The Contemporary Encyclopedic Novel

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Matthew Warren Raese
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Dedicated to B.H.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation will define the contemporary American encyclopedic novel and the significant role that irony plays in shaping meaning. The dissertation constructs a model of the encyclopedic novel based upon the history of the encyclopedia – from Denis Diderot's Enlightenment influenced *Encyclopédie* – and Northrop Frye's conception of the encyclopedic form. It claims (1) that the contemporary encyclopedic novel continues in the cycle of modal progression toward mythic integration that Frye proposes in *Anatomy of Criticism*; and (2) that the encyclopedic novel utilizes different forms of irony to challenge authoritative discourse and elevate marginal discourse.

The first chapter defines the encyclopedic novel by examining the history of the encyclopedia and existing criticism on the encyclopedic text in literature. It draws on theorists such as Denis Diderot and Richard Yeo to define an "encyclopedic project" that adopts a dialogic rhetorical style and seeks to democratize access to information. This chapter also defines the encyclopedic novel as a generic form that combines other forms into a unified whole and utilizes irony as a tool for integration.

The second and third chapters form a thematic pairing that shows the self-reflexive progression of the encyclopedic novel from individualistic to humanistic focus. The second chapter argues that Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* is an "anarchistic encyclopedic novel" that promotes associational thinking – in the form of paranoia, open forms, and horizontal transmission of knowledge. *Gravity's Rainbow* adopts a disintegrative irony to empower the oppressed individual against industry-state collusion in the post-WWII era. The third chapter

argues that David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest* seeks to reinvent irony as an integrative force and redirect Pynchon's individualistic anarchism toward an inclusive humanism.

The fourth chapter demonstrates a break from both of the preceding chapter and argues that Leon Forrest's *Divine Days* adopts a syndetic model of composition that further works to incorporate forms and integrate irony. Using Northrop Frye's "interpenetration," I argue that *Divine Days* integrates competing traditions and discourses by demonstrating their mutual-necessity. In the concluding chapter, I examine "meta-encyclopedic" by Jorge Luis Borges and Roberto Bolaño as an extension of the dissertation.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In Roberto Bolaño's *2666*, Amalfitano, a professor of literature, meditates on a young man's preference for reading the shorter works of the masters over the longer ones. "Qué triste paradoja,"[1] thinks Amalfitano, that even the bookish shy away from

> las grandes obras, imperfectas, torrenciales, las que abren camino en loe descondido. Escogen los ejercisios perfectos do los grandes maestros. . . . quieren ver a los grandes maestros en sesiones de esgrima de enterameinto, pero no quieren sber nada de los combates de verdad, en donde los grandes maestros luchan contra aquello, ese aquello que nos atemoriza a todos, ese aquello acoquina y encacha, y hay sangre y herida mortales y fetidez. (289-90)[2]

Amalfitano values the difficulty and the imperfection of the larger works; he mourns that this young man will know "Bartleby, the Scrivener" but not *Moby-Dick*. The "imperfect and torrential" long novel poses a set of challenges to the reader that the slimmer novel does not. Intersecting plot lines, jumbled chronologies, casts of hundreds of characters – these long novels compound the difficulty of other novels, which may also contain these same elements, while requiring more sustained attention and perseverance.

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[1] "What a sad paradox," unless otherwise noted, translations from the Spanish are my own.

[2] "the great works, imperfect, torrential, those that open the way into the unknown. They choose the great masters' perfect exercises. . . . They want to see the great masters in training bouts, but do not care at all to know their true combat, when the great masters struggle against that thing, that thing that frightens us all, that thing that moves and pushes, with blood and mortal wounds and stench."

Just as Amalfitano is not quite able to identify the difficulty behind the longer work – he is only able to identify the appeal of the shorter, perfect exercises – critics of the contemporary long novel have also had difficulty identifying what it is that sets these novels apart from their shorter counterparts. Three approaches to the contemporary long novel have emerged that seek to characterize the novels as something apart from their contemporaries and also attempt to provide methodologies for reading and making sense of these difficult works. The first two critical approaches, what I will term "ecological" and "systems" approaches, examine the question of "wholeness" of the novel, while the third uses the encyclopedia as a model for the contemporary long novel. Although the first two models do work to provide adequate readings under certain circumstances, the encyclopedic offers a fuller picture and will be my ultimate focus.

Very generally, ecological models of reading seek to expose the parallel between the novel as a complete whole and the singular wholeness of an environment, or ecological system. This model of reading shares important characteristics with environmentalism because it encourages agents to take action immediately in order not to just push off onto future generations the consequences of present actions. Because the ecological reading recognizes the connections among environment, humans, culture, and nature, it encourages a totalized, integrated worldview. In other words, ecological readings hinge upon mutual interaction among seemingly-disparate areas of experience.

Karl Kroeber writes in *Ecological Literary Criticism: Romantic Imagining and the Biology of Mind* that ecological literary criticism is a holistic approach to literature that

“concentrates on linkages between natural and cultural processes” (1). In connecting the natural and cultural, Kroeber draws a distinction between ecological criticism and what he calls the more accepted “philosophic” approach to criticism that, he argues, needlessly cuts off the discourse from the object of study. By reducing this distance between critic and object, Kroeber suggests that ecological criticism “resists current academic overemphasis on the rationalistic at the expense of sensory, emotional, and imaginative aspects of art” (2). Ecological criticism, as Michael McDowell points out in his essay “The Bakhtinian Road to Ecological Insight,” challenges more conventional critical approaches by contextualizing the text (as opposed to a New Critical study of the text in-itself) and avoids many of the linguistic pitfalls of postmodern criticism by returning focus to the physical world (371-2). What Kroeber and McDowell argue in common is that literary criticism needs to connect with the “hard” sciences the way that it has with such “soft” sciences as anthropology and psychology.

The benefit that the ecological model offers the long novel is two-fold: first, many of the long novels of the late twentieth-century take a renewed interest in science and incorporate this fascination with scientific theories and language into the fiction. Inclusion of scientific elements in the fiction – and critical attention to the same – expands the potential for understanding reality by diversifying the means by which it is possible to understand reality. Comparing inclusion of “soft” sciences with “hard” ones clarifies this logic. In much the same way that Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis or Claude Levi-Strauss' anthropology influenced both literature and criticism in the early and mid-twentieth century, Albert Einstein's theory of relativity and Charles Darwin's theory of evolution have influenced literature in the late-twentieth and early twenty-first

centuries. Second, many long novels, and particularly the ones I will call encyclopedic, engage in a "world-making" practice. By this I mean that the novels attempt to create a more complete world within the narrative rather than focusing solely on individual characters. Viewed from an ecological perspective, these more-inclusive narratives describe a wider swath of the world.

In contrast, the second critical type, the systems novel, proposed by Tom LeClair, accounts for open-system novels in addition to the closed-system ecological novel. In *In the Loop: Don DeLillo and the Systems Novel*, LeClair calls "Systems theory" "a set of assumptions about nature and an interpretive methodology … a metascience" that studies "all living systems, including social systems, and the specialized disciplines that study them" (3). Rather than attempting to define the rules of a closed system or ecology, as ecological readings of the long novel do, the systems approach is more interested in the interaction among numerous systems, present within and outside of the text. Each of these systems may be subject to its own set of assumptions and rules. Considering postmodernism a largely deconstructive movement, LeClair considers the systems novel to be a continuation of modernist tradition because the systems novels try to construct a unity of disparate parts rather than expose disjointed fragments. Systems novels, LeClair writes, are aware of and respond to the pressure of enhanced technology (particularly that which affects communication), offer themselves as an analogy to the extraliterary life in all of its complexity, provide a solution in holistic formulations to fragmentation, and reignite an interest in craft or mastery (9-11).

The third option, the encyclopedic approach, provides a much different way of understanding certain contemporary long novels because it both takes into account the concept of

ecological totality and acknowledges the importance of systems. The encyclopedic approach reaffirms the importance of knowledge, order, and epistemological variety in the contemporary encyclopedic novel. Each of these three perspectives – ecological, systems, and encyclopedic – acknowledge the importance of science in the novel, but where the encyclopedic novel differs is in the acknowledgement, explicit or otherwise, that science is but one method of understanding the world.[3] The encyclopedic novel, much like the encyclopedia itself, exposes the variety of means by which people understand their world. In a similar fashion, the encyclopedic novel often does concern systems in much the way that LeClair argues that the systems novel does, but goes beyond this recognition to claim or imply that systems in themselves may not be adequate to explain the complex interactions amongst characters, between characters and their environment, and so on. By juxtaposing competing, or even conflicting, epistemologies, the encyclopedic novel highlights areas of overlap and potential aporia of knowledge.

The contemporary encyclopedic novel is an extension of a longer encyclopedic tradition that has its roots in Enlightenment rationality and is aligned with a long history of social and political critique. This dissertation examines two roots of the contemporary encyclopedic novel: the history of the encyclopedia and criticism of the encyclopedic form in literature. The first, embodied in the "encyclopedic project" of Denis Diderot and the "encyclopedic vision" of Richard Yeo, leads to my claim that the contemporary encyclopedic novel is based on a dialogic approach to the encyclopedia that assumes a transhistoric communication of knowledge from

[3] Troy Strecker argues for a combination of ecology and encyclopedic narrative because "the concept of narrative ecology provides a valuable model which attends to the symbiotic interconnections and ecological processes active between different systemic levels and demonstrates how various cultural, social, and biological networks join us to our complex environment" (283).

author to audiences. The second, based upon the criticism of the encyclopedic form by Northrop Frye, leads to my claims, first, that the contemporary encyclopedic novel continues the recursive modal progression that Frye sets up, moving from modernist irony to myth but not leading fully into a new stage or mythic literary mode. In addition, it leads to my focus on post-1960s fiction, because the contemporary encyclopedic novel viewed through Northrop Frye's theory of historical modes is located at a historical cusp. Pressed to the end of ironic representation, the contemporary encyclopedic novel seems to search for a new method of expression.

In addition, in this dissertation I make two claims about irony: first, that the encyclopedic novel uses multiple forms of irony to identify, diagnose, and critique contemporary culture; and second, that the contemporary encyclopedic novel employs irony primarily as a corrective and community-building type of knowledge. My central argument is that the encyclopedic novel self-reflexively proposes and tests alternative logics that, working in tandem with ideological critique, seek to answer questions that ideological critique alone cannot or will not address. The encyclopedic novel demonstrates ideology's inability to describe the world accurately. Moreover, by placing reconstructive logics next to deconstructive ones, the encyclopedic novel elevates the stature of the marginal. The encyclopedic novel is a mediation between competing epistemologies, often betraying a deep ambivalence toward the epistemological models it presents.

The first chapter of this dissertation traces two lines of influence that make up the contemporary encyclopedic novel: Denis Diderot's *Encyclopédie* and Northrop Frye's “Theory of

Modes" in *Anatomy of Criticism*. This chapter offers a generic definition of the encyclopedic novel.

The second and third chapters of this dissertation form a thematic link, demonstrating the continuity of the encyclopedic genre between *Gravity's Rainbow* and *Infinite Jest*. The last chapter explores the encyclopedic novel within a different tradition – Forrester's *Divine Days* in the African-American literary tradition. Chapter 1 begins with the heterological tension between the "They-system" and paranoid logic in Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*. *Gravity's Rainbow* is as natural a starting place as any for a study of the post-1960s encyclopedic novel. Mendelson centers his consideration of the encyclopedic narrative around Pynchon's novel, and this call has been taken up by other critics after him. Pynchon's work embodies an anarchistic diagnosis of the ills of Western civilization. This has been read in a variety of ways, from a pessimistic recognition of the triumph of dehumanizing international corporations to the paradoxical retention of individual integrity through disintegration. The melding of science, occult, and popular culture presents a critique of prevailing cultural tendencies toward complacency and fatalism. I argue that *Gravity's Rainbow* adopts is an "anarchistic encyclopedic novel" that presents a series of alternatives to authoritative discourse in politics, systems of thought, and pedagogy.

Chapter 3 continues to develop a fuller account of irony in the late-twentieth century encyclopedic novel. Although David Foster Wallace has very famously denounced empty irony in this non-fictional writings, *Infinite Jest* is deeply ironic and seems to offer a certain kind of "knowing" irony as an escape from the ironic/sincere dichotomy. This escape permits a person

to retain self-awareness while engaging in activities which seek to destroy the self. Wallace presents a model of integration that couples ironic distance with extreme self-awareness that requires a keen sense of the ironic in different forms (local, infinite, stable and unstable). In this chapter I argue that Wallace strives to re-invent an integrative irony that counters what he sees as a corrosive postmodern irony.

Chapter 4 examines the cross-traditional influence academic and oral traditions in Leon Forrest's *Divine Days*. Through protagonist Joubert Jones, Forrester's novel attempts to legitimize the epistemological strength of the African-American oral tradition in the novel, while at the same time criticizing the need for such legitimation. Jones seeks to mythologize two men from his community by transforming the oral stories shared within the community into drama. He struggles with several double-identities and conflicting desires. He wants to legitimize the two men but fears that his work will not do them justice and he wants to become an intellectual playwright and also retain his heritage, which he perceives to be in conflict with academic writing. I argue that Forrest adopts the use of syndesis and interpenetrative logic to progress toward a mythic integration.

The conclusion to this dissertation briefly expands the scope of this project to include texts that engage with topics close to encyclopedism, but could not be considered to be encyclopedic. I consider two texts by Jorge Luis Borges, Roberto Bolano's *Nazi Literature in the Americas*, and Ambrose Bierce's *Deveil's Dictionary* as examples of two branches of "meta-encyclopedic texts."

CHAPTER 2

THE ENCYCLOPEDIC NOVEL

"The plan is so vast that the contribution of each writer is infinitesimal."

Jorge Luis Borges, "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," 72

2.1 The Encyclopedia

Before discussing the encyclopedic novel, it is necessary to define what an encyclopedia is and why this term is useful for describing a kind of fiction. The first definition for the word "encyclopedia" in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is "a circle of learning; a general course of instruction." This description fits the earliest encyclopedias (such as Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis Historia*), but the concept of the encyclopedia has changed over time. Richard Yeo writes that the Enlightenment brought about a new paradigm in science and changed the relationship between humans and knowledge of the world in such a profound way as to necessitate the creation of the encyclopedia. Yeo writes, "encyclopedias, science and Enlightenment assumptions about knowledge […] form a natural alliance of mutually reinforcing elements" (xii). Although the approach and purpose of the encyclopedia shifted over time, its central assertion that all knowledge is interrelated has remained constant.

There are two primary approaches to the encyclopedia that I term "pedagogic" and "dialogic." The pedagogic approach to the encyclopedia considers the work to be a repository of knowledge to be absorbed by the reader and incorporated into everyday life. The older of the

two approaches, the pedagogic, bears little similarity to contemporary encyclopedias, tending to be arranged thematically rather than alphabetically. The cross-referencing in the modern encyclopedia is a remnant of this thematic tendency. The pedagogic encyclopedia was primarily a teaching tool; thematic organization was beneficial because the reader would expect to read the work from start to finish, gaining a full education in the process. The circle is an important symbol for the pedagogic encyclopedia, first because the encyclopedia was a full pedagogical course, or cycle of learning, and second because the information contained within the pedagogic encyclopedia tended to have a strong theological center around which all natural knowledge was arranged. Describing an encyclopedia as a "circle of learning" had the effect of placing boundaries on the knowledge to be conveyed.[4]

Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis Historia* is one example of the pedagogic encyclopedia. The work compiled abridged portions of other texts thought to be indispensable to the educated man. The first Book begins with a dedication to Emperor Titus and then details the contents of the rest of the work. Beginning the second Book, the work is written in a continuous prose style, absent article headings standard in modern encyclopedias.[5] Each of the thirty-eight Books focuses on one broad area of study that is further divided within the book. Pliny likens his work to a storehouse of information, acknowledging the contributions of scholars before him:

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[4] Hilary Clark argues that the encyclopedia wants to "encircle" knowledge, to present knowledge by first cordoning it off (98).

[5] The volumes I examine, a side-by-side Latin-English translation edited by H. Rackham (1938), have marginal glosses in the place of subject titles. These glosses are an editorial addition, not appearing in the original Latin.

> by perusing about 2000 volumes, very few of which, owing to the abstruseness of their contents, are ever handled by students, we have collected in 36 volumes 20,000 noteworthy facts obtained from one hundred authors that we have explored, with a great number of other facts in addition that were either ignored by our predecessors or have been discovered by subsequent experience" (13).

Pliny overwhelms the reader with the magnitude of his undertaking, demonstrating to Titus his dedication to the process of compilation.

Pliny opens Book II with a description of the nature of the world, ascribing to it divine characteristics. He then presents a general top-down organization within subject groups. Book II begins with the broad description of the universe, its size, shape, and make-up, moving next to a description of the Earth, the occurrence of eclipses, and then a description of the moon and heavenly bodies. This leads next to a description of theories behind the mechanism of eclipses and the cyclic nature of the eclipse. Although these topics are related in a general fashion, their exact organization is typical of much of the work: a broad topic, divided into smaller topics with frequent digressions onto related topics. This organization functions well for the pedagogic encyclopedia because it provides a practical progression in learning – the reader learns first of the earth, then the moon, and finally eclipses, knowledge of the last requiring knowledge of the former.

Pliny's work, then, has the double purpose of presenting a wealth of knowledge found by Pliny in his reading and in his own experience and also contributing to the glory of his dedicatee. *Naturalis Historia* is both a memorial to the achievements of Rome and an attempt to record a

complete catalogue of human knowledge. As such, the *Historia* testifies to the authority of Rome.[6] The pedagogic encyclopedia, despite (or perhaps because of) its educational purposes, thus from the start possesses a secondary purpose that reconfirms the authority of the ruler. Pliny cedes the provinces of knowledge to Titus through his dedication of the work.

The dialogic approach to the encyclopedia adopts many of the practices of the pedagogic but re-envisions the purpose of the text. The dialogic approach considers the encyclopedia to be a mediating text between scholars, or between author and reader. The structure of the dialogic encyclopedia shifted along with the purpose. Whereas thematic organization in the pedagogic encyclopedia allowed the reader to read seamlessly from one topic into the next without having to jump around in pages or even in separate volumes, structured organization and cross-referencing permitted the reader to pick and choose among topics.[7] Thus, just as the circle is an important symbolic figure to the pedagogic encyclopedia, the tree is an important symbolic figure for the dialogic encyclopedia. The tree's limbs symbolizing the different bodies of knowledge, smaller branches designating sub-fields within the disciplines.

Denis Diderot's monumental *Encyclopédie* is a prominent example of the dialogic approach to the encyclopedia. Diderot's work began as a translation of Ephraim Chamber's *Cyclopedia* but eventually evolved into a work of twenty-seven volumes published over the

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[6] See Trevor Murphy's *Pliny the Elder's Natural History* for more on the interplay of politics and epistemology in that text.

[7] Although thematically organized encyclopedias do exist, alphabetical organization has far outstripped it in popularity. The emergence of online encyclopedias, such as Wikipedia, have permitted a new type of organization that is densely cross-referenced through the use of hyperlinks between articles.

course of 25 years.[8] Although the authorship of much of the material is contested (some of it is plagiarized from Chambers or other sources while the bulk seems to have been written by Diderot and a handful of other editors),[9] Diderot sought to write an encyclopedia that would outlast his historical moment and lead to a greater understanding of the world. In contrast to Pliny's aim of flattering authority, Diderot wanted his *Encyclopédie* to promote Enlightenment rationality that would challenge religious notions of propriety and of monarchical authority.[10] John Lough remarks that the *Encyclopédie* was received in two ways: as a work of reference, but also as a method of spreading ideas of the Enlightenment (*Encyclopédie* 91). Contemporary critics were quick to pick up on the philosophical and political undertones, and not all appreciatively.[11] Lough further remarks that "alongside his purely objective observations on the

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[8] There are a great many critical works offering similar histories of the publication of Diderot's *Encyclopédie* but the level of detail varies. Douglas Gordon and Norman Torrey provide a somewhat detailed history of the publication in *The Censoring of Diderot's Encyclopédie*. The book contains reconstructed fragments that Gordon found bound as an extra volume in one of the original printings: this book of errata contains proofs corrected in Diderot's hand, proofs bearing the censoring marks of Le Breton (the publisher), and other unpublished material. Philipp Blom's *Enlightening the World: Encyclopédie, The Book that Changed the Course of History* offers a wonderfully detailed history of publication of the *Encyclopédie*, biographical sketches of the most prominent encyclopedists, as well as the political and economic context, and even a chapter describing the importance of Paris in French intellectual life in the early 18th century.

[9] Blom writes of the early difficulty of the *Encyclopédie*, which began as simply a translation of Ephraim Chamber's *Cyclopedia* but was plagued by a charlatan who (it was rumored) barely knew French. Diderot was eventually sought out for the editorship and it was he who eventually altered the *privilege* (formal decree granting royal permission to publish a specific work). Some of the material in the *Encyclopédie* remained from its early stages (35-40).

[10] Daniel Brewer writes in his 2011 essay "The *Encyclopédie*: innovation and legacy" in *New Essays on Diderot* that Diderot's *Encyclopédie* reflects "the most powerful tenet of Enlightenment thought, namely, the belief in the individual's power to understand the world critically" (48).

[11] Lough points to the dedication of a supplement to the third edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* to King George III that states, in part, "The French *Encyclopédie* has been accused, and justly accused of having disseminated far and wide the seeds of Anarchy and Atheism. If the *Encyclopedia Britannica* shall in any degree counteract the tendency of that pestiferous work, even these two volumes will not be wholly unworthy of Your Majesty's patronage" (qtd. In Lough, *Encyclopédie* 91-2).

aims of such a work of reference, [Diderot] inserted passages in which he shows his pride in the progress of the Enlightenment and his determination to use the *Encyclopédie* to hasten that progress" (*Encyclopédie* 92).

Today's conception of the encyclopedia is quite different from Diderot's Enlightenment-influenced ideal because it has retained the form of the dialogic approach but not the purpose. For Diderot, the encyclopedia is a revolutionary medium that is perfectly in line with enlightenment sensibility: it questioned religious and monarchical authority and attempted to traffic in revolutionary ideas by, in effect, overwhelming government censors with huge amounts of material.[12] Critics attacked Diderot's *Encyclopédie* for these revolutionary ideals and its attempts to spread atheism and dissent. Thus, for Diderot, the importance of the encyclopedia was cultural, political, and even moral.[13] He foresaw two distinct purposes for his project. First, the *Encyclopédie* would be a type of "time capsule of the Enlightenment" so that if some catastrophe were to take place the world would not need to build itself back up to Enlightenment reasoning, but would be able to, in effect, pick up where it had left off (Yeo 3). The second purpose of the encyclopedia would be to inspire a conversation that would outlast Diderot and

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[12] Philipp Blom describes the encyclopedists' use of cross-reference to insert subsersive content into the *Encyclopédie* by linking contrasting ideas or suggestive juxtaposition. Blom writes, "ANTHROPHAGES (Cannibals) was surreptitiously commented on by the addition '*See Eucharist, Communion*.' Similarly, LIBERTÉ DE PENSER (Freedom of Thought) had as a contrasting reference '*See: Intolerance & Jesus Christ*'" (154).

[13] Daniel Brewer further argues that Diderot's work structured and revalued knowledge in a such a way that "aimed to establish and display the fundamental interconnectedness of all forms of human knowledge" (48). While the interconnectedness of knowledge itself is not revolutionary, Diderot's idea that the encyclopedia would map the "order that the encyclopedists believed that thought imprints upon the world" disrupted a top-down conception of knowledge with a central authority figure (whether God or monarch) (48). The encyclopedists, Brewer argues, believed that structures of knowledge were independent from knowledge itself, thus freeing the individual from an authoritative, pre-conceived, and ultimately arbitrary structure (54). "Thus," Brewer writes, "it falls to the knower to determine the criteria according to which he or she lays claim to know the world" (54).

the *Encyclopédie*. This ongoing conversation, Wilda Anderson writes, would take place between scholars of the past, the present, and those of the future: "the act of writing for the *Encyclopédie* is the pretext for the conversation that will organize the real encyclopedia, the living encyclopedia made up of the philosophers' exchange of ideas as they work to adjust their articles to each others'" (919). In this way, the encyclopedia is never actually complete and, thus, never authoritative.[14]

One of the more notorious entries in the *Encyclopédie* is the article titled "*Encyclopédie" in which Diderot outlines his thoughts on the project and sets up his philosophical outlook regarding knowledge and enlightened rationality.[15] The mere presence of this article within the text of the *Encyclopédie* illustrates Diderot's self-conscious editorial aims (both Diderot and his co-editor d'Alambert had also written introductory material, and Diderot wrote a prospectus arguing for the necessity of a French-language reference work, all of which one would expect to be paratextual material). This self-reflexive turn is in keeping with the ever-vigilant Enlightenment philosophy to which Diderot was dedicated. Diderot argues in this article that "the aim of an *encyclopedia* is to assemble knowledge scattered across the earth, to reveal its overall structure to our contemporaries and to pass it on to those who will come after us; so that

[14] Anderson argues that the true encyclopedia is the dialogue between scholars and not the written books and that the purpose of the encyclopedia must focus on that act of communication. The "progress [of knowledge] is made possible not by the content, but by the provoking of an act of thinking: that of questioning definitions of words and the status of an argument [. . .] the encyclopedia becomes a very different project – it doesn't store knowledge; it provokes speculation on the part of both its authors and readers and therefore creates new knowledge" (921, 925).

[15] Entries in the early volumes bearing an asterisk (*) or unsigned were written by Diderot. One of the *Encyclopédie*'s notable novelties was contribution of material from recognized names in the particular field of interest.

the achievements of past ages do not become worthless for the centuries to come, so that our descendants, in becoming better informed, may at the same time become more virtuous and content, and so that we do not leave this earth without having earned the respect of the human race" (21-2). For Diderot, the encyclopedia must be undertaken voluntarily by a group of like-minded scholars.[16]

The Enlightenment influence is clear when Diderot considers the important role of current philosophy to the *Encyclopédie*, arguing that the "revolution" in thinking will make past encyclopedias obsolete. He writes,

> as philosophy today advances with giant strides; as it brings order to all the subjects it embraces; as it sets the predominant fashion under which the yoke of authority and precedent comes to be shaken and to yield to the laws of reason, scarcely one work of dogma survives for which wholehearted approval is felt. Such works come to be perceived as copies of human artifice rather than drawn from the truth of nature. (23)

The agenda Diderot sets for himself is to abandon the influence of authority for the truth of empirical observation and of critical inquiry. The order which Diderot seeks, and that which will thence be viewed with suspicion, is not the order of established legal and religious authority but the scientific and philosophical desire for integration of science, philosophy and life.

[16] "Encyclopedic discourse is a metadiscourse," writes Hilary Clark in "Encyclopedic Discourse" (98). Drawing on a Foucauldian suspicion of order, Clark contends that the encyclopedia recognizes its own shortcomings and "ideological blind spots" (97).

Diderot's approach to his *Encyclopédie* is a model of sorts for the contemporary novel of a systematic yet open-ended, dialogic approach. In form, the encyclopedic novel rarely resembles an actual encyclopedia;[17] rather, the encyclopedic project that Diderot initiates provides an epistemological and political model for the novel. The Enlightenment project of the encyclopedia includes the potential for transhistoric dialogue, a broad interest in culture, and a self-aware, self-reflective turn that is conducive to social critique. Diderot was not interested in a straightforward "objective" presentation of information in the way that many modern encyclopedias attempt, but wore his ideology and critical approach on his sleeve. In foregrounding his critical approaches and including his philosophy on the encyclopedia as an element of the *Encyclopédie*, Diderot disrupts the enclosed and encircling tendency of the pedagogic encyclopedia. The formal and epistemological circle does not close but includes itself, like a moebius strip, projecting dialogue into the future. The dialogic approach to the encyclopedia does not accept the limits of the printed text but focuses on the process of developing and refining knowledge that comes from the interaction of present and future scholars.

2.2 The Encyclopedic Novel

The relationship between the encyclopedia and the novel is the central question behind the current project. The two have been related in literary criticism in the term "encyclopedic novel," which is most commonly used to describe very long and complex novels, what Henry

[17] There are some novels that emulate the literal form of the encyclopedia, most notably Roberto Bolaño's *La literatura nazi en America* and *Dictionary of the Khazars* by Milorad Pavic.

James would have called a "loose baggy monster."[18] However, more useful and specific definitions exist and have exerted considerable influence in critical circles. Foremost among these is that by Northrop Frye. Frye's study of the encyclopedic form in fiction appears first in *Anatomy of Criticism*, although the term "encyclopedic" will reappear in his criticism throughout his career.[19]

Northrop Frye's approach to the encyclopedic form in literature emphasizes integration of generic form, reintroduces the concept of the cycle, and constructs a long history of the encyclopedic form in literature that unifies all of literary genres. In *Anatomy of Criticism* Frye argues for the centrality of the encyclopedic form in each literary "mode" that characterizes each literary historical period. *Anatomy of Criticism* is constructed in such a way that its four essays are deeply intertwined, and terms which are often used loosely in one part will be strictly defined in another or definitions are built and refined in several essays. To get to Frye's definition of encyclopedic form in the fourth essay, it is necessary to track back to the first essay, "Historical Criticism: Theory of Modes" to pick up Frye's overall schema and define some of his more elementary terms.

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[18] In the preface to his novel *The Tragic Muse*, Henry James questions the artistic meaning of novels that have "queer elements of the accidental and the arbitrary," or that attempt to tell "two stories . . . in one," calling them "large loose baggy monsters" (83-4). James' objection, however, could describe many contemporary novels but the term has retained popularity in describing those large novels full of seeming loose ends or that resist interpretation in some way. The "accidental and arbitrary" may easily describe the scatological and ironic in postmodern literature.

[19] In Frye's later works the term "encyclopedic" takes on greater significance, transforming from a word defining a formal category of fiction into one that integrates the artistic and the social. The definition in *Anatomy of Criticism* leaves open the possibility for this expanded meaning, and at points even seems to suggest that this broader definition lies behind the writing somewhere. As with much of Frye's work, it is important to keep in mind the double meanings that everything has (outlined particularly in Frye's posthumous *Double-Vision*) – a natural meaning and a second, apocalyptic meaning.

Frye's first essay in *Anatomy of Criticism* develops a theory of "modes" that constructs literary historical periods. Classification of modes is based upon a hero's "power of action" compared to other humans and to the environment; the modes are based upon the Aristotelian concept of *ethos*, or character. Frye defines these modes as the following:

1) mythic – in which the hero is superior in kind to other people and to the surrounding environment;
2) romantic – in which the hero is superior in degree to other people and to the environment;
3) high mimetic – in which the hero is superior to other humans but not to the environment;
4) low mimetic – in which the hero is superior to neither other humans nor the environment, but is a normal person of normal abilities; and
5) ironic – in which the hero is inferior either to other humans or to the surrounding environment.

These five modes are "historical" in the sense that they associate form with historical periods; however, the historical is abstracted, based upon Frye's sense of formal aesthetic categories and social values. Works of literature are not mythic or romantic because of the time at which they were written, but rather because of their reflection, in the person of the hero, of the social values which Frye argues are prevalent in one era or another. This style of analysis, though it appears diachronic and historical, is also synchronic because all modes are perpetually present as a part of the whole structure. A.C. Hamilton notes that this conceptual framework can classify literature both diachronically and synchronically because "[the framework] describes the shape of a general literary history, one that may accommodate any number of specific histories" (63).

Since Frye's focus in *Anatomy* is the whole of literature, he can describe the broad trends, trusting these to accurately describe a great number of works.[20]

The movement from myth to irony in literature, for example, marks not just a movement through time but a thematic movement away from socially integrated myth into plots that gradually show more interest in human affairs. The hero's power of action demonstrates this clearly: the mythic hero is clearly greater than most humans while the ironic hero is somewhat less, to be pitied or scorned. Significantly, in this schema, as the relative power of action decreases, realism increases.

Myth Romance High Mimetic Low Mimetic Ironic

→

increasing realism

←

increasing "power of action"

[20] Paul Ricoeur disagrees in his essay "*Anatomy of Criticism* or the Order of Paradigms" from *Centre and Labyrinth: Essays in Honour of Northrop Frye*, arguing that Frye's approach is "neither ahistorical nor historical, it is rather transhistorical, in the sense that it traverses history in a cumulative and not simply an additive mode" (13). While Ricoeur finds this method valuable, he cannot reconcile this historical approach with a schema of recursive modes. Likewise, Marco Andreacchio disputes Frye's use of recursion ("Questioning Northrop Frye's Adaptation of Vico" in *Interpretation: A Journal of Political Philosophy*), but on the grounds that it is not well founded in Giambattista Vico's philosophy. Andreacchio interprets Vico's "ages," which Frye adapts into modal eras, to be focused more on the common origins of nations than on a recurring course of historical progression (284).

Frye's five-part historical schema describes one element of fiction that Frye derives from Aristotle – *ethos*, or character. To this he adds two other elements: *mythos* and *dianoia*. *Mythos* is equivalent to plot type, while *dianoia* signifies theme, idea, or thought as its central shaping principle. This split in fictional representation into *mythos* and *dianoia* represents a balance between plot and idea.

The principles of *mythos* and *dianoia* define macro-categories of fiction that Frye further subdivides – *mythos* into tragic and comic, *dianoia* into episodic and encyclopedic. From here, Frye refers to fictional forms categorized by *mythos* as simply "fictional" and those characterized by *dianoia* as "thematic." Thus, "the fictional" for Frye signifies texts in which plot takes precedence over theme or idea, and thematic texts are more typically novels of ideas in which theme is of greater importance. Any given text might contain tragic, comic, episodic, and encyclopedic elements, but will do so in varying proportions. Taking into account these subdivisions to fiction and theme, Frye constructs twenty distinct categories, outlined in the figure below.

	Mythos (fictional - plot)		*Dianoia* (thematic)	
	Tragic	Comic	Episodic	Encyclopedic
Myth				
Romance				
High Mimetic				
Low Mimetic				
Ironic				

Ethos (Hero Character)

Significantly, for Frye (as for Aristotle) tragedy and comedy express *ethos*, but for Frye tragedy and comedy are not just forms of drama. The ultimate outcome of the hero in society divides *mythos* into either tragedy and comedy. The tragic is a fictional form in which "the hero becomes isolated from his society" while the comic fictional form incorporates the hero into society (35).

Likewise, Frye divides the thematic mode (*dianoia*) into episodic and encyclopedic forms; this split in thematics parallels the split in the fictional forms tragedy and comedy. The episodic and encyclopedic thematic forms are roughly analogous to the tragic and comic fictional forms, but the former refers to the author's relationship to society rather than (as the latter) to the hero's relationship to her society. The tragic mode tends to alienate the hero from society while the comic tends to integrate the hero with society, and this is also a good way to consider

position of the author in the episodic and encyclopedic, respectively. Frye writes that "the poet may write as an individual, emphasizing the separateness of his personality and the distinctness of his vision," or the poet may "devote himself to being a spokesman of his society" (54). The first poet writes in the episodic form and the second the encyclopedic. Viewed as "alienated," the episodic poet writes apart from his or her own society, as a distinct individual informing a divided society about itself. The "integrating," or encyclopedic, author views himself or herself as a part of that same society addressing itself.

Frye provides examples of the encyclopedic and episodic thematic forms in each of the five historical modes, but my concern here is with his definition of the encyclopedic. In the mythic mode, the encyclopedic poet "who sings about gods is often considered to be singing as one, or as an instrument of one" (55). Because in the mythic mode the poet is fully integrated into the broader society, he (or she) will participate in the dominant poetic tradition, which can be taken to form an "encyclopedic aggregate." To put this another way, the poet writes in accordance with other poets (and is in accord with the hegemonic ideology of his or her culture), contributing to society's cultural project. Frye's primary example of this is the Christian Bible, which was written by many authors over a long history and in numerous geographical locations. What binds the "mythic encyclopedic" Bible together is a unifying belief in the word of the Judeo-Christian God and an integration into a society of fellow Christians. Thus, Frye argues, it is vital to read the Bible as a closed whole with a unified purpose rather than to fragment it and consider its parts separated from the whole. The Bible as encyclopedic form integrates its implied author (God/man) with society.

Moving through the epochs, away from the mythic, the encyclopedic form will arise as "increasingly human *analogies*" of the mythic (emphasis original 56), so in the romantic epoch the poet is more distant from God, delivering an analogy of divine knowledge, and playing the role myth assigns to a prophet. Both the high mimetic and low mimetic modes in the encyclopedic form reveal a gap widening in the unified cultures in the previous epochs. The low mimetic particularly reveals a society that has become more focused on the individual than the collective. Frye notes that the role of the poet in the low mimetic mode is similar to the hero in the romantic: "an extraordinary person who lives in a higher and more imaginative order of experience than that of nature" (59). To put it another way, even in the encyclopedic form, which highlights integration and unity with society, the mimetic mode shows a fragmenting of society that will deepen into the ironic. Individuals in societies become disassociated from one another and diversify in their values and beliefs. The encyclopedic literature which reflects this disassociation must necessarily be written by an author who can witness and understand the social fracturing while being a spokesperson for, and remaining a part of, society as a whole – a difficult prospect.

Frye's analysis of the encyclopedic form takes on the greatest importance for the current project when he begins to detail the encyclopedia in the ironic mode/age. In this age, Frye tells us, the texts "devote their entire energy to the poet's literal function as a maker of poems," and that "the thematic poet in the ironic age thinks of himself more as a craftsman than as a creator" (60). The society of the poet has become so fragmented and the narrative so displaced from a central organizing myth that the poet must focus all energy into locating significant moments in a

sea of mundane minutiae. Frye calls attention to Proust's repetitions of specific memories, for example, to create "timeless moments" of significance. The works of Eliot and Woolf share a common "sense of contrast between the course of a whole civilization and the tiny flashes of significant moments which reveal its meaning" (61). In the ironic age, encyclopedic and episodic seem to merge, as "[t]he paradoxical technique of poetry which is encyclopedic and yet discontinuous […] is […] a technical innovation heralding a new mode" (61).

In the ironic mode, the simple fact of the text takes precedence over its content, and the content of the text is focused on the authorial perspective – the author's experience of the world, the author's inability to make sense of the world, the author's experience of the very text she is writing. In these inward-facing moments, the desire the author has to capture meaning – or, to act as spokesperson for a fragmented society from *within* that society – pushes the author toward the creation of a new form.

This new form seems to blend characteristics of the ironic and the mythic. The ironic mode lacks the shared knowledge of an integrated mythic society, yet the timeless moments of Proust or the significant moments of Woolf and Eliot spark recognition within the reader of a broader (perhaps "universal" is too strong a word) truth. This shared knowledge shows a tendency toward integration that should be unexpected in a progression of modes that have grown more distant from myth and integration. However, there is a connection between these mythic and ironic modes. Frye differentiates between the specific sorts of myth that appear within each of his broad categories of literature (fictional and thematic works, also termed *mythos* and *dianoia*) and the "more common and easily recognized form as a certain kind of narrative" (21). This

narrative concerns characters who are gods or are in some way superior to other humans. The action takes place in a world outside of or prior to time as we recognize it, the actions are treated as though they have "really happened," and the actions tend "to stick together and build up bigger structures" (31). Most importantly, myth tries to assimilate humans and nature, and it works to erode the division between legend and history. Because myths so often include creation stories, ancestry, origin-of-mankind stories and the like, the combination of legend and history forms a more integrated sense of cultural history and identity. In other words, myths, when believed, encourage an integrated cultural worldview. Frye further expands on this formulation of myth in "The Archetypes of Literature" from the collection *Fables of Identity*, writing that "the central myth of art must be the vision of the end of social effort, the innocent world of fulfilled desires, the free human society" (18). This myth is a unifying structure that envisions an eternal present, or utopian time of unchanging and integrated social being.

An important counter to myth is the concept of "displacement," which is a movement away from myth, or an "indirect mythologizing" (36). Displacement works against myth in that it moves narrative away from the unified myth and toward a consensus of scientifically verifiable reality. In "Myth, Fiction, and Displacement" also collected in *Fables of Identity*, Frye calls displacement "the techniques a writer uses to make his story credible, logically motivated, or morally acceptable – lifelike, in short" (36). This notion is expanded in *Anatomy of Criticism* so that the displacement is relative, increasing from mythic through ironic modes. As literature moves away from myth, and verisimilitude increases, there must also be a corresponding movement away from the unifying power of the myth. If, then, one of the hallmarks of the myth

is integration, then a characteristic of the realistic and the ironic is disintegration caused by displacement. Myth gradually separates itself from history and becomes recognized as literature, which Frye says is what happened to Roman mythology in the early Christian era.

Yet this part of Frye's schema is key to the current project: at a critical point the ironic begins bending back to the mythic. As previously noted, in Frye's work displacement from myth coincides with an increase in realism. Frye writes: "Reading forward in history, therefore, we may think of our romantic, high mimetic and low mimetic modes as a series of *displaced* myths, *mythoi* or plot-formulas progressively moving over towards the opposite pole of verisimilitude, and then, with irony, beginning to move back" (52, emphasis original). The ironic is not, then, the most realistic of the modes (the low mimetic is), but it is the one which hearkens a move in the other direction, back toward myth. Frye picks up this thread again in his consideration of the thematic: the loss of such devices as apostrophe, mimesis of direct address (later to be termed *epos*), and symbolic patterning (replaced by juxtaposition of images) indicates "the implicit sense of an initiated group aware of a real meaning behind an ironically baffling exterior" (61). Frye argues that irony implicitly indicates a shared knowledge between author and audience (or in-group mentality) and that this sharing is the beginning of a return *back* to myth.

The movement from irony back to myth initiates the beginning of a new cycle. This is precisely why Frye offers parallel examples from the Classical and the Judeo-Christian worlds: the Bible marked the beginning of a new mythic epoch which began a new sequence of historical modes. A.C. Hamilton and others have noted the influence on Frye of Vico's theory of recursive history and Spengler's notion of organic civilization. Vico and Spengler both hypothesized an

historical model which operated in cycles rather than linearly. At this point we see an additional dimension to Frye's historical schema: the system is recursive.

The point of cleavage between irony and myth is significant to this study for, if we accept Frye's structure, this is the point at which the contemporary encyclopedic novel resides: after the ironic *Finnegans Wake* but before a new social myth emerges. The intrusion of the fantastic into "realistic" novels breaks the expected pattern of increasing verisimilitude, but perhaps this is not to be considered regressive, but the opening up of an indication of a new era of shared knowledge. The irony of postmodern or so-called post-postmodern texts that from one angle seem purposeless may perhaps from another be seen as productive in creating a shared knowledge. The very precariousness of these texts on the edge of the ironic mode suggests their existence at a point of jointure.

A final point before returning to Frye's definition for the encyclopedic form is the role of the reader of ironic fiction. Frye holds up *Finnegans Wake* as the example of his contemporary ironic epic. He asks who the hero of the book is, saying "one feels that this book gives us something more than the merely irresponsible irony of a turning cycle. Eventually it dawns on us that it is the *reader* who achieves the quest, the reader who, to the extent that he masters the book […] is able to look down on its rotation, and see its form as something more than rotation" (emphasis orginal 323-4). The author of the ironic fiction, then, does make a sort of direct communication that imitates the communication of the mythic poet. Though the ironic author does not speak for God, as it were, she does speak in an abstracted way *about* society from her position *inside* of society. The recipient, the reader, understands the idea (*dianoia*) that is

expressed because of the shared societal knowledge and cultural values which had seemed to be obscured in previous instantiations of irony.

Later in the *Anatomy of* Criticism, in addition to addressing the problem of mode for the contemporary encyclopedic novel, Frye also addresses the problem of *genre* by presenting a definition of the encyclopedic form as an *integration* of other prose genres. Under the category of "specific continuous forms" (ie, prose fiction), Frye delineates four genres within fiction: novel, confession, anatomy, and romance. The distinction that Frye makes between the romance and the novel "lies in the conception of characterization": the novelist wants to create "real people" while the romancer creates "stylized figures which expand into psychological archetypes" (304). Romance does tend toward allegory, has a longer tradition than the novel, and seems more geared toward remembrance of the past than is the novel (304-7). Frye qualifies the inclusion of the confession and the anatomy as fictional genres in terms of the author's creative intent. The confession expresses in the author's desire to construct narrative [an "impulse to select only those events and experiences in the writer's life that go to build up an integrated pattern," as Frye has it (307)], and so the confession is fictional. The anatomy is, perhaps, the most important form of fiction in relation to the current project because it is a category that today is little-discussed. Frye calls the anatomy a genre of fiction because of the "creative treatment of exhaustive erudition" that it shares with Menippean satire (311). What many critics identify as "encyclopedic" in contemporary novels is actually the influence of the anatomy (as Frye describes it) on fiction. The anatomy, Frye says "means a dissection or analysis, and expresses very accurately the intellectualized approach to [the] form" (311). Most

importantly, the anatomy builds its own structure in the process of exposition (this seems to be the element many critics identify as "encyclopedic"). As with all of the above terms and concepts, these four genres of fiction are relative and, what is more, they combine in most fiction. There are six possible combinations of the four genres: novel-confession, novel-anatomy, novel-romance, confession-anatomy, confession-romance, and anatomy-romance.[21] These forms rarely exist in a pure form but are more commonly hybrids. Significantly, however, according to Frye *the encyclopedic form within continuous fiction includes all four* – novel, romance, confession, and anatomy – combined in such a way as to form a complete prose epic in which "all [forms are] of practically equal importance, and all essential to one another, so that the book is a unity and not an aggregate" (314). The key phrase here is "unity." Based upon the thematic encyclopedic form seen earlier, Frye's encyclopedic form actively *integrates* the other forms into itself. Without this, it is simply another hybrid continuous fictional form.[22]

Frye demonstrates the existence of the encyclopedic form in all five of the historical epochs or modes, but there are two which are important to this project: the Bible and *Finnegans Wake* or the mythic and ironic instantiations of the form. According to Frye, the Bible is the central mythic encyclopedia of Western culture, while *Finnegans Wake*, on the other hand, pulls

[21] Hamilton counts eleven hybrids, including the four previously mentioned: four triple permutations (novel-romance-confession; novel-romance-anatomy; novel-confession-anatomy; romance-confession-anatomy) and one quadruple (novel-romance-confession-anatomy) (177-8).

[22] Interpenetration is a useful model for understanding the integration of genre because, if the encyclopedic form were to fully integrate all genres, one would expect the genres to become indistinguishable. Over the course of the reading, the elements of individual genres may stand out but upon reflection – the important second consideration Frye considers necessary for true criticism to take place – the reader can recognize the text as a unified whole. Thus, the encyclopedic novel is both fragmentary – consisting in many genres – and unified – fully integrating genre – at the same time. Interpenetration allows for this paradoxical unity of opposed entities and may perhaps be the rationale behind Frye's assertion that accreted episodic poems may result in an encyclopedic form.

in these same four strands of continuous fiction, but works them in an ironic fashion – developing that shared ironic symbolism which is recognized by the in-group. The irony of *Finnegans Wake*, argues Frye, builds to something which the reader can recognize as something more than an empty irony. It is this shared recognition that paves the way back to myth as the shared recognition forges new archetypal symbols.

At this point, all of the strands of Frye's theory come together. The movement in literary history from the Bible to James Joyce represents nearly a complete circuit. The next step, given everything to which *Anatomy of Criticism* builds, should be a recursion to the mythic. In every one of Frye's essays, modernist literature stands in the final "Ironic" phase of the historical schema, and *Finnegans Wake* marks a recursion. The question that Frye leaves unanswered, and could not possibly have answered given the time of his writing, is how do post-1980s encyclopedic novels fit into the schema? Had *Finnegans Wake* completed the cycle, encyclopedic novels to follow should have marked the beginning of the cycle again. Conversely, Joyce's novel may not have been the turning-point that Frye had thought it to be.

The two elements of Frye's definition of the encyclopedic text that are most important to this dissertation are the concepts of integration and recursion. Both of these concepts serve to represent multiple ideas within Frye's *Anatomy*. Each of the modes describes a relationship between the hero and society; this integration of the protagonist, for example, is parallel to the relationship of the author to society. Most importantly, the integration of forms proves a strong working definition for the encyclopedic form. Recursion, likewise, refers to both a cultural concept and an important formal element within encyclopedic texts. The recursive historical

schema that Frye adopts from Oswald Spengler parallels the cyclical nature that Frye finds in such encyclopedic texts as *Finnegans Wake* and the Bible. Integration and recursion are primary thematic and formal concerns in contemporary encyclopedic novels, but also crucial elements in Frye's literary theory because of the closeness he saw between literature and the social sphere.

Following Frye, critics of the encyclopedic form can be grouped into two categories: those who use a formal definition for the encyclopedic novel and those who identify a conceptual "encyclopedism" apart from form. In addition to this broad division, criticism of the encyclopedic novel is also split along historic lines, some critics tending to a synchronic interpretation, other to diachronic. Interestingly, both lines of criticism stem from elements discussed by Frye.

A number of critics define the encyclopedic novel formally, and critics in this group tend to consider the form diachronically, as having developed from the epic or another source. Aside from generic conventions, the formal critics tends to examine the role of language in the novel and also the scope or breadth of topics addressed.

Edward Mendelson, for example, constructs a definition for the encycopedic narrative that is very constricted, and comprised of seven points a text must fulfill in order to be considered encyclopedic. Each encyclopedic narrative must

1) give a "full account of at least one technology or science" (164)
2) incorporate other literary styles;
3) be monstrous or include monstrous elements
4) not "culminate in a completed relation of sexual love" (165)

5) be both analytic and synthetic;

6) tend toward a mythical history or toward a history of the genre

7) be polyglot or provide a history of language.

Additionally, the encyclopedic narrative makes extensive use of synecdoche and has its roots in the epic. Like Frye, Mendelson focuses on both formal and historical dimensions of the genre, but Mendelson rejects Frye's recursive model, charging Frye with inattention to the specific cultural importance of the encyclopedic narrative that reflects the identity of a nation. However, Mendelson seems to agree with Frye in finding a tradition for the encyclopedic text in the mythic, and attributing its history to the epic.[23] Also like Frye, Mendelson attributes generic importance to the role of the author, but Mendleson imbues his encyclopedic author with an additional status:

> each major national culture of the west, as it becomes aware of itself as a separate entity, produces an *encyclopedic author*, one whose work attends to the whole social and linguistic range of his nation, who makes use of all the literary styles and conventions known to his countrymen, whose dialect often becomes established as the national language, who takes his place as national poet or national classic, and who becomes the focus of a large and persistent exegetic and textual industry comparable to the industry founded on the Bible. (“Encyclopedic” 1267-8).

[23] Franco Moretti devotes a couple of lines to the encyclopedic text in his *Modern Epic* (1996). Moretti recognizes the exaulted place that Mendelson gives the encyclopedic narrative, but rejects the encyclopedia because it does not connote narrative properly.

Mendelson's focus on the author is much like his focus on the encyclopedic text as a fulcrum between "national pre-history and national history" (1267). Mendelson's celebration of the author is secondary to the text because it is only after the text has entered the national stage that it can be considered by critics to be encyclopedic (1268). Mendelson also recognizes the important myth-making aspect of the encyclopedic narrative's representation of history. Though his account of history differs from Frye's in rejecting the recursive model. The strength of Mendelson's essay lies in his identification of these seven characteristics of the encyclopedic narrative. Two important aspects of the encyclopedic narrative in Mendelson's essay to which critics return, and that are also important to this study, are the characteristics of a blended analytic and synthetic logic and the polyglot nature of the encyclopedia. Taken together, these elements are evidence of what Mendelson refers to as the dialogic model of the encyclopedia. For Mendelson, the blending of analytic and synthetic is at once a communication and a conflict.

Adopting several of Mendelson's defining criteria but infusing them with his own Marxist perspective, Alan Clinton reimagines the encyclopedic text within the context of a postmodern poetics of space. Clinton argues that accounts of science and a history of language – elements Mendelson identifies as necessary to the encyclopedic text – "have attained a central position in our postmodern, information-based technoculture." In other words, these elements have become so common in postmodern literature that they can no longer be used as defining characteristics of the encyclopedic text. Instead, Clinton argues that the encyclopedic narrative is "crowded" with information in a way that parallels the crowdedness of overabundance in a late capitalist culture. The form of the novel mirrors "a culture capable of saturating both physical and mental space

with commodities." The encyclopedic narrative, for Clinton, transforms into an allegory in which excess is the primary metaphor connecting the encyclopedia with contemporary life – an implicit critique of the encyclopedia within the encyclopedic form. Clinton's study differs from Mendelson's in historical aspect: Clinton argues for a specifically postmodern encyclopedic narrative while Mendelson, more in line with Frye, presents a diachronic model for the encyclopedic narrative that has its roots in the epic. However, Clinton adopts a postmodern's view of a pedagogic encyclopedia, for the encyclopedia for Clinton is shut down and out-of-date. The crowdedness of the encyclopedia points to superfluity of content that appears similar to Mendelson's characteristic of monstrosity. Clinton's critique does not consider the long history of the encyclopedia, but focuses on the contemporary model of the encyclopedia that reinforces authority rather than challenging it in the style of Diderot.

The formal approach to the encyclopedic narrative does not so much differ from Frye's as it does isolate one of the methods Frye uses. In Frye's *Anatomy*, the blending of forms is more strictly limited to four types of continuous prose fiction, but Mendelson opens this up to include styles of poetry, drama, and non-fiction. This is an important development in the criticism because Mendelson and others identify a tendency in the contemporary encyclopedic novel to incorporate these non-prose elements. These elements point to a mediating effect that the encyclopedic narrative has on form, in a manner analogous to its mediative effect on competing epistemologies or narrative logics.

In contrast to those critics who define the encyclopedic novel formally, there are a number of critics who identify a desire to accumulate knowledge that is separate from the text

that I will call “encyclopedism” or the “encyclopedic project.” For these critics, a text is encyclopedic for what it does rather than for what it is. By this, I mean that these critics identify a tendency in novels to collect knowledge, to attempt to offer a full rendering of human experience, or to critique these tendencies that, for them, outweighs blending of generic form as a primary identifying factor of encyclopedism. Ronald Swigger, for instance, divides the encyclopedic form into the text itself and “encyclopedism” or the “encyclopedic impulse.” Swigger argues that encyclopedism is a reflection of the human desire for knowledge. The connection between encyclopedic texts and the encyclopedia is this shared desire for knowledge, the encyclopedic impulse. Swigger also identifies encyclopedic texts that satirize encyclopedism, such as Gustave Flaubert's *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, which in this reading demonstrates the arbitrary nature of organization of knowledge. Swigger writes that the satirization of the encyclopedic impulse reveals a sense of “nostalgia for the comprehensive, unfragmented view” (364), or, to put it in terms he does not use, a loss of a unified, fully-integrated mythic worldview.

Anna Arnar, basing her work on both Swigger and Mendelson, argues that the criticism of encyclopedism is not just an element that may appear in the encyclopedic text but is the natural extension of the encyclopedic text. Encyclopedism represents an “ontological imperative,” a desire to know that is “impelled by the desire to define [our] role in the universe” (xi). For Arnar, the encyclopedic text is a self-conscious genre that synthesizes other genre forms while celebrating the native language. Arnar is also attuned to the role of influence in literature, emphasizing the encyclopedic narrative as a model for future authors. Between the ontological

imperative of encyclopedism that focuses on the present's need for sense-making and the modeling that the encyclopedic text does for future authors, Arnar connects Swigger's concept of the encyclopedic impulse with a dialogic model of the encyclopedia that Mendelson presents. For Arnar, encyclopedism represents a broader method of critique that can extend beyond literary criticism:

> Modern readers no longer presume that encyclopedias include information in all fields, nor do we expect them to present a method to interpret knowledge. Rather, our relationship is detached: we simply consult the encyclopedia for isolated facts. Yet we should recognize [. . .] that there is no such thing as "impartial" information. (57)

Arnar is correct in calling the critique of encyclopedism an element of encyclopedism, an inheritance, she does not acknowledge, from the dialogic model of encyclopedia pioneered by Diderot. The project that Arnar calls for relies on the kind of vigilance that spurred Diderot to create his *Encyclopédie* in the first place: a suspicion of authority and a desire for empirical and rationality-based knowledge.

Arnar's concept of the encyclopedic text draws strongly upon the literary critical works of Swigger and Mendelson – and upon Frye via these two critics – but more closely resembles a criticism of the encyclopedia that uses literary examples. This distinction is important because Arnar's work marks a shift in the drift of criticism from an allegorical relationship between literature and encyclopedia to a more literal connection to the encyclopedia based on the dialogic model.

One such critic who follows the shift Arnar initiates is Stephen Burn, who blends together an allegorical rendering of the encyclopedic text with the project of encyclopedism. Burn adopts a Lyotardian perspective, describing a "dream of total knowledge" that characterized early encyclopedias but is to be doubted as a "grand narrative" in a postmodern era. The breakdown of this dream, for Burn, has worked to obscure the relationship between the encyclopedia and the encyclopedic novel. However, Burn argues that the encyclopedic novel is uniquely suited to represent the desire for knowledge in a postmodern era because the encyclopedic novel "demonstrates the limitations of encyclopedic knowledge to show that in a world of proliferating information we can never master enough data" ("Collapse" 161). The encyclopedic text overwhelms the reader with information in order to demonstrate the an inability to possess a "total knowledge." Further, Burn proposes that the postmodern encyclopedic novel "explores the negative impact endlessly proliferating information has upon the lives [. . .] of characters" ("After" 163). Burn seeks to redefine the encyclopedia in order to correct the mistaken impression that the encyclopedia is simply a "data storage device."

Burn describes an "encyclopedic urge" that arises in a culture as an acknowledgement of decline. The encyclopedic urge is the expression of a culture's desire to record its history and knowledge in the face of its own fragility. The acknowledgement of decline, I would argue, carries an apocalyptic undertone that parallels Frye's moment of recursion from irony to myth.[24] Both represent

[24] Frye considers the apocalyptic "the final polarization of reality" (Frye, *Collected* 5:41). Apocalypse and reality together form a totality of vision akin to heaven and earth or the supernatural and natural – a vision without one or the other can never be complete. Although Frye presents these ideas as opposites they are also completely bound to one another. Brian Russell Graham's *Necessary Unity of Opposites* demonstrates the Blakean-inflected

an impending turning point, but one that is more intuited than initiated. The difference is that, for Frye, the recursion does provide for a way to actualize the "dream of total knowledge" in a way that Burn cannot answer because of the synchronic nature of his study. Burn's conception of the encyclopedic form also differs from Diderot's conception of the encyclopedic project in that what was positive for Diderot (that is, the incompletion of information and provocation to dialogue), becomes a *negative* for Burn, incompletion exposes the impossibility of knowledge, and therefore dialogue.

This thematic approach to the encyclopedic text that is characterized by concern with "encyclopedism" is, like the formal approach, not so much different from Frye's approach as it is a taking up of one element of Frye's approach. Swigger's encyclopedic impulse, Arnar's ontological imperative, and Burn's encyclopedic urge all describe the integrative potential Frye attributes to the encyclopedic form, but have subtle differences. Swigger's focus on the satirical elements of the encyclopedic text, Arnar's call for greater reader participation in knowledge formation, and Burn's skepticism of the encyclopedia and encyclopedic knowledge in the postmodern era all point to a self-critical aspect of the encyclopedia that a strictly formal definition misses.

What this focus on encyclopedism does, however, is to refine the ways in which the encyclopedic novel can be self-critical but not confine its criticism to literary matters. Arnar and

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dialectic that pervades Frye's thought, he writes that Frye's thought "moves dialectically beyond the level of opposition onto a higher level where seemingly antithetical modes of thought prove to be complementary" (6). Graham attributes this dialectical model to Blake's Orc and Urizen cycle in which two opposing forces balance one another out. He opposes this to the Hegelian dialectic which resolves a thesis and antithesis in a synthesis. In Frye's thought coexistence is key as the non-resolution of competing forces is not progressive or teleological.

Burn, in particular, seem to suggest a shift in hermeneutic expectation from an older encyclopedism to a newer version. The revised hermeneutic promotes a skepticism of structure and comprehensive content with which the encyclopedia must constantly contend. The historical offspring of Diderot's dialogic encyclopedia necessarily must remain skeptical of knowledge itself because, in questioning authoritative knowledge, the dialogic encyclopedia must derive authority *from* its rigorously applied, self-critical inquiry and skepticism.

In sum, a review of the literature concerning the encyclopedic novel shows a division of approaches that can generally be categorized as Frye's modal approach, a formal approach, and a thematic approach centered on the encyclopedic project. This dissertation will define the encyclopedic novel in a way that corresponds to the dialogic model of the encyclopedia, one that admits to non-completion and encourages transhistorical communication. It forwards a formal definition of the encyclopedic novel as a genre that incorporates and integrates other generic forms from both fictional and non-fictional sources, and has a self-aware, self-critical bent that is often expressed through irony or satire. Moreover, the encyclopedic novel makes extensive use of cycles or the figure of a circle, structurally and metaphorically. Finally, the encyclopedic novel is integrative in promoting a social or cultural reunification – in the sense that Frye suggests – and also in the sense of promoting alternate, coextensive hermeneutic systems – as Mendelson suggests.

2.3 The Problem of Irony

When Northrop Frye speaks of the "ironic mode" in literature, he means specific relationship between the hero and that hero's society and environment, called the "power of action." However, this is a very different approach to irony than that which arises in discussions of postmodernism, where irony is understood as a skepticism toward totalizing knowledge. This skepticism is pervasive in post-1960s literary and art criticism. Given its climate of epistemological skepticism, any discussion of the post-1960s encyclopedic novel must deal with the problem of irony. Because the encyclopedic novel claims totalizing knowledge in one way or another, there is a high likelihood of conflict between the form and the epistemological assumptions of these post-1960s novels. However, I would argue , in keeping with some of the major post-War theories of irony, 1) that the encyclopedic novel makes use of multiple forms of irony (including irony that satirizes this very skeptical postmodern irony), and 2) that irony, as a communicative act between implied author and audience, functions as a community-building trope.

Studies of irony in fiction significant to this dissertation identify irony as a rhetorical and figurative communicative act between an implied author and audience and identify the ideological underpinnings of irony. These studies aim implicitly to reclaim irony from its association in postmodern theory with a static, all-encompassing skepticism.[25] These critics concentrate on irony's productive and sense-making capabilities as well as its mode of critique.

[25] Alan Wilde notes a similar tendency in *Horizons of Assent* for irony to "manage again and again to escape its association with this or that school and to recast itself constantly into new and unpredictable modes" (1). Wilde's phenomenological approach explores the recast associations that irony has with each Modernism, Late Modernism, and Postmodernism rather than constructing a rhetorical theory of irony as a concept on its own.

Wayne C. Booth's 1974 book *A Rhetoric of Irony*, for example, differs both in scope and in outlook from many studies of postmodern irony. Because the book is a study of the rhetoric of irony, it focuses on recognizing and understanding irony, dividing it into stable and unstable versions. Booth does not seek to redefine irony within the context of a particular theory, but to explore the way that irony works and the way that it can be accurately assessed. Booth rejects open-ended or ambiguous irony that resists interpretation, reclaiming irony as a neutral literary device that has correct and incorrect interpretations. Booth wants to move beyond the idea that irony "undermines clarities, opens up vistas of chaos, and either liberates by destroying all dogma or destroys by revealing the inescapable canker of negation at the heart of every affirmation" (ix). Most of all, Booth writes to inform readers that irony is an ethical interaction between the author and reader; irony is linguistic and rhetorical by nature.[26]

Underlying the entire work is Booth's assumption that irony is ultimately something that readers can determine with some degree of certainty; he also assumes that the reader can reconstruct meaning from irony, or, in other words, that the reader can discern what is being said from *how* it is being said. Booth stresses this point in the opening chapter by emphasizing irony's status as a rhetorical device and comparing it to other devices such as metaphor, allegory,

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Significantly for this dissertation, Wilde writes that "The need may be, then, not to transcend irony but to accept it" (6). Claire Colebrook positions postmodern irony in a different light in her study *Irony*. Colebrook sees postmodern irony as a contested element, "both questioning and elitist, both disruptive of norms and constructive of higher ideals" (153). Colebrook's study investigates historical conceptions of irony. Her postmodern definition of irony is heavily inflected with poststructuralist thought, focusing on the instabilities as in "All speech is haunted by irony" (165), which is precisely what Booth strives to overcome.

[26] Booth describes four characteristics of irony, it is intended, covert, stable and localized. All four of these characteristics rein in irony, reestablishing the rhetorical context of the irony and, thus, rendering it susceptible to interpretation.

and pun, all of which appear to say other than what is meant and require the reader to interpret meaning. Booth's secondary assumption is that ironies tend to be integrative – forming "amiable communities" of readers who share meaning – rather than disintegrative – focusing on the "victim" of irony, the one who does not "get it" (28). This perception of irony as an integrative device reverses a view of irony as elitist because it excludes those who do not spot the "real" meaning. Booth celebrates irony as a joining together of the author and the reader in a moment of shared knowledge.[27]

Even though Booth mildly rebukes Frye for what he sees as a restrictive definition of irony,[28] their positions on irony bear some resemblance. One of the elements of Frye's ironic mode, as discussed above, is the assumption of shared knowledge that makes explanation of metaphors or images unnecessary. Booth's major point, however, and the one that is most important to this study, concerns stability. For Booth, it is possible to determine the degree of stability or instability in a given instance of irony – whether it be local (confined to a statement or passage) or infinite (unconstrained). Stable ironies invite reconstruction and do not later undermine those reconstructions (233). An example Booth uses earlier in the book is Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal." This is an example of stable irony because it is clear that a meaning other than the literal one is meant and the reader is encouraged to discover that

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[27] Booth writes that "the building of amiable communities is often far more important than the exclusion of naïve victims" in order to point out the essentially communicative function he ascribes to irony (28). Further, he writes that the ironist "assumes that he does not have to spell out the shared and secret truths on which … recontruction is built" (28).

[28] Citing Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism*, Booth agrees that Frye describes a kind of irony, but misses the opportunity to identify irony in its many forms and functions. Since Frye's "vision is on an Ideal Order," attempting to take in all of literature, Booth – whose purpose is to construct a model of communication between author and reader – concedes that his purpose differs from Frye's and must "come at things from a different angle entirely" (ix-x).

meaning. Further, nothing in the text suggests that the discovered meaning is faulty or in doubt. The reward for reconstructing Swift's irony is clear: the reader may understand Swift's intended meaning with confidence.

Instability of ironic interpretation presents a greater degree of difficulty. Not only are instabilities unpredictable, but the manner and degree of instability also varies. Booth writes,

> everyone knows that it is often difficult and sometimes impossible to find any such solid ground. In many works that are called ironic, very different demands are made, yielding very different and often incompatible rewards. By their nature, such rough beasts defy us. We can know in advance of any encounter that they will not yield to clear and final classification and that our interpretations will slip away from us even as they are made. (233)

Ironies that are unstable still call for reconstruction even, perhaps most often, when the implied author seems to discourage it. Reconstruction is always dependent on context and textual clues:

> reconstructions of irony are seldom if ever reducible either to grammar or semantics or linguistics. In reading any irony worth bothering about, we read life itself, and we work on our relations to others as they deal with it. We read character and value, we refer to our deepest convictions. For this reason, irony is an extraordinarily good road into the whole art of interpretation. Though ironic statements are only a small part of all that men say to each other – even in this highly ironic age – they bring to light the hidden complexities that are mastered

> whenever men succeed in understanding each other in any mode, even the most flat and literal. (43-4)

All ironies take place within a context that permits more-or-less accurate interpretation. Even in the most unstable of ironies there is likely to be some stability, some point or points from which to base an interpretation. Booth constantly searches for these points of stability that aid the reader in coming to a reasonable reconstruction of meaning. He rejects a model of criticism which takes instabilities in irony for license to interpret as one wishes:

> modern critics have tended to stress the value of diversity in interpretation, and they have had no difficulty finding innumerable examples of conflicting interpretation by responsible and sensitive readers, and of conflicts between such readers and the stated intentions of authors […] this is a commonplace about irony, and like most commonplaces it is true enough when confined to its proper domain. But the irony that disorients by resisting univocal interpretation, the irony that evades committed speech, is only a branch of a great and ancient art; even those modern works which are rightly celebrated for their rich ambiguity reveal, on close inspection, large tracts of stable irony […] about which no careful reader experiences any ambiguity whatever. (48)

To understand ironies properly, then, one must adopt a vocabulary such as that which Booth suggests, one that provides a way to discuss different kinds of irony that is more finely tuned than the styles of irony typically presented in postmodern theory.[29] Using Booth's taxonomy of

[29] Additionally, Booth makes a distinction between local and universal ironies, writing that "some of the finest effects of modern literature have been achieved by authors who have learned to shift their assertions of irony

irony, it becomes possible to parse texts that are richly layered in their ironic sensibility. The reader is no longer confined simply to calling a novel "ironic" when the novel may in fact engage in several varieties of irony – stable and unstable, covert and overt, local and infinite.

In many respects, Linda Hutcheon's conception of irony in her study *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony* is similar to Booth's version. Hutcheon, like Booth, gives special importance to the act of interpretation of irony and, also like Booth, works to dispel the concept of "victimization" in irony by transferring focus to the community that makes irony possible – although Hutcheon revises both of these positions. Hutcheon makes two important observations regarding irony: first, it is transideological – it is a shared moment of communication between author and audience, inferred by the reader – and second, it is always "edged." While these points look familiar by now, Hutcheon's approach to irony is more cautious than is Booth's, more aware of the inherent difficulties and dangers that irony presents (she even warns several times that her book is *about* irony but is not ironic, that it is *not* humorous). Throughout the study, Hutcheon makes clear the potential for misunderstanding and the care that must be taken when considering irony. From early in the book, Hutcheon writes, "irony happens as part of a communicative process; it is not a static rhetorical tool to be deployed, but itself comes into being in the relations between meanings, but also between people and utterances and, sometimes, between intentions and interpretations" (13). Irony is not a simple rhetorical device because it

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from local to universal and back again" (238). Far from an instability in irony, this shift from the universal to the local – and vice versa – is one of the methods that appears to introduce uncertainty of interpretation, but close attention, as Booth calls for, reveals this seeming-instability to be something more easily interpretable.

informs the way that individuals relate to the world, and this brings to it ethical and political implications.

It is important to review some of the observations that Hutcheon makes about irony. Irony is not bound to any ideology or politics. Hutcheon calls this the "transideological" character of irony. This idea is elegant in its simplicity; for Hutcheon, irony does not signify a lack but indicates a meaning other than what is expressly stated. On the surface this seems simple enough, but it calls to mind the layered interpretations of irony that Booth calls for: the reader must know when to read irony and how far to read it. The transideological nature of irony poses a separate kind of risk, however, in that it is a weapon anyone can wield and it can also misfire if readers do not "get" it. Hutcheon writes that irony "can and does function tactically in the service of a wide range of political positions, legitimating or undercutting a wide variety of interests" (10). Neither authority nor rebellion can claim irony as their own any more than either could claim metonymy or the pun for its own.

If irony is transideological, its danger lies in its "edged" quality. Unlike the other rhetorical devices, irony must have a target. In the chapter "The Cutting Edge," Hutcheon defines the effects that irony can have, from most mild (reinforcing) to most severe (assailing and aggregative). Irony is always double in nature: it can be used in a positive or negative way, and part of the interpretive act lies in figuring this part out. To take one example, an act of irony may work to form the "amiable communities" that Booth discusses. For Hutcheon, however, this is only half of the story because irony may also be exclusionary, forming elitist "in-groups." What makes Hutcheon's study unique is that she acknowledges both possibilities and the

importance that individual interpretation has on these. Booth's "amiable community" hypothesis is correct, according to Hutcheon, because interpretation of irony does rely on shared knowledge. But the suspicion of ironic elitism is real as well. Whereas Booth depends upon the goodwill of a benevolent author who expects readers to share similar knowledge and who has faith in the reader's ability to interpret irony, Hutcheon turns away from the author to the text and relies upon the reader's discretion: "the attributing of irony to a text or utterance is a complex intentional act on the part of the interpreter, one that has both semantic and evaluative dimensions, in addition to the possible inferring of ironist intent" (13).

This is a departure from Booth's work on amiable communities – Booth argues for the integrative ability of irony. Readers who detect and correctly interpret the irony of a text form a community with the ironist. For Hutcheon, the process works in reverse: the community exists prior to the instance of irony and is a necessary pre-condition for the irony to be shared. The discursive community shapes the members' understanding or ability to detect irony: "it is less that irony creates communities, then, than discursive communities make irony possible in the first place" (18). Hutcheon clarifies, "No theorist of irony would dispute the existence of a special relationship in ironic discourse between the ironist and the interpreter; but for most, it is irony itself that is said to *create* that relationship [. . .] it is the community that comes first and that, in fact, *enables* the irony to happen" (89). Hutcheon argues that shared understanding is a necessary precondition that makes irony understandable to members of that community.

The application of these forms of irony – Booth's "amiable communities" and Hutcheon's "discursive communities" – is that they both reclaim irony as a rhetorical device that has a

positive and integrative potential. This frees the encyclopedic novel from an all-encompassing irony through the acknowledgement that irony may be used in many registers, with varying degrees of stability, and with the realization that accurate interpretation of irony can happen some, if not most, of the time.

2.4 The Contemporary Encyclopedic Novel

My claims stand in relation to these important recent studies of irony in terms of Booth's rhetorical approach and Hutcheon's discursive community. For the contemporary encyclopedic novel, the most important aspects of literary irony are the communicative functions of irony, the diverse forms of irony, and the integrative potential that irony possesses. This dissertation agrees with Frye, and critics such as Yeo, Swigger, and Arnar, who define Diderot's encyclopedic project, but it deviates from these approaches to define the encyclopedic novel as a novel that integrates multiple generic forms and is based upon a dialogic model of transhistoric communication.

In light of this research concerning the encyclopedic novel and irony, this dissertation on the encyclopedic novel in post-1960s literature thus has two aims. First, it seeks to refine a definition for the encyclopedic novel that follows from and updates previous scholarship and recognizes the need for a fluid conception of the genre as it changes over time. This redefinition draws a line of continuity between the contemporary encyclopedic novel and the encyclopedic form first discussed by Northrop Frye; I argue that (1) the post-war encyclopedic novel uses

multiple forms of irony to identify, diagnose, and critique contemporary culture, and (2) that at the heart of this ironic critique is a drive that is humanistic and seeks a lost or desired integration of individual to society. I also argue (3) that the contemporary encyclopedic novel engages in a self-aware, ironic mode of expression that turns critically against the accepted concepts of authority, order, logic, and knowledge-neutrality that have traditionally been associated with the encyclopedia. This use of irony – in its manifold forms – functions primarily as a corrective and community-building apparatus.

Secondly, I argue that the encyclopedic novel in the late twentieth century proposes and tests alternative epistemological logics that work in tandem with ideological critique in order to offer non-authoritative accounts of history, social reality, and structures of power. By incorporating that alternative, or what I call heterological accounts, with ideological accounts, the encyclopedic novel demonstrates the latter's inability to accurately describe the world. It is only by comparing the heterological, or non-authoritative, accounts of experience that the deficiencies of the ideological becomes apparent. The heterological challenges and amends the ideological in such a way as to discourage confidence in authoritative ideology. Moreover, by placing the reconstructive heterologies next to deconstructive authoritative ones, the encyclopedic novel elevates the stature of the marginal.

There are three sources that I rely on in defining “heterology,” the first, Julian Pafanis' use of the term “heterology”in his *Heterology and the Postmodern* (1991) to describe the split of post-structuralism from structuralism (3); the second, Edith Wyschogrod's use of the term “heterology” in *Ethics of Remembering* (1998) to define an historiographic position in which the

historian attempts to recover lost voices and to speak for both the dead and the history that cannot speak on their own; and the third, Northrop Frye's concept of interpenetration – a concept that he writes about extensively in his posthumously published notebooks, but never developed in his published work. These three concepts contribute to a concept that, as I shall define it, demonstrates the non- and sometimes anti-authoritative discourse in the encyclopedic novel.

The first line of thought that contributes to the concept of heterology is Julian Pefanis', who traces an epistemological split in continental philosophy that began with Kojéve's reading of Hegel that prefigured the critiques of totality prevalent in French postmodern and post-structuralist though (1-5). Pefanis uses the term to denote an alternate epistemological perspective that stems from the precursor it seeks to redefine or correct. From this perspective, the concept of heterology denotes a step away from the accepted epistemology, specifically the way that totality had been considered up to that point. Pefanis sought a way to refigure post-structuralist thought, not as a new "school," but as a way of refiguring continental philosophy that continued a tradition of clarifying that which had come before it. In this way, Pefanis' conception of heterology initiates a new methodology of criticism that permits a substantive shift in focus that, instead of predicating itself upon a massive break from that which came before, shows a continuity from the old to the new that also allows for a major re-envisioning of approach. Pefanis bridges the gap between the structuralist and post-structuralist by showing continuities between these epistemological imperatives. This means that, first, there is a fundamental continuity between structuralism and post-structuralism – or between two

seemingly distinct epistemological methodologies – and that this continuity in-itself is significant.

The second line of thought that contributes to the concept of heterology in this study is Edith Wyschogrod's usage of the term heterology in *Ethics of Remembering* (1998) to define an historiographic position in which the historian attempts to recover lost voices and to speak for both the dead and past history. She derives this term from what she describes as the false assumption that the correspondence between "the 'original' and the narrated event are homologous" (2). Different narratives account for the same event and are "heterologous" or stemming from different roots. Wsychogrod adds an ethical imperative to the term that I would like to adopt. She demands that the "heterological historian" take into account the effects of time, language, and social existence on perceptions of history, include critiques of past attempts at history, and recover in the present what has been lost in the past (1-5). Wyschogrod adopts Pefanis' use of "heterology" to mean a secondary, additive account, and expands upon this to include an ethical imperative to give voice to the unvoiced. The two share the idea that there is an unrepresented account that is not being told: in Pefanis' case, the account is other than the post-structuralist and in Wyschogrod's it is that there is a story that has been suppressed.

Taken together, Pefanis' and Wyschogrod's rendering of the heterological both assert that the accepted, or authoritative, accounting of events is inadequate, is incomplete. Both critics assert that a secondary accounting is necessary in order to have a truer understanding of the world. However, the strength of both of these critics is that they insist that the truth of the "heterological" is dependent upon the authoritative rendering. Neither Pefanis nor Wyschogrod

demand that their version is *the* truth, but rather they contend that their renderings of history or the world are at least as valid as the authoritative versions that have been on offer to date. Wyschogrod makes the additional claim that the "heterological" position is inherently an ethical position, that this perspective is compelled to fill in gaps, to speak for the voiceless, and to amend authoritative history.

The third and most important line of thought that contributes to the concept of heterology as it relates to the encyclopedic novel is Northrop Frye's "interpenetration." Frye develops his concept of interpenetration piece-meal in his unpublished notebooks. He writes, "I wish we could throw away the notion of 'reconciling,' and use instead some such conception as 'interpenetration.' Literature itself is not a field of conflicting arguments but of interpenetrating visions" (Frye, *Collected* 27: 216) Put simply, Frye's concept of interpenetration is a unresolvable dialectical tension between thesis and antithesis. Rather than a Hegelian dialectic, in which the thesis and antithesis are resolved in a synthesis, interpenetration calls for seemingly mutually exclusive truth claims to co-exist and, what's more, to become mutually affective.[30] For Frye, interpenetration is both a presence and an absence – a unity and disunity – because opposed elements are co-present without reconciliation. To use one of Frye's own examples from his notebooks, the Christian and the Jew might never convert one another, but both must realize that they "see the same things from different points of view" (qtd. in Denham, "Interpenetration" 141). In other words, mutually exclusive truth-claims do not simply cancel

[30] In Notebook 53, Frye writes "Hegel showed how the thesis involved its own antithesis, although I think the 'synthesis' has been foisted on him by his followers" (Frye, *Collected* 6: 616). It is important to Frye that interpenetration is a static description of alternate visions, it is neither progressive nor teleological. Robert Denham identifies interpenetration as Frye's attempt to "drive toward unity – an effort to get beyond dialectic" (33), in his work *Northrop Frye: Religious Visionary and Architect of the Spiritual World.*

out one another but must continue to coexist, and this paradoxical co-presence of mutually exclusive claims colors each of the claims. Frye's example is particularly illuminating because the perspective of the one is, in some ways, dependent upon the other. Frye drives the paradoxical nature of interpenetration to show that not only must mutually exclusive claims coexist, but they may, in fact, be mutually dependent upon one another.

Interpenetration is an important element of heterology because it provides a model for the interaction of ideas, which can be extended to an interaction between epistemologies. In the example quoted above, Frye's thoughts on religion demonstrate, for him, the importance of disrupting an authoritative ideology's tendency to create privileged accounts of reality. Frye derives interpentration, or the idea that "things don't get reconciled, but everything is everywhere at once" from Spengler's *Decline of the West* (qtd in Denham "Frye Papers"). Robert D. Denham writes that Frye developed the concept of interpenetration first from reading Spengler and then refined the idea following his reading of Alfred Whitehead's *Science and the Modern World* ("Interpenetration" 141). Frye's concept is less concerned with the power imbalance of Wyschogrod's "heterological historian" and is more far-reaching than the post-structuralist heterology of Pefanis. This is not to suggest that Frye was unconcerned with political implications of the term, for he still saw interpenetration as opposed to "centralizing and homogenizing" discourses (qtd. in Denham "Interpenetration" 149). Because Frye is interested in the "double-vision" of an empirical reality's interaction with the religious, he desires a syncretic, non-dialectical means of reconciling the irreconcilable, which he finds in interpenetration. Although one of Frye's goals in theorizing interpenetration is to reconcile

religious and secular belief, which is an interesting inversion of Diderot's attempt to divorce rationality from authoritative religiosity, both Frye and Diderot have a similar goal of disrupting the authoritative discourse, which each saw as dangerously short-sighted. Interpenetration also provides the model for an alternative epistemology that amends and corrects an authoritative discourse, in much the way that Wyschogrod's heterology does, but does not replace that discourse. Frye's concept of interpenetration is both more inclusive and more hopeful than Wyschogrod's model of heterology because Frye considers interpenetration a totalizing concept, "a sense of the universal here" (*Collected* 13: 162). Whereas Wyschogrod hopes to fill in the unrepresented that has been omitted, Frye contends that these disparate elements influence the authoritative. The key to the concept for Frye is that interpenetration is an integration of vision that simultaneously keeps both (all) concepts involved distinct from one another.

The heterological is that which cannot be incorporated into the ideological but persists nonetheless.[31] What is more, the heterological is that which has been excluded from authoritative ideology. For the purposes of this study, I will define "heterology" as a non-authoritative vision of the world that is unrepresented by authoritative ideology. Heterological elements of a text indirectly challenge authoritative discourse by offering alternate explanations, alternate voices, alternate stories, or competing theories that are not accepted by the dominant ideology. Heterology seeks to legitimate knowledge claims that fall outside of the domain of authoritative ideology. For example, Diderot's championing of enlightened rationality

[31] John McGowan defines "ideology" from Marx and Engels' *The German Ideology* as describing two separate but related concepts. First, ideology is the "ideas or beliefs possessed by any group by virtue of its social position" and second, ideology is the "legitimation of the prevailing social arrangements" (64, 65).

challenged the accepted authority of monarch and church by providing alternate claims to knowledge based upon empirical observation and individual cognition.

Heterology has further importance to the study of the novel in general because it reflects the non-correlation between event and representation in narrative. As Michael Holquist suggests in his introduction to *The Dialogic Imagination*, the difference between a history and a novel is that the history "insist[s] on a homology between the sequence of their own telling . . . and the sequence of *what* they tell" (Holquist xxviii, emphasis in original). In this case "heterology" takes on the added connotation of difference and non-coincidence that points to the constructedness of narrative. Narrative heterogeneity, admittedly, is not unique to the encyclopedic novel but is an element of most, if not all novels. However, this additional aspect of heterology, when taken with Frye's concept of interpenetration, gives new meaning to the formal definition of the encyclopedic form proposed by Frye in *Anatomy of Criticism*.[32] The representation of heterologies within the encyclopedic novel more accurately reflects the inability of competing ideologies to either reconcile or eliminate the other(s).

Heterology is a key concept to understanding the contemporary encyclopedic novels because it draws together the recognition that an authoritative logic may not be adequate to accurately understanding the world. It carries an ethical imperative to represent that which is not represented – or to point in the direction of the unrepresentable – and it also works to democratize knowledge by breaking the top-down model of knowledge that authoritative discourse depends upon. Ultimately, the heterological points to gaps in explanation, biases, and

[32] See *Rereading Frye* for more on interpenetration.

structural inadequacies in authoritative ideology, whether or not the given heterology actually corrects these elements; heterology provides the means by which to see the inadequacies. Finally, heterology is useful in understanding the contemporary encyclopedic model because it is an integrative, reconstructive trope. One of the means by which the heterology exposes the inadequacies of authoritative ideology is by giving voice to that which falls outside of authoritative discourse. Heterological readings are inclusive, allowing space for the discourse that is excluded by authority.

Taking Diderot's project as a model, we should see the encyclopedia as a radical genre, one that challenges authority as it attempts to create a usable taxonomy for knowledge. One way that Diderot accomplishes this is simply to insist upon following reason wherever it might lead. This insistence on freedom of thought is, of course, a threat to established authority that often seeks to inscribe limitations on thought. Thus properly used, the encyclopedia in Diderot's sense is a tool for democratizing knowledge and opening the possibility of transhistorical dialogue. The encyclopedia levels access to knowledge by providing a platform that is accessible to all while at the same time including the supplementary purpose of transhistorical communication. There are still remnants of this approach in the contemporary encyclopedia, but the potential for real critical work has been eroded by the hardening of the genre into a “reference” work connoting authority.

The genre of the encyclopedic novel thus has a much longer pre-history than many contemporary critics have allowed. To sort out the complexities of the post-WWII encyclopedic novel, it may be useful to return to the Enlightenment model, epitomized by Diderot's

Encyclopédie, rather than to the contemporary encyclopedia, which has taken on a different, and more mundane, project.[33] What other critics of the encyclopedic form, such as Mendelson and Swigger, read as radical and working against conventions, then, is really in line with this tradition of the Diderotian encyclopedia. The encyclopedic novel engages in a discourse that, implicitly or explicitly, questions notions of authority, order, tradition, and most importantly, ideology. As with any line of honest questioning, the conclusion is not foregone: the questioning may result in a challenge to authority, a reaffirmation of a given position, or even in a desire for a return to some previous position.

As discussed above, Frye locates the contemporary encyclopedic novel in the ironic mode, and seemingly at the cusp of a recursion to the mythic mode. Frye's model, however, depends upon a theory of historical modes that creates a *de facto* periodization. And yet, writing before the advent of literary postmodernism, Frye lacked the vocabulary to discuss the movements which might follow Modernism – which he believed worked in the ironic mode. Frye's system implies that after modernism, however, there may be a turn from irony back to myth, a return within his recursive modal system. The problem with Frye's model, however, is that the historical modes are tied so closely to social values and consciousness that a shift in literary style would require a parallel shift in society. When the shifts are subtle and gradual (as with the movement from Myth to Romance) the corresponding social shifts are as well. But

[33] To provide one example, John Lough writes that Diderot "makes high claims for the originality of his work," but that "Originality is not what the modern user of encyclopedias seeks in their articles; what he wants is an accurate and up-to-date account of the present state of knowledge on any given subject" (*Encyclopédie* 71*)*

when the shift is radical, as it must be from the ironic to mythic mode, we have difficulty imagining the sort of radical restart this movement seems to call for.[34]

I claim that the late-twentieth century encyclopedic novel employs irony primarily as a corrective, anti-authoritarian, *and* community-building device. I draw my rationale for this from multiple sources: Frye's theory of historical modes and Booth's concept of "amiable communities" built by irony that Linda Hutcheon expands into her theory of "discursive communities" are foremost among them. Frye's theory of historical modes (which I've discussed at length above) asserts that in literary history, irony will eventually blend back to myth. The ironic hero (the protagonist who is inferior both to his environment and to society) becomes an outcast and begins to take on the mantle of the oracle, another figure on the fringe of society. The author of the ironic text, according to Frye, acts as a spokesperson for a disintegrated society. However, because the author's central concern is the craft of the text, he will rely on shared elements and shared knowledge. Frye writes that when the juxtaposition of images in the ironic work requires no explanation, the society shares a knowledge that places these images in the proper context. This shared knowledge is the basis for a return to myth. However, he refrains from analyzing how this happens, or what it would look like.

That irony is present in the encyclopedic novel is obvious and undeniable. It is the use to which irony is bent that is in question. When entering into the encyclopedic text, it is vital that the reader be equipped with a broad and pliable enough understanding of irony to interpret the

[34] In fairness, Frye does not predict a radical social upheaval in a return to a mythic mode. The problem is that, although his theory of modes depends upon recursion, there is no indication of what this recursive movement might look like.

nuances, which in Booth's terms might be understood as local and infinite irony, stable and unstable irony. One of the characteristics of the late-twentieth century encyclopedic novel is an ironizing of encyclopedic hallmarks such as order, authority, comprehensiveness, and so on. This irony is not empty; its goal is to point to the presumptions that these concepts carry, such as bias, privilege, manipulation, deception. Over the course of this dissertation I will address the concept of irony in each of the novels in order to demonstrate the specific usages of irony toward this goal of pointing to those abuses of the past.[35]

The claim that the contemporary encyclopedic novel is suspicious of the major operations of power is commonplace. All of the works in this dissertation are critical of their societies. This may seem an obvious point, given their postmodernist context in which nearly everything is challenged and suspicion is pervasive. However, it is the ways in which suspicion arises in conjunction with the – implicit or explicit – encouragement of a suspicious manner of reading by the audience that has gone untheorized in criticism. If we listen to Frye's views, ironic disintegration results from a fracturing of worldview and the mass questioning that seems to take place in postmodernist literature. In the movement from ironic back to mythic, however, there must be a move back toward social and epistemological integration. If Frye's theory is correct, then literature that began to work toward a re-integration could rework irony to shift away from the empty pastiche Jameson warned against and toward a different reconstructive view.

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[35] Inasmuch as irony provokes thought, Søren Kierkegaard identifies a Socratic root of irony. The sort of questioning Socrates engaged in, "not in the interest of obtaining an answer, but to suck out the apparent content … and leave only an emptiness remaining" hints at a secondary or absent meaning – questions the question – without overtly stating that meaning (73). Kierkegaard also remarks that irony may act as a "goad for thought" (151), in this way making the claim that Socratic irony pushes the audience to fill the void left by the spoken irony and gain new knowledge.

The late-twentieth century encyclopedic novel maintains an ambivalent relationship toward the alternate epistemologies that it presents, often failing ultimately to privilege one over the other. This position falls in line with both Diderot's encyclopedic project and Frye's theory of recursive modes. Even though Diderot worked to promote Enlightenment rationality with his *Encyclopédie*, the model of rationality presupposed a skeptical attitude that worked against prior notions of monarchical or religious authority. To be sure, the juxtaposition of images that will become mythical archetypes have their root in the preceding ironic mode, but the full significance of the symbol cannot be apparent until social integration takes place. In presenting these competing disintegrative and integrative epistemologies, the encyclopedic novel worries the edges of ideology and sets the stage for the competition, as it were.

By resuscitating the term "encyclopaedic novel" we come to understand a central aspiration of the novel itself: to understand the relationship between the narrative and knowledge. In defining the term "encyclopaedic novel" we must take into consideration both form and content. The sheer mass and diversity of content, along with (in many cases) multiple narrative threads, in the encyclopaedic novel often lacks generic organization (or may blend many generic organizations) and may evade the categories of formal analysis created by classic structural narratology. However, examination of the encyclopaedic novel's narrative rhetoric opens the possibility of interpreting the ethics and values of a novel in relation to knowledge by analyzing the stance of the implied author/narrator and the logical organization of the text. The encyclopaedic novel warrants further study because of the unique perspective these works provide on understanding the world: because the central theme of the encyclopaedic novel is

knowledge and the potential for knowing, the novel implies a narrative concerning the acquisition of knowledge. The encyclopaedic novel also represents a search for meaning and a desire for cohesion, which are expressed in the form of integrative irony and heterological discourse. The encyclopedic novel is integrative and community-building because both the concepts of integrative irony and heterology depend upon a pre-existing community of like-minded individuals. Whether this cohesion is desirable, or even possible, is often revealed through the implied author's stance regarding nature of knowledge. In any case, the integrative elements of the encyclopedic novel indicate a totalizing momentum in which the encyclopedic novel recognizes the communities already in existence rather than forming these communities ad hoc.

This dissertation examines three post-1960s texts in light of the encyclopedic novel genre. Each text bears similarity to the others, but approaches the encyclopedic integration by a different means. Additionally, each of these texts employs irony differently, yet the irony of these novels is bent toward the same goal. Finally, a central trope in each of these novels is the conflict between opposing epistemological systems. In each of these novels at least one, and sometimes several, marginal worldviews presents itself as a challenge to the culturally dominant ideology that reflects an authoritative position.

CHAPTER 3

GRAVITY'S RAINBOW: ANARCHISTIC ENCYCLOPEDIA

> "There is a hiatus between the highest wisdom and the actual perplexities with which men must deal. An encyclopedia of all that the prophets and philosophers have taught will not tell a man clearly and definitely how to make laws, how to govern a state, how to educate his children."
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> -Walter Lippmann, *The Public Philosophy*, 147

> "Whoever teaches without emancipating stultifies."
>
> -Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, 18

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I traced two lines of influence for the contemporary encyclopedic novel. The first tradition is the dialogic encyclopedic form, used by Denis Diderot in the *Encyclopédie*, which works to challenge authoritative discourse and engage in transhistoric dialogue. The second tradition is the encyclopedic form, defined by Northrop Frye, that projects a recursive model for narrative in which the encyclopedic form blends genres and reintegrates the mythic. I argue that the contemporary encyclopedia model does not return to the mythic, as Frye argues that it does in *Finnegans Wake*, but marks a progression toward this end. I also argue that the interaction of these two influences in the contemporary encyclopedic novel spur an

engagement with irony that is at once critical of contemporary culture and integrative in its scope.

In the current chapter, I turn my attention to Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*, a text that is an example of what I am calling an "anarchistic encyclopedic novel." The anarchistic encyclopedic novel participates in the encyclopedic novel tradition but extends from it – participating in, while also challenging, the latter's dialogic model of communication and reinventing the Enlightenment model of democratic access to knowledge along new political lines. The anarchistic encyclopedic novel works to disrupt a hierarchical structuring of knowledge, opting instead for a de-centered model of communication that relies upon interpersonal connection rather than appeals to authority.

Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* is an anarchistic encyclopedic novel, a postmodern version of the encyclopedic novel that has its politics based in the "dissensus equality" of Jacques Rancière and the postmodernist notion of the open form. Rancière's political philosophy is closely aligned with contemporary post-structuralist anarchist thought and, thus, has a rhetorical as well as political dimension that tracks onto the "open work" as a hermeneutical model that defies rigid, hierarchical structures. In this chapter I argue that this combination of characteristics revolutionizes the encyclopedic novel form in a way that later works will continue to build upon.

3.2 The Anarchistic Encyclopedia

Edward Mendelson sparked a veritable industry of criticism when he first called *Gravity's Rainbow* an "encyclopedic narrative" in his two essays of 1976.[36] Mendelson defined the encyclopedic genre so that *Gravity's Rainbow* and a handful of other books took on a central significance to the cultures that produced them. What Mendelson saw in *Gravity's Rainbow* that differed from the other works he defines as encyclopedic (such as *Don Quixote*, *Moby-Dick*, and *The Divine Comedy*) in that each of these other works defined a moment of cultural awakening within a particular national culture ("Gravity's Encyclopedia" 161).[37] Each of these important works, Mendelson wrote, is connected to a national culture, but Pynchon's work heralds the emergence of a "new international culture, created by the technologies of instant communication and the economy of world markets" (165). While Mendelson is correct in assessing that *Gravity's Rainbow* differs from these other encyclopedic narratives, he attributes its international scope to a shift in the culture. However, I argue that the fundamental shift that takes place is not cultural but political, politicizing the relationship between the individual and authority in the face of a new multi-national industrial complex. Pynchon calls for a redefinition of the relationship between the individual and authority because the autonomy of the individual is threatened by the "new international culture" in which the state-industry alliance conspires against the individual.

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[36] "Gravity's Encyclopedia" (1976) and "Encyclopedic Narrative from Dante to Pynchon" (1976).

[37] It would be onerous, at this point, to provide citations for the great number of critics who mention "encyclopedism" or the encyclopedia in conjunction with any of Thomas Pynchon's works. At times, the reference is tossed off casually, but most often Mendelson is cited for his contribution to the body of work on Pynchon's encyclopedism. I will make specific reference to critics who engage with the topic of encyclopedism in a substantive manner throughout the remainder of this chapter.

Contrary to authoritative narratives of World War II by the state that show democracy defeating fascism, the narrative of WWII in *Gravity's Rainbow* perceives the end of the war not as the victory of one form of government over another, but as the breakdown of government and, specifically, a breakdown in the individual's ability to trust governmental authority.[38] As Slothrop, the erstwhile hero of the novel, deserts his military unit and travels into newly unoccupied Europe (called "the Zone"), he discovers that authority is nominal at best and chaos rules. But rather than succumb to chaos, Slothrop claims his own authority for himself. The replacement of governmental authority by the autonomous individual comprises a rudimentary form of anarchy. This move to anarchism demonstrates a way out from under the hypocritical authority.

While other critics have identified the turn to political anarchy in *Gravity's Rainbow*, they have refused the tie between individualism and anarchy that both Pynchon and Rancière advocate.[39] Anarchism provides a revolutionary political framework that returns authority to the individual, but the ways in which anarchist critics perceive this operating has changed over time. For example, in a now "classic" formulation, Emma Goldman defines anarchism simply as "The

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[38] Gary Thompson argues that Pynchon's novels do not offer a "correct" version of history but "an account of the processes of knowing, so that readers will understand the necessity of forming critical interpretations of our own" (165). This is important to understanding *Gravity's Rainbow* not as an alternate history but an individual perspective that is one of a multitude of histories.

[39] Graham Benton and George Levine are two such critics who call attention to Pynchon's anarchist politics. In "Riding the Interface: An Anarchist Reading of *Gravity's Rainbow*," Benton argues that Pynchon's novels are anarchistic because they resist structures of knowledge. Levine argues in "Risking the Moment: Anarchy and Possibility in Pynchon's Fiction" that anarchy is the central thematic element of the novel that works to tie together the seemingly-unrelated elements of the novel. Levine's use of anarchy is more metaphorical than Benton's politically based anarchism because, for Levine, anarchistic style is thematic and based upon the notion of possibility, or contingency. Jeffrey Baker counters both Benton's and Levine's anarchistic reading by highlighting the democratic nature of Pynchon's work. I will take up Baker's argument more fully below because his interest in John Dewey's call for "dissensus" in a participatory democracy is similar to, but bears important differences from my interest in Jacques Rancière's notion of "dissensus."

philosophy of a new social order based on liberty unrestricted by man-made law; the theory that all forms of government rest on violence, and are therefore wrong and harmful, as well as unnecessary" ("Anarchism"). For Goldman, the political form of anarchy presupposes the restrictive nature of "man-made" institutions and it opts instead for organic interactions between individuals and *ad hoc* organization at anything higher than a very local level. In effect, Goldman deems the structuring of human interaction in the political arena as necessarily limiting to the individual. In the preface to her book of collected essays, Goldman writes that anarchism "leaves posterity free to develop its own particular systems, in harmony with its needs. Our most vivid imagination can not foresee the potentialities of a race set free from external restraints. How, then, can any one assume to map out a line of conduct for those to come?" For Emma Goldman, anarchism is about possibility (as it will be for Pynchon). Anticipatory long-range planning is disruptive to future happiness because it imposes the additional restraint of a past seeking to impress its own will on the future. Goldman's insight on systems also reverberates in *Gravity's Rainbow* (while Goldman looks forward to a future that is free of external [ie, political] influence, Pynchon questions whether these influences really are external).

Drawing upon the political writings of Goldman, contemporary anarchist critics sought an additional basis for anarchistic freedom beyond the strictly political realm. By renaming the movement ("postmodern anarchism," "constructive anarchism," etc.), contemporary anarchists hope to show the theoretical departures from classical definitions. Theorists such as Francis Dupuis-Déri seek to rescue the concept of anarchism from all negative stereotypes, beginning

with those of Aristotle.[40] Lewis Call suggests an expanded model of anarchism in his 2002 work *Postmodern Anarchism* that actually builds upon Goldman's definition of anarchism. Paraphrasing Murray Bookchin, Call notes that Marxism and classical anarchism both lack "meaningful revolutionary potential" and, instead, development of a broader critical method is necessary.[41] The answer, according to Call, is to expand the critique of power "by making the concept of hierarchy itself into an object of analysis" (21). Call's interest lies in the intersection between what he sees as the postmodern critique of hierarchy and the anti-statist position of the anarchist. The postmodern anarchism that Call attributes to Foucault is one that "adamantly refuses to make itself into a totalizing theory," refusing even to call itself "anarchist" (65).[42] What this model of anarchism has to offer criticism of *Gravity's Rainbow* is the Foucauldian concept of "micropolitics." Call describes micropolitics as power relations that are "capillary" in nature rather than top-down; that is, "[power] is everywhere, and it flows through every social relation" (66). For Call as for Foucault, this means that everyone possesses power, which also means that every interaction between individuals is also an opportunity for resistance.[43]

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[40] Dupuis-Déri challenges Aristotle's characterization of anarchy as a corrupted form of democracy by demonstrating the fallacy that anarchy implies a lack of politics, or a lack of authority. Dupuis-Déri insists that anarchy, rather than implying a lack of authority, realizes the equal authority of each individual (18).

[41] Thomas Martin agrees with Bookchin that contemporary anarchists must maintain a broader awareness of the world than the classical anarchists had because rejection of a particular government or hierarchy ignores the problems of concentration of power in hierarchical structures in general.

[42] For more on Foucault's postmodern anarchism, see Call (2002), particularly 61-66 and 73-85.

[43] Call somewhat simplifies Foucault's theory of power on the small scale. In part one of *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault writes that the state enacts power on the individual through "political technology of the body." Foucault uses "technology," "economy," and "physics" throughout the work as metaphors for the mechanisms and exercise of power. Power operates on the small scale, between individuals, from "innumerable points of confrontation, focuses of instability, each of which has its own risks of conflict, of struggles, and of an at least temporary inversion of the power relations" (27). Furthermore, in "Body/Power," Foucault argues that micro-politics do not replace state power but that "power isn't localised in the State apparatus and that nothing in society will be changed if the mechanisms of power that function outside, below and alongside the State apparatuses, on a much more minute and everyday level, are not also changed" (60). For Foucault, power is

Call's work illustrates that perhaps the most forceful divergence of the contemporary anarchistic theory from classical anarchism is its adoption of cultural and semiotic theory. Using post-structuralist philosophy, contemporary anarchists have found a way to broaden their critique of privileged hierarchies and political power. For example, in *Anarchism and the Crisis of Representation* (2006), Jesse Cohn interprets Fredric Jameson's "crisis of representation" to include a critique of the (in)ability of one individual to represent, or speak for, another.[44] Cohn extends this critique of representation to question the legitimacy of representative democracy, advocating for a politics of consensus and direct interaction rather than what he sees as a problematic mediation that takes place in parliamentary or Congressional systems.

The new anarchists discussed by Cohn and others articulate two aspects of contemporary anarchism that will become important to my definition of the anarchistic encyclopedia. First, is the desire to extend the classical anarchist critique of governmental power structures to hierarchical structures in general. This broader rejection of hierarchy generates the need to extend critique of power beyond the political to include other sources of authority. Second, stemming from post-structuralism, is the rejection of a totalized representation of politics, humanism, or reality in general.

This reconsideration of poststructural anarchism requires one more step to bring it in line with my conception of the anarchistic encyclopedic novel. So far, I have shown that new

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neutral on its own and it is the exercise of power that determines whether it is harmful or helpful. Call, and other anarchists who invoke "micro-politics," depend upon this interpretation of power as neutral to create an imperative among anarchists to exercise power in a positive fashion with regard to other individuals, and to exercise it in a revolutionary fashion with regard to authoritative hierarchies.

[44] Todd May approaches the problem of representation from a similar perspective as Cohn in his 2010 essay "Is Post-Structuralist Political Theory Anarchist?"

anarchism has expanded the classical anarchists' revolutionary desire to throw off state power to include broader critique of hierarchy itself. The critique of hierarchy includes examination of all relationships of power, including the question of political representation. Questioning representation in these theories of anarchism implies a re-evaluation of one's ability to speak for oneself. Anarchism's extension of individual autonomy to include the ability to speak for oneself, to represent oneself, merges the political with the rhetorical.

Jacques Rancière's political philosophy solidifies this relationship between the rhetorical and political in a concept he calls "dissensus equality." Rancière's revolutionary redefinition of equality and politics mirror the humanistic concerns that Pynchon displays throughout the novel. Both Rancière and Pynchon are suspicious of social hierarchies and seek to disrupt them. Rancière's disdain for propriety likewise mirrors Pynchon's own desire to force a re-evaluation of morality (through, for instance, his inclusion of sexually explicit practices and drug use). Most importantly, however, are the anarchistic undertones of Rancière's work, even though Rancière himself refuses to announce his political philosophy.[45] Rancière's political thought shares with anarchism concerns over the use and abuse of authority while it relies on a strong, libertarian-inflected sense of trust in the individual to be the best authority to govern his or her own affairs. This can be seen most clearly in Rancière's consideration of active equality, which I discuss below.

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[45] Todd May makes a strong case for a connection between Rancière's philosophy and anarchism. May writes in *The Political Thought of Jacques Rancière*, that anarchism "is a critique of domination and a practice of radical equality" (82), that fits the central themes of Rancière's work. Samuel A. Chambers argues against Todd May's characterization of Rancière's politics as anarchistic in his "The Politics of the Police: From Neoliberalism to Anarchism, and Back to Democracy" (2011). Chambers believes that May reads anarchism into Rancière's philosophy because May "inserts his own anarchistic politics" (19).

My own interest in Rancière's philosophy, then, is in the connections that his work makes possible among the disparate elements of paranoia, anarchy, and a refusal to operate within a dominant authoritative discourse. In addition to this, Rancière draws an important connection between politics and aesthetics that cements the political anarchism in Pynchon's novel. While Rancière's work derives from the continental philosophy of the late twentieth century and at times seems to carry on the tradition of marxist criticism,Rancière's approach to politics differs from both of these in providing a more direct interconnection between everyday life, art, and politics.[46] For Rancière, the popular understanding of politics serves to alienate experience from itself. Politics normalizes the everyday and drains it of significance. However, the term "politics" has a special definition for Rancière. Rancière sees politics as a division between the widely used term "politics," that functions as a catch-all term to describe anything pertaining to the political process, and the police order (in his work simply referred to as "police"). The division is important to Rancière because he does not perceive the catch-all "politics" as a true representation of what politics is. For Rancière, politics is the process of gaining equality which must be separated from the structured and hierarchical politics of the police.[47] Politics, for Rancière, is *im*proper by design, perpetually forcing a reconsideration of the terms of debate. This impropriety is central to what some consider Rancière's anarchistic politics because the impropriety of politics is a disruption of the police – a disruption of

[46] Nick Hewlett in *Badiou, Balibar, Rancière: Re-thinking Emancipation* (1) and Charles Bingham and Gert Biesta in *Jacques Rancière: Education, Truth, Emancipation* (27-32) find the roots in of Rancière's emancipation in Enlightenment philosophy, particularly Immanuel Kant.

[47] In this passage, I take Rancière's definitions of politics and police from "Ten Theses." However, Rancière's definitions do not seem to hold fast, for earlier in his career he defined politics differently, arguing that "[f]or a thing to be political, it must give rise to a meeting of police logic and egalitarian logic that is never set up in advance" (*Dis-Agreement* 32). Rancière's definition of political is not always rendered in opposition to the police in this way.

hierarchies that serve to silence dissent. Rancière bases his connection between art and politics on the notion that, properly executed, both art and politics must deal with the *im*proper.[48] True politics occurs when one who is not equal speaks out for him or herself, ignoring the conventional propriety of remaining silent and permitting others to speak as his or her representative. "If there is a connection between art and politics," Rancière writes in "The Paradoxes of Political Art," "it should be cast in terms of dissensus" (140). Dissensus is a particular kind of conflict that is necessarily irresolvable. The aim of dissensus is to make voices heard – Rancière's argument being that consensus effaces voices considered to be not "proper" for political discourse.[49] This idea meshes well with Jesse Cohn's conception of post-structuralist anarchism, which questions the possibility of one's ability to speak for, or represent, another. Rancière shares with post-structuralist anarchists a lack of faith in representation that lies at the heart of democracy. Both call for a radical de-centering of authoritative voice, an expansion of discourses to allow some to speak for themselves.

The reason that Rancière is suspicious of consensus is that it makes the false assumption that one can speak for another. The assumption made by the dominant order is that in a

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[48] Although, the arts, like politics, can be emancipatory or repressive. Rancière writes that "the arts only ever lend to projects of domination or emancipation what they are able to lend them . . . what they have in common with them" (*Politics* 19). In other words, the contributions that the arts can make to politics, such as "the parcelling out of the visible and invisible," must be present in the work itself. This is an important consideration in this novel because paranoia, as I shall discuss below, is a parcelling of the sensible in much the way that Rancière suggests must be shared. In this way, Pynchon also engages in a type of anarchistic aesthetic by engaging with the improper dimension of paranoid knowledge.

[49] As I mentioned above, Jeffrey Baker's essay "A Democratic Pynchon: Counterculture, Counterforce, and Participatory Democracy" bears some striking similarities to elements of my own project. Whereas I identify an anarchistic vein in Pynchon's politics, Baker identifies a democratic one. Baker points to John Dewey's call for "dissensus" in a participatory democracy where dissensus is a disagreement that will lead resolution and is proof of progress (Baker 114). Rancière's politics also calls for "dissensus," but he means this differently. Dewey is interested in coming to agreement and dissensus is a meaningful first step in ensuring that all voices are heard, but Rancière finds value in the act of disagreement and views dissensus as evidence of equality through self-representation.

democracy all are equal and, therefore, one can speak for another or one may be empowered to speak for another. However, the hierarchy that permits one to be heard and the many to be silenced is an arbitrary one: Rancière notes the "complete absence of any entitlement to govern" that leads to a government in which only those in power may speak ("Ten Theses" 31). "The police" is the obverse of politics that protects the status quo. Although the police protect social norms, Rancière does not consider the police to be equivalent with either police officers or the institution of the police. Rather, "the police" is a generalized term, like politics, that defines at once a position regarding authority and social conventions that reinforce that authority.[50] The police want individuals to think that politics is a rarefied event that takes place among the powerful and that everyday individuals cannot have access to it. Thus, Rancière's disdain for propriety is a deeply political commitment: it is propriety that keeps the individual from making her voice heard.

The danger, then, lies in the police's assumption that "anyone" can speak, "anyone" may govern, when this simply is not true – Rancière calls this assumption "passive equality" because it is unclaimed political potential that mistakes complacency for equality. This task is reserved for the "proper" people who can speak for (represent) the rest. Rancière calls the rest who cannot speak "the poor": "But the 'poor,' precisely, does not designate an economically disadvantaged part of the population, but simply the people who do not count, who have no entitlement to exercise the power . . . for which they might be counted" ("Ten Theses" 32). It is the arbitrary nature of who may rule that gives lie to the police supposition of equality because it is not equality at all. Rather, the hierarchy of who counts and who does not count determines

[50] For more on definition of "the police" see May 40-3.

who may exercise power in a political system. It is notable that Rancière, who uses speech as a differentiating factor between politics and the police, notes that when politics and police run up against one another, "this encounter [is] a meeting of the heterogenous" (*Dis-Agreement* 32). This argument recalls my own supposition in my introducion that the encyclopedic novel is a testing ground for competing heterologies. Where I have defined heterology as a non-authoritative discourse vying for currency within a hegemonic system, Rancière sees the heterogenous factions of politics and police on a more fundamental plane: as a division of the sensible, a meeting of two logics.

Equality, for Rancière, is the point of politics. Questions of freedom, self-determination and other expected rights in a liberal democracy dissolve into the large question of equality. What makes Rancière's philosophy of emancipation different from other philosophies is that he takes equality as a starting point rather than a utopian goal. Rancière tries to move equality out of the categories of identity politics, race, gender, or class because these categories already draw attention away from the individual. Instead, Rancière wants to discuss equality and politics as a specific relationship between individuals or between the individual and the social body. To speak of a class of people already undermines the primacy of the individual, and it is this aspect of Rancière's thought that correlates with revolutionary anarchism. Rancière believes that every society is built upon a hierarchy that determines a person's place in the world. Sometimes the hierarchy is explicit and other times it is not. To achieve equality is to expose the hypocrisies of the hierarchy, to show that the constructed hierarchies do not reflect reality. Rancière believes that for true equality to exist, each person must be able to speak, to be taken seriously, and to

have a place in debate. Rancière's politics differs from other revolutionary and emancipatory philosophies because, as Gabriel Rockhill puts it, "politics in its strict sense never presupposes a reified subject or predefined group of individuals such as the proletariat, the poor, or minorities" (*The Politics of Aesthetics* 3). The difference between Rancière's politics and other radical politics is that Rancière returns the power for emancipation to the individual, rather than assigning it to a group. In Rancière's emancipatory politics, the individual must take an active role and create truly political occurrences in which that individual claims his or her own equality from a normalizing police order that seeks to maintain the status quo.

That the individual must remain vigilant against the dominant order speaks directly to Pynchon's political project in *Gravity's Rainbow.* The hierarchy that determines who counts parallels the division in *Gravity's Rainbow* between the elect and the preterite. The preterite have no place within the proper order (for Rancière, proper order is the part of the police while politics are moments of disruption of order) and are therefore excluded. However, William Slothrop's act of redefining the preterite is, in itself, a political move in Rancière's sense. Rancière argues that "[p]olitics exists because those who have no right to be counted as speaking beings make themselves of some account" (*Dis-Agreement* 27): likewise, Pynchon's preterite are those of no account who reclaim some account. Yet Rancière points to the essential paradox of this very division. Those who stand up to be recognized as speaking beings, by the act of standing and forcing their own recognition, expose "the contradiction of two worlds in a single world: the world where they are and the world where they are not" (27). The authoritative narrative of Puritanism in colonial America – or the police, to use Rancière's terminology –

excludes the preterite, cedes them no voice. This narrative is shown to be a lie the moment that the preterite, or a member of the same, speaks.

The division between the elect and preterite represents a lack of parity among people that William Slothrop, Tyrone Slothrop's great-great-grandfather, argues against in his tract *On Preterition* and that the novel's protagonist, Tyrone Slothrop appears to sense but does not fully articulate. This bottom-up attempt to throw off a damaging and arbitrary hierarchy of power is something that Rancière calls "active equality" – or equality that the individual claims for him or herself as those who do not count "make themselves of some account."[51]

The struggle that William Slothrop initiated with his *On Preterition* is recapitulated in Tyrone Slothrop's quest through the Zone. William put forward the heretical notion that the preterite and the elect were equals and Tyrone does similarly when he elevates the importance of the individuals he meets in the Zone. Another example of this phenomenon is the split between Us and Them throughout the novel. One of the failures of the Counterforce is that the members perpetually view themselves as apart from Them when, according to Rancierian politics they – The Counterforce – should be pushing for equality rather than reinforcing the disparity.

Pynchon establishes the importance of the divide between the elect and the preterite on the first page of the novel. During Pirate's dream of the evacuation of London, the narrator refers to the "feeble ones, second sheep, all out of luck and time" (3). "Second sheep" is a metaphor from Calvinist theology for those who are "predestined for abandonment at the moment of

[51] Perhaps Rancière's most straight-forward account of emancipation comes from *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, in which he writes, "One need only learn how to be equal men in an unequal society. This is what *being emancipated* means" (133, Rancière's emphasis). In other words, learning how to be equal is the process of active equality. Conversely, Rancière writes of those "republican hearts and minds" who desire to "make an equal society of unequal men" (133), which process invites passive equality.

Christ's apocalyptic return, in contrast to the *elect* who are predestined for redemption" (17, emphasis original), Steven C. Weisenburger notes. Pynchon highlights the troubling arbitrariness of such a concept by listing those "second sheep": "drunks, old veterans still in shock from ordnance 20 years obsolete, hustlers in city clothes, derelicts, exhausted women with more children than it seems could belong to anyone, stacked about among the rest of the things to be carried out to salvation" (3). Here, Pynchon identifies the same problem that plagued predestination: humans assume divine knowledge. Materialistic and judgmental criteria are used to determine salvation or damnation without regard for what the *true* criteria may be. Those deemed to be in some way wanting by a normative society – or by the police order, to use Rancière's term – are considered to be lesser in God's eyes as well. Pynchon points to this central hypocrisy because part of his agenda in *Gravity's Rainbow* seems to be a desire to promote the kind of individualistic choice that Rancière also promotes.

More than 500 pages later in *Gravity's Rainbow*, the narrator describes the argument in William Slothrop's *On Preterition*. Briefly, William Slothrop's story parallels Pynchon's own real-life ancestor, William Pynchon, rather closely.[52] William Slothrop fled Boston and John Winthrop's church "convinced he could preach as well as anybody in the hierarchy even if he hadn't been officially ordained" (555). This line is significant because it establishes Slothrop, Sr. as an unorthodox figure who rejects the authority of hierarchy. He recognizes the division between the ordained and unordained as an arbitrary distinction and a poor criterion for determining who may speak. Secondly, the line sets up the equally arbitrary division between

[52] Weisenburger provides a concise history of William Pynchon and his tract, *The Meritorious Price of Our Redemption*, on which *On Preterition* is modeled. See Weisenburger 17, 131-2, and 287-8 for more on the preterite, Williams Slothrop and Pynchon, and John Winthrop.

the elect and the preterite that traditional Calvinist theology demands. Slothrop, Sr. also wrote a book concerning the elect and the preterite that angered the elect (rather, those who consider themselves to be elect without evidence) and was banned and burned in Boston because, "Nobody wanted to hear about all the Preterite, the many God passes over when he chooses a few for salvation" (555). This line demonstrates the normalizing momentum of the police which also exposes the privilege of the elect. The "nobody" referred to above means the elect, obviously – the Preterite are effaced not just in a theological sense, but in a social sense as well. The myopic logic is quite stunning in its own right: Anybody who wants to read about the Preterite must be among the Preterite. But the Preterite do not count. Therefore, nobody wants to read about the Preterite. The phrase, more properly rendered, would be "Nobody *who counts* wanted to hear about all the Preterite."

Slothrop's revolutionary tract on the Preterite echoes Rancière's claim that equality is the result of those without a voice speaking for themselves. It is quite obvious that the elect would not speak for the Preterite, could not speak for them because of the perceived differences between them. Rather, the voice redeeming the Preterite had to come from one of their own. To repeat an earlier point, this entire discussion about the division between the elect and the Preterite is predicated upon claiming knowledge that is impossible to know. It is not that Slothrop, himself, is preterite, but he *becomes* preterite at the moment that he attempts to redeem that class of people. The division between the saved and the damned relies on an arbitrary social convention.

The power structures that Rancière and Pynchon each identify differ, but the end result is the same: the actions in which William and Tyrone Slothrop engage are heretical because they expose the hypocrisy of the power structure. The hypocrisy lies in the collusion between industry and the state that comprises the conspiratorial "Them." For William, this hypocrisy lies in the church elders' arrogation of God's knowledge of the preterite and the elect. For Tyrone, the hypocrisy is more subtle, because he himself lacks the knowledge the readers are afforded.

The hypocrisy of the collusion between industry and state that Tyrone Slothrop discovers over time is, of course, connected to the fact that surveillance and money politics are wielded by both entities while claiming different priorities: industry's priority is the profit-motive and the state's priority is claimed to be the well-being of the people but is actually in line with industry. This hypocrisy is strongly suggested through Pynchon's studied use of innuendo and false-leads that may or may not actually be false. Pynchon encourages readers' searches for connections throughout Slothrop's quest to discover the truth of his infancy while also frustrating these searches. Slothrop slowly uncovers evidence that seems to suggest that his uncle Lyle sold him to Dr. Laslo Jamf for use in the Imipolex G experimentation, but the evidence is garbled and incomplete. Slothrop uncovers what seems to be a a vast interconnection of money and national interests that creates an artificial obstacle in his ability to represent himself. The hidden collusion between state and industry erodes the individual's ability to act in full knowledge. Early in the novel, the reader learns that Dr. Laszlo Jamf, inspired by the conditioning of "Infant Albert," believes that he could condition Infant Tyrone to respond sexually to a stimulus (84).

But it is not for another 200 pages that Slothrop begins to learn these things when he receives a dossier on the mysterious Imipolex G from the Swiss company Nordhausen (283).

Slothrop discovers that his uncle Lyle had been involved with both German and American companies at the time and that he had been, in effect, sold to IG Farben "like a side of beef" (286). The specific connections between Bland and these other companies is not my focus here,[53] but rather the hypocrisy of the split loyalties of both individuals and companies on the international scale. Slothrop acts with partial knowledge based upon a betrayal of those who were meant to protect him: his uncle sold him to facilitate a different deal that would rook the victors of WWI and his country sold his interests out in order to determine what his "powers" were that stemmed from the Imipolex G experimentation.[54] The central conspiracy of Slothrop's life, that he was used as a test subject for the substance Imipolex G, does not cohere because the substance was not invented until after Slothrop's infancy. Whatever the state of this mystery, it is through Slothrop's investigations that he discovers a tangled web of collusion between national governments and international corporations. It is difficult to supply a specific piece of evidence from the novel to support this hypocrisy because Pynchon is so adept at dropping breadcrumbs throughout the novel to indicate a connection.

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[53] This exact relationship is difficult to chart because Pynchon writes it in such a circuitous fashion and because the relationships loop back upon themselves; this is a case where Pynchon's complex style of narration perfectly matches the confusing subject matter he wishes to express. As nearly as I can make out, Lyle Bland had connections to the German company Stinnes while he sat on the board of the Slothrop Paper Company. Lyle arranged to sell Tyrone to IG Farben, another German company, where Laszlo Jamf worked. Jamf also sat on the board for the Grössli Chemical Corporation, which was also connected to Stinnes. The connections get more complicated when Slothrop discovers that Stinnes conspired to ruin the mark in post WWI Germany in order to get out of paying reparations mandated by the treaty of Versailles. The mark devalued, prompting massive printings of the paper money, the paper being supplied by the Slothrop Paper Company.

[54] See *Gravity's Rainbow*, 85 for a list of some of the speculations into the coincidence between Slothrop's map and the rocket strikes.

3.3 Encyclopedic Logic: Systematic Logic vs. Associational Thinking

The primary difference between the anarchistic encyclopedic novel and the traditional encyclopedic novel is a shift from the highly systematized modes of logical thought encouraged by the Enlightenment-inspired *Encyclopédie* and the associational thinking the contemporary encyclopedic novel adopted from postmodernist literature. I call this difference a shift because the anarchistic encyclopedic novel seeks to adopt and modify pre-existing modes of thought while retaining the same goals of leveling access to information and privileging individual thought over authoritative discourse. The anarchistic encyclopedic novel calls the systematic logic of the traditional encyclopedic novel – and through it, certain aspects of Enlightenment philosophy – into question.

In this section, I argue that the Enlightenment model of progress, faith in rationality to solve problems, and systematization of knowledge that are represented in the *Encyclopédie* are no longer adequate to make sense of a postmodern world and that the anarchistic encyclopedic novel attempts to correct by utilizing associational thinking. I will use Diderot's own thoughts on the purpose of the *Encyclopédie* to demonstrate these attributes. Following this, I will show that *Gravity's Rainbow* works to disrupt and redirect the old Enlightenment model by exposing a naïve encyclopedism based on outdated premises, and that Pynchon rejects systematized thinking, in the form of binary logic, in favor of associational thinking.

The Enlightenment influence on the *Encyclopédie* is evident in the opening to Diderot's entry on the *Encyclopédie* that reveals the optimistic perspective that he held toward knowledge. Diderot writes:

> In truth, the aim of an *encyclopédie* is to collect all the knowledge scattered over the face of the earth, to present its general outlines and structure to the men with whom we live, and to transmit this to those who will come after us, so that the work of past centuries may be useful to the following centuries, that our children, by becoming more educated, may at the same time become more virtuous and happier, and that we may not die without having deserved well of the human race (17-8).

This quote reveals three elements of Diderot's thinking that bear investigation: collection, collation, and transmission. Diderot's goal is to collect all of the world's knowledge and collate this knowledge into categories that can then be recorded and transmitted to future generations. Each of these elements expresses aspects of French Enlightenment philosophy that can be, and have been, called into question in a postmodern context.

To begin, Diderot's belief that world knowledge can be collected together in a coherent fashion reveals a deeper belief in the project of Enlightenment. Because Diderot saw the *Encyclopédie* as an ongoing project that would communicate with future scholars, a charitable reading of the above quote suggests that the work of scholars over centuries would realize his goal by continually contributing to the work. Diderot's project relies on the belief that humankind will continue on the same trajectory of progression and that the record of history will keep account of the progress made, while "our weaknesses follow our mortal remains into the tomb and disappear with them" (18). In other words, a rational society will retain that which contributes to progress and forget the rest.

The collection of knowledge would be useless without a process to systematize this knowledge in order to present it: collation. In presenting "general outlines and structures" in the work, Diderot reveals an ideal of categorization and systematization that is meant to provide a more "user-friendly" interface. Alphabetizing entries creates a structure in which to present the knowledge collected. In the context of the *Encyclopédie*, this structuring principle makes sense and helps the readers to jump directly to the entries they seek. Because the system is alphabetical, the systematization appears neutral compared to the thematically organized encyclopedias before the Enlightenment. However, Diderot also includes a system of cross-references that serve as a secondary structure that does reveal a greater degree of editorial choice that may be limiting. This is a subject that I will take up more fully in the next section.

Finally, Diderot is primarily concerned with transmitting this knowledge to his contemporaries and to scholars of the future. His interest in creating dialogue is in keeping with his philosophy of democratized knowledge. This final aspect of the *Encyclopédie* ties together these three activities because without the desire to share this knowledge, there would be no point to the project. But this projection into the future again reveals Diderot's faith in rationality and progress while implying a further systematization that would help to perpetuate such an ongoing project. None of these elements in themselves are bad or incorrect and it is only with the perspective of time that it is possible to view the limitations of such methods of thinking.

The Enlightenment perspective on knowledge influenced the traditional encyclopedic novel via Diderot's *Encyclopédie* by encouraging a categorization of knowledge and reinforcing the importance of empirical observation. The most important revelation for the current project is

the way in which Diderot thinks about knowledge and the way that this does not work in the contemporary world. His quote shows that he is unconcerned with epistemological questions such as what knowledge is, what the difference between information and knowledge is, and so on. Based on the fact that he believes that it might one day be possible to collect all of the world's knowledge, he also seems to believe that knowledge is somehow limited or quantifiable. While the purpose of the current project is not to examine these epistemological questions, it is relevant that these questions do reveal the ways in which systematized thinking can be limiting and potentially destructive.

In contrast to the systematic rationality of the *Encyclopédie* and the traditional encyclopedic novel, the anarchistic encyclopedic novel seeks to utilize a method of associational thinking that represents an attempt to break free of structural limitations. This method of associational thought is closely related to the critique of structure that the post-structural anarchists adopt. That is, the anarchistic encyclopedia maintains a skepticism toward even the methods of thought and critique that Enlightenment philosophers used in breaking away from the authorities of Church and Crown. The anarchistic encyclopedic novel does not seek to abandon systematic rationality completely, but rather to supplement this method of thought with different methods as a check against potential blind spots.

Associational thinking is a shorthand way of referring to a number of different models of thinking and logic that have emerged following scientific advancements and cultural shifts that alter or undermine older models of logical thought. It offers a way around systematic thinking by making links that are not based upon logic but upon subjective experience and sense relations.

Many different models of what I am calling associational thought have been proposed by critics of the postmodern. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer write in "The Concept of the Enlightenment" that "enlightenment is totalitarian as only a system can be" because knowledge is proscribed (18). They continue, "even what cannot be assimilated, the insoluble and irrational, is fenced in by mathematical theorems" (18). The argument that they present, in part, is that the Enlightenment was a project of de-mythologizing by making the world into a knowable place but that in the process, the Enlightenment itself turned into a myth because we lost the ability to self-reflect. This amounts to an inability to examine the structures that shape our knowledge. But it is the "irrational and insoluble," the mythic, that clashes with systematic logic and finally allows the self-reflection necessary to demystify the structures.

Although Horkheimer and Adorno conceive of a dialectical challenge to systematized thinking, critics such as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari posit a way of thinking that rejects dualism in thinking, a topic that I will take up in regard to binary logic as it appears in *Gravity's Rainbow*. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari propose the rhizome, an acentered system that erases hierarchy and authority by operating as a web of interconnection that is anarchic and open to communication between any of the elements within the complex (17). This permits connections not based on logic, or even pre-Enlightenment notions of authority and tradition, but on association, sense, emotion, or even happenstance. By operating outside of logical systems, they argue, it is possible to think outside of the capitalist system and provide a method of critique.

Other critics such as Zygmunt Bauman point to the necessity of building contingency into our thinking in order to expose failures of the Enlightenment search for knowledge. Bauman argues, "The order bound to be installed and made universal was a *rational* order; the truth bound to be made triumphant was the *universal* (hence apoditic and obligatory) truth. Together, political order and true knowledge blended into a design for *certainty*. The rational-universal world of order and truth would not know of no contingency and no ambivalence" (11). Contingency is an aspect of associational thinking because it does not demand the certainty that the Diderotian encyclopedia demands.

The model of associational thinking that I propose takes into account these elements of thought left out of the rational model of the encyclopedia and are associated with postmodern conceptions of the failure of the Enlightenment. Associational thinking is irrational, non-rational, and/or non-linear. It is contingent and permits a blurred logic that recognizes states of being and scales of degree instead of dualistic states. Most of all, associational thinking is metaphoric and metonymic; it relies on lateral connections between ideas not related by logic. By recognizing that there may not be a totality of knowledge to collect the postmodern subject is free from the need to collate and may understand the world in a different sense.

There are two connections between associational thinking and anarchism. The first, mentioned above, lies in the ability to think outside of prescribed systems and therefore critique those systems. The second connection is in the very nonhierarchical configuration of both elements. While Enlightenment progress imagined a democratic world in which men are to be considered equals, associational thought opens the way for broad-scale individual emancipation.

Associational thinking is a central feature of the anarchistic encyclopedic novel because of the freedom of thought that it permits and, through this freedom of thought, the freedom to speak back to power.

Pynchon uses associational thought in *Gravity's Rainbow* in order to demonstrate the new ways in which an individual must act to wrest some measure of freedom from the emergent authority. In the novel, the ending of World War II in the European theater reveals collusion between national states and international corporations. What Pynchon reveals over the course of the novel is that it is only through chance and associational thinking that Slothrop is able to uncover some sense of the truth of the new world. Pynchon demonstrates the futility of applying systematic logic in what I call an appeal to naïve encyclopedism. Naïve encyclopedism is the extension of the Diderotian encyclopedic model into the postmodern world; it is a result of the attempt to resort to Enlightenment ideals in a post-Enlightenment world.

One of the primary flaws in some uses of the term "encyclopedic" when applied to a novel is that the novel simply contains everything.[55] This is a view that Jorge Luis Borges lampoons at many points in his ficciones.[56] Complete knowledge, in Borges' work, is equated with exhausting the inexhaustible which, in his absurdist universe, is possible. In "The Library of Babel," for example, Borges describes an infinite bank of knowledge containing every work ever written. But every work containing every possible typographical error within each of those

[55] What I call "naïve encyclopedism" is a particular usage of the descriptive "encyclopedic" to mean that a novel is very large or that it is more inclusive than other novels.

[56] I address the work of Jorge Luis Borges here and in my conclusion because, although his work cannot be considered encyclopedic according to the genre definition I have outlined thus far, his work does engage with many of the same issues that the encyclopedic novel does. In many ways, Borges' work can be considered to deal with many of the issues that will arise in postmodernism decades before that term became fashionable in the Western academy. I will treat what I call Borges' "meta-encyclopedism" more fully in the conclusion.

works, and also every translation into every language of those works, also resides in the library – so that the expansion of knowledge serves ultimately to limit knowledge, to shut down the possibility of any kind of utility. This endless opening of meaning clearly does not represent encyclopedism as I have defined it. The reality of Borges' model of encyclopedism is inclusion leading to futility and frustration. When insignificant variations (such as the typos marring a text) become equivalent to originary texts and when encyclopedism stops being an epistemological imperative and becomes instead a drive simply to accumulate, the text ceases to be encyclopedic and simply becomes exhaustive.[57]

Although Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* may, at times, seem to fit this exhaustive characterization of the encyclopedia, there is an underlying logic to the ideas and systems presented in the novel that are not immediately apparent on a first reading. Pynchon works at one remove from the systems that he most clearly represents. In adopting a philosophy that casts doubt on totalized structures, Pynchon effectively removes his fiction from the constraints of dealing within a singular system, whether that system be a structure of power, an epistemological approach to the world, or an overarching ideological logic. In every case, Pynchon is careful to delineate the difference between a naively totalized conception of systems from his own broader, and more inclusive epistemological model that allows for an equally broad understanding of competing epistemological structures.

[57] This, unfortunately, is an error that Brian Stonehill makes in an otherwise meritous study of *Gravity's Rainbow*'s self-reflexivity. Stonehill reacts to Mendelson's characterization of *Gravity's Rainbow* as an encyclopedic narrative by asserting that the "label implies only that Pynchon threw everything in" (156). This reductive perspective of Mendelson's criticism, and of encyclopedism generally, ignores the long history of the encyclopedia.

Pynchon introduces the difference between a simplistic all-inclusiveness and true encyclopedism early his text. For instance, in Major Pudding's *Things That Can Happen in European Politics*, Pudding attempts to record every contingency and possibility of events that might take place in 1931. Pudding's project, though seemingly encyclopedic because of its urge to include everything, is ultimately useless in a practical sense because its "permutations 'n' combinations [. . .] don't give Hitler an outside chance" (275). The implication here is that reality eludes the attempt to compile every possibility. Pudding makes a mistake when he assumes that predictions can be extrapolated from any given point, and that possibility is not limited by perspective. Pudding's book echos Borges' "The Garden of Forking Paths," a story in which a Chinese foreign agent comes upon a book his grandfather wrote that contains every possible divergent story-line. Both works, Pudding's and the grandfather's in Borges' story, seek to contain infinite variation in a finite space, expressing a futile desire for completion. While Borges' grandfather's desire is to meditate on time and potential, Pudding's desire is to exhaust possibility and prevent a second World War, which he fails to do.

At another point later in *Gravity's Rainbow*, the image of a fork in the road arises again, but this time the fork is a limitation, denoting a lost opportunity. Considering William Slothrop's despondent return to England, the narrator questions whether the ancestor Slothrop's interest in the preterite might have represented "the fork in the road America never took, the singular point she jumped the wrong way from" (556). Whether it is because of the unusual politics of the Zone or due to his own naiveté, the younger Slothrop believes that there may be a way back, to take the missed opportunity to recognize the importance of the preterite. In the rarified space of

the Zone, “while all the fences are down [. . .] somewhere inside the waste of it a single set of coordinates from which to proceed, without elect, without preterite, without even nationality to fuck it up” (556). This fork in the road represents for Slothrop a way to reimagine the world in which he lives.

The differing versions of the encyclopedic vision that Pudding and Slothrop subscribe to, in turn, work to limit or to open their own lines of sight. While Pudding subscribes to the all-inclusive vision of the encyclopedic, Slothrop realizes the limitations of the splitting off. Slothrop's vision of a split in the historical timeline, however, is the most inclusive, in the sense that he believes that whatever personal decisions have been made, the collective turning away from the preterite that took place centuries before has reverberated through history. What lies behind Slothrop's desire to recover that splitting off point is his desire to do away with division, whether between the elect and preterite or amongst nations. This desire clearly differs from either Pudding's desired splitting, because he views the historical split as a desired dividing line between groups of people.

What the novel illustrates in the metaphor of the forking path is a range of attitudes in response to limiting decisions. Pudding's naïve encyclopedia, while the most “inclusive,” is also the most limiting because the project is firmly tied to an inability to admit either the influence of chance or the impossibility of an endpoint for knowledge. Pudding's work is dedicated to a logical model of exhaustion, but the fault of the work is that one cannot accurately predict events that may take place. It ignores the necessity of contingency. Later in the novel, Pynchon explicitly refers to the encyclopedia, but in a way that highlights the limitations of this naïve

encyclopedism. Describing the far-reaching influence of Slothrop's uncle, the narrator Lyle Bland describes “a silence the encyclopedia histories have blandly filled up with agencies, initials, spokesmen and deficits enough to keep us from finding them again . . .” (586; Pynchon's ellipses). Pynchon refers to the exhaustive aspect of naïve encyclopedism, but in the sense that this exhaustion is purposefully engaged in order to veil the truth. The adjectival “blandly” refers both to an inoffensive manner, and to a style in which Bland would act. In this short reference Pynchon identifies the way that knowledge can be weaponized. In his forking path, however, Slothrop correctly envisions himself – and everyone else – as participants within the struggle in which they all find themselves. He is able to imagine a change in the world because he also acknowledges his place within that world.

The interest that Pynchon has in breaking away from the “all-inclusive” model of the encyclopedia is to disrupt the naïve presumption that all-inclusiveness is a useful characteristic for defining “encyclopedism.” In this case the encyclopedia is a representation of totalized knowledge. Borges satirizes this notion of the encyclopedia by equating total knowledge with zero knowledge. Pynchon similarly satirizes this all-inclusive notion of the encyclopedia, but in a different way, by concluding that there is no way for any one individual's projection of alternatives to actually be comprehensive. Pudding's book makes the assumption that, given a finite set of variables (in this case, European inter-war politics), a well informed individual (Pudding) will be able to extrapolate all likely outcomes. The fact that Pudding is unable to predict the rise of Hitler and the re-emergence of Germany as a super-power points to one of two conclusions: that Hitler's rise to power was so unexpected that it was literally impossible to

predict, or that even the most comprehensive application of individual, monadic logic is ultimately futile in merely practical terms.

While Pynchon engages with the encyclopedia and dispels naïve encyclopedism by showing the necessity of contingency in associational thinking, he also works to show the limitations of systematized logic. He performs this by demonstrating the failure of binary logic to accurately represent the world.[58]

Pynchon uses the relationship between statistician Roger Mexico and Pavlovian Ned Pointsman to demonstrate the limitations of binary logic. Early in the novel Pynchon puts the two into a seeming-opposition, calling Mexico the "Antipointsman" (55). However, the opposition that Pynchon encourages the reader to see is within a limited domain: Mexico "is devoted to number and to method, not table-rapping or wishful thinking. But in the domain of zero to one, not something to something. Pointsman can only possess the zero and the one" (55). Locked within the system of binary logic, Pointsman is offered as exemplar of the faults of such either/or dichotomies. The domain "*between* the one and the zero" is, for Pynchon, the preferred domain because it allows for possibility, for shades of grey that is a part of associative thinking. Pynchon demonstrates this difficulty of Mexico's position just a page later as the narrator wonders "What if Mexico's whole *generation* have turned out like this? Will Postwar be nothing but 'events' newly created one moment to the next? No links? Is it the end of history?" (56; Pynchon's emphasis). The shift in the narrator's sympathies from Mexico to Pointsman indicates the difficult position of choosing one model over the other: both Mexico and Pointsman become

[58] Scott Sanders also connects Pynchon's rejection of binary logic with anarchist politics, pointing to the structural limitations of dualism: "Experience belies the simplification of binary choices into which our logic and our language bind us" (117).

analogies for the type of thought they use. In selecting either Pointsman or Mexico, the narrator implies, the reader must by extension select strict correlation or complete disconnect. The former is rigidly hierarchical and admitting of no middle ground while the latter is limitless transition, a perpetual deferral of meaning in favor of "No link. No memory. No conditioning" (56).

Interestingly, the references to Pavlov also indicate a connection to Enlightened rationality. Early in the novel Roger Mexico refers to Pointsman as a Pavlovian and a Royal Fellow (37). As a Royal Fellow, Pointsman is a member of the Royal Society of London for Improving Natural Knowledge, a group founded in 1660 to forward the science of natural philosophy. The Royal Society has long been associated with Enlightened rationality and empiricism. Among the Fellows are Carl Linnaeus, the famed taxonomist, and Sir Isaac Newton, physicist and originator of the Laws of Motion that are central to Pynchon's conception of entropy. When Pynchon places Mexico and Pointsman in opposition with one another he also, though by implication, places Mexico in opposition to the Royal Society and the focus on natural philosophy that this entails. On the one hand, this may be a positive thing for Mexico because it means that he would fail to fall into the trap of privileging empiricism and naturalism. On the other hand, however, it would be extremely limiting to discard the influence of the Royal Society and all of the advancements in knowledge for which its Fellows are responsible. Any rejection of natural philosophy under these circumstances would be simply for the sake of rejecting a dominant discourse and not due to its own failings. The connection between binary thinking – exemplified by Pointsman – and this Enlightenment institution provides evidence for my claim

that Pynchon seeks to distance the discourse of *Gravity's Rainbow* from the dominant discourse of Enlightened rationality. However, this is not so much because the perspective itself is flawed as because the privileging of this one discourse necessarily marginalizes other discourses in much the way that Diderot's privileging to the same Enlightened rationality came at the expense of other forms of discourse.

The problem with binary logic, at least in this instance, is that the limitation of choices is never limited to a local, or single, selection. Using binary logic, as Pointsman does in his work, colors the way that he views the world. In contrast, Pynchon creates a world in which characters often refuse to make a choice between *x* and *y*, such as the choice between Religion and Enlightenment. Among the most important messages that *Gravity's Rainbow* conveys is that binary logic is not false only because it excludes the middle. Binary logic is fallacious because it limits the ability to think in shades, as Mexico does, and also because it limits the ability to make connections to other elements outside of the binary. Breaking outside of binary logic in this novel represents a metaphorical break from the systematized logic that the Enlightenment philosophers encouraged and demonstrates the necessity of associational thinking.[59]

This line between the linear logic of the binary and spatial logic that allows for multiple possibilities distinguishes, I think, Diderot's democratic model and Pynchon's anarchistic one.[60] Perhaps the reason that *Gravity's Rainbow* may be unsettling to readers is the same as the reason

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[59] Pynchon extends his critique of binary logic to also include dialecticism. In a conversation Tchitcherine recalls from his younger years, he trots out the old Marxist maxim of religion being an opiate of the masses to which Wimpe replies, Marxist dialectics? That's *not* an opiate, eh?" (701; Pynchon's emphasis).

[60] Pynchon may have derived this line of thinking from Vladimir Nabokov's lectures at Cornell. Nabokov invokes a kind of "multi-level" thinking in his fiction and lectures. In "Good Readers and Good Writers," Nabokov blurs the line between fiction and science and writes that the best temperament for a reader to have is "a combination of the artistic and scientific one" (4-5). My thanks to Stephen Blackwell for pointing this out to me.

that it is successful in re-energizing Diderot's encyclopedic discourse: because it uses the very nature of the dominant systematized logical discourse to explode itself. Pynchon effectively plays upon a model of knowledge that depends upon a wide accessibility and the illusion of plurality to simulate a democratic leveling. What this means in reality, however, is that there is a privileging of a certain kind of discourse, in this case the systematized, and often binary, logic. In its place, Pynchon would rather leave open all of the doors of possibility.

Pynchon demonstrates this most effectively in the "White Visitation," a special ops group bent on exploring and enlisting the supernatural in the Allied war efforts. The importance of the "White Visitation" to the war effort goes beyond the simple desire to win by any means necessary. There is a kind of naïve pragmatism behind the idea that a technologically advanced superpower would invest energy and resources into researching supernatural weapons on the off-chance that they might work. Pynchon avoids this easy analogy by approaching the supernatural with the same gravity and intellectualism with which his characters approach rocket-building, psychological research, or any of the other scientific pursuits featured in the novel. Pynchon works to erode the dividing line between the natural and supernatural from the opening pages of the novel. Pirate Prentice's dream evacuation serves to de-stabilize the reader's expectations of a fictive reality. Prentice's dreams and the séance scene establish a thematic division between known and unknown that pervades the entire text. Both the séance and the dreams serve to destabilize the strict divisions between the known and the unknown, a break from certainty that systematized logic cannot permit.

Pynchon uses the ambiguity of words with multiple meanings to further destabilize readerly expectations, but also uses them to establish the analogy between the history, economy, and power relationships of the real world with the communication between the living and the dead. This demonstrates the need for associational thinking by implying connections that both the characters and the reader must learn to interpret. One example of this takes place during a séance during an attempt to make contact with the deceased Roland Feldspath. The medium Caroll Eventyr (a member of the "White Visitation") explains that "'It's control. All these things arise from one difficulty: control. For the first time it was *inside*, do you see. The control is put inside. No more need to suffer passively "outside forces" – to veer into any wind. As if . . ." (30; Pynchon's emphasis and ellipses). Playing with double meanings, Eventyr refers to control as both a potentially coercive force and as a participant in a séance who assists the medium. Eventyr is interrupted by one of the other séance participants who says,

> "A market needed no longer be run by the Invisible Hand, but now could *create itself* – its own logic, momentum, style, from *inside*. Putting the control inside was ratifying what de facto had happened – that you had dispensed with God. But you had taken on a greater, and more harmful, illusion. The illusion of control. That A could do B. But that was false. Completely. No one can *do*. Things only happen, A and B are unreal, are names for parts that ought to be inseparable. . . ." (30; Pynchon's emphasis and ellipses)

This passage attempts to explain the difference between control from inside versus outside of a system, but presents a contradiction. This conception of a system's autopoeisis removes the need for outside control, whether it be an Invisible Hand or God, but at the same time, it claims that

the control from inside is illusory. Here again, Pynchon works to show that contingency is necessary by challenging causation, which is something that he does from the first pages of the novel.

This passage is also interesting in how it shows members of the “White Visitation” attempting to quantify the supernatural. Such attempts to treat non-scientific phenomenon in a scientific manner are paradoxical. The treatment of supernatural occurrences as though they were subject to the same rules of empirical observability as natural occurrences demonstrates a lack of awareness of the break between the spiritual and physical. This is deceptive because the privileged discourse remains empirical and rational. When Roger Mexico strenuously objects to the use of such unscientific elements, Prentice warns him “'Careful, Mexico, you're losing the old objectivity again – a man of science shouldn't want to do that, should he. Hardly scientific, is it'” (33). Prentice ironically demonstrates the logic of illogic by using objectivity, a standard of scientific knowledge, to bludgeon a skeptic into believing in the efficacy of the supernatural.

However, it is difficult to know where Pynchon's sympathy actually lies; on the surface it seems that Mexico should be praised for maintaining his skeptical position and that Prentice warps logic in order to support an illogical position. However, Mexico's position maintains the same troubling binarism that Pynchon seeks to break down at every turn. By promoting a model of associational thought, Pynchon does seek to undo the limitations that follow from highly-systematized logic. Pynchon stages many “impossible” events in the novel, such as Slothrop predicting rocket strikes, or a supersonic rocket reversing cause and effect, or traveling down a toilet, and to make sense of these events one must work outside of the logic that makes these

things impossible. The ability to open up thought processes to account for these events requires considering contingency, scales, association, and resorting to arational thought. This freedom to work outside of structure mirrors the anarchic freedom that Pynchon also advocates.

3.4 Encyclopedic Politics: Closed (Totalized) Systems vs Open Forms

The second major difference between the traditional encyclopedic novel and the anarchistic encyclopedic novel is a political shift that parallels the logical shift described in the previous section. Encyclopedias are closed systems that, similar to systematic logic, are inherently limited to the structures imposed on them. The anarchistic encyclopedia adopts the general concept of the encyclopedia as a syncretic blending of information and perspectives but seeks an open form that is not limited by such constraints as systematized logic and highly structured organization. This shift in politics parallels the shift in logic because the anarchistic encyclopedia attempts to continue traditions of the encyclopedic model but also desires to revolutionize the purpose of the work. In the preceding section, I argued that associational thinking broadened the ways in which individuals can understand their world by avoiding artificial constraints. The open nature of the anarchistic encyclopedia relies on associational thinking but adds a political dimension that seeks personal freedom from restrictive structures as well as freedom in thought.

In this section, I argue that the encyclopedia's structure is limiting in two ways that the anarchistic encyclopedia attempts to correct. First, the two-tiered organizational structure (alphabetical and cross-referential) in some ways supports associational thinking but in a

constrained way that privileges the editors' choices. Second, the focus on empiricism and systematized logic restricts content and forces a homogenization by privileging ideas and discourses that fit into this authoritative structure. The anarchistic encyclopedia works to correct these limitations by providing an associational hermeneutic tool in paranoid thinking that resists totalizing impulses in the encyclopedia, thereby promoting anti-systems thinking and anarchic freedom. In this way, paranoia serves two important functions. First, paranoid thought parallels Rancière's model of active equality in that it is a process an individual may use to claim knowledge for oneself rather than relying on authority. Second, paranoia works to disrupt the traditional hierarchies that determine who has authority over knowledge. This disruption returns the ability to know to the individual rather than to the authoritative bodies.

One hallmark of the Enlightenment philosophy, and of Diderot's *Encyclopédie,* is the use of structuring elements to provide order. Diderot's use of the alphabetical organization, as opposed to the thematic organization of earlier encyclopedias such as Pliny's, grants the reader a greater autonomy in using the text. Rather than having to read through a thematically (and potentially arbitrarily) organized text to locate a particular topic, readers of the *Encyclopédie* have the option of skipping directly to the desired article.

The use of alphabetical organization makes sense in a printed text, but it is the second organizational system that begins to expose the influence of the editor. The system of cross-referencing in the *Encyclopédie* was a broad revelation for reference works, and Diderot was able to include some associational aspects in his work because of this. The contemporary cross-reference is much the same as the system of cross-references that Diderot developed as a part of

his *Encyclopédie* inasmuch as the systems consists of references at the ends of articles that redirect readers to other, related articles.[61] While cross-referencing is primarily a research aid, the references may also be used ironically as a way to critique a topic through radical juxtaposition with a seemingly unrelated topic.[62] Whether the cross-reference is used ironically or not, the role that it plays in the encyclopedia is that of a secondary ordering system that is based upon association.

One of the crucial distinctions that I drew between the pedagogical and dialogical models of the encyclopedia in the introduction was that of structure – ordering – and the varying influences that this has. The secondary ordering structure of the cross-reference recalls the pedagogical model in a way that still highlights accessibility but builds in the option to refuse the putative link offered by the editor. The cross-reference blends the accessibility of the alphabetical ordering common in the dialogical model with the thematic ordering featured in the pedagogical model. The arbitrary nature of these thematic connections remains somewhat obscured based on their paratextual status – relegated to the bottom of the entry where they must be specifically sought out by the reader. Nevertheless, the system of cross-reference still represents an organizing structure that favors the interpretation of the editor over those of the authors or the readers, creating a de facto hierarchical relationship.

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[61] Internet encyclopedias have picked up and expanded the cross-reference in the form of hyperlinks. Wikipedia's use of hyperlinks between entries permit the reader to either gain more depth on a topic, read about a related topic, or link to a merely marginally related topic. This system of hyperlinking is much more inclusive because (given a fast enough internet connection) switching from one topic to another is instantaneous and rather than listing a series of related article titles at the end of the entry, Wikipedia's hyperlinks are embedded in the main body of the text. This broader inclusion, however, comes at the cost of the focus that more traditional cross-references permit.

[62] I briefly discuss Diderot's ironic use of the cross-reference in the introduction, where I note that Philipp Blom points to Diderot's cross-referencing “anthrophages,” or cannibals to “Eucharist, Communion.”

In the passage quoted under the preceding sub-heading Diderot expresses a desire to collect the world's knowledge in his *Encyclopédie*. But we can ask what constitutes such knowledge. We must infer that Diderot and his editors recognized knowledge and made decisions about what should be included and what will be left out. Editorial decisions would constitute a bias that would be invisible to the reader. Diderot is clear about this and while the reader can correct for any potential bias that may be contained in the *Encyclopédie*, there is always the risk of influence when a text, like the *Encyclopédie*, claims a degree of authority.

But editorial authority can prove to be even more damaging if it encourages a homogenization of form and style. The clearest example of this is in the body of the *Encyclopédie* itself, where Diderot forwards the project of Enlightenment. This stance would cause the *Encyclopédie* to omit those ideas and topics that do not conform to the systematized logic of the Enlightenment. While Diderot perceived this as necessary to combatting the Church authority, it also serves to shut off potentially advantageous avenues of discussion.

Diderot's editorial stance develops a new dominant discourse that privileges knowledge that conforms to Enlightenment values: it creates a new hierarchical structure that dictates what may be acknowledged. An example of a conflict between dominant and marginal discourses occurs in a long narrative subplot in the middle of "In the Zone." The narrator relates the history of Tchitcherine, his origins, and his travels in the Soviet Republic Kazakhstan. While much of this episode details the internal conflict of creating a written language for the region that is an interesting meditation on Western colonialism in its own right, Tchitcherine observes that an act of preservation – from the perspective of the Westerners – is actually an act of destruction. For

example, Tchitcherine witnesses a singing duel between a boy and girl. The duel is highly ritualized and the improvisations subject to a specific structure.[63] As Tchithcerine watches the duel he "understands, abruptly, that soon someone will come out and begin to write some of these [duels] down in the New Turkish Alphabet he helped frame . . . and this is how they will be lost" (357 Pynchon's ellipsis). This observation implies the importance of divergent epistemologies and exposes the imposition of the privileged discourse of Western empiricism. The import here is two-fold; first, there is the immediate destruction of the singing-duel tradition through transcription. Second, the imposition of the New Turkish Alphabet that will have the same effect on the language that the transcription has on the song. The written transcript of an improvised song can never be equivalent to the singing-duel because the duel itself is a cultural experience. Translating an oral, communal experience into written form will render that form intelligible to outsiders, but may also, Tchitherine fears, replace the actual experience. Thus, paradoxically, what is done in the name of preservation and study – namely, the transcription of the songs – may destroy the culturally specific experience.

The integrity of the singing-duel is subordinated to the dictates of rationality; the oral language is first codified and then the oral cultural experience is set in print, thus limiting access to the original discourse. The democratic encyclopedic impulse of the West likewise calls for a standardization of discourse, an alignment of epistemological truth claims along a single, linear access or rationality. The Enlightenment model of the encyclopedia demands a uniformity of

[63] "You have to be on your toes for this," the narrator warns the reader, "you trade four-line stanzas, first, second, and last lines all have to rhyme though the lines don't have to be any special length, just breathable" (356). The direct address to the reader is interesting in that it turns this narrative exposition into a set of instructions for a participant.

approach under the impetus of intelligibility to a common audience and editorial consistency in tone. Just as the transcription of the singing-duel democratizes that cultural event, simultaneously transposing it for intelligibility's sake into a medium more widely accessible to those outside of the culture, the leveling discourse of Enlightened rationality achieves its democratic accessibility at the expense of those discourses that must be reshaped in order to fit the correct logical system.[64]

While the encyclopedia operates according to a strictly systematized logic that is limiting and can be potentially damaging to the freedom of the individual, the anarchistic encyclopedia builds a political valence into associational thinking. Paranoia is the key to this political dimension because it returns a type of agency to the individual. For an author like Pynchon, the individual's interface with truth and knowledge is already proscribed and is always limited by the external structures in place, supposedly, to provide order. Deborah Madsen notes in the introduction to her book *The Postmodernist Allegories of Thomas Pynchon* that

> by focusing upon the questing character's discovery of the constraints that are imposed upon social knowledge by the cultural construction of both social knowledge and the questioning self, [Pynchon's] postmodernist allegory is able to represent the mechanisms of ideological repression without pretending to occupy a position above or beyond this discursive system – a system in which no discourse is innocent. (5)

Pynchon's rhetorical anarchism reflexively examines structures of knowledge and denies any privileged discourse. Diderot's privileging of Enlightened rationality is, in the world of *Gravity's*

[64] Madsen continues, "Epistemology is corrupted as it becomes insulative, producing metaphors that disguise and obscure rather than reveal" (94).

Rainbow, a transgression against the spatial thinking that recognizes that science and religion not only do but must co-exist.[65] Madsen further argues that Pynchon allegorically represents Enlightened rationality, the "totalizing logic of Reason," as limiting discourse because it "radically circumscribes human freedom by limiting access to alternative discourses" (94).

Pynchon is skilled at giving the impression that seemingly unrelated things are related without actually showing the connection. Whether it be the suggestion of a link between the Tristero, Pierce Inverarity, and the Inamorati Anonymous in *The Crying of Lot 49*, the coincidence of Telluric ley-lines and the travels of the airship in *Against the Day*, or the relationship between Dixon (a freemason) and Mason in *Mason & Dixon*, Pynchon tantalizes the reader with the sense of paranoia that his characters feel – the sense that there is or must be some connection in the absence of any evidence or explanation. So intense is the *sense* of connection that the reader, too, is often inspired to speculate on the means of connection. While Pynchon engages his reader with many such suggestions of connection in *Gravity's Rainbow*, it is the connection between power, structure, and epistemology that is central to understanding the work.

Pynchon often suggests connections between seemingly unrelated elements by invoking Austrian American mathematician Kurt Gödel's incompleteness theorem in conjunction with Murphy's Law.[66] Pynchon's rephrasing of Murphy's Law is of a piece with his suspicion of totalized knowledge.

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[65] The privileging of logical discourse is not original to Diderot. Epictitus argued that anyone who would call logic useless must argue for its uselessness, but that arguing for the uselessness of logic requires the use of logic. Epictitus' syllogism appears to be sound, but only when logical discourse is privileged.

[66] It is, perhaps, unsurprising given Pynchon's predilection for "coincidence" that both Pudding's *Things That Can Happen in European Politics* and Gödel's Incompleteness Theorem appear in 1931, a fact that Pynchon points out (275).

Douglas Hofstadter offers a concise paraphrase of Gödel's incompleteness theorem: "All consistent axiomatic formulations of number theory include undecidable propositions" (17). What this means is that no fixed mathematical system will contain all propositions necessary to define the rules of that system: external influence is always necessary.[67] Pynchon adopts Gödel's theorem in order to expose the broader necessity of viewing systems as necessarily incomplete; in *Gravity's Rainbow*, the incompleteness theorem works as a metaphor to explain social structures and the operations of power. For Pynchon, Gödel's theorem represents the possibility of escape from a system of power that cannot control everything. At the same time, he evokes Gödel's theorem as a metaphor for the idea that there is always knowledge that is outside of one's understanding. The closed system of the encyclopedia is not enough in itself and must be accounted for by extra-textual reality. Gödel's theorem is connected to paranoia because both promote the potential to think outside of systems and beyond perceived authority.

Pynchon offers another way around the totalizing discourse of the Enlightenment through a device that mimics the system of cross-references in modern encyclopedias. Throughout *Gravity's Rainbow*, Pynchon uses the interconnection of people and events as a way to call attention to the ways in which these connections can seem indeterminate, or random, but may actually have a design behind them. Although Pynchon is careful never to reveal whether or not there is an actual design, these interconnections strongly suggest that there may be some shaping

[67] It is important to note that Hofstadter warns against the limitations of transposing Gödel's theorem into other disciplines. He writes, "If one uses Gödel's Theorem as a metaphor, as a source of inspiration, rather than trying to translate it literally into the language of [another] discipline, then perhaps it can suggest new truths in . . . other areas. But it is unjustifiable to translate it directly into a statement of another discipline and take that as equally valid" (696). It seems clear that Pynchon invokes Gödel's theorem in just this metaphorical spirit. In much the same way, Pynchon makes metaphorical use of paranoia, as I shall make clear in the next section.

influence, however ephemeral. By drawing connections between disparate elements, sometimes separated by hundreds of pages of text, Pynchon illustrates either the prevalence of patterns or the propensity for humans to divine patterns that are not present. The web of interconnections, referred to as an aspect of paranoia throughout the novel, parallels a figure that is common in today's encyclopedia: the cross-reference. Drawing connections based upon associations and partially obscured motivations mirrors precisely the paranoid perspective as it is constructed in *Gravity's Rainbow*. The map behind Slothrop's desk that marks his "conquests" and also happens to match the rocket strikes is certainly suggestive of connections that are interpreted differently by different characters in the book. The implied connection between the rocket and Slothrop's penis. not Slothrop and the strikes, is a secondary association to the more direct connection that Pavlovian Ned Pointsman attempts to make.

However, the associations are often even more abstracted in *Gravity's Rainbow* and the interpretations are frequently left to the reader rather than being defined in the text. That the associations are left to interpretation and are not made in the same formal way that cross-references are in the encyclopedia portends two things: first, the system of cross-references in *Gravity's Rainbow* is necessarily *virtual* and, second, the connections between elements is, itself, paranoid in nature. The cross-references in *Gravity's Rainbow* are *virtual* because they are not stated literally but left to inference by the reader, by which I mean that although Pynchon strongly suggests connections, these connections are never made explicit. Take for example the repetition of figures that recurs throughout the novel: the benzene ring, the parabola, tumescence, the cross-roads. Each of these figures is repeated over and over with a slightly different meaning

each time. One of Pynchon's prime narrative devices is to slowly accrue meaning over the course of the novel so that terms like “paranoia” and “entropy” come to mean many different things by its end. I argue, also, that the system of virtual cross-reference in *Gravity's Rainbow* is paranoid because, as I will show below, the connections are evocative of a particular kind of interpretive stance that relies upon a conception of the real within the novel that transcends typical narrative hermeneutics to encourage an extra-textual conception of the real that also values making connections that are outside of the authoritative discourse.

Pynchon's use of paranoia allows characters and the reader to make associative connections that mirror associative thought at the same time that it requires that non-systematized mode of thinking. Throughout *Gravity's Rainbow* there is an underlying assumption that paranoia is inevitable and potentially good. Characters adopt paranoid ways of relating to the world, often using the term to mean “cautious.” For example, after hijacking a Red Cross truck with Seaman Bodine, Slothtop imagines that the people chasing them are American GIs in the middle of the British sector. Bodine guesses that their pursuers are just Shore Patrol and admonishes Slothrop not to “get any more paranoid than we *have* to. . . .” (601; Pynchon's emphasis and ellipses). Bodine's language encourages the reader to regard the paranoia that they do have with a degree of legitimacy and that, in moderation, paranoia is a positive attribute. The men *are* being chased, after all. Bodine then tells Slothrop that “*Everything* is some kind of plot, man” (603; Pynchon's emphasis). Through Bodine and other characters, Pynchon reclaims paranoia as a way to break free from authoritative discourse.

Paranoia is a vital aspect of the anarchistic encyclopedia because it does encourage this new way of looking at the world. Characters experience their interactions with institutions of power in a new, and more suspicious, light. Slothrop's moments with Bodine in the zone are significant to his understanding of paranoia because it is with Bodine that he first sees confirmation that "the Zone can sustain many other plots besides those polarized upon himself" (603). Paranoia's focus on the ego as a pole around which plots rotate must now be broken up at the realization that each individual may also be a pole around which plots focus. The overlapping of plots must magnify paranoia at the same time that it solidifies the paranoid vision. Paranoia magnifies because those plots which had been considered "polarized" around a particular individual are actually elements of a matrix of plots. This matrix of plots disrupts the orderly "Them" and "We" binary and forces the paranoid Slothrop to also accept that there is a range of systems to which one may belong. There are shades of "Them-ness" which decenters the power of the plot. The paranoid vision is solidified from the perspective of the individual once the individual recognizes that others may also possess a paranoid vision. This recognition to some degree legitimates the paranoia, permits the individual – once isolated and hounded – a new solidarity amongst paranoids. The solidarity felt amongst paranoids in the new "We" system serves to fragment the power that "They" possess. Furthermore, as Linda Fisher argues, the paranoid distrust of official narratives reclaims the self as authority by seeking out the "true" meaning behind that official discourse (107-9).[68]

[68] See Fisher, "Hermeneutics of Suspicion and Postmodern Paranoia: Psychologies of Interpretation" for more on this subject.

Although paranoid discourse seems to produce a new solidarity, it is one that is based in shared knowledge rather than in a true camaraderie. Pynchon's project is to demonstrate the individual's ability to know outside of authoritative discourse, but this does not necessarily imply bonds of affiliation between individuals. The irony of Pynchon's paranoia is that it is disintegrative at the same time that it gives individuals a sense of solidarity. In fact, it is predicated on a need for integration. Paranoia is an individual's access to a world that makes sense, independent of community.

Paranoia is necessary as a response to a new conception of power. Pynchon both confirms and denies the efficacy of world-wide conspiracies by subjecting them to paranoid logic. Because, from the perspective of authoritative discourse, paranoid discourse cannot be legitimate, it becomes impossible to ever confirm conspiracies. Pynchon's recuperation of paranoia, however, redirects the energy of paranoia to examine the interactions between individuals rather than those of individuals to organizations. In order to demonstrate the varying aspects of paranoia, Pynchon refers to its many manifestations, including "operational paranoia," "office paranoia," "early paranoia," "anti-paranoia," and "creative paranoia."[69] These different versions of paranoia largely depend upon context to derive their meaning. For example, operational paranoia is a concept described by Tantivy Mucker-Maffick that is useful on combat. The individual pretends that rockets are aimed at him specifically, theoretically gaining the

[69] Charles Hohmann argues that "operational paranoia" is one of the characters' responses to primal anxieties, the other response being "mindless pleasure." For Hohmann, operational paranoia spreads and becomes mass paranoia, which is then routinized and may then become creative paranoia. Hohmann further notes that "We" systems fight "Them" by "playing 'Their' game without having recourse to 'Their' systematization" and that "We" systems "will not interlock in a rational way such as 'They-systems' do" (97).

advantage of preparedness. Office paranoia is less defined and refers to attitudes adopted in an office setting regarding the belief that others may be gossiping about one.

While Pynchon makes repeated reference to these aspects of paranoia, it is the series of "Proverbs for Paranoids" that draw the most attention. The five proverbs, scattered through Book 2: "Un Perm' au Casino Hermann Goering," vary between observations on the nature of the relationship between the paranoid individual and Them and warnings that can also double as imperatives.[70] By offering these proverbs as a sort of practical guide for the paranoid, Pynchon works to recuperate the term, to redefine paranoia as a positive, and even necessary trait for survival. It is obvious, based upon the examples from the text and from the Proverbs for Paranoids, that the term "paranoia" itself attempts to collapse many different concepts into a single word. The multiple meanings of the word mirror the paranoid vision by multiplying meaning and leaving it to the readers to discern which meaning is the proper one, or if there is a proper meaning.

The general consensus in the criticism concerning paranoia in *Gravity's Rainbow* is that paranoia provides an alternate vision of the world that is supplemental or preferable to the normal view of things. Paranoia in this sense is not pathological and, particularly from a postmodern perspective, may be a legitimate corrective to a seemingly fractured world. Paranoia, then, is not an individual condition but a cultural one – a reaction against the

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[70] The Proverbs for Paranoids include:

1) "You may never get to touch the Master, but you can tickle his creatures" (237);
2) "The innocence of the creatures is in inverse proportion to the immorality of the Master" (241);
3) "If they can get you asking the wrong questions, they don't have to worry about answers" (251);
4) "*You* hide, they seek" (262); and "Paranoids are not paranoids [. . .] because they're paranoid, but because they keep putting themselves, fucking idiots, deliberately into paranoid situations" (292).

dehumanizing aspects of contemporary, and particularly capitalist, culture. This model of paranoia has its roots in Richard Hofstadter's landmark study "The Paranoid Style in American Politics." This essay, which spawned a broad reconsideration of paranoia as a cultural phenomenon, defines paranoia along both political and cultural axes as a way to describe an American attitude toward the Communist other. This method of viewing the other shares affinity with Freudian paranoia in that both externalize insecurities and project them onto an other.[71]

Critics of paranoia in Pynchon's fiction take two broad approaches: those who root paranoia in a longer cultural or psychological tradition and those who seek to refigure Pynchon's model of paranoia within the postmodern tradition. Those of the former tend to argue that Pynchon's paranoia is primarily an ontological concern that then throws the reader into a position of questioning reality and paranoia, as well. The latter tend to argue that Pynchon's paranoia is primarily a hermeneutic concern and, in turn, tend to interpret the novel as either neutral or hopeful.

Critics who perceive paranoia as ontological include Scott Sanders and Leo Bersani. This paranoia is primarily ontological in character because these critics argue that the paranoia of the novel infects the reader as well, making an ontological leap from the fiction of the novel to the flesh-and-blood world of the reader. Ontological paranoia creates an uncertainty of what is real and what is not: what is seen and what is unseen.[72] For example, Sanders argues that readers and characters "dance on the same ground" because the readers "rarely know much more than

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[71] Amy J. Elias's "Paranoia, Theology, and Inductive Style" provides essential reading on the origins of postmodern paranoia and contains a concise listing of the characteristics of Hofstadter's "paranoid style."

[72] Sanders writes, "the paranoid intuition is, then, one of an *invisible interconnectedness*" (102). Sanders' concern with interconnection is common in the criticism about paranoia, as it is one of the tropes that Pynchon uses throughout the novel.

the characters, themselves, and they do not know much; and the narrator, if he knows more, rarely tells" (142).[73] This narrative uncertainty, Sanders argues, replicates in the reader a sense of suspicion that mirrors the paranoia of the characters in the novel. Bersani similarly argues that narrative uncertainty leads the reader to question whether or not Sothrop really exists in the novel.[74] Bersani focuses on the difference between what is real and what is visible, arguing that paranoia is, essentially, a doubling of orders of existence. The visible is an illusion over the invisible, which represents the connections that the paranoid person intuits behind the veil of the visible. Sanders and Bersani both extend suspicion or paranoia onto the reader, but this seems to alter the nature of the paranoia from ontological to hermeneutic. While the reader may question the reliability of the narrative or question its historical accuracy, the reader is not thrown into the same sort of existential crisis that characterizes the paranoia that the two discuss.

The lure of reading Pynchon's paranoia as an ontological question is that it allows a way of interpreting Slothrop's disintegration at the end of the novel, which is a difficult question to answer and one subject to critical disagreement. For Bersani, Slothrop was never a character in the sense that we typically understand the concept, but a position, a concept. A concept that disintegrates under its own illogic poses no metaphysical questions but does depend on a particular reading of Slothrop that is difficult to square with the rest of the novel. Slothrop, after all, has a family and history in America. I contrast critics who approach paranoia primarily

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[73] In "Pynchon's Paranoid History," Sanders writes, "Paranoia offers the ideally suited hypothesis that the world is organized into a conspiracy, governed by shadowy figures whose powers approach omniscience and omnipotence, and whose manipulations of history may be detected in every chance gesture of their servants" (139-40).

[74] See Leo Bersani, "Paranoia and Literature." Bersani extends this ontological uncertainty to the reader who, he writes, is forced to contend with the question: "What is *Gravity's Rainbow*?" (107).

as an ontological concern with those who approach it primarily as a hermeneutic concern because, as I stated above, those of the latter camp tend to judge Pynchon's texts in the light of various postmodern theorists, Fredric Jameson chief among them. While not all of the critics of hermeneutic paranoia refer to Jameson's concepts of the postmodern sublime or cognitive mapping, they all do interpret paranoia as a distinct way of knowing the world that affects the individual's interactions with that world. This approach differs from those critics mentioned above who consider paranoia an ontological concern because hermeneutic paranoia may produce uncertainty and suspicion in the mind of the paranoid individual, but it will not cause the existential anxiety that Bersani or Sanders describe as part of the novel.

Linda Fisher's "Hermeneutics of Suspicion and Postmodern Paranoia," which does not directly reference Pynchon, is a valuable resource for understanding the interpretations that many of the critics of hermeneutic paranoia employ. Fisher connects postmodern paranoia first with a "hermeneutics of suspicion," theorized by Paul Riceour, and then to a longer tradition of what she calls "critique of suspicion." Critiques of suspicion, Fisher argues, is a suspicion of "official" narratives, fear of a loss of control, and fear of a loss of agency (107-8). Fisher identifies these concerns with the postmodern suspicion of "anything that suggests authoritative, normative, totalizing, or essentialist tendencies" (108), arguing that both the paranoid and the postmodern critic claim the self as authority. The importance of Fisher's claim is that it refocuses attention on the individual, in this case the paranoid, in a way that Pynchon's fiction does as well.

Mark Siegel offers the first full-length monograph on Pynchon and paranoia in his *Pynchon: Creative Paranoia in Gravity's Rainbow*. Adopting the term "creative paranoia" from

Pynchon, Siegel writes that *Gravity's Rainbow*, "despite its frequent grimness . . . [is] not a novel of despair, but one of possibility" (4). For Siegel, paranoia is an alternative reparative logic that can reassemble the fragmentary elements of a postmodern world. The chaos of the Zone is the remains of a wrecked past from which a new culture can be born. Siegel's book marks an important moment in criticism of *Gravity's Rainbow* in recognizing this positive aspect of paranoia.[75] Siegel agrees with the cultural aspects of paranoia that Sanders develops, claiming that *Gravity's Rainbow* examines current cultural problems and their sources – always from within the confines of historical context – and that Pynchon is interested in the cultural reality around the characters, not in their mental processes (7-21). Siegel's assertion that the destruction of the war in the Zone is necessary to clear room for a new culture recalls the anarchist dictum to "build a new society in the shell of the old."

Four critics explain paranoia in *Gravity's Rainbow* using concepts drawn from the works of Fredric Jameson. Elaine Safer's "Dreams and Nightmares: 'High-Tech Paranoia' and the Jamesonian Sublime–An Approach to Thomas Pynchon's Postmodernism" and Bran Nicol's "Reading Paranoia: Paranoia, Epistemophilia and the Postmodern Crisis of Interpretation" both refer to a new conception of the sublime that Jameson theorizes in *Postmodernism* and variously terms "postmodern or technological sublime" and "high-tech paranoia" (Jameson 37, 38).[76]

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[75] Charles Hohmann also recognizes the potentially "positive" aspect of paranoia, see Hohmann (49-56).

[76] Briefly stated, postmodern sublime continues the tradition of Edmund Burke, Emmanuel Kant, and others in conjunction with a three-stage model of capitalism in which, Jameson argues, we live in the third, or "late" stage that is characterized by postmodernism. Jameson argues that postmodernist texts give the reader a sense of the technological sublime by "tap[ping] the networks of the reproductive process" which, in turn, "offer[s] some privileged representational shorthand for grasping a network of power and control even more difficult for our minds and imaginations to grasp: the whole new decentered global network of the third stage of capital itself" (37, 37-8). What Jameson means by this is that an individual cannot comprehend the complex totality of the operations of power on a global scale but can only experience a *sense* of the interconnection. This sense,

Elaine Safer approaches Pynchon's fiction in a broad sense, arguing that the arc of Pynchon's work can most adequately be explained via "'high-tech paranoia' and its relation to the sublime" (Safer 280). Safer's essay covers each of Pynchon's novels through *Vineland*, arguing that the characters' "desire for understanding and unity in a disordered universe leads to absurd quests" (285). The framework of her argument established, Safer proceeds to detail the quests of each of the novels to demonstrate high-tech paranoia's ability to explain the particular nature of Pynchon's postmodernism. Nicol's approach differs slightly form Safer's in appeal to historical argument and, particularly, his interest in the movement from the modern to the postmodern. Nicol explores the overlap between paranoia and postmodern 'technological persecution,' arguing for the Lacanian view that paranoia is a crisis of interpretation. Nicol attributes this crisis to "the epistemic shift from modernism to postmodernism" that parallels a Jamesonian crisis of representation characterized in the postmodern condition. Nicol tracks the similarities between the postmodern condition and paranoia, pointing to postmodernism as an epistemological shift during which the Enlightenment Project ended. For both Safer and Nicol, high-tech paranoia provides an alternate way of viewing the world. It is a way of knowing that encourages what Amy J. Elias calls the inductive style of rationality.[77]

Using a different concept from Jameson's work, Steven Best and Jon Simons take up opposing arguments concerning the use of cognitive mapping as a way to understand paranoia in

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because it can only be intuited, may result in "high-tech paranoia," which forces the individual to attempt to make connections in the absence of empirical evidence.

[77] Amy J. Elias makes the compelling argument that many theories of paranoia, and particularly postmodern theories, are incomplete because they do not properly account for the logical similarities with mystical theology in "Paranoia, Theology, and Inductive Style." Elias argues that postmodern theories of paranoia focus on the hermeneutics of paranoia but not on the logical underpinnings necessary to reaching paranoid conclusions. Both paranoia and mystical theology "generalize about basic assumptions about the world" (283).

Gravity's Rainbow. Cognitive mapping is closely related to the postmodern sublime and high-tech paranoia because it is a method to combat the unknowability of late capitalism.[78] As opposed to the critics of ontological paranoia, Best reads *Gravity's Rainbow* as an optimistic text that offers a method for understanding late-capitalism. Best's approach also differs from the ontological approach because he draws distinctions between kinds of paranoia, arguing that creative paranoia is not itself cognitive mapping but is "only a sensibility or pathos that guides and shapes cognitive mapping" (72). The division of paranoia into different aspect falls in line with Pynchon's own differing characterizations of paranoia and permits a more nuanced reading of the role of paranoia in the text.

Jon Simons disagrees with Best's argument about cognitive mapping, taking up the position that a Jamesonian interpretation of Pynchon is inappropriate and calls cognitive mapping "deeply problematic" (207). Simons argues that Jameson's cognitive mapping works against the very political project it is meant to progress because the "very possibility of total and untranscendable cognition of the world understood as a single system . . . unwittingly induces political helplessness" when the project fails (207). Additionally, Simons provides a different interpretation of Slothrop's disintegration from the one Bersani gave. That is, Slothrop's disintegration is not a result of an ontological paranoia but of anti-paranoia, the idea that nothing

[78] Jameson argues in "Cognitive Mapping," that space and the object mutated in a way that the subject did not, which created a disjunction in understanding that he would later term a crisis of representation. The "decentered global network of the third stage of capital itself" comprises a hyperspace, or totality of late capitalism, that requires a new method of navigation. Cognitive mapping is this new method of mapping hyperspace. Best argues that *Gravity's Rainbow* is a prime example of cognitive mapping that, "attempts to describe a crucial turning point in modern Western history, the transition to a new multinational, postmodern terrain of late-capitalism that takes shape after the second World War" (62).

is connected to anything. Ultimately, Simons argues that Jameson's postmodern sublime is, itself, paranoid and therefore inadequate to diagnosing paranoia.

What these four critics who use Jameson's theories to access (or not) Pynchon's work demonstrate is the importance of interpretation as the central aspect of paranoia that is in line with traditional, psychoanalytic conceptions of paranoia. Each of these authors perceives paranoia as a hermeneutic exercise that permits the subject to read the existing world radically differently from others. Secondly, paranoia comprises a particular hermeneutic approach that, as Linda Fisher argues, retains a suspicion of authority and seeks to re-inscribe the self as an authority. One final critic, George B. Moore, also argues for the unifying vision of paranoia in "Paranoia and the Aesthetics of Chaos in Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*." Moore's approach to paranoia is similar to the four just discussed in his central thesis, which argues that, "Pynchon deconstructs the notion of science as absolute authority by showing how it reduces human experience to unresolvable contradiction" (204).[79]

Based upon my reading of *Gravity's Rainbow* and the attendant criticism, it is clear that "paranoia" means many different things and, as noted at the beginning of this section, has many different metaphorical meanings beyond critics' specific interpretations. As Charles Hohmann recognizes in his structural study of *Gravity's Rainbow*, there are positive and negative paranoias – positions that differ based upon the belief that a conspiracy either harms or benefits the

[79] Moore does not perceive technology in the same way that Jameson does but approaches science in a much less suspicious way. Instead of the technological sublime, Moore perceives science as an alternative discourse in itself, as one of many ways of perceiving the world. It is this multiplied perspective – one may see the world politically, economically, scientifically, and so on – that comprises paranoia for Moore. Moore writes, "If paranoia is an awareness of interconnectedness, it is not restricted to verifiable phenomena, but manifests itself in conscious and unconscious associations as well as on the level of empirical phenomena" (208).

individual. In addition to the positive or negative attributes of paranoia, there is also an inward and outward trajectory to paranoia – a paranoia that is solipsistic in nature, or one that is integrative in nature.

There is a dual-trajectory to Pynchon's treatment of paranoia in *Gravity's Rainbow* that encapsulates the divergent tendencies of the broader logic of the novel. Paranoia tends to either humanize or mystify, again depending on the context in which it is used. The use of the capitalized pronoun "They" is effectively sinister because it is an *intuited* organization without identity and without a name. The sheer unidentifiablility of Them provides adequate space for any fearful paranoid to project his/her worst fears onto Them. This mystification of power is countered by a humanization of power as well. The Counterforce, a "We system," combats Them by recognizing the power of individual connections and the potential for collective action.

For Pynchon, the concept of paranoia is bound deeply with context: the particular meaning of paranoia shifts throughout the novel, carrying a different meaning when applied to different characters or different circumstances. Because the connotations and even definition of the word shifts so consistently throughout the novel, varying interpretations of the importance of paranoia are possible. A sharp delineation of these shifts is required in order to understand the complexity of the concept and its centrality to the anarchistic work of Thomas Pynchon.

Finally, the reader must consider whether or not such paranoia is justified. Slothrop is, indeed, sought after by Pointsman, Marvy, and a number of other characters throughout the novel. Marvy is even castrated because he is mistaken for Slothrop, which demonstrates the real bodily danger that Slothrop was in. Slothrop's fears are justified, but the reader is left to wonder

whether paranoia can even be legitimated. The reality of Slothrop's danger is apparent throughout the third Book, “In the Zone,” but this danger is always revealed through narration of events that follow Slothrop's movements. In the second episode of “The Counterforce,” the fourth and final Book of the novel, the danger Slothrop faces is confirmed by Roger Mexico. In discussion with Jessica Swanlake, Mexico expresses his concern for the conflict that continues despite the official end of the war:

> “I just can't leave the poor twit out there, can I? They're trying to destroy him--”
>
> But, “Roger,” she'd smile, “it's *spring*. We're at peace.”
>
> “No, we're not. It's another bit of propaganda. Something the P.W.E. planted.” (627-8)

Mexico acknowledges that the conspiracy to destroy Slothrop remains in place. The clear implication of this is that, as Slothrop and others have suspected throughout the novel, the war itself was never the central conflict. A separate, veiled purpose was always in play behind the rhetoric of nationalism and the fight against fascism. However, it is also significant that Mexico must convince Jessica that the end of the war was not also the end of aggression. Mexico's perspective is limited in the sense that, because it runs counter to the official ending of the war, he must perpetually fight an uphill battle against the dominant discourse that claims that hostilities have ended:

> There's *something* still on, don't call it a “war” if it makes you nervous, maybe the death rate's gone down a point or two, beer in cans is back at last and there *were* a lot of people in Trafalgar Square one night not so long ago . . . but Their enterprise goes on. (628; Pynchon's emphasis and ellipsis)

The episode continues on to provide free-indirect discourse of Jessica who thinks that Mexico cares more about Slothrop than about herself (629). Despondent, Mexico then learns that Slothrop had been under surveillance since before the war, confirming what the reader has known for hundreds of pages (631). At this point, however, the confirmation seems gratuitous – more of a formality than a narrative revelation – the narrator appears to reflect this position, offering "IG Farben, eh?" (631). The narrative discourse here reflects the readers confusion at the exact nature of the plot:

> Mr. Pointsman has been chumming, almost exclusively these days, with upper echelon ICI. ICI has cartel arrangements with Farben. The bastard. Why, he must have known about Slothrop all along. The Jamf business was only a front for . . . well say what the hell is going *on* here?" (631; Pynchon's emphasis and ellipsis)

The narrator's inability to follow the lines of the conspiratorial plot mimics the reader's inability to follow the narrative plot. Pynchon likewise mimics the paranoid vision by keeping the answers to questions just beyond the reach of the reader. The reader senses that the final answer will lie in the next twist, and narrative convention would encourage this view, but the answer never arrives, just more evidence.[80] Mexico's rational mind bucks at the paranoid logic that he delves into in his attempt to discover the truth.

Mexico's growing frustration at the loops that paranoid logic runs him through wears away at his finely tuned statistical mind. He lapses back into a sort of binary thinking at the

[80] Immediately following these not-quite revelations, Mexico tries to reason out how far Pointsman's influence extends, considering him "worse than old Pudding" (631). However, even once Mexico realizes that his order have, indeed, come through Pointsman this only presents more questions than it answers. Pointsman is just one more cog. This piece of evidence simply points to other parts of the conspiracy. It is the instability of paranoia that leads to Mexico's breakdown and his urination on his former colleagues in PISCES (636).

encouragement of Pirate Prentice. After informing Mexico that "For every They there ought to be a We," Prentice informs Mexico that "Creative paranoia means developing at least as thorough a We-system as a They-system—" (638). The logic of We and They-systems and creative paranoia takes on aspects of Pointsman's binary logic from early in the novel, but with an important difference. Mexico comes to learn that he cannot puzzle out the intricacies of the systems because he treats them as symmetrical whereas he needs to recognize that they are opposed in more than ideology. Osbie Feel screams at Mexico that "*They're* the rational ones. We piss on Their rational arrangements" (639; Pynchon's emphasis). In rejecting the rationality of Them, the Counterforce escapes the pitfalls of the linear thinking that constrains Them. Irrationality and bodily protest establish We as more than a binary counterpart to Them, though, in true irrational fashion, what this "more than" is remains inexpressible.

In the course of this revelation, Prentice also tells Mexico about the concept of "delusional systems" developed by "They and Their hired psychiatrists" (638). "'Delusions' are always officially defined," Prentice tells Mexico. What this means is that those in authority (or in the pay of those in authority) define what is delusional and, therefore, are in a position to deny the legitimacy paranoid logic as "delusional." Paranoid discourse may be so pathological that a paranoid suspicion proved true may no longer be recognized as paranoid. The reader is left to question whether in the face of evidence to the contrary the struggle, Their enterprise, can still be said to continue if the mass of the population is unaware of it happening at all. *Gravity's Rainbow* steadfastly refuses to permit this co-optation of paranoia. As in the episode cited

above, the paranoid remains resolutely paranoid. In other words, the authoritative discourse is unable to absorb the paranoid and make it conform.

Whether the paranoid perspective is correct or not is irrelevant to the paranoid perspective because the open potential to think outside of, and critically about, hierarchical systems is most important to the paranoid perspective. That there *may be* some outside means of control that is beyond the paranoid's ability to confirm or deny is the insight of paranoia. Later in the same subsection this analysis is confirmed: "What if there is no Vacuum? Or if there is—what if They're *using* it on you? What if They find it convenient to preach an island surrounded by a void? Not just the Earth in space, but your own individual life in time? What if it's *in Their interest* to have you believing that?" (697; Pynchon's emphasis). It is also at this line that the danger of the paranoid vision becomes most obvious: it may be impossible to distinguish between what one *really* thinks and what others *want* one to think.

For Pynchon, and for the anarchistic encyclopedia, the self-critical discourse of paranoid logic is central because it returns to the question of authoritative discourse and heterology. Paranoid discourse may never have a true place at the table and it may go unnoticed by a mass populace, but as a heterological discourse it receives at least some form of recognition. This slight recognition is also a part of its allure. Pynchon appeals to the counterculture and to a rebellious nature in limiting such non-authoritative knowledge to select individuals who take the time to see "outside" of what they may consider to be others' constrained perspectives. Here again, Pynchon plays with system-breaking in the way that an "insider" or specialized knowledge can be gained by those "outside" of the system. The perspective of the outsider, or of

one on the inside who is willing to adopt a self-reflective stance, permits for a different vision. The different vision may be as much a blessing as a curse in the end because those in the know must continue to fight a war that most believe to be over.

3.5 Encyclopedic Pedagogy: Vertical vs Horizontal Knowledge Transmission

The third major difference between the traditional encyclopedic novel and the anarchistic encyclopedic novel is a shift in pedagogical methodology. In the introduction, I discussed the difference between pedagogical and dialogical encyclopedias. The pedagogical seeks simply to instruct by providing a course of study while the dialogical model is based upon the idea of generations of scholars communicating with future scholars. Although these different models differ in their intentions, they both operate from the top down, or use a vertical method of knowledge transmission. This keeps the reader/student in an inferior position as one who does not know. The anarchistic encyclopedic novel attempts to correct de facto hierarchy by using a horizontal method of knowledge transmission. Horizontal knowledge transmission is peers teaching peers and, even more radically, one teaching another lessons that he, himself does not know.

In the previous two sections I have argued that the anarchistic encyclopedia engages in associational thinking and is an open form, both features meant to correct limitations of the traditional encyclopedia. This section picks up this argument to extend from the logical and political to engage in what is the true purpose of the encyclopedia: pedagogy. In this section, I argue that the anarchistic encyclopedic novel adopts a radical method of pedagogy that is

dialogic but is emancipated because it operates on knowledge transmission between peers. To make this argument, I will refer to the universal teaching method that Jacques Rancière describes in his 1987 work *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*.

Rancière argues that particular knowledge is not necessary to teach another and goes so far as to suggest that it is possible to teach another what one does not know by making reference to what one does know. In this work, Rancière retells the story of Joseph Jacotot, a French teacher who found himself appointed to a position to teach students with whom he did not share a common language. While the book appears to deal with the pedagogical necessity of explication in the classroom, it is also a meditation on equality between students and teachers – and by extension, equality between the intellectual and "poor" classes. Rancière argues that the method of teaching that depends upon a teacher imparting wisdom to students is flawed because it reinforces the hierarchical power roles in the classroom. Rancière observes that "Intellectual emancipation was the overturning of the old hierarchy attached to instruction's privilege" (125).[81] Instead, Rancière proposes a pedagogical model based upon Jacotot's method of universal teaching which posits that it is possible to teach something that one does not know.[82] The

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[81] Rancière continues: "instruction had been the monopoly of the managing classes justifying their hegemony, with the well-known consequence that an educated child of the people no longer wanted his parents' life. The social logic of the system had to be overturned. From now on instruction would no longer be a privilege; rather the lack of instruction would be an *incapacity*" (125, Rancière's emphasis).

[82] Rancière suggests the following proposition:

> Consider, for example, a book in the have of a student. The book is made up of a series of reasonings designed to make a student understand some material. But now the schoolmaster opens his mouth to explain the book. He makes a series of reasonings in order to explain the series of reasonings that constitute the book. But why should the book need such help? Instead of paying for an explicator, couldn't a father simply five the book to his sone and the child understand directly the reasonings of the book? And if he doesn't understand them, why would he be any more likely to understand the reasonings that would explain to him what he hasn't understood? Are those reasonings of a different nature? And if so, wouldn't it be necessary to explain the way in which to understand them? So the logic of explication calls for the principle of a regression ad infinitum . . . (*The Ignorant Schoolmaster* 4).

implications of this work is that the disruption of the polarized flow of information from font to receptacle disrupts the hierarchical power relationship between the student and the teacher.

Rancière argues that the explication model of pedagogy – which he calls "the pedagogical myth" because it is the teacher who depends upon the students and not the other way around – splits intelligence into two: a superior intelligence possessed by the teacher and an inferior one possessed by the students who need the guidance of the teacher. Thus, the teacher has an interest in convincing the students that they cannot learn on their own and that they must perpetually be led by another with superior intelligence to guide them. The example of Jacotot disrupts this myth by showing that, with simple instruction, a student can learn for him or herself. Rancière terms the process of a teacher reinforcing the student's "inferior" intellect as "enforced stultification" (7).

Somewhat counterintuitively, Rancière considers the Socratic method "a perfected form of stultification" because Socrates' questions direct the students' minds in a specific direction. This, Rancière argues, does not emancipate the student but makes the student depend upon the teacher for this subtle guidance. True emancipated learning occurs when the master "has never made the voyage before him: the ignorant master" (30). This point is crucial to understanding Slothrop's role at the end of *Gravity's Rainbow* because he becomes this ignorant master. Slothrop comes to only a partial understanding of the different mysteries in his life – the Imipolex G conspiracy of his infancy, the collusion of state and industry in the narrative present, and the identity and motivation of the frequent captors he must evade – and so comes to the teaching the subject of paranoia with the same knowledge as his students.

The role of the ignorant schoolmaster is additionally attractive for Rancière because, as he writes: “there is no hierarchy in ignorance” (32). This means that there is no superior/inferior relationship between student and teacher as there is in traditional, explicative pedagogy. Rather, the student and teacher stand equal to one another and it is the will to learn here that is the active equality that I have discussed earlier in this chapter. The act of learning, then, is a political and revolutionary act because it disrupts the propriety of the police order that dictates who may speak and who may not. This also recalls William Slothrop's contention that he has as much right to preach as an ordained minister, for what is ministry but teaching? To extend this thought, William also exposes the hypocrisy of pretending to know what God knows. He, rightly, places himself among the ignorant because he recognizes the impossibility of knowing God's will on Earth.

Rancière frequently uses searching as a metaphor for emancipated learning. He writes that the way that the ignorant master verifies the student's knowledge is “by verifying that he is always searching” (33). For Rancière, the searcher will always find something, whether that something is what the searcher intended to find is another matter, “he finds something new to relate to the *thing* that he already knows” (33). Thus, Slothrop's search for knowledge may not yield the truth that he desires to find but it does result in his eventual emancipation. Over the course of the novel Slothrop perpetually questions his own history and, more importantly, the nature of the world. His paranoia demonstrates, as the critics I mention above have noted, a desire to understand the world through an interpretation that makes sense to him rather than from an authoritative perspective. Paranoia, then, becomes a method of learning and teaching, for as

Rancière notes, “To teach what one doesn't know is simply to ask questions about what one doesn't know” (30).

In *Gravity's Rainbow*, Slothrop is indeed an ignorant schoolmaster, because the topic that he teaches is one that he, himself, learns as he goes. It is his own emancipation and it is the emancipation of the reader that Pynchon ultimately seeks to teach. However, Pynchon must carefully avoid stultifying his audience by telling them what he wishes them to know. Emancipation depends upon a mutual recognition of intelligence: equality. However, Pynchon complicates this by separating the schoolmaster from the student. There is a metaphysical disconnect as the critics of ontological paranoia point out, but it is not in the way that they suppose. The reader does not become paranoid in the manner of Slothrop but the ontological leap form character to flesh and blood reader does occur and this is the reason that Slothrop must disintegrate at the end of the novel. Rancière writes that, “To emancipate someone else, one must be emancipated oneself. One must know oneself to be a voyager of the mind, similar to all other voyagers: an intellectual subject participating in the power common to intellectual beings” (33). Slothrop's exit from the text is presaged by Pynchon's reliance on Gödel's incompleteness theorem as a metaphor.

All of Rancière's argument on emancipatory pedagogy rests on his assumption of an equality of intelligence. While this seems an unusual proposition, Rancière defines intelligence in such a way that it takes on a separate meaning from what would normally be considered “intelligence.” The reason behind Rancière's disdain for the common understanding of “intelligence” is similar to the disdain that he has for a common understanding of “politics”: both

imply a hierarchy and a proper order. Just as he redefined politics to empty the concept of power inequality, he also redefines "intelligence" in such a way as to empty it of the necessity for a superior and inferior. "Intelligence," for Rancière, "is the power to make oneself understood through another's verification" (72-3). Following this definition, intelligence is not a measure of one's capacity to reason or ability to learn, nor is it an abstract *potential* that one individual may fulfill to a greater extent than another. Rather, intelligence requires a reflexiveness between individuals. In order to properly engage in universal teaching, Slothrop must become the equal to the reader and this can only happen outside of the text. The reader never knows what happens to Slothrop because his ultimate fate lies in his ability to bring emancipatory realizations to the reader.

Sltohrop's quest for knowledge and his role of ignorant schoolmaster highlights the need for equality between "teacher" and "student" because the reader only learns as he learns, though the lesson is different. Rancière warns against the syllabi of progressives who do not adhere to the method of universal teaching but hope to explicate their revolutionary ideas: "They want to tear minds away from the old routine, from the control of priests and obscurantists of any kind. And for that, more rational explications and methods are necessary" (121). But these explications serve not to educate, as the progressives intend, but to stultify: "The progressives [. . .] want to liberate minds and promote the abilities of the masses. But what they propose is to perfect stultification by perfecting explications" (121). The importance of this trap, this "progressives' circle," as Rancière calls it, lies in the fact that, given these strictures to adhere to equality and to avoid stultifying explication, neither Pynchon nor Slothrop can explicate

disintegration and liberty. Slothrop's disappearance from the novel and from his own materiality can serve to elevate him to a mythic status, which would be in keeping with the overall trend of the encyclopedic novel as I discussed in my introduction, but it also serves as an example of the universal teaching method in practice. The observation of Slothrop sloughing identities and avoiding capture throughout the novel while on a quest of self-discovery and emancipation suggests the path to freedom that an individual reader might take. But it is more than this: Rancière's philosophy, as I mentioned at the beginning of the previous section, draws the necessary connection between the individual and the structure, and it is Slothrop's continued resistance to hierarchical structures of power that provides the supreme learning experience for the reader. Slothrop becomes the ignorant schoolmaster because he is unable to perceive the totality of his actions, because he is unable to control the effects that his actions have on the world. The reader witnesses the effects of his actions and perceives the trouble that his actions cause for those who seek to do Slothrop harm.

Rancière neatly ties equality with pedagogy at the end of *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*. The connection that he makes lies in the concept of active equality and the individual's ability to recognize for oneself what cannot be given: “Equality is not given, nor is it claimed; it is practiced, it is *verified*. And proletarians couldn't verify it except by recognizing the equality of intelligence of their champions and their adversaries” (137). Pynchon develops *Gravity's Rainbow* in such a way as to lay the potential for emancipation before the reader through the actions of Slothrop. It is up to the individual to make good on that potential and to see it for the lesson that it may be.

The anarchistic encyclopedic novel adopts this method of emancipated knowledge transmission that operates between equals. This may partially account for the difficulty of *Gravity's Rainbow*: the lesson are not stated. The anarchistic political perspective and the guide toward associational thinking are never outlined in the text for the reader to simply absorb. That is, *Gravity's Rainbow* does not explicate. By allowing the reader to come to realize the power of the voice in creating equality through Slothrop, *Gravity's Rainbow* succeeds in conveying important knowledge while also demonstrating how that knowledge can be applied.

3.6 Conclusion

The contributions that *Gravity's Rainbow* has made to the encyclopedic novel tradition are difficult to overstate. The novel disrupts Enlightenment ideals of progress and systems-building and attempts to replace a broad democratic political drive with an individualistic, anarchistic politics of emancipation. But at the same time, Pynchon seems bent on retaining portions of the old idealism. Jean-Francois Lyotard argues that, in a postmodern era, knowledge acquires an exchange value – that it ceases to be an end in itself (*The Postmodern Condition* 15-6). A statement such as this would likely perplex a thinker such as Diderot who saw a different use-value for knowledge – namely human progress. But in the text of *Gravity's Rainbow*, knowledge is at risk, it is at the cusp of being co-opted by the multi-national corporations that Lyotard specifically warns against.

Gravity's Rainbow proposes a model of the encyclopedia that retains the essential elements of the Enlightenment encyclopedia, yet alters them to stave off the ill-effects of a

postmodern, information-intensive world. Lyotard predicts, “Data banks are the Encyclopedia of tomorrow. They transcend the capacity of each of their users. They are “nature” for postmodern man” (51). Calling data banks “encyclopedias” degrades the notion of knowledge to a salable commodity. Pynchon shows us, through Slothrop, that there is escape, or at least refuge, if we are willing to throw off the artificial limitations of hierarchical systems and claim power, equality, and knowledge for ourselves.

In case it seems I paint too bright a picture, Pynchon's work is pessimistic. The option for escape comes at the cost of personal disintegration. Slothrop's lessons come as a result of great hardship for him and it is unclear whether he learns the lessons himself or if he is just a conduit for the reader to learn. Freedom, Pynchon wants us to know, is costly. In this way, *Gravity's Rainbow* demonstrates what Frye predicts as a deepening irony as literature displaces from the mythic. Frye writes that the ironic protagonist will be outside of his society and, thus, be able to critique it. Slothrop does fulfill this role. In the encyclopedic narrative of integration that Frye establishes, Slothrop and paranoid knowledge anticipate a reintegration that is necessary after a social dissolution.

CHAPTER 4

INFINITE JEST: RHETORICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

"Irony is a disciplinarian feared only by those who do not know it but loved by those who do."

S. Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony* (326)

"The idea is that the book [*Infinite Jest*] is structured as an entertainment that doesn't work"

David Foster Wallace, *Although of Course You End Up Becoming Yourself*[83]

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I argued that *Gravity's Rainbow* is an anarchistic encyclopedic novel that utilizes associational thought, the open form, and emancipatory pedagogy to revolutionize the encyclopedic form. In particular, these elements in the text work against Enlightenment-influenced hierarchies and modes of thought. In positing a non-systematized logic in the form of paranoia, Pynchon encourages thought that allows characters to make extra-systemic connections that reveal the ideology of authoritative discourse.

In the current chapter, I turn my attention to David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest*, a novel that develops key encyclopedic elements found in *Gravity's Rainbow*. *Infinite Jest*, however, is

[83] In his recorded discussion with David Lipsky, Wallace makes this comment regarding *Infinite Jest*'s original title, *A Failed Entertainment* (Lipsky 79).

not an anarchistic encyclopedic novel, but takes a rather different rhetorical approach. Wallace's perspective, and the primary encyclopedic element in the novel, relies upon a careful interaction of various forms of irony with fallacies of cause and effect (particularly the fallacy of double-negation, *cum hoc ergo propter hoc*, confirmation bias, and *non causa pro causa*).[84] Wallace attributes many of these fallacies to his characters and also to the situations in which they find themselves. Wallace collects these fallacies and others under the loose term "double-bind." Irony and the double-bind stress the importance of maintaining multiple perspectives and including human experience and emotion in logical thought, ultimately to lead to an integrative irony that helps to combat what Wallace sees as postmodernism's dangerous drive to atomize and de-individuate society.

Since its publication in 1996, David Foster Wallace's mammoth *Infinite Jest* has fascinated both academics and popular readers. Wallace's obvious erudition, down-to-earth humor and unmistakable style captivated audiences but also presented a host of difficulties that have proven difficult to resolve. The novel presents a series of paradoxes that are irresolvable given the logic that it, itself, establishes. Enthusiastically engaging in irony, the narrator encourages the reader to identify with the earnest members of Alcoholics Anonymous who despise irony and any form of pretense. Similarly, Wallace lampoons academic writing and overly theoretical approaches to life and culture (termed "analysis paralysis" by the same AA denizens), but he relies heavily on the tropes of postmodernist fiction and includes examples of academic writing as well as citations in many of the book's copious endnotes. Wallace

[84] It is not my intention to parse *Infinite Jest* according to specific logical fallacies, but rather to use the general form of the logical fallacy – and particularly fallacies of cause and effect – as a metaphorical representation for the many ways in which Wallace attempts to undermine systematized thought.

juxtaposes entertainment, obsession, and addiction, asking his readers to draw parallels amongst them. He skillfully draws his readers into a trap of binary thinking by presenting two seemingly opposed options (irony or sincerity, addiction or abstinence), implicitly asking the reader to make a choice between them.

In this chapter I argue that *Infinite Jest* follows in the same encyclopedic novel tradition as *Gravity's Rainbow* but further innovates the form, building upon *Gravity's Rainbow*'s own innovations. Two key concepts emerge that echo the encyclopedic tropes in *Gravity's Rainbow*: irony and the double-bind. In the first case, Wallace builds upon and challenges the ironic position of the subject in postmodern texts. The double-bind, similar to Pynchon's associational thinking, covers a range of concepts that work against systematized thought. At the heart of the double-bind is a conflict, paradox, or confusion that is irresolvable according to binary or systematized logic. The double-bind layers in emotion, compulsion, and pathology to diagnose a trap in postmodern thinking that echoes Pynchon's rejection of either/or rationality. Both irony and the double-bind tie Wallace's and Pynchon's texts while allowing Wallace to deviate from his mentor's influence.

For in many ways, Wallace's *Infinite Jest* follows in the footsteps of Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*. Both novels blur the lines between the individual and cultural; both novels revel in moments of absurdity embedded within realistic episodes (and vice versa); and both books self-consciously engage in a knowing irony that leaves a lot of space open for readerly interpretation. This is to say nothing of the smaller similarities, such as the penchant for absurd character names (consider Pynchon's Ronald Cherrycoke, Pig Bodine, and Nora Dodson-Truck or Wallace's Emil

Minty, Mildred Bonk, and yrstruly), inventive organization names (Pynchon's "White Visitation" and Schwarzkommando or Wallace's O.N.A.N. [Organization of North American Nations] and *Les Assassins des Fauteuils Rollents* [Wheelchair Assassins]). In addition, Wallace pays homage to Pynchon's work in smaller textual clues that most readers might easily to miss. For example, Wallace draws the surname of Teddy Schacht from Hjalmar Schacht, a Weimar bureaucrat who helps to smuggle weapons into inter-war Germany and is mentioned only once in *Gravity's Rainbow* (285). Likewise, the well-known phrase "howling fantods" that Wallace uses to describe an aversion or dread in his characters echoes the "urban fantods" Pynchon invokes (303).[85] Certain narratorial colloquialisms pepper both novels as well: Pynchon's "a-and" and Wallace's "like." The thematic similarities and textual clues show the influence that Pynchon, among other postmodern authors, has had on Wallace.

There are also a series of textual and thematic clues that Wallace uses to indicate the continuity between Pynchon's work and his own. Rather than repudiating his postmodernist forbears or arguing against self-conscious irony, as has been argued by some critics, Wallace adapts the concerns that Pynchon introduces to a turn-of-the-century context. The international cartels that operate behind the scenes in *Gravity's Rainbow* operate in the open and in concert with governmental bodies in *Infinite Jest*. The impending environmental destruction and disintegration of the populace in *Gravity's Rainbow* is realized in Wallace's novel in a North American union that effaces the boundaries between nations, destroys immense tracts of land in

[85] The phrase "howling fantods" appears several times in *Infinite Jest*, but its widespread recognition is due the website thehowlingfantods.com, a well-travelled fan webpage dedicated to the works of David Foster Wallace. D.T. Max provides an alternate origin of the word in his critical biography of Wallace, *Every Love Story is a Ghost Story*. Max writes "[Wallace's mother] loved the word 'fantods,' meaning a feeling of deep fear or repulsion, and talked of 'the howling fantods,' this fear intensified" (2).

the name of cheap energy and “cleanliness,” and further atomizes individuals – cutting them off not only from one another but also from their own emotions. Perhaps the most significant similarity between Wallace's and Pynchon's novels, however, is the way in which they each systematically present a dominant discourse that is then revealed to be flawed. In the previous chapter I argued that *Gravity's Rainbow* exposes intellectually deceptive binary logic in favor of associative thought that does not depend on authoritative discourse to establish opposed binaries. In this chapter, I argue that *Infinite Jest* engages in a similar epistemological struggle by presenting a series of double-binds that seem to defy logic while also demanding resolution.

Aside from the similarities, however, there are also significant differences between Pynchon's and Wallace's approaches. The mood of *Infinite Jest* is suffused with a melancholy that does not affect *Gravity's Rainbow*. Although both novels boast massive casts of characters, Wallace is invested in his principal characters in a way that Pynchon does not seem to be; Wallace invests deeply in characterization, physical descriptions, and interpersonal relationships characters have with one another. Similarly, Wallace's narrative is seemingly more conventional than Pynchon's. *Infinite Jest* lacks many of the sudden narrative and focalization shifts that *Gravity's Rainbow* uses, Wallace preferring to signal his focalization shifts through page breaks, subheadings, or paratextual notes. Perhaps one of the greatest differences between the two novels is the contrast between the chaos of *Gravity's Rainbow* and the incredible regimentation of *Infinite Jest*. As western Europe attempts to regroup itself after WWII in *Gravity's Rainbow*, the America in *Infinite Jest* has already been reconfigured, its borders redrawn: Pynchon looks to the past while Wallace looks forward to the future. The characters in *Infinite Jest* live very

regimented lives: the students of Enfield Tennis Academy (or ETA, the sports academy that the Incandenza family runs and livesin) eat, sleep, study, and play tennis to a strict schedule, while the residents of Ennet House Drug and Alcohol Recovery House [*sic*] work a minimum number of hours per week, must attend daily AA meetings, and are bound by a curfew.[86] Even the E.W.D. catapults lob waste into the Concavity at mathematically regular intervals.[87]

Thus, in the chapter that follows, I suggest that *Infinite Jest* continues the encyclopedic novel tradition that *Gravity's Rainbow* revolutionized. *Infinite Jest* continues *Gravity's Rainbow*'s critique of contemporary culture and authoritative discourse, but seeks to provide, by way of both positive and negative examples, an alternative. Wallace's novel also continues Pynchon's rejection of the extremes of binary thinking. I argue, however, that *Infinite Jest* avoids the move to anarchistic dissensus that Pynchon makes in *Gravity's Rainbow* while remaining humanistic and highlighting the centrality of interpersonal connection as a way to escape postmodern alienation. This move to a greater humanism contributes to *Infinite Jest*'s progression toward mythic integration.

The sections that follow address the ways in which *Infinite Jest* continues in the encyclopedic tradition that had been altered by Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* and will show that

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[86] Ennet House is located downhill from Enfield Tennis Academy in the Ennet Marine Public Health Hospital complex that also houses a methadone clinic and an in-patient mental facility. Much of the action of the novel takes places in and around ETA and Ennet House.

[87] Because Empire Waste Disposal (or E.W.D.) is responsible for toxifying the Concavity to prevent its overgrowth into the surrounding areas, the catapulting happens on prime numbered days (573). This is necessary because annular fusion, the source of cheap and plentiful energy, operates as a process of linked energy production cycles in which the waste of one process becomes the fuel of another. Catapulting waste is necessary because the fusion process draws toxins out of the surrounding environment so efficiently that the area around the reactor becomes massively over-fertile and must be kept in check. This aspect of annular fusion brilliantly displays Wallace's theme of moderation and recursive checks. Unchecked fertility, rather than the expected toxicity, render the Concavity uninhabitable.(570-4)

Wallace's work strives to re-invent the encyclopedic novel for the 21st century in much the way that Pynchon's work re-invented the encyclopedic novel for the post-War era. The first section examines *Infinite Jest* as an extension of the encyclopedic novel tradition. The second section focuses more directly on *Infinite Jest*'s contribution to the encyclopedic novel genre, and specifically the ways in which the novel builds upon the innovations of *Gravity's Rainbow*. This section is divided into three sub-sections that examine the nature of irony in the novel. I argue that Wallace uses solipsism in much the way that Pynchon uses paranoia, as a way to diagnose significant cultural problems and offer a way out of stultifying social dilemmas. First, I examine the "double-bind" as Wallace introduces it in the novel and present this as an extension of Pynchon's both/and binary logic. Next, I argue that *Infinite Jest* uses irony in many different, and contradictory ways, but that the overall role of irony in the novel is to point to the integrative rather than corrosive nature of irony, and that *Infinite Jest* establishes a "proper" usage of irony that is in line with the encyclopedic impulse. Wallace's novel pursues a humanist agenda that stresses interpersonal relationships, self-reflection, integration, and works toward a modal reintegration of the mythic as defined by Northrop Frye.

4.2 *Infinite Jest* in the Encyclopedic Tradition

Infinite Jest bears many of the characteristics of the encyclopedic novel identified in the introduction to this dissertation. These include formal and thematic continuities with the theoretical models of Denis Diderot and Northrop Frye in addition to formal and thematic continuities with other encyclopedic novels. In the section that follows, I will explore the

ideological and epistemological characteristics that *Infinite Jest* shares with Diderot's Enlightenment-influenced view of the encyclopedia. I will also examine the formal characteristics of *Infinite Jest* that align the novel with Northrop Frye's conception of the encyclopedic form. While the novel does share these characteristics, it also departs from them to reflect Wallace's historical and social context. Thus, *Infinite Jest*'s encyclopedism differs from that of *Gravity's Rainbow*. It will become evident in this chapter that the deviations that *Gravity's Rainbow* made from older iterations of the encyclopedic form are multiplied in *Infinite Jest*, primarily in the rejection of what Wallace perceived as an empty postmodern perspective and in a redefinition of the terms of irony in a social context.[88] *Infinite Jest* finds interest in the individual subject as a way to break the infinite cycle of lack/need and strives to reinvest the subject with a positive agency.

4.2.1 Enlightenment Influence

In *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*, Peter Gay writes that Denis Diderot exemplified the dual nature of the Enlightenment: disdaining hierarchical authority while striving to retain authority, skeptical while revering myth, and looking toward the future while invoking the past. Gay calls Diderot "a partisan of empiricism and scientific method, a skeptic, a tireless experimenter and innovator . . . possessed by the relentlessness of modern man" (47). Diderot's formal innovations and subversive stance in the *Encyclopédie* reflect these characteristics in a bold way that does meld a respect for aspects of the past coupled with a desire to rebuild the

[88] Edward Mendelson notes that *Gravity's Rainbow* is a new kind of encyclopedic narrative because it shifts from an older, nationalistic context to a new international context. I argue in the previous chapter that *Gravity's Rainbow* serves to revolutionize the encyclopedic novel in other ways as well, including the use of heterology.

nature of authority. Similarly, David Foster Wallace invokes both classical and modern myth in order to challenge authoritative discourse in a postmodern society. Also like Diderot, Wallace does not seek to do away with authority but to expose the hypocrisy of arbitrary, hierarchical authority. David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest* embodies many of the ideals of the Enlightenment philosophy but expressed through postmodern innovation, and, like Diderot, he seeks a mediated model of authority that recognizes positive elements while attempting to excise stultifying tradition.

Two elements within *Infinite Jest* demonstrate continuities with Diderot's *Encyclopédie* and thus the long encyclopedic tradition. First, the use of endnotes parallels the cross-referencing system of association employed by Diderot in his *Encyclopédie*. Second, through the use of double-binds, *Infinite Jest* participates in the disruption of privileged discourse and the elevation of heterological epistemological modes by engaging a similar type of associational thinking that Pynchon uses in *Gravity's Rainbow*. Wallace's use of endnotes, like Diderot's cross-references, creates a secondary organizational structure that operates parallel to the primary structure. Wallace's primary organization centers on three intertwined plot lines and includes narrative digressions that either provide background information, follow minor characters, or narrate parallel activity that may affect the main plot lines. In this way, Wallace's overall structure employs many metafictional, postmodern narrative tropes.[89]

[89] Edward J. Maloney's *Footnotes in Fiction: A Rhetorical Approach* provides a useful taxonomy for notes in fiction. He divides notes in fiction into three types: (1) “factual” notes that provide definitions, translations, and the like for terms in the main text; (2) “interpretive” notes that provide commentary or perspective on an element in the main text; and (3) “discursive” notes that are separate narratives from the main text but that may interconnect (28-57). *Infinite Jest* uses each of these types and often blends them. From here, I will use Maloney's terms to describe the functions of notes in the novel.

However, the use of endnotes complicates this structure in much the way that Diderot's cross-references complicate the structure of his *Encyclopédie*. The system of cross-references that Diderot adopted from Chamber's *'Cyclopedia* served as a secondary, non-hierarchical organizational system. A network of cross-references built on association formed a secondary organizational system that is reminiscent of the rhizome that overlays the alphabetical organization that is more evident in the *Encyclopédie*. The two methods of organization neither conflict nor supplement each other, but operate according to different logics – linear and hierarchical versus associative and rhizomatic – the end result being that these separate organizational structures supplement the content of the encyclopedia by providing the reader multiple routes through which to locate information. The primary, alphabetical structure provides the reader a route to specific entries while the secondary cross-reference structure provides the opportunity for the reader to seek depth in understanding by following references to related entries. Endnotes in *Infinite Jest* serve a similar purpose: they supplement the main body of the text while providing paratextual connections. While Wallace is certainly not the first author to incorporate notes into a novel, his use of the endnote is one of the most highly remarked-upon features of the text, aside from its length. The narrative purpose of the notes varies greatly. Many of the notes function similarly to academic footnotes, providing technical explanations, presenting digressions that are related to the main text but are not essential to understanding it, and providing clarifying information. Where the use of endnotes diverges from this more academic usage is in providing additional narration that directly affects the reader's understanding of the main text. This second feature is important because this element of

Wallace's novel contributes to the tension between the necessary and the unnecessary that is one of the primary thematic motifs in the text.

Two studies of textual notes from the 1990s bears out this distinction – Anthony Grafton's *The Footnote: A Curious History* and Kevin Jackson's *Invisible Forms: A Guide to Literary Curiosities*. Grafton's diachronic study of footnotes lingers over its usage in historical texts, arguing that the note is separate from but provides commentary on the primary text. The footnote, Grafton observes, not only comments on the main text; it also conveys other messages on its own, such as bearing evidence of additional work done by the author, indicating that the claims made in the main text may be contested by others or that the claims of the main text conflict with prior claims made by others (10-13). Jackson makes a similar point in his chapter on the footnote, writing that authors make "claims about reality in the big print on the upper part of the page" and then use the note to "display . . . grounds for such claims in the small print" (140). Although Grafton limits his study to non-fictional usages and Jackson only briefly mentions fiction, their points about the secondary messages that notes convey to readers remains valid for fictional notes as well. Both Grafton and Jackson acknowledge that the main text and the paratext *do* different things.

Wallace's use of notes contrasts with the models that Grafton and Jackson present because fairly often the notes in *Infinite Jest* perform the same narrative function as does the main text. A brief examination of two endnotes will illustrate the difference between them and show the narrative uses to which they are put. Note 234 (1038-1044), for instance, features the transcript of an interview of Orin Incandenza performed by Helen/Hugh Steeply. Orin had

previously discussed the magazine feature article on himself with Hal, foreshadowing the full text for the reader. The content of the note conforms to the academic note that Grafton discusses because it is of some interest to the reader, but is unessential to understanding the plot. This would qualify as a "discursive" note according to Maloney because it provides a narrative that supplements the main text but is unessential. The format of the transcript mimics the journalistic style of the non-fictional interview; questions are omitted (marked with just a Q.), leaving the reader with just the responses from the interview subject. There is no clear indication of how the information from the note fits in with the novel, or how the reader should incorporate the transcript into the general reading, and it is left to the reader to make these decisions.

In contrast, note 110 (1004-1022) is a tiny reproduction of the novel itself. The discursive note leads with an academic-looking "Q.v." (for *quo vadis*, a frequent refrain in the novel) and then begins with a description of Hal sitting alone, attempting to exercise his injured ankle (another frequent image in the novel). However, this note also includes a sample epistolary exchange between Orin and Avril Incandenza, and a telephone discussion between Orin and Hal.[90] This conversation differs from the transcript in that it reveals both sides of the conversation, although it does not contain the narrative descriptions of the characters' activities as they talk. Unlike note 234, this note does contain vital information concerning the relationship between Orin and his mother and also about the politics of radical Quebecois separatism. This long note even has eight notes of its own. Note 110 thus more closely mirrors

[90] Wallace may be playing with his use of "Q.v." to mean *quo vadis* and the more traditional footnote usage of "q.v." (meaning *quod vide*) to direct a reader to more information on the given subject in the same volume. The latter usage of "q.v." appears throughout the index section of Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire*, which may indicate Nabokov's influence on Wallace. My thanks to Stephen Blackwell for pointing this out.

the narrative make-up of the main text by utilizing several different generic conventions, including narrated elements and its own notes. This difference is significant because of the way that it blurs the distinction between the main text and the paratext. Notes 234 and 110 possess ambiguous relationships to the main text in terms of narrative continuity but both make associative connections to elements in the main text, the significance of which the reader is left to determine.

Infinite Jest's discursive endnotes are an encyclopedic characteristic of the novel because they disrupt the primacy of the narrative in the main text by providing opportunities to digress into the paratext, while factual notes permit Wallace to explain complicated technological elements of the text. This sense of the encyclopedic is enhanced during the reading experience when the reader must flip back and forth between text and paratext, mimicking the activity of flipping between various encyclopedia entries as the reader seeks a broader understanding. Secondly, many endnotes serve as bridges between narrative events in the main text, and the notes occasionally cross-reference other notes. The nature of the connections mirror the cross-references' purpose of connecting elements in the main text of the encyclopedia.

The second line of continuity between Diderot's *Encyclopédie* and *Infinite Jest* is the presence of "double binds" throughout the novel. Wallace relies heavily on the theme and narrative dilemmas of the "double-bind" to signal an arrested position between two seemingly opposed positions. (I will define the double bind and introduce the topic here in the way that relates it to Diderot's *Encyclopédie* but will pick up the topic more fully in the third section of this chapter, where I will show the relationship between the double bind and integrative irony.)

Wallace does not mean "double bind" in the current academic sense of mutually-effacing options in a single image, but rather presents the double-bind as any situation in which a character must decide between two equally repellent choices. Wallace also presents ambiguous states that are nearly indistinguishable, one positive and one negative, as a double bind.

The double-bind in *Infinite Jest* works to expose the kinds of tensions that color logical thought but are either rationalized or ignored. It forces the individual to mediate between competing urges and identities. This is an extension of tensions within Enlightenment thought. Peter Gay calls these tensions a "dialectical interplay," noting the "appeal to antiquity" coupled with a "pursuit of modernity" (8).[91] Gay goes on to argue that the *philosophes* "found it convenient to simplify the welter of their experience, to see their adversaries too starkly, and to dramatize their age as an age of unremitting warfare between the forces of unbelief and the forces of credulity – that is, between good and evil" (23).[92] Such internal tensions do not mark the undoing of Enlightened rationality but reveal blind spots in the rational perspective.

One example of the first kind of double bind comes from the second episode of the novel in which Erdedy waits in his apartment for a friend to deliver some marijuana he has asked her to buy. He does not want to try to call her because he is afraid that he will miss another incoming call. In the extended scene, Erdedy is torn between his desire to seem indifferent to getting the drug and his actual overwhelming desire for it. This bind is realized when, at the close of the

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[91] Gay labels Enlightenment *philosophes* "modern pagans" due the varied nature of their beliefs and "a volatile mixture of classicism, impiety, and science" (8).

[92] Gay's *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation* seeks to synthesize a liberal veneration of the Enlightenment with a conservative view of the Enlightenment's "superficial rationalism" and "foolish optimism" (ix). In doing so, he is often critical of Enlightenment thinkers but Gay is motivated by the desire to render the Enlightenment in what he sees as a more accurate way.

scene, his doorbell and phone ring simultaneously, leaving Erdedy unable to decide which to answer. Fearing that answering one will cause him to miss the other, he cannot solve the problem and, thus, is unable to act. This scene also serves to demonstrate the second kind of double bind. Erdedy's predicament is so vexing for him because of his mental state. He engages in a cycle of abstinence from marijuana during which he will throw away all of his paraphernalia and swear off the drug completely; however, he then shifts back to addiction and justifies purchasing the drug "one more time" so that he can smoke copious amounts in a short time and make himself sick on it, thereby helping him to quit. This, of course, just kickstarts the next phase in the cycle that will lead him back to purchasing and using.

The significance of the double bind is that it is a non-logical thought process that reflects the injection of human desire and human failings into the rational world. Erdedy perpetually defeats his own attempts to quit smoking marijuana by developing a system that allows him to repeatedly buy marijuana "one last time" that is part of his quitting. He creates a logical vortex that reinforces the very behavior that it is meant to curtail. It is through the use of the double bind that Wallace breaks from the logical mode of thought represented by the authority figures in the novel. The double-bind continues the encyclopedic tradition of disrupting authoritative discourse in much the way that Pynchon challenges authoritative discourse through the use of paranoia as a model of associational thought. Whereas Pynchon sought to introduce a horizontal dimension to the transmission of knowledge, Wallace seeks to reinsert the human element by showing that emotion and irrational thinking come to bear on decisions and may pose impossible situations.

4.2.2 Encyclopedic Form

In addition to the encyclopedism derived from Diderot, *Infinite Jest* also conforms to generic conventions of the encyclopedic form defined by Northrop Frye. In this section, I will demonstrate *Infinite Jest*'s blending of genre, a convention that characterize the novel as encyclopedic. This is a topic to which I will return in the other two sections of this chapter, where I will identify another of the generic conventions that *Infinite Jest* adopts: integrative irony. That is, Frye describes the encyclopedic form as one that blends four continuous fictional forms: romance, confession, anatomy, and novel. Frye's genres of the continuous prose forms, however, are needlessly limiting in a discussion of postmodern fiction in which the lines between genre and even the very nature of representation is blurred. While Frye's idea and methodology are sound, I propose a reading of *Infinite Jest* that considers genre more broadly. To that end, I argue that *Infinite Jest* also blends genre but rather than the four fictional genres that Frye defines, Wallace blends non-fictional conventions that I will call the "rhetorical genre" with more conventional fictional forms.[93] The most prominent example of the rhetorical genre in the novel is Wallace's extensive use of endnotes.

Form in *Infinite Jest* must first be divided into fictional and non-fictional genre. Nicely following from Frye's formulation, *Infinite Jest* actually contains examples of, or variations upon, the confession, the novel, and the romance – all of which are fictional prose forms. *Infinite Jest* also contains varying examples of dialogue and transcripts – which are fictional though not continuous prose forms. *Infinite Jest* includes academic writing and technical

[93] I do not contend that any part of *Infinite Jest* is actually non-fictional but for the sake of brevity I will refer to all conventions typically used in non-fictional writing that are adopted by Wallace in *Infinite Jest* as non-fictional.

references, the latter tending to appear in numbered endnotes (endnotes themselves point to a blending of a non-fictional convention into a fictional text). In total, there are five main forms within *Infinite Jest*: confession, novel, romance, dialogue, and rhetorical. The first three of these overlap with the continuous prose forms Frye's includes in the encyclopedic form, the fourth is an addition to the fictional form, and the last is an extension of the anatomy form, also taken from Frye. For Frye, the blending of genre in the encyclopedic text comprises an apocalyptic vision, a totalized vision that captures the ethos of the text's culture.

Wallace uses the blending of genre to create tension via the radical juxtaposition of generic modes. This tension encourages a blending of disparate elements of the text and shows the interaction between the individual and the collective that is demonstrated rather than narrated. One extended example of this radical juxtaposition splices together a description of Mario Incandenza's film chronicling North American Interdependence and the creation of O.N.A.N., the governing organization that binds together Mexico, Canada, and the United States.[94] Rather than describe the plot of the movie, as he does for many of James Incandenza's films, Wallace conveys the events of the film as transcribed dialogue. This dialogue is then cut with narration of events around E.T.A. By blending the fictional narration with the rhetorical dialogue, Wallace demonstrates the connection between the individual mentality of the students and the national ethos espoused by President Gentle and C.U.S.P. (the Clean United States Party). In one such transition, the inaugural meeting of the Canadian, American, and Mexican heads of state, during which President Gentle describes the new future of Interdependence, is

[94] While O.N.A.N. is presented as an equal partnership between the three member countries, the "interdependence" is only nominal and American President Gentle is de facto head of the nations.

followed by the guru Lyle's order from a different story line: “Do not underestimate objects!” (394). This transition from dialogue to narration is significant because Gentle's election platform centered on cleaning up the nation, or degrading the status of objects. Gentle, compulsive about cleanliness, is shown to be germ-phobic many times throughout the novel and goes to extreme measures to keep his body clean. Gentle also displaces (“cleanses”) the population of a large area in New England that he then cedes to Canada, again showing his disregard for the physical land and the property of the displaced population. In the second, juxtaposed story line, Lyle, who is a generation older than the students of E.T.A., must remind the students that objects carry meaning and that they are not always expendable. The juxtaposition of these messages serves to underscore the associative connections between the national and the individual. By interspersing the two generic forms, Wallace demonstrates a tension between the authoritative discourse of the state and the real lives of the students.

The rhetorical genre, aligned with non-fiction prose, enters the text in the use of endnotes. In addition to the secondary ordering system mentioned above, they are also a non-fictional convention that is a prominent feature of *Infinite Jest*. While the endnotes serve many narrative functions in the novel, it is the mere presence of these notes that most disrupts the “fictional” mode of *Infinite Jest*. If, as Grafton and Jackson argue, the note performs a different function than does the main text in non-fiction, the reader could expect the endnotes of a novel to follow similar guidelines. Gerard Gennette comments on the presence of notes in fictional texts in his *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, describing the note (like any paratext) as a threshold, a possible point of entry into the text. In Gennette's model, the reader is “outside” of

the text and the main text is “inside,” placing the note in a liminal space neither inside nor outside of the text. The note as a threshold is, at once, a part of the text and not. The very appearance of notes in fictional works, Gennette writes, denotes a text “whose fictionality is very 'impure'” (332), meaning that the generic conventions of fiction are being transgressed. However, the significance of the notes in *Infinite Jest* does not lie in their transgression of fictionality, but in the inclusion of non-fictional rhetorical genres into a fictional form. Wallace incorporates the endnotes in such a way that they are essential to understanding the novel. This works against the notion that non-fictional notes are supplementary to the main text. The non-fictional convention of the endnote is enfolded entirely into the fiction of the novel that also enhances the novel: this is the essence of the blending of genre in the encyclopedic form. Supplementing Frye's theory of the encyclopedic form is necessary for a full consideration of postmodern encyclopedic novels because of the changing nature of the literature. The four continuous fictional forms that Frye identifies as making up the encyclopedic form are no longer adequate to defining the encyclopedic and must take literary innovations into account.

Wallace's use of notes serves a third important role in helping to differentiate it from the use of notes in other works of fiction. The history of notes in fiction is longer than many suspect, dating back to the origins of the novel genre.[95] The uses of these notes have varied greatly, but critics of postmodernist works that employ the device point to the problems of authorship and representation that more contemporary instances present. Manuel Puig's *Kiss of the Spider Woman* uses footnotes to supplement the main text with the work of figures such as Sigmund Freud and Herbert Marcuse in order to complicate the primary narrative by forcing the

[95] See Maloney, 12-4 for a short history of notes in fiction and 23-7 on the development of scholarly notes.

reader to rethink the relationship of the "factual" note with the fictional text.[96] Mark Z. Danielewski uses a complicated, and often confusing, system of notes in *House of Leaves* to erode the concepts of authorship and representation.[97] While Wallace does work with these conventions in the novel, his purpose is different.[98] The use of notes in many other postmodern texts works to distance the reader from the text, to remind the reader of the constructed nature of narrative and representation. Wallace's use of notes works to integrate the larger, untold story. He uses notes to explore characters' backstories and to show connections between characters, even if the connection is fleeting.

Wallace's use of notes to build upon and also complete the main text's narrative contributes to the overall integrative nature of the text. Rather than questioning the nature of construction or authorship, Wallace's notes pose a larger question about the nature of narrative and the role that minor characters play in plot lines. Using notes to show broader connections that are not immediately apparent in the main text, Wallace reveals the humanism that sets him apart from Pynchon and other postmodernists: Wallace reminds us that narrative lines are supported by rarely-seen, or even unseen, characters just as our own lives are filled with – supplemented by – those who are overlooked.

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[96] See Dunne 127-8 for his discussion on the role that footnotes play in constructing a dialogic novel. For Dunne, the notes in *Kiss of the Spider Woman* contribute to the overall polyphony of the text because the writing style in the notes differs greatly from the style in the main text (127).

[97] Caroline Hagood argues that the role of layered footnotes in Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* serve to reflect the "difficulty of chronicling life and assessing that record," to ultimately reflect the postmodern crisis of representation. Beata Marczynska-Fedorowicz writes that the notes "not only . . . divide the page visually to mirror the stratification of narrative voices, but also partition the body of the text into interlinked chunks" (244).

[98] Wallace includes "factual" notes the way that Puig does, to much the same effect. In addition, Wallace and Danielewski also employ similar techniques in their notes (notes within notes, confusion over authorship of some notes, notes that double back onto preceding notes to create cycles, among others), employing "factual," "interpretive," and "discursive" notes as well as hybrids of these.

4.3 *Infinite Jest* updates Pynchon's Encyclopedic Form

In defining *Gravity's Rainbow* as an "anarchistic encyclopedia" in the previous chapter, I wrote that Northrop Frye depicts the encyclopedic text as an accretion of meaning culminating in a totalizing, apocalyptic vision. Pynchon's text reveals a tension between the totalizing tendency of the encyclopedic text and the drive to destabilize hierarchical structures. Wallace's *Infinite Jest* similarly seeks to destabilize hierarchical structures of order, but to that he adds a third dimension: rather than simply rejecting the dominant discourse or rationality, Wallace must contend with both an authoritative discourse (the same Enlightened rationality that Pynchon identifies) and the counter-discourse of postmodernism espoused by Pynchon and others.[99] Wallace negotiates the difference between these discourses in a way that necessarily differs from Pynchon's rejection of dominant discourse.

That is, *Infinite Jest* participates in an encyclopedic discourse that, like *Gravity's Rainbow*, draws upon the long encyclopedic tradition of heterological disruption of authoritative discourse. Wallace's important contribution to the encyclopedic tradition, also like that of *Gravity's Rainbow*, lies in reinventing the model of encyclopedic discourse to fit its historical moment. *Infinite Jest* continues the encyclopedic tradition that *Gravity's Rainbow* itself re-shaped by reworking two key themes from *Gravity's Rainbow*: a broad cultural malaise that is

[99] Many recent critics have labeled David Foster Wallace's works as "post-postmodern" in that they extend from postmodernism but deviate in some particular way. Nicole Timmer argues that Wallace and other late-twentieth century authors engage in a re-humanizing aesthetic that turns away from the postmodernism and post-structuralism that came before them. While I do not think that it is right to categorize Wallace's work as post-postmodern, I do believe that Wallace maintains a conflicted relationship with his postmodern forebears and that the obvious anxiety that is evident in Wallace's work warrants more attention. In the current project, I am more interested in Wallace's participation in the encyclopedic novel tradition than his position vis-a-vis postmodernism.

ambiguous in nature and the power of irony to speak back to power. In Wallace's text, as in Pynchon's, these concepts are deeply intertwined. For Pynchon, paranoia and irony offer alternatives to authoritative discourse. Wallace reinvents these two concepts in the forms of solipsism and a new, integrative form of irony. In addition to these two key concepts, Wallace also presents the double-bind as a form of entrapped thinking that echoes Pynchon's binary logic. In this section I define the continuities between these concepts in the two novels and will return to each of these elements in the following section of this chapter.

4.3.1 Irony and Paranoia vs. Irony and Solipsism

In *Gravity's Rainbow*, as in many postmodernist novels, irony takes center stage as a way of making over or rethinking modernist novelistic conventions; in the encyclopedic novel, this irony also works to highlight tension between heterological, marginal discourse and authoritative discourse. However, the instability of irony that Pynchon engages in *Gravity's Rainbow* as a method of resistance troubles David Foster Wallace because of the instability of interpretation. But even more troubling is the prospect of a subversive, ironic discourse that has been re-co-opted by “Them” and used as a weapon against the very public that once leveled it at “Them.” This prospect is dangerous to the individual for the same reason that it is dangerous to the authorities: it is possible to speak one thing and mean another, to define groups based upon who understands the irony, and to subvert one meaning to another. In other words, irony has the potential to destabilize any meaning and, as Linda Hutcheon argues, may be wielded by anyone.

If used by those in power, irony may have the power to deceive on a massive scale and can be used to silence voices of protest.

Wallace contends with this very nature of irony in his previous work. In "E Unibus Pluram," he considers the ways self-conscious television "metawatching" and ironic metafiction influence one another. Specifically, Wallace argues that the younger generation of fiction writers (born after 1950 who grew up with a television in the house) incorporate the "voyeuristic" tendency to view pop cultural representation as mimetic in nature, leading to such "slick" fictions as *Bright Lights, Big City* by Bret Easton Ellis. Wallace argues that television has adopted the irony of postmodern fiction and incorporated it into a mainstream mode of communication. He contends that television adopted the metafictional techniques popular in 1960s fiction. But television overused irony so that the trope, in itself, came to signify only a hip kind of self-awareness of the televisual medium. Wallace writes, "TV . . . has become able to capture and neutralize any attempt to change or even protest the attitudes of passive unease and cynicism TV requires of Audience in order to be commercially and psychologically viable at doses of several hours per day" (171). The problem that Wallace has with all of this is that just as 1960s metafiction influenced television of the 1980s, television of the 1990s has influenced contemporary fiction. This led, as Wallace saw it, to a generation of "slick," young writers who could write equally slick fiction that he feared had no content behind the flash.

This has diluted the critical power of irony, on the one hand, and emptied it of meaning, on the other. Wallace sees critical potential in the postmodern irony of Pynchon or Barth, but brilliantly draws a parallel between the reflective self-knowledge displayed in this kind of

writing and the sort of intuitive self-knowledge required of television viewers. The viewer must be willing to believe simultaneously in the ironic and non-ironic aspects of television and its characters. Wallace's concern is that television has created a new audience that is quick to pick up on irony (and then to affect it), but does not understand the meaning of irony.

Wallace demonstrates this isolating trend in advertising. He identifies a trend that, on the surface, encourages viewers to "be themselves" and to stand out from the crowd. This results in stultifying spectacle. In other words, television advertisers learned to use irony in such a way as to make the irony completely obvious so that the viewer would be invited to laugh at television *along with* the advertisers. This use of irony, itself being used cynically by advertisers, makes viewers feel as though they are actually on the same side because everybody gets the joke. Such use of irony encourages the viewers to believe that they both know more than the group and are part of the group. But the true aim is to veil motivations behind a cool irony. Wallace argues that this move actually isolates viewers while making them feel a part of a broad audience. Thus, Wallace's "Them" is only marginally different than Pynchon's. Corporations and international political groups still exert power in Wallace's world, but in this world paranoia is no longer an effective tool against this power because corporations, in the form of advertising, no longer have to hide their intentions. Instead, "They" invite Us to join them in their cynicism.

This transition from a subversive irony to a co-opted irony used by "Them" signifies a shift from the use of a trope to a General Irony that pervades the culture. Wallace worries that interpersonal relationships suffer from this pervasive, general irony. Another way to frame this shift in irony is to use the terms that Fredric Jameson outlines in *Postmodernism*. Jameson

argues that the emergence of postmodernism is characterized by a decentering and fragmentation of the individual subject. "The disappearance of the individual subject," Jameson writes, "along with its formal consequence, the increasing unavailability of the personal style, engender the well-nigh universal practice today of what may be called pastiche" (16). Jameson describes pastiche as a blank irony that mimics parody but lacks "parody's ulterior motives, amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter and of any conviction that alongside the abnormal tongue you have momentarily borrowed, some healthy linguistic normality still exists" (17). According to Jameson's definition, postmodern irony is indistinguishable from irony because it takes the same form, but it works to efface the subversive power that irony once had.

It is this irony that Wallace fears, because it is accompanied by the loss of individual subjectivity. For Wallace, general or cultural irony isolates individuals at the same time that it convinces them that they are part of a social group; it therefore provides a false self-awareness. To correctly read Wallace's perspective on irony, the reader needs to keep two things in mind. First, Wallace does not fear all irony, or even the kind of irony that Pynchon employs, but what irony has become after "Their" co-optation of it. Second, he sees postmodern irony as intimately related to the destruction of the individual through its viral promotion of false self-awareness.

"Solipsism" is the term that Wallace uses frequently throughout *Infinite Jest* to refer to the kind of loss-within-self that comes from de-individuating, cultural irony. Wallace is centrally interested in the ways in which individuals interact with one another and also in the ways that individuals are affected by their environments. Because of this Wallace invests time in developing the psychology of his characters. This move to interiority is one of the primary

differences between Wallace's approach to the encyclopedic novel and Pynchon's. The young of Wallace's 1990s face a bombardment of cynical irony and adopt this stance as their own. As a result, individuals will dehumanize themselves and adopt a mass cultural stance rather than a considered, individualistic one because they have absorbed a nihilistic cultural perspective. Just one example of this is Mario's fear that the E.T.A. students do not know how to talk about real feelings without cringing or joking about them.

Solipsism shows a break from Pynchon's paranoia by shifting the focus of the threat. Paranoia is a projected, external threat about the world affecting the individual, while solipsism internalizes the threat so that, to the individual, it feels as though danger arises from within. However, the two bear the similarity of ambiguity. Since Pynchon uses paranoia in multiple contexts, it sometimes carries negative attributes that are damaging to the individual rather than liberating. Conversely, solipsism is negative in *Infinite Jest*, but it is closely related to more positive attributes such as self-awareness and self-consciousness.

4.3.2 The "Double-Bind"

The second key concept that *Infinite Jest* shares with *Gravity's Rainbow* is the drive to expose the illegitimacy of strict binary logic. Wallace's double-bind and Pynchon's associational thinking share a similar goal but differ in execution. In *Gravity's Rainbow*, Pynchon counters Pointsman's strict "either/or" thinking with Roger Mexico's "both/and" logic to recognize gradation between poles. The "both/and" alternative pits the statistician Mexico against the Pavlovian Pointsman – both are men of science and both derive their findings from their chosen methods. Both depend upon abstractions of everyday common-sense reasoning as they pit one

scientific paradigm against another. The difference between associational thinking and Wallace's "double-bind" is that the double-bind returns the thinking to everyday life and includes a degree of uncertainty, or illogic. Those who experience the double-bind may not have the capacity to think logically about their predicament or may not have complete knowledge of it. This difference between associational thinking and the "double-bind" is key to Wallace's humanism. For Wallace, liberation is not a matter of systems or groups (such as "We" and "Them"); rather, the double-bind is centrally important to individuals' everyday lives.

A second major difference between Pynchon's and Wallace's alternatives to systematized logic is that Wallace's double-binds are ambiguous. Much like the subtle divide between solipsism and self-awareness, the double-bind may affect an individual positively or negatively, and it is largely a matter of the individual's interpretation or use of the double-bind that determines its valence. The double-bind, like Pynchon's associational thinking, covers a range of concepts that work against systematized thought. At the heart of the double-bind is a conflict, paradox, or confusion that is irresolvable according to binary or systematized logic. The double-bind also layers in emotion, compulsion, and pathology.

An example from the novel will most clearly demonstrate Wallace's concept of the double-bind. Wallace demonstrates that the logical answer to a problem or question is not always the right answer and that double-binds, like the fallacy of either/or logic in *Gravity's Rainbow*, may require a different kind of thinking to solve – if "solving" the problem is even a possibility. Wallace writes explicitly about the double-bind as a central feature of a class taught at ETA called "The Personal Is the Political Is the Psychopathological: the Politics of

Contemporary Psychopathological Double-Binds," taught by prorector Marty Esther Thode (306-7). The class, ostensibly meant to point out the ways in which personal pathologies may be at odds with one another, is framed in highly academic language. The class encourages students to consider glib answers to unlikely double-binds. For example, in a question on a midterm about what an agoraphobic kleptomaniac is to do for relief, the student Ted Schacht simply writes "mail fraud" (307-8).[100] Thode creates a question that trivializes actual double-binds because her students recognize that her "exams were notorious no-brainers and automatic A's if you were careful with your third-person pronouns" (308-9). She falls victim to systematized thought by failing to recognize that logical thought cannot answer some questions. This only multiplies the double-bind because, as the title of the course suggests, her purpose is to guide her students away from systematized thought into a personal, mindful way of thinking. This question also reveals the potentially damaging nature of the double-bind by trivializing pathological compulsions and reducing them to a logically "solvable" problem.

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[100] The full question is a thing of convoluted beauty:

ITEM *1*

(1a) You are an individual who, is pathologically kleptomaniacal. As a kloptomaniac, you are pathologically driven to steal, steal, steal. You must steal.

(1b) But, you are also an individual who, is pathologically agoraphobic. As an agoraphobic, you cannot so much as step off your front step of the porth of your home, without undergoing palpitations, drenching sweats, and feelings of impending doom. An an agoraphobic, you are driven to pathologically stay home and not leave. You cannot leave home.

(1c) But, from (1a) you are pathologically driven to go out and steal, steal, steal. But, from (1b) you are pathologically driven to not ever leave home. You live alone. Meaning, there is no one else in your home to steal from. Meaning, you must go out, into the marketplace to satisfy your overwhelming compulsion to steal, steal, steal. But, such is your fear of the marketplace that you cannot under any circumstances, leave home. Whether your problem is true personal psychopathology, or merely marginalization by a political definition of 'psychopathological,' nevertheless, it is a Double-Bind.

(1d) Thus, respond to the question of, what do you do? (*sic* 307-8)

From the convoluted logic presented in the form of a warped syllogism, to the second-person positioning of the student as the afflicted, to the various repetitions, and amateurish understanding of psychology, this question undermines whatever political point Thode wants to make.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, there is a correlation between the double-bind and irony because both depend upon simultaneously accepting potentially mutually-exclusive, or at least conflicting concepts. Another example from Wallace's novel illustrates this. In one case, a resident of the Enfield Marine Public Health Hospital complex is functionally catatonic because she deeply fears *being* catatonic:

> the lady is not catatonic in the strict sense of *catatonic* but rather a 'D.P.,' which is mental-health-facility slang for *Debilitatingly Phobic*. Her deal is apparently that she's almost psychotically terrified of the possibility that she might be either blind or paralyzed or both. So e.g. she keeps her eyes shut tight 24/7/365 out of the reasoning that as long as she keeps her eyes shut tight she can find hope in the possibility that if she was to open them she'd be able to see (997n67).

The non-catatonic woman has *reasoned* herself into acting catatonic in order to avoid being actually catatonic although this “reasoning” is itself born of her phobia. She is stuck with the thing that she fears most as a means of avoiding that very thing. The double-bind here functions as a mental block that results in a paradox: inaction is the result of a fear of inaction.

The double-bind also arises from situations when knowledge is purposefully obscured or impossible to determine. Although this is not technically a double-bind in the way that Wallace means it, because for him the double-bind is always linked to irony, it is reasonable to consider this a variation on the double-bind because the result is the same: competing urges, thoughts, or inclinations tie up an individual's thought process. This point is illustrated by considerations of where Rémy Marathe's true allegiances lie. Marathe, a member of the Wheelchair Assassins and

(potential) traitor to his cause, spends much of the novel atop a mountain outside of Tuscon, meeting with his OUS[101] contact Hugh Steeply. Marathe initially agrees to pose as a mole to feed erroneous information to the O.N.A.N. Intelligence agency but has actually crossed over (and is now effectively a triple-agent) in order to "secure advanced medical care" for his severely disabled wife, but his true loyalties are in question (89). While Marathe does seem to give Steeply information, he is also very cagey about revealing too much. Sorting out Marathe's loyalty quickly becomes complicated. He pretends "only to M. Fortier and his A.F.R. Superiors that he was merely pretending to feed some betraying information to B.S.S." (89).[102] The passage is studded with endnotes, some of which clarify abbreviations, but none that help to clarify Marathe's position. A particularly daunting note reads in part, "M. Foriter and the A.F.R. (as far as Marathe knew) believed that Marathe was functioning as a kind of 'triple agent' or duplicitous 'double agent' . . . only (as far as Marathe can know) Marathe and very few B.S.S. Operatives know that Marathe is now only *pretending* to pretend to betray, that M. Steeply is fully aware that Marathe responds to B.S.S.'s summonses with . . . full knowledge" (995n40). The result of this is that Steeply and his superiors in O.U.S. believe that Marathe works for them, but the fact that he has betrayed his original loyalties continues to taint his credibility. In these segments, Wallace's obscure prose matches the theme of uncertainty. The note that is meant to help to clarify, and is written in a deceptively conversational tone, works to obscure meaning as readily as Marathe himself obscures his true loyalties.

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[101] Office of Unspecified Services, a post-Reconfiguration spy agency similar to the CIA under O.N.A.N. The name is most likely a play on Office of Strategic Services, the WWII precursor to the modern day CIA.

[102] B.S.S. also refers to O.U.S. in French the "*Bureau des Services sans Spédificité*" (89).

The uncertainty in the text about where Marathe's loyalties lie reveals a double-bind for Steeply and his superiors that mimics rhetorical irony: Steeply's orders depend upon both trusting and not trusting Marathe. The spy must remain ever-vigilant to the possibility that he has been discovered and what he considers to be accurate information may, in fact, be misinformation. In effect, Steeply's inability to read Marathe echoes the position of the television audience Wallace describes in "E Unibus Pluram" because, like the television viewer, there is a great deal of uncertainty about the individual's position. Steeply's unstable position in regard to Marathe's loyalty echoes the television viewer's ability to accurately read an unstable irony.

Double-binds also appear as paradoxes throughout the novel as parts of sports philosophy and as elements of Alcoholics Anonymous. Don Gately prays to a God he does not believe in, while Teddy Schacht realizes that "to win enough of the time to be considered successful you have to both care a great deal about it and also not care about it at all" (269). Dr. Charles Tavis changes the school motto to "THE MAN WHO KNOWS HIS LIMITATIONS HAS NONE," upon his replacing James Incandenza as ETA headmaster (81). Many of the characters come to realize that it is impossible to logically parse these binds. AA confronts this head-on by down-playing the importance of logic and elevating the importance of experience, personal history, and gut-feeling. Gately has no difficulty praying to a God he does not believe in because he believes in the efficacy of AA. Likewise, Schacht recognizes the impossibility of both caring a great deal and not caring at all because his own life experience shows him that this kind of paradox

actually can be true.[103] The role that double-binds play for the characters parallels the role that they play in the novel overall and is, I would argue, an extension of the disruption of either/or logic that occurs in *Gravity's Rainbow* and serves a similar purpose.

4.4 Integrative Irony

Irony in *Infinite Jest* is complex and multi-layered because Wallace engages the topic directly throughout the novel: many characters appear to take a negative stand on irony. These characters' attitudes are colored by their experiences and their culture. As an encyclopedic novelist, Wallace engages many of the cultural problems of his day, and one that Wallace was very aware of is the empty irony of postmodern pastiche and the degenerative effects that this can have on culture. Wallace was particularly concerned with the way that irony can be used as a tool to alienate people from one another.[104] Wallace critiques irony at the same time that he reinvents it in a new context in order to reclaim it as a critical tool and to reverse its disintegrative postmodern force. He does this by challenging the nature of irony in character dialogue about irony and in the way that he employs irony in AA meetings to underscore the connection and community among the members. The result is an encyclopedic novel that advances *Infinite Jest* in Frye's modal cycle further in the direction of the mythic, challenges the rhetorical purpose of local irony in the text, and seeks to reclaim the critical edge of general irony.

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[103] Teddy Schacht suffers from Crohn's disease and a persistent knee injury and only wants to play tennis competitively enough to go to dental school. However, since he stopped caring about playing tennis professionally he has improved his game (266-7).

[104] However, Wallace's stance on irony was not straightforward and changed over the course of his career.

Critics of *Infinite Jest* have read irony in three primary ways: Wallace is critical of disintegrative irony by creating an anti-ironic text, Wallace is critical of irony and reappropriates irony in some way, and Wallace engages in a post-ironic discourse. Critics such as Heather Houser, Marshall Boswell, and Iannis Goerlandt read irony in *Infinite Jest* as a form of detachment, or alienation of the author from the reader.[105] Houser, Boswell, and Goerlandt interpret this ironic detachment as Wallace's commentary on the disintegrating power of irony – Goerlandt deems *Infinite Jest* "highly anti-ironic" (2). Each of these critics is correct, to a degree, about Wallace's use of irony in *Infinite Jest*. I would argue, however, that Wallace's perspective on irony is more complex, for he attempts to mediate between the negative aspects of postmodern irony, the trope of irony, and a broader use of irony that works as a commentary upon irony itself. It is this last usage of irony that challenges a reading of *Infinite Jest* as "anti-ironic" because Wallace engages copiously in a variety of forms of irony.

Alcoholics Anonymous presents a model of ironic instability that leads to varied interpretations of the role of irony in the novel. Iannis Goerlandt accepts AA as "highly anti-ironic" (2) and Petrus van Ewijk agrees with Goerlandt that the AA model is a solution to both addiction and solipsism.[106] However, Timothy Aubry also comments on the role of AA in the novel, arguing that *Infinite Jest* actually requires a mediation between irony and AA-style sincerity. This balance of irony must be determined by the reader because there is no one

[105] See Houser, "*Infinite Jest*'s Environmental Case for Disgust." Houser argues that the narrative irony of *Infinite Jest* reflects themes of detachment and disgust. Houser draws a parallel between the ironic detachment in the novel with disgust over destruction of the environment (geo-politically in the form of Reconfiguration as well as ecologically). See also, Boswell (14).

[106] See Van Ewjik, "'I' and 'Other': the Relevance of Wittgenstein, Buber, and Levinas for an Understanding of AA's Recovery Program in David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest.*"

character in the novel who maintains a healthy balance, all of the primary characters tending toward one extreme or the other. Aubry's essay is important because he identifies the necessity for a balance between self-awareness, sincerity, and irony.[107]

Two recent pieces by Emily Russell and Josh Roiland argue a different form of irony in Wallace's writing, staking out the position that Wallace's use of irony is multifaceted and heavily dependent on context. These critics either perceive Wallace's use of irony in a positive light or argue that he does successfully use irony as a tool to combat alienation. Emily Russell analyzes the role that irony plays in the formation of discursive communities in her book *Reading Embodied Citizenship*. The chapter, entitled "Some Assembly Required: The Disability Politics of *Infinite Jest*," argues that body and disability are perceived as separate from the self.[108] Russell notes that viewers of Mario's Interdependence Day movie share in an ironic enjoyment that is at the expense of the political landscape (not at Mario's expense). She writes, "the viewers' shared ironic experience nevertheless achieves the purpose of Interdependence Day by illustrating a collective relation to the state" (185). Russell's observations clearly distinguish between modes of irony (the carefree parody of recent political events) that *Infinite Jest* contains. Josh Roiland's essay takes a slightly different approach to Wallace's writing by examining the structure of notes in his non-fiction writing and acknowledging the use of ironic tropes. He addresses the question of irony in Wallace's writing, although it examines Wallace's non-fiction rather than his fiction. Roiland's essay is useful in examining Wallace's use of irony because the

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[107] See Aubrey, "Selfless Cravings: Addiction and Recovery in David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest*."

[108] See also Elizabeth Freudenthal's essay "Anti-Interiority: Compulsiveness, Objectification, and Identity in *Infinite Jest*" for more on separation of self and body. Freudenthal's perspective focuses more on the individual than Russell's, whose focus is on the broader cultural landscape.

essay is about the interpretation of irony in Wallace's work rather than Wallace writing about his own process. Roiland writes that Wallace's notes express his "excess of consciousness," meaning that Wallace used the notes as a way to represent formally his own hyper-awareness and exuberance (33). Roiland also writes that "Critics who label Wallace an ironist privilege his writing style and ignore his ideology" (36). Roiland recognizes that Wallace's irony is both a subject and a rhetorical device. This is important, because despite the fact that Wallace writes against irony in his non-fiction, he writes about a very specific self-negating, consciousness-effacing irony that obviates connection and empathy. In using irony as a weapon against irony, Wallace assumes the position of meta-ironist.

To date, the most comprehensive study of irony in *Infinite Jest* is Lee Konstantinou's "No Bull: David Foster Wallace and Postironic Belief." Konstantinou's view of Wallace's irony departs dramatically from the accounts of other critics because he not only notes the complexity of Wallace's irony (recognizing both the overarching narrative and structural irony, but also addressing the smaller instances of irony as well) but attempts to redefine the context in which Wallace writes. Konstantinou reads Wallace in the context of Fukuyama's "end of history," presenting the argument that because Wallace writes in a dramatically shifted context from previous postmodernist writers, his use of irony is likewise dramatically shifted. Wallace uses "metafictional form as a way of reconnecting form and content, as a way of strengthening belief" (90-1). The irony that Wallace engages in is, for Konstantinou, "post-ironic" in the sense that it is opposed to the negativity of Kierkegaardian irony which is negative because it counteracts

belief *as such*. Post-irony, Konstantinou argues, advocates a belief in "the ethos of belief in and of itself" (90).

While Konstantinou's critique of irony in *Infinite Jest* makes sense in the context of Fukuyama's Hegelian dialecticism that stresses synthesis and teleology, my understanding of *Infinite Jest* in the context of the encyclopedic novel follows more closely the Blakean dialectic that Frye theorizes in many of his works and the cyclical modal progression that Frye also presents.[109] I do agree that there is a shift in the context of the use of irony from writers like Pynchon to Wallace, but I argue that this is the result of Wallace's interactions with postmodern irony, and not an extension of the same sort of irony or even the result of a shift to "post-irony." The synthesis of postmodern irony and Wallace's integrative irony does not efface postmodern irony, but continues to contend with it and combat it from a position beyond the instability of postmodern irony.

4.4.1 Local Irony

The first step, then, in clarifying irony's role in *Infinite Jest* is to separate ironic tropes from the general irony that imbues the text and to contextualize these within the broader sweep of modal irony. Ironic tropes are instances of what Booth calls "local irony," or specific uses of ironic figurative language (literally saying one thing but meaning another). Irony is applied to different things and has different meanings in *Infinite Jest*. For example, students at ETA crack

[109] Brian Russell Graham writes in *The Necessary Unity of Opposites: The Dialectical Thinking of Northrop Frye* that, when faced with conflicting concepts, Frye's thought "moves dialectically beyond the level of opposition onto a higher level where seemingly antithetical modes of thought prose to be complementary" (6). I have written else where that "this spatial metaphor of resolution on a 'higher' level also aligns with Frye's invocation of the Apocalyptic world as the space of revelation" (Raese 267). For Frye, the Apocalyptic is the syncretic anagogy that permits what he called "interpenetration," or the mutual-effectiveness of competing ideas.

ironic jokes about one another that do not extend beyond that specific utterance. Modal irony, according to Frye's model, marks the novel's position on the cycle that moves from myth through the romantic, high mimetic, and low mimetic before arriving as irony. As I described in the introduction to this dissertation, the cyclical movement from myth to irony represents a displacement from the cultural integration of myth to the cultural disintegration of irony. While *Infinite Jest* remains in the ironic mode, it does represent a movement closer to a reintegration into the mythic than did *Gravity's Rainbow*.

Likewise, despite their declarations to be "irony-free," AA members indulge liberally in this kind of irony.[110] AA in fact actively engages in its own brand of irony. For example, members of AA groups in Boston frequently share in-jokes, and maintain a double awareness about the effectiveness of the program. Thus, AA does not so much discourage irony *per se* as it discourages the *wrong kind* of irony. AA members' rejection of irony stems comes from the mistaken notion that irony always undercuts sincerity. In the context of the novel, this means that members are not to speak deprecatingly about the program, must not use irony to mask their true desire to become sober, and must not use irony in any other way that might detract from their ability to become and remain sober. However, the daily interactions of the residents of Ennet house and AA members undercuts this point. Sponsors and counselors actively engage in irony to tell jokes and express kinship with new members. This use of irony does what Booth terms "the building of amiable communities" (28). Booth writes that these ironic utterances

[110] Van Ewijk writes, "At Ennet House, Wallace presents an audience that is not receptive to irony. AA consciously tries to alter the context so as to take away any relevance of the ironic pose. It does not entirely do away with the possibility of such an attitude emerging, but it certainly discourages it" (140). While van Ewijk's point has merit in terms of general irony, it too makes the mistake of positioning AA and irony opposite one another rather than along a range.

work because the speaker "assumes that he does not have to spell out the shared and secret truths on which [the] reconstruction is to be built" (28). Irony, in this case, strengthens interpersonal bonds by revealing shared knowledge and developing trust between the speaker and interlocutor.

Not only does irony have this integrative function, but AA actively encourages some kinds of irony amongst its members, albeit calling it something else. Gately cannot puzzle out how it is that AA works, but by putting faith into the program, he has been able to see the success. It is participation in this improbable program, "this unromantic, unhip, clichéd AA thing," that seems to get results in spite of itself that draws group members together in a moment of shared understanding. A long-standing joke among the Crocodiles[111] is that remaining active is "only a *suggestion*" (356; Wallace's emphasis). The irony of course, is that this "choice" is presented as something that is compulsory to staying sober. The alternative to following this suggestion is going back to the habit to "die in slime" (356). This, the narrator explains, is "your classic in-type joke" (356). This "in joke" depends upon the knowledge that AA members of any tenure share with one another at the expense of the new members who do not want to follow the "suggestions." The reason that this irony works is twofold. First, it distinguishes those who are "in" from those who are "out." Those who are "in" continue to share their experiences, to "pay it forward," and remain sober. They gain solidarity through this shared experience. Secondly, this irony negates the "common sense" that incoming members believe that they possess. Rather than degrading the program or one's own sincerity, this type of joke degrades the kind of person an addict *once was*. Gately, who is now "in," gets to laugh at the person he used to be – the

[111] Long-time AA members whom Wallace describes as having "geological" amounts of sober time under their belts.

person who rejected AA logic. This ability to look back at the past also contributes to the recovery narrative to show the personal growth that an individual has undergone.[112]

In another episode, new Ennet house resident Geoffrey Day disputes the logic of AA with Don Gately. Day's rejection of AA appears to be based upon his inability to see past AA's logical inconsistencies. Gately reads this as Day's searching for a reason to redirect blame from himself for lapsing into addiction. Geoffrey Day's path to rehab began when he fell asleep while driving and drove his car through a storefront, "and then got out and proceeded to browse until the Finest came and got him" (272). After this, Day was taken to Dimock Detox, a legendarily seedy detoxification center, before arriving at Ennet House. According to Day, however, this did not happen: "his story is he just strolled into Ennet House on a lark one day . . . and found the place too hilariously egregulous[113] to want to ever leave" (272).

However, the ironic stance that Day takes to AA is what allows him to continue to participate in a program that he finds illogical and anti-intellectual. Gately has already made peace with the inconsistencies of AA and made the decision to continue with the program (eg. to continue to pray to a God he does not believe exists), but Day has not reached that point of letting go of his intellectual inhibitions. If he can do so, the ironic stance will serve Day's purpose of getting clean. By maintaining an ironic distance from the real reason that he arrived at Ennet House, Day retains a portion of his dignity by pretending that he is at the house for

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[112] See Timothy Aubry's "Selfless Cravings: Addiction and Recovery in David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest*" for more on the role of irony in AA and the recovery narrative.

[113] This is likely not Day's word choice but is a misunderstanding by Gately, through whom this episode is focalized. On the blog "Infinite Detox," the blogger interprets this word as a blending of "egregious" and "ridiculous." However, this term might also derive from the Latin "regulus," a diminutive for "rex," which the *OED* defines as "a petty king or ruler; a sub-king." Since Day does become something of a petty tyrant in lording his education over Gately and the other residents, this possible derivation seem apropos.

reasons other than his substance abuse. Ultimately, if Day is sincere in his effort to get clean, he will need to alter his approach, but this is clearly a tactic that he uses to permit himself to remain in a place where he feels he does not belong but also knows that he needs to be. Thus, Day can maintain an ironic distance as an excuse (for himself? for those around him? for his colleagues?) to stay in rehab while pursuing a sincere desire for change. Thus, far from being simply a disintegrative force, irony can promote community and a helpful "double-perspective." Day can look haughtily at rehab and also participate in rehab; the ability to have two perspectives propels Gately and others to continue to participate in a program that their logic tells them will not work.

The importance of integrative irony is underscored by examples of disintegrative irony in the text. The notion that irony will undercut sincerity is not unique to *Infinite Jest*, or to postmodern irony. One of the dangers of irony that Wayne Booth points out is that irony can be difficult to interpret, which can lead to difficultly in determining where irony begins and ends. Booth notes that a single word or phrase at the end of a passage can be enough to cast doubt on the entire passage. Likewise, in *Infinite Jest*, because AA is built upon the structure of openness and sharing, the fear is that an ironic slip may cast doubt on an individual's sincerity in desiring sobriety. Thus, members are encouraged to "Get Active With Your Group," meaning they should attend meetings, go on Commitments, and also "share their experience, strength, and hope" with others (343). The instability of irony can morph into Jamesonian pastiche. Irony, in this sense, can be a danger to communities such as AA or ETA because the instabilities may remain local – one is uncertain of what a particular utterance means – or it may be symptomatic of a general irony – one is uncertain of broader meaning. An ironic joke that exposes shared

knowledge builds community, but a speaker who jokes about the efficacy of the program casts doubt on the whole enterprise and the value of remaining sober.

4.4.2 General Irony

The general irony of *Infinite Jest* presents more of a challenge than does the use of irony as a trope. General irony expands the scope of instability of local irony.[114] Rather than limiting the instability – or doubling of meaning – to a phrase or exchange, general irony characterizes a cultural attitude toward truth and representation, like Romantic or postmodern irony (Jamesonian pastiche).[115] As seen from my examples above, the trope of irony tends to take place in discussions between characters and thus its limitations are more clear. General irony in the novel is expressed through its narration, tone, juxtaposition of episodes, and the like. It is this general irony that many critics interpret in a negative light, and Wallace seems to encourage this view through the discussions between AA members and Mario's observations that irony masks true feelings. Because *Infinite Jest* stems from the postmodern tradition and adopts many postmodern techniques and tropes, it seems logical to presume that it partakes of general irony, but it is local irony in the text that indicates the proper way to read irony overall in *Infinite* Jest. The subject of many of these local ironies focus on the "amiable community" is a clue to the interpretation of general irony as a move away from disintegrative Jamesonian pastiche and toward an integrative model of irony.

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[114] For Wayne C. Booth, general irony would be equivalent to "unstable-covert-infinite" irony in literature. For Booth, this kind of irony "leav[es] us to infer the depths of their ironies from superficial and deliberately ambiguous signs" (257).

[115] Claire Colebrook describes Romantic irony as "a style of existence rather than a rhetorical figure" (52).

However, Wallace never seems easy with methods by which one combats postmodern irony. The liberating power of irony that Pynchon unleashes in *Gravity's Rainbow* is not available to Wallace: in his world, that form of irony has been co-opted by "Them," and Wallace must struggle with developing a way to combat irony with irony. This is apparent in an earlier work, Wallace's novella *Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way* from the 1989 collection *Girl with Curious Hair*. In this piece, creative writing students Mark Nechtr and Drew-Lynn Eberhardt study under Professor Ambrose, a John Barth stand-in. Wallace plays with Barthian metafictional form and seeks to find a way for the young Nechtr to emerge from under what Wallace clearly considers to be Ambrose's destructive influence. The interaction between the two authors is less interesting than the metafictional choices that Wallace makes as the author of the piece. In addition to making multiple allusions to Barth's *Lost in the Funhouse*, Wallace adopts certain metafictional tropes while claiming that the story itself is not metafictional. For example, Wallace writes,

> if this were a piece of metafiction, which it's NOT, the exact number of typeset lines between this reference and the prenominate referent would very probably be mentioned, which would be a princely pain in the ass, not to mention cocky, since it would assume that a straightforward and anti-embellished account of a slow and hot and sleep-deprived and basically clotted and frustrating day in the lives of three kids, none of whom are all that sympathetic, could actually get published, which these days good luck, but in metafiction it would, nay *needs* be mentioned, a required postmodern convention aimed at drawing the poor old reader's

> emotional attention to the fact that the narrative bought and paid for and now under time-consuming scrutiny is *not* in fact a barely-there window . . . (264-5)

and this continues for another half page, describing the difference between such a facile postmodern approach and a more traditional realistic vein. The narrator comments that "this self-conscious explicitness and deconstructed disclosure supposedly mak[es] said metafiction 'realer' than a piece of pre-postmodern 'Realism'" (265). In this novella, Wallace does seem to take an anti-ironic stance, but he uses a disintegrative irony in an attempt to destroy a disintegrative irony. Rather than actually combatting the destructive postmodern irony as he intends, Wallace doubles down on the irony. *Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way* is not less self-conscious nor less metafictional than *Lost in the Funhouse*, but neither is it more. It is *as* self-referential and metafictional as Barth's work, which undermines Wallace's purpose in writing it.

Wallace's critique of such postmodern conventions is clear, but the problem lies in the execution: he must posit a way out. I believe that it is his realization that disintegrative irony cannot combat destructive irony that leads Wallace to make the dire claims about irony that he does in "E Unibus Pluram," as mentioned above. The impulse of using irony to combat irony is correct, but this is an impulse that Wallace will not redeem until *Infinite Jest*. It is in *Infinite Jest* that Wallace identifies and utilizes integrative irony, though he refrains from explicitly pointing to the integrative irony in *Infinite Jest*. What is more, in the "E Unibus Pluram" essay, Wallace characterizes integrative irony as a *lack* of irony. This is Wallace's strongest point because integrative irony depends upon a pre-existing understanding among individuals – like the in-joke

– while disintegrative irony plays on ironic instability – the individual's ability to accurately interpret irony – that is necessarily alienating. Unlike the irony of *Westward the Course of Empire Makes Its Way*, that is irony that metafictionally points out irony, *Infinite Jest* trusts the reader to understand the context of the irony and to be able to identify the ironic without guidance from the narrator.[116]

Just as meta-fiction provides a useful tool for examining the fictional nature of fiction, irony provides a useful tool for examining irony. This is the ultimate legacy that Wallace receives from the postmodernist authors of a generation before: a redirection of ironic discourse back at itself. Wallace demonstrates the drama of this recursive self-returning in human terms by making his characters face their own ironic detachment. For example, throughout the novel, Hal faces extreme bouts of self-awareness and self-doubt that alienate him from his peer group. Hal suffers from "anhedonia," a lack of the ability to enjoy his successes and his life. He feels a loss of identity in the midst of the pressures that he faces both from his mother and from the weight of his dead father's influence.[117] One expression of this is Hal's narration of an instructional video made by his brother Mario in which Hal gives the advice: "If you are an adolescent, here is

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[116] Herman Paul argues that Hayden White's *Metahistory* seeks to pit irony against irony in a way that is similar to my discussion of Wallace's use of irony. Noticing that White does not use the word "irony" uniformly, Paul posits two versions of irony White uses: epistemological and ideological. The former refers to a skeptical historical position that recognizes there is no objective founding to history. The latter form of irony refers to positioning a historian so that he or she cannot comment upon contemporary political, scientific, or philosophical debate. White found this position to be constraining and a misunderstanding of the historian's role. Paul argues that White's use of irony to fight irony works because of irony's unique ability to point beyond itself (this is the point that Konstantinou and others take from Kierkegaard) to a sincere meaning: "In other words, it is an understanding of pluralism that opens the door to a non-ironic comprehension of reality" (43). While I agree that irony can be used as a tool against itself, I do not believe that it must lead to a non-ironic comprehension.

[117] In another striking example of a double-bind in the novel, Hal's mother Avril Incandenza pressures her son by refusing to influence his decisions and letting him make his own choices. The freedom that Avril believes she is granting her son ends up constraining his ability to make decisions because he needs guidance from an interested adult.

the trick to being neither quite a nerd nor quite a jock: be no one. It is easier than you think" (175). Hal's plight is so painful because every reflection spirals back upon itself as he examines and reexamines his motivations. This is a process of reflection that is absent from characters such as Orin, who practices "sincerity with a motive" and regales Hal with his deceitful pick-up strategies. Hal's ability to interpret Orin's techniques locates the ethical failings that Orin seems completely oblivious to. One of Orin's strategies – "Speedy Seduction Strategy Number 7," to be precise – involves making up a fake spouse so that he can approach a woman, tell her how much he loves his "wife" and then confess that the woman's beauty and charms are severely tempting him away from the wife he holds so dear. Orin presents this simply as a strategy, a dishonest one, he owns, but a way of gaining what he wants: there is no real infidelity and the other women will never know. Hal, however, points the worst of it out to him: "The fake ring and fictional spouse. It's like you 're inventing somebody you love just to seduce somebody else into helping you betray her. What's it like. It's like suborning somebody into helping you desecrate a tomb they don't know is empty" (1009n110). Hal's sense of ethics is highly evolved for a seventeen year old and this is due, in large part, to his ability to bend irony to this larger ethical purpose. In similar fashion, Gately is able to access the ritualistic (or religious) aspects of AA due to ironic stance regarding it.

Taken in a broader sense, irony's ability to "point beyond itself" is also a continuation of the encyclopedic disruption of authoritative discourse. Irony, in pointing beyond itself, disrupts hierarchies of discourse. A similar disruption of authoritative discourse occurs throughout *Gravity's Rainbow* in the form of paranoia and the metaphorical appeal to Gödel's

Incompleteness theorem. The role of irony in the novel parallels the ironic function of the novel as a whole: the key to combating empty postmodern irony is not to veer off into unbounded sentimentality but to mediate the use of irony so that it can regain its critical edge. And so, the key to the novel is not to read it as completely ironic or against irony, but as mediation that makes careful use of irony. *Infinite Jest* addresses the topic of integration in several ways: as a reacquaintanceship of the self with the self, as a relationship between the artist and the work, as an integration of the individual into society, and as a nation struggling to find its place in the world.

Many characters share their expression of alienation through irony, and this shared experience leads to a mutual understanding. Recognition of this shared experience is an important first step in characters' realization of their participation with discursive communities and the beginning of a cultural re-integration. But irony is a binding agent not just between characters but also between conflicting or even contradictory states of mind. AA requires members to be both rational and non-rational creatures. As noted above, Geoffrey Day's problem with AA is its banality. He knows, rationally, that the program should not work but it somehow does. This is the same hurdle that Gately had to clear in order to stick with the program. But despite Gately's acceptance of AA principles, he remains a rational character able to articulate the value of the program even as he fails to completely understand it. The irony of the situation here is not verbal but mental. Gately and the other members of AA must constantly work to integrate their desires to be rational creatures with the irrational program. It is in this way that the general irony of the novel tracks onto the figure of the double-bind. The double-bind depends on a

model of general irony that integrates multi-layered "binaries" that move beyond the both/and logic of *Gravity's Rainbow* to something that is not recognizable as a binary at all.

Addiction, like habit formation, is not a rational process but the repetition of certain actions over a period of time that becomes a habit. "No one action establishes a habit" (9), David Morris writes.[118] Morris argues that Gately is able to address his problem of addiction in a more appropriate way than Day because Gately does not try to rationalize the recovery process. AA, as Morris rightly argues, defies rationality through a reliance on ritual: "Gately acknowledges that something beyond his rational capacity is integral to his reform to the extent that he realizes that his own time of action is not what enables his reform . . . it is the ritual communal life of A.A." (16). Morris ties Gately's success to his association with AA and Day's lack of success to his too secular, too rational mindset that rejects the ritualized aspects of the program. Gately's activities, Morris writes, "force Gately to dwell in patterns that are alien to his rational attempts to change . . . and why he has to go on faith where A.A. is concerned" (16).

It does not seem a coincidence, then, that Hal writes about the role of the hero in the midst of such cultural upheaval. Hal performs a comparative analysis of the protagonists from *Hawaii Five-0* and *Hill Street Blues*, describing the former as "a classically modern hero of action" who is always on the move and solves cases himself (140). The latter protagonist is a "'*post'*-modern hero . . . a hero of *re*action," who delegates responsibility and manages his station (141; Wallace's emphasis). Hal argues that the television audience has grown to prefer the latter protagonist but posits a move to "the hero of *non*-action, the catatonic hero" who

[118] Morris' essay originally appeard in *Clio* vol.30.4 (2001), though the version that I cite is a downloadable PDF available from Concordia University's Spectrum Research Repository and is paginated differently.

simply exists “divorced from all stimulus” (142). Hal considers this “'post-post'-modern” hero in the light of a new shift in the “North American audience” (142).[119] What Hal might be inadvertently advocating is a new reaction to culture in which the viewer refuses the stimuli of substances, entertainments, and the ever present specter of Too Much Fun. Meaning is retained by maintaining a knowing distance from Entertainment and from a culture suffused in empty irony. The ironic stance, in this case, is the rejection of a detrimental aspect of culture that the young students at ETA and many in the broader society cannot articulate.

The inability to articulate a sense of unease about the culture that they are growing into pervades the seemingly cynical ironic stance that the students of ETA adopt. For example, Mario mourns other students' inability to talk about “really real stuff” without hiding their embarrassment or “roll[ing] their eyes or laugh[ing] in a way that isn't happy” (592). What Mario sees in his fellow ETA residents may be an inability to break away from that ironic position, or it could be the marker of a deeper unease. It is important to keep in mind that what is “really real stuff” for Mario is markedly different than it is for the other students who face the pressures of high level competition, bodily stress, familial stress, and uncertainty of their future. However, that Mario can detect the sadness behind the eye-rolling and uneasy laughing is an indication of the students real emotional state beneath the pose. After all, the characters most featured in this atmosphere are adolescent males in a hyper-masculinzed environment that is not

[119] It is suggestive (and seems oddly prescient on Hal's part), that Hal suggests a catatonic hero who seems to be cut off from the world because he ends up becoming cut off from the world and because the Entertainment transfixes the viewer into a kind of catatonia. To the first point, Hal cannot be said to be “divorced from all stimulus” because he does apprehend stimulus, he just cannot respond to it. To the second point, this reading would position the viewer as the *hero* of the Entertainment, but this falls into the same problem as above. The viewer is not cut off from stimulus because the stimulus is what keeps the viewer transfixed.

conducive to showing emotions, let alone sharing fears.[120] Mario's openness is a counter-point to the affectations of young ETA students, but just as AA is presented as a counter-point to irony, these are not true oppositions. Rather, it is Mario's concern for Hal that is more clearly indicative of the danger of the ironic stance. The difference is that Hal lacks even that emotional tell of eye-rolling and uneasy laughing. Hal affects a completely normal appearance in order to hide his fears that he is empty inside.

Hal's "post-post-modern" hero more accurately describes himself than it does his peers at ETA. Mario's concern for the ironic pose that ETA students affect is an imperfect one that still reveals their discomfort. In other words, these students are *re*active in the way that Hal describes the "post-modern" hero. The truly dangerous form of irony lies in that inability to react or to emote. This is where Hal seems to get heroism wrong.[121] Hal may even recognize this error in a late night discussion about lying with his older brother Mario:

> 'I think at seventeen now I believe the only real monsters might be the type of liar where there's simply no way to tell. The ones who give nothing away.'
>
> 'But then how do you know they're the monsters, then?'
>
> 'That's the monstrosity right there, Boo, I'm starting to think.'
>
> 'Golly Ned.'
>
> 'That they walk among us. Teach our children. Inscrutable. Brass-faced.' (774).

---

[120] Mario's reliability is somewhat questionable due to his inability to accurately interpret conversations that he has. In one conversation, an exasperated Hal exclaims "Jesus, Mario, it's like trying to talk to a rock with you sometimes," to which Mario replies "This is going very well!" (759). Mario's primary intelligence seems to lie in detecting others' emotional states, sometimes even before they are aware of them.

[121] Hal calls the "post-post-modern" hero one of *non*-action, which I read as static and unchanging in regard to a toxic culture. This *in*action should not be considered a form of passive-resistance, which might be seen as *re*active to coercive threats from elements of culture.

Earlier in the novel, Hal identified that distance as an heroic trait. If this is heroic, it is due to a fractured reality from which Hal is learning to distance himself. The ironic distancing to the point of catatonia has a hyperbolic Romantic quality to it. However, by the time of the conversation quoted above, Hal is ready to recognize that a person who is impossible to read is one who can hide anything and is indistinguishable from everyone else.

The irony of all of this is that irony is the adopted stance that distances the individual from others and from affect, but it is also a tool for the individual to recognize these failings in the self. Hal, without the proper ability to distance himself, is just one of those unfeeling monsters who can lie effortlessly and blend in with others. It is the very mechanism that distances him that also permits himself to see that distance. Although for Wallace this is a double-bind that plagues Hal and others in the text, it is also the way back out of all of this. Gately, again, provides an ideal example of this process: he enters Ennet House and AA completely disingenuously, as a way to escape prosecution, quickly revolts against the inanities and illogic of the program, but grows to find its value. Gately had to first realize that there was a gap between who he was and who he wanted to be before he could begin his transformation.

Irony in *Infinite Jest* is a method of integrating competing ideas and of developing interpersonal relationships. Irony does still carry some of the negative connotations associated with Jamesonian pastiche, but this is a novel of conflict over the meaning of irony. As shown in the progression of Wallace's stance toward irony through his career, this is not a settled topic. *Infinite Jest* must present irony in a variety of ways to demonstrate the conflict and the need for a reconsideration of the concept.

4.4.3 Modal Irony

My considerations of local and general irony in *Infinite Jest* ultimately are in the service of transitioning from a thematic consideration of irony to a modal one. My contention in this chapter is that *Infinite Jest* fulfills two aspects of the encyclopedic novel as I have presented it: the Enlightenment tradition of Diderot's encyclopedia and Northrop Frye's argument in the "Theory of Modes" that the encyclopedic form occupies a position in a cycle that begins with mythic integration and displaces into "increasingly human *analogies* of mythical or scriptural revelation" (56). While much of the chapter to this point has concentrated on the first aspect, it is to this second aspect that I now turn fully. What this means is that the mythic encyclopedia represents a unified field of vision that unites the divine with the human but that, as the cycle progresses, the vision begins to separate into the divine and the human. These "visions" overlap to varying degrees until the ironic mode is reached and there is a complete separation of the divine from the human. In the ironic mode we are able to recognize the divine in an anagogic sense, but recognize this as a strict analogy of – and not experience of – the divine. Frye uses the trope of irony as a metaphor for this separated vision because it comprises a disassociation of the individual from group experience and from the "total body of vision" that is the mythic (55). I argue that *Infinite Jest* presents the ironic vision, the double-knowledge of the ironic and the mythic. The return to the mythic is presaged by the self-awareness of separation from the mythic that only the ironic can afford. Whereas *Gravity's Rainbow* is bound in establishing the position of the individual, its ironic perspective does not yet permit a vision of the horizon of the mythic.

Wallace's double-bind and his struggles to re-conceive irony as an integrative force is in line with the progression of modes that Frye theorizes. The double-bind is an attempt to regain the anagogic double-vision that moves back toward the mythic. In "Theory of Modes," Frye writes that "the return of irony to myth . . . is paralleled by some tendencies of the ironic craftsman to return to the oracular. This tendency is often accompanied by cyclical theories of history which help to rationalize the idea of a return" (62). It may be an overstatement to consider Wallace as an oracle, even a postmodern, ironic oracle, but in "E Unibus Pluram" as in *Infinite Jest,* Wallace acts as a guide to defining the postmodern, ironic malaise that he sees as having affected the youth of his generation. Though he does not explicitly present predictions of the future, his work does provide a signpost to those struggling with the kind of disconnection that many of his characters experience.

While Wallace may not be an oracle, his work does contain cyclical theories of history, and in precisely the way that Frye means it. Again, in the "Theory of Modes" essay, Frye introduces another element of the double vision: the episodic history of "the aesthetic or timeless moment" compared to the "vast panorama unrolled by history" (61), or the episodic and encyclopedic historical tendencies brought together. Frye introduces Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Times Past* and James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* as exemplars of these concepts, respectively. Frye notes that Proust creates "timeless moments" through his repetition of experience and that Joyce reveals that "vast panorama" with his "Viconian theory of history which sees our own age as a frustrated apocalypse" (62).

Wallace represents both episodic and encyclopedic historical tendencies in *Infinite Jest*. The postmodern "timeless moment" is a cycle of addiction and recovery in which the individual experiences a repetition of use and abstinence. Erdedy's failed attempt to break his marijuana addiction mentioned earlier in this chapter is a prime example of this. He repeats his attempts to score his drug for "one last time" before he quits until he must finally make a break, go into treatment and recognize his union with the divine. On the other hand, the narrative structure of the novel itself replays the cyclical nature of *Finnegans Wake*. The opening scene of the novel is the last to occur, chronologically. This means that the narration begins *in media res* and the scene only makes sense in light of the rest of the novel. Because of the length of the novel, it is necessary for the reader to return to the first episode in order to reach a sense of completion.

4.5 Conclusion

Infinite Jest's contributions to the encyclopedic novel from are very similar to those of *Gravity's Rainbow*. Both are products of their times written by authors very aware of their cultural context. The two greatest contributions that David Foster Wallace makes with this novel are his move toward an ethics of integration and his reinvention (or perhaps rediscovery) of irony as an integrative force. Wallace's humanistic drive demands a turn away from the alienation of Pynchon. At the end of *Gravity's Rainbow*, there is little trust among individuals or of the communities that they create. Wallace rejects this vision and creates a world that is still

fragmented but is beginning to turn the corner on radical individualism. Wallace creates communities that have the potential to create true connection between individuals.

It is no coincidence that the two major communities that Wallace includes – AA and ETA – encompass the members' entire lives. AA is an integrative community that focuses on branching out and making further connections, staying involved, and forging personal relationships with other members. Ennet House requires its residents to attend meetings daily and the house itself is an expansion of this community. ETA encourages a team mentality while also encouraging a healthy model of competition that focuses on improving the self. The students practice daily, attend class together, travel together and live together. Despite all of the ills that befall characters while in these groups and the ills that AA members faced before becoming members, both present models of community that shape the interactions these characters will face in the future.

Wallace's use of irony is likewise hopeful and offers a path to greater mutual understanding. Interpretations of irony will always be disputed and the nature of general irony is fluid over time. But for this moment when irony connotes something particularly dark or empty or apathetic, Wallace saw a need to investigate the nature of irony and reclaim it as a critical tool. This is not to say that he has reinvented irony as a wholly positive force, but he has uncovered what should have been obvious to us all along: we are steeped in irony everyday and irony comes in many forms. It is naïve to accept a single definition or interpretation of irony. Jamesonian pastiche and the “hip” irony of apathy still plague our culture, but Wallace wants to offer another way. We can differentiate between the irony of cynicism and the irony of sincerity.

One alienates us from each other and purposefully obfuscates meaning. The other binds us in communities and revels in shared understanding.

Thus, as an encyclopedic novel, *Infinite Jest* engages in a new discourse of mutual understanding through irony and shared knowledge that seeks to replace a dominant discourse steeped in a disintegrative irony. This marks an important progression toward the mythic as irony shades further into common understanding and cultural integration. Wallace also expands the boundaries of the encyclopedic form by including rhetorical elements derived from non-fiction. Thus, the integration of genre into the encyclopedic form is likewise expanded. Finally, and perhaps most importantly to this project, Wallace's humanism marks a dramatic shift from *Gravity's Rainbow* and the threat of individual disintegration. This encyclopedic novel notes the glimmer of hope that Pynchon withholds in his novel.

CHAPTER 5

DIVINE DAYS: THE INTERPENETRATIVE ENCYCLOPEDIA

> "History moves in a cyclical rhythm which never forms a complete or closed cycle. A new movement begins, works itself out to exhaustion, and something of the original state then reappears, though in a quite new context presenting new conditions."
>
> -Northrop Frye, *The Double Vision*, 3

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters, I presented the argument that David Foster Wallace's novel *Infinite Jest* built upon the postmodern model of the anarchistic encyclopedic novel that is Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*. I pointed to continuities between the novels and, more importantly, the points at which Wallace's encyclopedic text diverges from Pynchon's. Keeping with the conceptual and formal traditions of the encyclopedic that I traced from Diderot's *Encyclopédie* and that Northrop Frye outlines in *Anatomy of Criticism*, I argued that Pynchon develops a critique of Enlightenment-influenced systematized thinking by introducing the postmodern concept of "associational thought" in the form of paranoia that relies upon horizontal transmission of information and contingency, and that Wallace continued this critique by, in effect, multiplying the role of contingency through his creation of the double-bind. In addition to this, I argued that the novels' use of irony showed a modal progression toward a re-integration with the mythic, as Frye predicts in his "Theory of Modes."

In the current chapter, I turn my attention to Leon Forrest's little-read *Divine Days*. The novel is the first-person narration of six days in the life of aspiring playwright, Joubert Antoine Jones, that layers the characters' histories with local lore and the history of a town to create an encyclopedic text that challenges tradition, heritage, and art at the same time that it reinforces each of these in a new context. Rather than attempting to replace an authoritative discourse with a marginal one, as the novels in the previous two chapters have done, *Divine Days* attempts to blend traditions, to uncover hidden similarities between them and expose the mutual interconnection of seemingly opposed ways of thought.

Divine Days carries on the tradition of the encyclopedic novel established by *Gravity's Rainbow* and echoed in *Infinite Jest* but diverges from these novels in an important way. Although Forrest's work appeared in 1992, four years prior to Wallace's work, Wallace's and Pynchon's works share a much stronger continuity in tone and theme. Whereas those novels are desperate and ironic, *Divine Days* is hopeful and grounded in a much stronger sense of community. Rhetorically, both *Infinite Jest* and *Gravity's Rainbow* are diagnostic in approach in that they both attempt to demonstrate the damaging effects of authoritative discourse first by labeling the problems ("Them" in Pynchon's book and either solipsism or cynical irony in Wallace's) and then proposing an alternative discourse to cure these symptoms (paranoia and associational thought in Pynchon's novel and the double-bind in Wallace's). *Divine Days* adopts the differing rhetorical approach of explication, meaning that it aims to show explain or describe a current state of culture. The important difference between the two approaches is that the diagnostic approach assumes a conflict that must be proactively corrected while the explicative

approach demonstrates that the conflict of discourses *is* the discourse and one needs only recognize the mutual necessity of heterological discourses. I take up *Divine Days* last to also reflect its position further along the turn toward the mythic than either of the two previous novels addressed.

In this chapter, in addition to Frye's definition of the encyclopedic form already presented, I argue that Leon Forrest's *Divine Days* represents an evolution of the encyclopedic form that I call the "interpenetrative encyclopedia" based upon Northrop Frye's concept of interpenetration.[122] *Divine Days* represents a tonal and rhetorical shift from the encyclopedic tradition in which both *Infinite Jest* and *Gravity's Rainbow* participate and indicates a further move toward re-integration with the mythic. This shift is evident in two ways: first, *Divine Days* seeks to integrate competing traditions in a syndetic rather than syncretic fashion. While previous models of the encyclopedic novel have shown a tendency to subvert dominant discourse and elevate marginal discourse, *Divine Days* reveals the mutual interconnection of multiple discourses. Second, *Divine Days* actively participates in mythic integration of irony by avoiding the general irony that pervades *Infinite Jest* and *Gravity's Rainbow* and by supplementing local irony with signifying. I conclude that these two shifts contribute to the novel's anagogic perspective (or "double-vision," to use Frye's term) that represents a nearly complete re-integration with the mythic according to Frye's theory of the encyclopedic form.

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[122] Frye's theory of "interpenetration" appears only briefly in his published work but he wrote about it extensively in his personal notebooks that have been published by the University of Toronto Press as a part of *The Collected Works of Northrop Frye*. While Frye never definitively outlines this theory, it meshes closely with other topics he dealt with frequently, such as double vision, anagogy, and certain forms of irony. Although I will discuss each of these topics in greater detail below, a provisional definition for "interpenetration" can be: the mutual and necessary interactions of concepts, thoughts, or ideas originally considered to be in tension with one another. Frye often presents interpenetration as a cyclical alternative to the teleological Hegelian dialectic.

I have divided the chapter into three sections. The first section examines the personal tension that the protagonist Joubert Jones experiences because of his desire to be a part of two different communities. Jones, an aspiring playwright, wishes to distance himself from his traditional community to legitimate his creation of high art. At the same time, he wants to write about members of his community and to adopt an African American oral tradition that includes storytelling and signifying. Forrest works to reconcile these traditions in the character of Jones by showing that he is able to integrate these traditions. Forrest represents this tension in a broader way in the novel, as well, by including numerous allusions to works of Western literature while also employing a trickster figure. The second section of this chapter centers on mythic integration, arguing that Forrest's "gumbo" style of narration mirrors the syndetic nature of the interpenetrative encyclopedia and that Forrest's use of local irony and signification reveal a stronger focus on "discursive communities" and shared, prior knowledge. Finally, in the concluding section I draw these threads together to demonstrate *Divine Days*' engagement with anagogic "double vision." My interaction with "double vision" mirrors Wallace's "double-bind" but offers a new solution to the problem of binary thought in the form of reintegration.

Divine Days also adds an important dimension to this dissertation by providing an example of the encyclopedic novel that engages the Western canon itself as an authoritative discourse. Up to this point, this dissertation has focused almost solely on the Western tradition in literature. In part, this is due to the fact that Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* is also very focused on Western literature with the Bible as its *ur*-text. Denis Diderot's work also focused on specifically European modes of thought and the form of the encyclopedia that I have adopted as

my model (from Pliny's pedagogical model to Chambers' and Diderot's dialogic model and beyond) seems to be a particularly Western construct. Forrest builds tropes from the Africana literary tradition into his novel in ways that contend with the marginalized nature of this tradition.[123] While there is much work to be done with this novel regarding its place in the Western canon, I am primarily interested in the ways that *Divine Days* contends with competing traditions and its role as an encyclopedic novel because the novel does draw together elements such as doubling, use of irony, and marginality from different traditions, but in a way that attempts to reconcile rather than critique or replace. Because of this, my consideration of *Divine Days* as an encyclopedic novel will fall more on the conceptual elements defined by Frye than on the formal elements derived from Diderot.

Divine Days is a massive novel, even in the context of other encyclopedic novels, that spans over 1,100 pages. Beginning on February 16, 1966, the novel is the Joubert Jones' journal that details one week in his life. The novel is a *künstlerroman* that follows Joubert's development as a dramatist. Having previously worked as a freelance journalist for the *Forest County Dispatch*, Joubert writes extensively about his desire to learn the craft and includes many of his ideas for plays that he wants to write, all of which revolve around some of the prominent figures in the community. The main plot line centers around Joubert's working to transition back into a civilian life after a term of service in the military while also attempting to remake himself as an adult and an artist in a community that has only known him as a child. The narrative structure of the novel is such that the main plot line makes up less than half of the bulk of the

[123] The cover of the paperback edition of this text features a quote from Henry Louis Gates that underscores this double tradition. Gates calls *Divine Days* "The *War and Peace* of the African-American novel."

novel, the rest turning to Joubert's branching digressions and personal histories of people Forest County, where he lives. These narrative digressions reveal Joubert's family history and focus prominently on two characters who never appear in the narrative-present: Sugar-Groove and W.A.D. Ford.

The conflict between Sugar-Groove (a mysterious figure who drifts in and out of town and is a source of inspiration for Joubert) and W.A.D. Ford (a huckster who starts a disreputable church) and the influence that the two men have on a young Joubert are the real centers of the novel. Although neither Sugar-Groove nor Ford are in the narrative-present of the novel, the two loom large in Joubert's life and in the novel and the are constant sources of stories in Joubert's journal. At the opening of the novel, Joubert has already written one play, *Divine Days*, about Ford and begins to think about writing a second play about Sugar-Groove. The majority of the narrative digressions in *Divine Days* retell stories from Joubert's youth that involve one or the other of these two older men. At one point, Joubert reveals that he has been keeping three separate journals on Ford: one is an "intelligence report" made up of Ford's own words (38), a second that is Ford's own account of his life (this often contains contradictory stories), and a third that is "straight news reportage" about Ford (39).

The structure of the novel and the prominence of these two conflicting characters gives Forrest space to work out the tensions of small-town life and the nature of influence on a community. Sugar-Groove and Ford captivate everyone in the town and Joubert's plays are his way of puzzling out how two characters, so different from one another, can become so important within a community. Parallel to the influence of the two men in the community is literary

influence in Joubert's life. Forrest makes rich use of literary allusion from across canons. He frequently layers allusions, making unexpected combinations to demonstrate the catholicity of Joubert's influences.[124]

5.2 Integrating Competing Traditions: Frye's Interpenetration

In the first three chapters of this dissertation, I have sought to show the ways in which the encyclopedia is a radical form that defines ways of knowing and collates information based upon a particular epistemological structure (ie., pedagogic or dialogic). The encyclopedia, and by extension the encyclopedic novel, attempts to define modes of thought for a particular time and place. In other words, the text reflects cultural attitudes toward knowledge by reflecting tensions between authoritative and marginal discourses. The interpenetrative encyclopedia takes this definition and extends its self-aware critique to the novel form itself. Rather than accepting the precept that marginal discourse is separate from, or ancillary to, authoritative discourse, the interpenetrative novel argues for a greater reconsideration of the relationship between authority and the margin.

The interpenetrative encyclopedia argues for more than equality of discourse: it argues for the mutual-necessity of authoritative and marginal discourses. In this way, the text is not diagnostic in the sense of pointing out an ill in the hopes of then looking for a cure, but explicative because it points out the fact that these tensions are themselves part of the

[124] Joubert's consideration of Raskolnikov in Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* is one such example of Forrest's layering of allusions: ". . . his name is Raskolnikov. Here's the perfect blend for me. Even greater than Hamlet. And second only to King David" (1052).

discourse.[125] *Divine Days* presents this mutual-necessity primarily in a tension and resolution between academic and oral traditions. In the remainder of this section, I define what Frye means by "interpenetration" and what this, in turn, means regarding the cultural tensions Forrest includes in his novel. This will include examining a part of Frye's definition of the encyclopedic form that I mentioned in the introduction but have not fully explored until now: the relationship of the author to the text and to his or her community. Interpenetration and the encyclopedic author are two key aspects of the novel's approach to mythic re-integration.

It is necessary to first explore what Northrop Frye means by "interpenetration" and to consider how this concept fits into the encyclopedic form. While Frye never formally outlined a definition for "interpenetration" in his published work, what he left behind in his many volumes of personal notebooks helps to tie together a series of ideas that he explores in many different works. Frye's musings on interpenetration are varied, and sometimes he uses the term to indicate another scholar's missed turn or as a metaphor for a universal perspective. At its basis, interpenetration is an irresolvable dialectic: Frye writes, "I wish we could throw away the notion of 'reconciling,' and use instead some such conception as 'interpenetration.' Literature itself is not a field of conflicting arguments but of interpenetrating visions" (Frye, *Collected* vol. 13: 216). Much like the encyclopedic form in the mythic mode, interpenetration builds multiple perspectives together into a unified vision.

[125] This definition of the interpenetrative encyclopedia also tracks onto Jacques Ranciere's definition of "equality politics" discussed in chapter 2. In short, the interpenetrative encyclopedia takes an active stance because it presumes the equality between discourses rather than attempting to justify the need for equality.

At the center of Frye's concept of interpenetration is the desire to "get beyond subject-object categories" (Frye, *Collected* vol. 5, xl), or "a sense of the universal here" (vol. 13: 162).[126] In effacing the categories of subject and object, Frye seeks a totalizing, or universal, view that includes a broad view of history both secular and spiritual. One such example considers the nature of God: "God's centre is everywhere, but his circumference must be everywhere too: things get defined and outlined, not just absorbed" (vol. 6: 53). Thus, to use Hegelian terms, the coexistence of thesis and antithesis is the key to interpenetration. The non-resolution of competing forces is neither progressive nor teleological but part of a broader spectrum of myth.[127] At one point, Frye does hint at a political dimension of interpenetration that pre-figures Ranciere's elevation of disagreement in politics. Frye writes, "interpenetration of belief is unity with variety, like metaphor; reconciliation, conversion, agreement, are all forms of imperialistic compulsion" (Denham, *Unbuttoned* 149).

In terms of the encyclopedic novel, interpenetration should be interpreted as the mutual-coexistence of competing discourses. This model of interpenetration differs from the models of the encyclopedic novel explored in this dissertation so far and from Diderot's *Encyclopédie* because all of those iterations sought to replace or supplement one mode of thought with another. The interpenetrative encyclopedia demonstrates the futility of attempting to legitimate a marginal discourse because that discourse is already a part of broader dialogue between the authoritative and the marginal. The interpenetrative encyclopedia makes good on the early promise of the

[126] Sárá Tóth identifies the similarities between Frye's interpenetration and Martin Buber's I-Thou principle (128-9).
[127] Frye mentions Hegel in connection with interpenetration several times in his notebooks, at one time opining that "Hegel showed how the thesis involved its own antithesis, although I think the 'synthesis' has been foisted on him by his followers" (Frye, *Collected* vol. 6: 616).

anarchistic encyclopedia because it seeks to bring together not just a plurality of voices, but also a unity-in-difference – all perspectives into a universal.

In *Divine Days*, Forrest establishes a complex network of metaphors to refer to oral and literary traditions using the barbershop and the college, respectively. Forrest establishes the tension between traditions early in the novel. As the novel opens, Joubert Jones has just arrived back in America after serving an Army tour at a base in Germany. Joubert begins work at Eloise's Night Light, a bar owned by his Aunt Eloise, while he tries to restart his flagging literary career. The opening pages are peppered with many literary allusions from Willa Cather to Shakespeare and also with gossipy stories about the locals who patronize the bar. Because the eleven hundred page novel is structured as a record – one week's worth of Joubert's journal – it often digresses to include his musings on literature and his role in life. One such example has him criticizing the amateur literary output of Joubert's friend Sergeant Franklin Hamilton for being too plain, too single-voiced, which he follows with a consideration of his own position:

> But my problem was more complex [than Hamilton's]; my heritage is hounded by the voices of oral tradition, literary tradition. Chased up into the church, the steeple in order to reveal the people. Twelve voices went into the curating of One Apostles Creed. I liked that passage about the resurrection and the life everlasting. What playwright wouldn't? What must I do to produce a Black literary revival, in order to be saved? First of all shut my mouth up! And listen to those voices wherever that [*sic*] take me" (16-7).

Joubert's embattled position between oral and literary traditions complicates his relationship with either tradition, forcing him to consider the constraints of one tradition over the other. The

scattered nature of Joubert's writing style, free-associating from topic to topic, demonstrates his inability at the outset of the novel to reconcile these two traditions.

Forrest then complicates the alignment of oral tradition to the barbershop and the literary tradition to the college by introducing Dr. Allerton Jamesway, one of Joubert's former professors with whom he developed a friendship. In an extended description of a lunch the two shared, Forrest shifts the seat of the oral tradition from the barbershop to the bar where Joubert works. After hitting the numbers and using his winnings to purchase a typewriter and some books about drama writing, Joubert meets Prof. Jamesway for lunch. Joubert is anxious to justify his desire to re-enroll in the college, recognizing that his associations with his aunt's bar and "low" activities such as playing the numbers may carry unwanted implications about his character. In this scene, Forrest complicates the tension between the oral and academic by exposing the intersections with both class and race. Joubert worries that he could not "reveal how [he] had enough money to buy his used typewriter, because of money [he] had won in the Numbers Game in a lower middle-class Negro bar" (88). In this way, Forrest shifts the dichotomy between the barbershop and the college to one between the bar and the college, with the important difference that Jamesway recognizes the barbershop as a cultural center in the community, versus a "lower middle-class Negro bar."

This shift in tensions is important because it begins to open Joubert's eyes to the fact that it is his own internalized sense of division that may prevent him from becoming the writer he dreams of being. Joubert acknowledges that Prof. Jamesway was "very much appreciated in the [*sic*] Williemain's barbershop" (89). Because Jamesway is respected in the community and has

already bridged the gap that Joubert wishes to cross (Jamesway reveals that he also learned about Sugar-Groove in Williemain's barbershop), Joubert begins to see the interpenetration of the oral and academic. However, Jamesway is also a forgotten entity in Joubert's community. The addition of class to the tension between the oral and the academic seems to have effaced Jamesway from the community: "Dr. Jamesway was unappreciated (almost unknown among the black middle-class) even though many of the teacher-class had read his works in college probably force-fed upon them. [. . .] most of the Negroes in the middle class that I knew assumed that Dr. Jamesway was dead" (89).

The discussion between Joubert and Jamesway begins to elevate the barbershop in Joubert's estimation. While he already respected the role of the barbershop in the community, he still retained the notion – reflected in his thoughts about the Night Light Lounge – that the barbershop was somehow lacking in comparison to the college because of class differences. But what Joubert had perceived as a class tension has more to do with the seedy nature of the bar and the influence that it has on Joubert's behavior. Before parting after their lunch, Prof. Jamesway advises Joubert that he must choose his own path:

> "It's almost impossible for me to advise you, Joubert, about a life that you must settle upon, for your own good. You do tend to be very self-deprecating. I haven't seen the boastful side of your ego, yet it must be there. I do believe that you need to strike out for yourself; and strike for yourself in the direction that's best for your future, and the future of your own talent"

Prof. Jamesways' words leave Joubert torn because he can recognize the truth in what he says but still doubts his own abilities. Jamesways' words forecast the realization of interpenetrating influences that Joubert must come to in order to develop as the writer he wishes to become. The path that he must strike out on is one that recognizes the interpenetrative nature of influence and one that leads to Joubert's realization that, in his deliberations over the difficulty of mediating the oral with the academic, he does not need to mediate because he already has been incorporating these influences into his thoughts and work.

A second aspect of encyclopedism that Frye theorizes that is important here is the notion of the encyclopedic poet. This figure is unique to the interpenetrative encyclopedia because the encyclopedic poet marks an important step toward reintegration into the mythic that other forms of the encyclopedic novel have not achieved. This dissertation so far has invested heavily in the blending of genre, and that will continue to be an important factor in this chapter, but a new focus on the role of the author of the narrative is also necessary for full consideration of this novel.[128]

The role of the poet follows the same cycle that Frye defines in "Theory of Modes" in *Anatomy of Criticism* but Frye uses the term "encyclopedic" in a new way.[129] For Frye, the encyclopedic poet is one who represents his or her own society and addresses it from a position within that society. The encyclopedic poet aligns with the mythic mode because "the poet may

[128] Frye does not mean "author" in the contemporary narratological sense of a flesh-and-blood human being who exists outside of the text. Frye includes "the poet" and "the poet's readers" as a part of the ethical elements of a work of literature (*Anatomy* 52-3). In this case "the poet" might also be considered an implied author or even a narrator, in either case the poet exists within the text for Frye.

[129] Frye frequently overlaps multiple meanings in a single term when he wants a particular term to carry additional weight or when he wants to blur boundaries between meanings. One of the most prominent examples in this dissertation is his use of "irony" to mean a mode in his cycle of displacement, the position of a hero in relation to society, general irony, and local irony.

devote himself to being a spokesman of his society, which means, as he is not addressing a second society, that a poetic knowledge and expressive power which is latent or needed in his society comes to articulation in him," and that this poetry is "educational in the broadest sense" (*Anatomy* 54). Frye's reference to the "second society" indicates the poet's integration into his or her own society. But rather than presenting variations in the progression of the modal cycle, Frye presents a gradation between "encyclopedic" and "episodic" poet. The episodic poet is one who writes as an individual or as one outside of his or her society and, thus, must write back to that "second society." The degree to which the episodic poet is outside of society is equivalent to the displacement of myth into irony.

The encyclopedic poet also recalls another important aspect of this dissertation, which is the role that local irony plays in an encyclopedic narrative. Much like Booth's "amiable community" or Hutcheon's "discursive community," the encyclopedic poet must write to a community that already has a shared knowledge and understanding. For Booth and Hutcheon, this prior knowledge is necessary for stable ironies to exist – the community must precede irony – and it is the same for Frye: a common knowledge must pre-exist the encyclopedic poet for him or her to be able to effectively communicate with that society. Indeed, Frye anticipates this point in arguing that "a conception of a total body of vision that poets as a whole class are entrusted with, a total body tending to incorporate itself in a single encyclopaedic form" is implicit in the idea of an encyclopedic poet (55).

What makes *Divine Days* different from both *Infinite Jest* and *Gravity's Rainbow* in this regard, and what merits this discussion of the encyclopedic poet, is that *Divine Days* utilizes a

first-person narrator who is a writer as well. Drawing again from the passage quoted above, Joubert asks himself "What must I do to produce a Black literary revival, in order to be saved?" This question explicitly connects Joubert's conception of his own art with his position in the community.[130] In taking the responsibility for reviving the Black literary tradition and putting it explicitly in the context of being "saved," Joubert elects himself spokesperson. For Joubert, this means developing both the oral and literary traditions, finding a way to counter-balance the two. Still later in the novel, Joubert refers to himself as "the snotty-nosed, uncircumsized, unclean bard of [his] race" (437). But navigating the differences between two traditions is not simply a way of finding his own voice, but of achieving recognition for the new voice of his society. In this way, the encyclopedic poet shares with the encyclopedic form the goal of drawing together, of integration.

Taken together, interpenetration and the encyclopedic poet provide a new model for progress toward integration into the mythic. Both of these concepts depend upon a syndetic rather than a syncretic model of integration characterizing previous iterations of the encyclopedic novel. The syndetic model of integration refers to a process of sense-making where concepts or objects take on multiple meanings. Rather than canceling prior meanings or altering a single meaning, syndetic integration asks the reader to layer meanings so that a single concept or object must carry multiple meanings at once. As a narrative strategy, syndesis builds meaning in a single concept, object, word, or figure in order to build complexity. The most prominent

[130] Joubert's question also echoes the concerns of canon formation and even the naming of African-American literature. For example, Kenneth W. Warren argues that African American literature took shape in the context of racial subjugation and prejudice during Reconstruction and in Jim Crow south and that, in the absence of that historical frame, "the coherence of African American literature has been correspondingly, if sometimes imperceptibly, eroded as well" (2).

example of this is Forrest's extensive use of the word “divine” to imply many separate but related meanings.[131] I draw syndetic integration from the term “syndesis,” a term coined by Robert Plant Armstrong to explain differences in perception of certain objects by different cultures at different times. Armstrong traces the concept of syndesis to Yoruba culture, in which objects can retain multiple meanings that may contradict one another but do not cancel out or replace one another.[132] Rather, Armstrong defines syndesis as a process of accretion of meaning.

While the syndetic model of integration combines elements while respecting the individual integrity of these elements, the syncretic model relies upon reconciling differing elements to a single, authoritative voice. The syncretic model becomes problematic for the encyclopedic form because it has the tendency to replace one form of authoritative discourse with another. For example, Diderot's goal for the *Encyclopédie* was to upend the authoritative hierarchy that privileged Church and State by replacing it with a rational skepticism. This model of thought then became standardized to the point that Pynchon found it necessary to argue against this model of rationality and standardized access to knowledge.

Divine Days, on the other hand, does not attempt to subvert one tradition to another or to standardize the discourse. Instead, *Divine Days* adopts a model of syndesis in which it makes broad connections between authoritative and marginal discourses to demonstrate a meta-discourse that includes both. Rhetorically, Forrest builds syndesis into his dialogue, frequently

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[131] Forrest's use of the word “divine” is one that I will return to in greater detail below.

[132] Armstrong traces “syndesis” to Yoruba culture in which he defines “works of presence” and “works of invocation” as differing aesthetic standards than Western “works of virtuosity” that are judged by the skill of the artist's production. Armstrong's point is that both works of presence and of invocation may be interpreted differently depending upon their function, what they are meant to express, or how they make sense of the world. However, these interpretations are multiple, do not negate one another, and can both be and not be at the same time. For more on Armstrong and snydesis, see *The Powers of Presence* 3-20.

opening character speeches with ellipses coupled with conjunctions in a way that mimics polysyndenton. In dialogue, this form of syndesis has the effect of mimicking conversational patterns that highlight continuity from one speech into the next. Forrest also uses the ellipsis/conjunction formulation to begin paragraphs of exposition. Much like syndetic integration, this use of syndesis on the rhetorical level works to efface boundaries that would otherwise separate thoughts or flows of speech patterns and promotes an inclusive interpretation.

At one point, Forrest uses the ellipsis/conjunction construction to open a subheading. This example is significant because the syndetic momentum of the ellipsis/conjunction construction effaces the textual mark that indicates a sub-heading break, which forces the reader to consider the new sub-heading both a continuation of the previous episode and a unique episode at the same time. While this tactic is not new, Forrest does call attention to the constructed nature of individual episodes within a larger narrative frame and encourages the perception of many interlinked episodes, such as those that make up *Divine Days* to comprise an overarching story that is mythic in scope. The complex of interrelated stories is no longer Sugar-Groove's story or Joubert's story, but *a* story of community.

In this example, Joubert reflects on the death of Aaron Snow, a heroin addict who was shot dead by Eddie Egglestone, a plain clothes police officer, in the course of a hold up. Joubert had covered the death and funeral for the *Forest County Dispatch* and viewed Snow sympathetically. The episode ends with Joubert's memory of Snow's distraught uncle. The entire episode is narrated from Joubert's memory. After the sub-heading, the narrative picks up with Eddie Egglestone sitting in Eloise's Night Light Lounge: “. . .And even now, Eddie

Egglestone—despite his destain—could not forget how Aaron Snow swirled about like one of those bullfighters in Hemingway, when evilly pursued by the bull" (567). This use of the ellipsis/conjunction works to bind the description of Egglestone's conflicted relationship with Aaron Snow to the previous episode, narrated from a different point of view at a different time. Egglestone, sitting at the bar, justifies his killing of Snow to Joubert: "Motherfuck if he did come at me with an artist crazed eye of absolute concentration and hopped up madness" (567). Egglestone's harsh characterization of Snow reflects his perspective as much as Joubert's does his. The juxtaposition of these episodes calls attention to the conflicting feelings toward the same event about which both Joubert and Egglestone are "correct" even though their interpretation of events and of Snow differ. On top of this, Forrest layers an allusion to Hemingway's use of the bullfights as a metaphor for the same interpersonal conflict.

Forrest also uses syndesis as a metaphorical structure for blending competing discourses. This is most apparent in the blending of oral and literary traditions through Joubert's desire to write academic plays that feature prominent figures in Forest County where Joubert lives. Two figures, W.A.D. Ford and Sugar-Groove, are central to the mythology of Forest County and are subjects of two plays that Joubert plans to write. Both Ford and Sugar-Groove's origins are obscured through most of the novel, and both are constant sources of gossip within the community, for they are rumored to possess supernatural abilities and are very charismatic. The difference between the two is that Ford is revealed to be a charlatan preacher while Sugar-Groove is admired by most of Forest County. These two figures represent two archetypal African characters: the badman and the trickster.

Early in the novel, Joubert refers to Ford explicitly as a trickster when describing the play *All Souls* that Joubert had written about him. Ford arrived in town under mysterious circumstances, rented a storefront, and used the space to start DIVINE DAYS church. By the time the novel opens, the church has been shuttered and Ford has disappeared amidst rumors of his sexual dalliances with female parishioners, and Eloise's Night Light has opened in the same storefront. Joubert frequently reminisces about Ford and his influence on the people of Forest County, and he frequently attributes supernatural qualities to these influences.

Trickster figures in mythology are liminal characters who inhabit spaces between humans and gods. These figures often bend or break the rules for proper conduct. Henry Louis Gates traces the trickster figure in African traditions to Esu-Elegbara in Yoruba mythology, although the trickster exists in many different African and African-American traditions. While Gates is quick to point out that this figure has appeared in many cultures in various forms, Esu-Elegbara, or Esu, is fundamentally a figure of mediation between states of being, such as between humans and gods. Gates includes a partial list of qualities of Esu, the most important of which for this chapter are individuality, irony, magic, indeterminacy, sexuality, and betrayal.[133] The inclusion of conflicting characteristics on the list represents the "complexity of this classic figure of mediation and of the unity of opposed forces" (6). The significance of the trickster figure is that it is both an interpreter and is open to interpretation: the trickster is something of a cipher.

Ford's role as trickster in *Divine Days* is yet another instance of the integration of divergent tropes or characteristics. While Ford's role as a trickster is one that deserves more

[133] Gates' list reads, "individuality, satire, parody, irony, magic, indeterminacy, open-endedness, ambiguity, sexuality, chance, uncertainty, disruption and reconciliation, betrayal and loyalty, closure and disclosure, encasement and rupture" (6).

coverage, my interest in this character is in its contribution to the mythic elements of the novel while providing another example of unity-in-difference that pervades the interpenetrative encyclopedia. In one extended passage, Joubert recalls Ford's unique perspective on preaching and the importance of the goat to his theology. Forrest writes:

> Workmen had to fumigate the premises [of All Souls church and Eloise's Night Light] because of the "divine" smell of the goat, before we could get started on the necessary reconstruction of DIVINE DAYS, or what was left of it. W.A.D. Ford believed that the bedraggled but wily goat was in actuality a holy animal. The animal had received a bad rap for the last five hundred years. The goat held a status of nobility at DIVINE DAYS. Ford sought to have all of his flock "nurse" their "lambs" on goat's milk. Ford had no qualms about setting a blaze of firelight upon the sacred animal's flanks: commingling sacrifice with appetite sending up a message to God and creating a sacrifice and a sacrament. This hunger for light initially fulfilled by pointing out the ever present power of the Star. "Look to it," he cried. There was no separation line between the state of earthly delights and the temple of spiritual hunger. Ford saw a starvation for light, "in toto." "In toto" was a favorite expression of Ford's (435).

This passage is significant because it demonstrates Ford's subversion of gospel by elevating the "goat" while also introducing a vocabulary of liminality and integration, and also developing the significance of repeated words and phrases. Ford subverts the parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew by reinterpreting (misinterpreting?) the metaphor of goats as passed over to one

central to a Christian theology.[134] Not only does this trickster invert the meaning of the parable, but he also blurs the lines between the spiritual and the earthly. Terms such as "commingling," "ever present," and "no separation line" reinforce the notion of integration, though Ford's motivation seems to be to confuse and misdirect his flock rather than to guide them toward a mythic integration. The metaphor of the goat takes on additional significance as Joubert describes actual goats "strutt[ing] about the grass-matted floors of DIVINE DAYS, like natural men; or even satyrs" (436). Forrest's introduction of the mythical satyr in conjunction with Ford confirms the pan-mythical perspective of the narrative. Given that the satyr is also a sexualized creature, this aligns with other of Ford's personality traits.

Finally, this passage is significant because it continues a trend that pervades the novel: Forrest uses many phrases repeatedly and in different contexts so that the phrases take on added meaning. However, although the accrued meanings that the phrases take on over the course of the text is ironic, this does not create an instability of meaning. The most repeated word in book is "divine," and it is most frequently paired with "days" and capitalized. "DIVINE DAYS" first refers to Ford's church, but then it becomes the title of the play that Joubert wants to write about Sugar-Groove. Forrest also uses the terms "divine vigil" (147, 148, 754), "divinity's daimon" (1093, 1094), "divine one" (436), and "divine deeds" (624), among several others.[135] The point

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[134] The allusion to goats and sheep comes from Matthew: "And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (*KJV* Matthew 25:32-4).

[135] Forrest clearly recognized the power in the repetition of "divine" and particularly "DIVINE DAYS." In an interview with Eugene Redmond, Forrest remarked on the title, "I was going to use the title *The Memoirs of Joubert Jones*. This is his name, the main character, Joubert. After a while that seemed to be a little, well, I tried it on people and people would sort of say, 'Well, that's all right.' And one of the churches in the novel is called

of this, like Gates' partial list of the characteristics of the trickster, is not to be definitive, or even to examine the meanings of individual instances of the term, but to show the complexity of the topic. That Joubert links Sugar-Groove to Ford in his mind via the term "DIVINE DAYS" demonstrates a unity-in-differences between the figures and a great deal of associational thought. Forrest wants to challenge the concept of divinity by associating it with a clear charlatan (Ford) while also invoking the mythic (Sugar-Groove).

Ford's foil, Sugar-Groove takes on a mythic presence from the very opening of the novel and he takes the form of "badman," another archetypal figure that extends from the Trickster. John W. Roberts traces the origins of the badman to the trickster in much the way that Gates traced the contemporary trickster from Esu-Elegbara. Roberts argues that many accounts of the badman in African American literature conceive of the character as one who opportunistic and as likely to victimize blacks as whites (220-1). However, he goes on to show that the label of "dissembling trickster" that has been bestowed upon the badman by scholars unfamiliar with the origins of the figure are incorrect and that badmen are black folk heroes who have "traveled as champions of African Americans who have been forced to negotiate the American landscape by being quick of wit and adept at detecting sleight-of-hand . . . whose characteristic behaviors have historically and traditionally served as models of and for behavior among people of African descent in America" (221). Roberts likens the transition from trickster to badman to Br'er Rabbit, a figure that continually escapes capture through trickery. Like Br'er Rabbit and like the

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Divine Days and there are other allusions to 'Divine Days,' so I said I'll try this one and everyone I've mentioned it to has said it's intriguing, this 'Divine Days'" (Redmond 31).

trickster Ford, the badman may exhibit duplicitous behavior, but it is in the service of survival in a contentious atmosphere.[136]

Sugar-Groove is a figure who is well-known in the community but also is mysterious. His means of support is never quite known, and he is often attributed with supernatural characteristics and is the subject of much gossip in the the community. Forrest establishes Sugar-Groove's mythic potential early in the novel when Joubert is coming to learn of what had transpired in Forest County during his absence:

> Sugar-Groove had apparently passed away some time during the last weeks of my two-year army stint. I say apparently passed away, but vanished into the sunset, or up into the heavens would also be vaguely helpful (thus another spoke in the wheel of his nicknames, Sugar-Smoke, will be revealed in prophecy) because one was never sure if someone might not report seeing Sugar-Groove out south, or out west or out east. Nor were these Sugar-Groove sightings confirmed by bird-watchers, or sky-hawks, or sky-kings, either (32-3).

In addition to this, "nearly everything known about Sugar-Groove is by word of mouth, and thus filled with contradictions" (27), and pages later, "Nearly all Aunt Eloise knows (as well as everyone else, except Willieman) issues from legend" (31). Sugar-Groove's position in the community as badman fulfills an archetypal position as a character to emulate. Indeed, Sugar-Groove will prove to be a more important symbol of integration in the course of the novel.[137]

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[136] It does not seem coincidental that Joubert's Aunt Eloise often refers to him by the pet name "Br'er Bear."

[137] Dana A. Williams also mentions the badman influence in the character of Sugar-Groove. She writes that as badman, "a folk figure in African culture, Sugar-Groove adopts an ability to attract women, though he is not as uncaring or as unfeeling as his [trickster] counterpart" (101).

As Joubert learns more about Sugar-Groove and his history, he uncovers secrets about Sugar-Groove's origins. When young, Joubert worked as a shoe-shine boy in Williemain's barbershop and one night he stayed late to shine Sugar-Groove's shoes and heard the story of Sugar-Groove's education and early life. Joubert relates the story from Sugar-Groove's perspective in his journal. Sugar-Groove seems to understand Joubert's role as a story-teller because he informs the young man that he had not told the story before but that he thought that Joubert would "make some sense out of it in the long run over a period of time," and that he might be able to "make use of it one day" (312). At the same time, Sugar-Groove emphasizes that this is "the general outlines of history—*unwritten*" (emphasis original, 312). Sugar-Groove seems to challenge Joubert to write his unwritten history.

The story begins with a revelation: a young Sugar-Groove sets out to his father's home, and his father turns out to be Wilfred Bloodworth, a white former slave-owner. The father, Wilfred Bloodworth, had "never acknowledged him as a son, only 'boy' in any public way" (314), and had been "materially . . . 'generous' to the young Negro, funding Sugar-Groove's two years at Tuskegee. Sugar-Groove further reveals that his mother, Sarah-Belle, had been a slave in Bloodworth's house and had died in childbirth. The climax of Sugar-Groove's story is a physical confrontation with Bloodworth when he was fourteen.

Sugar-Groove's confrontation with Bloodworth stems from a series of alluring pictures of Sarah-Belle that Sugar-Groove found tucked into Bloodworth's bible. Sugar-Groove has never seen a picture of his mother and was shocked at the sight of her body and the way that she posed for the shot. Sugar-Groove sees the photographs because Bloodworth, who blamed Sugar-

Groove for the loss of Sarah-Belle, stood to leave the room and Sugar-Groove wondered what Bloodworth had been reading. He sees the pictures and is shocked by the revelation of Sarah-Belle's death and her image at the same time. Sugar-Groove is conflicted over his feelings for his mother who

> posed for the white man, who would not (and could not) marry her down here. Not would not leave this state and go to another state and marry her—the few that would allow them to be man and wife. . . What white man would when he could get all he wanted without giving up his freedom. . . Why that sonofabitch. The youth was now crying with anger. Why the pictures were stuck up in the Bible; each one smaller than the last. Each one more revealing of her figure than the one before it on top of it. Did he hate her for this? Well, no in one way, because some part of him was happy just to see her face at any price. Had Wilfred Bloodworth put a gun to get Sarah Belle to do this . . . pose in this way? (333).

In the midst of his conflict, Bloodworth returns to the room and, seeing what Sugar-Groove is holding, tries to wrest the pictures from his grasp. As the two grapple, one of the photographs rips in half and the two fall back, stunned. When Sugar-Groove recovers, he hurls the envelope of money at Bloodworth shouting, "'. . .Keep your mother fucking white man's money! My beautiful Mama weren't no white man's whore'" (336). This conflict culminates in a question of "ownership" and authority to claim a dead woman. Sugar-Groove cheapens what was, in Bloodworth's eyes, a relationship of love. To Sugar-Groove, however, the relationship between Sarah-Belle and Bloodworth is impossible to separate from the bonds of slavery, his image of a

mother he had never met, and the money that Bloodworth had given him as an allowance while never formally acknowledging him. Bloodworth fails to see what is apparent to Sugar-Groove, that Bloodworth cannot justly claim Sarah-Belle and rebuff Sugar-Groove.

The scene ends as the furious Bloodworth attempts to kill Sugar-Groove for his insolence when the two hear a female voice whisper "*How can you destroy what we created*" (336), which allows Sugar-Groove to escape. This scene is central to the novel and to Sugar-Groove's life because it reaffirms the interpenetrative, syndetic drive toward integration. Sarah-Belle's disembodied voice reminds Bloodworth of their connection and that the two had created Sugar-Groove. Both men are forced to recognize the power that she has and that neither had the authority to claim her because of this power. Dana Williams interprets the importance of this scene as one that humanizes the badman Sugar-Groove. She writes that without revealing this conflict to Joubert,

> Sugar-Groove is little more than a culture hero who experiences rebirth repeatedly. Instead, by sharing with Joubert the complexity of his character and being as well as his survival strategies and secrets of transformation, Sugar-Groove escapes the limitations of the traditional culture hero, reveals the fullness of a culture hero's experience, and returns the boon—survival--to his community through Joubert (103).

Sugar-Groove's lineage and position in the community demonstrate the complexity of the progression toward the mythic. While Ford and Sugar-Groove both embody folkloric figures, Ford fails to become anything more than an archetype, a charlatan. The trickster is not one to be admired or emulated, but the badman is because he understands survival.

In using archetypal characters, Forrest also plugs into an oral tradition that mirrors Joubert's engagement with drama. The performative nature of drama differs from the strict textuality normally associated with academics or a literary tradition.[138] Joubert writes for the *Forest County Dispatch* and also keeps his journal, but he sees this sort of writing as a distraction or an exercise for his real work as a playwright. Even Joubert's Aunt Eloise, who writes a gossip column in the same paper, refers to this writing as "avocational" and that this "'exercise' will exorcise the playwright in [his] soul" (9). The drama that Joubert wants to write embodies the conflict between the college and the barber shop.

The college and the barbershop are Joubert's two greatest influences. He spends much of his time either discussing the possibility of returning to college with his friend and professor from the local university or engaging with Williemain, owner of the barbershop and founder of the Royal Rights and Righteous Ramblings club that meets after hours in the shop. The two influences represent different forms of development for Joubert. The college is his opportunity for intellectual awakening and realizing his art, but this is in the service of his community and the stories that he wants to share. The barbershop, however, represents a rite of passage: "To be a man among men means among other things, to be taken in the back of the barbershop after closing and for Williemain to offer you something out of his private stock" (42). Joubert recognizes the competing discourses but works to bring them together throughout the novel. This is the purpose behind his journal and his plays: to integrate what may seem to be disparate elements of his life from an outsider's perspective, but which are both deeply intertwined within

[138] Richard Bauman and Donald Braid argue that considering oral traditions in terms of performance uncovers "their primary existence in the action of people and their roots in social and cultural life" (107).

his consciousness. Thus, it is this bringing-together of seemingly competing discourses that enables Joubert to become the encyclopedic poet of this interpenetrative encyclopedia.

5.3 Signifying Ironic Integration

One area in which *Divine Days* differs dramatically from the models of the encyclopedic novel discussed so far in this dissertation is in the use of irony. At times *Divine Days* is highly ironic and bitingly satirical, but the irony is of a different tenor than the irony in either *Gravity's Rainbow* or *Infinite Jest*. Rather than the irony of *Gravity's Rainbow* that becomes a means of speaking back to authority or the irony of *Infinite Jest* that motions toward common understanding, Forrest's irony in *Divine Days* is based in gaming word play and focused on integration. When Forrest uses irony to criticize, the object of critique is one that stands outside of the community and has the potential to disrupt the community. At base, it is this notion of community that differs so greatly from *Gravity's Rainbow* and *Infinite Jest* because in the former, communities were artificial and destructive and in the latter, communities exist in a nascent form, based on common interest. Community in *Divine Days* is more organic and based upon individuals' strong relationships with one another.

In this section, I will examine two kinds of local irony that Forrest uses in the novel. First is the replacement of local ironies with signifying. I will pay particular attention to the double-voiced nature of this form of irony. Second is satire aimed at preserving the integrity of the community by criticizing essentialist and/or nationalistic groups. In both cases, the use of

irony in this text strengthens bonds and amplifies the humanistic tendency found in Wallace's *Infinite Jest*.

Signifying is a term that Henry Louis Gates associates closely with the trickster figure because of the indeterminacy that the trickster projects. However, the indeterminate nature of this kind of irony extends beyond the trickster and badman figures in the text to become a trope that is used throughout the novel in normal conversation. In signifying, indeterminacy differs from the indeterminacy typical of postmodern irony or the instability of irony that Booth theorized. In the case of postmodern irony, there is a danger of irony canceling out meaning. The indeterminacy of postmodern irony is based in an inability to negotiate between negation and assertion. The emptiness of Jamesonian pastiche recognizes potentially nihilistic irony behind which nothing lies—there may be no signifier, or referent. Booth's unstable irony, on the other hand, reflects a characteristic of a certain kind of irony in which two "voices" are present in the text and the reader is unable to decide which of the two (it either) is correct.[139]

Rather than present an instability or reflect the danger of a crisis in representation, signifying encourages broader understanding by multiplying potential meaning for those who share common knowledge. While Gates' argument is much broader in sweep and includes the political dynamic of signifying as a means to speak back to power, I would like to focus on signifying as a local trope. Regarding the rhetorical usage of signifying, Gates draws a parallel between "signify" as a Saussurean relationship between a signifier and signified (sound-image and concept) and the "black linguistic sign, 'signification,'" describing the relationship between the two: "the standard English word is a homonym of the Afro-American vernacular word. And,

[139] For more on instability in local irony, see Booth 55-62.

to compound the dizziness and the giddiness that we must experience in the vertiginous movement between these two 'identical' signifiers, these two homonyms have everything to do with each other and, then again, absolutely nothing" (44-5). For Gates, this means that the relationship between the terms is both present and absent; it is, "paradoxically, a relation of difference inscribed within a relation of identity" (45). To put this in terms that I have used already in this chapter, there is a unity-in-difference.

Signification negotiates the subtle differences that overlay a word or term. I have provided one example of this already: Forrest's extensive repetition of "divine" throughout the novel. This represents a form of signification in that multiple meanings accrue to the word as it is used in multiple contexts and the reader is not left with the instability of determining which version, or "voice," is the correct one, but of combining the meanings to create something new. In this way, Forrest can use the word "divine" both ironically and not, at the same time. This occurs many times in the novel, but one example of this usage occurs when Joubert considers the tasks that lie before him: attending to his duties at Eloise's Night Light, writing his memoir of Sugar-Groove, and going to his evening with Royal Rites and Righteous Ramblings at Williemain's barbershop. Joubert writes, "At least large portions of these days shall be divine" (43). This phrase means a variety of things and is both ironic and non-ironic at the same time because of the use of this particular word that has already begun to accrue meaning novel. The word "divine" also carries a specific meaning for Joubert that differs from others in his community because he has kept his play a secret from most of the people in town. The title of his play, *Divine Days*, is both a play on Ford's continued repetition of the word and also Joubert's

ironic comment on what he sees as the profane nature of Ford's All Souls church. It is impossible to determine a single meaning of the phrase because it shifts depending upon perspective and prior encounters with the word "divine." Forrest's use of the term grows in complexity when the reader, who knows that the title of the novel is also *Divine Days*, interprets Joubert's use of the word differently even from the characters in the novel. Forrest repeats "divine" in a variety of contexts and depends upon the reader to track the shifting meaning over the course of the novel.

Another way that Gates writes about signification is in the game "the dozens." The dozens is a form of jocular ribbing in which players bond by insulting one another and the goal is not to become angered by the ridicule. It is a test of emotional strength for participants. This is another trope that occurs throughout the novel, but it is more frequently observed in the form of characters telling embarrassing stories about one another in a large group context. This happens frequently at the Night Light either in the form of making fun of the food that waitresses bring to give to patrons or in ridiculing a patron's drunkenness. In one particularly humorous example, the regulars of the Night Light recall Mac Mac (McGovern McNabb) passing out in the bar and the regulars' attempts to awaken him. The attempts to awaken him began with Joubert applying smelling salts, and when this failed to work, other patrons insulting him to shock him out of his stupor, which then escalates eventually to the decision to pour ice down his pants to snap him awake (230-256). The dozens in this case is not the event itself but recounting the event afterwards in Mac Mac's presence. As Joubert retells it, there is no way to know what has been exaggerated to get a rise out of the now lucid Mac Mac and what had actually occurred. Much

like the case of the word “divine,” what “actually” happened is beside the point because it is a rhetorical ploy to form bonds with others through multiplied meaning.

The second way that Forrest uses irony in *Divine Days* is to satirize potentially fractious elements in the community. Forrest employs a more standard use of irony to critique these groups, but what makes this form of irony different is in the respect that it expresses for the cohesion of the community. Specifically, Forrest is critical of members of Afro-centric communities and any limiting terms applied to black Americans. Forrest describes Fulton Armstead, proponent of the multi-valent “double Black Letter 'A.'” which he variously defines as “All-African,” “African-American,” and “Absolutely African” (633). Armstead is presented as a buffoon who spouts Pan-African rhetoric but does not understand what it means. He claims affinity with other blacks that befuddles them, such as the “shocked African student” upon whose shoulder Armstead would throw his head, “embracing not so much the African, but Africa the pure” (633). Armstead also collects African art but does not understand it. Forrest does not criticize the interest in African heritage, but the essentialism that assumes that African Americans are culturally similar to Africans and that men like Armstead can dictate what “African” entails.

Forrest expresses this ironically through his characterization of Armstead's thoughts on race relations: “But God, or Allah help an Afro-American if he or she happened to be sitting with any white friends (colorful, or plain, or those who had put their lives on the line in the South). For no matter their firing-line credentials, *you* were simply 'bewitched by whiteness' and your blackness, lacquer-thin, 'moth-eaten' and 'Asleep,' or 'white-washed'” (635-6). Forrest's ridicule of Armstead differs from the ridicule of Mac Mac not because this is a story shared amongst

laughing friends but a screed against a mindset that temporarily adopts the buzzwords and attitude of "the man." Forrest's satire points out the hypocrisy of what he considers to be black nationalism or Afro-centrism by evoking the notion of purity. Forrest expands on his consideration of racial and cultural alliances in his interview with Madhu Dubey. It is worth quoting the exchange to capture Forrest's tone:

> Dubey: It was clear to me from reading the novel that your understanding of African-American culture is strongly opposed to any kind of purist or singular conception of cultural identity, or even a bifocal conception. I'm thinking here of the various references in the novel to the Du Boisian notion of double-consciousness . . . Could you elaborate on what precisely you find so confining about these?
>
> Forrest: I resist anything in this culture that has to do with purity. That's so anti-American in the first place. And yet at the same time it's crucible on which so much of race relations and white supremacy is based—the idea of purity. But there certainly aren't any pure Americans culturally, not at this time, that's one thing for sure. And obviously the heritage, the background of blacks is very complex, not just on color lines but lines of culture (65).

For Forrest, the importance of identity lies in multiplicity and complexity. A unified, or "pure" version of race or culture is, to him, inconsistent with American identity. In a different interview, Forrest expresses similar thoughts on a question about his influence from "across the racial and cultural spectrum": "Wherever I can get influence, wherever I can be moved by something,

maybe I can use it . . . This is what we're talking about, where I can get new techniques. So I don't have any problem with that at all" (33).

The use of irony in *Divine Days* is of a piece with the novel's broader integrative progression. Community and respecting the integrity of the community, along with the complex individuality of its members becomes of paramount importance. The potentially fractious Armstead is not just a variation but a potential threat because of his notions of purity. The use of signifying also extends the in-joke ironic mentality that was present in *Infinite Jest* from a local ironic utterance to a rhetorical mode of speech. Forrest expresses an additional form of signification in the juxtaposition between vernacular speech and Joubert's heightened academic engagement. However, there is still a division between discourses and rhetorical speech patterns and in Joubert's consideration of his writing career. Although these elements are brought together they are not fully incorporated and this is what makes *Divine Days* a part of the progression toward the mythic and not mythic, itself. Joubert is an imperfect encyclopedic poet because he cannot quite bridge the gap to fully speak for his society. He is displaced from this community to the extent that he perceives himself to be displaced due to his aspirations to education and artistry.

5.4 Conclusion: Double Vision and Double Consciousness

One of the figures who has been glaringly absent from this chapter is W.E.B. DuBois, although I have made several glancing references to his ideas. I have purposefully left DuBois for last in order to address his notion of double-consciousness in the context of the encyclopedic

novel and in light of Forrest's sometimes ironic engagement with some of the ideals that DuBois forwarded. Finally, I also want to introduce another concept that bears some affinity to DuBois' double consciousness and that is Northrop Frye's double vision. These concepts share some affinities that illuminate the characteristics of the interpenetrative encyclopedia and Forrest's novel.

"Double-consciousness" is a condition that DuBois introduces at the beginning *The Souls of Black Folk* that address the position of an individual of African descent living in America. It is worth quoting DuBois at some length:

> the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world, – a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (3).

DuBois' power is such that this double-consciousness has formed a strong backbone for African American criticism and is often under the current of contemporary critics. For example, "two-ness" is present in Gates' signification, a two-ness of interpretation and meaning. It is echoed in Joubert's tension between the college and the barbershop.

But the tension that DuBois has expressed has not gone unchallenged. Kenneth A. Warren questions double-consciousness in a post-Jim Crow America. Likewise, Leon Forrest expresses some discomfort with the idea in *Divine Days*. For DuBois, double-consciousness is a mark of the continual other-ness of the black American that is both internalized and externalized. It represents for him a fear of never attaining a true self-consciousness because the mind is always divided. This tension, however, runs counter to the process of integration. Where DuBois sees two-ness as a rift, Frye sees it as a unified encyclopedic vision.

In "Theory of Symbols," Frye draws from medieval anagogic symbolism to define a phase of writing that he also calls the anagogic. Medieval anagogy is the perception of the universal in a polysemous symbol. But in order to conceive of the anagogy, one must see double because the symbol contains the individual, the archetypal, and the universal. Frye writes, "When we pass into anagogy, nature becomes, not the container, but the thing contained, and the archetypal universal symbols, the city, the garden, the quest, the marriage, are no longer the desirable forms that man constructs inside nature, but are themselves forms of nature" (119). The anagogic symbol offers something of the God's-eye perspective of mankind.

Anagogic symbolism becomes important to *Divine Days* and to DuBois' double-consciousness because anagogy aligns with mythic encyclopedism in Frye's "Theory of Modes." The concept of unity-in-difference that pervades the interpenetrative encyclopedia marks a glimpse at the universal. Joubert's attempts to bridge gaps and to embody conflicting urges brings DuBois' double-consciousness back full-circle and attempts to combine what was unreconcilable to DuBois. Forrest is aware of the conflict of doubling and addresses it in the

novel. In a moment of crisis, Joubert questions the nature of his own consciousness and the conflict between the college and the barbershop. He writes,

> Oh, conflicted me...
>
> Not Du Bois simple-formula of double-consciousness, but rather one of a hundred hog-headed cheese voices of madness from my literary genesis. I am contorted between the voice in *Finnegan's Wake* [*sic*] [. . .] Despising the parts, and fondly horrible home to parts of the sum . . . the nightmare of my history . . . (unbracketed ellipses original,713)

Joubert's concern over his identity is not limited to a two-ness but extends to a multitude and includes his white literary influences. In this moment, Forrest confirms the multiplicity and complexity of the individual that extends beyond the cultural and racial and includes every other influence.

The double vision of anagogy, the ability to see on an individual and universal basis is the culmination of Frye's encyclopedic vision. Like interpenetration, it collapses difference into a singularity within nature. This is *Divine Days*' contribution to the encyclopedic form: it demonstrates the move beyond individual concerns to see the unity-in-difference that marks the movement into a mythic re-integration. Leon Forrest's *Divine Days* has moved incrementally toward that re-integration by incorporating seemingly competing discourses and showing that they already do coexist.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION: META-ENCYCLOPEDIC DISCOURSE

> "It is a laborious madness and an impoverishing one, the madness of composing vast books--setting out in five hundred pages an idea that can be perfectly expressed orally in five minutes. The better way to go about it is to pretend that those books already exist, and offer a summary, a commentary on them"
>
> -Jorge Luis Borges, Foreword to *Garden of Forking Paths*, 67

6.1 The Meta-Encyclopedia

In this dissertation I have argued that the contemporary encyclopedic novel traces two lines of influence from Diderot's Enlightenment *Encyclopédie* and Frye's conceptions of the encyclopedic form and have endeavored to show a progression of the encyclopedic novel from Pynchon's anarchistic encyclopedia that posits a radical individuality to Wallace's rhetorical encyclopedia that attempts to overcome Pynchon's individualistic priority to a broader humanistic re-integration. Finally, Leon Forrest's *Divine Days* approaches most closely the turning point from the ironic mode into the mythic that Frye predicts in his “Theory of Modes” in *Anatomy of Criticism*. This trajectory describes a broad arc of historical development and organic growth that mirrors a desire for cultural re-integration that has shifted focus from the narrowly nationalistic purview to a broader international and finally inter-cultural integration.

There is another body of literature that deals with many of the same concerns as the contemporary encyclopedic novel but does not possess the characteristics of that genre as I have outlined them. This body of literature is comprised of short stories and novels that adopt one or another of the elements of the encyclopedic novel. I call this body "meta-encyclopedic" texts, and it consists two types of texts: one that adopts the encyclopedic form, and one that address the concept of the encyclopedia. These texts are meta-encyclopedic because they take the tools of the encyclopedic form and bend them against the concept of the encyclopedia itself.

Very often meta-encyclopedic texts critique the project of encyclopedism by attempting to deflate its pomposity or dispute its conception of knowledge or authority, but there is another element to the meta-encyclopedic texts that extends from Frye's encyclopedic form. The satirical nature of many of these texts, and their often overt political interventions, serve to point the way for future encyclopedic projects. Frye's overarching narrative of the encyclopedia is one of redemptive integration. These texts do not lie on this narrative path toward reintegration but serve as sign-posts to help correct the course by pointing out flaws in our conception of the encyclopedia.

In this conclusion, I offer a brief excursus of four texts that exemplify elements of the meta-encyclopedia. This exploration into the meta-encyclopedic must necessarily be brief because a full study would require an inquiry into a different body of criticism and a different body of source texts. Rather, what I hope to offer here is a suggestion for further study into encyclopedism in contemporary literature. The first category often utilizes a highly ironic approach that adopts an informative rhetorical stance in order to undercut the surface meaning of

the text and, in some instances, is aimed at deflating the encyclopedic project. The second category seeks to address the *idea* of the encyclopedia as it exists in the popular imagination. For the sake of simplicity, I will refer to these categories as "meta-encyclopedic form" and "meta-encyclopedic content," respectively.

6.2 Meta-Encyclopedic Form

Meta-encyclopedic texts mimic encyclopedic form, or reference text forms in general, to engage in a self-reflexive critique of totalized knowledge. These texts use formal characteristics of the encyclopedia in order to point out the pitfalls and inadequacies of the form. These texts also often adopt an exaggerated dry, informative, or "objective" tone.

Roberto Bolaño's *Nazi Literature in the Americas* is an uncharacteristically brief novel that is constructed as a biographical encyclopedia of fictional fascist and extreme-right authors and publishers. The novel is divided thematically into fourteen parts, each of which contains biographies of different groupings of authors from across the Americas. Section headings such as "Forerunners and Figures of the Anti-Enlightenment," "Wandering Women of Letters," and "North American Poets" reveal the tenor of the novel: Bolaño never breaks his satirical tone in the body of the novel and leaves both the ironic ambivalence and fictional integrity of the work completely intact. At the same time, the headings are merely descriptive in a banal, faux-objective way. The significance of these groupings is effaced by the dry descriptions.

There is only one point at which Bolaño reveals a hint of his ironic stance and that is the epigraph. The quote, by Augusto Monterroso, is an ironic reimagining of Heraclitus' dictum that

one cannot step into the same river twice: “If the flow is slow enough and you have a good bicycle, or a horse, it *is* possible to bathe twice (or even three times, should your personal hygiene so require) in the same river” (xi). This paratext establishes the ironic stance of the novel, but on the periphery, and not in the body of the text, proper. The quote also reveals something of Bolaño's fears that history can be repeated, that it is possible to see the rise of fascism again.

The light-hearted tone of the epigraph contrasts sharply with the dry, informative tone of the body of the text that clearly mimics the writing style and structure of modern encyclopedia. The first entry, titled “Edelmira Thompson de Mendiluce,” describes Edelmira's first encounters with literature, her marriage to Sebastian Mendiluce, a wealthy man twenty years her senior, their travels to Europe and finally Edelmira's radicalization following a meeting with Adolf Hitler. What is striking about the passage is the way that Bolaño empties it of judgment or comment:

> In 1929, the stock-market crash obliged Sebastian Mediluce to return to Argentina. Meanwhile Edelmira and her children were presented to Adolf Hitler, who held Luz and said, “She certainly is a wonderful little girl.” Photos were taken. The future Führer of the Reich made a great impression on the Argentinian poet. Before leaving, she presented him with several of her own books and a deluxe edition of *Martin Fierro*. Hitler thanked her warmly, beseeching her to translate one of her poems into German on the spot, a task which, with the help of Carozzone, she managed to accomplish. Hitler was clearly delighted. The lines were resounding and looked to the future. In high

> spirits, Edelmira asked for the Führer's advice: which would be the most appropriate school for her sons? He recommended a Swiss boarding school, but added that the best school was life itself. By the end of the audience, Edelmira and Carozzone were committed Hitlerites (6).

After Edelmira's return to Argentina she uses her husband's money to start a publishing house that is dedicated to literary arts and political commentary. Later in the entry, Bolaño reveals that Edelmira may have financed a magazine and publishing company called *The Fourth Reich in Argentina*.

What makes *Nazi Literature in the Americas* significant is that it adopts the dry editorial tone of the modern encyclopedia that attempts to remain objective but, in doing so, implies a tacit acceptance of the events described. Bolaño satirizes the modern encyclopedia's attempted objective stance in presenting information by presenting material that, in another novel, would be presented in a negative light. The novel demonstrates that objectivity in relating past events decontextualizes those events and has the greater purpose of exposing the danger of history without commentary.

Meta-encyclopedic form is not always so dour, though it does tend to carry a critical edge. Compare Bolaño's *Nazi Literature in the Americas*, for example, with a text such as Ambrose Bierce's *Devil's Dictionary.* Bierce's work is well known for its cynical perspective on the world. His lexicon redefines many words to reflect his personal antipathies. The purpose of Bierce's dictionary varies from point to point. At times his definitions seem to simply display a curmudgeonly rejection of convention, such as his definition of the word “bigot”: “One who is

obstinately and zealously attached to an opinion that you do not entertain" (11). At other points, Bierce presents definitions that are jokes for their own sake, such as "armor": "The kind of clothing worn by a man whose tailor is a blacksmith" (7), or "Brain": "An apparatus with which we think that we think" (13). Very often, however, Bierce ventures into political satire, offering such definitions as "Conservative": "A statesman who is enamored of existing evils, as distinguished from the Liberal, who wishes to replace them with others" (18). Significantly for this project, Bierce also comments on the constraining nature of lexical systems – such as "Dictionary": "A malevolent literary device for cramping the growth of language and making it hard and inelastic. This dictionary, however, is a most useful work" (24).

Taken together, these examples demonstrate Bierce's perspective that an "objective" or "authoritative" dictionary is lacking because of the artificial constraints it places on language, which mirrors Bolaño's concerns about objectivity in history. A word has a "just-so" meaning that, for Bierce, cannot capture the full range of meaning behind the word. In the case of his definition for the dictionary, Bierce also demonstrates a self-reflexivity that is an important element of his critique. By claiming that his own dictionary is a useful tool in spite of the limitations inherent to the form, Bierce jokes about the paradoxical utility of the dictionary as a lexical reference. Although *The Devil's Dictionary* is not an encyclopedia, the ironic adaptation of the reference form is parallel to the parodic encyclopedia.

6.3 Meta-Encyclopedic Content

The second division of meta-encyclopedic texts includes those that address the content of encyclopedic discourse. This can run the range from the proposition of a heterological discourse as an alternative to authoritative discourse, to challenging the authority of texts, to commenting on the futility of data acquisition. It is this last concept that I turn to for my examples of text concerned with meta-encyclopedic content. Throughout this dissertation, I have peppered in allusions to the works of Jorge Luis Borges, and here I want to direct attention to one of his fictions that deals directly with content of the encyclopedic project.

The passage that I quote in this chapter's epigraph perfectly encapsulates this meta-encyclopedic approach to writing, and Borges made much of the invented book, library, city, or province. In this manner, Borges' work is largely speculative, and thus abstracted from either Bolaño's novel or the encyclopedic works discussed in the preceding chapters. It is this abstraction, though, that gives his work a timeless quality. Because the books to which Borges refers never existed, they will never fall out of fashion, and what makes Borges' criticism so biting is that there is an indeterminacy at the root level of interpretation because the reader can never fully understand who the audience for the books Borges describes is supposed to be and projects his or her own interpretations onto that imagined audience of an imagined book.

The two fictions I will explore here are “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius” and “The Book of Sand.” These two fictions have a number of things in common. Both contain books with vanishing pages, both feature characters who become obsessed with these books, and both find the infinite monstrous. Despite these similarities, however, the two fictions approach the

question of knowledge from opposite directions. "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" is about the creation of a world from a wisp, a hint of a hidden reality, while "The Book of Sand" takes the paradoxical stance common in Borges' fictions that the infinite is a negation.

"Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" is made up of two parts and a fictional "Postscript." The first part details vanishing pages, the second details the discovery of an imaginary book, and the postscript details the way that the imaginary world in the book begins to erode the real world and replace it. The plot of the fiction is quite intricate for such a short narrative, and I cannot do it full justice here, but will restrict my comments to the relevant elements. In the first section, the narrator and his friend discover an encyclopedia entry about a fictional province called Uqbar. However, the two discover after cross-checking that the entry only exists in the friends copy of the encyclopedia and not in other copies of the same edition. Nowhere else can the two find any reference to the mysterious Uqbar and details about the nation remain unknown to the narrator for some time.

The second part takes place two years later when the narrator finds a book addressed to another friend of his who has died. This book turns out to be *A First Encyclopaedia of Tlön. Vol. XI. Hlaer to Jangr*, which contains the same unknown phrase, "Orbis Tertius," that the missing encyclopedia entry from the first section has also contained. Given the cross-referencing in the volume of the encyclopedia, the narrator is able to infer the content of other volumes of the Tlönian encyclopedia and a third friend suggests that the two set about reconstructing the full set, proposing that a full generation of scholars could complete the task.

Finally, in the postscript written seven years after the second part, the narrator reveals yet more about these strange encyclopedias. A secret society in the seventeenth century had endeavored to invent a nation – Uqbar – but then in 1824 one of the hereditary members of the society "laughed at the modesty of the project" and proposed to invent not only the planet where Uqbar is located – Tlön – but to compose "a systematic encyclopedia of the illusory planet" (79). In 1914, the society secretly published the *First Encyclopaedia of Tlön*, one volume of which the narrator found in the second part. After the publication in 1914, the secret society undertook to write the encyclopedia in one of the Tlönian languages. In the last couple of pages of the fiction, the narrator describes the intrusion of some Tlönian objects and ideas into the real world. At the end, the narrator fears that Tlön will overtake the real world.

The significance of this fiction lies partially obscured by the complicated plot, but it stems from a Viconian notion of the self-constructed nature of societies. The narrator writes, "Tlön may well be a labyrinth, but it is a labyrinth forged by men, a labyrinth destined to be deciphered by men" (81). Writing and thinking about Tlön made it more real with each iteration and each discovery. The Tlönian project could as easily have been a project of a secret society to influence events in the real world. Whether the secret society members wanted to test their imagination by inventing a new world or if they actually wanted to effect real change in the world, the end result is the same: the incursion of Tlön into reality. This is a significant point because it recognizes that the ways in which we order the world, write about it, and think about it have real bearing on that world. This point goes straight to the heart of the encyclopedic project to record knowledge for the betterment of humankind. The germ of an idea blossoms into a new

reality and the human intellect has the ability to shape the nature of that new reality. The danger that Borges points to is the unexpected ways in which human imagination and invention can leap out of control. In this way, "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" mirrors Bolaño's message in *Nazi Literature in the Americas*, which is that the way we describe the world influences the world.

The second Borges fiction, "The Book of Sand," is much less complicated than "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," but conveys a similar meaning. Another unnamed narrator tells the story of a bible salesman who arrives at his door with an unusual book. As the narrator looks through it, the bible salesman tells him to look on each page well because he will never see it again. This is because the book is filled with an infinite number of pages with no beginning and no end and it is impossible to locate a single page in an infinite range. The book is "called the Book of Sand because neither sand nor this book has a beginning or an end," and the salesman proves this by asking the narrator to try to locate the first page: "I took the cover in my left hand and opened the book, my thumb and forefinger almost touching. It was impossible: several pages always lay between the cover and my hand. It was as though they grew from the very book" (481).

The narrator, fascinated, purchases the book but quickly becomes obsessed and finds the book to be monstrous and hides the book in the basement of the library to be rid of it. Borges never reveals the contents of the book and leaves it to the reader to interpret the monstrosity. Given other fictions, such as "The Garden of Forking Paths," in which a book contains all possible plot lines of a single story, and "The Library of Babel," in which Borges describes a library holding every book and every variation of that book (including translations into every language and every possible combination of typos), it is clear that the infinite is monstrous

because it obviates uniqueness. The individual no longer matters in the face of the infinite. This is the reason the narrator of "Book of Sand" must pay attention to each page because he will never see it again since the individual page will become lost in the infinite.

For Borges, the infinite negates individual possibility and his characters recoil from it. The Book of Sand frustrates the narrator because it is impossible for him to figure out. He only gains the scantest knowledge in his examination of it and can barely describe it. The infinity of pages is so overwhelming that this is really all that he knows about it. The monstrosity of the book even transfers to the narrator. He writes, " I realized that the book was monstrous. It was cold consolation to think that I, who looked upon it with my eyes and fondled it with my ten flesh-and-bone fingers, was no less monstrous than the book. I felt it was a nightmare thing, an obscene thing, and that it defiled and corrupted reality" (483).

"Book of Sand" is a meta-encyclopedic text because it address the limits of knowledge and, implicitly, the limits of the encyclopedic project. If Diderot's vision for the encyclopedia is to compile information for future generations, then at some point this compilation would exceed our ability to make use or sense of it. Borges interactions with the meta-encyclopedic reveal a deep mistrust of the project of encyclopedism. In Borges' hands, the encyclopedia seems authoritarian and inhuman. Just as the Book of Sand is monstrous to the narrator, mirrors are monstrous to the narrator of "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius." He writes that he and his friend "discovered . . . that there was something monstrous about mirrors" (68). The monstrosity of mirrors sparks the friend to remember a line from the entry on Uqbar in his recalcitrant

encyclopedia: “Mirrors and copulation are abominable, for they multiply the number of mankind” (68). Borges never reveals what it is that the narrator discovered.

There is a vast unknown at the center of both of these fictions by Borges that burrows into the minds of his narrators and becomes an obsession. For Borges, the desire to know is positive, but it is the utter refusal of the infinite to be known that mars the encyclopedic. Borges' contribution to encyclopedic discourse is an important one because of his distrust. He wants to warn us of these limitations and to show us that we cannot always control our creations.

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VITA

Matthew Raese was born in Medina, Ohio in 1979. After finishing public school in 1997 he attended the Ohio State University where he earned a B.A. in English Literature. He moved to Manhattan, Kansas to earn his M.A. in English Literature at Kansas State University. Matthew then moved to the American south to study English Literature with a focus on the contemporary American novel at the University of Tennessee. He completed the requirements to earn a Doctor of Philosophy degree in May 2014.