

"Spot this Mumbo Jumbo":
 Thomas Pynchon's Emblems for American Culture
 in "Mortality and Mercy in Vienna"*

Claire M. Tylee

Before World War I, as early as 1910, Bertrand Russell, one of the founders of logical positivism, had characterised "the world which science presents for our belief" as "purposeless" and "void of meaning." He claimed that "Man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; . . . and that the whole temple of Man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins." Such things are not beyond dispute, but "so nearly certain" that "only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation be safely built" ("A Free Man's Worship"). But worse was to come. After World War II, Gilbert Ryle claimed that even the belief in the soul was a logical error, a category mistake. The soul was insubstantial, not even "the ghost in the machine" of the human body (Concept of Mind [1949]). Following that lead, the influential Norbert Wiener, in his The Human Use of Human Beings (1954), resolved to avoid "all question-begging epithets such as 'life,' 'soul,' 'vitalism,' and the like," since "such words as life, purpose and soul are grossly inadequate to precise scientific thinking." It was no longer even to be possible coherently to state Russell's original "unyielding despair" concerning the soul's proper habitation in a purposeless life.

Not only was talk of the soul and the purpose of life banned from the domains of philosophical and

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scientific discourse, but also the whole realm of poetry, which might have sustained it, was declared to be empty of sense. In his paper "The Rejection of Metaphysics" (1935), Rudolph Carnap distinguishes "two functions of language, which we may call the expressive function and the representative function." The representative function is "to assert something" or "represent a certain state of affairs which must be verifiable;" if it is not, "your assertion is no assertion at all; it does not speak about anything; it is nothing but a series of empty words; it is simply without sense." On the other hand, "many linguistic utterances are analogous to laughing in that they have only an expressive function, no representative function. Examples of this are cries like "Oh, Oh" or on a higher level, lyrical verses. The aim of a lyrical poem in which occur the words 'sunshine' and 'clouds' is not to inform us of certain meteorological facts, but to express certain feelings of the poet and to excite similar feelings in us." A lyrical poem has no assertional sense, it does not contain knowledge." As Carnap pointed out, he and the other members of the Vienna Circle owed much to Ludwig Wittgenstein and his Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus (1922), written under the influence of Russell and Frege. At that time Wittgenstein considered, like Russell, that language ought to be "precise," avoiding all ambiguity such as puns or metaphors.

Thomas Pynchon's aim in his early short stories is clearly to reinstate the language of poetry. Puns and metaphors revitalise language, giving new life to clichés. Poetry itself is the scaffolding of the world of the soul, enabling man to articulate the value of his life at the metaphysical interface between the sacred and the profane, between "cosmos" and "chaos."

In The Sacred and the Profane (1959), Mircea Eliade showed that, for religious man, the world (that is, "our world") is a universe within which the sacred has already manifested itself; "it exists, it is there and it has a structure; it is not a chaos but a cosmos." The existence of the world itself "means" something; it is not an inert thing without purpose or significance. Eliade believed that something of the religious

conception of the world still persists for profane man; the paradigmatic sacred images live on in his language and clichés, although he is not always conscious of this "immemorial heritage." For instance, we still use the same images as are to be found in the Old Testament and writings of the Middle Ages to formulate the dangers that threaten a certain type of civilisation: we speak of chaos, the disorder, the darkness that will overwhelm "our world." (Even Russell, in his declaration of himself as a Free Man, still talks of a "hostile universe.") For religious man "the reactualisation of mythical events is an eternal return to the sources of the sacred and the real" by which "human existence appears to be saved from nothingness and death." For the non-religious man every existential crisis once again puts into question both the reality of the world and man's presence in the world. Pynchon's heroes are all non-religious men undergoing existential crises in a profane world. For them the vital experiences such as death and sexuality have been desacralised. Their acts are deprived of spiritual significance and thus of "their truly human dimension." But Eliade believed, like Nietzsche and Jung, that the non-religious man of modern society is still nourished and aided by the activity of his unconscious: although "his religious sense has fallen even below the level of divided consciousness" into the depths of the unconscious, "in his deepest being he still retains a memory" of religion. Thus "going native" is an attempt to return to that primitive sense of sacred reality which Pynchon's character Irving Loon still lives in but which urban civilised man only retains in the detritus of his language--where he still talks of "home" as special. Man cannot really feel at home in a desacralised, "hostile" universe, and this existential alienation, this "cosmic insecurity," is the source of the destructive paranoia in "Mortality and Mercy in Vienna," Pynchon's second short story.

"Mortality and Mercy in Vienna" centres on an idea that was dropped casually in the first paragraph of Pynchon's first short story, "The Small Rain"--the idea of "going native."¹ Like "The Small Rain," this second story was also published in early 1959, but the

style is more assured, the content more idiosyncratic. "Mortality and Mercy in Vienna" may also have been intended for an undergraduate readership, but whereas the earlier story was explicitly critical of college habits, perhaps even didactically so, the later one at first appears to feed the undergraduate sense of superiority and actually to encourage the game of Spot This Quote that "The Small Rain" so despises. The sick sense of humour it panders to is particularly adolescent.

Sure, it's amusing, in a twisted sort of way. And it gives literary critics something to write about and people at parties something to talk about: "So by use of literary references or intertextuality. . . ." "Fascinating, this Windigo psychosis." "And we'd both laugh and laugh because it was so much fun." "O, ha, ha." But by the end Pynchon seems to have preempted all possible responses except a horrified, puzzled silence. He has deliberately taken the laughter out of our sails, and the black humoured anticlimax forces us back into the deadly earnest question posed by Siegel's response to his "moment of truth"--why would the matador casually stroll off, whistling, from the massacre about to result inside the bull-ring? Nor will the literary clues that litter the sand help us; they merely show us that old literary ideas are no key to contemporary maps: the clue to Pynchon's labyrinth is not to be found in Dante or Shakespeare, Conrad or Eliot. (Nor is it to be found in Weber, although the story confronts Weber's ideas about types and groups, bureaucracy and authority and charisma.) Despite having arrived near duPont Circle, the "gloomy circle of some inferno," Siegel in Washington is not a guideless Dante in Hell: Rachel is not Beatrice to summon him on to Paradise; and despite the source of the title (Measure for Measure: I.i.44), he is not Angelo in Vienna: there is no Duke to return and dispense divine mercy. Neither is Siegel Marlow, who reached self-knowledge, nor Kurtz, who, far from being "in his way a father confessor," "presented himself as a voice." Above all, Siegel is clearly not the fisher-king come in Spring to redeem his people from their wasteland. Although part of the richness of the theme comes from these resonances, the counterpoint of

Vienna and Paris, the dark jungle and the wasteland, the chord composed of Dante, Angelo and Marlow is a dominant seventh leading us back to the tonic of Siegel in Washington.

The narrative recounts how Siegel, a young career diplomat recently returned to Washington from Europe, arrives early for a party at which he was to have met up with another guest, his girlfriend Rachel. He finds he bears a strong resemblance to his Rumanian host, Lupescu, whom he has never met before. Lupescu impulsively delegates Siegel to be host in his stead and abruptly leaves, with the parting words "Mistah Kurtz--he dead." Siegel, stunned, phones Rachel to discover she is not coming after all, but, before he can make his escape, the other guests begin to arrive. She has described them as a "curious" crowd, and they are certainly odd. Siegel, fighting panic, adopts the role of suave host only to find he is gradually, reluctantly, pushed to assume the role of father confessor for revelations of obsessional sexual relationships. In the course of the party he realises that one of the guests, a silent Ojibwa Indian named Irving Loon, is in the early paranoid stages of a psychosis peculiar to his tribe, Windigo psychosis. Siegel flippantly triggers his movement towards the violence characteristic of the next stage, where the sufferer perceives other humans as beaver to be killed and eaten. The only person to recognise that a massacre is about to ensue, Siegel then quietly leaves the party, and has strolled down to the street by the time he hears the sounds of rifle fire.

Commencing with a shower of spring rain, and then mentioning that Siegel had regarded himself as a healer and prophet, the story, by the time it reaches Lupescu's use of Baudelaire's words "mon semblable, mon frère," has the literary reader, like Siegel, "flipping over a stack of mental IBM cards frantically" to complete the quote from T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land": "You! hypocrite lecteur!" and recognise Siegel as the redeemer of the wasteland of Washington. The thirty-year-old Jewish Siegel has come, bearing under his arm a bottle of whisky (uisge beathe--the water of life), to replace the "wild-looking, rangy man with fierce eyebrows," Lupescu, depicted as a kind of ill St. John Baptist. (The connection could even be stretched to Siegel's college friends' having nick-

named him "Stephen," like Joyce's Stephen Dedalus, who also saw himself as a Christ figure and his friend Cranly as St. John. How frantic can a reader get?) Furthermore, if Kurtz has died, Washington is not only the Waste Land, but also the Heart of Darkness; and Siegel, like Marlow, is going to follow Dante's descent into one of the dark places, the infernal condition of the human soul. The title begins to make sense; it is not an obscure compliment to Freud. As priggish as Angelo in Measure for Measure, the young lawyer Siegel finds he has the power of dispensing mortality or mercy in a city which, although not Vienna, yet suffers from sexual depravity. The rain, then, which Shakespeare celebrates in The Merchant of Venice, seems to symbolise that unstrained quality of mercy and compassion which Measure for Measure demonstrates as essential to the wise legislator and ruler. Like J. W. Slade, we too can just catch "the near audible clicks of motifs falling neatly into place" (Thomas Pynchon [1974]).

Yet Angelo was neither a wise ruler nor a healer. And where is the good Duke? He does not appear on the scene to counteract Siegel's decisions. As Siegel speculates on the similarities between Kurtz and Lupescu, the catastrophe gathers momentum, and an apocalypse takes place that the literary allusions had not prepared for. The critic can quickly recover himself, mock heroic; we have, after all, the perfect parody of an out-of-date myth: "Poetic? Religious? Ha, ha."

Forced to retrace our steps through the story by the final literary paradox, the non-joke that in the Heart of Darkest Washington a savage, Loon, is about to follow Kurtz's injunction to "exterminate all the brutes" and may even go as far as his example of the "unspeakable rites" of cannibalism, we readers--half-suspecting that the joke is on us all the time--find it all much less of a shaggy dog than it at first appeared. On first reading, we tend to share Siegel's jokes; but as these grow increasingly cheap, more and more we not only appreciate the discrepancy between other people's expectations and his private reactions, but we also laugh at Siegel's growing discomfiture.

We enjoy his remembered cartoons and funny stories, the puns, wry remarks and sardonic comments, but we also enjoy the incongruity of this uptight petty bureaucrat's being left to host such a bizarre, hung-loose party. On our second reading, Siegel's paranoia is more apparent. Also, the recurrent patterns, the reinforcing of certain ideas Siegel is anxious to evade, become more prominent. We gradually realise that the story is profoundly ironic, and that the events and the obvious literary allusions gain their value negatively. If our previous laughter now sounds hollow, and Siegel more and more resembles Eliot's hollow men--like Kurtz, he is "hollow at the core"--we begin to recognise the nature of that hollowness.

A marked feature of Pynchon's style is his frequent punning, which at times has the reader groaning as at a Goons/Marx Brothers script. For instance, his choice of the name Loon, the Canadian word for a diving-bird of the North, is appropriate for an Indian, but over-appropriate for an Indian who is, crudely, going murderously loony. Sometimes the word-play seems randomly humorous, as when Lupescu's girlfriend is named Sybil, reminding us of "The Waste Land," or just plain coincidental, as when the word for the Jewish mourning ceremony "shivah" resembles the name of the Hindu god of destruction, Shiva, the third aspect of the Hindu trinity. At other times the play on the multiple senses of a word seems artfully pointless, as when Lupescu appoints Siegel to be the host in his place and tells him that this makes him a trinity: (a) a receiver of guests, (b) an enemy, and (c) an outward manifestation "for them" of the divine body and blood. Is he to play God? The punning makes the reader more aware of words and lures him half-expectantly into filling in gaps and connections that Pynchon leaves open. (Doesn't every reader correct him when he says that Harvey [Donald?] Duckworth, who arrived "in a sailor suit"--he is in the navy after all--spilled wine all over his "whites": "Don't you mean 'ducks'? Haw, haw.") And then we wonder whether there is some point to the puns. During the party Siegel is reminded of a "whole host of trodden-on and disaffected" who have unburdened themselves to him over the years. Is he unconsciously thinking of them

in a hostile way, as enemies? And however pointless the pun may seem to us, it takes on a madly dangerous meaning when Siegel decides to "miraculously" allow his fellow guests to become body and blood for Loon to partake of, although not a holy eucharist.

In fact, double-meaning is not simply a stylistic device. Duality is the central idea throughout. Siegel, who sees Lupescu as his Doppelgänger and later admits he's not sure he is not Lupescu's double, is continually "trying to stop seeing double," vacillating between a religious perspective and a more superficial, pragmatic one, looking for "Deeper Human Significance" or irresponsibly finding excitement and "fun."

This double-mindedness is physically manifested in the emblematic situation of facing a "slightly flawed mirror image" of a man in a tweed coat, his eyebrows raised, with something stuck under his arm. When this first occurs, Lupescu and Siegel silently face each other like mirror images. The only flaw is the difference between the bottle of whisky that Siegel brings and the Dadaist pig-foetus that Lupescu is to pin mockingly over the kitchen door in place of the druidical fertility symbol, mistletoe. (Frazer's Golden Bough is no clue to this story.) For Siegel, it is a prophetic, visionary moment. They change places, and Siegel finds himself taking on Lupescu's role, slowly changing from a nonchalant mixer of drinks to a shaman figure, a western witchdoctor. Siegel has assumed the conventional persona of a cool John Buchan-style British hero, which goes with his looks; he adopts this persona in order to play the part of apologetic guest, stood-up escort, party-swinger, reluctant confidant, who resolves "to bite the jolly old bullet and make the best of a bad job." Just how alien this is is brought home when it jars with the inner language of the American-style hero prompted in him by Debby Considine, whom he sees as a "broad" who gives him "the demure bit with the eye-lashes."

We are told that Siegel inherited this tendency to play a part from his mother, an apostate Catholic. She argued herself out of her religion (appropriately in Hell's Kitchen) by refuting Aquinas's proofs for

the existence of God, and her substitution of jesuitical intellectual reasoning in place of faith has influenced Siegel, despite his upbringing as an orthodox Jew like his father. One of the crucially formative experiences of his life took place shortly after his bar mitzvah, when his cousin Miriam died of cancer. During the formal Jewish mourning rites of shivah, Miriam's distraught husband, as he wept, cursed the doctor and the money wasted. It was then that the adolescent Siegel became afraid that humans could be only doctors and not the healers or prophets "you had to be" "if you cared about it at all."² The fear that man cannot control death or misery underlies his later life.

It is his own failure as a political healer, the insignificance and stupidity of what he does do as something less than that, that he tries not to be conscious of. The rationalising argumentative part of himself calls that consciousness "funky periods" and finds the race against time, the petty scheming and politicking, "when you came down to it," fun. This "still small jesuit voice" of anti-conscience has cunningly convinced him that Jews are ineffective, and he conceals his guilt at the actual ineffectiveness of what he is doing under his "British" diplomat's appearance. He has cultivated a suave nonchalance to sustain his illusion, and this comes into play to cover his panic when he is confronted with the unfamiliar. His humour and role-playing distance him and dissociate him, not only from other people, but from himself and his own imaginative insight. Siegel knows that "if you cared about it at all" you have to be a prophet as well as a healer, but from the point of view of the degenerate religiosity he has inherited, the trappings of the Judeo-Christian tradition, his periods of heightened sensibility are merely hysterical aberrations. He has no faith in God to make them meaningful. Siegel believes a prophet is needed, someone who speaks with divine inspiration and expresses the divine will, but that is the one role he cannot undertake. It is not a role. (Politically speaking, America needs a charismatic leader, as Weber would put it; but the spiritual power of charisma has to be seen as divinely bestowed.)

It is only with hindsight, on re-reading, that we recognise the strangely ominous nature of his double-vision of, for instance, a dirty limerick about a beaver being "gilded with a certain transcendental light"; but this second sight makes him uneasy, and the jesuit part keeps calling him back to the "real country" where there are distracting things to do and "bon mots to be tossed out carelessly." The jesuitical, machiavellian side of his nature gets tougher in the course of the party, and he hardens into the cynical jibes about "bent souls," quite callously using language to blunt his sensibility.

By reference to a Peter Arno cartoon, Pynchon links this duplicity to the idea of "going native," rambling into what seems to be a humorous diversion; but the expression flickers sinisterly as a pun when we encounter a psychotic native. By the end of the party it has more serious implications. Needing to confide in someone, Siegel tells Lucy, the 40's style vamp, about Lupescu's sudden departure in what had appeared to be the state of a "raving lunatic." She is not worried, judging it might have been a good thing that Lupescu got out because "he was going native." This expression is significant enough for Siegel to consider it at some length before the implications arouse his jesuitical tendency to distract himself, but not before Pynchon has connected it suggestively with the image of double-mindedness.

What puzzles Siegel is whether it makes sense for Lupescu to have gone native in Washington. Still, "stranger things had happened." He remembers his roommate at Harvard, Grossman, a Jew from Chicago, who, having previously considered Cook County to be the only civilisation, gradually converted to the effete, puritan culture of Boston. This process of "degeneration" Pynchon sums up in an event that recalls Siegel, the tweed-jacketed partygoer with a bottle of whisky under his arm, who has just remembered himself as the tweed-jacketed bureaucrat with a briefcase in that position, confronting a tweed-jacketed Lupescu identical but for the pig foetus: one spring afternoon Siegel had surprised Grossman facing the mirror, in flawless and expensive tweeds, umbrella under one arm, eyebrows raised, reciting "I

parked my car in Harvard yard.'" It is a good joke at the expense of New England that Grossman's deliberate change in voice and appearance in order to escape from a vaguely Jewish Chicago to puritan gentility should be equated with a colonialist's decline and fall away from "more advanced," civilised European standards to more primitive mores. But Siegel goes on picking at the idea and, referring to Gauguin and Eliot, suspects it may have more to do with some compulsion that links people than with any particular place. It comes as a surprise when Gauguin and Eliot are mentioned in connection with Grossman. Grossman went from the Midwest to New England, Eliot from New England to Europe, Gauguin from Europe to the South Seas. Gauguin escaped from being a stock-broker in what he saw as the degenerate, bourgeois society of Paris to become a great primitive painter. The Midwestern New Englander Eliot similarly saw his native culture as a dissipated waste but found significance in conversion to neo-Anglicanism. The bookish Grossman converted to a more refined culture. The question is: from which standpoint does one measure the degeneracy or primitiveness of a civilisation? Later, Siegel is also to recall his college anthropology lecturer, "perched like a sparrow," according to whose sarcastic bird's-eye view "all cultures were equally mad," only the form of madness varying, never the content. The dilemma with which Pynchon is going to confront the reader is whether the madness of the "civilised" Washingtonians is identical with that of the "primitive" Loon or is degenerate. Siegel feels "unwilling to think about it too much" and evasively tells Lucy that Lupescu seemed "sort of under the weather. Also maybe a little neurotic."

One after the other the party guests, misled by Siegel's resemblance to Lupescu into thinking he will be sympathetic, confide their anxieties to him, hoping he can aid them. Far from feeling compassionate, Siegel is "neither ready to be curious about nor confident he would be able to cope with" such unburdenings which, after he hears Lucy's own unskilled self-analysis, he feels "should never have been exposed." She reveals to him "the anatomy of a disease more serious than he had suspected: the badlands of the

heart." "Badlands" is an evocative term which both retains its sense of American barren waste land, the lawless area beyond the frontier of civilisation, and suggests a heartland (cf. "headland") where goodness or loving care cannot take root. It expresses one of Siegel's moments of penetration, but the irrationality of Lucy's confusions makes him feel hysterically edgy. This tendency to hysteria gets ever stronger during the party, and he counters it with that inner sneering and playacting which distance and dissociate him not only from other people but from his own real understanding and perception.

Interrupted during his session with Lucy, Siegel "wearily" decides to "make the best of a bad job" and stay at the party. When Debby then wants to pour out her troubles to him, his private reaction is "here we go again." He finds her confession embarrassing, even tries to change the subject. Finally he gets fed up with it and cuts the interview short. He agrees absently to see Brennan alone (on the balcony, being a little sick of the confessional bedroom perversely decorated with crossed automatic rifles), nods profoundly at what he says, but pays no attention. Then, when Vincent wants to talk, he waves him away; "Siegel had had about enough of confessions."

What is striking about the two confessions Siegel does listen to is that they reveal modes of behaviour and states of mind similar to Siegel's own. Lucy's diatribe is concerned with the convoluted relations between a number of people including herself, Lupescu, "who hates to get involved in anything," and others at the party such as Debby and Brennan. Their scheming and counter-scheming, forgery, "almost roguery" and manoeuvring resemble Siegel's time at college and with the Commission in Europe; her idea that writing poison-pen letters was "fun" echoes Siegel's own justification for petty intrigues. Debby is an economist working for the State Department; her sexual exploits in under-developed areas, the boon-docks, the wilderness, sound like colonial exploitation. The manipulation which she "can't help" and her jaded sexual appetite also recall Siegel's past. (She is a man-eater--a pun Pynchon leaves up to the reader.)

Like the carrier of disease, she irresponsibly wreaks havoc in bad-heart-lands, emotional boondocks. Her emotional immaturity parallels Siegel's stunted inability to respond to other people's feelings. And the frenetic sexual activity that both she and Lucy have set about appears to be a frantic attempt to escape both their own and other people's unhappiness. The result is to spread the disease, laying other people's hearts waste too.

As Debby talks, Siegel is jolted by a chance juxtaposition of words into ferreting out of his memory an explanation for Loon's present depressed state. What Debby calls a "brooding James Dean quality," an almost mystical melancholy, Siegel recognizes as a type of madness peculiar to Ojibwa Indians, who are rooted in an ethos "saturated with anxiety." When paranoid tendencies, aroused by the isolation of the wilderness, are intensified by, for instance, a shaman's curse, an Ojibwa can become susceptible to the Windigo psychosis, in which he identifies with a god and, suffering from altered perception, becomes a cannibal. As Debby continues talking, it becomes apparent that she too suffers from paranoia, the terror that an arbitrary Act of God might destroy her. This depression has even led her to try to play God herself: to attempt suicide with an "act of Debby Considine."

At once Siegel responds to an equally paranoid desire to escape from the role of isolated confessor in this emotional wilderness. He sees "this sort of thing" as dangerous "because in the course of things it was very possible to destroy not only yourself but your flock as well." He had reflected on the idea of destruction earlier in the evening, remembering Grossman saying that Siegel's jesuitical tendency was the seed of his destruction, but he was not "particularly aware of destruction mainly because he was unable to give it a name or a face, unless they were Rachel's and this he doubted." We know little about Rachel, but she seems to conform to Siegel's mother's recommendation of "some nice quiet Jewish girl,"

unselfish and open by comparison with Siegel. How she could represent destruction for Siegel is one of the problems the reader may skip over in order to get on with the story.

A half-submerged metaphor informs Pynchon's portrayal of Siegel's mind. If Gauguin and Eliot were inspired geniuses, Siegel somehow suffers from an evil genius, as if he were possessed by a devil. The idea of an evil spirit is continually present in the guise of a poltergeist, a genie, a doppelgänger; and now, as Siegel tries to escape from Debby's revelations, he is "bugged" or exasperated by the demoniacal Concerto for Orchestra by Bartok. Speech would not have provoked him, but "the nimble little Machiavel inside him" responds to the murderous frenzy of the music from the record player. He has a vision of himself going native like Lupescu "standing in front of some mirror with a pig foetus under one arm, reciting Freudian cant at himself to get the right inflection." He wonders if, in some misguided intellectual attempt to heal people who are already beyond human help ("people like Debby Considine and Lucy and himself and all the other dead), "someday he too might degenerate into a quack psychoanalytic witchdoctor, reciting mumbo jumbo." Of course, he already has; for the past hour or more he has spouted stock religious phrases: "what seems to be your trouble, my child" and "make a good Act of Contrition."

Siegel gets himself introduced to Loon. Then recklessly, like a naval destroyer going into enemy waters, Siegel quietly discharges the word "Windigo." The curse has an immediate impact on Loon, who, previously unaware of Debby's existence, now begins to treat her as his "beautiful little beaver." The full holocaust is still to come, but Siegel no longer rushes against a "deadline." Recognising the danger, he nevertheless sits in the kitchen (Hell's Kitchen?) and jesuitically manages to convince himself that his imagination is going "off the deep end." He mixes himself a drink, and it becomes apparent that his rationalising intellect has now got the upper hand over his perceptive imagination. He toys with the idea of working "a miracle involving a host," resolutely resisting any consciousness of guilt connected with his "hunch" about Loon. He has a chance to play the (Stephen) Hero in earnest and save his "parishioners." This is mere empty rhetoric. He does nothing.

It comes to him that Lupescu's parting remark was more than "a drunken witticism," and Siegel's intellectualized imagination now begins to interpret Washington in terms of Conrad's story. Falling into a kind of literary cant, he casts Lupescu as some Kurtz "possessed by the heart of darkness" and produces a brilliant but free-wheeling play on the idea of an ivory tower, a bon mot for the self-worshipping egoism of Washington society. Siegel shakes his head, trying to clear it. But he is no longer seeing double, no longer able to recognise himself in the Kurtz-Lupescu-Grossman image. The facetious Grossman went native, "refined beyond the point of civilisation" (in Eliot's phrase) into a supercilious New England intellectual; Lupescu, who became a sort of dadaist oracle, also disappeared as if refined beyond the point of meaningful discourse. Siegel has now become refined Beyond Good and Evil. He is no longer divided against himself when the disaster is about to strike; he is intoxicated with his sense of power over a "miracle" and sees any "penance" as "as good as any other." The jesuitical and Jewish sides of his nature are united in their inability to make any meaningful religious distinction. Like Kurtz, who, having played God and become a mad soul, could finally only speak what Marlow called "nonsense!" and who died uttering "The horror. The horror!", Siegel has come to the end of sense.

He has also come to the end of a tradition, a civilisation.

There is now no creativity or spontaneity. The infertility of Washington culture matches the barrenness of the people and can be measured by the debasement of the language. It is not simply that Siegel tends to speak in clichés which click automatically, unthinkingly into place: "statutory rape and all that, you know"; or that like his guests he speaks in stereotypes which have lost their cutting edge: "beautiful," "lovely," "'Zen,' 'San Francisco,' and 'Wittgenstein.'" There is a slide from these concepts to others which have been worn smooth and can be used almost indiscriminately, "saint," "good," "divine," and then to the repeated expletives which have lost their original

value so completely that the reader hardly even notices that the same terms are being used over and over again, hollowly, "God," "damn," "hell."³

The distance that this culture has fallen from Dante and Shakespeare could almost be measured by the current weightlessness of the word "God,"⁴ which now lacks even a metaphorical value by which to interpret

And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice.

By contrast, the mere whisper of the name "Windigo" has the power to swing Loon into destructive action. The name "Jesus Christ" holds no comparable magic for Siegel. Except for the slob Duckworth's pelting it with nuts, the new symbol for the decline of this republic, where these self-obsessed people rule supreme, itself goes unremarked; in place of the mystic fertility symbol of mistletoe or of a naked new-born babe, the Christmas Eve sign that Lupescu pinned up in this springtime of the year is an aborted pig. Pynchon has accounted for Siegel's paranoid schizophrenia in terms of religious concepts which were used seriously in an earlier age to refer to entities that were believed to exist but which are now dead metaphors. The scorn with which the expressions "wrestled with her soul," "Fisher of souls," "bent souls" are tossed out is also an indication of what is absent from Siegel's life, making it meaningless. Siegel shares a cosmic insecurity with Loon, an existential dread that he cannot even make sense of to himself. His culture, in which such anomie is prevalent, provides no understanding; it is as lost as the Indian's culture. Siegel is frightened that there are only human beings in charge, that there is no divine order; yet he is also excited at the idea of himself playing God, while simultaneously fearful that he "can't make this."

Siegel's world is a world of absurd verbal cant, Freudian pseudoscientific, pseudo-literary-analytic mumbo jumbo, mockingly expressed in the disconnected Dada of Lupescu:

You . . .
 Of course. You're perfect. . . .
Mon semblable . . . mon frère.
 A sign . . .
 A sign, and deliverance. . . .
 Only a matter of time . . .
 Tonight. . . .
 Why.
 Why not.
 Pig foetus.
 Symbol.
 God, what a symbol.
 And now.
 Freedom.
 Deliverance. . .
 Genie.
 Bottle.
 Century after century, until Siegel, fisher of
 souls,
 Pulls the cork.

Siegel lives in a world in which sacred ideas are reduced to clichés and are now disconnected from a desacralised social reality. He may be as paranoid as Loon, and his world makes even less sense.

With its similarity to a long line of gothic doppelgänger stories stretching back through Frankenstein to Faustus and including Poe's William Wilson and Stoker's Dracula as well as Heart of Darkness and The Secret Sharer,⁵ Pynchon's story is a serious and detailed attempt to replace the Freudian psychoanalytic accounts of the self, fashionable in American society in the 50's,⁶ with a Jungian account. The central pun of "going native," as Siegel suspects, does not have to do with a place so much as with an inner compulsion. A cultivated plant such as a rose, if left to itself, returns to a state of nature, to its original wild rootstock. To go native is to surrender to what is more primitive; in Jungian terms the "primitive" is the shadow behind the persona. The persona Siegel has adopted is that of the suave British officer out of a John Buchan novel (ominous if one recalls the advice given in The Thirty-Nine Steps [1914], that the secret of playing "Peter's Game," of playing a part, is to think yourself into it: "You will never keep it up

unless you convince yourself that you are it"). Siegel has repressed his childish fears, which have developed an unconscious, autonomous life behind this mask--the shadow.

The reader who has become accustomed to Freudian-style character analyses from the 20's onwards will be surprised that no information is given about Siegel's childhood. The formative influence on his adult life is not his infantile past, particularly not any Oedipal relationship with his father--although the strength of his mother's personality is important--but a religious experience in his adolescence. In "Mental Disease and the Psyche" (1928), Jung links paranoia to just such a "particular psychological moment" when "the spiritual form which the paranoiac's emotions needed in order to live finally broke down." Siegel himself traces the "whole host of trodden-on and disaffected" who have sought healing comfort from him back to the "timid spindle-shanked boy in a slashed necktie" at the shivah for Miriam. According to Mitchell, the fictional anthropologist, Ojibwa Indians have such a moment culturally induced. Both cultures identify manhood with self-sufficiency, conceived as isolation.

Siegel's compensatory, artificial British persona, which he has adopted from his boyhood reading, resembles Lupescu's tweed-jacketed persona and Grossman's, merely a mirror image that takes on life as "a character in a British war flick," a moving image. Jung says: "The construction of an artificial personality becomes an unavoidable necessity" in society, but "to the degree the world invites the individual to identify with the mask, he is delivered over to influences from within," the influences of the primitive ("The Relations Between the Ego and the Unconscious" [1928]).

Jung recognises that the change from one milieu to another brings about a striking alteration of personality, even in normal individuals, but it is typical of the schizophrenic that his self doubles, or splits into a number of autonomous personalities which "know each other intimately, but they have no valid arguments against one another" (MDP). Such complexes or "personality fragments . . . behave like Descartes's devils and seem to delight in playing impish tricks" ("A

Review of Complex Theory "[1934]). Thus the nimble machiavellian jesuit and the Jewish mensch inside Siegel are not simply metaphors but the personality fragments that shadow his nonchalant mask. And the strange idea that Rachel represents destruction makes sense in Jungian terms if she is the projection of his anima. In fact, having thought of Rachel, Siegel immediately does meet the name and face of his destruction, when the door opens and the mirror-image of Lupescu confronts him and introduces himself. This is the moment of the "spell"; Lupescu is Siegel's Steppenwolf, his doppelgänger, both his likeness and the premonition of his destruction. (Rumania is the location of Transylvania, thus linking Lupescu to the vampire Dracula whose "eyebrows were massive" too. In a ghoulishly appropriate way, Lucy is also the name of the heroine in Stoker's novel, a vamp who became a vampire like her seducer. Lupescu is derived, of course, from lupus, the Latin word for "wolf," as in wolf-man.) Grossman's quotation from the Bible, "house divided against itself," to describe Siegel's nature and to identify the seed of his destruction, imitates Jung's use of biblical parables as psychological insights. A man cannot hope to cast his self out of himself; somehow he must reconcile opposing tendencies. Otherwise, he bears his own destruction within. Lupescu and Siegel are both double-goers in a pun in which the word mirrors itself: they are both divided selves themselves, seeing double, double dealing with other people, and they are also each other's doubles, duplicating each other's duplicity. Once Siegel identifies with Lupescu, he is "delivered over to the forces within."

Lupescu, however, had realized the part he'd been forced to play, and if Siegel redeems no one else, he releases Lupescu from his role: "Mistah Kurtz--he dead." Lupescu's comment to Siegel that, although the Washington crowd has changed, "the types are constant" recalls Jung's Psychological Types, in which he formulated his theory of introverts and extroverts. According to this theory, Nathan Levine in "The Small Rain" would be a neurotic extrovert who has sunk into depression; Siegel would be a neurotic (psychotic) introvert who has retreated into emotional isolation. It

is from this source that Pynchon derives his groan-
 -ful pun which is the climax of Siegel's identifica-
 -tion with that other mad soul, Lupescu's shadow, Kurtz:
 "introverts become incapable of love and retreat into
 an ivory tower of emotional isolation."

Thus the idea of "going native" and that of founding
 one's identity on a conventional appearance, bril-
 -liantly coalesced in the image of Grossman at the
 mirror converting himself into a social stereotype and
 thus going native in Boston, are the two aspects of
 one phenomenon: the respectable persona becoming
 dissociated from its more primitive shadow, the
 unconscious. The gothic terror novel had grasped a
 profound psychological truth about the nature of the
 self and the need to recognise evil if it is to be
 restrained. Measure for Measure makes a similar point:
 Angelo's respectable facade conceals a disreputable,
 lecherous shadow, more sinister than the rampant
 sexuality of the society he pretends to reform.
 Kurtz's inner nature is more brutish than the natives
 are. The primitive is powerful energy, and the final
 metaphor of Siegel as a defenceless matador sums up
 his psychic helplessness. Inwardly, he is still a
 boy frightened of death, not the cool hero of his
 public pose.

Pynchon's joke is to get his reader to identify
 with Siegel, and then gradually to pull the cape away.
 His last laugh is to identify Siegel's "monumental,"
 "ivory tower" coolness with Washington's paranoid
 administration by way of the Washington Monument of
 the opening paragraph. We, the lecteurs, become hypo-
 crites for laughing; the destruction that may well
 occur to our lifetime is hardly a laughing matter.

--University of Málaga

Notes

¹ "The Small Rain," Cornell Writer, 6, no. 2 (March 1959), 14-
 32; rpt. in Slow Learner (Boston, 1984). For "Mortality and Mercy
 in Vienna," Epoch, 9, no. 4 (Spring 1959), 195-213, which was
 omitted from Slow Learner, I have used the Aloes Books edition
 (London) undated and unpaginated.

² Cencrastus, 5 (Summer 1981) published a "slightly shortened version" of this story, omitting the second and third pages and thus all information which explains Siegel's paranoia (and, incidentally, the dreams that link him to Shelley; see A Defence of Poetry).

³ Not as frequently as in "The Small Rain." I count twenty-eight expletives in its twenty-odd pages; "God" has a capital letter.

⁴ A. J. Ayer popularised the tenets of logical positivism in Language, Truth & Logic (1936), which claimed that statements purporting to be about "God" were "literally meaningless."

⁵ The list also includes: F. Dostoyevsky, The Double (1846); Hermann Hesse, Steppenwolf (1927); James Hogg, The Private Memoirs & Confessions of a Justified Sinner (1824); R. L. Stevenson, The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886); and O. Wilde, The Picture of Dorian Gray (1891).

⁶ See M. Bradbury & H. Temperley, eds. Introduction to American Studies (London, 1981), 211.