Moviegoing

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In the final frames of Monte Hellman's 1971 film _Two Lane Blacktop_, the film appears to catch and then stick in its projector. The celluloid itself, jammed between two frames, is momentarily revealed before it disintegrates, leaving the screen blank and the audience confused. This temporary disorientation is relieved by the appearance of the credits: our suspension of disbelief has been suspended not by accident, but by design. This is a film, we are reminded; films can break. Whilst Hellman's particular device here is distinctive, self-reflexivity in the cinema is a well-trodden path. In the past, it has characteristically been used with comic intent--

> "This is 1870. Don Ameche hasn't invented the telephone yet!" (Groucho Marx, _Go West_, 1940)[1]--

although films like François Truffaut's _Day for Night_ clearly explore the theme more seriously. We might compare the effect of Hellman's final frames to the novels of B. S. Johnson, a writer who never lets his reader forget he is reading a novel and not witnessing a slice of life. For instance, at the end of Johnson's _Christie Malry's Own Double-Entry_, the character Christie talks to the novelist about the cancer he has:

> "Just think, it may have been caused through those misshapes I had on page 67!"[2]

Of course, the novel has enjoyed a long tradition of self-awareness from _Tristram Shandy_ onwards; and Thomas Pynchon's _Gravity's Rainbow_ would seem to merit discussion in this context, were it not for the fact that it appears to suffer a rather distinctive transvestism of genre. Where Charlotte Bronte suddenly drops the mask of impersonality and says, "Reader, I married him," Thomas Pynchon seems to exchange one mask for another when on the final page of _Gravity's Rainbow_ he addresses the reader as one of us

Old fans who've always been at the movies
(haven't we?).[3]

Pynchon identifies the reader not as a reader, but as a viewer; not of a book, but of a film.

Such cross-genre references are quite rare, although the Hollywood film, when "adapting" the well-loved literary classics, has made the symbolic opening and closing of a book, at the beginning and end of a film, something of a cliché. It is hard to find original examples of such usage, but Jean Cocteau's 1945 version of Beauty and the Beast reveals his keen awareness of such pitfalls. He begins his film with the words, "Il était une fois. . ." ["once upon a time. . ."] but deliberately avoids the rather obvious symbolism of a book, and instead includes a brief shot of the clapper-board being used for the first "take" of the film. This is a film which obstinately refuses to be a book. Dennis Potter's 1981 film Brimstone and Treacle ends with the closing of a book. Yet the film is made from an original screenplay; Potter is not in any way atoning for the sins of "adaptation," and his motivation is perhaps similar to Pynchon's in using the same conceit in reverse. The book featured at the end of Potter's film is a picture-book, albeit a rather sinister one, and is wholly in keeping with the rather ambivalent good humour of the film. Since the book appears only at the end of the film, it can perhaps be best read as a rather ambiguous "and they all lived happily ever after." Like Cocteau, Potter is attracted by the fairy tale but cynical towards its conventions.

Potter closes his film with the hint that we might "read" it as a book; Pynchon closes his book by suggesting that we are "watching" it like a film. Gravity's Rainbow, from beginning to end, flirts with the notion of itself being a film (the redactional stylised sprocket holes were an astute embellishment). The final section of the novel is made up of a series of brief titled "scenarios" which resembles a movie shooting-script in which the scenes get shorter as the climax approaches; but during the penultimate scene, the narrative flow is interrupted. First Gottfried's memories begin to go "out of focus," and then "they begin to blur CATCH." Another five times the word

"CATCH" disrupts and disjoints the narrative. It is clear that this is meant to represent a film catching in a projector, and as in Hellman's *Two Lane Blacktop*, this scene effects a change of emphasis from content to form. What we are watching is no longer a feature film, but the celluloid film which is its true nature. We see the sprocket holes in the final frame of *Two Lane Blacktop*; in *Gravity's Rainbow* they have been visible all along. The final scene of *Gravity's Rainbow* has the reader characterised as part of a movie audience, chanting for the restarting of the feature it was watching:

> The screen is a dim page spread before us.[. . .] The film has broken, or a projector bulb has burned out. It was difficult even for us, old fans who've always been at the movies (haven't we?) to tell which before the darkness swept in. (760)

Hellman's film is an apparent exercise in the arbitrarily picaresque as much as Pynchon's novel, which seems to suggest an interest in content rather than form. The endings of both the film and the novel, however, reveal a fascination with form which both men share. The rambling narratives of *Two Lane Blacktop* and *Gravity's Rainbow* may seduce the viewer/reader into passive receptivity; indeed, as Virginia Woolf observed nearly sixty years ago, such is the nature of cinema:

> The eye licks it all up instantaneously, and the brain, agreeably titillated, settles down to watch things happening without bestirring itself to think.[4]

But both Pynchon and Hellman force us to think: instead of asking "what comes next?", we must ask "what is going on?"; we are forced to think. It is impossible to tell whether Pynchon recalled the conclusion of *Two Lane Blacktop* in ending *Gravity's Rainbow*, but it may be more than coincidence that Rudolph Wurlitzer, who was largely responsible for the film's screenplay, should count Thomas Pynchon amongst his admirers, if we are to believe the jacket-notes on his novels *Nog* and *Flats*.

Both Hellman's and Pynchon's cinematographic breakdowns are textual devices, but in 1926, Woolf experienced a similar malfunction whilst watching The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari:

> a shadow shaped like a tadpole suddenly appeared at one corner of the screen. It swelled to an immense size, quivered, bulged, and sank back again into nonentity. For a moment it seemed to embody some monstrous, diseased imagination of the lunatic's brain. For a moment, it seemed as if thought could be conveyed by shape more effectively than words. The monstrous, quivering tadpole seemed to be fear itself, and not the statement, "I am afraid." In fact, the shadow was accidental, and the effect unintentional.[5]

Woolf was disappointed by the revelation, but the experience had impressed upon her the advantages for expression the cinema might possess over the novel. Woolf, however, was merely evoking the potential of the film; meanwhile, she deplored the reality of the nineteen-twenties cinema,in which travesties of great novels, simplified to a ridiculous degree, were the norm. Films which masquerade as books simply do not work:

> The eye says: "Here is Anna Karenina." A voluptuous lady in black velvet wearing pearls comes before us. But the brain says: "That is no more Anna Karenina than it is Queen Victoria." For the brain knows Anna almost entirely by the inside of her mind--her charm, her passion, her despair. All the emphasis is laid by the cinema upon her teeth, her pearls, and her velvet.[6]

Of course, modern filmmakers are not always so heavy-handed, and it might be said that they have learned from the novel. This process has been a long one: Eisenstein claimed to have learned montage (intercutting of different scenes for effect) from Dickens, but he never claimed his films were novels. It is reasonable to ask whether the novel has in turn been educated by the film in this century. Claude-Edmonde Magny, writing in 1948, saw the cinema as the biggest single influence on American novelists of that period,[7] but

literary critics nowadays are often suspicious of the "new barbarism" which seeks to equate the two genres; neither point of view is without its harmful prejudices. Questions of value and genre aside, however, if there is such a thing as the novel educated by film, then Gravity's Rainbow has undoubtedly been to all the best schools.

The image of film, of course, since film is the medium which most closely mimics life (to the relatively lazy human brain, at least), has provided a convenient, if relatively crude, target for many an author's satire. Thus Guy Grand, in Terry Southern's The Magic Christian, has faked scenes inserted into popular movies such as Mrs. Miniver and The Best Years of Our Lives for showing at his cinema. The result is more than a joke, for it symbolises the outrageous and bizarre interludes he is apt to introduce into the lives of all those he comes into contact with: being very wealthy, he is able to bribe all his victims into playing the most ridiculous and demeaning roles in his own private "movies." Or we might recall the prominence of the cinema in Malcolm Lowry's Under the Volcano, a novel in which half the characters are directly involved in the movie business yet curiously unwilling to see films. Since the only opportunity to do so is to be found at the local cinema, where (like at Pynchon's and Hellman's) "the lighting is always failing," perhaps this is wise; for the cinema in Lowry's novel is a concrete form of both mass- and self-deception. For instance, despite the Spanish Civil War then raging, when Yvonne went to the cinema, "'we saw a travelogue, Come to Sunny Andalusia, by way of news from Spain.'"[8]

Pynchon is not above using the cinema figuratively and is fond of exploiting our preconceptions about reality and "reelty." But Pynchon's favourite theme is the influence of cinema on our everyday lives; it is both symptom and cause of a peculiar cultural perversity, summed up by Tom Robbins in the opening lines of Still Life with Woodpecker:

> In the last quarter of the twentieth century, at a time when Western civilization was declining

> too rapidly for comfort and yet too slowly to be very exciting, much of the world sat on the edge of an increasingly expensive theater seat, waiting--with various combinations of dread, hope, and ennui--for something momentous to occur. . . .
> Would it be apocalyptic or rejuvenating? A cure for cancer or a nuclear bang?[9]

Pynchon decides on the latter, but Robbins' novel begins just as Pynchon's ended seven years earlier. Twentieth century Western culture is pictured in the Orpheus cinema on the last page of Gravity's Rainbow, happy to succumb to the mind-numbness that Virginia Woolf warned of, happily waiting for another show to start, like Beckett's legless Hamm crying out for his "pap," blissfully unaware that this one is finally finished.

Gravity's Rainbow is populated with characters whose lives are shaped by film, from Bianca, who is conceived on a film set during the filming of Alpdrucken, to Gottfried, whose final moments on film are, figuratively, our own. A movie is the ultimate form of determinism. In Delmore Schwartz's "In Dreams Begin Responsibilities," the narrator bemoans the feeling of futility he experiences when watching, in a dream, a film of his parents' courtship. He shouts out:

> "Don't do it. It's not too late to change your minds, both of you. Nothing good will come of it, only remorse, hatred, scandal, and two children whose characters are monstrous."

The point is that we should assume individual responsibility for our actions; indeed, we have no choice: "'Don't you know that you can't do whatever you want to do?'" the usher tells the narrator in his dream.[10] Pynchon takes the image further: life is often like a film, and the individual is forced to shoulder the responsibility for events or actions whose course he is powerless to change.

Discussing a deterministic conception of time, Hans Reichenbach uses a similar image:

> The deterministic conception of time flow may be compared to the happenings seen in a motion

> picture theatre. While we watch a fascinating scene, its future development is already imprinted on the film; becoming is an illusion. We laugh at the person who pleads with Romeo, "Don't do it!"[11]

Pynchon uses film as a figure of determinism, but we can be sure he would not laugh at the person who stood up to plead with Romeo. Personal freedom, he suggests, is an illusion. No one stands up in the Orpheus Theatre; instead, we all chant in unison: "Come-on! Start-the-show!" (760). Of course, this is not merely a deception practised upon us by "Them"; it is a conspiracy in which "We" are actively, or rather passively, involved.

The analogy of the cinema is a subtle exposure of the most successful mechanism of mass subjugation, and indeed may be something more than an analogy. Pynchon's targets are those of us "who've always been at the movies (haven't we?)," content to be the pets and playthings of nameless manipulators like Dr. Mabuse, "the gambler" of Fritz Lang's 1919 film, who, not content with manipulating card games, moves on to playing with people. Pynchon makes much of Dr. Mabuse, and as a number of critics have demonstrated, he has taken up Siegfried Kracauer's thesis that German cinema of the twenties both reflected and fed the coming evil of Nazism. But Pynchon goes further; he suggests that this process has never stopped. More recent cinema may not predispose us to playing Beethoven and invading Poland, but this symbiosis did not end with Nazism; indeed, it may well have been strengthened. The triumph of good over evil is, after all, a no less popular movie-myth. We are all content to watch Their films, to be *in* Their film.

It does not take long for the reader of *Gravity's Rainbow* to be struck by the extent to which Pynchon's characters have exchanged their own identities for more attractive self-images. They may sneer like James Cagney, have hairstyles like Bing Crosby or Rita Hayworth or accents like Bela Lugosi or Cary Grant, wear hats like Greta Garbo or Sidney Greenstreet; the list goes on (I counted forty such examples without much effort). They wander around a landscape of film sets, from German expressionist to Cecil B.

de Mille, where they imagine themselves filmed, perhaps, if they have artistic pretensions, from a "German camera-angle" (229). Some changes may be effected smoothly with suitable musical accompaniment, and characters are apt to break into song at any moment (on around seventy occasions, in fact), just as in Meet Me in St. Louis or Flying Down to Rio. However, whilst such characters are distinctive, they can be glimpsed outside Gravity's Rainbow, and a short survey may be informative.

Elmer Rice's satirical novel of 1930, A Voyage to Purilia, which was written in Hollywood's heyday, is two-edged. Its critique of Hollywood is achieved by describing a world in which everyone lives as if he or she were a character in a film; but like Gulliver's Lilliput, the world described is not as far from our own as the narrator would have us believe. Rice's Purilia takes the affectations of Pynchon's characters a stage further: Purilia is a gigantic film set, where everyone has a role in a movie. On his arrival in Purilia, Rice's narrator remarks upon the captivating music which is heard constantly in the atmosphere, evoking and reflecting moods appropriate to what is happening at the time:

> now pathetic, now gay, now ominous, now martial, now tender, but always awakening familiar memories, always swelling mellifluously and always surcharged with a slight but unmistakable tremolo.[12]

Rice is referring, of course, to the piano-music which accompanied silent films, but we might compare:

> The bridge music here, bright with xylophones [. . .] based on some old favorite that will comment, ironically but gently, on what is transpiring [. . .] slowing and fading (222-23)

which accompanies Pynchon's narrative. The observer of life in Purilia is aided in his understanding by a disembodied voice which provides useful background information and scene-setting: for example,

> The lovely hour of twilight . . . when the sun sinks behind the western hills and man

> and beast return homeward after the day's toil (_P_, 42)

accompanies the sunset and a herd of cows silhouetted against it. We might compare this to the imaginary "voice-over" provided by the narrator of _Gravity's Rainbow_ for Frau Gnahb's voyage into the _Greifswalder Bodden_:

> _We now come in sight of mythical Rügen off our starboard bow._ [. . .] _After an hour_ (comical bassoon solos over close-ups of the old recreant guzzling some horrible fermented potato-mash lobotomy out of a jerrican, wiping her mouth on her sleeve, belching) _of fruitless search_. (527-28)

Illustrating a sequence of relevant close-ups (a robin's nest, a new-born lamb, a crocus), the Purilian "presence" informs the narrator that "spring comes early to the Purilian hills" (_P_, 36). Roger Mexico experiences a spring, neither Chaucer's nor Eliot's, in the tightly scripted film he imagines is his life as:

> a bad cinema spring, full of paper leaves and cotton-wool blossoms and phony lighting. (628)

Of course, the cinematic world of Purilia is sketched in stereotypy, but not all stereotypes are as harmless as new-born lambs or cotton-wool blossoms. The root of racial tension between Purilia's white and black inhabitants is to be found, ridiculously, in the Negro's liking for chicken and watermelon:

> in fact, an otherwise law-abiding Negro will stop at nothing to obtain the coveted viands. (_P_, 138)

Popular cinema not only reflects, but also reinforces popular stereotypes of racism, and it is no surprise that forty years on, Pynchon's America boasts of:

> Shufflin' Sam, the game of skill where you have to shoot the Negro before he gets back over the fence with the watermelon, a challenge to the reflexes of boys and girls of all ages. (558)

The treatment of blacks in Purilia is an object lesson in the relationship of cinema and popular

thought. White America's attitude towards black America might be expressed in the appalling shorthand notation of Cabin in the Sky or the "Who Dat Man?" sequence of A Day at the Races ("in more ways than one" [619]); but it is also institutionalised. Some Americans, like the Purilians, have

> reduced all life to a series of convenient symbols and easily comprehended gestures. (P, 86)

Racial tensions are more easily expressed as a dispute over watermelons than as a catalogue of racial oppression and hatred. Likewise, the Second World War is more easily understood as a "great struggle of good and evil" (54) than as the natural outcome of a period of industrial and commercial expansion and consolidation. Life is easiest lived as if it were a movie. America, say Rice and Pynchon, is a nation of cinemagoers who have abdicated the ability to discriminate between the simplified and neatly structured version of life to be found in the movies and the real world outside the cinema. Claude-Edmonde Magny points out the difficulties this sort of mass flight from reality held for screen actors. Mary Pickford, a screen innocent, created a public scandal when she obtained a real-life Reno divorce to marry Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., and Bing Crosby's popularity nose-dived after he played a drunkard in Sing You Sinners. Ray Milland's agent took the precaution of insisting that his star was a teetotaler after The Lost Weekend.[13]

Of course, it is not hard to understand this delusion. Rice's Purilia is an attractive place; everything is beautiful and the air is sweet. The whole country is suffused with a rosy glow, and more significantly, everyone's life is filled with constant spectacle and excitement: car chases, aerial chases, runaway trains, murder, passion and melodrama. In The Day of the Locust (1939), Nathanael West was more critical of the engineers of such delusions, and saw such a deception leading inevitably to violence:

> They realize that they've been tricked . . . Every day of their lives they read the newspapers and went to the movies. Both fed them on

> lynchings, murder, sex crimes, explosions, wrecks, love nests, fires, miracles, revolutions, wars. This daily diet made sophisticates of them. The sun is a joke. Oranges can't titillate their jaded palates. . . . They have been cheated and betrayed.[14]

Real life does not compare well with "reel" life, but West credits the cinema-goer with greater reserves of individual strength than does Pynchon or Rice. The cinema is always a place of refuge in Gravity's Rainbow for those "convalescent souls" for whom life has become too arbitrary or painful. Victims of V2 blasts, having sought shelter in the cinema only to suffer a direct hit, regret only "the cinema kiss never completed" (49). Nothing has changed, and Pynchon ends his novel with we, the reader/audience, sitting in another cinema:

> the Rocket, falling nearly a mile per second, absolutely and forever without sound, reaches its last unmeasurable gap above the roof of this old theatre. (760)

And still we chant: "Come on! Start the show!"

For Pynchon, this syndrome is cultural as much as psychological, but Walker Percy has given us an instructive case history in the personal psychology of such a flight from life in his 1961 novel The Moviegoer. The narrator of Percy's novel, Jack Bolling, introduces himself by recalling the childhood day his aunt informed him that his brother had died:

> "It's going to be difficult for you but I know you're going to act like a soldier." This was true. I could easily act like a soldier. Was that all I had to do?[15]

Acting becomes central to Jack's existence: at first like a soldier, for All Quiet on the Western Front was one of the first films he saw, then like

> William Powell, George Brent and Patsy Kelly and Charley Chase, the best friends of my childhood. (M, 211)

He becomes what he has seen or read; to his mother he

"became Dick Rover, the serious-minded Rover boy" (M, 139), and

> During my last year in college I discovered that I was picking up the mannerisms of Akim Tamiroff, the only useful thing, in fact, that I learned in the entire four years. (M, 165)

This is, perhaps, the mark of the chronic "moviegoer": an obsession not with the stars of the screen, but with the more obscure actors. Pynchon's Bodine

> specializes in supporting roles, he can do a perfect Arthur Kennedy-as-Cagney's-kid-brother, how about that? O-or Cary Grant's faithful Indian water-bearer, Sam Jaffe. (684)[16]

The more time he spends in cinemas, the more Jack's life seems to take on the easy correspondences of a motion picture. Now he can look back on his aunt's revelation of his brother's death and "It reminds me of a movie I saw last month" (M, 4). He comes to see his life in terms of films, and the boundaries between the two become indistinct.

> Other people, so I have read, treasure memorable moments in their lives. . . . What I remember is the time John Wayne killed three men with a carbine as he was falling to the dusty street in Stagecoach, and the time the kitten found Orson Welles in the doorway in The Third Man. (M, 7)

Like Pynchon's and Rice's characters, Jack has succumbed to the cinema's predigested diet of structured realism. His local theatre has emblazoned upon its marquee "Where happiness costs so little." Whilst financially irreproachable, the statement is not without its irony. The cost of becoming a moviegoer is one's individuality: the moviegoer no longer thinks and acts in the clumsy and insignificant way he used to; he becomes part of an audience and assumes his favourite movie persona--"acting" rather than merely acting.

> Toward her I keep a Gregory Peckish sort of distance. I am a tall black-headed fellow and I know as well as he how to keep to myself, make

> my eyes fine and my cheeks spare, tuck my lip and say a word or two with a nod or two. (M, 68)

Jack is sometimes "Gregory grim" and muses "Gregory Peckishly."

This phenomenon is, of course, familiar to the reader of Gravity's Rainbow. Tyrone Slothrop, who assumes a constant stream of identities, most often considers himself in relation to movie stars. He combs his hair into a Bing Crosby pompadour (184); acts towards Katje like "the Cagney of the French Riviera" (222); fancies himself as Errol Flynn (248, 381); affects a Cary Grant accent (240, 292); and plays a song sung by Dick Powell (622). Of course, he is not alone; in fact, he perfectly complements a cast of characters wearing George Raft suits, Caligari gloves, Sidney Greenstreet Panamas, etc., etc. Movie stars serve as models for behaviour in Pynchon as much as in Percy. Take for example Pirate Prentice's grin:

> He learned it at the films--it is the exact mischievous Irish grin your Dennis Morgan chap goes about cocking down at the black smoke vomiting from each and every little bucktooth yellow rat he shoots down.[17] (32)

Percy's narrator doesn't model only himself upon the films he has seen: everyone he meets is entered upon the cast-list that constitutes his day-to-day relations. Eddie Lovell, it seems to Jack, has perfected a "Charles Boyer pout"; Mercer has grown himself an Adolphe Menjou moustache. An old college friend was "a regular young Burl Ives with beard and guitar," and a man on the subway is a kindly old philosopher, "such as portrayed by Thomas Mitchell in the movies." Sharon looks like "snapshots of Ava Gardner when she was a high school girl," and so on. And of course similar things happen in Gravity's Rainbow. Not just Slothrop models himself on movie stars; although he is far from being a James Cagney or Errol Flynn, his admirers argue over whether he is Oliver Hardy or Don Ameche (381). Slothrop's friend, Tantivy, spreads the rumour that he is "some kind of Van Johnson" (182). Franz Pökler is perhaps the most conspicuous example of a moviegoer to be found in Gravity's Rainbow: more

than being "some kind of fanatical movie hound all right" (577), he is German, and as such prey to

> the strange connection between the German mind and the rapid flashing of successive stills to counterfeit movement. (407)

Pynchon presumably intends another, humourous recollection of Kracauer's thesis here; Pökler has a personal version of Kracauer's cultural malaise. He confuses movies and life:

> "when I heard General Eisenhower on the radio announcing the invasion of Normandy, I thought it was really Clark Gable, have you ever noticed? the voices are _identical_. . . ." (577)

Of course, it may have been Eisenhower who suffered from the syndrome, not Pökler.

A moviegoer in Percy's novel is, significantly, not necessarily someone who goes to the movies. The term describes the behaviour of all those "convalescent souls" who take a break from life. The moviegoer finds the world of the movies, or of books, or of any sufficiently structured scheme, preferable to the vague portentousness of everyday life. He does not merely withdraw from life, however; rather he approaches his life as if it were a film, or a book, and he a character in it. Thus, the young graduate student Jack encounters on the bus, who is lost in _The Charterhouse of Parma_,"is a moviegoer, though of course he does not go to movies."

> His posture is the first clue: it is too good to be true, this distillation of all graceful slumps. . . . (He speaks in a rapid rehearsed way, a way he deems appropriate. . .). (_M_, 215-16)

His life will be shaped by the books he reads: he is going to New Orleans, but like Huckleberry Finn for the territory, he has "lit out." He means

> to load bananas for a while and perhaps join the merchant marine. . . . to find himself a girl, the rarest of rare pieces, and live the life of Rudolfo on the balcony, sitting around on the

> floor and experiencing soul-communions. (*M*, 216)

Being a moviegoer helps you through life, because part of you is never in it. It helps Pynchon's Dillinger not only through life, but through his own death. On his last night he watches *Manhattan Melodrama*:

> Clark Gable going off unregenerate to fry in the chair [. . .] "Die like ya live--all of a sudden, don't drag it out." (516)

As Melvin Purvis' "G men" gunned him down outside the cinema,

> there was still for the doomed man some shift of personality in effect--the way you've felt for a little while afterward in the real muscles of your face and voice, that you *were* Gable [. . .]--to help Dillinger through the bush-whacking, and a little easier into death. (516)

Blackie's screen death enables Dillinger to rehearse mentally his real death; in a life lived like Dillinger's, which is like a movie, such a death is inevitable. It is part of the script, and for Dillinger to hope to escape it would be as ineffectual as imploring Romeo, "Don't do it!"

Klaus Närrisch, however, caught in a tight situation which seems sure to end in his death,

> hasn't been to a movie since *Der Müde Tod*. That's so long ago he's forgotten its ending, the last Rilke-elegiac shot of weary Death leading the two lovers away hand in hand through the forget-me-nots. No help at all from that quarter. (516)

Närrisch expects to die, like Dillinger, but he doesn't; and implicitly this is because he hasn't been to a movie recently. The accomplished moviegoer selects his actions from a comprehensive repertoire, but the very act of establishing such a repertoire makes him entirely subject to the strictures of narration and symbol which constitute cinema. Dillinger died a violent death outside the Biograph Theatre because the role of screen-gangster he had adopted dictated it.

He died like he lived, not just suddenly and violently, but in the foyer of a cinema. Närrisch, on the other hand, has seen too few movies and values his life too dearly to die "at the end of the first reel." The image is mine, not Pynchon's, but may serve to distinguish two different uses of the metaphor of going to the movies in Gravity's Rainbow. Pynchon uses the device, much as Percy or Rice, to satirise the moviegoer, but the case of Närrisch reveals that the narrator of Gravity's Rainbow, too, suffers from this vice. We leave Närrisch on page 516 of Pynchon's novel, expectantly awaiting imminent death. Since he is not a moviegoer, that death is by no means as inevitable as he imagines, and indeed fifty pages later we learn that he survived; but the narrator gives the game away. Närrisch, when apprehended, tries "to go out Audie Murphy style" (563). Now, Närrisch couldn't possibly be imitating Audie Murphy, as Dillinger imitated Clark Gable, for Murphy wouldn't get into films for another three years. It is the narrator who is the moviegoer in this instance: he is truly one of the "oldest fans."

In Gore Vidal's novel Myron (1974), Vidal appears to be taking Pynchon's image to an even more absurd conclusion. The narrator, Myra Breckinridge, is indeed "trapped inside Their frame"(694). She is trapped in a film--to be precise, the 1948-49 Siren of Babylon, starring Bruce Cabot and Maria Montez.

> After twenty years as a film critic, there is nothing I don't know about how to break into the movies.[18]

The film is fictional, unlike the sixty or so others Vidal manages to mention in 244 pages (and the sheer bulk of his film references invites comparison with Pynchon and Percy). Vidal is unequivocal in his treatment of the movies (as with most things), for like Nathanael West and F. Scott Fitzgerald, he is a disenchanted Hollywood screenplay writer. In Myron, and in the 1968 Myra Breckinridge, Vidal ridicules the so-called "golden age" of Hollywood: 1939 to 1945 "when no irrelevant film was made" (My, 7). An inkling of Vidal's views on cinema can be elicited from his attack on a 1973 book review in the Sunday New York Times:

> The bad movies we made about twenty years ago are now regarded in altogether too many circles as important aspects of what the new illiterates want to believe is the only significant art form of the twentieth century.[19]

Vidal is very outspoken on the relationship between books and films, and has little time for novelists who acknowledge the cinema in anything but satire. Reviewing some recent novels, he castigates this generation for whom

> storytelling began with The Birth of a Nation. Came to high noon with, well, High Noon and Mrs. Miniver and Rebecca and A Farewell to Arms.[20]

Vidal's personal disenchantment with Hollywood has probably played a part in shaping his attitude on this point, for not all critics or novelists would agree with him. Indeed, it is precisely in the realm of storytelling that cinema most closely challenges the novel:

> It is a fact of crucial significance in the history of the novel this century that James Joyce opened the first cinema in Dublin in 1909. Joyce saw very early on that film must usurp some of the prerogatives which until then had belonged almost exclusively to the novelist. Film could tell a story more directly, in less time, and with more concrete detail than a novel.[21]

Johnson goes on to suggest that the novel should occupy itself with more than telling stories. Both Pynchon and Vidal would agree on that point, but whilst for Pynchon the cinema provides a useful metaphor, for Vidal it remains a personal bugbear. For a character in a novel to be aware that he is no more than that is a metaphor of the strictest determinism (as in most of Johnson's novels), but for a character in a novel to be under the impression that he is an actor in a film is a type of determinism Vidal finds symptomatic of the seventies. Myra's becoming trapped in The Siren of Babylon is, I think, a parody of Pynchon's notion of the individual "trapped inside

Their frame"; and Myron's discovery that his body has been inhabited by Maria Montez since the age of ten is an interesting version of Pynchon's and Percy's moviegoer. Pynchon is one of Vidal's (many) targets (the gibe at "Vonchon and Pynegutt" suggests he regards neither as individual talents), but Vidal in fact succeeds in criticising the same aspects of our lives as Pynchon.

The plot of Myron revolves around a battle between the cinema and the novel for the hearts and minds of America in the seventies. The head of MGM deliberately engineers the downfall of Hollywood, and rejoices at

> "the young people of the seventies who laugh at Lana Turner as they read Holkien and Iesse and Vonchon and Pynegutt." (My, 209)

Myra Breckinridge studies literature and decides to release its stranglehold on modern America by changing history:

> . . . if I can film a photoplay [in 1948] with a title that has Beat in it--On Beat, Beat Me Daddy Eight to the Bar, The Beat Years of Our Lives, The Beat Man, Beat Your Meat--I will anticipate and torpedo an entire "literary" movement of the pre-Myra fifties when the so-called Beat writers, howling their words at random, helped distract attention from our Industry's product and made it possible for Charles Van Doren to dominate through television the entire culture, answering questions whose answers he had been given in advance--a twenty-one-inch corruption that was directly responsible, first, for the death of Marilyn Monroe at the hands of the two Kennedys and, second, for R. M. Nixon's current subversion of the government. (My, 151)

Myra does change the Nixon era by manipulating the cinema of the forties. In contrast, Pynchon's Nixon, R. M. Zhlubb, maintains the status quo by controlling his own cinema, the Orpheus Theatre. Gravity's Rainbow, unlike Myron, predated the Watergate affair, but the juxtaposition in both novels of Richard Nixon and the film industry is significant: Myra looks for a re-

establishment of Hollywood values, whilst R. M. Zhlubb has succeeded in implementing a Hays code which applies not just to films, but to real life. Vidal does not admire Pynchon; but both writers are aware of the immense power cinema wields to shape attitudes amongst large numbers of people. Pynchon attributes Nixon's America to the willingness of ordinary people to adopt the role of moviegoer, whereas Myra Breckinridge puts it down to the decline of Hollywood; however, even in the new version of the seventies occasioned by Myra's meddling with history, Nixon is still President, and although Jack Kennedy is still alive, he is discredited. Vidal actually makes exactly the same point as Pynchon.

Vidal, Percy and Rice all parallel Pynchon's use of the cinema as both symptom and symbol of a mass abdication of responsibility in which most people are both deceiver and deceived. All would agree that the cinema, as either cause or effect, exerts a pernicious influence, whether in personal relationships or national politics. Pynchon, however, is nothing if not ambivalent, and balancing his image of a culture at the movies witnessing its own destruction is his use of other films as crucial (and not so crucial) structural images in _Gravity's Rainbow_. As I have shown, Pynchon's novel is a catalogue of the postures of a generation who select their self-images from the cinema, and Pynchon is as acerbic towards many films as Vidal. "That awful _Going My Way_" (38) and "every wretched Hollywood lie down to and including this year's big hit, _A Tree Grows in Brooklyn_" (641) clearly invite Pynchon's scorn. But several films, from _Dr. Mabuse Der Spieler_ to _King Kong_, are of great importance to him, as has been ably demonstrated by David Cowart and Scott Simmon. I would like, in the second part of this paper, to discuss Pynchon's use of several other films in _Gravity's Rainbow_ to help establish exactly what sort of an "old fan" he really is.

The myth of Orpheus runs in several strands through _Gravity's Rainbow_ and forms the basis for much of Pynchon's characterisation and even the structure of the novel itself. It is not surprising, then, that

the climax of the novel is reached in the Orpheus movie theatre in Los Angeles (of course, since the theatre is managed by the Nixon figure, R. M. Zhlubb, this Orpheus is suitably quiet: he has "put down" his harp). If the audience has been attending regularly, they will have caught the "Bengt Ekerot/Maria Casarès Film Festival" (755), where, in addition to Bergman's Seventh Seal, they will have seen Jean Cocteau's Orphée, in which, like Bengt Ekerot in Bergman's film, Maria Casarès played an embodiment of death.

"Legends are timeless: it is their privilege," announces Cocteau in setting his version of the Orpheus story in (then) modern France. But it is also the artist's privilege to use that myth as it suits him,which is what Cocteau does. Cocteau's Orpheus is more than half in love with his own personal death, and resembles Tannhäuser, whose love for Venus under the mountain is his downfall. Tyrone Slothrop is Pynchon's Orpheus, and he also suffers "that not-so-rare personality disorder known as Tannhäuserism" (299); and according to the

> world-renowned analyst Mickey Wuxtry-Wuxtry--"Jamf was only a fiction . . . to help [Slothrop] deny what he could not possibly admit: that he might be in love, in sexual love, with his, and his race's, death." (738)

Both Pynchon and Cocteau use Orpheus as an image of effete orthodoxy. Cocteau's Orpheus is a rather boring state-patronised poet, a great favourite of policemen's wives. His death is rather a squalid affair, an accident with a gun. He is not savaged to death by the horde of Bacchantes who gather to accuse him of plagiarising the work of a successful avant-garde poet. The state-patronised Orpheus Theatre in Gravity's Rainbow is, as I have said, an emasculated Orpheus. Zhlubb is trying to stamp out the subversive "mouth-harp"; so, like Cocteau's, Zhlubb's Orpheus is silenced. Slothrop is the unofficial Orpheus of Gravity's Rainbow: it is his harp which floats down an unnamed German river; it is he who resurrects the spirits of lost harp-men; it is he, finally, who is "Scattered all over the Zone" (712).

In the same year that Orphée was released, 1949, a British film which at first seems the very antithesis of Cocteau's invoked a mood which permeates Gravity's Rainbow. The film was Graham Greene and Carol Reed's The Third Man. Parts of Pynchon's novel even seem to echo set pieces in that film. The description by the counterforce spokesman of the pursuit of Gnostics through the underground recalls the climactic pursuit of Harry Lime through Vienna's sewers (not forgetting V., of course). The ferris wheel at Zwölfkinder, in the compartment of which Pökler and Ilse ride, recalls the Prater wheel in Vienna where Martins met Lime. The Prater, like Zwölfkinder, is a dying place of pleasure, destroyed physically by bombs as the need for such a place was slowly sapped from the souls of children by a hundred daily inhumanities.

Perhaps Martins meets Harry Lime in the wheel deliberately, or the association may be subconscious. The wheel is normally full of children, but Harry has been, through his penicillin racket, responsible for the deaths of many children. Martins and Lime have a compartment to themselves; no doubt Harry's influence stretches to this, but like the isolation of Pökler and his latest Ilse in the Zwölfkinder wheel, the isolation is not merely spatial. Pökler and Ilse are isolated from time in a counterfeit life which merely suggests movement by a rapid succession of stills; they are truly isolated on a ferris wheel. They are isolated in a city of children, for Ilse is not truly a child, and not truly Pökler's. There are no children on the Prater wheel with Lime and Martins; for Martins has seen the only children Lime has ever touched: they are all dead or maimed.

> "In these days, old man, nobody thinks in terms of human beings. Governments don't, so why should we?"[22]

Harry, like Pirate Prentice and Katje, is a victim of a war in which people have become a means to other ends. People are money to Lime; pointing to the people two hundred feet below:

> "If I said you can have twenty thousand pounds for every dot that stops, would you, really, old man, tell me to keep my money or would you calculate how many dots you could afford to spare--Free of income tax, old man. . . .It's the only way to save nowadays." (TM, 111)

Pirate and Katje, too, work in these more brutal currencies:

> Jews are negotiable. Every bit as negotiable as cigarettes, cunt, or Hershey bars. (105)

The worlds of The Third Man and Gravity's Rainbow are worlds where the black market is the norm, where such private enterprise is only, on a lower level, an emulation of mid-century statesmanship. Pynchon's England, like Hawkes' in The Lime Twig, may well owe something to the novels of Graham Greene, but his post-war Europe certainly resembles Greene's, paradoxically, just as it resembles Cocteau's.

The Third Man and Orphée seemed in 1949 to represent two opposite poles of filmmaking,the one tending towards a documentary realism, the other towards abstraction; and yet in Pynchon's novel the two are seen to have a great deal in common. The Third Man is remembered as one of the first British feature films to be shot on location, and war-torn Vienna is as much a subject of the drama as the black market it supports. Cocteau, too, is fond of evoking moods without words, and it is not surprising that he chose to film a large section of Orphée in the ruins of St. Cyr, a monument to the pointless destruction of the war years. Cocteau, Greene/Reed and Pynchon all play out their dramas against the background of a great destruction which, although historically precise, reflects a cultural and spiritual condition. Vienna, of course, was divided among the Allied powers at the end of the war, and these "zones" are crucial to the plot of The Third Man; they represent different worlds where entirely different standards of behaviour apply, though the standard is not notably high in any. Harry Lime survives entirely by shuttling between zones, never belonging to any one. Our introduction to Vienna, and to the film, is a shot of a poster bearing the message "you are now entering the American Zone,"

followed by posters for the other three powers. These are historical zones, but Cocteau, too, has a "zone" in Orphée. "La Zone" is Cocteau's underworld, represented by the St. Cyr barracks ruins, for it too is post-war Europe, like Vienna, like "the Zone" of Gravity's Rainbow.

Pynchon's "Zone" seems to contain both the historical and the poetic "zones" of Greene/Reed and Cocteau. Pynchon's Zone has a historical and geographical site, but it includes more than Vienna or Berlin and is occupied not by any one power, but by "them." It has the unreal quality of Cocteau's Zone, which cannot be reached by earthly means, as is revealed in the epigraph to Part Three, "In the Zone": "Toto, I have a feeling we're not in Kansas any more" (279); but it is also as riddled with earthly bureaucracy as the real zones.

Zones thrive on bureaucracy. To survive, one must learn to manipulate it like Harry Lime, or Tyrone Slothrop for whom forged papers become a way of life. Cocteau's Zone, too, has its bureaucracies: the Princess and Heurtebise are brought before a board of middle-aged, dark-suited bureaucrats to account for their breaking of the rules. They have taken "personal liberties," and are brought to justice by the "Zone police." We might compare the chapter in Gravity's Rainbow which is epigraphed by "Dear Mom, I put a couple of people in Hell today" (537). From the opening nod at Eliot (and Dante), it is clear that this is intended to be for Pirate some sort of educational visit to the underworld, along the lines of Orpheus'. The place has "many levels," and like Vienna's Zones and Cocteau's, it is based on bureaucracy. One corridor contains

> Beaverboard Row, as it is known: comprising the offices of all the Committees, with the name of each stenciled above the doorway-- (538)

In all these zones, death is administered by a bureaucracy: typewriters kill more people than rockets. Fritz Lang's Der Müde Tod, like Orphée, has a character who plays Death, recalled by Pynchon, characteristically, as "tender, wistful bureaucratic Death" (579); and as Pirate discovers, one can't appeal to God; most of us will never get further than

Beaverboard Row. The Princess reminds Orpheus of this, too: there is no higher appeal than death's bureaucracies:

> "The one who gives orders is nowhere to be found: some think he is asleep and we are part of his dream--a bad dream."

This is the same God of The Third Man, and Gravity's Rainbow:

> MARTINS: That's a strange crucifix.
> WINKEL: Jansenist.
> MARTINS: Never heard the word. Why are the arms above the head?
> WINKEL: Because he died, in their view, only for the elect. (TM, 56)

Pynchon may well have been attracted to Cocteau's film by its director's fondness for film trickery. Orphée makes use of negative projection, trick camera angles, back projection, and, in particular, running the film in reverse when depicting the raising from the dead of a character. Cocteau reverses the flow of time (notably in a long sequence at the end of the film as Orpheus is resurrected) by reversing the film, a concept which Pynchon finds particularly applicable to the V2. The rocket, in its apparent reversal of time sequence ("Firebloom, followed by blast then by sound of arrival"), mocks our mortality:

> . . . nothing can really stop the Abreaction of the Lord of the Night unless the Blitz stops, rockets dismantle, the entire film runs backward: faired skin back to sheet steel back to pigs to white incandescence to ore, to Earth. But the reality is not reversible. (139)

Except of course to von Göll, the obsessive film director who is eclectic in his monomania. Just as he (like Myra Breckinridge with the Beat Generation) manages to preempt the "corridor metaphysics" (394) of L'Année Dernière à Marienbad by thirty years,

> on his camera dolly, whooping with joy, barrelassing down the long corridors at Nymphenburg (750)

he also predates Orphée's film trickery:

> pull the trigger and bullets are sucked back out of the recently dead into the barrel, and the Great Irreversible is actually reversed as the corpse comes to life to the accompaniment of a backwards gunshot. (745)

Such concepts are often put wistfully in the mouths of madmen. Joseph Detweiler in Thomas Berger's _Killing Time_ asks

> "can a moment be stopped, suspended, frozen, as light can in a motion picture projector; and reversed, relived? This is worth consideration."[23]

It may be that Pynchon has such a suspension in mind at the end of _Gravity's Rainbow_. The film has stopped, and Zeno tells us that there can never be a "last delta-t"; all final gaps above the movie theatre are theoretically measurable, and perhaps the rocket will continue falling "absolutely and forever."

In its almost documentary naturalism, _The Third Man_ eschews special effects; it does, however, raise some of the questions familiar to readers of _Gravity's Rainbow_. Holly Martins is a writer of second-rate western novels, such as _The Lone Rider of Santa Fe_ and _Death at Double X Ranch_, and not above turning life into art: "Mind if I use that line in my next Western?" he asks Colonel Calloway. His next work, he tells Popescu, is to be called _The Third Man_:

> POPESCU: I'd say you were doing something pretty dangerous this time. . . . Mixing fact and fiction, like oil and water. (_TM_, 84)

The Third Man is the film of the book in the same way that _Gravity's Rainbow_ is the book of the film. Martins is a moviegoer; we see him in only one cinema, but like Pirate Prentice in the all-night cinema around the corner from Gallaho Mews, he is seeking shelter. Martins, though, is a bookish moviegoer, and prefers his life expressed as if it were a novel; like Percy's narrator, he becomes aware of this trait. He has imagined Harry Lime, his friend from childhood, as if he were the hero of one of his own yellowback

novels: The Oklahoma Kid, perhaps, which Baron Kurtz, Lime's co-conspirator, carries in his pocket. But Martins comes to realise his mistake:

> "For twenty years I knew him, the drinks he liked, the girls he liked. We laughed at the same things. He couldn't bear the colour green. But it wasn't true. He never existed. We dreamed him." (TM, 93)

We might recall the arguments of the last section of Gravity's Rainbow over the nature of Slothrop; was he, too, a fiction, just as Lazslo Jamf may have been Slothrop's own fiction? Holly Martins learns what Pynchon demonstrates: the people we know are our own fictions. We may not cast them as crudely as the moviegoer, as Gregory Peck, or the Oklahoma Kid, but they are our own creations, nonetheless.

If it is fair to suggest that Holly Martins may have imagined Harry Lime as the "Oklahoma Kid," then perhaps we may relate Martins' creation to the shadowy figure of the "Kenosha Kid," who hovers tantalisingly on the verges of Pynchon's novel, often promising revelation, but always disappointing. Kenosha, Wisconsin is not renowned for very much, but it was the birthplace of Orson Welles. This fact alone has led to an almost desperate identification of the Kenosha Kid with Orson Welles. Now, of course, Harry Lime in The Third Man was played by Orson Welles, and if Martins sees fit to think of Welles as the "Oklahoma Kid," then this may explain Pynchon's "Kenosha Kid." Pynchon offers few hints, but at the conclusion of Slothrop's drug-induced trip down the Roseland toilet, we seem to be on the verge of discovery. Slothrop has come to meet the Kenosha Kid:

> In the shadows, black and white holding in a panda-pattern across his face [. . .] waits the connection he's traveled all this way to see. (71)

This is a deliberate ploy to implicate us old fans, who've always been at the movies, for what we are perhaps meant to recall is (as Jack Bolling puts it)

> the time the kitten found Orson Welles in the doorway in The Third Man.

A window opens, and Lime's face emerges from the shadows which have partially obscured it. Of course, Pynchon disappoints us, for it is not the Kid: he has been busted. We meet the Kenosha Kid again in one of the fragments of Part Four, LISTENING TO THE TOILET, where he appears to be one of the few figures in the novel who do escape "Their frame." He is the "Sentimental Surrealist" who experiences a partial eclipse of the sun's roar, one of the few to see through the "elaborate scientific lie: that sound cannot travel through outer space" (695). The episode is an incidental conceit, but the Kenosha Kid is clearly a character of some significance, for very few escape "Their editorial blade" (694).

The Kenosha Kid is first invoked in Pynchon's novel in what amounts to a discussion of form and content. As Slothrop succumbs to narcosis, he considers half a dozen "changes on the text" of "You never did the Kenosha Kid" (61). The six words considered as a sentence are given as many entirely different meanings, depending on grammar, intonation and context. The section in fact foreshadows the debate which will take place later when the Counterforce seek to understand the "St. Veronica Papers"(688). Slothrop will come to mean different things to different sects, just as Jesus of Nazareth did; and having a written transcript of Slothrop's trip down the toilet will not preclude a variety of interpretations. If a six word sentence can be interpreted in so many different ways, how uncertain looks the task of discerning content in any more sophisticated form. (This is a problem experienced by, for instance, modern interpreters of the Christian gospels.)

Orson Welles' film Citizen Kane is also a debate on form and content. How do we untangle Kane the man from Kane the phenomenon? Content may be distorted by form, and is often irrecoverable in its original sense. Once a historical fact is included in, say, a Christian gospel, it is immediately susceptible to all the distortions of that form. Once Tyrone Slothrop becomes an object of veneration of the Counterforce, it is immediately impossible to discover who or what he really was:

> Some called him a "pretext." Others felt that he was a genuine, point-for-point microcosm. (738)

Once Charles Foster Kane becomes a public figure, the man recedes under the paraphernalia he collects.

Welles' film is considerably longer than Slothrop's six-finger exercise, but it reaches a similar conclusion.

> "I don't think any word can explain a man's life,"

says the reporter assigned to "tell us who he was." The "word" his editor has in mind is "Rosebud," but he can't even put a meaning to that. The "newsreel" which opens the film contains all that is known about Kane the public figure. It confirms Pynchon's notions concerning what is real and what is imagined to be.

> "The great yellow journalist himself lived to be history, outlived his power to make it."

For, though a newspaperman, Kane is an embodiment of the idea that what we believe we create, and that what we believe to be true is only what we believe. The Counterforce created an imaginary Slothrop; Martins created an imaginary Lime; when Charles Foster Kane created what he imagined, the results were very serious. He meddled in politics and social issues, created wars; he made news instead of reporting it. But Pynchon and Welles both insist that there is no difference: reporting news _is_ creating news; writing history is creating history.

Kane, too, was a "moviegoer," though of a rather rarer type. For the vast majority of moviegoers, their condition is precarious: their habit of living life as if it were a movie is ultimately susceptible to the unhappy vagaries of the random element on this side of the projection screen. Even in the cinema, the rocket will find them. Charles Foster Kane, through his immense wealth, succeeded in largely removing the random element from his life. He scripted his every activity as scrupulously as a Hollywood spectacular: Xanadu was a gigantic film set, and every activity there a perfectly choreographed scene

in the personal movie of Citizen Kane. But Kane learns too late that no amount of wealth and spectacle is a hedge against mortality.

Welles treats his Kane in the same way that Pynchon treats Slothrop. Both are doomed to be dispersed and fragmented: having shaped history, history will not contain them. Kane gradually fades from Welles' film in the same way that Slothrop disappears from *Gravity's Rainbow*, so that, in the end, it is possible for characters to wonder whether, like Martins with Lime, they didn't just dream Citizen Kane. Finally Kane's possessions are catalogued and auctioned or destroyed. We learn about Kane through these remnants, and through the recollections of others, in the same way the Counterforce learns about Slothrop through the "St. Veronica Papers" or the "Book of Memorabilia" (739). This process is what we might generally call compiling history, but more often than not, such a process merely gives us, like the reporter in *Citizen Kane*, a jigsaw whose pieces do not fit.

Citizen Kane's dark impressionism is characteristic of the cinema of the forties and is reflected in both *Orphée* and *The Third Man*; and whilst Welles wrote his own dialogue for *The Third Man*, he was also one of *Orphée*'s most outspoken supporters. *Citizen Kane*, too, vast and sprawling, a series of changing points and methods of narration, tumbling along at a variety of paces from lethargy to frenzy, always sophisticated, but often mawkishly sentimental, reminds us, a little, of *Gravity's Rainbow*. Welles dismissed Rosebud as "rather dollar-book Freud," but Pynchon, too, is fascinated by childhood in the same way. "The Occupation of Mingeborough," for example, relates Slothrop's current situation to childhood games back in his hometown; and indeed we might compare Slothrop with Kane. Both were entrusted as infants to the auspices of large corporations, and both bear the scars of the experience into adulthood.

Cocteau's Orpheus is instructed by a man in a cafe as to how he may become an innovative poet: "Etonnez-nous," he is told. Cocteau deliberately recalls a command he claimed to have received from Nijinsky in 1912: "Etonne-moi!" Cocteau took Nijinsky's advice

and would no doubt like to be remembered in those terms. It is interesting to compare a description of Orson Welles:

> He was born with the power to astonish, and in some ways his film career could be read as a process of learning to curb that power. [24]

I think it is fair to say that Pynchon, too, has this power, a power which is revealed most often in the flaunting of convention and the introduction of alien elements. Welles' film of Kafka's The Trial, for instance, ends not with Kafka dying "like a dog," but with a nuclear explosion. Pynchon's novel echoes Welles' film; we, like Joseph K, are willing accomplices in our own destruction. Pynchon's thoughts on the cinema at first seem paradoxical, and then merely perverse, but his position is logical. The "old theatre" of our civilisation shows the sort of films which sustain the moviegoer. But within cinema's establishment are rebels like Welles and Cocteau and Hellman whose films do not fulfill expectations. These filmmakers use the medium to question its own nature rather than reinforce its subtle deceptions: the question is one not of suspension of disbelief, but of suspension of belief. It is clear from the final sections of Pynchon's novel that Pynchon is using the image of the cinema to question the passive receptivity which characterises all aspects of our culture, the voyeurism which allows and even encourages the spectacles of Vietnam and Watergate. It is almost as if life must now be lived with syndication of its motion picture rights in mind. (Vietnam and Watergate have spawned what we are all guilty of calling "good films.") Pynchon reminds us that it is possible to go to the movies without becoming a moviegoer.

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Notes

[1] He would, of course, in 1939, in The Story of Alexander Graham Bell.

[2] Christie Malry's Own Double-Entry (London, 1973), 180.

[3] Gravity's Rainbow (New York, 1973), 760. Subsequent references will be noted in the text.

[4] "The Movies and Reality," 1926; rpt. in Authors on Film, ed. Harry M. Geduld (Bloomington, 1972), 86.

[5] Geduld, 89.

[6] Geduld, 88.

[7] The Age of the American Novel: The Film Aesthetic of Fiction Between the Two Wars, trans. Eleanor Hochman. (New York, 1972).

[8] Under the Volcano (1947; rpt. London, 1967), 110.

[9] Still Life with Woodpecker (New York, 1980), 3.

[10] "In Dreams Begin Responsibilities," 1937); rpt. in In Dreams Begin Responsibilities and Other Stories (London, 1978), 6,8.

[11] The Direction of Time (Berkeley, 1956), 11.

[12] A Voyage to Purilia (London, 1930), 36. References in the text will be denoted (P, __).

[13] Magny, 7.

[14] The Day of the Locust, in The Collected Works of Nathanael West (Harmondsworth, 1975), 146.

[15] The Moviegoer (New York, 1961), 4. References in the text will be denoted (M, __).

[16] In City for Conquest (1940), and Gunga Din (1939), I presume.

[17] In God is My Co-Pilot (1945), perhaps.

[18] Myron (New York, 1974), 7. References in the text will be denoted (My, __).

[19] "Top Ten Best Sellers," 1973; rpt. in Matters of Fact and Fiction (Essays 1973-1976) (New York, 1977), 4.

[20] Vidal, 1977, 5.

[21] B.S. Johnson,"Introduction"to Aren't You Rather Young to be Writing Your Memoirs?, 1973; rpt. in The Novel Today, ed. Malcolm Bradbury (Manchester, 1977), 151.

[22] The Third Man, Modern Film Scripts series (London, 1969), 112. References in the text will be denoted (TM, __).

[23] *Killing Time* (Harmondsworth, 1976), 133.

[24] Penelope Houston, "Orson Welles," in *Cinema: A Critical Dictionary*, ed. Richard Roud (London, 1980), 1064.