

V. and The Maltese Falcon: A Connection?

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I recently re-read Dashiell Hammett's The Maltese Falcon and my Pynchonized imagination was intrigued by the detective story's opening paragraph:

Samuel Spade's jaw was long and bony, his chin a jutting v under the more flexible v of his mouth. His nostrils curved back to make another, smaller, v. His yellow-grey eyes were horizontal. The v motif was picked up again by thickish brows rising outward from twin creases above a hooked nose, and his pale brown hair grew down--from high flat temples--in a point on his forehead. He looked rather pleasantly like a blond Satan.

Is there a connection between V. and The Maltese Falcon? To answer this question conclusively would require a careful study of both texts, but even without that effort there are some intriguing parallels. Though Hammett does introduce some esoterica about Maltese history, TMF is not really about Maltese history. But Sam Spade is caught up in a frustrating, inconclusive search for connection with a "broad"--or, in Pynchon's terms, the Feminine. Miss Wonderly appears in the opening chapter and engages Spade to find her sister, Corrine. Corrine proves to be a fiction. Miss Wonderly metamorphoses into Miss Leblanc and finally Brigid O'Shaughnessy. Brigid is seductive but deadly. At the same time Spade is pursued by Iva, the widow of his dead partner, and is comforted throughout by his "angelic" secretary, Effie Perine. Readers of V. may see some parallels in Pynchon's elusive and mysterious women.

This, admittedly, does not establish a connection, but I think it might be worthwhile for someone very much in possession of the text of V. to take a close look at The Maltese Falcon.

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