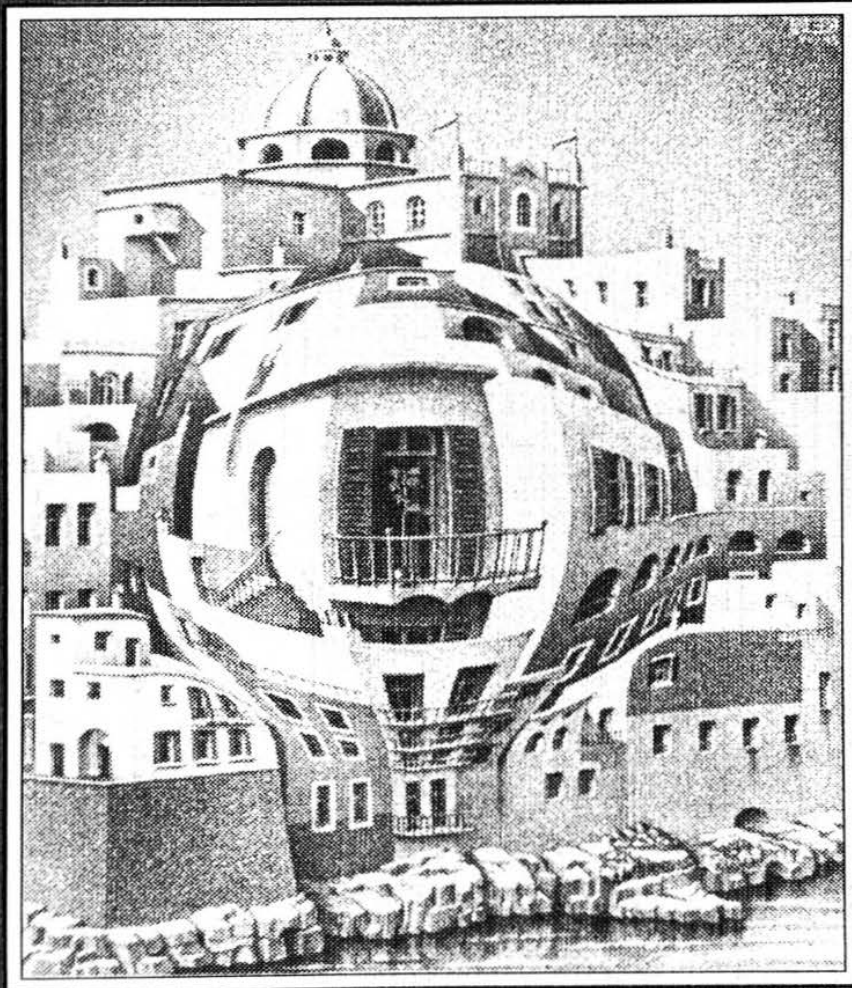P. BIANCHI   A. CASSOLA   P. SERRACINO INGLOTT

PYNCHON MALTA AND WITTGENSTEIN

with a preface
by
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Preface

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"Was there nothing for it but Valletta," the ironic quest-hero Stencil asks himself in Pynchon's *V.* Stencil's question occurs at the end of a chapter that consists mostly of recollections of Valletta in 1942 and 1943. The novel answers the question by concluding with two further chapters set in Valletta, one in 1956, the other in 1919. Valletta was for Pynchon the most suitable place in which to end a novel that was also designed to portray nothing less than the inner history – the secret history – of the twentieth century.

Pynchon chose Malta as the goal of the historical quests in his book because he understood the landscape, language, and people of Malta as the most complete embodiments of the book's most central historical, linguistic, and psychological issues. In this collection of essays, Maltese scholars and critics devote to Pynchon the same kind of detailed and sympathetic attention that he devoted to Malta three decades before.

When a novelist treats nations or peoples as embodiments of a theme, he inevitably falsifies and exploits them. Yet this book makes clear that Pynchon wrote about Malta with an intensity of attention that was closer to love than to exploitation. Pynchon took the trouble to learn details of Maltese history and geography with an exactness far beyond anything needed to create convincing fictions. And the details he used were based to a large extent on his personal experience of Malta in 1956. Some of his treatment of Malta makes use of the literary method that he derided in his introduction to *Slow Learner* as "the old Baedeker trick" of lifting authentic-sounding details from historical documents and faded guidebooks. But, as Arnold Cassola demonstrates in his essay in this, much of Pynchon's treatment of Malta is autobiographical. The Maltese chapters of *V.* have the kind of emotional force that Pynchon (again in the

introduction to *Slow Learner*) attributes to fiction that has "been made luminous, undeniably authentic by having been found and taken up, always at a cost, from deeper, more shared levels of the life we all really live."

One of the deepest of those shared levels is the one at which language is felt as inadequate to speak of those psychological, moral, and religious depths that Pynchon's fiction, at its best, attempts to portray. Petra Bianchi's essay in this book explores the way in which Pynchon associates Wittgenstein's treatment of this issue with the Maltese theme of the novel. A related issue is the inevitable coloration that fiction and myth apply to history, and the unavoidable truth that history is inaccessible unless it is conveyed through the medium of fiction or myth. Three essays by Peter Serracino Inglott in this book consider in detail the intersection of history, fiction, and myth in *V.*

When *V.* was published in 1963, it was printed in a typeface (Linotype Electra) that, like almost all typefaces then used in America and continental Europe, lacked the barred "ħ" needed to print the Maltese language. In all editions of the novel, Fausto Maijstral writes the Maltese word "moħħ", but it is printed as "mohh". Yet the novel itself is the strongest possible refutation of this implicit linguistic exclusion of Malta and Maltese. This book of essays makes clear for the first time the depth of Pynchon's attention to Malta, and the thematic, intellectual, and narrative riches that he found there.

The Wittgensteinian Thread in Thomas Pynchon's Labyrinth :
Aspects of Wittgenstein's Thought in *V.*

PETRA BIANCHI

One of the numerous possible ways in which to try and unravel the complex workings of Thomas Pynchon's novel *V.* is to approach, (and avoid), through the somewhat murky space existing between the two "opposite" protagonists Herbert Stencil and Benny Profane.

To begin with the basics, Profane is a picaresque type of character who describes himself as a "schlemihl", a street bum with no abilities, no job, no ambitions and only a few simple needs. He never seems to see links between things or events, and doesn't feel like he has to ever actually do anything – even women happen to him by accident: "Women had always happened to Profane the schlemihl like accidents: broken shoelaces, dropped dishes, pins in new shirts." (p. 134)[1]. And he never understands why they like him in the first place: "He glanced at himself in the mirror. Fat. Pigpouches around the eyes. Why did she want it to be him?" (p. 145). When a friend finds a good job for Profane he goes for the interview but doesn't stay, and when women really seem to be falling for him he runs away. In a sense, he is a Prufrockian type of figure, and not only as regards his indecision and apathy, but also the imagery connected to him is that of the poem.[2]

The aspect of Profane which is important regarding the opposition with Stencil is that Profane does not simply drift physically but also mentally. In other words, his concerns are immediate and he never attempts to direct his energies towards anything, let alone explain or understand anything very much – yet he is far from a stupid or unintelligent character. His thoughts involve us and are often interesting and amusing, for example, in his relationship with the alligators and their death-wish or the way in which Rachel

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1. *V.* was first published in Great Britain in 1963 by Jonathan Cape Ltd. My references all make use of the Picador edition published in 1975 (London)

2. See Tony Tanner, *City of Words: American Fiction 1950 - 1970*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1971.

and others like her treat their cars like lovers, and his views on Fina and her gang. His thoughts are, in fact, among the most lucid in the whole book and are, I think, what sticks most in the reader's mind. In other words, Profane is to be taken seriously, and not simply shrugged off as a "schlemihl". His attitude, moreover, seems to represent the sense of apathy and lack of direction of twentieth-century post-war Western culture[3]. Profane simply accepts reality and does not attempt to impose his own pattern of interpretation on the world around him. What he does seem to have, however, is a deficiency in his *emotions* and *communicative_skills* which we see, for example, in his failure to love and express his feelings adequately.

The way in which Herbert Stencil describes himself to us seems to indicate that, until 1945, he had a similar attitude to that of Profane:

> " Since 1945, Herbert Stencil had been on a conscious campaign to do without sleep. Before 1945 he had been slothful, accepting sleep as one of life's major blessings." (p. 54)

He says that he was always sleeping and did not have any qualifications or aims. Yet at a certain point in his life, Stencil found, or created, a purpose – to search for the woman V. mentioned in his father's diaries, which he sees as a "legacy from his father", and who may or may not be his mother. Stencil is not necessarily trying to find the living woman, if it is a woman, but rather to trace her down and identify her. He realises that his search is something which he has created himself and in fact is rather afraid of ever completing it as then he would again have no purpose and would have to revert to his state of apathy:

> "Finding her: what then? (...) if he should find her, where else would there be to go but back into half-consciousness? He tried not to think, therefore, about any end to the search. Approach and avoid." (p.55)

So his intention is to "approach and avoid", scared of the emptiness which he may find under the surface. Again, towards the end of the book in Chapter Eleven he states the same fear:

> " He had stayed off Malta. He was afraid of ending it; but, damn it all, staying here would end it too. Funking out; finding V.; he didn't know which he was more afraid of, V. or sleep. Or whether they were two versions of the same thing." (p. 346)

3. See John Dugdale, *Thomas Pynchon: Allusive Parables of Power*,   London: Macmillan, 1990

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An interesting point about the opposition between the characters of Profane and Stencil is that Stencil, unlike Profane who never seems to make any connections between anything, makes connections between *everything* and finds clues everywhere. This is explained by Eigenvalue the dentist:

> " Cavities in the teeth occur for good reason, Eigenvalue reflected. But even if there are several per tooth, there's no conscious organisation against the life of the pulp, no conspiracy. Yet we have men like Stencil, who must go about grouping the world's random caries into cabals." (p. 153)

Stencil is particularly interested in trying to find an order in his concept of history, but in doing so he imposes his own personal pattern onto the facts and so distorts them:

> " People read what news they wanted to and each accordingly built his own rathouse of history's rags and straws. In the city of New York alone there were at a rough estimate five million different rathouses. (...) Stencil fell outside the pattern. Civil servant without rating, architect-by-necessity of intrigues and breathings-together, he should have been, like his father, inclined towards action. But spent his days instead at a certain vegetation (...) waiting for Paola to reveal how she fitted into this grand Gothic pile of inferences he was hard at work creating." (pp. 225-226)

Slightly further on in the chapter, we are clearly told how Stencil distorts the facts of Mondaugen's story:

> " Stencil listened attentively. The tale proper and the questioning after took no more than thirty minutes. Yet the next Wednesday afternoon at Eigenvalue's office, when Stencil retold it, the yarn had undergone considerable change: it had become, as Eigenvalue put it, Stencilized." (p. 228)

A comparison can be made here with Profane's view of history:

> "Material wealth and getting laid strolled arm-in-arm the midway of Profane's mind. If he'd been the type who evolves theories of history for his own amusement, he might have said all political events: wars, governments and uprisings, have the desire to get laid as their roots; because history unfolds according to economic forces and the only reason anybody wants to get rich is so he can get laid steadily, with whomever he chooses." (p. 214)

The way in which I have contrasted Herbert Stencil and Benny Profane so far can also be applied to other characters in literature. For example, Tony Tanner[4] suggests that Stencil and Profane can be seen as "modern versions and distortions (...) of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza", and that "Pynchon's novel can be seen as a modern repetition and distortion of what is the paradigm novel for Western fiction, *Don Quixote*". Similarly, I find that an interesting comparison can also be drawn with two other characters in literature, namely, Hugo Belfounder and Jake Donaghue in Iris Murdoch's first novel *Under the Net* (1954). In many of Murdoch's works there is a definite opposition between those characters which constantly impose false forms onto reality and, on the other hand, truth-telling "religious" type of figures. These figures can be seen as representing the opposition between what Murdoch terms "saints" and "artists", although this contrast is not to be taken to extremes and we are always made to realise that true saints and true artists do not really exist.

Jake Donaghue is an artist-type character, and ultimately a bad artist because he imposes false forms onto reality. For example, in the novel he completely misunderstands the whole situation and the relationships between different people by imposing his own ideas onto them. He creates and believes in his own personal interpretation of reality and the patterns or forces through which it functions. Hugo Belfounder, in this respect, is presented as the opposite to Jake. He is ultimately a "Good" or saint-like character, and this is intimately connected with the fact that he refuses to accept any form and organisation in his interpretation of the world around him.

Hugo and Jake meet at a cold-cure centre where they share the same room, and after a while they begin to engage in lengthy "philosophical" discussions. One of their favourite topics is the nature of truth and falsity. Hugo is very concerned with the fact that, as soon as you try and explain anything or tell a story, you begin to "touch it up" and thereby distance it from the truth or reality. Ironically, Jake begins to write down their conversations and work them into a book called "The Silencer", and he becomes painfully aware of how very different the end-result is from the actual conversations which took place between them. In fact, Hugo himself does not even recognise the theories put forward in Jake's book, let alone think they may have been his own. Another character in the novel, Anna Quentin, also translates Hugo's ideas in her own way by setting up a mime theatre, which Jake clearly recognises as having been inspired by Hugo although Hugo himself finds this hard to believe.

4. See Tony Tanner, City of Words: American Fiction 1950 – 1970 (London, Jonathan Cape, 1971).

An important link is established between Hugo Belfounder and Wittgenstein. Hugo clearly states that "the whole language is a machine for making falsehoods" (p. 68), and after various discussions Hugo and Jake come to the conclusion that they really shouldn't talk at all, at which point they both burst into a fit of laughter as they hadn't been doing anything else for days. Hugo also speaks of language as a "net", which is of course reflected in the title "Under the Net", but which is actually an image derived directly from Wittgenstein. In his *Tractatus-Logico-Philosophicus*, Wittgenstein speaks of the net behind which the particulars of the world hide – the net which is also necessary to describe these particulars. This net is composed of both language and theory, which simultaneously reveal and obscure reality. Hugo himself has been described as a Wittgensteinian type of character, for instance, his family is said to be wealthy and German in origin, and, like Wittgenstein, he also gives up all his money.

Interesting parallels may be drawn between some aspects of Hugo and Jake in *Under the Net,* and Profane and Stencil in *V.* Like Jake, Stencil is concerned with trying to order reality into a pattern, thereby trying to come up with a general theory to explain everything. By imposing a pattern, however, they are both distorting reality and falsifying it. On the other hand, Hugo Belfounder and Benny Profane exist in a world full of objects and facts, but are incapable of – or do not wish to – try and order them into any pattern (Ironically, Hugo is conceived as a "saint" by Murdoch, whereas Benny is "Profane" for Pynchon). For example, Jake says this of Hugo:

> " He was interested in everything, and interested in the theory of
> everything, but in a peculiar way. Everything had a theory, and yet
> there was no master theory. I have never met a man more destitute than
> Hugo of anything which could be called a metaphysic or general
> Weltanschauung. It was rather perhaps that of each thing he wanted to
> know the nature – and he seemed to approach this question in each
> instance with an absolute freshness of mind." (p. 65)

Another odd similarity between Jake Donaghue and Herbert Stencil may be worth mentioning. It has often been pointed out that the name "Stencil" indicates that the character is linked to the idea of copying, that is, either reproducing or possibly falsifying. Jake Donaghue in Murdoch's novel is also, coincidentally, intimately linked with the idea of copying. Murdoch is a self-proclaimed Platonist and many of her philosophical concerns with Platonist ideas come out in her novels, and *Under the Net* is no exception here. Of fundamental importance in this connection is Plato's theory of forms and ideas, which may be briefly explained as follows: Socrates, in his

quest for knowledge, had developed an inductive method through which, by considering a number of particular instances of some attribute or notion, he had succeeded in isolating their common character in the form of a general definition. For example, melons, olives and oranges are all instances of Roundness. Plato, following Socrates, would have described them all as sharing in the Form or Idea of Roundness. He often used the metaphor of copy or pattern to illustrate this point. Following directly from this, Plato believed that the world of Ideas was far superior to the material world as it was more "real" or (or eternal). Plato's famous – or infamous – negative view of art is directly derived from this. Since the material world is merely a copy of the world of ideas, the material world is therefore inferior, and since art is in turn a copy of the material world, it is a copy of a copy and therefore "twice-removed" from the world of ideas. Accordingly, in Plato's view art occupied a very low status indeed, and therefore he also placed artists very low on the social scale for this reason. As I described earlier, Jake tries to write down the original version of what went on in the discussions between Hugo and himself, and yet he does not succeed in doing so without distorting them to an alarming extent. Similarly, earlier I quoted a passage in which Stencil listens to Mondaugen's story carefully, but by the time he has come to repeat it to Eigenvalue he has "Stencilized" it and thereby changed it considerably. At one point during Stencil's narration of the story, Eigenvalue interrupts and exclaims that he cannot believe that Mondaugen should have remembered the events of the story so clearly, especially as they meant nothing to him. At first, Stencil hesitates, then he replies:

> " Stencil called it serendipity, not he. Do you understand? Of course
> you do. But you want to hear him say it." (p. 249)

For Hugo Belfounder, as for Plato, art is a special case of copying, and like Plato he is very suspicious of mimetic art. For example, when he talks about his fireworks he claims that he "despised the vulgarity of representational pieces" (p. 61), and preferred that they be compared, if to anything, then to music. For Hugo, the very impermanence of fireworks is a positive recommendation – he also thinks that Leonardo understood that art should not be permanent and states that "He deliberately made the Last Supper perishable" (p. 61).

Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* is mainly concerned with language, the world, and the relation between them. Wittgenstein believed that language and the world both have a structure, and that these two structures are intimately linked. He postulated that the basic constituents of lan-

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guage are names, which are combined to form elementary propositions, and which are in turn combined to form propositions. In the same manner, the basic constituents of the world are objects, which are then combined to form "states of affairs", and which are in turn combined to form facts. In other words, in order to describe the relation between language and the world, objects can be seen as corresponding with names, "states of affairs" as corresponding with elementary propositions, and, finally, facts as corresponding with propositions. In this way, propositions can be seen as "picturing" facts. This "picturing" relation is fundamental to the way in which Wittgenstein explains the relation between language and the world in this early work. It follows from this that the structures of language and the world are intimately connected and together impose the limits of what can significantly be said.

Wittgenstein's main aim in the *Tractatus* was to solve the problems of philosophy, and he intended to do so simply by showing how language works. He thought that if the nature of language and thought is made clear then all the problems of philosophy will be solved. He tried to go about this by identifying the logic underlying language, as he thought that an understanding of this logic would show the limits of what could meaningfully be thought or said. It is from this basic assumption that his famous assertion at the end of the *Tractatus* stems, where he states that whatever can be said at all can be said clearly, and "what we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence". (T 7)

What this means is that the only things which can significantly be said are those which reflect the world through the "picturing" relation that I described earlier. Wittgenstein thought that ethics, religion and the "problems of life" lie outside the world, and therefore cannot be pictured in language, in other words, he thought that nothing could significantly be said about these three topics. He says: "There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They make themselves manifest. They are what is mystical." (T 6.522). By this Wittgenstein seems to mean that these things cannot be said, they can only be shown. This is a crucial point of the *Tractatus*.

These philosophical theories of Wittgenstein are, in my opinion, useful in achieving a full understanding of the labyrinth of ideas in Pynchon's novel *V.* The fact that Pynchon himself had them, to some extent, in mind while writing the novel is evident, for example in the fact that in Chapter Nine the decoding of the sferics received on Mondaugen's apparatus reveals the statement "The world is all that is the case". This is part of Wittgenstein's account of the world structure given right at the beginning of the *Tractatus*:

> " 1.   The world is all that is the case
>
> 1.1 The world is the totality of facts, not of things
>
> (...)
>
> 2.   What is the case – a fact – is the existence of a state of affairs
>
> 2.1 A state of affairs (a state of things) is a combination of
>   objects (things). "

We are clearly reminded throughout this chapter that the scene is set in 1922, and this is of course the same year that the *Tractatus* was first published. By using the opening statement of the treatise in connection with an attempt to decode signs, Pynchon is again reverting back to a central theme of the novel – that of patterning vs. no pattern, and the role that signs (or language) plays in this. What is it that underlies the pattern? And does the pattern genuinely allow us to interpret the world? Pynchon's own position seems to favour the idea of an underlying chaos, and his treatment of the patterning theme throughout the novel has an ironic twist.

As I explained earlier, Wittgenstein thought that the world is represented by propositions. Propositions are true or false depending on whether they represent correctly whatever is the case therefore the world is everything that is represented by true propositions. This is obviously fundamental to Wittgenstein's ideas on what can legitimately be said, as opposed to that which can only be shown. In *Under the Net*, Hugo Belfounder and Jake Donaghue take up this point in one of their discussions at the cold-cure centre:

> " 'I know myself,' said Hugo, " that when I really speak the truth the
> words fall from my mouth absolutely dead, and I see complete blank-
> ness in the face of the other person."
> " So we never really communicate?"
> " Well," he said, "I suppose actions don't lie."   (p.68)

In chapter ten of Pynchon's *V.*, Charisma and Mafia sing a Wittgensteinian song, which I would here like to quote in full:

> It is something less than heaven
> To be quoted in Thesis 1.7
> Every time I make an advance;
> If the world is all that the case is
> That's a pretty discouraging basis
> On which to pursue
> Any sort of romance.
> I've got a proposition for you;

Logical positive and brief.
And at least it could serve as a kind of comic relief:

(Refrain)
Let P equal me,
With my heart in command;
Let Q equal you
With Tractatus in hand;
And R could stand for a lifetime of love,
Filled with music to fondle and purr to.
We'll define love as anything lovely you'd care to infer to
On the right, put that bright,
Hypothetical case;
On the left, our uncleft,
Parenthetical chase.
And that horseshoe there in the middle
Could be lucky; we've nothing to lose,
If in these parentheses
We just mind our little P's
And Q's.
If P (Mafia sang in reply) thinks of me
As a girl hard to make,
Then Q wishes you
Would go jump in the lake.
For R is a meaningless concept,
Having nothing to do with pleasure:
I prefer the hard and tangible things I can measure.
Man, you chase in the face
Of impossible odds;
I'm a lass in the class
Of unbossable broads.
If you'll promise me no more sticky phrases,
Half a mo while I kick off my shoes.
There are birds, there are bees,
And to hell with all your P's
And Q's.

What is being joked about here is Wittgenstein's theory that love is a meaningless concept and cannot be talked about but only demonstrated. Something similar emerges in Chapter One, when Profane meets a barmaid named Beatrice:

" 'Why can't man live in peace with his fellow man,' wondered a voice behind Profane's left ear. It was Beatrice the barmaid (...) "Benny",

she cried. They became tender, meeting again after so long. Profane began to draw in the sawdust hearts, arrows through them, sea gulls carrying a banner in their beaks which read Dear Beatrice." (p. 10-11)

What is significant here is that as soon as Benny Profane tries to express any sort of love or romantic feelings, words fail him and instead he tries to show it rather state it. This basically fits into the picture in the same way as Charisma's song. Since Charisma can probably also be seen as a schlemihl, they share the same world view and suffer the same problems. The problem which they face is the ability to communicate meaningfully beyond the description of basic facts. This is a problem from which the Whole Sick Crew suffers – at times they even seem to find difficulty in expressing themselves in basic facts and sink to the low level of communicating using only objects. For example, Paola Maijistral speaks mainly in Proper Nouns. Rachel Owlglass thinks this of her, one day when she arrives home:

> "First thing she saw through the open door was a sign on the kitchen wall, with the word PARTY, illuminated by pencil caricatures of the Whole Sick Crew (...) Paola's handiwork, Paola Maijistral the third room-mate. Who had also left a note on the table. "Winsome, Charisma, Fu, and I. V-Note, McClintic Sphere. Paola Maijistral." Nothing but Proper Nouns. Persons, places. No things. Had anyone told her about things? It seemed Rachel had had to do with nothing else." (p. 51)

According to Wittgenstein's theory, nouns correspond to objects, not even facts. And Paola does not even command all nouns, but only proper nouns, indicating that her level of communication must be very low indeed.

The problem of communication emerges constantly with Profane, who actually feels that his "whole vocabulary seemed made up of wrong words", and the Whole Sick Crew actually seems to value this sort of thing. For example, one of the characters, Slab, is described as "painting in sporadic bursts, referring to himself as a Catatonic Expressionist and his work as the "ultimate in non-communication". In other words, Slab's art aims at giving expression to this problem of communication, rather than attempting to counteract it.

In chapter ten, Pynchon describes the Crew as seeing language like building blocks which you could arrange in various ways:

> "The Crew had developed a kind of shorthand whereby they could set forth any visions that might come their way. Conversations at the

Spoon had become little more than proper nouns, literary allusions, critical or philosophical terms linked in certain ways. Depending on how you arranged the building blocks at your disposal, you were smart or stupid. Depending on how others reacted they were In or Out. The number of blocks, however, was finite.

"Mathematically, boy," (Eigenvalue) told himself, "if nobody else original comes along, they're bound to run out of arrangements someday. What then?" (pp. 297-8)

In the *Tractatus,* Wittgenstein described a "state of affairs" as a combination of objects, analysable into component parts. These component parts are therefore the building blocks of the states of affairs, and cannot be broken down into smaller parts. He goes on to say that if we had a complete inventory of all objects, we would be able to know all the possible states of affairs. Chapter Eleven, the "Confessions of Fausto Maijistral," can be regarded as a premonition of the fact that all the different lines and themes of the novel are to eventually converge in Malta towards the end of the book, before they dissipate again and go their separate ways. Accordingly, the protagonist of this chapter, Fausto Maijistral, again picks up the theme of language.

We are immediately made aware of Fausto's concern with language when he tries to explain how his bilingualism presents a problem for him as a poet, as by speaking two languages his "mind" or thought-process is divided between the mentality of two very different cultures. Although he would like to express himself in Maltese, he finds that the Maltese language is not subtle or adequate enough to catch the varying shades of his feelings, and therefore he is constrained to writing in English. Yet he feels that he cannot express his "Malteseness" in a language which remains essentially foreign to him although he masters it with ease.

As Professor Peter Serracino Inglott[5] has pointed out, this idea of language constraining the way we think is ultimately Wittgensteinian. Language defines the world-view of its speakers by setting up a kind of grid of categories through which we are able to perceive the world in an organised way. Although this "grid" is actually an aid to understanding and perceiving the reality around us, it is also a constraint upon the way we think. This idea naturally implies that speakers of different languages may have different perceptions of the world, although the rigidity of such differences should perhaps not be stretched too far; since it is possible to translate languages

5. See Peter Serracino Inglott, *The Faustus of Malta: an Interface of Fact and Fiction in Pynchon's "V.",* reprinted in this volume.

into one another, this indicates that these different types of "perception" are really quite similar.

Such theories have extended into different areas of linguistics, such as the question of the relationship between bilingualism and biculturalism. Since culture is largely transmitted through language, does this mean that bilinguals actually belong to two cultures? In fact, bilinguals are often monocultural, although this is sometimes not so, as in the case of colonised countries where one culture is "invaded" by another – in such cases many members of the original community do in fact become both bilingual and bicultural. This often leads to a combination of both cultures co-existing side by side, which in turn results in some percentage of the community feeling that they no longer belong to any culture at all. This, indeed, seems to be the situation which Fausto Maijistral finds himself in at one stage of his life, and which he subsequently attempts to come to terms with. He says:

> "Perhaps British Colonialism has produced a new sort of being, a dual man, aimed two ways at once: towards peace and simplicity on the one hand, towards an exhausted intellectual searching on the other."
> (p. 309)

Eventually Fausto concedes to using English in his poetry, although he always feels that it does not adequately reflect the reality around him and instead serves to distance him from it. For example, at this point his communication with his monolingual, Maltese-speaking wife Elena Xemxi begins to become problematic – once again we encounter the question of the relationship between language and communication prevalent throughout the novel. Fausto tells us that "She cannot read my poetry, I cannot translate it for her", and laments the fact that the Maltese language cannot express his love:

> "Can I explain love? Tell her my love for her is the same and part of my love for the Bofors Crews, the Spitfire pilots, our Governor? That it is love which embraces this island, love for everything on it that moves! There are no words in Maltese for this. Nor finer shades; nor words for intellectual states of mind." (p. 309)

Again the problem of expressing love through language has emerged. Yet Fausto does not take this problem to the extreme point that Profane does, who cannot express love in any words at all. Fausto merely feels that he has to switch to a foreign, different language, the language of a more distant reality. Eventually Fausto I undergoes a "shift" and turns into Fausto II dur-

ing the war, now becoming more Maltese again; accordingly, his poetry also begins to change, becoming less metaphysical and abstract.

Yet he admits that his "English" side is still there, urging him to keep a journal. He begins to sense that a "void" underlies everything, in the same way as Signor Mantissa sensed this when he looked at Botticelli's "Birth of Venus" in Chapter Seven. This is reflected in Fausto's thoughts on poetry, which he feels only serves to give the illusion of understanding the world:

> "Living as he does much of the time in a world of metaphor, the poet is always acutely conscious that metaphor has no value apart from its function; that it is a device, an artifice (...) Fausto's kind are alone with the task of living in a universe of things which simply are, and cloaking that innate mindlessness with comfortable and pious metaphor so that the "practical" half of humanity may continue in the Great Lie, confident that their machines, dwellings, streets and weather share the same human motives, personal traits and fits of contrariness as they." (p.326)

This is obviously a profound criticism of the role of the artist and his art, in fact he goes on to say:

> "Poets have been at this for centuries. It is the only useful purpose they do serve in society (...) It is the "role" of the poet, this 20th Century. To lie." (p.326)

The novel is filled with artists, yet the only one who is in any way successful is Mafia Winsome, who writes pulp fiction and believes that "Heroic Love" is what can save the world, a theory which she has invented herself.