

The Role of Conspiracy in *Gravity's Rainbow*

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1. Introduction

Gravity's Rainbow is an absolutely fragmented story. It frustrates the traditional reader who supposes that a novel develops around its main character. The protagonist of this novel seems to be Tyrone Slothrop. However, reading it trying to recreate half Tyrone Slothrop's life, the reader will surely get frustrated. There are very few clues which assure any certainty in Tyrone Slothrop's life. While the narrator describes that Slothrop ends up broken down and scattered, it remains ambiguous what really happens to Slothrop. If one reads the novel devoting oneself to discovery of an explanation of Slothrop's footmark, he will get frustrated. It is quite difficult to reconstruct Slothrop's footmark clearly enough to discuss as the main topic. Moreover, Slothrop is not likely to become the main character whose footmark becomes an integrated and coherent meaning of the entire novel. Even after his being broken down and scattered, the story goes on with being scarcely affected by his extinction. Linda A. Westervelt points out that Slothrop's disappearance before the end of the novel and unsatisfying explanation of what really happens to Slothrop frustrate the traditional reading:

Slothrop's disappearance before the end of the book also presents a dilemma for the reader who must interpret the significance of his decreasing "temporal band-width." Even if Slothrop is a character with a past, a heritage, and a personality at the beginning, the surrealistic events at the end of the book frustrate the reader's desire to interpret his character according to traditional norms. (72)

It is also difficult to consider him as the mere embodiment of illusions due to the lack of evidence out of which coherence can be made. Talking about his failure to read it trying to identify the main character or to find the integrated and coherent meaning of the novel, David Leverenz says:

Pynchon had toyed with my subjectivist temperament. He had seduced me into liking Slothrop, only to rob me of that novelistic coherence. The one quester whom I could understand had become a jumble of other people's quest. . . . The book was an act of calculated hostility against my own need to find out what it was about. Anything organized, including narrative or interpretation, signified co-optation by waste-making forces. (230-31)

To sum up, Leverenz considers the impossibility of the traditional reading as Pynchon's intention, and insists that the impossibility of deducing coherent meaning is the only coherent meaning of the novel. Leverenz supports that reading, by saying, "No longer bored, I now realized I was annoyed. Pynchon had toyed with my subjectivist

temperament. He had seduced me into liking Slothrop, only to rob me of that novelistic coherence” (230). In detail, since the attempt to figure out Tyrone Slothrop’s life clearly is destined to end up unsuccessful due to the lack of information acquirable in this novel, it makes sense to think that what prevents the reader from knowing half his life fully is Pynchon’s intention. Edward Medelson also says, “To refer to it as a novel is convenient, but to read it as a novel—as a narrative of individuals and their social and psychological relations—is to misconstrue it” (161).

Since the hints of conspiracy are omnipresent in this novel, the reader tends to try to figure out the conspiracy. The attempt always fails, due to the lack of information. As a result, what is clarified will be that the novel will not be clarified. The conspiracy seduces the reader to integrate the novel. However, the reader ends up failing without reading his own idea into it obviously. In this novel, conspiracy functions to reveal the mechanism of reading. Both the reader and Tyrone Slothrop search for the conspiracy.

2. Tyrone Slothrop’s Conspiracy Paranoia

First, I dare try to integrate this novel by reconstructing the main character’s trait or the conspiracy. This novel seems to be about Tyrone Slothrop’s search for his real identity: his attempt to know whether he has been involved in a conspiracy or not. What is presented first about him is the correspondence between the places where he has had sex and the locations destroyed by V-2 rockets. Inspired by that suggestive phenomenon, both Tyrone Slothrop himself and the scientists come to suspect a conspiracy hidden behind their own actions. Noticing that V-2 rockets fall on wherever he has had sex, Slothrop “has become obsessed with the idea of a rocket with his name written on it—if they’re really set on getting him (‘They’ embracing possibilities far beyond Nazi Germany) that’s the surest way” (25). Gradually, he comes to suspect that he has been controlled without any knowledge, as described in the following quotation:

Oh, the hand of a terrible croupier is that touch on the sleeves of his dreams: all in his life of what has looked free or random, is discovered to’ve been under some Control, all the time, the same as a fixed roulette wheel—where only destinations are important, attention is to long-term statistics, not individuals. (209)

Since he suspects that the control has been put over him though he has not been aware at all, it seems impossible to make sure whether the control is real or not. There seems to be no way to make clear if he is really controlled or behaving spontaneously. Slothrop suffers from agency panic.

Then, Tyrone Slothrop comes to think that the control put over himself is substantiated by the physical aspect; since an operation has been done on him, his body has been made to react as the cabal intends:

Once something was done to him, in a room, while he lay helpless. . . . His erection hums from a certain distance, like an instrument installed, wired by Them into his body as a colonial output here in our raw and clamorous world, another

office representing Their white Metropolis far away. (285)

Moreover, believing that the operation was done in his early childhood, he comes to think that his own father is responsible for the control. Analyzing the dossier, he becomes convinced that he has been sold by his father to Laszlo Jamf, who develops Imipolex G, for the sake of his father's paper company and his education at Harvard University, and has been under observation after that:

Nice way to find out your father made a deal 20 years ago with somebody to spring for your education. Come to think of it, Slothrop never could quite put the announcements, all through the Depression, of imminent family ruin, together with the comfort he enjoyed at Harvard. Well, now, what *was* the deal between his father and Bland? I've been sold to IG Farben like a side of beef. Surveillance? Stinnes, like every industrial emperor, had his own company spy system. So did the IG. Does this mean Slothrop has been under their observation— m-maybe since he was *born*? Yaahhh . . . (286)

The reader is told that around 1920, Jamf conditioned Infant Tyrone into a reflex erection, and that when Tyrone Slothrop was discovered late in 1944, many people already identified him with the Infant Tyrone (84-85). However, Slothrop himself seems unaware of that childhood experience. By gathering clues and connecting them, he is trying to know about his own body and whether he has been put under control. As has been seen, Slothrop becomes obsessed by the suspicion that he has been watched and controlled, mainly because of two discoveries of his: the discovery of the correspondence between the places where he has sex and the locations destroyed by V-2 rockets, and the discovery of his having been sold to the mad- scientist-like figure, Laszlo Jamf.

Searching for the solution to his own mystery, Slothrop considers the purpose of his quest as the proof of the connection among Jamf, Imipolex G, and S-Gerat, which is also called G device or Schwarzgerat: "What happened to Imipolex G, all the Jamf a-and that S-Gerat, s'pposed to be a hardboiled private eye here The S-Gerat now—O.K. if I can find that S-Gerat 'n' how Jamf was hooked in, if I can find that out, yeah yeah Imipolex now . . ." (561). Moreover, he feels bad when it seems difficult to connect these three things and himself: "But what then? Slothrop and the S-Gerat and the Jamf/Imipolex mystery have grown to be strangers" (434). He supposes that he was conditioned to erect, reacting to the scent of Imipolex G, by Jamf in his childhood. That is the reason, Slothrop believes, why he erects and comes to have sexual desire prior to the attack of a V-2 rocket whose insulation device is made of Imipolex G. To prove the causality is what he tries to do. And the direct aim of his quest is to find S-Gerat which is attached to one of those rockets and is also made of Imipolex G. S-Gerat is compared to the Grail, and Slothrop's quest for S-Gerat is expected to be a kind of heroic deed. The anonymous voice which is likely that of the omniscient narrator states: "Even as determinist a piece of hardware as the A4 rocket will begin spontaneously generating items like the 'S-Gerat' Slothrop thinks he's chasing like a grail" (275). Once Slothrop

mentions the comparison: “The Schwarzgerat is no Grail, Ace, that’s not what the G in Imipolex G stands for. And you are no knightly hero. The best you can compare with is Tannhauser, the Singing Nincompoop And where is the Pope whose staff’s gonna bloom for you?” (364). Though the fantasy of the heroic quest seems denied by Slothrop here, these words also make it clear that he has compared S-Gerat to the Grail and has thought his quest is heroic. Immediately after that, there is a fantastic expression which functions to help the reader to compare Slothrop’s quest with a heroic one: “So the Evil Hour has worked its sorcery. The wrong word was Schwarzgerat. Now the mountain has closed again thundering behind Slothrop, damn near like to crush his heel, and it might just be centuries before that White Woman appears again” (377).

However, Slothrop comes to realize that his quest also has been merely what other people let him do:

He knows as well as he has to that it’s the S-Gerat after all that’s following him, it and the pale plastic ubiquity of Laszlo Jamf. That if he’s been seeker and sought, well, he’s also baited, and the Casino Hermann Goering, with hopes it would flower into a full *Imipolectique* with its own potency in the Zone—but They knew Slothrop would jump for it. Looks like there are sub-Slothrop needs They know about, and he doesn’t: this is humiliating on the face of it, but now there’s also the even more annoying question, *What do I need that badly?* (490)

In “Margherita’s story of her last days with Blicero,” she talks about S-Gerat or Imipolex’s magical charm which makes people sexually enchanted and submissive. In the Casino Hermann Goering which Slothrop is mentioning, he becomes aware of the insulation device made of Imipolex G when he is left alone with “a puzzle, a kind of a, well not an obsession really . . . not yet Opposite the parts listening, over in the Materials column now, here’s ‘Imipolex G.’” (242). To sum up, in the Casino Hermann Goering, Slothrop seems to become aware of the insulation device made of Imipolex by accident. Then, he becomes obsessed by it and secretly starts the quest for it. However, as has been described in the above-quoted passage, he comes to think that, seeming accidental, the chain of events are Their plot; he ends up controlled by Them without his knowledge. The same as his reflective erection which is obviously programmed by Jamf, his would-be heroic quest turns out, he thinks, to be what other people intend it to be.

Viewed in this way, Slothrop turns out to have suffered from agency panic. As seen already, Slothrop comes to suspect that he has been controlled without any knowledge while playing roulette in the casino. Concerning his doubt of spontaneity which arose in the casino, Timothy Melley says:

It is significant that Slothrop’s first sustained doubts about his autonomy come in a casino—a model of the way random individual events fall into regular patterns if allowed to transpire within a “fixed” structure or system. Inside the casino, events appear variable, uncontrollable. Outside, in the back office, however, balance sheets would suggest otherwise. . . . he can only begin to understand the

idea of his total determination, and of chancelessness, as a “disagreeable *chance*.” (100)

Slothrop likely attributes the control put over him to what was done to him by the scientists represented by Jamf in his childhood. Then he starts his quest in order to prove the connection of Jamf, Imipolex, S-Gerat, and himself. While he has been controlled, the quest itself seems to be spontaneous; therefore, it is compared to the heroic quest for the Grail. At this point, he has not been convinced of his total determination. However, he comes to think that the quest is also what has been programmed by Them. He suffers from agency panic even worse because he was unaware of his being controlled and thinking that he was acting spontaneously to solve the mystery created by Them. Because of his agency panic, he becomes unsure of what he himself is thinking; therefore, he asks the question: “*What do I need that badly*” (490).

The purpose of Slothrop's quest, which is compared to the heroic quest for the Grail, is to connect himself to Jamf, Imipolex and S-Gerat. In *Gravity's Rainbow*, the omniscient narrator defines Slothrop's propensity for connecting events as paranoia. For example, just after describing Slothrop's realization of his being unable to connect Jamf, Imipolex, S-Gerat, and himself, the omniscient narrator defines that situation of chaos as anti-paranoia: “If there is something comforting . . . about paranoia, there is still also anti-paranoia, where nothing is connected to anything, a condition not many of us can bear for long. Well right now Slothrop feels himself sliding onto the anti-paranoia part of his cycle” (434). And the following is written with the assumption that paranoia is closely linked to the discovery of connectedness: “About the paranoia often noted under the drug, there is nothing remarkable. Like other sorts of paranoia, it is nothing less than the onset . . . of the discovery that *everything is connected*” (703). Moreover, Slothrop's tendency to look for order behind visible things is defined as paranoia: “it's a Puritan reflex of seeking other orders behind the visible, also known as paranoia” (188). Slothrop requires things to have been put in order even though they seem fragmented. His quest coincides with Martin Parker's conspiracy theory: “A conspiracy theory creates and ties together a series of events in relations of cause and effect. Conspiracy is predicated on uncovering a specific form and structure” (193).

Parker also insists that the attempt to unmask conspiracy, the order hidden behind things, becomes a heroic quest: “So the search for explanations can be posited as a heroic one. The more ‘we’ know, the less ‘they’ can control us. This is the ‘quest’ for knowledge, the question begins a journey with trials and tribulations, but one that takes us to a better place” (201). This idea of a heroic quest for knowledge applies to Slothrop's comparing his quest to a heroic one, the search for the Grail. As has been already pointed out, Slothrop seems to start his quest spontaneously to uncover the hidden connection of Jamf, Imipolex, S-Gerat, and himself. By doing so, he is to outwit Them. Then, his quest would be considered heroic. As he realizes that his quest is also what is programmed by Them: nothing more than a part of Their plot, he comes to suffer from

agency panic. The positive conspiracy theory, which is to assure one's own spontaneity by unmasking conspiracy and outwitting the conspirator, ends up frustrated. Slothrop is suffering from agency panic even before the quest due to his suspicion that his actions, represented by the reflective erection, were conditioned in his childhood by Jamf. His realization of the quest's nature worsens his agency panic.

Slothrop has been conspiracy paranoid throughout the novel. First, he is suspicious of Jamf's conspiracy which manages his reflective erection; this is his first conspiracy theory. He is intent on finding the connection among Jamf, Imipolex, S-Gerat, and himself. According to the omniscient narrator, the search for the connection is paranoia. In fact, his obsessive attempt to find the connection behind those things must be based on his expectation of and belief in that connection. This search for the connection is his second conspiracy paranoia; while the first one is the fear of the connection, the second one is the desire for it. After all, moving from the first conspiracy paranoia to the second one, Slothrop sublimates his obsessive fear of conspiracy. The second one is related to the positive attempt to assure his spontaneity by spontaneously outwitting the conspirators.

Even after realizing that his search for the connection is just what is programmed by Them, Slothrop is intent on proving the connection. In fact, the following description of his will to connect them, which is on page 561, comes later than his realization of the total control, which is on page 490:

Why is he out here, doing this? . . . Yeah! yeah what happened to Imipolex G, all the Jamf a-and that S-Gerat, s'posed to be a hardboiled private eye here

The S-Gerat now—O.K. if I can find that S-Gerat 'n' how Jamf was hooked in, if I can find that out, yeah yeah Imipolex now. (561)

Suffering from agency panic, Slothrop is still intent on the conspiracy which is the ringleader of his agency panic. He tries to go deep into the agency panic. After all, he has suffered from conspiracy paranoia from beginning to end. First, he seems to try to fight the conspiracy and secure his minimum spontaneity. As it sounds paradoxical, for that purpose, he requires conspiracy as the enemy to fight against. His attempt to assure the minimum spontaneity, which is Slothrop's first conspiracy theory, has been discussed above in terms of Martin Parker's theory. The following words of Parker's explain Slothrop's second conspiracy theory well:

A conspiracy theory typically claims that there is a hidden agenda and a hidden hand behind current events. In effect conspiracy theories have tended to restore a sense of agency, causality and responsibility to what would otherwise seem the inexplicable play of forces over which we have no control. Even as they draw attention to the people's lack of power (since the conspiracy controls everything), they offer a compensatory fantasy that at least things are still controllable by an all-powerful individual or group. (21)

Losing the belief in his spontaneity as the cause of his actions, he comes to attribute all his actions to the conspiracy. Though suffering from agency panic once, he does not seem to

grieve over his loss of spontaneity. He puts himself into the hands of conspiracy symbolized by Jamf or Them. Since his own spontaneity is not certain enough to play the role of origin of his own actions, the conspiracy is expected to take over the role. In Slothrop's world where spontaneity is uncertain, only the conspiracy can assure causality including himself; only the conspiracy can secure cause-and-effect relationships and prevent chaos. Joseph W. Slade states that: "Conditioned to trust in cause and effect, control, and linearity and frightened of the chaos that randomness and charisma imply, the characters in the novel strive for certainty, however false their perception of it might be. . . . Paranoia is preferable to uncertainty" (31). The doubt of spontaneity leads Slothrop to expect the conspiracy to have controlled him. However, it is also true that because of his suspicion of conspiracy, he doubts spontaneity.

3. Act of Reading

I have dared to figure out the relation between Slothrop and the conspiracy. However, it does not help the reader to understand the meaning of the entire novel, as seen earlier in this article. And what the conspiracy is like remains quite ambiguous. What I have done so far is just to pick up some clues and weave them into the story of Slothrop's search for the conspiracy. As discussed above, Slothrop tries to establish connections between events so that the events converge into a conspiracy. The image of conspiracy helps both the reader and Slothrop to organize or integrate fragmented things. The reader's attempt to figure out the conspiracy or discuss Slothrop's conspiracy paranoia as the main theme ends up frustrated. Referring to some critics represented by David Leverenz, I have already said that it makes sense to think what prevents the reader from knowing Tyrone Slothrop's footmark fully is Pynchon's intention. Concerning the relation between Pynchon's intention and the reader's attempt, Leverenz makes a remarkable comment:

Like Hawthorne, he is most appalled by the sin of righteousness and the specter of tyrannical fathers betraying and raping the innocence of their children. . . . But unlike Hawthorne, he takes sin and guilt away from humans and attributes it to systems. *Gravity's Rainbow* has no center; it moves away from human realities to a series of mixed signals and pulled punches. We put down the book laden with sympathy for *everybody*, and hostility only for human organization of any kind. Blicero isn't guilty, nor Pointsman, though Hawthorne would say they are. Only the reader is, for trying to make sense of it all. (242)

Talking about father's cruel treatment of children represented by Slothrop's father's selling little Tyrone to Laszlo Jamf, Leverenz points out that those fathers' characteristics are not described in detail. Therefore, their cruelty cannot be discussed deeply enough to become the main topic. Then, Leverenz states that even those inhumane actions are attributed not to the father's spontaneity but to the system. To sum up, Leverenz attributes the attenuation of their impact not to the poorness of writing but to the statement of the novel: people are nothing better than pawns of a system. In other words, he

considers that the lack of impression of each character, or of his actions, is Pynchon's statement and the meaning of this novel. In the long run, Leverenz states that Pynchon intentionally avoids describing characters as animated individuals, or establishing a main character as the firm center of the novel, in order to show that each individual is reduced to a mere part of a huge system.

Westervelt also considers the characteristic of *Gravity's Rainbow*, which seems to be a defect in terms of the traditional reading, as Pynchon's insistence. Westervelt emphasizes that the reader's task is to connect limited information filling up blanks with his own ideas in order to make coherent meaning out of *Gravity's Rainbow*. Then, she insists that the novel reveals the mechanism of reading: "creating a consistent pattern by selecting elements from the data of the text" (69). Though that mechanism is involved in all readings, to read this novel is especially strong in that characteristic because of the novel's fragmented encyclopedic detail which, in Westervelt's words, "may nevertheless omit crucial facts or include conflicting information, mediated by the various voices of a teasing narrator, encourages the reader to systemize, if he is to make any sense of the work, and at the same time frustrates his attempt to do so" (69-70). To sum up, to make any rationally coherent meaning of the entire novel, the reader must take on the editorship more than when reading usual novels, and the editorship inevitably reflects the reader's own pre-decided idea of the novel.

As mentioned above, Westervelt says that Slothrop's disappearance before the end frustrates "the reader's desire to interpret his character according to traditional norms" (72). Such frustration is caused by the gap between what the novel is and what the reader expects the novel to be. To put it concretely, the reader's idea of what novels should be opposes *Gravity's Rainbow's* incompleteness. For convenience's sake, I have said "incompleteness." However, what makes the novel incomplete might be the reader's one-sided expectation. In other words, Slothrop's disappearance might be a defect only in terms of a traditional reading. Westervelt says:

If initially the reader is angry with Pynchon's apparent failure to "finish" the work by explaining what happens to Slothrop, for example, ultimately he may understand that using order and unity as references in the experience of reading *Gravity's Rainbow* directly opposes the process of balancing on the interface that Pynchon wants the reader to enact. (72)

The "traditional reading" from whose perspective the novel seems incomplete is nothing more than one of reading modes, which is against Pynchon's. Westervelt says that the reader might notice his own mode's being not objectively true while reading this novel. After all, the alleged incompleteness of this novel derives from the reader's belief that the traditional reading mode is the only right one.

As I mention above, whatever we are reading, we must take on the editorship: selecting and connecting information, or filling blanks with our own idea, in order to make any sense of the writing to a greater or lesser degree. And we end up projecting our idea on

the writing actively while reading. *Gravity's Rainbow* requires the reader, who has internalized the traditional reading mode, to carry out that editorship exceedingly in order to make coherent and integrated sense of it. Concerning that, Westervelt says:

Up to a certain point, both frustration and surprise increase the reader's participation in creating the text. They compel him to confront the information again in an effort to find any missing clues or alternate interpretations. In *Gravity's Rainbow* Pynchon increases the demands he makes on his reader in *V.* or in *The Crying of Lot 49*. *Gravity's Rainbow* is more complex and has more indeterminacies which encourage the reader's participation. (72)

To sum up, the filling blanks with own idea in order to make coherent sense of the novel is equal to filling the gap between what the novel is and what the reader wants it to be, or what the reader thinks it should be. That is the reader's participation in creating the text. Roland Barthes makes a remarkable comment on the characteristic of reading:

We know that today post-serial music has radically altered the role of the 'interpreter', who is called on to be in some sort the co-author of the score, completing it rather than giving it 'expression'. The Text is very much a score of this new kind: it asks of the reader a practical collaboration. (163)

Barthes clearly defines the reader as the co-creator of the text. Reading or interpreting is not to find the meaning of the text but to make its meaning by providing the symbols with *reasonable* meaning. Therefore, consciously or not, the reader creates the text while reading. Barthes says that reading contemporary texts is reduced to a mere consumption since they are unreadable. They are unreadable for many readers since they are quite different from the traditional idea of literature. Since the reader cannot make those texts reasonable and integrated in their terms, he cannot become the co-creator. As a result, he ends up merely consuming what is written passively. If he tries to become the co-creator, his practical collaboration (to fill the gap between the text and what he wants to be) will be given considerable weight. And *Gravity's Rainbow* is the typical example of such a text.

4. Inconsistent Narration

Agreeing with the idea that many attempts to integrate this novel and to make it into a coherent story tend to consider its part as the whole, Mark R. Siegel says, "The weakness of the 'standard' critical readings is that they leave too much of what happens unexplained" (49). It is almost impossible to make multiple plots of the novel converge into an integrated sense, or to identify any particular figure through which the entire novel can be rationalized. What makes *Gravity's Rainbow* more disintegrated is its narration. In fact, the narration clearly reflects the disintegration or incoherence of this novel. In this novel, the narrator sometimes uses "we," "us," or "our" as if he is identifying himself with the characters or the reader: "We have lost them" (92), "Yes, and now what if we—all right, say we *are* supposed to be Kabbalists out here" (520), "Our judgment lapsed, fatally: we paid more attention . . ." (589), "They will use us. We will help legitimize Them"

(713). The narrator also sometimes uses “you” as if he were directly speaking to the characters or the reader: “*Praise be to God!*—for you to take back to your war-address” (136), “Your savior, you see” (174), “You will want cause and effect” (663), “What it damps out to is *we will never know each other*” (663), “Russian loudspeakers across the Elbe have called to you” (724). The omniscient narrator’s usage of these personal pronouns seems to be a defect in terms of a traditional reading, since that makes him seem to be a character rather than an omniscient narrator. If the reader considers the narrator as a character, it seems that this novel will have a kind of coherence; since the narrator is a character, it makes sense that he speaks to the other characters face to face. In that reading, the description of the characters’ thoughts is considered as the character-narrator’s imagination. However, since the narrator never makes his appearance in the novel, considering him as a character cannot be nothing more than the reader’s imagination. There seems to be another possible way of explaining the inconsistency in narration rationally. It is to think that the passages, which the narrator speaks using first or second personal pronouns, belong not to the narrator but to the characters in reality. However, neither is the reading supported by any proof in the text. Therefore, the narration remains inconsistent; supposing to be omniscient, the narrator sometimes seems to be a character.

In this novel, the reader sometimes becomes unable to clarify where some passages come from, whether they are a character’s thoughts or the omniscient narrator’s. The inability to tell the omniscient narrator’s words from the characters’ keeps the meaning of the novel ambiguous and elastic, since the reader needs to decide to whom those passages belong. It is implied that Roger Mexico and Pointsman might be nothing more than two parts of the same large system which its insiders cannot be aware of, though Mexico seems to be the opposite of Pointsman:

Roger stares back at [Pointsman]. The Antimexico. “Ideas of the opposite” themselves, but on what cortex, what winter hemisphere? What ruinous mosaic, facing outward into the Waste . . . outward from the sheltering city . . . readable only to those who journey outside . . . eyes in the distance. (89)

It is not made clear whether this suspicion of their being controlled is Mexico’s thought or the omniscient narrator’s words. That is to say the reader reads his idea into the novel; each reader creates his own story out of it. Concerning the suspicion of Pointsman and Mexico’s being parts of an ungraspable conspiracy, the meaning differs according to whether it is Mexico’s monologue or the omniscient narrator’s explanation. The ambiguity gives the reader various impressions: that Mexico turns out to suffer from conspiracy paranoia the same as Pointsman; that Pointsman and Mexico have been really parts of the conspiracy without notice; that the omniscient narrator gives up his omniscience even in his creation, and so on. To find meaning, the reader must read his idea into the text and support it with his own reason. Neither is the following statement’s origin made clear in the text:

It means this War was never political at all, the politics was all theatre, all just to keep the people distracted . . . secretly, it was being dictated instead by the needs of technology . . . by a conspiracy between human beings and techniques, by something that needed the energy-burst of war. (521)

If the omniscient narrator is speaking this passage, the existence of the conspiracy controlling the world is verified. However, it might be one of the character's thought. It is not made clear whether the conspiracy controlling the world really exists or not; the conclusion that the world is controlled by a conspiracy can be considered both as the omniscient narrator's and as a character's. It depends on the reader's attitude whether the conspiracy really exists or not.

The ambiguity of the narration frustrates the attempts to explain the inconsistency away rationally. What is inconsistency then? What does rational mean? We must say those attempts aim to explain the inconsistency away rationally in the traditional terms. According to our reading mode, it seems inconsistent that the omniscient narrator speaks to the characters in first person. However, according to other reading modes, that might not be inconsistent. After all, those attempts to rationalize the novel are to try to adapt it to our reading mode, the traditional reading mode. I have discussed that the traditional reading of *Gravity's Rainbow* requires the reader to take on the editorship: selecting and connecting information, or filling blanks with his own idea. Though all activities of reading are accompanied by the editorship to a greater or lesser degree, to read this novel requires it much more than to read most of other novels; there is a big gap between this novel and what the novel is in terms of the traditional reading.

5. Conclusion

The conspiracy functions to have the reader engage in the editorship discussed above; in order to explain the references to the conspiracy, the reader needs to read his idea into the novel and verify it with his reasons. Seducing the reader to figure out the conspiracy with Slothrop's search for it as clue, the novel frustrates the reader's attempt and makes him aware that reading is not to find meaning but to read meaning into the text. Since there is not enough evidence to clarify where the references to the conspiracy come from at all, the reader must be aware that his explanation is his invention, and that the meaning of the novel is his creation. The conspiracy plays the role of ground bait which lets the reader face himself at last, the same as Slothrop is inspired to look into the conspiracy and ends up facing his real self.

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