

Paolo Simonetti and Umberto Rossi (eds). *Dream Tonight of Peacock Tails: Essays on the Fiftieth Anniversary of Thomas Pynchon's V*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015. 212pp

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Dream Tonight of Peacock Tails gathers together eight new articles on Pynchon's first novel, evenly distributed in two sections ("Re-Visions" and "V-locations"), along with an introduction written by Paolo Simonetti and a bibliography compiled by Mario Faraone. The articles have been collected from conferences that coincided with the occasion of *V*'s fiftieth anniversary in 2013, but do not pretend to address the issue of what it means for this novel to warrant having a book dedicated to it fifty years after its publication or the interpretive history of the novel during the fifty years between 1963 and 2013. The original conference panels—one at International Pynchon Week, on *V*'s locations, and one at the 22nd AISNA Conference, on rereading *V*. at fifty—supplied the themes, and some of the papers, for the book's two sections, the intent being to have a section addressing "a diachronic, historical axis" and a section addressing "a synchronic, spatial plane" (6), a division that fittingly alludes to *V*'s own two-plotline structure.

The focus of the historical section, "Re-Visions," doesn't always lend itself to the highlighting of the novel's history. Only one of the articles, Stipe Grgas's "Re-reading *V*. in the Emergency of the Crisis," raises the issue of our interpretive approach becoming revised through time, though Tore Rye Andersen's "Cherchez La Femme" does briefly review how the changes to the paratexts in different editions affect how readers' will be inclined to read the text. The other two articles in the section, Luc Herman and John M. Krafft's "Monkey Business" and Mario Faraone's "Travelling and Spying into Baedeker's Land," are more closely interested in revision: Herman and Krafft explore Pynchon's own revision of the novel, while Faraone discusses revisions that Pynchon works upon the traditions within which he writes, as well as the revisions wrought upon the novel-world by the perspectives of its characters.

One could call what each article does a part of the history of the book's creation, but one wouldn't apply the adjective *diachronic* to either one if the introduction had not directed readers to do so. Indeed, Faraone's article could be made to fit in with those in the next section: it focuses on the Egyptian episode, after all. The synchronic section, "V-Locations," is more successful at complying with the introduction's stated intentions. Its articles look at Pynchon's construction of place, as well as the relevant places' significance, particularly Florence (Umberto Rossi's "Florence, or Pynchon's Italian Job"); Paris (Clément Lévy's "'Paris for Love?')"); the underworld, the Classical version of which Pynchon draws upon (Jennifer Backman's "Katabasis, Orpheus, and Alligators"); and Malta (Paolo Simonetti's "'He Could Go to Malta and Possibly End It'").

The book then is not entirely successful by its own stated goals, chiefly because the required emphasis on *revision* in the articles in the first section does not necessarily lend itself to diachronic approaches to their subject. The articles, nonetheless, perceptively engage the elements of *V.* on which they focus, and just as importantly to my mind, most, if not all, of them open up areas beyond their immediate margins for future scholars to explore, and empower readers to find interpretive paths not explicitly taken, or not taken far enough, within the pages of the book. Furthermore, the articles fit together in ways not consciously intended, for commentary in one article sometimes gains significance in relation to commentary in another one, adding relevance to their being placed in a collection.

Re-Visions

Andersen's "Cherchez La Femme" might strike readers as a counter example to the ability of the articles to open new investigative directions, for Andersen *seems* to exhaust the possibilities. The essay's summary of the known facts regarding the choosing of a title and the back story of the paratexts of the first edition of the novel lead seamlessly into not just a reading of the original dust jacket and book design, as well as the images on the covers of the editions that followed, but also an analysis of how other paratextual features guide the audience's reception of the text. It's not that nothing else can be done with the material or that Andersen attempts to address

every paratext associated with *V*; it's that he covers the material he writes about so well that he creates the impression that there isn't much else to say. His analysis of the correlation between the visual elements of the dust jacket and the ambiguity of the figure *V*. in the text is particularly strong. It clearly demonstrates the ways that the materiality of the book influences interpretation, or "interferes with its meaning" (33), a point more pointedly stressed, especially with regard to the notion of interference, in Andersen's assessment of how the characterization of *V*. as a woman in the final paragraph of the book description on the inner flap of the Lippincott dust jacket and the placement of a woman on the cover of the Bantam paperback, as well as on most of the U.S. paperback editions that have followed, affect how readers will interpret the text. Identifying *V*. as a woman, Andersen argues, serves to undermine the novel's textual ambiguity, a problem Anderson's argument corrects, thereby refining how readers could be tempted to engage *V*.

Andersen does skip the Modern Library edition of the novel (1966), the dust jacket for which Pynchon saw in proof and approved, though not in effusive terms. He simply told James H. Silberman, the executive editor of Random House, "Got the Modern Library dust jacket. Pretty sharp, that Art Nouveau typeface—it fits. Colors, even in rough, look good."⁸ Not mentioning the Modern Library edition does not detract from the power of Andersen's discussion of the effects of *V*'s paratextual features. The absence merely raises the possibility of supplementing Andersen's insights. We might ask, for instance, why does Pynchon appear to have been unhappy with the Lippincott dust jacket as Faith Sale described it to him,⁹ a description that was undoubtedly less thorough than Andersen's, and happy with the Modern Library

⁸ Thomas Pynchon, Letter to James H. Silberman, 21 June 1966.

⁹ Pynchon does not seem to have seen a proof of the dust jacket. His comment to Faith Sale, "I was afraid something like that would happen" (qtd. in Andersen 34), appears to reference her description of the dust jacket, not a copy of it. If Pynchon were commenting on an image, the referent of "something like that" would be unclear, as it is to those of us who read the October 1, 1962, letter to Faith at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center. Pynchon's dissatisfaction then seems to have been based on what Sale wrote in a letter that is not extant or, if it has been kept by Pynchon, not accessible. Indeed, Pynchon may have come to admire the dust jacket after seeing it, if not immediately at least in the years that followed, for he allowed an image of it to be used for the novel's e-edition, which appeared after he had acquired the clout to demand that a different image be used.

one, which presents “just a two-dimensional sign” (Andersen 34) rather than the monumental three-dimensional V. of the original dust jacket? May it have been the very monumentality of the “V.” image, which evokes a Baedeker landscape of “inanimate monuments” (V. 408), one that could be rendered “two-dimensional, as is the Street” (409) by the text, and thus evokes an inanimateness to V. that is more complete than Pynchon seems to have decided to allow?

This last possibility may be suggested by “Monkey Business,” in which Herman and Krafft once again join up to guide us into the untitled V.-typescript at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center in Austin, TX. “Millennium,” the typescript’s deleted tenth chapter, proves a valuable place to gain insight into Pynchon’s thinking about V., despite, or because of, his unwillingness to keep it. Particularly illuminating is Herman and Krafft’s discussion of how including the chapter would have altered our experience of the eponymous figure. Pynchon told Smith that he had intended to hint in “Millennium” that V. had progressed into a more fully inanimate state by 1955, having become “a toy ape” (Pynchon to Smith, qtd. Herman and Krafft 15), a detail that would have provided, beyond Stencil’s construction, a confirmation of part of “the history of this female/inanimate alleged agent” (15). Removing the chapter thus leaves “Stencil’s idiosyncratic historiographic construction ... more richly ambiguous” (16) and perhaps leaves V. less fit to be represented as a monument, a concrete “tangible thing in the world” (34) as Andersen describes the V.-image on the Lippincott dust jacket.

Snippets of the “Millennium” chapter—including “the entire bathroom scene on typescript pages 170–171, in which Fina asks Profane to deflower her” (14)—do appear in the novel, and the contrast between those snippets and text that was removed provides ample room for Herman and Krafft to discuss the workings of Pynchon’s editorial mind. The discussion is strongest when its insights are grounded in the extant correspondence between Pynchon and Corlies Smith, that is, the discussion of the significance of leaving out the “toy ape.” Those parts that are more conjectural often seem just as convincing, for example, the idea that “the switch between typescript chapters 9 and 10 from first- to third-person narration for Profane’s story inspired Pynchon to apply that person switch to Stencil’s stories” (16). Yet the need to conjecture, however well-grounded in a knowledge of Pynchon’s work, provides an

opening for other critics, as do other elements of the article. To take just one example to illustrate how matters that Hermann and Krafft discuss open paths of inquiry, we can look at the Millennium chapter's apparent allusions to Shakespeare, specifically *Richard II* and *I Henry IV*. "In *Richard II*, Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland, helps the king's cousin, Henry Bolingbroke, usurp the throne to become Henry IV. But in *I Henry IV*, Northumberland is part of a group of ultimately unsuccessful rebels against King Henry" (19–20). Should our understanding of Pynchon's use of those names consider the common reading of Bolingbroke's rise as England's emergence from the Medieval era into the early modern "Renaissance" era? And does Pynchon's use of those Shakespearean names in the typescript, if not the novel, provide context for reading their presence in Pynchon's published work, particularly "Low-Lands" and "The Secret Integration"?

Mario Faraone, whose contribution, it must be said, could have used more heavy-handed editing and had its citations more carefully checked, aims to demonstrate how Pynchon reworks nineteenth-century travel writings (particularly the Baedeker Guides), spy fiction, and detective novels. Faraone is at his strongest when he is discussing *V*'s use of the travel literature, illustrating not just how Pynchon uses his main source, the Baedeker, but also how Pynchon's text fits in, perhaps incidentally, with nineteenth-century fictions—a story by Anthony Trollope in particular—that were influenced by the genre to which the Baedeker Guides belong. Faraone is at his weakest when he turns to detective novels, mentioning their importance without any sustained discussion of the genre and then quickly turning to his main interest, the problem Stencil, as well as *V*'s reader-detectives, has fulfilling the function of the spy/detective. "Stencil's idea of fully connecting, precisely tracing and unequivocally interpreting several international crises and cloak-and-dagger activities is doomed to fail" (67) because all the information he gathers about *V* is Stencilized. That insight won't strike critics of *V* as especially novel, even if it hasn't been articulated in those exact terms, but the article suggests something much more interesting, something that may have been brought more clearly to the surface if Faraone had attempted to tie the various strands of his argument together more carefully in, say, a concluding section. The issue, in any case, ought to be taken up and explored more rigorously.

The relationship between tourists' experience of a country they are visiting, Egypt in the context of Faraone's article, and the country they see is analogous to the relationship between the material Stencil gathers and his understanding of that material. In other words, just as the information Stencil retrieves is Stencilized, the Egypt that tourists see is Baedekered. In fact, even the perception of the local inhabitants, or at least those drawn into the Baedeker world because of their being obliged to accommodate travelers, has been colored by the codes established by the genre of travel writing that tourists had come to rely on. Take P. Aïeul's "shifting hypotheses about the identities of the travelers and the motives behind their conduct" (56). Although these hypotheses all turn out to be wrong, they are developed, at least at first, from the expectations the Baedeker has created and then perhaps, though Faraone doesn't make the connection, from the expectations of the spy-novel genre: Aïeul, after all, wonders if he might be looking at participants of a plot involving anarchists and assassinations. Aïeul might be able to accommodate the latter possibilities, perhaps because his place within the Baedeker world is at a slight remove, but those more firmly integrated into it don't seem to have the same liberty. Maxwell Rowley-Bugge, whose survival depends on his being both an observed element of Baedeker land and an observer of it, is threatened when confronted with possibilities outside his expectations. Goodfellow and Bongo-Shaftsbury's simulation therefore "frightened him" (V. 74 *quod*. in Faraone 59), as if its existence threatened his very existence, and he flees the intrusion. The Great Game, that is, the game of espionage "involving European countries" (60), potentially undermines the game Rowley-Bugge plays and thus his identity.

Faraone, despite his focus, is interested in more than V's Egyptian episode. Indeed, he asks us to consider whether the clash or convergence of Baedeker codes and spy/detective codes—or their analogues in the novel's different settings—can tell us something about the novel as a whole, maybe even in relation to the risk posed by V's intrusion into its world. The danger of such an intrusion is suggestively made in the "Florence, April, 1899" journal entry in which the elder Stencil writes, "There is more behind and inside V. than any of us had suspected. Not who, but what: what is she. God grant that I may never be called upon to write the answer, either here

or in any official report" (*V.* 53). Speaking of this journal entry, Grgas notes in the article that follows Faraone's, "First, the *V.* entity is depersonalized, it is something that transcends human embodiment. And, second, it is something that frightens, that the human stands in awe of" (82–83). To which we might add, it is something that Stencil hopes to avoid confronting much as Rowley-Bugge flees to avoid more fully confronting the intrusion of the other into his world. Is the intrusion of *V.* in the novel world analogous to that of spies into Baedeker land? Grgas would seem to suggest that the answer is yes, even though the only apparent thing that his article shares with Faraone's is a concern for how perception is shaped. Grgas's interest is in the critics' perception, not so much that of the characters: he asks us to turn our attention to the effects that our place in history have on our perception of the novel, arguing that positioning readings of *V.* within the context of our most recent economic crisis, as well as within that of Pynchon's entire oeuvre, particularly his three most recent novels, compels critics to take a more careful look at *V.*'s "economic theme" (81), which had been "submerged in [earlier] readings privileging a different focus" (78).

To demonstrate that such is the case, Grgas first illustrates how several economic markers—"evocations of the Great Depression" (81), money and its relation to social differentiation, the rise of consumerism, and an emerging globalization—lie behind the circumstances in which the novel's characters, particularly those among the Whole Sick Crew, find themselves entangled. From there, he goes on to argue that "Pynchon maps the object [*V.*] of the search onto" the economic nexus, noting that *V.*'s predilection to incorporate the inanimate is analogous "to the compulsion of capitalism to incorporate, to ever expand, to turn everything into a commodity" (83). The use to which Pynchon puts the animate-inanimate dichotomy, as Grgas argues, is not the only element of *V.* to point toward its "economic theme." The novel's suggestion that *V.*'s nature is Gothic and Hugh Godolphin's negative identification of "her" as a "Nothing" also point to that theme, for these associations connect *V.* to Marx's notion of capital, which is "constantly sucking in living labour as its soul, vampire-like" (Marx *quod.* Grgas 84). Regardless of how far readers of *V.* will want to follow Grgas, who himself registers the concern that readers will think he is going too far,

“Re-reading *V.*” presents a compelling argument, deserving our attention because of what it adds to our understanding of the political engagements of Pynchon’s work at the start of his career.

V-Locations

The second section of *Dream Tonight of Peacock Tails* turns to notions of place, opening with Rossi’s consideration of Pynchon’s Florence, which is rendered geographically accurate, Rossi tells us, but typographically inaccurate, at least occasionally: the layout of the Florence, as it is described, is correct, but the Italian used to establish its reality is not always as precise. Some of the errors are apparently a result of the Italian’s deriving from Italian-American usage (a possibility reinforced by the Italian in *Bleeding Edge*) and opera libretti rather than the Italian spoken in Florence in 1899 or the present: “When Mantissa cries ‘Andiam’ (V. 187) he sounds more like a character out of a Donizetti or Puccini opera than a real Italian” (96).

Other mistakes could have had their origin in Pynchon’s sources, but some are almost certainly meaningful. Mantissa, for example drinks “Broglia wine,” which, Rossi observes, is Pynchon’s transformation of Brolio wine: *Broglia* is “an Italian noun meaning ‘fraud, intrigue, manoeuvre, rigging;’ a term perfectly fitting the Florentine episode” (98). Pynchon could also have misspelled the bridge “Ponte San Trìnita” (stress on first syllable) as “Ponte San Trinità,” Rossi conjectures, to draw our attention to it (101), although that possibility, which assumes Pynchon trusted the audience enough to recognize the error, isn’t the only one. We could conjecture, beyond Rossi, that Pynchon is making some sort of architectural pun and alluding to the ruins of the abbey of San Trinità, which is mentioned in a Baedeker (225),¹⁰ for the bridge itself was in ruins between 1944 and 1958 (see Rossi 101). That’s not to say that all the errors are intentional, and one might get a better sense of those Pynchon insisted on keeping if one were to compare *V.*’s Italian with the Italian in the translation put out in 1965 by “Bompiani Editore of Milano,” the publisher to which Candida Donadio, Pynchon’s agent, sold the Italian translation rights sometime before June

¹⁰ Karl Baedeker, *Italy: Third Part: Southern Italy and Sicily, with Excursions to the Lipari Islands, Malta, Sardinia, Tunis, And Corfu*, Leipsic: Karl Baedeker, 1887.

1963: “Which is the only thing about the whole business I’m really happy with,” Pynchon told the Sales.¹¹ The value of such a comparison, of course, would depend on whether or not Pynchon worked with the translator. Given his enthusiasm for the idea of an Italian translation, he may well have wanted to. (Has anyone thought to inquire if there are any Pynchon letters—maybe even in Italian!—in the files of Bompiani, which is now owned by Giunti Editore?)

While his discussion of Pynchon’s Italian is informative, Rossi’s illustration of Florence’s significance to *V.* goes beyond the hints about Pynchon’s construction of the city that can be gleaned from mistakes, intentional or unintentional. Indeed, the article’s more interesting contribution to our understanding of *V.* lies in the connections Rossi makes between the history of specific locations in Florence, as well as of the city itself, and the events in the Florence chapter. Evan Godolphin’s presence on Via dei Panzani, a street that has a connection to Vincenzo Peruggia’s 1911 theft of the Mona Lisa, or Gioconda, for instance, serves as a starting point for Rossi’s reading of the fictional theft of the *Birth of Venus* in relation to the historical theft of Gioconda, just as Florence, a synecdoche of Italy, serves as a means of demonstrating the significance of Italian history—particularly with reference to Machiavelli’s place in that history—to *V.* and Pynchon’s thinking elsewhere. Rossi connects the historical figures Giuseppe Mazzini and Giuseppe Garibaldi, whom he describes as “*padri della patria* [fathers of the homeland]” (Rossi’s translation 109), to the characters Rafael Mantissa, whom Thomas Moore noted represents, in Machiavellian terms, the politics of the fox (265), and, “in some counter-factual and counter-historical way” (109), the Gaucho, “a representative of the politics of the lion” (108), the other term in the Machiavellian dichotomy. Rossi also calls attention to Pynchon’s playing with the Machiavellian categories of *virtù* and *fortuna*, which “repeatedly appear in *V.*” (107), and argues they influenced his construction of the paranoia/anti-paranoia opposition in *Gravity’s Rainbow*.

Lévy’s “Paris for Love?” provides a more theoretical grounding for the type of criticism Rossi engages in, situating it within geocritical approaches to texts, a form

¹¹ Thomas Pynchon. Letter to Faith and Kirkpatrick Sale, 2 June 1963.

of criticism that “allows in-depth exploration of fictional spaces through the actual spaces to which they refer. It is all the more interesting as novels often transform the configuration of real places to adapt them to the narrator’s perspective and the story’s conditions and needs” (119). Lévy, of course, is interested in Pynchon’s Paris, and the first thing he notes about it is that it is not the Paris of Pynchon’s American literary precursors. Pynchon avoids revisiting the “places already claimed by Miller, Hemingway, or Fitzgerald” (121), as well as, perhaps, Gertrude Stein. The Paris of *V.* then is not all that is foreign to U.S. readers: the “literary geography of Paris” (Wells, *quod*. in Lévy 119) is foreign to the Paris that readers had grown accustomed to reading about, that is, the “‘Americanized’ Paris” (Wells, *quod*. in Lévy 119) fashioned in celebrated novels from the first half of the twentieth century. In fact, *V.*’s Paris is in a sense foreign to *V.*, for, unlike Cairo or Florence, it is not primarily presented as a Baedeker city, except when Mélanie arrives in it. Mélanie’s arrival in Paris, a scene fashioned with the aid of the Baedeker as Lévy demonstrates, or, to be more precise, her taxi ride away from the train station that she enters the city through could be characterized as the novel’s exit from the familiar tourist world that *V.*’s plots previously meandered through. Lévy thus gets the impression that the chapter is the last one in which “the name Karl Baedeker is cited” (123), despite “Baedeker” being used as an adjective in the Epilogue (475). That Lévy implies that “*V. in Love*” charts a departure from Baedeker land renews the significance of the chapter for future readers, assuming the implication holds up to more careful analyses than I am offering here.

Backman and Simonetti’s articles are wider ranging, for they focus not on the places that launch their inquiries but on the significance of the places they discuss to the novel as a whole. Backman’s discussion of the underworld comes by way of her analysis of the importance of the Orpheus myth, which, she argues, “informs the experience of several main characters” by “evoking Orpheus through four distinct qualities—skill as a musician, engagement in a fruitless quest, descent into the underworld, and ultimate fragmentation” (134). No character embodies all these qualities, suggesting that the novel is itself the fragmented Orpheus figure, “that Pynchon himself acts as a maenad” (147), adding significance to the novel’s title: *V.* in her feminine form, after all, is the character who suffers literal fragmentation.

McClintic Sphere possesses musical skill and has a peripheral connection to “the figurative underworlds of the city” (135) but not to a quest or a descent. Stencil is the character engaged in a fruitless quest, the one for V., the fulfilment of which would likely prove unsatisfying, for “the real quest[, Stencil comes to understand,] is to maintain the sense of purpose that having a ‘goal’ establishes.” Thus it could be argued, recalling Faraone’s comment about the method by which Stencil thwarts the possibility of achieving his goal, that Stencil maintains his animation by means of his Stencilizing.

Benny Profane and Fausto Maijstral are the characters whose experiences are informed by descent. Backman’s examination of the relationship between the Classical underworld and the sewers into which Profane descends as well as the Orphic quality to Profane’s descent is more focused than her discussion of Fausto’s experience of the underworld. Numerous connections are made between Classical views of the underworld and the descriptions of the New York sewers and between the nature of Profane’s experience and Orpheus’s. Backman, of course, is able to imply the Classical nature of Malta’s underworld space by illustrating what it shares with the one Profane enters. Avoiding repetition isn’t the only reason she has for establishing a different approach for her reading of the Maltese underworld, a reading that is built on an appropriation of notions that Gaston Bachelard establishes in *The Poetics of Space* (1958). The symbolism of Maltese space and of Fausto’s experience “is complicated by the destructive effects of war” (141), so the underground, Backman argues, takes on the quality of domestic space, at least in some respects, while the street level becomes a version of Hades, which Fausto, unlike Profane, explores for poetic inspiration. His experience thus partakes of the Orphic tradition, the one in which the Orpheus myth is seen as “an allegory of poetic production” (Sean Desilets qtd. Backman 143) and, thereby, of the production of an animating force.

Simonetti focuses more fully on Malta, his interest being its value as the “location” of the epilogue, of which he proposes an “alternative reading” (154), and its status as the “prime location”—in the real-estate sense of “first in excellence, quality, and value” (156)—of the novel. But “location,” including the prime variety, isn’t simply to be understood in its spatial sense: it also has “technological and cinematic

reverberations" (156), that is, respectively, as "a position in a memory capable of holding information" and as "a natural setting in which a film ... is made" (OED qtd. in Simonetti 156). In setting up his argument in such terms or in his decision to give greater emphasis to the cinematic rather than the technological sense of his location metaphor, Simonetti sells himself short, despite his realization that in *V*, as in *Gravity's Rainbow*, cinema plays an "important role" (157) and his effective concluding remarks on Pynchon's deconstructing of the "cinematic imagination" (168) in his first novel. It is Malta as a location that "holds information"—although more than just "a word," as the definition that Simonetti cites has it—that comes across most strongly in his recounting in, dare I say, encyclopedia-like detail the cinematic, literary, historical, geographical, mythological etc. import that the island possesses. Suggesting Simonetti should have given greater emphasis to the technological rather than the cinematic reverberations of "location," of course, is easier to say than do, and Simonetti expertly brings much to the surface that "becomes opaque and shows 'nothing at all of what came to lie beneath'" (168) after the waterspout disappears in the novel's epilogue.

The value of *Dream Tonight of Peacock Tails* rests not just on the strength of the articles and the directions toward which they may lead us but also on how they complement each other to generate insight that they would not have produced on their own. Many readers, of course, will pick and choose which articles to read based on their research interests, but Pynchon scholars will be well served if they read the collection as a book rather than treat each article as an isolated work in itself and seek out the connections among the various contributions.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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The Coercive Paratexts of Thomas Pynchon's V.; citation_author=Simonetti, Paolo; citation_author=Rossi, Umberto; citation_publication_date=2015; citation_inbook=Dream Tonight of Peacock Tails: Essays on the Fiftieth Anniversary of Thomas Pynchon's V.; citation_firstpage=31. La Femme. Thomas Pynchon's Playlist. However, though romance - which in the Iberian Peninsula relates to the local tradition of the hispanic ballad - is in the spotlight, epic poetry would be kept in the horizon. We try to show how paratexts of Portuguese and Brazilian narrative poems, while not only [Show full abstract] expressing intentions of genre affiliation, but also constructing the work and its author and negotiating a place for them in the literary field, reflect on this situation. View full-text. Article. The fiftieth anniversary of the publication of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* is an obvious occasion for critical reevaluation. Already we are separated from the great works of that annus mirabilis, 1922, by a distance in time and sensibility as great as that which separated Eliot and Pound and Joyce from their Victorian predecessors. In the late 1940s, when I first encountered *The Waste Land*, I could still read Eliot as if he were my contemporary: evidence both of the extraordinary impact of the "modernist" movement and of *The Waste Land*'s central place in that movement. Few works can cite this. The eight essays collected in the volume provide both scholars and avid readers with new and original insights into a too-often underestimated work that, probably even more than *Gravity's Rainbow*, established Pynchon. *Dream Tonight of Peacock Tails* marks the first in-depth examination of Pynchon's debut novel, which was immediately recognized as a breakthrough masterpiece. The eight essays collected in the volume provide both scholars and avid readers with new and original insights into a too-often underestimated work that, probably even more than *Gravity's Rainbow*, established Pynchon as one of the great American novelists. Biographical note. The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Pynchon. Ed. Inger H. Dalsgaard, Luc Herman and Brian McHale. New York: Cambridge UP, 2012. 9-16. Founding co-editor of Pynchon Notes, and the journal's bibliographer (1979-2009). (With Luc Herman) "Monkey Business: The Chapter 'Millennium' Removed from an Early Version of V." *Dream Tonight of Peacock Tails: Essays on the Fiftieth Anniversary of Thomas Pynchon's V.* Ed. Paolo Simonetti and Umberto Rossi. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2015. 13-30. (With Luc Herman) Pynchon, Thomas. The Encyclopedia of Twentieth-Century Fiction, Vol.