



HAL
open science

”Paris for love”?

Clément Lévy

► **To cite this version:**

Clément Lévy. ”Paris for love”?. Paolo Simonetti, Umberto Rossi, ”Dream Tonight of Peacock Tail”, Essays on the Fiftieth Anniversary of Thomas Pynchon’s V., Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015. hal-01979480

HAL Id: hal-01979480

<https://unilim.hal.science/hal-01979480>

Submitted on 13 Jan 2019

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L’archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d’enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

“Paris for love”?

Clément Lévy

University of Bari “Aldo Moro”

Institut français Italia

The novel’s chapter fourteen, “V. in love”, is the only one in whose title appears the name of the elusive V. It is also the last, before the “Epilogue” (the novel’s seventeenth section), of the historical chapters (chapters 3, 7, 9, 11, and 14), alternating with the main narrative. Like all the historical chapters, it contains elements of a story told to Herbert Stencil, who managed to reconstruct events from the witnesses’ tales. But unlike the other episodes of his research, this one entails a substantial comment on the object of Stencil’s quest, and the possible evolution of V. in 1956, if she—supposing it was a woman—were still alive. Very interestingly, this comment comes along with a reflection on “Baedeker’s world” (V. 78): it makes Paris the place where the narration takes into account the tourist’s point of view for the last time, after Cairo and Florence, and where the discourse about tourism and geographical displacement comes to a conclusion.

A few pages before the beginning of chapter fourteen, Stencil gives Profane his interpretation of the meaning of V.’s stay in Paris in 1913. It is the place where she dedicated herself to love: “Paris for love” (387). However, this love ends in such a tragic way, and is analyzed in such detail by the narrator, that Stencil’s words seem tinted with a strong irony. This can prompt the reader to reconsider the way in which Paris, love, and V. are related to each other in this chapter.

My research is based on a geocritical approach to Thomas Pynchon’s text, which puts the focus on the places named in the fourteenth chapter and how closely they represent the real places. Geocriticism is still a recent methodology for literary studies, but it warrants greater attention.

As Pynchon’s characters travel across whole continents, and as his stories so often give new shapes and meaning to local legends and historical events, his works seem well suited to a geocritical approach. To begin with, the spatial dimension is a theme that his novels address in many ways, not only as a setting for the stories they develop, but as a proper theme. Locations are of course very diverse as early as in his first long publication. *V.* tells the story of Benny Profane and the Whole Sick Crew during the year 1956, but half of the novel, the historical chapters, give unclear testimonies about Lady V., or V., and the various other identities she may have taken in the course of her life. The historical chapters may also be called geographical, because they take us far away from New York. The author gives the reader some help, as chapters two and thirteen include dialogs in which Stencil explains what he knows about V. and where he is looking for her: in Malta (where Stencil’s father died), in Florence (where he was when he wrote a famous line about V. in his journal), in New York (where Dr. Eigenvalue owns “a vital piece of the V.-jigsaw,” 55), or in Egypt and the Middle East (“a young, crude, Mata Hari act in Egypt,” 386). A few other places are mentioned in Stencil’s speeches: Corfu, Rotterdam, Spain, the Middle East and Italy (388), but Paris is noted, as it seems, to build a contrast with Malta: “Paris for love, Malta for war” (387).

Later in Pynchon’s œuvre, geographical mobility becomes one of his Leitmotifs. Slothrop in the Zone, Mason & Dixon from Greenwich to Cape Town, Saint Helena and the Ohio frontier, Kit Traverse on the Silk Roads, in Ostend, Venice and

Hollywood are easy examples of Pynchon's tendency to come to terms with space, and more precisely, with the "chronotope of the road." Mikhail Bakhtine first conceived it as the connections between real and historical time-space coordinates with fictional time-space in the picaresque novel (Bakhtine: 98), but it is present in many recent novels. Though some of Pynchon's novels have California as a single setting¹, nonetheless they can take the reader far away from the Golden State. For example, *The Crying of Lot 49* entails an Elizabethan tragedy about the Thurn und Taxis postal network in Europe in the fifteenth century; *Vineland's* characters also travel away from Northern California, like DL whose earlier years in Japan are recalled, or Zoid Wheeler, who goes to Hawaii at some point. And the real estate issue in the Los Angeles area is linked in *Inherent Vice* to a broader scheme. Doc Sportello goes to Las Vegas to investigate this criminal network, while Mickey Wolfmann tries to find an escape route in the deserts and wastelands of Nevada, in his efforts to create an alternative to land property. These quickly sketched examples and moreover the many other "Fictions of faraway lands" (MD 281) make geographical space a very rewarding research subject for Pynchon scholars.

To be precise, geocriticism is a literary criticism trend that takes into account the recent developments of a more humanistic geography, and that has helped to conceive a new approach toward space in comparative literature. Its starting point was the "spatial turn" in humanities: place became a common terrain of investigation for literature scholars and a new paradigm was founded, as Michel Foucault had conjectured in his groundbreaking essay on heterotopias:

The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. (Foucault: 22)

Furthermore, the sense of place became a research object that geographers like Yi-Fu Tuan and David Harvey linked to literary works during the 1980s, and their works gave way to a new literary geography². Brian McHale then identified a new paradigm for the representation of space in postmodern narrative (1987), and took *Gravity's Rainbow* as an example in his next essay (1992). It thus helped lay the foundations for a methodology of spatial studies in novels where geography is challenged by the author's fantasy. Reconsidering the phenomenological approach to artworks and reception theory, Bertrand Westphal coined the word geocriticism to pave the way to a geocentered methodology that would allow for the study of interactions between real spaces and their representations in literary or cinematographic works. Geocriticism thus gives priority to places, instead of the subjective gaze of the authors with which more classical criticism deals, and has some acute tools to identify the various strategies of authors wishing to play with places' references in the representations that they create. Geocriticism 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.

Using historical descriptions and travel narratives also helps broaden the scope of such studies of literary places, and a typology of modifications of the *réalème* provides a practical way through the mazes of postmodern fictional inventions. These "strategies of interference between the referent and its representation" (Westphal: 105) have been first identified by Brian McHale (1987): *juxtaposition*, *interpolation*, *superimposition*, and *misattribution*. To these four ways of altering the geographical

map to create new confines between usually distant countries, putting real and fictional countries border to border, giving them a familiar aspect by the use of mixed cultural or historical hints, and voluntarily scrambling the system of reference between names and places, Westphal adds “*transnominatio*” and “*anachorism*”, that belong more closely to geographical fantasy, so often used in modern and postmodern literature (Westphal: 107-108). These ways of playing with the referent enable an author to precisely identify the settings of a narrative before denying this localization, and blur the shapes of the referent to allow for the development of a utopian or dystopian narrative.

As *V.*'s fourteenth chapter begins, the 15-year-old girl Mélanie l'Heuremaudit has run away from her school to join a ballet company in Paris led by the Russian choreographer Satin. He is preparing a show called *L'Enlèvement des Vierges Chinoises* (Rape of the Chinese Virgins) in which Mélanie will dance the leading role under the stage name of Mlle La Jarretière. The music is by another Russian called Porcépic. And their producer, who not long ago was a bartender in Pigalle, Paris's red light district, is a Frenchman called Itague. As the young ballerina arrives in Paris, she seems to follow the usual path, as described in Baedeker's handbook. At the Gare du Nord,

she hurried through the station behind an Algerian-looking facteur who carried her one embroidered bag lightly on his shoulder and joked with customs officials being driven slowly to frenzy by a beseeching mob of English tourists (*V.* 393).

The guide was probably the source for the French term “facteur”, already antiquated in the 1940s:

On arrival the traveller hands his small baggage to a porter (*facteur*; 25 c.-1 ½ fr., according to weight and number of packages), follows him to the exit (where an *octroi* official asks the nature of its contents [...]) and calls a cab (*voiture de place*) or taxi-auto (Baedeker: 1).

But the narrator succeeds in making this scene lively, by mentioning possible difficulties at the customs office, and the French colonial empire is also remembered. According to David Seed, Pynchon “summarize[s] the world of tourism as a supranational ‘coordinate system’ which reassures the traveller by reducing every location to its standard pattern” (Seed: 113). Pynchon seems to conform to this touristic Weltanschauung when he chooses to take us on a short detour to the Opéra, before the cab veers off to the North where Mélanie meets Satin in a café next to Boulevard de Clichy. This longer route allows the narrative to follow a path that approaches the Grands boulevards, “the centre of Parisian life”, and goes behind the opera house, “the largest theater in the world” according to Baedeker (Baedeker: 76-7). It seems natural that a young dancer would wish to have a look at this famous ballet academy, as indeed would many tourist's arriving in Paris. But for a writer, to describe a well-known place is never easy.

As Westphal writes in *Geocriticism*, “Today the writer always comes in second place: the writer is always preceded by those who have fixed the referent, who are sometimes themselves writers” (Westphal: 83). In other words, there is nothing new to tell about Paris now, nor was there at the beginning of the 1960s when Pynchon was writing *V.* On the other hand, the narrator deliberately chooses to name places that were infrequently cited by other American writers who were describing Paris

around the time of the First World War. This is probably because Pynchon did not want to revisit places already claimed by Miller, Hemingway, or Fitzgerald, the last two praised in the author's introduction to Richard Fariña's *Been Down So Long It Looks Like Up to Me*: "We showed up once at a party, not a masquerade party, in disguise—he as Hemingway, I as Scott Fitzgerald, each of us aware that the other had been through a phase of enthusiasm for his respective author" (Pynchon 1996: x).

As a matter of fact, a recently published essay on gender and geocriticism deals with the representation of Paris by American expatriates between 1900 and 1940³. This literary investigation of Parisian places, by Amy D. Wells, includes a very useful list of the places named in novels that were published before Pynchon wrote *V*. Wells built a vast database of places and their occurrences in a wide corpus of works and authors: she shows "that the literary geography of Paris is adapted and adopted by American writers and that therefore an 'Americanized' Paris exists" (Wells: 150). In a table in which she compares the five most cited places according to the gender of the writer (Wells: 152), at the top of the list, for male writers, are cafés of the Boulevard du Montparnasse like the Dôme, the Coupole and the famous Closerie des Lilas. Readers of Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* (1927) and *A Moveable Feast* (1964) know that the author spent much time writing there during his stay in Paris (1921-1928).

The four next most visited places in male writers' works are all located on the Left Bank, except the Bois de Boulogne and the Champs Élysées, in the western part of the city. The north of Paris is much less present in the database: most of the locations are limited to Montmartre, the surroundings of the Gare du Nord and the Boulevard Lafayette, as Wells's map demonstrates (Wells: 153). Another writer that Pynchon seems to avoid consciously in chapter fourteen is Gertrude Stein, whose *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* includes many pages about "Picasso and all his friends in Montmartre" (Stein: 58) from 1903 to 1913 and during the First World War. But it is more difficult to comment on the absence of a reference than on its presence, so a hypothesis about why allusions to Stein are lacking is impossible.

In the fictional Paris of *V*'s fourteenth chapter, the Baedeker guide helps to build a background consistent with the historical setting of the story, but it may well be that Pynchon mixed these references with sources posterior to the First World War. And the young author never alludes to the places where Hemingway, a writer he confessed to admiring, lived and wrote⁴. This could be the reason why the Montparnasse cafés are totally absent from the Paris episode. The fictional cabaret where the beginning of the chapter is set, Le Nerf, is near the boulevard de Clichy, "rue Germaine [sic] Pilon" (*V*. 395). The only occurrence of this street-name in the novel has it wrong, feminizing the first name as Germaine instead of Germain. This typo could be one of the remaining "goofs [that] ought to be cleared up before then," as Pynchon writes in a letter to Faith and Kirkpatrick Sale (March 9, 1963)⁵ but it was in fact never corrected in the American nor in the British editions of the novel, even though only the latter (London: Cape, 1963) benefited from the corrections intended by the author, as Albert Rolls made clear in an article about authorized and unauthorized versions of *V*. (Rolls).

Le Nerf sits on a slope leading to "the heights of Montmartre" (*V*. 394): "on the Butte" (414). But other cabarets and cafés like the Moulin de la Galette or the Chat Noir and the Lapin Agile, where cubist artists met, all located in the heart of this district, are not mentioned. The very name of this cabaret, Le Nerf, seems also very uncommon, as does the name of another café, L'Ouganda. However, they could be

allusions to colonial dispute in Africa that is referred to in chapter three (the Fashoda incident), and to Freudian theory, mentioned in this chapter and elaborated in a Parisian hospital where the young doctor from Vienna studied nervous pathology, which was named hysteria at this time, with Docteur Charcot in the 1890s.

Few other places can be precisely located on the map: lady V.'s house near rue de Grenelle, in the 15th arrondissement, on the Left Bank, far away to the west from the Latin quarter; her dress shop, "rue du Quatre-Septembre" (399), near the Opera house; and Satin's house at "Les Batignolles" (401), in the 17th arrondissement (on the Right Bank in a recently built district, from place Clichy to the North). Some of Mélanie l'Heuremaudit's trips across Paris are described, so that a few other landmarks are cited: she takes a surface metro line to Grenelle, passes by the Eiffel Tower, and crosses the Seine river on the Pont de Passy (406). Paris's oldest parts, churches, castles and museums are not mentioned: Paris in *V.* is the growing "Ville-Lumière" (401), the modern city where immigrants, artists, and tourists swarm.

Pynchon quotes from and comments the Baedeker guides he used in the historical chapters. An often-quoted page criticizes the way tourists view the world through Baedeker's guide:

V. at the age of thirty-three (Stencil's calculation) had found love at last in her peregrinations through (let us be honest) a world if not created then at least described to its fullest by Karl Baedeker of Leipzig. This is a curious country, populated only by a breed called "tourists." Its landscape is one of inanimate monuments and buildings; near-inanimate barmen, taxi-drivers, bellhops, guides: there to do any bidding, to various degrees of efficiency, on receipt of the recommended baksheesh, pourboire, mancia, tip. More than this it is two-dimensional, as is the Street, as are the pages and maps of those little red handbooks. (408-9)

Here, during the pause that delays the narration of the opening night of *L'Enlèvement des Vierges Chinoises*, the name of Karl Baedeker is cited for the last time in the novel. The narrator brings together two important themes of the novel: the inanimate and tourism. The link between them is V., who is an explicit protagonist in this chapter (which is not the case in the rest of the novel, where of course she is haunting Stencil's, or Maijstral's, narratives). William Plater dedicated the second chapter of his monograph on Pynchon to "Baedeker Land", and his analysis provides a very persuasive explanation of this system of representation of foreign societies. But at a more general level, his introductory remarks help us understand how

Pynchon deliberately builds his fictional world from the facts and artifacts of his readers' experience. In part, he fulfills the tour guide's responsibility for familiarity, but he also demonstrates the confluence of illusion and reality in form. (Plater 104)

To make the word more familiar is precisely the reason why the Baedeker handbook tells the tourist how to tip, and what foreign words to use. And Pynchon, by using actual place-names in chapter fourteen, also creates an effect of reality, so that the readers believe him. But the familiarity with the local context is also an illusion: it is not "two-dimensional" in *V.* but this world has a deeper strata of hidden references and themes pervasive to the whole novel, because Pynchon's fantasy adds a strange personal perfume to an otherwise realistic description of Paris. Bernhard Siegert, who studied Pynchon's concept of story in *V.*'s third chapter and its first published version, puts it another way:

What guarantees the possibility to tell the *story* is the Baedeker world in which the figures move; it is a scene based on city maps. Pynchon clearly pointed out this source, to which he also

alluded in the short story [*Under the Rose*]. But every obvious hint, so learn the Baedekers of espionage, is meant to hide something else. (Siegert: 42, my translation)

The situation in chapter fourteen is, however, quite different: no spies here, no hints, no leads. Tourism is present in the background, as we saw in the first pages, which tell of Mélanie's arrival in Paris, but the chapter is about revelations, not secrets. Lady V. does not feel like a tourist anymore: she “found herself excommunicated, bounced unceremoniously into the null-time of human love, without having recognized the exact moment as any but when Mélanie entered a side door to Le Nerf on Porcépic's arm and time—for a while—ceased.” (V. 409). Love indeed has temporarily made V. another person, and it explains why the Paris chapter does not conform to the others set in Cairo, Florence, South-West Africa, and Malta.

Near the end of chapter thirteen, Herbert Stencil tells Profane how for him, V. has always been connected to gruesome events, not as a “cause” or an “agent”, but rather as a “symptom” (386). Comparing her presence in Cairo to “a young, crude Mata Hari act [...] while Fashoda tossed sparks in search of a fuse”, in 1892, and in Paris in “1913 when she knew she'd done all she could and so took time out for love” (386), Stencil lets the readers expect that V.'s taste for violence will be tempered or disappear altogether. And this is the reason why this chapter somehow lacks an action-filled plot. Stencil found out from Porcépic what V. had told him about “their affair” (409) and this tale of a fetish and voyeuristic love takes place in the private space of V.'s house, in a street whose name is not given, near Grenelle, south of the Eiffel Tower.

Hanjo Berressem has studied with great care, from a Lacanian perspective, their “secret chamber of mirrors” (Berressem 16). Their love is set away from the cafés and parks because it needs no outside. Being based on a closed circuit of gazes that objectify one's self and the lover, “the tableau freezes into inanimateness” (17). It is no wonder that Pynchon predicts Mélanie and V.'s entry into the Kingdom of Death: “Dead at last, they would be one with the inanimate universe and with each other” (V. 410). But this brings an end to the fixed time-space of V. in love.

This also explains why Paris in this chapter sits very much in the background, presented rather as a sketch than as a detailed picture. The narrator outlines very few places: the Gare du Nord, with her “three massive arcades and seven allegorical statues”, and the rising “dome of the Opéra, and tiny Apollo, with his golden lyre” (397), appear in the first pages of the chapter. Other places or landmarks are named, most remarkably in the comments about Baedeker Land, but they are in fact interchangeable. As an example, the tourists of all nations form “the most absolute communion we know on earth [...], the Tour Eiffel, Pyramids, and Campanile all evoke identical responses from them” (409): this is an undifferentiated world, where all the places of interest have the same meaning and do not seem to bear any relation to any culture or historical moment in particular. In this chapter, the cities evoked earlier—Cairo (for the pyramids of Giza) and Florence (for the Campanile) are merged together with Paris in an indefinite system of reference where the narrator, in a nonchalant way, can also add small details that could distract the reader's attention.

This is the way the carnivalesque presence of known people in chapter fourteen can be understood. Some play an important role, such as the Russian ballet company. Others, like the French writer Gerfaut, are only mentioned in passing, but the name of the young girl, the character of his next novel, “Doucette” (402), and the fact that she suffers strong passions could be an obvious reference to the French writer Georges Bernanos (1888–1948) and Mouchette, an important character in *Sous le soleil de*

Satan (1926)⁶. Such blurred allusions and the carefree treatment of spatial references in this chapter are an indication that Pynchon uses Parisian space as a setting for this chapter without much intention to work on this material. The referential space of London in *Gravity's Rainbow* and *Against the Day* receives more visible modifications, and benefits from more precise descriptions.

The geography of Paris in this chapter is thus slightly influenced by the Baedeker vision of space, while the influence of other is largely suppressed by the young Thomas Pynchon, so that his creation of a personal Parisian space is above all based on the sentimental relation between V. and Mélanie, who do not wander through the city.

V.'s chapter fourteen is also set in Paris in 1913 because it was the scene of a scandal that could suggest the violence of the coming world war. The première of *L'Enlèvement des Vierges Chinoises* bears a famously striking resemblance to the opening night of *Le Sacre du printemps*, on May 29, 1913. Igor Stravinsky composed the music, Vaslav Nijinsky created the ballet and led the dancers, while Sergei Diaghilev, impresario of the Ballets russes, was in charge of the whole production. These artists are the models for Porcépic, Satin and Itague. *Le Sacre* was presented in a newly built theater, le Théâtre des Champs Élysées, on avenue Montaigne, in a part of the town that was not built before the end of the 19th century. Today it is in the 8th arrondissement, between the Seine and the avenue des Champs Élysées, in the most expensive part of the city. In the novel, the producer Itague is characterized by his anti-Semitism: his hatred for captain Dreyfus is mentioned (V. 399) as well as the titles of far-right newspapers that he reads: *La Libre Parole* (399), *La Patrie* (406). It is quite ironical that Pynchon made the producer of *L'Enlèvement des Vierges Chinoises* an anti-Semite whereas les Ballets russes and *Le Sacre du printemps* were possible thanks to a Jewish art-lover, Gabriel Astruc, who owned the Théâtre des Champs Élysées. In the novel, the theater is called Théâtre Vincent Castor, possibly because "castor" is not only the name of the beaver in French, which could allow a coarse pun, but also a near-anagram of "Astruc". However, the theater in chapter fourteen seems to be located on the Montmartre hill, instead of the richer district where the Théâtre des Champs Élysées lies.

The première of *Le Sacre* was largely commented on because its innovative character, both in music and choreography, shocked the audience and provoked a tumultuous reaction. The historian Modris Eksteins recollected testimonies and described in great detail that riotous evening.

Shortly after the wistful bassoon melody of the opening bars, the protests began, first with whistling. When the curtain went up and the dancers appeared, jumping up and down and toeing, against all convention, inward rather than outward, the howling and hissing started. (Eksteins 34)

In the *New York Times*, the angry review that Alfred Capus published in *Le Figaro* on June 2 was translated soon after and echoed this "storm of hissing" ("Parisians Hiss..."). What provoked such a savage reception was of course the aesthetic of this work, but also its theme. In two acts, the ballet represents the pagan celebration of spring and the sanctification of its power through a sacrifice: one of the virgins is chosen and dances to death before the assembly of the elders. The music was also designed to impress: the score needed a huge orchestra, with a large percussion section, and Stravinsky favored very loud sound and high-pitched melodies over

harmony: “With its violence, dissonance, and apparent cacophony, the music was as energetic and primitive as the theme” (Eksteins 84). In the novel, Porcépic is presented as a composer “experimenting with African polyrhythms” (V. 402), common in Cuban music and becoming a new trend in modern jazz in the early sixties⁷. At the end of the opening performance of his ballet, “Porcépic’s music was now almost deafening: all tonal location had been lost, notes screamed out simultaneous and random like fragments of a bomb” (414). The comparison of the score of *L’Enlèvement des Vierges Chinoises* with a shrapnel explosion is a prefiguration of the coming war. Moreover the violent estrangement produced by Porcupine’s [I meant Porcépic!] work is also prepared earlier in the text with a prevision of the Russian revolution, which will occur and provoke an “irresistible and irreversible tide,” according to “the basic rhythms of History” (405). But the most obvious manifestation of the violence in chapter fourteen is the strong motive on which it ends: Mélanie dies impaled on a pole at the climax of the ballet, because she forgets to wear the protective device that would have made her death a simulacrum. Nonetheless, the reader learns in *Against the Day*, more than forty years after V. was published, that Mélanie’s accident was itself staged. In the last part of the novel, one day in 1918, when Dally Rideout is living in Paris, she has a friend, Jarri, whom a group of Americans recognize before her shop:

“Scyuzay mwah, but ain’t you that La Jarretièrè?”

“Oh, yes, before the . . . War? I used to dance under that name.”

“But they say she died—”

“—A-and real horribly, too . . .”

The young woman sniffed. “Grand Guignol. They came to see blood. We used the . . . raspberry syrup. (AD 1066)

Mélanie’s death, and the story of the opening night that Stencil recollected from “police records, and [that was] still told, perhaps, by old people around the Butte” (V. 412) may in fact have been a scheme, if Pynchon’s fictional world, where characters can appear in more than one novel, is consistent. This late evidence that the artists succeeded in setting up the pitiful death of the young ballerina, using popular horror drama props, shows how Pynchon corrected V. so that death did not triumph over the forces of life.

Paris in V. is thus the place where important revelations occur regarding Lady V., but the tragedy of Mélanie’s death makes it a place that is anything but romantic. Their love has for a moment the bitter taste of fetishistic dead ends, until Pynchon discloses another, happier revelation in *Against the Day*. For V., Paris is a place where she tries to give herself to the realm of the inanimate, this theme being also echoed by the presence in the chapter of a great number of automata. Her violence is not aimed at the others, probably because the diplomatic situation between the great powers of the continents will inescapably trigger a war. Thus Pynchon did not choose Paris as a setting for this strange moment in the life of the mysterious character because he would be able to link it to the events that trigger World War I. His reason was probably that he wanted to write a parody of the opening night of *Le Sacre du printemps*. But as we saw, this version of Paris is an original fictionalization of a Montmartre where neither the Sacré Cœur is mentioned, nor the cubist artists, and where the main characters leave aside beaten touristic paths, Baedeker’s guide being apparently left untouched on a bed-stand.

By studying the results of a geocritical approach to the representation of Paris in books written by American expatriated authors, we learned how Pynchon, by contrast, created his own vision of the city. V.'s fourteenth chapter lacks an action-filled plot because it is focused on V. and Mélanie's love, so that the representation of this city makes it much bleaker than Cairo, Florence and Malta. The places named in chapter fourteen do not give a clear understanding of the author's intentions, but show only his desire to escape the already classical Paris depicted by Hemingway in his first novels and perhaps also the cubist Montmartre whose story Gertrude Stein had already told. Coming back to the Ville-Lumière after the First World war in *Against the Day*, Pynchon could finally show a relaxed attitude towards American residents in Paris, and laugh fancifully at their pronunciation of the French language, because, even though he called himself a "slow-learner", he quickly received much praise for his novels and could stand the comparison with the authors he admires.

Works Cited

- Baedeker, Karl. 1913. *Paris and Environs, With Routes from London to Paris*. Leipzig: Karl Baedeker. Print.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail Mikhailovich. 1981. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Transl. by C. Emerson and M. Holquist. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press. Print.
- Berressem, Hanjo. 1986. "V. in Love: From the 'Other Scene' to the 'New Scene'," in *Pynchon Notes* 18-19 (Spring-Fall 1986). 5–28.
- Eksteins, Modris. 1990. *Rites of Spring. The Great War and the Birth of Modern Age* (1989). London: Black Swan. Print.
- Foucault, Michel (Spring 1986). "Of Other Spaces". Trans. by J. Miskowiec. *Diacritics* 16 (1). 22–27. Print. Online on *Foucault, Info*: <<http://foucault.info/documents/heterotopia/foucault.heterotopia.en.html>>. Web.
- Frank, Joseph. 1991. *The Idea of Spatial Form*. Piscataway (N.J.): Rutgers University Press. Print.
- Grant, J. Kerry. 2001. *A Companion to V*. Athens (Ga.): University of Georgia Press. Print.
- McHale, Brian. 1987. *Postmodernist Fiction*. New York: Methuen. Print.
- . 1992. *Constructing Postmodernism*. London: Routledge. Print.
- "Parisians Hiss New Ballet." *New York Times* 8 Jun. 1913: C5. 5 Febr. 2015 <<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/09/17/arts/dance/rite-of-spring-1913.html>>. Web.
- Plater, William M. 1978. *The Grim Phoenix. Reconstructing Thomas Pynchon*. Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press. Print.
- Pynchon, Thomas. 1986. *V*. (1963). New York: Harper & Row (Perennial Fiction Library). Print.
- . 1996. "Introduction" (1983), in Richard Fariña. *Been Down So Long It Looks Like Up to Me* (1966). New York: Penguin. v–xiv. Print.
- . 1997. *Mason & Dixon*. New York: Henry Holt. Print.
- . 2006. *Against the Day*. New York: Penguin Press. Print.
- Rolls, Albert. 2012. "The Two V.s of Thomas Pynchon, or From Lippincott to Jonathan Cape and Beyond." *Orbit: Writing Around Pynchon* 1.1 (2012). <<https://www.pynchon.net/owap/article/view/33x>>. Web.

Seed, David. 2012. "Pynchon's Intertexts," in *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Pynchon*. Ed. I. H. Dalsgaard, L. Herman and B. McHale. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. 112–120. Print.

Siegert, Bernhard. 2003. "Maxwell und Faschoda. Pynchons Enden der Geschichte," in *Thomas Pynchon – Archiv – Verschwörung – Geschichte*. Ed. B. Siegert and M. Krajewski. Weimar: VDG. 15–45. Print.

Stein, Gertrude. 2001. *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933). London: Penguin Books (Modern Classics). Print

Wells, Amy D. 2014. "Geocriticism, Gender, and Genre: Literary Geographies and Female Narrative Strategies," in *Géocritique : État des lieux / Geocriticism: A Survey*. Ed. C. Lévy and B. Westphal. Limoges: Pulim. 146–154. E-book.

Westphal, Bertrand. 2011. *Geocriticism. Real and fictional spaces*. Transl. by R. Tally. Basingstoke (Hampshire): Palgrave Macmillan. Print.

¹ In David Cowart's *Thomas Pynchon and the Dark Passages of History* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 2011), *The Crying of Lot 49*, *Vineland*, and *Inherent Vice* are presented as "the California novels".

² Three articles by Yi-Fu Tuan are considered fundamental: "Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective", "Sign and Metaphor", and "Literature and Geography: Implications for Geographical Research". David Harvey's *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* is also a seminal work that bases parts of its critical elaboration on Henri Lefebvre's Marxist vision of space: *The Production of Space*

⁴ The lines (quoted above) of his Introduction to Fariña's novel acknowledge Pynchon's unequivocal yet juvenile admiration for Hemingway.

⁵ Cited in Rolls 2012.

⁶ *Sous le soleil de Satan* was translated as *The Star of Satan* in Great Britain (1927) and in the USA (1940), and as *Under the Sun of Satan* (1949). Grant sees in Gerfaut a mask for Nabokov (Grant 175), because Doucette reminds us of Lolita, but the way that society in the novel blames Mouchette for having older and married lovers, while Doucette is "strangled within by passions she could not name" (V. 402), and the analogy between their nicknames, make it easier to consider Gerfaut a parody of Bernanos rather than of Nabokov. Pynchon may also have mixed different models to create his Gerfaut whose "two or three chins" (V. 402) do not bring to mind Bernanos or Nabokov.

⁷ Quoting this line of the text, I corrected the typo still present in both American and British editions: "polyrhythms" (V. 402).