

# Voice Gathered with the Preterite Memories: The Echo and Revelation in Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*

Shota Yamabe\*

Colors remain but sounds faint away and we can never be certain that the sounds reborn are the same as the sounds that vanished.

J. J. Rousseau, qtd. in Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight*

## 1. Revelation and Vacuity

It is not entirely inappropriate to consider that Thomas Pynchon's works harbor a dream of the revelation of God, even though those delineate the world of vacuity where subjectivity is completely lost and humans are reduced to emotionless materials, and even though those, at times satirically, imply the impossibility of revelation. When examining the currency of criticisms on his works, we often encounter the articles insisting on Pynchon's obsession with apocalyptic revelation. J. Kerry Grant in his *A Companion to The Crying of Lot 49* maintains the importance of it, "The concept of revelation will play a key part in the novel" (22)<sup>(1)</sup>, and Stephen Cox says that "Pynchon's apocalyptic messages is usually considered as obvious as his symbolism" (91), yet the most decisive trait of Pynchon's revelation is represented in the following statement. Drawing attention to a phrase "Holy-Cernter-Approaching" in *Gravity's Rainbow*, Molly Hite remarks:

The Holy Center is the terminus of the quest, the epiphanic point in both

---

\* Assistant Professor, Hiroshima University of Economics, Hiroshima, Japan

time and space where the questing hero realizes the full meaning of his life, his search, and his world. It is thus the conclusion toward which the narrative tends. In Pynchon's novels no major character reaches this Holy Center. The pattern of the quest is an infinite approach, which brings the seeker closer and closer to a terminal revelation without allowing him to reach it. (121)

As if the Christians awaited the advent of New Jerusalem in The Revelation, the narratives of Pynchon's novels always incline to "a terminal revelation," although, with the impossibility of reaching it, they cannot help being endlessly "infinite approach" toward "The Holy Center." Hite's polemic unveils an idiosyncrasy that Pynchon's narratives consist of staving off revelation, and, furthermore, this tendency evokes a fear that "The Holy Center" becomes nothing but void in the modern period, as Tony Tanner implies:

as D. H. Lawrence said, we live in the paintings we put on the underside of our umbrellas. For Lawrence this was a suffocation, a deprivation, and he considered it the artist's job to come along and slash a gap in the protective umbrella and let in reality. But in Pynchon's world there is a more ominous feeling that if did cut through the painting a something or a nothing more frightening might be revealed. (*City of Words* 169-170)

Tanner expresses the grave apprehension about the inanity of revelation in the last sentence, whose situation provokes bird's words in Eliot's *Four Quartets*, "Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind / Cannot bear very much reality" (14) of the modern vacuity. We may see only nothingness, the hollowness of center, and the death of God, when something which Lawrence believes veils verity is stripped and the substance of it is consequently revealed. That the characters of Pynchon are involved in fantasy or paranoia against reality possibly suggests their intention to evade facing the vacuity of "The Holy Center." Otherwise, the reason Pynchon insinuates revelation but avoids showing it lies in his piousness that he does not want to encounter the modern revelation that has already turned to vacuum de facto. However, even the modern fantasy, in the

long run, cannot eschew “discovering emptiness inside an apparently full reality,” for emptiness or absence is “placed at the semantic center of the text[s]” of Pynchon (Jackson 158–159).

As Raymond Olderman states that “The two major symptoms of the twentieth century, as both Pynchon and Eliot have described them, are the inversion of love and the inversion of religion” (132), the hollowness is aroused by the absence or inversion of the sacred in the modern age.<sup>(2)</sup> Since Nietzsche articulated the death of God in *The Gay Science*,<sup>(3)</sup> theology has struggled to make evidence of the existence of God. Postmodern theology tries to find the vestiges of God and to establish the sacred paradoxically with the negation of it, as Mark Taylor contends:

Postmodernism opens with the sense of *irrevocable* loss and *incurable* fault. This wound is inflicted by the overwhelming awareness of death—a death that “begins” with the death of God and “ends” with the death of our selves. We are in a time between times and a place which is no place. Here our reflection must “begin.” In this liminal time and space, deconstructive philosophy and criticism offer rich, though still largely untapped, resources for religious reflection. (6 italics original)

Taylor's postmodern theology casts a light on a possibility that the death of God throws us into a new sacred space where “rich, untapped resources for religious reflection” still remain intact, a space where the otherness of God that was regarded as negativity or profanity is reconsidered. His theology is based on the negation of the traditional sanctity, as if repeating the idea of Feuerbach, “[God] is the incorporeal, formless, incomprehensible—the abstract, negative being: he is known, *i.e.*, becomes an object, only by abstraction and negation (*via negation*) ...” (*The Essence of Christianity* 35, italics original). The characters of Pynchon stand at a “liminal space” where “rich, untapped resources” for revelation possibly loom in the waste land after the death of God, though the essentials of the space might be much of vacuity and profanity.<sup>(4)</sup>

## 2. Entropy and Narcissus

The phenomenon that the narratives almost reach but never culminate in revelation is an earmark of Pynchon's second novel, *The Crying of Lot 49* (hereafter abbreviated as *Lot 49*). Quoting Joanna Russ's notion of fantasy that "the negative subjunctivity, the *cannot* or *could not*, constitutes the chief pleasure of fantasy" (qtd. in Jackson 22, italics original), Rosemary Jackson regards fantasy as harboring "contradictions" and "an impossible unity" (21), and her polemic of fantasy exquisitely explains the trait of *Lot 49*.

Oedipa Maas, the protagonist and a wife living in California, undertakes the executrix of the estate of Pierce Inverarity, who was a Californian real estate mogul and had a love affair with her before. Executing the role, she comes to notice a cryptic underground postal organization, The Tristero (the alternative name, The Tryster<sup>(5)</sup>o), which seems to work in America under the alias, WASTE, an illicit postal service hidden in American underground, which seems related with Pierce, and of which she and even readers are not sure whether it really exists or is just her fantasy. She first hears the name, The Tristero, when she watches a play, *The Courier's Tragedy* written by Richard Wharfinger, a play which functions as a metafiction in *Lot 49*. She is completely caught in this fantastic organization and investigates its origin and history, yet the more she gains the information of it the more she is perplexed and feels separated from the cryptic organization. The story ends at the very moment right before Oedipa recognizes the entity of The Tristero at an auction where a forgery stamp of The Tristero would be sold as "lot 49"; after all, Oedipa and readers are not convinced of the reality of The Tristero.

Necessity the story proceeds to apocalypse probably stems from the contemporary disorganized and deadlock situation, that is, the world of entropy. As Oedipa says to herself "For this, oh God, was the void. There was nobody who could help her. Nobody in the world. They were all on something, mad, possible enemies, dead" (171), her world is nothing more than emptiness, disorder, degeneration, and death, all of which are condensed in the symbolic city of entropy, San Narciso, where "the Galactronics Division of Yoyodyne, Inc.," a company of which Pierce is a large shareholder, is located. Albeit the

desolate spectacle, Oedipa feels behind the city that it emits "a hieroglyphic sense of concealed meaning, of an intent to communicate" (24), as if the city were an amalgamation of the sacred and the profane.

Entropy has been Pynchon's biggest theme since he started the career as a writer, which is caused by the lack of communication, by the sameness of society, that is, the loss of individuality. Of the condition of entropy, Peter Abernethy scrutinizes, "Disorder and chaos, then, do not mean a random jumble of things but rather uniformity, a lack of distinctions, a sameness, a lack of individuality, a tendency toward complete conformity. It is a "steady-state" in which "matter and energy" are evenly distributed so that no real exchange of information is possible" (20). Pynchon parallels entropy to the global system society of capitalism in America, a society which is "among matrices of a great digital computer, the zeroes and ones twined above, hanging like balanced mobiles eight and left, ahead, thick, maybe endless" (181), a society where everything turns to mechanic and no communication exists between a subject and another.

To emphasize the entropic situation of America, Pynchon lays an underplot in this story. Alluding to Narcissus in Ovid's story, Pynchon describes a world in which a subject is absorbed in him/herself and is hard to communicate with others. The name of the city, San Narciso, echoes Narcissus<sup>(6)</sup>, but the most salient image of Narcissus in *Lot 49* is epitomized in a painting, Remedios Varo's "Bordando el Manto Terrestre." When seeing the painting, Oedipa feels sympathy with the girls in it who vainly weave a tapestry in a circular tower and try to make up for a vacuum world outside, she senses as if she were immured in such a vacuum space just as Narcissus is caught in his reflected figure by water, and she wishes a knight coming to help her to get out of the immured, hollow space. In front of the painting, Oedipa cries mute, and nobody around her notices her silent crying (21). Shedding tears, Oedipa, as well as the girls embroidering the tapestry in the painting, tries to fill void that is parasitically spreading out over the world. Her tears, the emblem of human emotion, show that she is not the same as emotionless people living in the entropic world, and with her tears she wishes for the advent of another world, which counters the entropic society and revitalizes the frozen communication

system. Further, with the threads she intends to weave the figure of The Tristero, a counterforce to reduce entropy.

Oedipa writes, “*Shall I project a world?*” (82 italics original), below the sign of WASTE, a muted post horn, which she took down in her note when she found it at a bar, “The Scope,” in San Narciso. Thus, The Tristero invades into this entropic world as the Other, and actually, the name The Tristero was coined by the Scurvhamites, a denomination of Puritan, to “symbolize the Other” (156) to them. The Tristero stands for the Other, whose function “turns out to be the potential provider of anti-entropic information that might redeem a world that is revealed as a closed system consisting of closed subsystems” (Freese 174), the Other which makes a crevice in the entropic society of uniformity.

### **3. Waiting for the Emergence of The Tristero, Scavenging for the Leftovers of The Tristero**

As John May refers to the work, “there is a decided inclination toward the expectation of unambiguous revelation, and the only solution for Oedipa is to wait” (May 189), the narrative comprises of Oedipa’s awaiting a moment when the body of The Tristero appears. Actually, if considering an esoteric code that “WASTE” is the acronym of the phrase “WE AWAIT SILENT TRISTERO’S EMPIRE” (169), all Oedipa can do for the emergence of The Tristero is to await the moment.

However, her performance is not restricted to waiting for The Tristero. In fact, she tries to gather the residues The Tristero left behind in America, the residues that are “actual residue(s) of lives,” like “all the bits and pieces coated uniformly, like a salad of despair, in a gray dressing of ash, condensed exhaust, dust, body wastes—it made him[Mucho] sick to look, but he had to look” (14). As the name WASTE indicates, The Tristero is buried in the waste land of America, and it externalizes the preterite mass of “the stored, coded years of uselessness” (128), to borrow a phrase in *Gravity’s Rainbow*, “the kinds of revenants that [are] not persons but forms of energy, abstractions ...” (161). Obviously, the leftovers of The Tristero are the entropic waste, in which the possibility of revelation, however, is latent, for the saturation of entropy, the uniformity of heat energy, inevitably is led to apocalypse to precipitate the

rebirth, as Callisto sees the omens of it in the entropic situation of the same temperature ("Entropy" 85).

She tells herself of the role, the executrix of Pierce, that "*She was meant to remember*. She faced that possibility as she might the toy street from a high balcony, roller-coaster ride, feeding-time among the beasts in a zoo ... . Each clue that comes is *supposed* to have its own clarity, its fine chances for performance" (118 italics original). When she totally assembled the clues of The Tristero, they could have "chances for performance," that is, the chances The Tristero is "supposed" to appear to her. Like the girls weaving the threads to fill void in Varo's painting, Oedipa collects the memories of The Tristero that were discarded in the past, smites those, and make chance for the emergence of it; as if she were the angel of history Walter Benjamin imagined seeing Klee's painting, "Angelus Novus" ("Theses on the Philosophy of History" 257-258).

Benjamin's severe criticism on the progress of the global capitalism is represented with his pessimistic tone. Although, turning his face toward the past, the angel wants to remain with the shattered heaps of the past and to put those together again with the complete shape they possessed before they were broken, the storm, the progress of history, which directs "downward into new losses and degeneration" (Jennings 56), does not allow him to perform the role he wants to. Like the angel, Oedipa scavenges for the discarded leftovers of The Tristero, that is, the discarded memories of The Tristero in the stream of history, which, "like the memory bank to a computer of the lost," keep "vestiges of every nightmare sweat, helpless overflowing bladder, viciously, tearfully consummated wet dream" (126). The Tristero is the preterite in the history of the expanding global capitalism, and is an apparatus to bring revelation, as Benjamin says that "The past carries with it a temporal index by which it is referred to redemption. There is a secret agreement between past generations and the present one ... . Like every generation that preceded us, we have been endowed with a *weak* Messianic power, a power to which the past has a claim" (254 italics original). According to Benjamin, the past is an intermediary to revelation and its "Messianic power" is invisibly immanent in the present, just as Oedipa speaks of San Narciso:

San Narciso was a name; an incident among our climatic records of dreams and what dreams became among our accumulated daylight, a moment's squall-line or tornado's touchdown among the higher, more continental solemnities—storm-systems of group suffering and need, prevailing winds of affluence. There was the true continuity, San Narciso had no boundaries. (178)

While San Narciso is the aggregate of entropy and is the waste land of the modern days, it is the accumulation of the past memories and is the seedbed where another world emerges with revelation. San Narciso is the storage of the preterite memories, but just collecting the memoirs eliminated in history is not enough to invoke The Tristero.

Although many critics have primarily referred to Pynchon's employment of the myth of Narcissus in *Lot 49*, Peter Freese, interpreting the significance of number 49, remarks the moment of revelation in this story: "Pentecost, which means 'fifty' and takes place forty-nine days after Easter, is the most wondrous of the intrusions of the sacred into the profane that punctuate the novel. Because 'lot 49' of the estate is to be sold at the close of the auction, Oedipa may stand a chance of receiving the sacred communication she longs for" (172). In watching a play *The Courier's Tragedy*, Oedipa harks to the following sentence: "Descended this malign, Unholy Ghost, / Let us begin thy frightful Pentecost" (68), and as regards Pentecost, The Bible says:

When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and *one* sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Acts 2: 1-4)

The biblical scene, without a doubt, embodies the revelation Pynchon wants to articulate, and one of the characteristics of Pentecost lies in the sound from



heaven that is spoken by unknown languages. Oedipa awaits the advent of such a (un)holy sound descending from heaven, and sound is the most remarkable apparatus to inform the time of revelation in *Lot 49* as well. Albeit it is mute, a post horn, the emblem of WASTE, reminds us of seven trumpets wielded by the angels to inform the revelation of God in *The Revelation*; Pentecost, *The Revelation*, and *Lot 49*, all of which lays the importance on sound. When the function of the mute is dismantled and sound consequently rings out from the post horn, Oedipa faces a revelation, that is, the emergence of *The Tristero*, a revelation that “a metaphor of God” consisted of “many parts” is held together by “a sound, a word, Tryster<sup>(7)</sup>o” (109).

#### 4. Voice and Revelation

Whereas, relating the myth of Narcissus, many critics have especially paid attention to seeing in perceptions depicted in this story, it is worth noting that hearing sound is not a negligible ingredient in *Lot 49*. The various sounds are scattered throughout the story, such as the music Wendell Mucho Maas, Oedipa's husband and a radio disk-jockey, plays, and the sinister noise at Echo Courts where Oedipa stays at in her pursuing *The Tristero*. Concerning sound, David Cowart lays the importance on Pynchon's musical allusion, and Tony Tanner attends to “multi-vocal” of Pierce (*Thomas Pynchon* 57) at the beginning scene where he called last to Oedipa a year before his death as follows:

there had come this long-distance call, from where she would never know (unless now he's left a diary) by a voice beginning in heavy Slavic tones as second secretary at the Transylvanian Consulate, looking for an escaped bat; modulated to comic-Negro, then on into hostile Pachuco dialect, full of chingas and maricones; then a Gestapo officer asking her in shrieks did she have relatives in Germany and finally his Lamont Cranston voice, the one he'd talked in all the way down to Mazatlán. (11)

Pierce talked to Oedipa in various tones of languages she cannot understand, and this scene is bound with Pentecost, where people “are filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues.” Pynchon, in the beginning,

seems to drop a hint as to the moment of revelation through Pierce, who perchance grasps the entirety of The Tristero. Both Pentecost and Pierce speak the incomprehensible words, the words of the Other, the mysterious words that were resonant with those of the Tristero.

Voice and sound are occasionally associated with the sacred. Neil Forsyth points out the significance of voice that represents the omnipresence of God, drawing attention to the following lines of Psalms: “The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty. / The voice of the LORD divideth the flames of fire” (29: 4–5). The lines of Psalms infer that the omnipotence of God lies in His voice, yet, as Job states that “but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand?” (26: 14), the importance lies in that the voice of God is puzzling to humans. In other words, revelation cannot be comprehensible to them due to the lack of understanding the esoteric, sanctified voice and words, as indicated in Pentecost or Pierce’s call to Oedipa. In spite of its incomprehensibility, to hear such a voice is the nucleus of Pynchon’s *donné*, which is inscribed in the tomb of William Slothrop that “Till Christ rise again all His children to save, / I must lie, as His Word in the Scriptures hath taught me. / Mark, Reader, my cry! Bend thy thoughts on the Sky” (*Gravity’s Rainbow* 27). Crying that seems inscrutable roar contains a cue to approach the revelation of The Tristero.

Forsyth maintains that “if the source of his [Yahweh] power is specified at all, it is his voice. Sometimes it is heard in the wind or in the thunder, for he remained ... a storm god, but often enough all he needs to do is *roar*” (64 italics mine). Employing the term “roar,” Pynchon articulates the relevance of revelation and sound as follows:

And the voices before and after the dead man’s that had phoned at random during the darkest, slowest hours, searching ceaseless among the dial’s ten million possibilities for that magical Other who would reveal herself out of *the roar of relays*, monotone litanies of insult, filth, fantasy, love whose brute *repetition* must someday call into being the trigger for the unnamable act, the recognition, the Word. (180 italics mine)

Intriguingly enough, Pynchon links the moment of The Tristero's revelation to voices, voices "out of the roar of relays, monotone litanies of insult, filth, fantasy, love," some of which are seemingly against the sacred, but the importance of the above citation lies in the articulation that "relays" or "repetition" of sound triggers "that magical Other," that is, The Tristero, triggers "the Word" of The Tristero. Yet, how this repetition of voice that precipitates the emergence of The Tristero is concretely delineated in this story?

## 5. Two Types of the Echo

Although, compared to Narcissus, Echo is not paid much attention in the criticism of the Ovid's story, as Gayatri Spivak says that "Where was Echo, the woman in Narcissus's story?," she is a weighty figure in *Lot 49*, whose function that is "the roar of relays" or the "repetition" of voice provokes the buried voices of The Tristero. Whereas *Lot 49* heavily rests on the myth of Narcissus, without considering the role of the echo we would overlook the moment of revelation in the story. For instance, staying at a motel, Echo Courts, Oedipa continues to gain the information of The Tristero, and the senselessly various echoes of sounds pervades in *Lot 49*, such as the music of a band, "Paranoid," and the sinister sound that happens when a hair splay falls on the floor and flies over Oedipa's room at Echo Courts. In contrast to those sounds, the echo of silence overlays the story, silence originated from the muted post horn of WASTE. That The Tristero does not have sound means that the moment of revelation has yet to come. It is the moment of the revelation of The Tristero when sound is emitted from the muted post horn, as the angels informs the moment of God's judgement through the trumpet sounds in The Revelation. Rather than seeing the figure of The Tristero, Oedipa's excursion is to collect voices and sounds sealed in the horn with mute and to make the echo of those in the entropic world.

Specifically, Pynchon writes a scene where Mucho directs Oedipa to echo what he says and she literally repeats his words: "Say 'rich, chocolaty goodness.' 'Rich, chocolaty, goodness,' said Oedipa." Oedipa asks him of this seemingly ridiculous echo of his statement, "Well *what?*," and Mucho replies:

“No matter who’s talking, the different power spectra are the same, give or take a small percentage ... . Everybody who says the same words is the same person if the spectra are the same.” To his delusive response, Oedipa thinks that Mucho is in “a whole roomful of people” with “his vision of consensus as others do orgasms.” Mucho punctuates the sameness through having Oedipa perform the echo, and echoing words, in his account, makes a world of “a whole roomful of people,” a world without a difference between self and others. Although Joseph Slade emphasizes that in this scene “Mucho has become Echo” (169), his echo does not coincide with Echo in Ovid’s story but is bound with Narcissus, who more indulges himself in his fantasy with the response of Echo that only repeats his words. As if acting Narcissus, after talking with Oedipa, Mucho “puts a little clear plastic bottle” with reflection, presumably so as to take a pill of LSD from the bottle. He is totally absorbed in his fantastic world like Narcissus (*Lot 49* 142–143 italics original).

As Mendelson points out two types of repetition in *Lot 49*, “trivial repetition” and “repetition that may signify the timeless and unchanging sacred” (131), two types of the echo are embedded in this story. Whereas the above scene delineates an Echo who stays behind Narcissus, repeats what he says, and helps Narcissus to indulge himself in his own world, another function of Echo is included in *Lot 49*, which violates the entropic sameness and the narcissistic fantasy. In the chapter “Echo” of *Lost in the Funhouse*, John Barth claims that “Echo never, as popularly held, repeats all, like gossip or mirror. She edits, heightens, mutes, turns others’ words to her end” (100). Barth explores that she subjectively edits what Narcissus says, and utters her insistence to him, much as she just iterates his words.<sup>(8)</sup>

Furthermore, Claire Nouvet shows an innovative idea of the echo that, while Echo just repeats Narcissus’s words, she opens the otherness of language that he does not command:

Narcissus asks “*Veni!*” (Come!). This time the echo does not transform the demand into an answer. It repeats the “same” demand. Narcissus’s reaction is nevertheless quite surprising. Hearing “*Veni!*” he turns around to see if anyone is coming! ... . Although the echo repeats the same call he

uttered, Narcissus hears the call to come addressed to him as a statement that the other is coming to him ... . Did he invite the other to approach or was he already stating his intention to approach? (106)

Nouvet pays attention to Narcissus's action that, when the echo repeated "come" Narcissus first uttered and he heard the echo of his statement, Narcissus does not go to the place where the echo said "come" but awaits somebody coming from there. It is Nouvet's emphasis that Narcissus takes "come" that is returned to himself through the echo as "I am coming" against his first intention. He unconsciously violates the identified meaning of his language through the echo. In other words, while Echo just seems to repeat Narcissus's statement, she opens another space of language of which he is unaware; she makes "my" language slid into a space of the unnamable otherness that is hidden in language. Nouvet expatiates on this violation of language: "The echo is not a distortion which affects the intended meaning of a statement. It marks the *impossibility of determining any such intended meaning, that is, the impossibility of connecting a statement to the intention of a speaking consciousness* ... . [I]t answers by underlining the otherness which, from the very beginning, diffracts the question *into a potentiality of alternative meanings*" (107, 109, italics mine). Both Barth and Nouvet emphasize the unique function of the echo, whose answer does not just mimic others' words but edits, slides those to an unrecognizable area, as Oedipa is led to a mysterious area, The Tristero. Against the narcissistic sameness, the echo creates a difference to make a crevice in the entropic world of sameness and a chance to enter the incomprehensible world of The Tristero. However, the voice of the echo is also an indecipherable, deviant noise, and occasionally a silence, a sound that ghostly wanders between reality and fantasy and is hard to understand; as the Bible says of the voice of God that "but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand?" (Job 26: 14) Especially, it is hard for Narcissus, who is caught in his own fantasy, to understand it, yet *Lot 49* alludes to a moment when the echo appears breaking through the narcissistic, entropic world.

An old fisherman who gets delirium tremens asks Oedipa to send his letter

through WASTE. It is difficult for this man to communicate with others due to the addiction to alcohol and falling into his narcissistic world. However, Oedipa remembers that delirium tremens, whose initials are DT, has a metaphor, “a trembling unfurrowing of the mind’s plowshare” (128), whose meaning is resonant with time differential of mathematics, “dt.” With the echo of her memory, Oedipa thinks of dt as follows.

Trembling, unfurrowed, she slipped sidewise, *screeching* back across grooves of years, to hear again the earnest, high voice of her second or third collegiate love Ray Glozing bitching among ‘*uhs*’ and the syncopated tonguing of a cavity, about his freshman calculus; ‘dt,’ ... meant also a time differential, a vanishingly small instant in which change had to be confronted at last for what it was, where it could no longer disguise itself as something innocuous like an average rate ... (129 *italics mine*)

Interestingly, she remembers the past love with the strident noise like “screeching.” Dt, time differential, indicates an invisible moment that the unknown entity of a material emerges and is disconnected with “an average rate” with a subtle difference of plus or minus. It is also the moment that the voice of The Tristero which is muted would ring out through the post horn, and, to borrow the phrase of Oedipa, “DT’s must give access to dt’s of spectra beyond the known sun, music made purely of Antarctic loneliness of fright” (129). In opposition to the same spectra Mucho refers to (142–143), dt’s spectra stay “beyond the known sun,” that is to say, stay in an unknown area. The music dt creates must be (the echo of) the music of The Tristero, because The Tristero is located at a place where few reach, and appears when it invisibly deviates from “an average rate” and from the world of “balanced mobiles right and left” (181).

## 6. The Echo and the Memories

Scrutinizing the testimonies, the returning voices of Auschwitz in the film, *Shoah*, Shoshana Felman elucidates a relevance of the echo and the memory, and, like Nouvet, refers to the function of the echo that unfolds an unknown

territory of the memory:

The function of the refrain ... like the burden of the vocal echo which, as though mechanically, returns in the interviewer's voice the last words of the discourse of his interlocutors, is *to create a difference through the repetition*, to return a question out of something that appears to be an answer: (Therefore. –Why?). The echo does not simply reproduce what seems to be its motivation, but rather puts it into question. Where there had seemed to be a rationale, a closure and a limit, *the refrain-like repetition opens up a vacuum, a crevice and, through it, the undefined space of an open question.* (Felman 277 italics mine)

Narrating the memories causes the confusion of a narrator, causes the echo that breaks “a rationale, a closure, and a limit” of the memory and opens “the undefined space” of it. Recalling memories evokes the echo, which opens “undefined space,” to borrow the phrase of Nouvet again, “a potentiality of alternative meanings” (109), and opens the door to The Tristero, whose voice is not anything but the incomprehensible, cacophonous echo. “A crevice” which opens “undefined space” is the same as “dt,” a moment of “a trembling unfurrowing of the mind's plowshare,” a moment when the echo of the voice of The Tristero reverberates.

As Felman also insists that “to speak from within the Other's tongue insofar precisely as the *tongue of the Other* is by definition the very tongue *we* do not speak, the tongue that, by its very nature and position, one by definition *does not* understand. To testify from inside Otherness is thus to bear witness from inside the living pathos of a tongue which nonetheless is bound to be heard as *mere noise*” (231 the first, second, and third italics original, the fourth mine). The voice of the Other is heard as the noise incomprehensible and cacophonous, which links with the voice of The Tristero's revelation and with the magical sound of Pentecost. As the interlocutor harks to the testimonies of Auschwitz from inside, Oedipa undoubtedly hears the voice and sound of The Tristero from inside, from inside the Otherness. The voice makes a crevice in the narcissistic, entropic world of sameness, which *V.*, Pynchon's first novel,

delineates in the following scene. Hiding behind an experimental room, Mondaugen sees Weissmann coming in the room through a mirror:

Weissmann ... tiptoed into the room, crossing between the mirror's frontiers and vanishing again near the spheric equipment. All at once a *dawn chorus burst from the loudspeaker, chaotic at first but resolving eventually into a deep-space madrigal for three or four voices*. To which the intruder Weissmann, out of sight, added still another, in falsetto, to a minor-keyed Charleston. (V. 276 italics mine)

Whereas the mirror that is, in terms of causing reflection, relevant to the water Narcissus gazes at is written above, the importance lies in that not the harmonious but the chaotic, dawn chorus bursts after Weissmann crossed the mirror's frontiers; which means that the narcissistic frontiers are stepped over, and consequently the cacophonous sounds echo over the area. The various sounds of cacophony are bound with the sounds of the incomprehensible words of Pentecost and Pierce, which inform the dawn of *The Tristero*. The cacophonous sounds resolve into "a deep-space madrigal for three or four voices," a madrigal of *The Tristero*.<sup>(10)</sup> Much as cacophonous to Mondaugen, the sounds to which Weissmann adds composes a harmony that few comprehend, as Pynchon writes that "As to some musical ears, dissonance is really a higher form of consonance" (*Gravity's Rainbow* 494).

## 7. Conclusion

In his *Orality and Literacy*, Walter Ong underlines the significance of spoken more than written words in Christianity: "in Christian teaching the Second Person of the One Godhead, who redeemed mankind from sin, is known not only as the Son but also as the Word of God. In this teaching, God the Father utters or speaks His Word, his Son. He does not inscribe him. The very Person of the Son is constituted as the Word of the Father" (175). When accounting for Mucho's statement that "Oedipa, the human voice, you know, it's a flipping miracle" (143), and accounting for the fact that the etymology of person is "per sona (sonance)," the existence of an individual is a miracle. The



voice of an individual's birth, crying of a born baby, marks its existence that cannot be substituted, marks its own "dt" that is not converged into an average rate. However, the world of entropy that is composed of zeroes and ones without middles and excludes any difference effaces the voice of an individual and puts it into the average rate of wholeness.

When Oedipa visits Professor Emory Bortz who she believes is the only left person to get information of The Tristero, he questions her, "What's left?," and she replies, "Words" (151), with a firm tone. At the moment that the Word, The Tristero, which is unawares implanted in *The Courier's Tragedy*, is equipped with voice, the revelation of The Tristero appears in front of Oedipa. The moment is when the apparatus of mute is dismantled and the post horn rings out the sounds, just like the moment when the trumpet sounds of seven angels informed the revelation of God in The Revelation. In the final scene of *Lot 49*, a scene where a forgery stamp of The Tristero is sold as "lot 49," the finest auctioneer in the West, Loren Passerine, "spread his arms in a gesture that seemed to belong to the priesthood of some remote culture; perhaps to a descending angel" (183). The text ends right before the actual bid, that is, "the crying of lot 49" by Passerine (bid is called crying), right before the revelation of The Tristero, yet, as a sign of the revelation, *Lot 49* offers the echo of the sound in the last that the lock of the door is shut and "[Oedipa] heard a lock snap shut; the sound echoed a moment" (183). The weak sound of "a lock snap shut" echoes toward the world of The Tristero, as the lines of Eliot's poem say, "Footfalls echo in the memory / Down the passage which we did not take / Towards the doors we never opened / Into the rose garden. My words echo / Thus, in your mind" (*Four Quartets* 13).

Spivak says that "Narcissus is fixed, but Echo can disseminate" (196), and, moving in history and in various versions of the text of *The Courier's Tragedy*, the echo of The Tristero disseminates its voice and tries to bear fruit at the final moment of "the crying of lot 49." The echo of the voice hides in the narcissistic, entropic world of sameness, and after invisibly emerging it sinks again in the entropic world. The figure of The Tristero, as well as of Echo, becomes invisible and only its cacophonous sound is left, and its real body is never reflected in mirrors or water. However, its invisible world still remains as

Oedipa meditates:

As if their[dandelions] home cemetery in some way still did exist, in a land where you could somehow walk, and not need the East San Narciso Freeway, and bones still could rest in peace, nourishing ghosts of dandelions, no one to plow them up. As if the dead really do persist, even in a bottle of wine. (*Lot 49 99*)

The moving sound of *The Tristero* does not dwell in the same place like a flower, narcissus, into which Narcissus changed, but is carried by the wind, is disseminated on the earth like the seeds of dandelions, and awaits the moment of its blossom, its revelation. However, we cannot anticipate when the seeds blossom, as The Bible exhorts thus: “And He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority’ ” (Acts 1: 7). Alluding to the impossibility of revelation, *Lot 49* paradoxically harbors a moment to shatter the impossibility itself with the powerful voice and to enter another “undefined” world. Dwelling on apocalypse, David Robson says that “The revealed Word, it seems, is always the shattered Word” (72), because, as Pynchon evinces, the center of truth is too bright for her [Oedipa] memory to hold, which blazes out, destroying its own message irreversibly, leaving an overexposed blank when the ordinary world came back (*Lot 49 95*). Only the shattered Word is left in the blank center, from which the cacophonous voices cry, awaiting somebody to notice them.

### Notes

- (1) Raymond Olderman also refers to the fact as that the term revelation is often employed in *Lot 49* (147). More importantly, Mendelson points out that, compared to *V.*, in *Lot 49* the word God saliently appears near Oedipa or her discoveries (126).
- (2) Along with Eliot, Hillis Miller mentions that “Man the murderer of God and drinker of the sea of creation wanders through the infinite nothingness of his[or her] own ego” (3).
- (3) With regard to the death of God, Pynchon cynically articulates in *Gravity’s Rainbow* that “A market needed no longer be run by the Invisible Hand, but now could *create itself*—its own logic, momentum, style, from *inside*. Putting the control inside was ratifying what de facto had happened—that you had dispensed with God. But you had

- taken on a greater, and more harmful, illusion. The Illusion of control" (30 italics original).
- (4) Timothy Melley points out that fictive conspiracy theories take over the place of the grant narrative, that is to say, the place of God in the postmodern era, and he mentions the reason of those flourishes that, because of the uncertainty of the era, people require a form of quasi-religious conviction, and supernatural powers(8). With a form of pseudo-gods, fictive conspiracy theories implant the awe and terror to humans' minds of the era.
- (5) The name is undoubtedly derived from the term, *tryst*, and in *Lot 49* Pynchon notes a hint of the meaning of the name that "*trystero* is a pseudo-Italianate variant on *triste* (=wretched, depraved)" (102 italics original).
- (6) See Grant 29.
- (7) Mendelson refers to the muted post horn of WASTE as "suggesting the demonic aspect of the system: it mutes the trumpet of apocalypse" (132).
- (8) Jacques Derrida says that, in terms of etymology, iteration is closely bound with otherness: "*iter* [of iterability] probably comes from *itara*, *other* in Sanskrit, and everything that follows can be read as the working out of the logic that ties repetition to alterity ..." (7 italics original).
- (9) This noise reminds us of the noise of the rocket in the famous opening of *Gravity's Rainbow*: "A screaming comes across the sky" (3).
- (10) With regard to the relevance of mirror and fantasy, employing the theory of Jacques Lacan's mirror stage, Rosemary Jackson explores that "Fantasies try to reverse or rupture the process of ego formulation which took place during the mirror stage, i.e. they attempt to re-enter the imaginary" (90 italics original).

### Works Cited

- Abernethy, Peter. "Entropy in Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*." *Critique* 14.2 (1973): 18-33.
- Barth, John. "Echo." *Lost in the Funhouse: Fiction for Print, Tape, Live Voice*. 1968. New York: Anchor, 1988.
- Benjamin, Walter. "Theses on the Philosophy of History." *Illuminations*. Ed. Hannah Arendt. Trans. Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken Books, 1969. 253-264.
- Cowart, David. *Thomas Pynchon: The Art of Allusion*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1980.
- Cox, Stephen. "Berkeley, Blake, and the Apocalypse of Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*." *Essays in Literature* 7.1 (1980): 91-99.
- Derrida, Jacques. "Signature, Event, Context." *Limited Inc.* Trans. Samuel Weber. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1988. 1-23.
- Eliot, T. S. *Four Quartets*. 1943. San Diego: Harcourt, 1971.
- Felman, Shoshana, and Dori Laub. *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Feuerbach, Ludwig. *The Essence of Christianity*. Trans. G. Eliot. New York: Harper and

- Row, 1958.
- Forsyth, Neil. *The Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1987.
- Freese, Peter. "Surviving the End: Apocalypse, Evolution, and Entropy in Bernard Malamud, Kurt Vonnegut, and Thomas Pynchon." *Critique* 36.3 (1995): 163-176.
- Grant, J. Kerry. *A Companion to The Crying of Lot 49*. Athens: U of Georgia P, 1994.
- Hite, Molly. "'Holy-Center Approaching' in the Novels of Thomas Pynchon." *The Journal of Narrative Technique* 12 (1982): 121-9.
- Jackson, Rosemary. *Fantasy*. 1981. London: Routledge, 1993.
- Jennings, Michael W. *Dialectical Images: Walter Benjamin's Theory of Literary Criticism*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1987.
- May, John. *Toward a New Earth: Apocalypse in the American Novel*. Notre Dame, Indiana: U of Notre Dame P, 1972.
- McHale, Brian. *Postmodernist Fiction*. London: Routledge, 1989.
- Melley, Timothy. *Empire of Conspiracy: The Culture of Paranoia in Postwar America*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2000.
- Mendelson, Edward. "The Sacred, the Profane, and *The Crying of Lot 49*." *Pynchon: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Edward Mendelson. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1978. 112-146.
- Miller, J. Hillis. *Poets of Reality: Six Twentieth-Century Writers*. New York: Atheneum, 1969.
- Nouvet, Claire. "An Impossible Response: The Disaster of Narcissus." *Yale French Studies* 79(1991): 103-134.
- Olderman, Raymond. *Beyond the Waste Land: A Study of the American Novel in the Nineteen-Sixties*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1972.
- Ong, Walter J. *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*. 1982. London: Routledge, 2002.
- Pynchon, Thomas. "Entropy." *Slow Learner*. 1984. Boston: Little, Brown, 1998. 79-98.
- . *Gravity's Rainbow*. 1973. New York: Penguin, 1995.
- . *The Crying of Lot 49*. 1966. New York: Perennial, 1990.
- . *V*. 1963. New York: Perennial, 1999.
- Robson, David. "Frye, Derrida, Pynchon, and the Apocalyptic Space of Postmodern Fiction." *Postmodern Apocalypse: Theory and Cultural Practice at the End*. Ed. Richard Dellamora. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1995. 61-78.
- Slade, Joseph W. *Thomas Pynchon*. New York: Warner, 1974.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Echo." *The Spivak Reader*. Eds. Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean. London: Routledge, 1996. 175-202.
- Tanner, Tony. *City of Words: American Fiction 1950-1970*. New York: Harper and Row, 1971.
- . *Thomas Pynchon*. London: Methuen, 1982.
- Taylor, Mark. *Erring: A Postmodern A/theology*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1987.