

Entropy & Metaphor & Allegory: Unscrambling on Post-Modernism of Thomas Pynchon's Works

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Abstract: Thomas Pynchon, The American black humorist, has import "entropy" theory of Thermodynamics and Information theory into his literary eyeshot. His works from particular visual angle of entropy announce human society just among tremendous closing system, and turn confusion and disorder day by day, and finally will tend towards the tragic destiny of languishing and deathly stillness. Pynchon's works by obscurity and mult-meaning's metaphors and symbols introduce reader to admirable art labyrinth of entropy world; and by allegorize narrating resource of the post-modern literature construct new meaning text, and since his resisting entropy's dissimulation to human beings by metaphor literary manner, Thomas Pynchon has been known as "anti-entropy hero".

Keywords: Thomas Pynchon; Entropy; Metaphor; Allegory; Dissimulation

1. Introduction

Thomas Pynchon, an American postmodernist writer, is keen on introducing the "entropy" theory of thermodynamics and information theory into his creative vision, which gives his works a distinctive feature: He uses "entropy" as a metaphor for this swaying and turbulent postmodern society, which is full of uncertainties. In his series of works, he tries to prove that human society is a closed system and that with the unidirectional increase of the value of "entropy," human society tends to be chaotic disorder from the initial orderly stability, and will ultimately irreversibly go to the state of exhaustion and death due to the depletion of energy. This paper attempts to interpret and evaluate Pynchon's three masterpieces: *V* (1963), the *Crying of Lot 49* (1966), and *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973) from three aspects: the image illustration of the "entropy" world, the text construction of metaphorical symbols, and the narrative strategy of allegory.

2. Entropy: a Graphic Representation of an Alienated World

"Entropy" as a thermodynamic concept, refers to a measure of thermal energy that is unable to convert to work. the second law of thermodynamics is another way of expressing the law of entropy, which states that in a closed system, matter and energy can switch in one direction. "When the entropy is at its minimum value, the highest degree of energy concentration, the valid energy is at its maximum value, and the whole system is also in the most ordered state. On the contrary, the state where entropy is the maximum and valid energy complete dissipation is the state with the highest degree of chaos." [1] According to the doctrine of the law of entropy, the world of the universe, as a self-contained closed system, tends from regularity to irregularity, from order to disorder, and the total value of entropy in the universe constantly increases while the energy continuously dissipates and will ultimately return to deadness. In the short story *Entropy*, Thomas Pynchon initially describes for the readers an "entropic" world that tends to be disordered and chaotic. the author uses a building as a metaphor to show that the modern human society presents a closed reality and a depleted and tragic situation under the domination of the magical hand of the law of "entropy", which started Pynchon's passion for analyzing the basic theme of human society from the perspective of the law of "entropy". Pynchon's use of the law of entropy received the most perfect presentation in his 1966 work the *Auction of the Forty-Ninth Lot*. the novel describes a chaotic world of entropy through the encounters of Oedipa, a middle-class housewife in the 1960s, as she carries out the will of her ex-lover Pierce. the "Paranoia" band in the novel is the epitome of this "entropic" society: they spend their days taking drugs and loitering under the banner of rebelling against traditional morality, and they are eager to let off steam with fast-paced music, the author plays crazy and

shocking rock music, using this band to satirize the hippie culture that was once popular in Southern California in the mid-1960s. Drugs, which symbolize one of the main features of the post-industrial society, are another theme used by the author to represent the "entropic" world. Drugs are also a harmful factor in the confusion and detachment of people from the world. the novel also introduces the theory of entropy into the realm of the American social and political order, Pynchon uses the kingdom of Tristar, which opposes the monopoly of the U. S. Postal Service, to represent the other America, secret underground America, this kingdom, known as the "night dweller," is a home of occasional and mixed social "abandoned children" such as vagrants, homosexuals, prostitutes, lunatics, extremists, etc. It is also a realistic and vivid portrayal of the "entropy" world. Published in 1973, *Gravity's Rainbow* is a labyrinthine work that rivals James Joyce's *Ulysses*. "Gravity's Rainbow" is a graphic representation of a missile launch track, and is set against the backdrop of World War II, with the manufacture and launch of the German V-2 rocket as a clue to the scattered descriptions and discussions, showing the alienation of an "entropic" world. the author borrows these fantasy, bizarre, and specious scientific concepts in his novels to represent an irrational, "entropic" world full of absurdity and chaos.

In the above works, Thomas Pynchon, from the unique perspective of "entropy", shows us the alienation of an "entropic" world: human society is irrevocably heading towards a tragic fate of chaos, disorder, and even death. In such an "entropic" world, traditional cultural values lost, society has no center and no order; human beings have lost themselves, the spiritual world is chaotic and paranoid; communication between people and society is blocked and cut off because of the vague and confusing and uncertain information, and society and human beings are in the inertia of commercialization. In this closed world where the amount of message is increasing, the order is getting chaotic, the entropy value is increasing, and when the entropy value reaches the highest value, the human society will tend to be hot and silent and die out.

3. Metaphor: The Textual Construction of Labyrinthine Consciousness

"Metaphor" first appeared as a rhetorical term.

the word "metaphor" originates from the Greek word "metaphora", whose etymology "meta" means "beyond" and "pherein" means "transmit". It refers to "a special set of linguistic procedures by which aspects of one object are 'transmitted' or 'transformed' to another object so that the second seems to speak for the first." [5] In short, metaphor achieves its significance by integrating the dual meanings of "transcendence" and "transference. Thomas Pynchon, a writer of black humor, introduced the theory of "entropy" into his creative writing, and constructed a wonderful artistic labyrinth using obscure and ambiguous metaphors and symbols.

The title of the novel *V* obviously has multiple metaphorical meanings: "V" can refer to victory; it can refer to the two vector lines that collide; it can also refer to Vheissu; in addition, V can also refer to Valletta, the capital of Malta. V as a letter has two V's in N and three V's in W and M. the attentive reader of the original English text will thus be able to make further associations. [7] But in the novel, V mainly refers to a woman, and the process of Stencil's tracking down and searching for this woman is also the process of her face gradually being exposed and her history slowly coming to the fore. V is not only a metaphorical summary of the existing state of the universe, world, and society in which modern human beings are living but also a manifestation of their ability to understand the universe, world, and society. the novel *Auction Lot 49* is an enigmatic work because it is interwoven with a huge system of metaphors: the main character, Oedipa Mass, where Oedipa is the feminine reference to Oedipus, and Mass is the masses, which together seem to suggest that the main character, Oedipa Mass, is in a combination of Oedipus and the masses, and Pynchon uses this as a metaphor for the reality of the modern "human" riddle in the text of the story of Oedipus "killing his father and marrying his mother," which has been recited and interpreted by many people; the fictional city of San Narciso in the novel also has strong metaphorical coloring. In Greek mythology, the beautiful boy Narcissus rejected the love of the nymph Echo fell in love with his reflection in the river, and finally drowned in the river, and San Narciso and the Echo Courts in the book both imply that Oedipa will fall into her imagination and cannot extricate herself. In a deeper sense, San Narciso is also a metaphor for human narcissism.

Thomas Pynchon uses the literary expression of metaphorical symbolism to construct his postmodernist texts, and as a result, his works are filled with a disorienting, fantastical, and dizzying sense of labyrinth.

4. Allegorical Narratives: Deconstruction and Rebellion against an Entropic World

To break the tragic fate of closure and exhaustion faced by the world under the law of "entropy", Thomas Pynchon adopts the metaphorical way of allegorization in the construction of his fictional works, and allegory has become one of Pynchon's narrative strategies to break the law of "entropy". He seems to be fond of the mythological archetypal model of the "quest", which is essentially an allegorical representation of the spirit of self-improvement of human beings:

The *Auction of the Forty-Ninth Lot* inherits the narrative mode of *V.*'s quest, unfolding the contemporary wilderness adventures of Oedipa Myss against the backdrop of the mythological archetypal framework of the quest. Oedipa in the novel originates from the feminization of Oedipus in Greek mythology, which foreshadows that Oedipa will, like Oedipus the King, pursue and solve the many obsessions and doubts of human existence. The novel tells the story of Mrs. Oedipa Myss, who one day suddenly learns that she has been nominated to be the executor, and she accepts the commission and leaves home to investigate Pierce's legacy without knowing anything about it but with a lot of misgivings. Oedipa finally finds that everything is connected with a mysterious underground organization Tristeo. After many trials, Oedipa resolutely returns to the auction house in San Narciso, looking forward to finding the secret representative of Tristeo, the novel abruptly ends just as the auction is about to begin, leaving the pursuit of its ultimate goal unanswered. This dramatic ending suggests that the search for life, as a form of exploration, is illusory and inaccessible in the postmodern society of the 20th century. The protagonist of the novel *Gravity's Rainbow*, U. S. Army Captain Tyrone Slothrop, absurdly marks his debauched private life on a map, and these locations coincide with the German rocket landing sites. His inquiries and reconnaissance at the German rocket base once again follows the narrative pattern of the quest. However, Slothrop's quest can only be seen as a helpless wandering in the

age of technological dictatorship, a dying struggle for the domination of the law of "entropy". This allegorical plot is a metaphor for the disillusionment of mankind's attempt to fight against the "entropic" world and seek self-rescue. Pynchon is hailed as the "anti-entropy hero" for his allegorical narrative texts that rebel against and deconstruct the "entropic" world. While the traditional heroes of the quest, Oedipus, bravely challenged fate, the modern "anti-entropy heroes" are hesitant to go on a solitary journey in the modern wilderness, lost their way. By contrast, isn't this itself a black humor with allegorical colors? It is full of tragic irony and mockery.

5. Conclusion

In the context of postmodernism, it is natural that the concept of "entropy" is integrated into literature. When the entropy consciousness of "the world is going towards extinction" gradually enters the vision of scientists and humanistic intellectuals, Thomas Pynchon, with his sensitive and thoughtful personality, introduces the scientific concept of "entropy" into literature, to express his humanistic concern. From the perspective of postmodernism theory, the disorder and chaos of the universe emphasized by the "entropy" theory is consistent with the anti-rational and anti-centered theory of postmodern literature. Thomas Pynchon, as a postmodern writer with a strong sense of worry, took an original idea to incorporate the theory of "entropy" into his vision of literary creation, and constructed the "entropic" world as an artistic labyrinth of disorientation and fantasy using obscure and ambiguous symbolic metaphors, and attempted to use allegory as a means of creating the "entropic" world. Pynchon doesn't, like Sisyphus, break his head in front of the irresistible and rapidly falling boulder of the times, but resolutely faces the contemplation of the modern ruins and painstakingly pursues the hope of salvation and the way out.

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