

Blog Post 2: Intertextuality and Research

500-1000 words

Due Tuesday, March 18th for A-K

Due Tuesday, March 25th for L-Z

As should be quite clear by now, *Gravity's Rainbow* is a highly allusive, referential text that draws upon and points toward many other literary texts, moments in history, films, songs, historical figures, etc. Thomas Pynchon's novel is a fabulously intertextual text. And for this post I would like you to get into the archive a bit and see what you can do with Pynchon's wild referentiality.

For this post I would like you to *choose one or two intertextual references* that Pynchon makes, report on them, explore them, and see how you might read those references with regard to Pynchon's larger novelistic project. After you have selected a reference or allusion you find interesting, problematic, strange, confusing, etc., I would then like you to do the following things. First, consult Weisenburger's companion to the novel and/or the *Gravity's Rainbow Wiki* to see what they have to say about the reference. Where might they lead you?¹

Second, I would like you to do some further digging on your own. What else might you learn about this reference? For this you will want to get into the archive. Perhaps you might begin by consulting Wikipedia, but as this is a notoriously unscholarly and inaccurate resource, I do not want you to stop there. Get into the library, into the stacks, into PittCat's databases and see what more you can learn. Consult books and articles. Read contemporary newspapers.² If the reference is to a literary author, for instance Rilke, read some of Rilke's poems. In short, allow your research to expand your reading and understanding of what Pynchon is drawing upon.

Third, I would like you to report on your findings. For this post, quote the moment where your reference occurs at the top of your post. In your first paragraph, begin by describing the intertextual reference that Pynchon is making. Then provide some context for where and how this reference is made in the novel. In your second and third paragraphs, provide a short "research report" on your findings. What is significant about Pynchon's reference? Where is it situated in history? Where did this reference take you? What sources did you look at (cite them)? What interesting discoveries did you make? Were there dead ends? Why or why not? What further avenues for research might there be that you did not have time to follow up on?

Lastly, in however many paragraphs seem necessary, I would like you to then use what you have found out in your research to read the passage in which the reference occurs, and potentially use this reference to open up some other aspect of the novel. Basically, how might this reference allow you to interpret Pynchon's text? What kinds of close readings might it produce? What else in the novel might be important to consider with regard to your research? In short, what kind of *argument for an interpretation* does knowing about, researching, and understanding Pynchon's reference allow you to make?

Please provide a Works Cited list at the bottom of your post and be sure to format your citations correctly.

¹ Note: I will be also offering a small amount of extra-credit to anyone who locates an aspect of Pynchon's novel that is unaddressed by the *Pynchon Wiki* and then updates the Wiki themselves, adding that information. If you do this, provide a link to your addition to the *Pynchon Wiki* at the bottom of your post. Extra credit will be based on the rigor and care of your scholarship in adding to the Wiki.

² Looking at microfiche of *The New York Times* or *The London Times* during the period Pynchon represents in the novel can be highly illuminating, as he drew extensively on each newspaper.