

TIME AND ANACHRONISM IN PYNCHON'S *VINELAND*

A Genettean Analysis

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ABSTRACT: The aim of this research is to analyze, from a Genettean perspective of temporal order, the influence that numerous anachronies present in the discourse of *Vineland* (1990), by Thomas Pynchon, may have in the novel as a whole, either by means of analeptical and proleptical movements, or through immersions into hypodiegetic levels. In order to do so, the most widely used theoretical framework, provided by Gérard Genette, will be observed. Besides, this research attempts to evince its weaknesses when applied to postmodernist literature, assisted, moreover, by Brian McHale's approximations, so that an alternative model of analysis for non-sequential discourse will be suggested.

KEYWORDS: Pynchon, narratology, Genette, anachronism, time, order.

TIEMPO Y ANACRONÍA EN *VINELAND*, DE THOMAS PYNCHON: UN ANÁLISIS GENETTEANO

RESUMEN: El objetivo de este trabajo es analizar, desde una perspectiva genetteana del orden temporal, la incidencia que las numerosas anacronías presentes en el discurso de *Vineland* (1990), de Thomas Pynchon, tienen en el conjunto de la obra, bien a través de movimientos analépticos y prolépticos, bien mediante inmersiones en niveles hipodiegéticos. Para alcanzar dicho objetivo se presentará el marco teórico más utilizado en narratología, el propuesto por Gérard Genette. Asimismo, se observarán tanto las debilidades de esta propuesta en su aplicación sobre literatura postmodernista como la perspectiva más reciente de Brian McHale, a fin de establecer un modelo de análisis alternativo en aquellos discursos no secuenciales.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Pynchon, narratología, Genette, anacronismo, tiempo, orden.

INTRODUCTION

Vineland is one of the major novels by the acclaimed American writer Thomas Pynchon, best known for his masterpiece *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973). Seventeen years after that work, Pynchon published his fourth novel titled *Vineland* (1990), again characterized with his peculiar overwhelming narrative, popular culture references, varied registers, countless catalogues and a very particular taste for mystification. His complexity is likely to confound readers of *Vineland*, whose labyrinthian scheme lays on a systematic recovery of the past. This recursive reverberation will give the reader a peculiar view on the intricate background for the main characters to act the way they do in the diegetic present (1984). This architecture is the keystone that constitutes the focus of the attention of the present essay. Pynchon's work can be observed as an interesting source for potential narratological research since a quick search on library or database

concerning Pynchon will prove that most of this research is devoted to other fields such as political science, ideology, sociology or even physics, e.g., O'Bryan, M. (2016), Willman, S. (2010) and Grmusa, L. G. (2010).

This research aims to shed light on a purely narratological approximation to Pynchon's novel, since his works have been mostly observed from the perspective of varied fields except that of narratology. As a consequence, a proper narratological study focused on structural features, rather than in textual ones, is attempted. Thence, the objective of this analysis is two-fold, as two major theories are to be applied to *Vineland*: firstly, the Genettean theory of order, as an attempt to structure the convergence between story and discourse times. This is especially relevant in the case of novels whose structure tends to trace back (or forward) within the linearity of its events, thus interrupting the discourse flow; secondly, Brian McHale's approximation to new strategies in postmodernist writers and their tendency to construct deviations from the first narrative that may result in a complex design of hierarchical levels.

In order to do so, the first step is to dissect the novel so that it is viable to reshuffle the temporal sequence of the nuclear events and, therefore, a coherent skeleton of the discourse will be provided. With that raw material, a detailed analysis of some representative passages within the novel is attempted so that it can be checked if *Vineland* completely fits any of the patterns mentioned by the critics suggested in this research. In the case of the Genettean analysis, an ambitious attempt to offer an alternative to his formulaic system of anachronies is aimed. The challenge of this proposal is remarkable in that the milestone set by Genette works as the reference point for the research developed regarding time relations within narratological field since the seventies. Indeed, more recent studies, e.g., Richardson (2019) or Alfonso de Toro (2011), keep looking back at the systematization of time relations proposed by the French critic. Then, the feasibility of the aforementioned formulaic system is checked and contrasted with the original one. Categorizing the main types of analepses and prolepses within discourse will be also one of the goals regarding Genettean analysis of the text. On the other hand, the applicability of McHale's «Chinese-box worlds» system of articulation is to be contrasted as well (McHale, 2003: 112), especially in the immersion into sublevels of the diegesis which may complicate the reading of the novel.

One of the reasons for choosing *Vineland* for this kind of analysis is found in the numerous instances of going back and forth in time, the variety of their durations and ellipses, and the amount of characters with their respective focalizations. This is why I find it very useful (I dare say even imperative) to present a brief summary of the plot in order not to mislead the reader when referencing them throughout this research. Then, after various re-readings of the novel, the core of this project is presented via diagram. Nevertheless, I proposed a new way to face the study of nonlinear narratives which are characterized by a systematic alternation of the sequentiality, especially in postmodernist texts. In any case, both formulae are given, although the one expounded on is the new approximation proposed. My proposal, as an attempt to update this useful method, is to group events present in the discourse, which are somehow connected, into clusters labeled with the same letter.

In order to compound the formulae, there are two necessary steps: on the one hand, to filter the story-events that are relevant enough to be isolated and include them in the formulae; on the other hand, to sort the spans of time that are containers for the story-events lined up in the discourse. Chatman's concept of «event» (Chatman, 1978: 44) is going to anchor the first grouping, that of letters in the binary code of the formula. The latter is going to be sifted from the various time references mentioned in the novel, after

being listed and ordered chronologically, from the first time period (the twenties) until the end of the timeline (sometime in 1984). The list proposed consists of sixteen time segments in which the story-events can be pinned. These segments will be listed together with the diagram for a better comprehension.

Then, one may retrieve the resulting formula obtained by means of the new methodology proposed, which will be confronted with that following Genettean instructions. Finally, some selected fragments dealing with order and sublevels of the diegesis are proposed, so that Pynchonian superb elaboration and inventiveness can be more clearly observed.

GENETTEAN CONCEPT OF ORDER

The core of this research gravitates around Gérard Genette's treatment of time, which was proposed in his renowned *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. It is self-evident that this theory worked as a milestone for narratologists since its appearance in the seventies. In Seymour Chatman's words, «Gérard Genette's elegant analysis of the time-relations between story- and discourse-time must form the basis of any current discussion» (1978: 63). In other words, Genettean work in the field of story and discourse time sets the paradigm for every research of literary work. Most of subsequent researches about time and plot cite his work. May this project serve as an example of it: every single manual consulted and contained in the bibliography quotes Genettean treatment of order, duration and frequency in the time relation between discourse and story. The fact that Genettean model is still the ruling paradigm in narratological study of time works both as a virtue because of its versatility but also as a weakness, since there has not been any considerable advance within narratological study for the last 40 years regarding the study of order. This evinces the lack of progress within this field of study and demands new approximations to the issue.

Due to the vastness of a hypothetical resulting project based on the three parameters previously mentioned, the time analysis of Thomas Pynchon's *Vineland* will be fully devoted to order (*ordre*). Regarding this parameter, Theresa Bridgeman finely foregrounds the pivotal role order runs, which is intimately linked to the way they are disposed in the discourse:

All reading is a combination of memory and anticipation. Our focus on whatever moment in the text we have reached will invariably be colored by our memory of what has gone before and our anticipation of what is to come. The order in which events are presented in the texts is therefore crucial to our temporal experience of narrative (Bridgeman, 2007: 57).

Ordre, or order, is an axial parameter for literary critics in their research about sequentiality, causality or (non)linear narratives. Thus, the purpose of the project is to check the anomalous disposition of events in discourse, which results in variations in the chrono-logical timeline or, in other words, anachronisms. It is precisely anachronism what is to be foregrounded. The systematicity of them all along *Vineland* makes this novel a very interesting specimen for this sort of research.

Genette proposes a formal analysis based on a binary coding of letters and numbers, so that letters enunciate the sequence of events present in the narrative, whereas the order in the story is represented by numbers. In the case of chronological order both

in discourse and story, the resulting diagram would be: A1-B2-C3-D4-E5-F6. However, this is usually an illusion, since the feasibility of such attempt is hardly imaginable. Narrative discourse is usually interrupted by anachronous sections which may go back to previous instances or, conversely, go forward from the narrative now. As a result, the existence of what is to be called *zero degree* «that would be the condition of perfect temporal correspondence between narrative and story» is, as Genette points out, «more hypothetical than real» (Genette, 1980: 36).

The next step is to provide a formula which functions as a clarifier of the time disposition of such events. For doing so, Genette proposes a twofold solution: on the one hand, a simpler procedure which functions by lining up the alphanumeric narrative sections only separated by hyphens. This is, for instance, the formula that he provides to represent *Jean Santeuil*'s non-linear disposition: A2-B1-C2-D1-E2-F1-G2-H1-I2 (Genette, 1980: 38). Nevertheless, this analysis is not sufficient since it is too simplistic in a way, as stated in the methodology section. The dislocation between story and discourse time by means of this formulaic strategy seems to be the only reason to be of such procedure, thus leaving apart its potentialities for other forms of narratological research. In any case, Genette himself proposes a more profound procedure within this logic which borrows syntactic relations such as coordination and subordination so that the issue which concerns us can be more profoundly scrutinized. As Genette puts it: «This analysis of syntactic relationships (subordination and coordination) between sections now allows us to replace our first formula, which admitted only positions, with a second, which recognizes connections and interlockings: A2[B1]C2[D1(E2)F1(G2)H1]I2» (Genette, 1980: 40). This distinction may serve as starting point of Genettean analysis of order. Therefore, apart from lining the narrative sections up, the different temporal references and their interconnections may be equally explored.

BRIAN MCHALE AND POSTMODERNIST TIME STRATEGIES

Apart from the rupture of linear temporality by means of distortion of the concept of order (that is, basically by means of analeptical or proleptical breaks), postmodernist narrative is in many cases characterized by sprouting interest in hypodiegetic interruptions. In order to understand such strategies, it is highly recommended to examine Brian McHale's appraisal on Postmodernist fiction devices, «strategies involving recursive structures- nesting or embedding, as in a set of Chinese boxes or Russian *babushka* dolls [...], have the effect of interrupting and complicating the ontological "horizon" of the fiction, multiplying its worlds» (McHale, 2003: 112). Such embeddedness may follow a variety of shapes, McHale proposes everlasting loops (114), misleading of the reader between two hierarchical narrative levels via *trompe-l'œil* (115), *mise en abyme* (124) or Genettean concept of metalepsis (119).

Back to Genette, the problem with such a taxonomic study like his is that it is restricted to a standardized variety of narratives. As Brian Richardson points out, «these categories do not work if applied to many late modernist and postmodern texts, since they are predicated on distinctions that experimental writers are determined to preclude, deny, or confound» (2006: 47). That is why Richardson proposes up to six forms of experimentation in narrative temporality or, in his own words, «violations of realistic temporality» (48), that could help categorizing recent works of narrative in which the author tricks temporality not only as an instrument, but as the central element of the work.

Despite the efforts made by McHale and Richardson, none of their models fits the time structure of the narrative of *Vineland*, although McHale's view on the so-called «Chinese-box worlds» will be helpful when analyzing some scenes from the novel.

In any case, Thomas Pynchon's *Vineland* is a hard to catalogue novel. Genette's treatment of time relations between story and discourse is more easily applied in traditional novels in which a chronological sequence was followed. It is a good approximation to the issue, a starting point that may well serve to set the structure of the kind of narrative mentioned before, but difficulties show up when chronological order is hardly recognizable or one of the purposes of the author is to disorient or mislead the reader. Richardson, revisiting the evolution of narrative temporality (Richardson, 2006: 604), recalls a very suitable quotation by Jesse Matz in relation to this subject:

[traditional] novels tend to put things into chronological order, to tell their stories in linear fashion, and to Ford and other modern writers this practice seemed artificial. For even if events happen in linear time, we tend not to experience them that way. At any moment, memories intervene, taking us back into the past even as we proceed into the future; or hopes project us forward, coloring the present with expectations of change (Matz, 2004: 61-2).

This point reinforces the reason why Richardson is interested and foregrounds the serious progress made by some modern authors such as Joyce, Woolf or Proust, who faced the necessity of evolving the previous proceedings regarding chronological narrative, conversely rather more focused on how the subject perceives it. In any case, what Matz tries to emphasize is how a group of innovative novelists «tried to break the sequence, to put things out of order, to work from the present back into the past, to dissolve linear time» (Matz, 2004: 62).

At this point it is advantageous to check Abbott's interpretation of time and narrative. According to Abbott, «narrative is the principal way in which our species organizes its understanding of time». In other words, time is narrativized so that it allows «the events themselves to create the order of time» (Abbott, 2002: 3). This functions to foreground the saliency of time at the narrative level. In this regard, Chatman accounts for time as a pivotal structural feature at three different levels: it implies wholeness, since «events and existents are single and discrete, [...] the narrative is a sequential composite»; it implies self-regulation, its «structure maintains and closes itself»; and undergoes a transformation process, for instance, «the author elects to order the reporting of events according to the causal sequence or to reverse them in a flashback effect» (Chatman, 1978: 20-21). Then, the mastery of Pynchon stands out because of his willing for composing a puzzling mosaic discourse out of a relatively simple story, that of four generations of Californians living in the West Coast.

VINELAND'S PLOT OVERVIEW

This is a novel about the recent history of America seen through the eyes of four generations of Californians that will thread the discourse. The unraveling of this thread is part of its challenging reading, since it is characterized by a «yoyo-movement», as Bénédicte Chorier terms it in her essay (1994: 350). The beginning is set in 1984, likewise the ending. But the novel is characterized by multiple characters with a past that becomes a recursive element and shapes the way in which discourse is presented, which is puzzling

and challenging for the reader. This fact makes it advisable to introduce a brief summary of the plot, since multiple references to «kernel» and «satellite» events will rise and become a substantial part of the project, being kernels those nuclear events whose removal would severely damage the overall structure of the narrative and satellites those which work as supporting elements (Chatman, 1978: 53).

Zoyd and her daughter, Prairie, are living in Vineland, a fictitious Californian town where they enjoy a peaceful life. Then, an undercover federal agent, old acquaintance of Zoyd, looks for him and warns him about Brock Vond, who is prosecuting Zoyd's ex-wife and everyone related to her. Frenesi is the star of the novel and most of the characters gravitates around her, although her «present» action is very little if compared with the rest of the characters. She appears most of the times by means of characters recalling their memories, obsessions and watching their video-recordings. Zoyd and Prairie separate, being Prairie the one that seems to undergo a teleological process, via a journey with her unknown mother, Frenesi, as the final destination. Meanwhile, she will get to know DL and Takeshi, and their respective pasts. One also gets to know the origins of Prairie's family up to her great-grandmother, that is to say, four generations are presented; DL's family is also retrospectively observed, but only part of it; Takeshi is solely presented and forms a link between Vond and DL in the past, and DL and Prairie at the present first narrative. There are other supporting characters that develop necessary subnarratives that help to understand the wholeness of the work: Weed Atman who is a college Professor assassinated due to a conspiracy instigated by Vond and secondarily by Frenesi; Sasha and Hub (Frenesi's parents) at the family root and Vato and Blood, who incidentally will pick up other characters in their tow truck. At all events, Vond blackmailing Frenesi's family and hunting her along decades, together with Prairie's journey to find her mother, are the only unifying threads to which the rest of disruptions are attached. At the end of the novel, Vato and Blood pick up Vond after his mission to kidnap Prairie has been frustrated, and then he literally vanishes. Then Prairie relaxes in the Woods, falling asleep, and being awoken shortly after by her dog Desmond.

TIME REFERENCES IN *VINELAND*

Before a time diagram presenting the order of the nuclear events as they are disposed in the discourse is given, it is equally important to understand the time references hidden in the novel. In the case of *Vineland*, temporal references are mostly blurred so that an important effort on the reader's behalf is required. There are not many definite dates, which is quite remarkable considering the important amount of anachronies throughout the discourse. The narrative *now* can be dated in 1984, date which only appears six times. The other definite dates mentioned are 1967 (twice), 1953, 1956 and 1970 (once each of them). There are up to 21 more dates but basically specifying the release of movies and songs, since Pynchon is very fond of catalogues. Fortunately, the narrator keeps leaving some temporal clues for the reader to trace back some more or less accurate range of time milestones. In this regard, some indefinite markers are: decades, «1940s» appears once, «sixties» is mentioned 20 times, «1960s» once, «seventies» and «1970s» are mentioned respectively once and «1980s» up to three times; presidential references, such as «Reagan» (governor of California between 1967-1975 and president of the United States between 1981 and 1989) or «Reaganomics» which are mentioned up to 20 times, «Nixon» (at presidency between 1969 and 1974) or «Nixonian» 16 times, «Kennedy» (in office between 1961 and 1963) is also mentioned three times; subjective

references, e.g., «this year», which is used five times; and some other less frequent time references such as the «General Strike» of 1934 or the «postwar» period. Thus, thanks to conjectures inferable from socio-political, historical context and musical, televisual and other forms of catalogues, the reader may contextualize herself in time in order to position herself in the narrative time. In any case, in order to keep going in this prospecting manoeuvre, these are the proposed enumerated spans of time according to the story-events: 1, the 1920s; 2, the 1930s; 3, the 1940s; 4, the Vietnam War period (1955-1975); 5, the early 1960s; 6, the middle 1960s; 7, later in the middle 1960s; 8, the late 1960s; 9, the early 1970s; 10, the late 1970s; 11, the early 1980s; 12, early in 1984; 13, later in 1984; 14, subsequent period in 1984; 15, penultimate period in 1984; 16, final span of time in 1984.

PROPOSED CHRONOLOGY AND TIME SEGMENTS

Once that all these time signs have been noted down and ordered, it is feasible to provide a list of the chronology of them all, which will also serve to understand the numbering within the formulaic binary code. Therefore, the grouping of these dates is done according to their homogeneity, not mainly in time length, but because of the density of kernels or nuclear events contained within their temporal span. This is the reason for setting a number to a section whose narrative segment is composed of one or two kernels (time section 1, for instance), whereas another decade must be divided in various sections, as in the case of the decade of the sixties, which is subdivided in sections 4,5,6,7 and 8. As a consequence, the list of the time sections to understand the temporality of the formulae proposed results as follows:

1. The decade of the twenties: this section encapsulates the romance between Jess and Eula.
2. The decade of the thirties: it embraces the adolescence of Sasha and her romance with Hub in the context of the General Strike of 1934.
3. The forties: it contains narrative segments of Hub and Sasha having Frenesi parallel to Moody and Norleen rising DL after the Second World War.
4. Some years during the Vietnam War (1955-1975): Vato and Blood narrate the origin of their relationship at this period. There is also a satellite contextualized in that period, that included in the medallion inscription of Virgil («Sparky») Ploce that disrupts the narrative to a hypodiegetic level unfolding the story of this American martyr.
5. Early sixties: it is composed of the narrative segments of DL ending up in Kunoichi Retreat for the first time and the omen made by DL's Sensei about her in a time she will use her lethal ninja skills.
6. Middle sixties: this is the time when DL and Frenesi meet at 24fps and the conspiracy and assassination of Weed Atman takes place.
7. Second part of the middle sixties: it consists of the rescue mission DL runs for saving Frenesi, before taking her to Mexico. Brock Vond is also part of it, since he has a conversation with Frenesi after Atman's assassination and reacts furiously to Frenesi's escape.
8. Late sixties: this span of time is mainly focused on Frenesi and Zoyd as singles and the way they met during one of the concerts run by The Corvairs. It also includes a prolepsis about how Sasha and Zoyd will have to deal with each other over the coming years.

9. Early seventies: this temporal segment is closer to the first narrative and, therefore, more prolific in kernels. The narrative segments of Frenesi and Zoyd romance, Prairie's birth, Frenesi suffering from postpartum depression and the whole Kahuna Airlines episode is covered by time section 9.

10. Late seventies: it deals with the narrative segments of Wayvone Sr., Vond, Takeshi and DL entanglement, mostly located in Tokyo; Frenesi having gone undercover; and Vato and Blood picking up thanathoid Weed Atman with their tow truck.

11. Early years of the decade of the eighties: it spans the development of both families, Prairie and Zoyd and Frenesi and Flash, and also Hector Zuñiga's crusade for hiring Frenesi as the director of his film.

12. Early 1984: section 12 contains the beginning of the novel, the moment in which Zoyd Wheeler is presented, together with his daughter Prairie and Hector Zuñiga, and its immediate subsequent events such as Prairie leaving her hometown with The Vomitones rock band and meeting Wayvone Sr. and DL.

13. At some time later in 1984: it covers the time span while Prairie and DL are at Kunoichi Retreat and, later on, flee from there accompanied by Takeshi Fuminota.

14. Later in 1984: section 14 contains most of the narrative segments happening in sections H and J, when Prairie, Takeshi and DL reach Ditzah's and decide to go back to Shade Creek, near Vineland. Concurrently, Frenesi is determined to fly to Vineland accompanied by Flash and Justin.

15. Sometime later in 1984: it contains the happenings taking place at the Traverse-Becker family reunion in the woods, such as the first conversations between Prairie and Frenesi, Flash and his in-laws and Brock Vond's attempt to kidnap and arrest Prairie.

16. End of 1984 span: this section covers the very final narrative segment in the novel, the parallel moment in which Brock Vond is picked up by Vato and Blood and literally vanishes and, somewhere in the woods, Prairie falls asleep and is awakened by her dog Desmond.

GENETTEAN FORMULAIC SYSTEM REVISITED

For obvious reasons, the present research is to be focused only in the macrostructure of the novel, since an analysis at the micro-narrative level would have no end and its vastness would make its formulaic transcription immeasurable.

Besides, as anticipated before, a more adaptable version of formulaic system is proposed, taking as a starting point the Genettean method. Due to the extension of the resulting formula and the interest in interrupting the linearity of the narrative in postmodernist writing, I propose a more versatile procedure. Thereby, the formula consists of narrative segments that, in many cases, encapsulates nuclear story-events that took place previously in the timeline, even doubly, or very likely to take place in the future (as a sort of premonition) but, in any case, as a part-whole relation of a major narrative segment in the discourse. This is the reason why I found more adequate to reduplicate the letter of analeptical narrative segments that form an attachment for the major letter and a diminuendo symbol as a pointing arrow that may help indicating the forward movement along the timeline in the (less frequent) instances of prolepsis. As a result, the suggested formula results: (A11-AA8)(B12-BB9)(C12-CC9-C>8-CC9)(D11-DD3-DDD1-DD2-D11)E12(F13-FF6-FFF3-F>5-FF5-F13)(GG10-G13-GG10-GGG4-

GG10-G13)(H14-HH6-H6-H14-H14-H4-HH7-HH7)(II9-III2-I>9-II10)(J14-JJ11-J11-JJ10-J14)(K0-K15)L16.

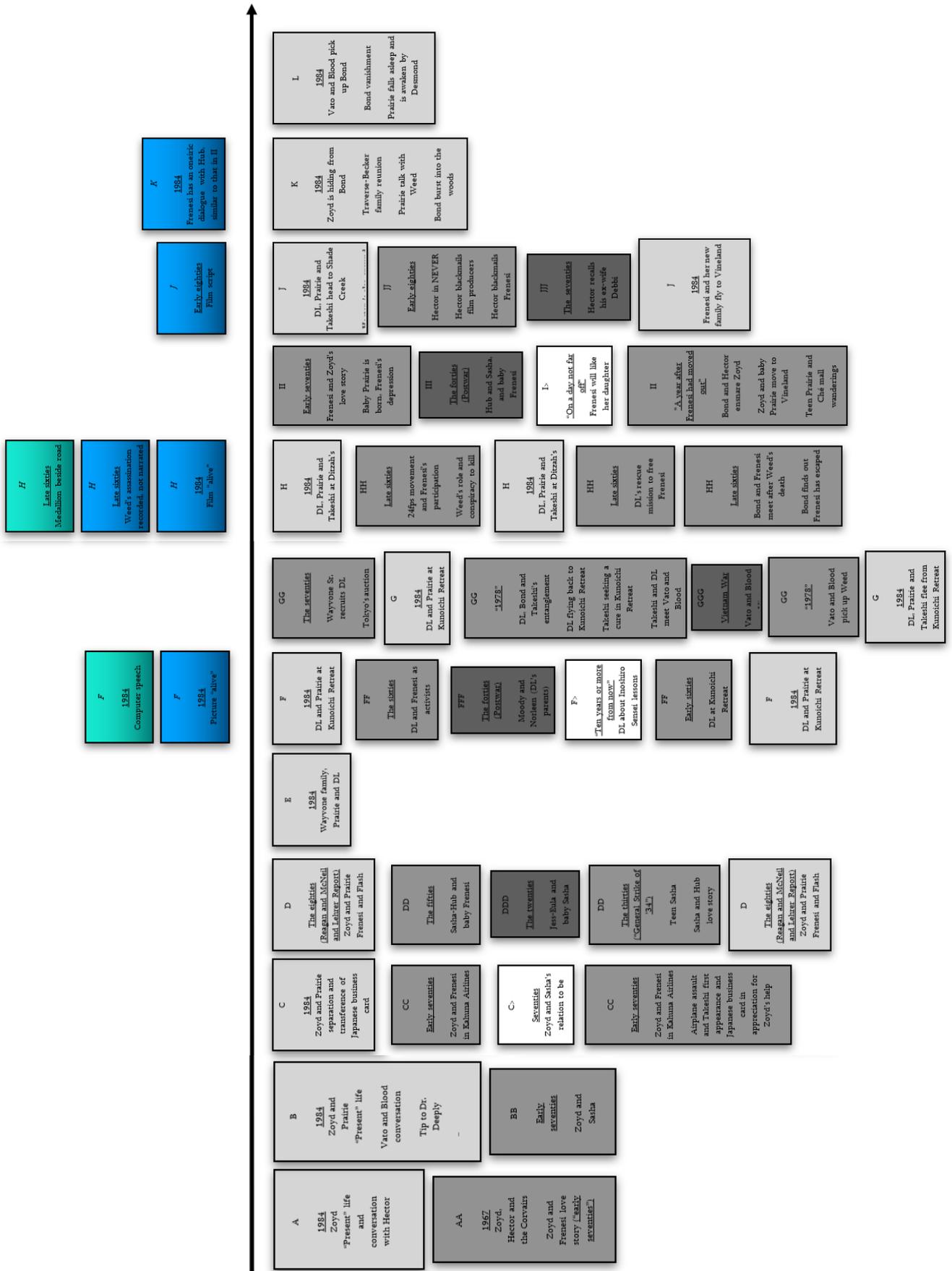
On the other hand, the Genettean formula is also presented, so that it can be compared to the one previously proposed as the parameters guiding its composition: A11-B8-C12-D9-E12-(F9-G8-H9)-I11-{J3-(K1)-L2-}M11-N12-O13-P13-{Q6-(S3)-T5-U5}-V13-W10-X13-{Y10-(Z4)-a10}-b13-c14-{d6-(e6-f14)}g14-(h4-i7-j7)-k9-(l2)-m15-n10-o14-p11-q11-r10-s14-t15-u0-v16

DIAGRAM OF *VINELAND*'S TIMELINE

In the next page there is a full-page diagram presenting, as announced in the methodology section, the nuclear events and its disposition along the discourse. In order to understand it, it is necessary to observe the colour range and the narrowness of the boxes since this is the way proposed to represent each temporal or hypodiegetic disruption which deviates from the horizontal axis.

This diagram consists of a horizontal axis representing the forward movement of time moving along the arrow, but also serves to separate the two forms of interruptions in the discourse. Below the horizontal axis, the different analeptical and proleptical interruptions based on Genettean study of order. Above, another type of disruption in narrative temporality. The gradient in grey color and the narrowness of the box indicates how deep the analeptical immersion undergoes whereas proleptical movement is represented in white. When the disruption has to do with another typology, as proposed by McHale, the box is positioned over the time arrow and colored in blue. The system that vertebrates the diagram is inspired by Genettean formulaic idea, since subsequent order analysis after Genette have looked back at him.

Time and Anachronism in Pynchon's *Vineland*: a Genettean Analysis



ANALYSIS OF VINELAND'S TIME SCHEME

Now that structure of the novel is exposed, the next step in analyzing the novel is to decode the narrative segments that build up the whole work: the novel is an example of in extrema res narration, since it begins at the 11th of the 16 temporal segments of the proposed narrative timeline. A11 introduces Zoyd Wheeler, who cannot be empowered with a protagonist role though. The time narrated is 1984 and the action takes place in Vineland. This fact can be considered as a hint about when and where the unfolding of events will happen after all the comings and goings throughout the novel. Subsequent to it, the first jump back in time takes places when Zoyd's life as a young adult in 1967 is presented and lasts until he meets Frenesi in the early seventies (AA8). Frenesi and Zoyd's love story is then interrupted to be back in 1984 (B12). The conflicts between Zoyd, Hector and Dr. Deeply and the threat looming over father and daughter lead them to flee out of their hometown. They are backed by Vomitones rock band, which serves as a sort of reverberation of Zoyd's music band in the late sixties, the Corvairs, which were presented previously in narrative segment AA8.

During the next eight narrative segments discourse sways between story-events of the 1970s and 1980s. BB9 consist of a brief analepsis to a conversation in the early seventies in which Zoyd blames himself for being cheated by Frenesi, just before being right back to 1984 in C12, at which point father and daughter separate and Prairie is given a Japanese business card. This amulet shapes a zig-zag movement in time, so that CC9 dives into the early seventies in order to explain its origin. It is in CC9 when reader is narrated Zoyd and Frenesi's time at Kahuna Airlines. This story-event is interrupted once, by means of a proleptical narrative segment of a commentary about the relation to be between mother-in-law and Zoyd in C>8. Both CC9s envelopes the proleptical movement mentioned before.

D11 goes just beneath the narrative now, in the early eighties according to some contextual references (Regan period and *McNeil and Lehrer Report* TV show). Then, what can be termed as a «genealogical tide» structures the next four narrative segments.¹ Firstly, an analepsis takes the reader to the 1940s (DD3) in order to show Frenesi's first grade of kinship: Sasha and Hub, Frenesi's parents, are portrayed as well as Frenesi being born. Then, another step in the family tree presents Sasha's ascendants and Sasha's own birth in the 1920s (DDD1). At this point, in the first temporal story-event of them all, the double analepsis goes in reverse back to the early eighties, firstly recalling Sasha as a young adult meeting Hub in the context of the General Strike of 1934 (in DD2), then restored from this double analepsis in the eighties, Frenesi living together with Flash and their son Justin in the early eighties (D11). E12 functions as a link to connect two of the main (female) characters in the novel, Prairie and DL, the latter who will accompany Prairie throughout her quest. They meet at Wayvone's mansion, who will work as nexus doubly in the novel: DL and Prairie meet at his place, and DL and him will try to physically encounter Brock Vond in order to kill him, which unexpectedly ends up putting DL and Takeshi into contact.

In F13 Prairie and DL arrive to Kunoichi Retreat again in 1984, which actually is a recursive place in DL's past. F13 consists of an interruption in the narrative dynamics

¹ This is the term I suggest for a very specific sort of anachrony. It is characterized by an analeptical movement into the roots of a family tree, after which the level of diegesis that served as starting point is recovered. This term will appear in the following pages applied to selected narrative segments present in the novel.

by means of a computer language speech. Thanks to continuation of *F6* the stillness of a computer picture plays a vivid action in *FF6*, back in the middle sixties, when DL and Frenesi met in a demonstration in the peak of their role as activists. Again, section *F* operates similarly to section *D*, as a genealogical tide, this time ascending only one step into DL's kindred. So, *FFF3* goes back in time to the Postwar period when DL's parents, Moody and Norleen met, raised DL and she enrolled into Inoshiro Sensei Dojo. Then the analepsis is broken by means of a prolepsis that foresees the result of these lessons put into practice in *F>5*, right before ending up in *FF5* at Kunoichi Retreat for her very first time (*FF5*).

Location coincides in place, but not in time with *F13*, when DL is back to Kunoichi Retreat, together with Prairie in this occasion. «Section *G*» remains in temporal span 10, that is, in the late seventies. The relation between Wayvone, Sr. recruiting DL in order to kill Brock Vond is introduced here (*GG10*). It is interrupted by a return to 1984 in *G13*, right before unfolding the relation between Takeshi and DL, his unfruitful assassination at the hands of DL and the incipient relation until they end up at Kunoichi Retreat. This narrative segment dives into the Vietnam War (*GGG4*) due to Vato and Blood's appearance, the very same that bring the reader back to the late seventies in *GG10*, when they pick up thanatoid Weed Atman. At the end of the cluster, DL, Prairie and Takeshi bring the reader to the surface of 1984 in *G13*. The three of them, having escaped from the besieged Retreat, take shelter at Ditzah's home (*H14*), where they «watch» 24fps movement past (*HH6*) by means of the films recorded (*H14*) and, going one step further, the «recording of the recorded» assassination of Weed Atman (*H6*). *H7* serves to remind the reader that she is one level down from the 1984 narrative segment due to Prairie's comments on the film being played before her eyes. On the road towards the double *HH7* segments, there is a brief interruption in the narrative level to recall the story of Virgil («Sparky») Ploce, an undercover agent who tried to kill Fidel Castro (*H4*). Then, the double *HH7* segments reproduce different nuclear events with a very slight variation in the sequential order: DL heads to Vond's headquarters to rescue Frenesi after Weed's death, whereas the second *HH7* is a previous encounter between Vond and Frenesi after Weed's death and then Vond's reaction when he discovers Frenesi has been released.

«Section *I*» brings again the family realm of Frenesi into focus. This cluster begins with *II9* and the love romance between Zoyd and Frenesi, resulting into Prairie's birth and the subsequent postpartum depression. Prairie's birth echoes Frenesi's own birth in *III2*. This tidal movement is similar to that in section *D*. Then, a proleptical prediction foresees maternal affection in *I>9*. Section *I* is closed in *II10*, thus late seventies, with Zoyd having accepted Vond's bribe, moving out and Prairie (via elipsis) become an adolescent. *J14* spots DL, Prairie and Takeshi heading to Shade Creek, although the linking character this time is Hector Zuñiga. In *JJ11* Hector recounts his problems in *NEVER*, his intention to film a movie by means of blackmailing renown producers and persuading Frenesi to direct it. There is a short analepsis when he recalls his ex-wife Debbi in *JJJ10*, and the analeptical circle is closed in *J14*, back to 1984, this time spotting Frenesi and her family in their way to Vineland (although Vineland's airport is besieged by Vond).

All of the last happenings in the novel develop in 1984 in the surroundings of Vineland. Zoyd tries to hide from Bond, then the Traverse-Becker family get-together takes place and Prairie is about to be kidnapped by Vond in *K15*. At once, Frenesi seems

to establish an oneiric relation with Hub which can be considered as an achrony (*K0*),² as it happened in II9. The final narrative segment is also placed in 1984, in L16, when Vato and Blood drive Vond to his succeeding vanishment and Prairie sleep before she is awoken by her dog Desmond.

As it can be inferred from this first approximation to the structure of the novel, the recursive embeddedness of the text digging into the past seems to weigh the relevance of the past narrative segments over present events. Although the narrative present is located in 1984, most of the kernel events are retrospectively recovered. This feature is mentioned by Chorier (1994: 350), who observes the strategy of the author as follows: «Pynchon goes through the century, writes a novel where exploration of the past is the main motive, although recreating a past where the most relevant national episodes are absent (nothing about the Second World War, and fugitive allusions to Korea and Vietnam)».³

Nonetheless, there is a dominant tendency in the novel which consists in an oscillating movement along the timeline, a coming back and forth via analepsis and prolepsis, «story keeps returning, past and present are the poles of a yoyo movement, a movement that resembles that of Pig Bodine, although it ceases in a last episode where everything comes back at the original place which gives name to the novel» (Chorier, 1994: 350).⁴

SELECTED FRAGMENTS

In order to explain in further detail, the anachronies present in the discourse, mostly by means of analepses, a selection of fragments for analysis is proposed so that they may help to clarify the way they vertebrate the novel and serve as the substrate of what I have called «genealogical tide». When a first attempt to categorize or label such anachronic movement within discourse, the first candidate to be utilized was Clayton's «genome time». This concept, according to his creator, «fuses the temporal timescale of everyday life with the immense impersonal timescale of the species» (Clayton, 2013: 58). Thus, it certainly fits in that it is a blending of a personal experiencing of time (individual, so to speak) and a time that looks back in one's roots. Nevertheless, the vastness of this second aspect, more related to the very concept of Darwinian «species» made me consider a more specific concept that could utterly adjust to this analeptical movement led by ancestor's kinship, so that Clayton's proposal was not suitable enough for the present subject matter.

² Genette provides the following explanation for this concept: «an event we must ultimately take to be dateless and ageless: to be an achrony» (Genette, 1980: 84).

³ This and all subsequent quotations from Chorier are my own translations from the French language. «Pynchon traverse le siècle, écrit un roman dont l'exploration du passé est le ressort principal, mais il recrée un passé d'où sont absents les épisodes nationaux les plus marquants (rien sur la Deuxième Guerre mondiale, des allusions fugitives à la Corée et au Viêt Nam)».

⁴ «L'histoire y revient sans cesse, passé et présent sont les pôles d'un mouvement de yoyo, mouvement qui rappelle celui de Pig Bodine, mais semble s'arrêter dans une dernière péripétie où tout revient au lieu originel qui donne son nom au roman».

ANALEPTICAL MOVEMENTS

The recurrent appearance of passages from the past is implemented, predominantly, by means of external analepses, since their main convenience according to Genette is «to fill out the first narrative by enlightening the reader on one or another “antecedent”» (1980: 50).

In the first case, there is a significant passage in which, as can be inferred from the term proposed, there is a tidal movement that begins in Frenesi's reality until it reaches the past of her family (sometime in the decade of the twenties, thus in temporal section 1), just to be right back to the present moment at the end of the section. This way, in narrative segment D11 of the formula Frenesi manages her place somewhere in a Sun Belt city, sometime in the early eighties. Whenever she settles down in a new location due to her undercover position, she remembers her daughter Prairie and tries to imagine how she would look today, since she left her when she was just a baby. While having a conversation with Flash, her current husband, her mind flies away back in time to recall herself growing up in the fifties, which means going down one step into this past sublevel:

Frenesi let him (Flash) rave on. Her childhood and adolescence had been full enough of taps on the phone, cars across the street, name-calling and fights in school. Not exactly a red-diaper baby, she'd grown up more on the fringes of the political struggle in Hollywood back in the fifties (Pynchon, 1990: 74).

This device, a sort of incursion into memories that triggers the analepsis, is precisely the very same used to present her mother's youth: «“Oh, Frenesi”, her mother would sigh when presented with this costume drama, “if you'd been there, you'd chirp a different tune”» (*Vineland* 75). Thanks to this linking step the analeptical jump into the forties is fulfilled and developed in further detail and, what is more, provides a proper spring to achieve the decade of the twenties (DD3). In this time segment, not Frenesi, but Sasha experiences a maturation process which is explained by the occupational «accident» her father suffers. This triggers DDD1:

She'd come down by old 101 from the redwoods to the City, a teenage beauty with the same blue eyes and wolf-whistle legs her daughter would have, out on her own early because of too many mouths to feed at home. Her father, Jess Traverse, trying to organize loggers in Vineland Humboldt, and Del Norte, had suffered an accident arranged by one Crocker «Bud» Scantling for the Employers' Association (Pynchon, 1990: 75).

Then Sasha stops her remembrance and gets back to her youth at the city. Therefore, the decade of the twenties is left in order to continue into the thirties. This is one of the few examples in which reader is provided with a definite date, although it is not entirely definite. She refers to the offspring of the General Strike of 1934, that is, a later point in time to the referred date: «Sasha left for the City, got work, began sending back what she could. She found a rip-roaring union town, still riding the waves of euphoria from the General Strike of '34» (Pynchon, 1990: 76-77).

The following interruption is hard to locate in diegetic terms. It is imprecise to assure it as an interjection made by Frenesi during the remembrance effort undergone by her mother Sasha, or as a self-remembrance of Frenesi herself when she remembers the precise moment when she interjected her mother. In any case, it is a moment in which Sasha is talking to her daughter in a maternalistic manner, which can be inferred by the

term of endearment, similar to that used by her father when calling her «my young gaffer»: «“What about other women?” Frenesi wondered. “My, what you'd call, sisters in the struggle, ooh no, no, my poor deluded pumpkin, forget that. They were all preoccupied. Having affairs while the husbands were overseas”». (Pynchon, 1990: 77).

This is one of the instances by which McHale's work can be said to be essential in reading postmodernist texts, if a full understanding of the work is aimed. Pynchon's keen enthusiasm for this sort of diegetic transgressions, trying to disorient the reader while discerning which is the hypodiegetic level she is facing at a given line, is not new nor unique in this particular novel. As McHale puts it, «postmodernist texts tend to encourage *trompe-l'œil*, deliberately misleading the reader into regarding an embedded, secondary world as the primary, diegetic world» (2003: 115). This is peculiarly significant since this genealogical tide here happens at an early stage of the novel, before the first 80 pages, so that the reader has not yet a panoramic view. The lack of insight of the wholeness of the work makes it even more difficult to situate oneself before the variety of diegetic levels. Besides, the first and supposedly to be the main character, Zoyd, is left aside and the reader is left adrift sailing through the act of remembering of two women, mother and daughter, recalling nearly six decades of their family tree past.

Gradually, the narrative gets back to the original point it was before such cascade of analeptical movements. Frenesi in her childhood remembers how she felt while listening to these retrospective stories told by her parents and the narrator inserts a very sharp comment which seems so Pynchonian, specially threaded to the present project:

Not for the first time, Frenesi found she'd been switching her eyes back and forth, as if cutting together reverse shots of two actors. She had already been through a few of these what Hub called «exchanges of views». They ended with everybody screaming and throwing household items, edible and otherwise. She knew her parents liked to proceed backward, into events of the past, in particular the fifties, the anticommunist terror in Hollywood then, the conspiracy of silence up to the present day (Pynchon, 1990: 80-81).

This analeptical movement is thus self-contained at the moment it retakes the time of the first narrative:

In the years since she'd departed the surface of everyday civilian life, Frenesi had made it a point, maybe a ritual, whenever business brought her to L.A., to drive out east of La Brea, down into those flatland residential blocks, among the pale smudged chalet-roofed bungalows and barking dogs and lawn mowers, to find the place again, and cruise the block in low the way the FBI had all through her childhood, looking for Sasha but never seeing her (Pynchon, 1990: 82).

«CHINESE-BOX WORLDS»

Section F may well serve to explain the second type of interruptions proposed in the methodology of the project. Apart from temporal deviations, *Vineland* diegetic worlds are recursively interrupted by means of other strategies such as «Chinese-box worlds», as McHale terms them.⁵ This systematic maneuver undeniably complicates the reading process, specially when recursive nesting is subsequently attached, which can be

⁵ This is actually the title of the eighth chapter within *Postmodernist Fiction*, by Brian McHale, listed in the bibliography.

considered a feature of postmodernist works of fiction, and particularly significant in the case of Thomas Pynchon. Pynchon's taste for this stratagem can be explained in the same way McHale shows the Chinese-box disposition, since this «strategy have the effect of interrupting and complicating the ontological “horizon” of the fiction, multiplying its worlds, and laying bare the process of world-construction» (McHale, 2003: 112). In the example of F13, and its immediate diving into F6 (a considerable temporal jump), the shift is not concealed but exposed:

Back down in the computer library, in storage, quiescent ones and zeros scattered among millions of others, the two women, yet in some definable space, continued on their way across the low-lit campus, persisting, recoverable, friends by the time of this photo for nearly a year, woven together in an intricacy of backs covered, promises made and renegotiated, annoyances put up with, shortcuts worn in, ESP beyond the doubts of either (Pynchon, 1990: 115).

Despite the fact this example is not hinted but given, its importance resides in being narrated by a computer machine. In the previous paragraphs, DL and Prairie are simply observing some pictures in the computer, just still images scrutinized by the abandoned girl in her personal quest to find out information about her mother, but as soon as the computer is left alone as the two women go to sleep, those images stored in the hard disk of the computer become vividly inspirited and this clears the way for the rest of section F analeptical path. So, if taking McHale's approximation to this episode, the reader faces a staircase from a first narrative level to bound diegetic sublevels. The first layer (first narrative or starting point) would be that of F13, when Prairie and DL are watching the pictures on the screen. This leads to a story-within-a-picture-within-a-computer, which positions the reader in the narrative events of FF6 at the demonstrations time-located in the sixties. The recursive structure goes deeper into its embedding and, because of a conversation between Frenesi and DL after the prior being rescued, the observation of a picture provokes the immersion in a lower sublevel. In other words, reader undergoes the narrative path of a story-within-a-picture-within-a-story-within-a-picture-in-a-computer, which transports her to the Postwar period and the youth of Moody and Norleen Chastain of FFF3. Thus, unless a rethinking effort is aimed beforehand, this Pynchonian disorienting trap is fulfilled and the reader may wander in an imprecise hypodiegetic sublevel. In this regard, McHale borrows Hofstadter's terminology to explain how «such deliberate “mystification” is followed by “demystification” in which the true ontological status of the supposed “reality” is revealed and the entire ontological structure of the text consequently laid bare» (McHale, 2003: 116). Finally, the analeptical movements throughout hypodiegetic levels is progressively reversed and the reader may easily realize the subtle immersion and the stage at which she was before it, that of F13 at Kunoichi Retreat: «She and Prairie were out taking a break» (Pynchon, 1990: 128).

This is precisely one of the points made by McHale when characterizing the functioning of *trompe-l'œil*, so that «demystification often follows deliberate mystification: dynamic episodes which have evolved illicitly from static representations often collapse back into “stills”, thus abruptly reminding the reader that he or she has been at the hypodiegetic level all along» (McHale, 2003: 118). It is necessary to indicate that, for many pages the diegetic world of 24fps Group is presented as the first narrative until a given moment (the fragment quoted above) in which the reader reconsiders the diegetic hierarchy and realizes that she has been tricked, thanks to Prairie's name turning up.

This taste for cinematic interferences in diegetic levels has to do with modernist fiction. It is inherited from that movement and increased in postmodernist fiction due to the variety of examples at that time, «in a television-oriented culture like the one that postmodernist writing so often reflects, TV and the movies constitute a privileged source for the sort of conceits that threaten to overwhelm the primary, literal reality» (McHale, 2003: 128). In fact, television and films are pivotal elements in *Vineland*, so that its fundamentality is utterly acknowledged. In addition, McHale already pointed at *Gravity's Rainbow*, another novel by Pynchon, in which this enthusiasm for filmic representations is key for the plot (in fact, the final plot twist is the masterstroke of the novel). It is such the disorientation caused to the reader that «Pynchon's movie metaphors are developed so concretely and at such length that we begin to lose sight of the literal reality of which they are supposedly the vehicle» (McHale, 2003: 128).

CONCLUSION

Vineland's peculiar reshuffling of the events is not random whatsoever. On the contrary, it is learnedly designed in order to foreground the past rather than the present. The resulting state is less meaningful than the causing symptoms provoking such synergy, neither teleological reasons nor causality are the *raison d'être* of Pynchon's *Vineland*.

With regard to Genettean method, one may weigh the pros and cons of both perspectives, the traditional approach and the one proposed in the present dissertation. On the one hand, the problem when facing this sort of analysis from a Genettean approximation is the impossibility to find enough items to form the binary code proposed. In postmodernist texts, which may be overcrowded by «disordered» events, this method seems to be insufficient. In the Genettean formula proposed for this novel, it was necessary to fall back on lower case letters, being the amount of macrostructure events present in the discourse superior to the number of (capital) letters in the alphabet. It is true that Genette also includes a pattern using brackets to block events, but it does not overcome the disadvantage previously mentioned. On the other hand, the advantage of the alternative method proposed is the abbreviation of the letters needed to determine the formula of order and the visual easiness when analyzing sections in the discourse. Nevertheless, as a minor inconvenience, the formula is likely to mislead the reader if she is not familiarized with the subject of study, since the same binary code, e.g. «HH7» may appear repeated, expressing contiguity in story-event and discourse.

As for McHale, his is a fundamental tool when a researcher faces the analysis of postmodernist fiction, since he has managed to convey a systematized and labelled manual that supports one's effort to face postmodernist novels like *Vineland*. The treatment of *trompe-l'œil* and his proposal to borrow Hofstadter's terminology seems to me more than adequate if a narratological dissection is aimed.

To conclude, I hope that this essay may serve to foreground the fact that narratological study still relies primarily on Genettean perspective of time dating from the eighties, that is to say, study of temporality in works of fiction in English literature seems to be at a standstill and, seemingly, new approaches to this sort of studies need to be implemented. That was precisely my commitment, as declared in the objectives section, which brought about the need for a new approximation to the study of order, exemplified in the new formulaic system proposed in this essay.

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