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„Writing Totality in the 20th Century
Encyclopedism in *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* and *Gravity's Rainbow*"

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1. Introduction

Gravity's Rainbow was published in 1973, thirty years after the death of Robert Musil, and the world had changed drastically since the writing of *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*. Musil wrote from the perspective of a European in the ruins of the First World War, anticipating the second. By the time of *Gravity's Rainbow*'s writing, the Second World War had come and gone; America had already fought another major war and was still in the trenches, so to speak, in Vietnam. Nevertheless, Pynchon set his narrative in Europe in 1944; again we find ourselves on the very precipice of major change. But just as in *Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, in which the war never truly begins, in *Gravity's Rainbow* World War II will never truly end. In this way, *Mann ohne Eigenschaften* and *Gravity's Rainbow* can be seen as complementary book-ends framing the event that pushed the Western world from modernity to postmodernity. Both texts mourn this shift. Both gaze with the angel of history: seeing the pile of wreckage and knowing with dread that there is no way to intervene.

Der Mann Ohne Eigenschaften is an encyclopedia that seeks to encompass and preserve a world since lost, and as such describes a certain order, nostalgic for its stability, though unable to reflect on it without ironic interventions. *Gravity's Rainbow*, on the other hand, was written from the perspective of a new order and seeks to catalogue and preserve the chaos out of which this brave new world was born. The frightening possibilities that this shift enabled again cannot be depicted without the buffers of irony and fantasy. The two therefore share the desire to explain what came before as a world in its entirety, since this rich historical setting will never be experienced again in the flesh, but at the same time never give in to the temptation to do so uncritically. This is the basic motivation for the encyclopedism in both texts: to collect, analyze, and critique, and this purpose explains the sort of topics covered by each writer in his respective encyclopedic sections. Musil devotes chapters to fashion, sexual mores, arguments among minor sects of artistic avant-gardes, the specific honorific language used in certain bureaucratic subsections, etc.; all of the daily rituals that held the empire together in the final days before its collapse. Pynchon, on the other hand, describes the debauchery of the wealthy and the squalor of Germany's late-war ruins, political changes in Central Asia, failed colonial endeavors in Western Africa, America's puritan heritage, the myriad hypotheses proposed to predict where the next rocket would fall, 1001 ways to cook a banana, and much more; all of the details which together reveal a new, globalized, late-capitalist mode of interacting.

Both texts take place a few decades before their writing, an essential feature of the encyclopedic novel as theorized by Edward Mendelsohn. Mendelsohn also predicts that encyclopedic texts will take place at historical turning points for a given culture. Pynchon, who has been said to have written the encyclopedic text of the post-WWII globalized world, includes characters from nearly every continent and narrates extended scenes in Kazakhstan, Massachusetts, the Herero lands of Germany's former African colony, Britain, France, and Germany. From the perspective of the final years of the war to the first few months post-war, Pynchon is able to discuss the aspects of wartime bureaucracy and financialization that will be foundational to the post-war reorganization of diplomatic relations, international borders, financial markets, technological development, and so on. Musil in turn set his work in the final days of the Habsburg empire, at a time when none of the characters in the story actively predict the immense restructuring of European society that is on the horizon (although one certainly cannot argue that such a prediction was not possible)[1]. The characters' lack of awareness of their position on the precipice of utter transformation naturally saturates the text with irony. The organization that premises the second section of the text is set with the task of planning a celebration of Emperor Franz Josef's 70th Jubiläum in 1918, a celebration which all readers will immediately recognize never took place. As in *Gravity's Rainbow*, *Der Mann Ohne Eigenschaften* focuses on organization and communication between powerful people from various distinct sectors of society: bureaucrats, aristocrats, engineers, public intellectuals, lawyers, professors, bankers, and so on. Through these characters, Musil toys with ideas and societal roles much more than personal motivations or nuanced personalities, although the latter are never completely neglected. Character construction is one method through which both Musil and Pynchon present the interconnectedness of seemingly disparate industries or sectors in society, and as such will be one of this study's guiding frameworks for interpreting each text.

Both authors took as central aspects of their work the systems that held together the worlds they undertook to depict: both the tangible and the ideological, the systems which concretize our beliefs and the beliefs that later become concrete. In this aspect, these encyclopedic works seek not only to collect a vast array of information related to the worlds they contain, but also to understand the way(s) in which all of this information is connected. In *Der*

[1] The avoidance of WWI as a central feature of *MoE*'s narrative project is thoroughly commented upon by Paul K. Saint-Amour and Michel Andre Bernstein, whose works will be discussed more thoroughly in section 2.

Mann ohne Eigenschaften, there are still traces of a belief that with enough information and a rigorous enough approach, one really could uncover one or more fundamental rules guiding the actions and lives of mankind. Very often, such beliefs are given voice through certain characters within the cast, who are given due opportunity to defend their ideas, which also receive responses from the narrator in essayistic intrusions. Later on in the text, the protagonist loses faith in the possibility that grand systems could ever speak accurately and with nuance to the myriad situations individuals are presented with. For this reason, the protagonist decides to live his own life according to the principle of essayism and to conceptualize the arc of his life according to the rules of narrative[2]. *Gravity's Rainbow* also begins with a group of men, Roger Mexico principle among them, searching for a certain and systematic way to explain life and death and what should be done. Given, his search takes on a much more limited context than Ulrich's: it is focused on the pattern of aerial bombardment on London. His colleague Pointsman, however, looks beyond the bombs to the ways in which their findings can be applied to the lives and actions of men and the way the hierarchies constructed to research and defend against bombardment could be used for other more insidious purposes. Pointsman's totalizing system can be compared to those Ulrich debates against throughout *MoE*, and will become one of the handful of power structures which it becomes the protagonists' goal to resist. In both *MoE* and *GR*, then, totalizing structures are portrayed and resisted, and the protagonists look for a more genuine way to connect to the meaningful, connected, total way of life they imagine their ancestors may have enjoyed.

One of the major forces separating these protagonists from the harmony and imminent meaning of earlier eras (at least in their estimation) are the economic and scientific forces of rationalization which drove the major societal changes experienced especially acutely in first half of the 20th century. From his first paragraph, Musil presents the world as a set of data to be measured and analysed[3]. He will continue to comment on the effect rationalization has on the

[2] *MoE*, pp. 566-75

[3] *MoE*, p. 9: "Über dem Atlantik befand sich ein barometrisches Minimum; es wanderte ostwärts, einem über Rußland lagernden Maximum zu, und verriet noch nicht die Neigung, diesem nördlich auszuweichen. Die Isothermen und Isotheren taten ihre Schuldigkeit. Die Lufttemperatur stand in einem ordnungsgemäßen Verhältnis zur mittleren Jahrestemperatur, zur Temperatur des kältesten wie des wärmesten Monats und zu aperiodischen monatlichen Temperaturschwankung. [...] Mit einem Wort, das das Tatsächliche recht gut bezeichnet, wenn es auch etwas altmodisch ist: Es war ein schöner Augusttag des Jahres 1913."

human spirit throughout the text, valuing precision but decrying the way its misapplication causes deep division in society.

Beginning even with the title, *Gravity's Rainbow*, Pynchon makes clear that he is discussing a world ruled by the laws of physics, where all men are equally at the mercy of globalized capitalism's machinations[4]. The totalizing systems which command the lives of *GR*'s characters are unmistakably driven by the rationalizing forces of economics and science. Through these twin forces, every aspect of human life is controlled and individuals lose nearly all of their personal agency. The intensification of the effects of these forces is naturally a consequence of their continued acceleration throughout the decades that separate the writing as well as the settings of the two texts. What the texts definitely share, though, is a preoccupation with the way in which these forces have a massive and continuing effect on the lives and souls of men, alone and as a collective.

With this rapid overview of the main points at which these texts overlap, the angle from which the following study will approach them has hopefully become clear; by examining these two very different works side by side, this study hopes to bring the epistemological and ontological differences between these two texts into focus, and thereby reveal more general trends in 20th century thought. *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* and *Gravity's Rainbow* will be investigated first in their formal structure as encyclopedic narratives and then the way in which this structure accomplishes or connects to the texts' discussions of life within a totality and the totalizing systems that have been proposed to explain human life will be assessed. In the following section, theories of encyclopedic narrative will be reviewed and evaluated in terms of their relation to the present texts. Following this will be a brief investigation of what is meant by the term totality, establishing what exactly is sought or portrayed within the texts' discourses. Finally, each text will be examined individually and in comparison according to the criterion set out in the first two sections. Through this investigation, it is hoped that a deeper understanding not only of these two canonical works can be found, but also of the ways in which the totality of

[4] GR, p. 253: "His classic study of large molecules spanned the decade of the twenties and brought us directly to nylon, which not only is a delight to the fetishist and a convenience to the armed insurgent, but was also, at the time and well within the System, an announcement of Plasticity's central canon: that chemists were no longer to be at the mercy of Nature. They could decide now what properties they wanted a molecule to have, and then go ahead and build it."

life was conceptualized throughout the 20th century from a diachronic as well as international perspective.

2. Encyclopedic Writing

Encyclopedic narrative is a formal category that has been applied to relatively few works since being theorized in the mid-20 century, primarily because it is employed rather infrequently. The first mention of the term encyclopedic as a literary feature comes from Northrop Frye, within his authoritative volume on the theory and techniques of literary criticism, *The Anatomy of Criticism*. Frye placed his discussion of "Specific Encyclopaedic Forms" at the outer edge of the literary, just before moving on to "The Rhetoric of Non-Literary Prose." Here Frye isolates works that, beyond the conventions of comedy or tragedy, lyric or prose, are joined by a common interest in narrative arcs that stretch far beyond the interests of a singular hero to encompass the fate of a whole society and which are then in turn accepted by that society as paradigmatic. The primary example of this type of work in Christian cultures is the Bible, which Frye emphasizes is very fruitfully read not only as a historical document or as a sacred text but as a vast source of literary myths and symbols. Observing the work as a whole, from Genesis to Revelation, the Bible combines the patterns seen in the ancient epics: wrath, *nostos*, the coming of the messiah, and the fall from grace, thereby providing the basis for a multitude of works that followed it, including some that would go on to become encyclopedic works in their own right, such as Dante's *Commedia*. Rather than defining explicit genre boundaries of the encyclopedic, as later theorists will do, Frye describes encyclopedism as merely a characteristic of the epic, in fact focusing closely on each text's relation to the history of epic writing, portraying encyclopedism as a secondary effect of the work's totalizing ambitions.[5] Already from this first definition, the rarity of the encyclopedic is clear: encyclopedic works should be monumental. It is nearly impossible for any work of fiction in the modern era to serve as a model for subsequent fictional forms, let alone to influence life's social dramas or rituals in the way that the Bible has. Nevertheless, according to Edward Mendelsohn, professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University, there have been a handful of works in the history of Western

[5] Frye, Northrop. "Specific Encyclopaedic Forms," in *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957): 315-326

literature which can be said to have achieved such a lofty status, to the extent that this is possible in the modern world.

Two decades after Frye's inclusion of encyclopedism as an afterthought to his monument to world literature, Mendelsohn took the term up with exuberance. Mendelsohn wrote his definition of the encyclopedic novel, it is generally agreed, as a thinly veiled ploy to extol one of his own personal favorite novels and novelists: *Gravity's Rainbow* and it's author Thomas Pynchon. Nevertheless, the term was adopted and circulated, forming the basis of several doctoral theses in literature departments across the United States and inspiring commentary and criticism until the present day. All subsequent discussions of literary encyclopedism pay homage to Mendelsohn as their forefather.

In his original article, "Encyclopedic Narrative from Dante to Pynchon,"[6] Mendelsohn presented a set of criteria which could be used to identify encyclopedic texts for modern readers. beyond the epics and the Bible. These were: firstly, encyclopedic narratives must "occupy a special and definable place in their national literatures." A point that would later face criticism as overly focused on geopolitical boundaries, this first criterion centers the role of reception in Mendelsohn's definition. Whereas Frye argued the centrality of the Bible to the literary traditions of Christian cultures, Mendelsohn argued that no national literature is truly mature until it has produced its own quasi-sacred text, which would provide a "fulcrum between pre-history and national history."[7] This formulation places the national culture as a sort of conscious agent, capable of "producing" whatever text is necessary to the shared discourse at a given moment in time, which is of course, simply not possible. Within the context of cultural reception, however, period-defining, if not entire culture-defining works have been known to exist (again Dante's *Commedia* comes to mind). Nevertheless, whether even the few texts explicitly named by Mendelsohn really conform to this unlikely level of critical consensus is debatable. Mendelsohn goes on to demand that the critical reception of the encyclopedic text "becomes the focus of a large and persistent exegetic and textual industry comparable to the industry founded upon the Bible." Naturally, none of the literary works listed have become the basis of a worldwide religion, though all enjoy vast libraries of critical reception, and a few of them have inspired

[6] The same argument is reiterated, with greater focus on the example of *Gravity's Rainbow* in the following chapter: Mendelsohn, Edward. "Gravity's Encyclopedia," in: *Mindful Pleasures, Essays on Thomas Pynchon* (1976): 161-95

[7] Mendelsohn, Edward. "Encyclopedic Narrative from Dante to Pynchon" *Modern Language Notes* 91 (1976): 1267-75, p. 1268

multiple popular adaptations. The first, although not the second of these, can be applied to both *MoE* and *GR*.

The second criterion listed is that the text make use of "the whole social and linguistic range of the nation," including all prominent literary styles of the time. This formal element is closely related to the content requirement that the text also include accounts of "the full range of knowledge and beliefs" available to a given culture at the time of publication, not failing to include the ideological viewpoints that those beliefs rest on. Since it is not possible in modern times for a literary work to incorporate the vast range of scientific developments of our day, the works "make extensive use of synecdoche."[8] Nevertheless, Mendelsohn does demand a complete account of at least one technology or science; a history of language, or at least a display of multiple languages; some attention to artistic media outside the literary; and a substantial interest in statecraft, which should result in the proclamation of a "new dispensation on earth," which usually takes the form of newly founded community, no matter how small. As a result of their description of life in the city, encyclopedic narratives always feature extensive lists of different professions. In reflection of their own massive scale, they all include literally gigantic figures. The narrative arcs must not culminate in any sexual or romantic consummation. The integration of women characters in general is also limited, according to Mendelsohn. Although these points may seem excessively specific, they are nonetheless present to a greater or lesser degree in all of the examples the author names and a relatively reasonable way of quantifying a work's degree of inclusion of society as a whole, the exclusion of women and romance precluding an excessive focus on one singular protagonist above the collective which should be the center of the encyclopedic novel. The inclusion of multiple arts and sciences, the use of synecdoche, and the discussion of language are both present in both *MoE* and *GR*. *GR* does feature literally gigantic figures, though very briefly and figuratively[9]. Though Mendelsohn's argument that such figures stand in for the expansive focus of the text, and their presence within all of the works he lists are convincing, I do not see this particular criterion as of primary importance, and therefore will not lend much weight to its dearth in *MoE*.

Mendelsohn remarks that encyclopedic authors do not intend to write encyclopedic works, but take the ancient epics as their inspiration. This moment solidifies the connection

[8] Ibid., p. 1269
[9] *GR*, p. 261

already made by Frye between the encyclopedic and the epic, but rather than presenting the two as nearly synonymous, Mendelsohn proposes that encyclopedic form grew out of and moved beyond the epic. This separation is further specified in the following criterion: that encyclopedic narratives take place in a time near the present, rather than a mythical past. This makes possible the fourth criterion: that encyclopedic narratives are prophetic; they put predictions about the future into the mouths of their characters, some of which have already happened in the real world and some of which may shortly come to pass. The prophetic requirement makes clear the extent to which Mendelsohn idolizes the writers of the texts he lists, as well as his interest in enumerating a genre whose requirements are not only formal, but also historical. Not only must the public vaunt the work as an exemplary artistic masterpiece, but this masterpiece must also engage actively with the fate of that society[10]. Despite the writer's intense interest in the society he portrays, however, Mendelsohn notes that encyclopedic authors generally place themselves outside of the mainstream, from which point they are poised to follow the Weberian pattern of the "routinization of charisma".[11] It is this very process, Mendelsohn argues, which facilitates the industry of academic criticism that eventually encircles each text. In the case of Musil, his prolongation of the writing of the second part of *MoE* up until his death effectively removed him from the literary market which had praised his earlier works. Pynchon absents himself intentionally from the public eye. To this extent, both authors take some distance from their respective cultural milieus.

Mendelsohn's genre is based on seven exemplary texts: Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Rabelais' *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, Goethe's *Faust*, Melville's *Moby Dick*, Joyce's *Ulysses*, and Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*, which he argues conform to the above stated criteria. He also names a few works (George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, Gogol's *Dead Souls*, and Tolstoy's *War and Peace*) which could have belonged to the genre if only they had been celebrated sufficiently by their native cultures, and one that he says probably belongs to the genre, but within a culture that he does not know well enough to discuss (Camões *Os Lusíadas*)[12]. This list of would-be encyclopedic works solidifies the importance of reception to

[10] Though, as with all the criteria, this one is also true to a differing extent with each work. In "Gravity's Encyclopedia," Mendelsohn berates interpreters of Joyce for obsessing over details which illuminate nothing beyond the scope of the text, praising in contrast Pynchon's constant closeness to the political. (p. 171)
[11] Ibid. pp. 1273-1274
[12] Ibid. p. 1267

Mendelsohn's definition. Thus, although Mendelsohn admitted from the outset that his miniscule list was necessarily incomplete, he also set a nearly unreachable standard for the inclusion of other works, aside from the addition of texts from more cultures Mendelsohn himself is not sufficiently aware of (analogous to the case of *Os Lusíadas* to the former Portuguese empire, this is the space within which it will be later be argued that *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* could be included). On the other hand, *Gravity's Rainbow* breaks out of the geopolitical constraints Mendelsohn set for himself by claiming to be the encyclopedic work not of one singular national context, but of the postmodern, globalized cultural sphere.

Overall, Mendelsohn's work has been hugely influential for academics looking to compare the most ambitious works in European and North American literary history. It also inspired, to a much greater extent than Frye's brief entry, an interest in the totalizing impulse shared by nonfictional encyclopedic endeavors and specific literary works. This connection was more explicitly addressed in a direct retort to Mendelsohn's original argument by Luc Herman and Petrus van Ewijk from the University of Antwerp, which they entitled, "Gravity's Encyclopedia Revisited". While Mendelsohn's choice of the term "encyclopedic" seems to be much more related to Frye's understanding of a culture's central literary text that myriad other works reference, Herman and van Ewijk take the term as signifying a relation between the works enumerated by Mendelsohn (especially *Gravity's Rainbow*) and non-fiction encyclopedias, thereby casting light on an unaddressed tension in Mendelsohn's formulation: the conflict between the totality that he insists the works represent, and the totalizing nature of the encyclopedic structure, which can only ever produce an illusion of completeness.[13] This fundamental lack, this assurance that the project of containing all of human knowledge within the confines of one text, no matter how contradictory and polyphonic, was already recognized by Diderot in the eighteenth century. Herman and van Ewijk assert that prior to Diderot and D'Alembert's undertaking of the first modern encyclopedia, encyclopedias of the medieval era were often written by a single author who purported to include within his text all there was to know[14]. Whereas medieval encyclopedias symbolized their understanding of the world in the image of a mirror or speculum, which perfectly reflects all it captures, modern encyclopedias

[13] Luc Herman & Petrus van Ewijk (2009) "Gravity's Encyclopedia Revisited: The Illusion of a Totalizing System in *Gravity's Rainbow*", English Studies, 90:2, 167-179

[14] ibid. Pp. 169 - This particular claim, which Herman and Ewijk provide no citation for, assumes that writers of medieval specula thought of themselves as living within a coherent world where meaning was imminent. In a world, in Lukácsian terms, wherein totality was given.

explain the interconnection of their articles through the image of a map. Although a map admits a far greater degree of uncertainty than a mirror, it nevertheless still posits the possibility of an objective perspective from which the general contours, if not each composite detail, can be accurately grasped. The model of knowledge undergoes another paradigm shift in the postmodern era, wherein knowledge comes to be conceived as something limitless and inescapable, like an ever-expanded labyrinth in Eco's terms, or a rhizome in Deleuze and Guattari's[15]. This development of the conceptualization of knowledge is essential for a discussion of the encyclopedic novel, because it is the deciding factor in the question of whether or not a text can be said to "render the full range of knowledge and beliefs of a national culture, while identifying the ideological perspectives from which that culture shapes and interprets its knowledge,"[16] as Mendelsohn claims encyclopedic narratives do, and which Herman and van Ewijk argue is impossible. Mendelsohn's idea of the encyclopedic narrative as a reference work rich with synecdoche aligns well with the map-model of knowledge, in which the totality of knowledge can be seen from above and analysed, despite the fact that some areas may be glossed over or left vague. Herman and van Ewijk propose this contrasting definition of the way in which encyclopedic works encapsulate knowledge: "by processing an enormous amount of information from a variety of fields, quite a few big novels produce the *illusion* that they have encyclopedic proportions and perhaps even manage to impose some form of order on the wealth of material."[17] The key distinction here is on the feasibility of containing and organizing a totality of knowledge as it pertains to a given cultural context. The solution that Herman and van Ewijk are proposing here still portrays the information included in the encyclopedic work as a map, but no longer claims that this map represents a totality, emphasizing rather that the boundaries of the map are arbitrary and constructed. Herman and van Ewijk go on to point out multiple examples within *Gravity's Rainbow* in which texts aspire to deal conclusively with a given topic, even one as specific and seemingly manageable as *King Kong*[18], and nevertheless fail. While Herman and van Ewijk impute this failure to the nature of knowledge, Mendelsohn addressed it in "Gravity's Encyclopedia" as a failure at the level of written language. By placing the limitation at the level of language, Mendelsohn still leaves open the possibility that within language all knowledge

[15] Ibid. pp. 171-4
[16] Mendelsohn, p. 1268
[17] Herman and van Ewijk, p. 169, emphasis in the original
[18] Ibid., p. 169

could be contained. Herman and van Ewijk counter that all systems of understanding are based on exclusion, thus if there is a totalizing order, there must be something outside of it. Citing Hillary Clark and Jed Rasula, Herman and van Ewijk argue that encyclopedic texts create the illusion of depicting a totality of knowledge by "narrativizing the limits of learning as such."[19] This can be clearly observed in the example of Edward Pointsman, whose orthodox commitment to Pavlovian thinking limits his ability to understand more nuanced causal relationships. In examples such as these, Pynchon points out the inability of any imposed order to accurately encompass all of what exists in reality. Thus, the distinguishing feature of encyclopedic narratives as a genre in Herman and van Ewijk's understanding is their attempt to impose order and coherence on a totality of knowledge. While Herman and van Ewijk see this as imposition or the creation of an illusion, Mendelsohn seemed to have seen it as a revelation. The impact of this distinction will be instrumental to the argument of this study.

Hillary Clark described the transition between medieval specula and modern encyclopedic endeavors in yet greater detail in her 1992 article, "Encyclopedic Discourse."[20] Clark, similarly to Herman and van Ewijk, aligns the encyclopedia with Foucault's idea of the archive: an enormous undertaking with the aim of institutionalizing knowledge. To Eco's idea of encyclopedic knowledge as a labyrinth, Clark posits the encyclopedia as a "semiotic machine," wherein data is organized and ordered into a more or less coherent whole. Emphasizing the inescapable limitations on knowledge, Clark argues that aspiring encyclopedic narratives "must speculate on [their] own discursive processes of discovery and arrangement, and on the limitations of these processes, given the fact of time and change."[21] This awareness of the situatedness of knowledge not just within cultural context but also within time period is something that Mendelsohn addressed in his clause on the function of encyclopedic texts as the initiators or earliest adopters of the discourses of new periods in a nation's history. What Clark crucially adds is that the situatedness, collectedness, and resulting degree of incoherence must be a central feature of the text, ideally on the levels both of content and of form. Whereas Herman and van Ewijk highlighted the illusory nature of an encyclopedia's attempts at coherence, Clark intensifies this statement by proposing that the imposition of order and its predestined failure is the point of it all.

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[19] Ibid., p. 170
[20] Clark, Hillary. "Encyclopedic Discourse." Sub-stance 21, no. 1 (1992): 95–110
[21] Ibid., p. 107

In 1994, nearly two decades after the publication of Mendelsohn's inflammatory articles, Franco Moretti published his monograph *Modern Epic*, which once again sought to classify the major canonical texts of European literature under one umbrella, this time including Goethe's *Faust*, Wagner's Ring cycle, Ezra Pound's *The Cantos*, T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, Robert Musil's *Der Mann Ohne Eigenschaften*, and Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (as a deliberate insertion that is intended to allow the author to claim expanse beyond Europe and North America), in addition to *Ulysses* and *Moby Dick*, which he carries over from Mendelsohn. These works span over multiple centuries as well as across continents, taking modern as a very broad period extending from the Enlightenment to the late 20th century, well beyond the limits of literary modernism. This spread belies Moretti's interest in compiling a "materialist history of literary forms," a method inspired by Darwin's theory of evolution, which relies, crucially, on a series of failures. Moretti replaces Darwin's genetic variations with rhetorical innovations and natural selection with social selection[22]; in other words, Moretti will sketch the trajectory of literary trends based on popular and scholarly reception. This requires dualistic thinking balancing both formal elements and sociological influences. An alliance between the social history of literature and observation of formal literary trends is possible in this instance because Moretti states from the outset that art follows societal trends, rather than driving them. This is a much more clear and explicit approach than Mendelsohn's, which proposed that encyclopedic works inspired entirely new national identities and cultural movements, but because they tapped into undercurrents that were somehow present but unknown. Compared to this, Moretti's assumption seems overly simplistic. Although Moretti has taken away the prophetic role which was a major feature of Mendelsohn's valorization of the encyclopedic author, he nevertheless leaves innovative writers with an invincible giant to slay: "to *resolve* the problems set by history. For every transformation carries with it a quantity of ethical impediments, perceptual confusions, ideological contradictions. … [literature] has a problem-solving vocation: to make existence more comprehensible, and more acceptable."[23]

While hardly a reasonable task, as a project, making sense of ethical problems or ideological inconsistencies does present a few approachable paths forward. If the question one

[22] Moretti, Franco, trans. Quinton Hoare. *Modern Epic: The World System from Goethe to García Marquez*. Verso, 1996. Pp. 5-6
[23] Ibid., p. 6, emphasis in original

would take arms against had to do with "the basis of civilizations, their overall meaning, or their destiny,"[24] then the fitting form according to European literary tradition would be the epic. Thus, taking past epics as models also offers would-be encyclopedic authors some guidance. Within the context of medieval and classical Europe, epic poetry abounded. But these poems aligned with a general consensus about the basis, meaning, and destiny of civilizations, because these questions were already answered by the prevailing mythical or religious understanding of the universe[25]. Already in Goethe's time, questions about the nature of the universe were being answered by astronomers rather than astrologers, which also meant that the questions being posed were specific and premised on objectivity, rather than all-encompassing or harmonious with a total understanding of man's place in the world. Scientific thinking[26], in short, precluded enunciations of a unified world view that satisfied the human need for meaning and connection. It is this lack that modern epics seek to fill, and it is the persistent presence of science that obligates the modern epic's failure.

Besides the term modern epic, Moretti also refers to the presented works as "world texts," identifying globalization as another crucial distinction between these and ancient epics. Thus, like Mendelsohn, Moretti is also interested in the link between these texts and the real world. Moretti also makes explicit, however, that in his paradigm, the representation of national identity is a responsibility of the novel, while modern epics must address the interconnected world economy. He argues that the existence of myriad cultural settings is incorporated into modern epics through the staging of history as a metaphor for geography.[27] For Moretti, then, modern epics focus not on national identity but on international hegemonic conquest. For Mendelsohn, this domain is covered by *GR*. In *MoE* also, the possibility of Austria serving as a model for the rest of the world is discussed.

Whereas Frye mentioned encyclopedic writing as merely a feature of epic and Mendelsohn chalked up the main difference between encyclopedic narratives and epic to varying degrees of social and scientific engagement, Moretti focuses specifically on how these monstrous

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[24] Ibid., p. 36

[25] It is clear here that Moretti's understanding of the classical era aligns with Lukács presupposition that meaning was given and generally accepted in classical civilizations. Other authors do not accept this distinction so whole-heartedly.

[26] The foundational importance of scientific thinking to the condition of modernity will also be discussed by many other theorists and scholars, especially Bruno Latour, whose proposition for non-modern thinking will be discussed in connection to *MoE* later on.

[27] Ibid., p. 50-56

texts are related to classical epics, and in what ways they differ. The central difference is apparent from the onset: modern epics must contend with the conditions of modernity. Moretti thereby brings the question of whether or not a text can represent or include a totality of knowledge back to a question of the time of writing. Moretti summarizes this tension succinctly as: "a discrepancy between the totalizing will of the epic and the subdivided reality of the modern world."[28] Like Clark, Moretti also accepts from the outset that these texts are largely failures, but this failure gains weight when we realize that the attempt has nevertheless been repeated across time and space. In other words, the discrepancy Moretti points out is evidence of a significant gap between modern epic's aims and the fruits of the author's labor.

What, in Moretti's view, is the source of this discrepancy? The author begins to answer this question by turning to Hegel's definition of epic writing. It was Hegel who first proposed that epics expressed a totality which connected the individual to the universal, bringing all ethical, civil, or moral acts together within a living cosmos of meaning. This active relationship between the individual and the universal, Hegel argues, was broken earlier on by the formation of the state, which regulates the moral and the civil, presenting as objective what was once embodied, and removing individual cases to the mere "incidental."[29] Already at this stage it has been recognized that what separates the individual from their place within the totality is institutionalization, bureaucratization, scientific thinking, or taken together: rationalization. Here we return to the imposition of structure on knowledge which formed the basis of multiple critiques of Mendelsohn's genre description, which showed no awareness of any instability in the would-be representation of totality in a modern setting. Moretti, following Hegel, writes that it is precisely these ordering impulses (both in science and society) which destroy the organic whole that once was.

Radically, Moretti connects this former power of the individual to his modern epics, reminding the audience that many of those works were judged to be "barbaric" or "reactionary" when they were initially published, arguing that these works sought to "abolish the excessive complexity of modern societies and restore the unchallenged dominion of an individual."[30] Moretti does not say that the works achieved this aim, merely that they were tempted by it. As proof of this temptation, Moretti quotes Goethe's *Faust*, written during the same time as Hegel's

[28] Ibid., p. 5
[29] Ibid., p. 12
[30] Moretti, p. 75

aesthetic lectures and promising to seize "the experience allotted to the whole race of mankind," bringing this back to the one individual hero, as it was in ancient epics. But despite this pronouncement, Goethe's Faust is infamously not a man of action. This characteristic can be equally applied to Stephen Dedalus, Ishmael, and Ulrich, all of whom stand at the center of epic works nearly void of action. Moretti classes these protagonists as "spectators." Rather than acting, they observe and reflect. Rather than affecting the history of mankind, they problematize their place within it. To these figures, history no longer feels tractable, but rather, as Dedalus famously said, like "a nightmare from which I am trying to awake."[31] This refusal to act is, of course, strongest in *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, which is premised on infinite layers of refusal. In short, the heroes of ancient epics acted to influence the destiny of all, a destiny which the heroes of modern epics intensely consider[32] and ultimately refuse to actively influence.

Perhaps signalling his continued support of the ideas he professed in *Modern Epic*, Moretti included in the second volume of his anthology *The Novel* an article on the continuities and disparities between epics and novels, written by classicist Massimo Fusillo. This article, "Epic, Novel," has circulated widely among those interested in the monstrosities of the Western canon. Fusillo's unique position as an expert on ancient literature allows him to provide more depth and meaning to the concept of epic, which was taken in earlier texts to be largely self-evident. Fusillo problematizes epic, revealing that the category that served as the ideal form for authors seeking to encompass the totality of life was never really as pure and uncomplicated as they had imagined.

Fusillo begins by tracing the idea that epics act as artifacts of a time in which meaning was immanent and society acted as a whole to G.W. Hegel. This image of the epic was from this originary moment set in a dichotomy against the novel. Fusillo quotes Hegel as arguing that, "Epic inaugurated literature and established national identity through its choral, impersonal, and totalizing poetry; and of the novel, instead as the preeminent secondary form, a fragment longing

[31] Joyce, James. *Ulysses*. Faber and Faber, 1975. P. 60

[32] *Gravity's Rainbow* is not included among Moretti's list of modern epics. It will later be considered to what extent Slothrop treads the line between action and innocence. Here the question of awareness and intention will of course be crucial.

for a lost totality."[33] Insightfully, Fusillo sees beyond Hegel's dichotomy here to a deeper undercurrent of European thinking, writing:

"The opposition between epic and novel thus evokes the great dualities on which Western identity is constructed -- and that contemporary culture has begun to challenge -- whose first term of reference is always the original and hence superior term: nature/culture; public/private, collective/individual, orality/writing, tragedy/comedy, masculine/feminine."[34]

Epic writing has absolutely been tied to the originary terms of each of these oppositions: it was originally produced in an oral form and recited in a collective, public setting. It deals with the social concerns of a society as a whole rather than the psychology of an isolated individual. Often dealing with political and martial themes, the epic is populated with overwhelmingly masculine characters and concerns and generally takes itself very seriously. The question of nature vs. culture is an interesting one here, because it is likely that from the perspective of the originary context, epics would have been seen as culture at its peak, yet from the vantage point of Hegel and his successors, epics were seen as representative of man in a state of nature, before the loss of grace and imminent meaning. The encyclopedic work carries on the majority of these traits, especially the masculinity, publicness, and serious tone. Although the encyclopedic work should include the "full range" of language in use in both oral and written forms around the time and place of its writing, it is a primarily written text, differing in that sense from the epic. In terms of nature and culture, even within Mendelsohn's conception of a given totality being revealed rather than a false totality being constructed (as in the understandings of Clark and Herman and van Ewijk), this totality would be one of culture and not nature.

It must also be noted that one aspect of critics' eagerness to impute the epic label on modern texts is an impulse toward valorizing those works by connecting them to the "original and hence superior" literary category. This elitist reflex grants modern works authority through perceived similarities with older works, not questioning the logical basis that constructed that canon. This instability at the level of an authority that often goes unquestioned is expertly supplied by Fusillo's article, which goes on to illuminate that, contrary to the definitions given by Hegel, Lukács, and Bakhtin, even the Homeric epics were impure and polyvocal. Modern theorists' casting of the classical past as absolute and organic is purely mythical, a legitimization

[33] Fusillo, Massimo. "Epic, Novel" in *The Novel* ed. Franco Moretti. Princeton University Press, 2006. pp. 32-64.
[34] Ibid., p. 34

tactic with little regard for historical fact[35]. Thus, Fusillo proposes a fluid understanding of the genre boundaries between novel and epic, writing:

"Epic and novel should not be thought of as two fixed, immutable entities but rather as two bundles of transcultural constants that can be more or less active from period to period and work to work, or even transformed altogether. In a highly codified genre such as the epic, it is obviously easier to identify constants (the narrating of a community's founding heroic, mythical or historic deeds; elevated, sublime language; encyclopedism); topoi; and expressive techniques (the formula, the catalogue, similes, the descent into the underworld). It is much harder but not impossible to do so for a marginal and semiofficial genre such as the novel (the private, sentimental dimension; open form; pathological identification)." [36]

While allowing for the labelling of works across time period as either epics or novels (which he will go on to evidence with examples of novels from Classical Greece as well as Classical works that already existed in between these genres, suggesting the openness of this distinction even from the beginning), Fusillo does not leave critics empty handed in terms of identifying criteria for epics. Here Fusillo is aligned with Frye in listing encyclopedism as a trait of epic. His suggestion that the epic narrate a founding deed is parallel, though not identical, to Mendelsohn's demand that the encyclopedic narrative inaugurate a new national self-understanding. Fusillo's characteristics of the novel also lend themselves to negative application, in which a lack of pathological identification or focus on sentimental concerns would also suggest a more epic form. This defense of the openness of epic as a term facilitates Moretti's appropriation of the term in the modern era while also relaxing its elitist connotations.

After Mendelsohn's extremely exclusionary birth of the genre of encyclopedic narrative, Fusillo opens up these characteristics for broader praxis through factual deconstruction of a long-vaunted myth. Nevertheless, Fusillo does not do away with the category of totality, and in fact leaves more or less intact the assertion that ancient epics did represent a totality of the knowledge relevant to the functioning of their societies:

"To us, the ancient epic looks encyclopedic because it contains a collective wisdom, an entire cosmos, through the functionings of a broad anthropological literature associated with systems of strong values (an 'encyclopedia of morality' as Hainsworth so effectively puts it). The modern epic is forced to aspire to totality through often failed attempts to create new sacred texts."[37]

The ancient epic, thus, only seems encyclopedic because of the completeness of its contents, but this completeness is not quite the same as the encyclopedic collection of fragments. In the

[35] Ibid., pp. 38-39
[36] Ibid., p. 40
[37] Ibid., p. 52

classical context, there was already the moral structure, an ordered cosmos, which included everything there was to be known, seen, done, written. In the modern world, morality had been relativized and pluralized. The general understanding of what the world is and how one should live in it was also no longer premised on morality alone, but relied on science, philosophy, economics, and legal codes. As will be discussed as one of the foundational arguments of *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, "collective wisdom" as such was something that hardly existed anymore in the modern era, as individual discourses became increasingly specialized. Thus, even with a more detailed view of the history of epic writing in sight, the question of modernity's lost totality still stands.

In 2014 and 2015, two works developed the concept of encyclopedic writing further. One, by University of Pennsylvania English department chair Paul K. Saint-Amour, focused on the relevance of encyclopedic writing as a technique that presented a totality contra to that produced by the nationalistic rhetoric of total war[38]. Interestingly, this premise ties Saint-Amour's primary context of study - mid 20th century Britain - to the ancient epics addressed by Fusillo, in that both count war as a necessary aspect of the coalescence of a society into a whole with a collective drive to action. Encyclopedic authors by Saint-Amour's definition, however, were not interested in the normative, imposed image of national totality that total war constructed, instead seeing this construction as an inspiration to search for a different kind of national totality, one that did not rely on violence or rubber-stamped normativity. For this reason, Saint-Amour focuses on how novels of the interwar period reflected the anxiety produced by the past and

[38] Saint-Amour, Paul K. *Tense Future: Modernism, Total War, Encyclopedic Form*. Oxford University Press, 2015. ; for more on the inherent nationalism of epic form as well as the legacy of anti-imperial epic works, based on epics of imperial victors as embodied by Virgil versus epics of the defeated as exemplified by Lucan, see Quint, David. *Epic and Empire: politics and generic form from Virgil to Milton*. Princeton University Press, 1993. Quint's argument in this text complicates overly simplistic understandings of the epic genre as monovocal, but at the same time agrees that this monovocality certainly was a central feature of some of the most influential epics in literary history, such as the *Aeneid*, and that this politicization became a necessary aspect even of the epics of the defeated, as they were compelled to write within the tradition that had already been defined by imperial voices. Quint also explores the ways in which epic and romance were always already intertwined, throwing into question the epic vs. novel debate of later periodizations by, like Fusillo, complicating the concept of epic itself. While it is valuable to recognize the complexity of epic as a genre, this study will accept the model of Virgil's *Aeneid* as a baseline from which to generalize the epic model which many works have either emulated or rebelled against.

future total wars, searching for ways in which the authors refracted and resisted official narratives[39].

Like Moretti, Saint-Amour also emphasizes the global distribution of violence in the modern era, making clear that total war on the European front was by no means geographically unique, that European states had already introduced the methods of total war that would come to be known as such only during the world wars decades earlier in their colonies.[40] Moretti, however, saw his modern epics' totalizing gaze as an incorporation or extension of colonial violence and predatory global capitalism. By acting as mere observers, taking for granted their privileged positions of assumed objectivity, Moretti's modern epic heroes give their tacit approval to the violence that constructs the world so as to place them on top. This is particularly clear in Moretti's discussions of *Faust* and *Moby Dick*[41]. In Saint-Amour's discussion of the works of Virginia Woolf and Ford Madox Ford, by contrast, he emphasizes these authors' experiences of anxiety and attempts to look away from global power structures. Rather than centering heroes whose gaze encompasses a conquered world, Saint-Amour's heroes turn away from or perhaps try for a different angle from which to gaze at a world that nevertheless lays at their feet. Thus, this distinction clearly relies on the choice of literary work one centers, and serves to solidify the importance of the world economy and colonial violence to the construction of a position from which one can take up the project of addressing totality.

The main difference between Moretti and Saint-Amour that remains, then, is Moretti's continued belief in the continuities between his modern epics and their classical forebears, against Saint-Amour's assertion that these modern literary monuments are at the core distinct from epics and take as their model instead the encyclopedia. This differentiation will lead Saint-Amour into a detailed discussion of the ways in which epic and encyclopedic writing have been theoretically entangled from the outset. Ultimately, this will lead to the conclusion that, while epics and encyclopedias address the same topics ("war, form, and totality") they do so with differing attitudes. Saint-Amour will require that his texts present a "counter-totality" rather than

[39] Saint-Amour, p. 10: "I hope to re-entangle two critiques of totalization that are currently wilting in isolation. One opposes baleful totalities (globalization, capitalism, and total war) with some more defensible counter-totality (altermondialisme, communism, and perpetual peace). The other opposes bad totalities through the partial, the local, and the fragmentary. My approach sees partiality and counter-totality not as discrete alternatives but as plaited into one another, dialectically enmeshed. A truly counter-totalizing work, I maintain, avows the partiality of its totality claims without renouncing them, taking up totalization under the sign of its impossibility."

[40] Saint-Amour, pp. 213-4

[41] Moretti, pp. 48-50

buying into a militarized national totality. There is no hint of the irony here that Moretti and Clark allowed as a release mechanism for the invincible aspects of this project. Here again we recognize the seriousness of the works' commitment to resistance, according to Saint-Amour. Rather than acknowledging through irony the necessary failure of quests for totality, Saint-Amour proposes that these texts dig into their contradictions wholeheartedly, aiming for totality within partiality once it becomes clear that totality on its own has already been constructed through state violence. This is why these works must "emphatically avoid coherentism,"[42] in order to effectively resist any sort of disingenuous reiteration of the normative totalizing impulse. Saint-Amour takes this point of resistance so far that he ultimately positions himself against Hegel, Lukács, and all of the theorists who walk in their footsteps by saying,

> "the problem during the interwar years was not totality's loss but its all too forceful reassertion through the logic of total war. The long modernist narratives that took shape during those years were built not on an epic armature to foreground the lost totality of the present, but on an encyclopedic armature to contest the resurgent totality of the present."[43]

For Saint-Amour, thus, the question is not whether totality is possible in the modern age, but on what logic it stands and how it reflects the society it encompasses. Against all of the authors that wrote that totality was not readily accessible to society after the fall from grace instigated by the growth of the state and science, Saint-Amour proposes that the union of those very elements in the common goal of total war reconstructed an imposed totality in the geopolitical areas affected. Even if we accept this proposition, this readily available totality is not the same one that encyclopedic authors seek to depict in their works, unlike the writers of classical epics, who happily submitted their works for the military and political advancement of the whole. Therefore, the question of whether an encyclopedic text can establish within its own pages a reflected totality is still up for debate. This acknowledgement of modernity's totalizing discourse will be essential for later sections of the present study.

This point is essential to Saint-Amour's argument, as he is as convinced as Clark that false coherence amounts to epistemic violence. For this reason, Saint-Amour also highlights the way in which his encyclopedic texts stage the contingency of the knowledge they present. This, for Saint-Amour, is another point which necessitates departure from epic, which he sees as fundamentally "coherentist." Despite their resistance to coherentism, Saint-Amour maintains that

[42] Ibid., p. 176
[43] Ibid., p. 214

modern encyclopedic texts still strive for comprehensiveness.[44] Herein lies the justification for the return to the term encyclopedic after the abandonment of epic, since the goal of the encyclopedia since its inauguration with Diderot and D'Alembert has been to make a totality out of disparate parts, guiding connections while preserving contradictions, and never claiming that the project could be completed to satisfaction. Saint-Amour gives this idea of totality a poetic moniker, writing: "encyclopedic modernism is, like the Encyclopédie itself, a presumptively shattered totality." This prolonged effort despite the knowledge that the goal will not be reached characterizes particularly fittingly those modern monstrosities that (as Moretti also noted) were never quite able to end.

Although Saint-Amour's source material is mainly British, he also brings in *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* as the premier exemplar of the technique of side-shadowing. This is a concept Saint-Amour adapts from Michael André Bernstein[45] to mean a focus on historical alternatives: things that could have come to pass. Such conditionality is a main feature of Musil's work as well as a convincing support to Saint-Amour's working definition of modernism as characterized by an anti-normative attitude. Any text set in Europe in 1913 can be reasonably expected to directly address the war, and yet *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* does anything but, electing instead to dwell on the before and the could-have-been. Collecting all of those possibilities is an excellent example of striving toward a comprehensiveness that will never be complete or cohesive, as their connection is anti-teleological.

The other recent monograph to step into the lineage of epic/encyclopedic theorizing was Stefano Ercolino's *The Maximalist Novel*[46]. Although this work draws significant inspiration from Mendelsohn, Moretti, Fusillo (to whom the volume is in fact dedicated), and other theorists of encyclopedic literature, it moves beyond their customary dichotomy between classical and modern to branch instead into the postmodern and contemporary. This shift in time contributes to the slightly different "symbolic need" of Ercolino's genre in comparison to Moretti's, which it must be recalled was to "resolve the problems posed by history." These later works seek not to

[44] Ibid., pp. 182-6
[45] Bernstein, Michael André. "Sideshadowing and the Principle of Insufficient Cause" In *Foregone Conclusions: against Apocalyptic History*. University of California Press, 2018. *UC Press E-Books Collection*. pp. 95-120.
[46] Ercolino, Stefano. *The Maximalist Novel: from Thomas Pynchon's Gravity's Rainbow to Roberto Bolano's 2666*. Bloomsbury, 2014.

solve, but rather "to relate the complexity of the world we live in, by providing a totalizing representation of it."[47] Thus, if we see the maximalist novel as a direct descendant of the modern epic or encyclopedic text, the goal of representing a totality has at this later stage taken the central role of representation as an end in itself, rather than a means through which to solve society's problems. In the postmodern age, the impulse to resolve has been abandoned in favor of the lesser but still perhaps unattainable goal of understanding.

The Maximalist Novel is also informative for the present study for its conception of the way in which very long texts form a cohesive whole out of thousands of fragments. Ercolino demands of his maximalist novels that they not allow the masses of information they include to usurp any totalizing order. Rather than devolving into chaos, Ercolino argues that maximalist novels construct a complete cosmos out of their disparate, polyphonic fragments. Ercolino breaks down exactly how form is imposed on these masses of text: through overarching plot structures, leitmotifs, myths, and intertextual forms (such as the songs that constantly interrupt *Gravity's Rainbow*'s prose) with the end goal of completeness. Ercolino's argument that his maximalist novels are all complete goes directly against Moretti's assertion that his modern epics are necessary failures. Instead, Ercolino asserts that: "the completeness or incompleteness of a literary work is not measured in relation to the plot or to the mechanisms of its production, but rather at the level of their arrangement into a specific form which guarantees their *control*."[48] Thus, Ercolino's concept of completeness prioritizes the governing logic of the text -- which he sees as necessarily normative -- over storyline or even production criteria. Within this logic, any text that grasps the organizational structure of the material they have pulled together (such works clearly require a bricoleur, as expounded by Moretti[49]) has satisfied the criteria of completeness, regardless of any narrative trajectory. This criteria clearly aligns Ercolino's texts with the encyclopedic lineage, recalling Diderot's idea that the fundamental aspect of the encyclopedia is the structure itself, which will first off be circular (as is made clear by the name), secondly include abundant cross-references signalling the harmony or dissonance between the articles, and thirdly be open for infinite growth[50]. Openness and imitation of the complexity and abundance of nature are thereby also tacitly allowed, even if they will never be satisfactorily contained within a

[47] Ibid., p. 115
[48] Ibid., p. 96
[49] Moretti, *Modern Epic*. p. 120
[50] Anderson, Wilda. "Encyclopedic Topologies." Modern Language Notes 101 (1986): 912–29.

work, nevertheless a work with the right structure would be hypothetically able to incorporate any aspect it encountered. This paradigm of completeness thus both accepts and dismisses aspirations toward totality, in that it elevates totalizing order over the totality itself. The paradigm also problematizes the idea of normativity through Ercolino's belief that an imposed structure can nevertheless be "imitative" of the wealth of information and occurrences in the real world.

It is remarkable how the genre of encyclopedic literature has shifted from a mainly European to a mainly US-American one over the decades since its introduction. The American identity of the originary author may be partly to blame (or my own biases as a researcher), but even European scholars such as Ercolino, who actively strives to expand his definition beyond the US-American context as Moretti was able to, must admit that while a wealth of maximalist novels exist on the American continent, this form is simply not as popular in other regions. One possible explanation for this could be the myth of the Great American Novel, which some scholars have suggested inspired Mendelsohn's label, wherein he explicitly writes that though *Moby Dick* must be recognized as the American sacred text, *Gravity's Rainbow* stands even above this. It could also be related to the privileged vantage point of Americans geopolitically. In an age in which American English has become the global lingua franca and American neo-colonial ventures forcibly direct the world economy, it is reasonable that American authors would be thinking expansively while writers from other regions would tend to prioritize specific local themes. This tendency toward the grounded and specific can also be clearly noted among writers from marginalized groups within the United States; it is correspondingly striking the extent to which the encyclopedic genre is dominated by upper-class white men. Though Mendelsohn notes that encyclopedic authors positioned themselves outside of the conventional cultural political frameworks of their native cultures[51], this was for each writer a free and reversible choice. To claim any knowledge of totality, or even to pursue such knowledge over more urgent, embodied experiences, one must always speak from a position of extreme privilege.

While all of these similarities, whether based on form, reception, or content, are significant, the central bond between *Der Mann Ohne Eigenschaften* and *Gravity's Rainbow* is in their shared search for total understanding in increasingly fragmented and chaotic worlds. Rather

[51] Mendelsohn, p. 1274

than focusing on Mendelsohn's overly specific criteria or on fitting these works into any author's individual definition of what constitutes an encyclopedic work par excellence, this study will apply the multiple perspectives explored above in order to approach the central question of these works: to what extent do their encyclopedic features and form address the problem of modern totality?

3. Writing Totality

To begin, it will be necessary to set out what is meant by totality and how this concept has been related to literary works. Summarizing the literary theoretical interpretations and applications of the concept of totality, Anna Kornbluh characterizes totality not as a matter of content, but as a method or approach to the material to be addressed by a given narrative. From a Marxist, anti-positivist perspective, totality is the purview of the dialectic: it sees society not as an assemblage of disparate functions, but rather as a unity despite contradictions. Highlighting the historical and political-economic contingency of facts connects them to the totality, revealing at the same time the potential for alternate paths. One can see clearly how Bernstein's side-shadows are produced by shedding light on the totality, giving it shape by paying attention to its margins. Kornbluh proposes that a novel achieves this *not* through "the depiction of a concrete totality, diverse classes and typical types, historical context and temporal duration, but rather the specific method, the specific kind of thinking that crafts a formal equivalent, in abstraction and generalization and integration, to the social form of capitalist totality."[52] Here the encyclopedic method wanes in importance, and it is apparent for which reason not all encyclopedic texts have a claim on totality. Although often interested in depicting a systematic element of the way in which society functions, not all encyclopedic texts seek to show the contingency between society's more concrete and abstract elements. Dante's *Divine Comedy*, for example, focuses distinctly on the abstract matters of the soul, with minimal consideration of what economic or historical conditions may have influenced a given individual's moral decisions. While *Don Quixote* does cast light on disparities between ideology and actuality, the interconnectedness of the concrete elements of the actuality are not addressed. *Der Mann ohne*

[52] Anna Kornbluh. "Totality" in Victorian Literature and Culture, Vol. 47, No. 3, pp. 671–678: p. 676

Eigenschaften and *Gravity's Rainbow*, on the other hand, take up not only a unwieldy amount of material, but also approach these mountains of material with the methodical aim of revealing their connectedness, both concretely and abstractly. This method recalls an expanded version of Ercolino's cosmos function: a grand-scale perspective which reveals harmony despite or even through contradiction.

The marxist philosopher and literary critic Georg Lukács argued in "Es Geht um den Realismus," that any literary work that attempted to depict or engage with reality must also consider totality: referring to the dialectical view, the way in which seemingly heterogeneous processes in fact originate from and contribute to a larger whole[53]. Lukács expounded on totality's place in literature in his *Theorie des Romans*, which is a major inspiration for all subsequent writing about literary representations of totality. Written in 1916, this monograph compares epic writing in an idealized connection to classical civilizations to modern writing as illustrative of a fundamental lack in modern society. Lukács begins by thoroughly romanticizing the life of the classical Greeks. He asserts that in their society everything was united in production as well as in meaning and in purpose.

"Denn Totalität als formendes Prius jeder Einzelerscheinung bedeutet, daß etwas Geschlossenes vollendet sein kann; vollendet, weil alles in ihm vorkommt, nichts ausgeschlossen wird und nichts auf ein höheres eigenen Vollkommenheit reift und sich erreichend sich der Bindung fügt. Totalität des Seins ist nur möglich, wo alles schon homogen ist, bevor es von dem Formen umfaßt wird; wo Bewußtwerden, nur das Auf-die-Oberfläche-Treten von allem, was im Inneren des zu Formenden als unklare Sehnsucht geschlummert hat; wo das Wissen die Tugend ist und die Tugend das Glück, wo die Schönheit den Weltsinn sichtbar macht."[54]

Totality here is portrayed as a natural state. Modernity's fall from this state, then, does not offer up any immediately apparent pathways back to this wholeness. Rather, the isolated modern individual can only bemoan their inner abyss, their lack of purpose, their lack of access to the meaning of life as a result of the disconnectedness of industrial society. From now on, as Saint-Amour said, totality will present itself as "presumptively shattered." This is due to the fact that modern individuals still think in terms of totality, although these thoughts are not reflected in the world around them. Art then arises as a way for individuals to mourn as well as to imagine a connectedness that is no longer given. This ruptures art from life, in the hollows of which

[53] Lukács, "Es Geht um den Realismus," *Das Wort*, Heft 6. 1938. Pp. 112-138.
[54] Lukács, *Theorie des Romans*, pp. 21-22

philosophy surfaces as an attempt to reunite life with meaning. The conventions of modern society are no longer part of a coherent fabric of life, and are therefore meaningless.[55]

Both *Gravity's Rainbow* and *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, in line with their identities as encyclopedic works, expand beyond the purely novelistic form that Lukács focuses on in *Theorie des Romans* to include philosophical passages and descriptions of science, industry, and economy. Although these component parts cannot be reunited within the texts to their theoretical originary unity, their explicit inclusion marks a pursuit of totality that is detailed and actively sought. In the novels Lukács discusses, individuals pine for connection, but are blind to the ways in which all of the mechanisms that organize society are responsible for their isolation. By focusing on these mechanisms as well as the ideologies that support them, both *GR* and *MoE* display understanding of modern life's contingency on material conditions. Just realizing the connectedness of all aspects of modern life to the market does not in itself satisfy the desire for totality, however, without a sense of meaning.

Andrew Feenberg, inheritor and interpreter of Lukács in the contemporary North American context, has argued that *Theorie des Romans* serves as a culmination of the aesthetic theories of Schiller, Schlegel, and Hegel, as it saw totality, "not merely as a sum total of knowledge but rather a form and structure of life itself."[56] This conceptualization obviously relies also on Marx, who saw economic production in an expanded sense of "the total production of a whole form of life, of a way of understanding the world and of acting in it."[57] Whereas in *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein* Lukács would focus on the relevance of this interconnectedness to politics and history, in *Theorie des Romans*, the young philosopher is preoccupied with the way in which the totality allows for an imminence of meaning in the lives of individuals. The element of meaning is what differentiates *Theorie des Romans* from Lukács' subsequent works, aligning it slightly more with Hegelian than Marxian dialectics. The hunger for meaning is central to *MoE*, as is the need for some deeper, shared truth is to *GR*.

In Frederic Jameson's defense of Lukács ideas, he terms the art produced by pre-industrialized societies such as the Greeks "concrete": its immanent meaning comes from its understandable place within all of the networks of the society. Works of art in such a society

[55] Ibid., pp. 45-60
[56] Feenberg, Andrew. "Introduction to the Young Lukács." *Alternatives* vol. 1 no. 3, 1966, pp. 2–18.: P. 6
[57] Feenberg, pp. 5-6

need not address the complicated developments of history because each generation has lived out similar dramas: the setting and the humanity of the actors speak for themselves. Even the Greek gods act in an understandably human way. In short, all elements in the fiction are "meaningful from the outset… they need no *mediation.*" In modern literature, the increased complexity of human society necessitates that actions be justified and objects be given meaning foreign to themselves. All of the metaphorical and allegorical modes that have developed out of this necessity serve as evidence to the fact that modern works are fundamentally "abstract"[58], in order to reveal the humanity behind the institutions that create the objects and activities that populate modern literature, works would have to zoom out to a level "irreconcilable to the very form and structure of literature," since the scale of literary fiction is generally accepted to be that of the individual human life. Thus, modern society has lost touch with totality, and modern works cannot supply the concreteness that reality has lost. Importantly, Jameson also remarks that, while in epic meaning and life are united throughout the text, in tragedy they are also united, though only in the moment of crisis. This union through crisis is reminiscent of Saint-Amour's proposition that society becomes a totality in war, when common purpose unites a whole nation and imbues each action and object within its collective meaning.

After the momentary union between life and meaning achieved in tragedy, Jameson writes that meaning completely dissociates with narrative and therefore with life, moving into philosophy and the Platonic realm of ideas[59]. This separation of meaning and life, the abstract and the concrete, is exactly what encyclopedic novelists attempt to overcome through their narration of technical or scientific (concrete) processes within a narrative form. By involving a wide variety of professions, branches of thought, styles of language, and other concrete aspects of modern life in their texts, encyclopedic authors fight to include them in the totalizing meaning produced by the novel. Resisting the tendencies of both abstract idealism and romantic disillusionment, encyclopedic authors do not allow the world to serve either as an empty backdrop or as a hostile environment to be resisted, but actively try to imbue its systems and objects with meaning. *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* especially focuses on the unification of the fabric of society with philosophy, putting a great deal of effort into concretizing the abstract and

[58] Jameson, Frederic. "The Case for Georg Lukács." *Marxism and Form*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J, 1980, pp. 160–205, pp. 167-8
[59] Ibid., pp. 165-72

abstracting the concrete. *Gravity's Rainbow* also abstracts the concrete, though more often through fantasy and slapstick than through earnest philosophizing.

The idea of the concrete and the abstract which informs the argument of *Theorie des Romans* will return in *Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein* in the distinction between the realistic, that narrative which understands its subject matter particularly and historically, which connects its subject to its social conditions, and the symbolic, which presents objects and narratives disconnected from social-historical context. Once again, it is the engagement the text has with reality that is crucial to its value in Lukács' eyes. This awareness of the particulars of a historical moment, especially its social and political conditions, is fully present in *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, much more so than one would expect of a novel so preoccupied with morality, a topic which aspires to universality. *Gravity's Rainbow*, while undeniably symbolically rich, also includes a pronounced preoccupation with historical specificity, overwhelming the reader with its abundance of disparate specificities.

Kant wrote that all artistic forms are totalities without teleology, but for this study a solipsistic notion of individual completeness will not suffice to define totality. Indeed, the criterion of individual completeness is already meaningfully defied by *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, which as a project was never officially concluded. Teleology, for its sake, could be connected to Lukács' diagnosis of Zola's novels, which exist as a "mere illustration of a thesis,"[60] a predetermined performance of his positivist understanding of the structure of society, thus with no room for investigation of the structures that uphold that order. The works here investigated are genuine explorations of reality which seek to address the whole of it in both its concrete and abstract layers. Totality for the purpose of this study must address both the concrete interconnectedness of the objects and actors that inhabit the world and find their meaning within this structure.

Thus we can agree with Moretti in his characterization of modern epics, that "great epic writing gives form to the totality of life."[61] By casting a mass of concrete realities into a narrative, meaning is necessarily endowed. Another challenge lies in establishing that this meaningfulness is relevant not only to the imposed form of the narrative, but also to the total structure as it exists in reality: a nearly impossible goal, but nevertheless striven for.

[60] Jameson, p. 195
[61] Moretti, p. 34

Another inheritor of Lukács' theory of the novel as the marker of the loss of totality was A.J. Cascardi, who focused specifically on the idea of totality and the novel from a more contemporary perspective. Cascardi pits Lukács against Ian Watt, though their arguments are essentially complementary. Watt argued that the novel developed alongside the growing economic and ideological power of the individual: the rise of liberal individualism as reflected in the works of Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding. Before these writers, Watt characterizes literature as focused on exemplary types or character tropes, rather than believable human figures[62]. Lukács' argument sees historical change on a grander scale, but focuses on the same essential difference: between a pre-modern era in which society existed as a coherent whole, and the modern era in which each individual fails to see his own reliance on the fabric of society. This distinction between modern and pre-modern is relevant to Watt's study because he is investigating the transition, and to Lukács' as well as the present study because they see some answer to modernity's discontents in the pre-modern as a myth of wholeness. For this reason, this study will take the essential feature that Lukács identified as characteristic of the disparity between pre-modern and modern: imminent totality, as our grail. It is nevertheless enlightening to realize that the loss of totality alongside the development of the novel can be traced along the lines of development of Liberalism, an ideology that makes appearances in both of the texts at hand. Even before Liberalism, Watt identifies Descartes' meditations as a breaking point of totality, in that they moved the locus of truth from the collective to the individual[63]. It is precisely this longing for a shared and imminent truth that motivates Ulrich, although his methods are unflinchingly Cartesian.

Cascardi, following Lukács, emphasizes the centrality of the split between philosophy and literature to the crumbling of classical totality, writing: "The disappearance of integral forms as confirmed by the division of literary and philosophical discourse marks the subject as divided and the culture of modernity as a 'detotalized' whole."[64] Thus, a need to reconcile form and life, soul and world, arises. This reunification is Ulrich's goal precisely, despite his privileged perspective as an individual observer detached from the world around him. Despite his quintessentially modern interior isolation, Ulrich is always imagining ways through which

[62] Watt, Ian. *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding*. Vintage Digital, 2015.
[63] Ibid., p. 20
[64] A. J. Cascardi, "Totality and the Novel," New Literary History 23.3 (Summer 1992): 607–27, p. 608

individuals might find some shared meaning and connection. The climax of this search comes of course in book two, when Ulrich forges as close a bond as can be experienced with his sister[65]. The failure of this attempt reveals the novelistic aspects of the work, which Lukács predicted would predestine any attempts to reunite soul and world within a modern literary work to failure[66].

Like Ulrich and Agathe, plenty of the characters that populate *Gravity's Rainbow* work to shift their abstract beliefs into praxis. Pointman is typical of this approach, as his Pavlovian worldview informs not only his research but all of his interactions[67]. In a way, everything Pointsman touches becomes a part of his research. It is clear, however, that this approach requires forceful measures to bring each aspect within the totalized structure. As Pavlovianism can be boiled down to an orthodox adherence to the credo of cause and effect, Pointsman's dogma can be seen as a stand-in for the larger baggage of modern positivism. Pointsman's hunger for domination also marks this method as totalizing, artificial, and ineffective as a reflection of anything real.

Slothrop, on the other hand, sees the world around him as a mystery to be unraveled, and therefore allows reality to reveal itself in its totality. At the same time, Slothrop, although he is barely aware of it, exists as an object within the concrete structure of the rubber industry that connects the war to the peacetime economy. In his concrete being, Slothrop serves as the fulcrum between science, industry, and warfare. At the same time, Slothrop's peculiar role in the development of Imipolex G means that he also connects this compound to human interactions: familial bonds and sexual desire. Slothrop therefore illuminates the interlocking structure of the totality not through experimentation or contemplation but through his concrete connection to the operation of the whole, which is bound at the crosshairs of science and soul.

Slothrop embodies, therefore, that which Ulrich only hopes to understand. Ulrich appreciates the concrete interconnectedness of the modern world, but fails to recognize --or even to force into being-- his own place within it. Lukács and Jameson would assert that this is due to the reification that blinds Ulrich, allowing him to see the world around him only as a series of stable objects, and not as the use-value that unites them and constitutes their true connection to the concrete totality. The utter bourgeois-ness of Ulrich's worldview is undeniable; the characters

[65] *MoE,* pp. 671-732
[66] Cascardi, p. 609
[67] *GR*, pp. 50-52

in his social circle promote myriad models of normative totalities: to be imposed without regard for any ethical particulars. These characters' vision is clouded by the apparent discreteness of the rapidly multiplying rational systems that surround them. Although Ulrich seeks a cohesion without forced coherence with a great respect for particulars to a much greater extent than his peers, he is never able to overcome his understanding of himself as a mere observer of these processes. Even in his utopian attempt to live in the Other Condition with Agathe, Ulrich's plan is foiled by his unbreakable commitment to observation and evaluation.

D. A. Miller argued in his 1981 monograph *Narrative and its Discontents* that it is from the conclusion of a narrative arc that the requisite lack that is the precondition of a given novel's being can be most easily identified; the resolution to the conflict clearly illuminates what was at the heart of the conflict all along[68]. The premise of narrative is that before the story began there was some kind of peace, and the story may end when this peace is somehow restored. *Gravity's Rainbow* begins with the scientists at PISCES (especially Roger Mexico) trying to find a pattern in the aerial bombardment of London. Peace is restored, as it were, with the bomb falling in Los Angeles (the global capital of postmodernity according to Frederic Jameson) and everyone accepting their places in this new order that can hardly be explained. *Der Mann Ohne Eigenschaften* begins with its protagonist deciding to retreat from the world for one year in order to find meaning and therefore should end (though it infamously does not) when he finds a satisfactory mode of living meaningfully. The second part of the novel -- the final part to be published during Musil's lifetime and with his personal oversight -- does formally conclude, however, when The Parallel Campaign informally decides that their raison d'etre: to unite Austria under the banner of one great idea or project is ultimately unattainable. Just like PISCES, they accept that their search for totalizing meaning and purpose is beyond their reach. *Der Mann Ohne Eigenschaften* in its latest editions also includes drafted chapters left by Musil to his wife after his death. In these final fragments, Ulrich is called back to his childhood home by the death of his father and thereby reunited with the sister he hasn't seen since childhood. What unfolds in the family house is a striving for completeness obviously not on a global, but nevertheless on a larger-than-personal scale. Ulrich and Agathe willingly decide to pursue a "complete" life,

[68] Miller, D. A. *Narrative and Its Discontents: Problems of Closure in the Traditional Novel*. Princeton University Press, 1989. pp. ix-xiii

dismissing the empty formalities of reified bourgeois existence. *Gravity's Rainbow* does have a formal ending, but this ending relies on structural customs of conclusion. The protagonist has already vanished from the novel 20 pages earlier in a character ending that flauts aesthetic convention as well as phenomenological experience, leaving his personal arc in a sense officially unfinished.

Both Ulrich and Slothrop begin their arcs working within a system and continue to search for their own places within that system before breaking off and pursuing totality instead within themselves. The split between self and society that both of these trajectories are premised on is already inherently opposed to Lukács' idea of the totality as a culture-wide phenomenon. Ulrich in particular, however, describes the state he is searching for and the paradigm that prompts his discomfort in terms extremely reminiscent of Lukács own argument in *Theorie des Romans*. Slothrop, on the other hand, leaves his role within the totalizing institution of international military intelligence in order to search for an explanation for his seemingly extremely personal connection to a greater whole. After immense encyclopedic journeys through piles of ideas, experiences, and facts, both texts feature major reversals: rejections of the un-totality of (post)modern life in favor of nothingness.

It is nothing new to assert that totality in the modern age is unattainable; that modernity is characterized by fragmentation and reification, a chasm between self and world that means not only that all forms but also life itself is incomplete (in postmodernity, as discussed by Jameson, these effects are only heightened)[69]. Following from this it has often been asserted that the underlying arc of all novelistic plotlines is some variety of search for fulfillment which can never truly be satisfied. Seen from such an abstract perspective, neither *Gravity's Rainbow* nor *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* can be said to be truly unique. Both works also conform to the necessary failure: neither novel depicts a totalized world free from reification or bourgeois antinomy. Nevertheless, the protagonists of these two works are both on far more explicit searches for totality than those of other novels. It will be the task of this study to investigate to what extent both the protagonists and the works that house them attain some sense of totality throughout their narrative arcs and to what extent and for which reasons they fail.

[69] Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism: Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Verso Books, 2019.

4. *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*

First a brief remark on form. Robert Musil's *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* is not listed among Mendelsohn's original list of encyclopedic texts. As an aside to this list, Mendelsohn mentions that there are certainly more encyclopedic texts extant, which would belong to cultures Mendelsohn himself did not feel sufficiently knowledgeable to comment on, such as Camões' *Os Lusíadas* in the Lusophone literary tradition. This opening allows us to imagine the possibility of *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* as the encyclopedic text of the Austrian moment of the fin de siecle. The contextual requirements of an encyclopedic text, according to Mendelsohn's model, are that the work arise at a time of major cultural transformation in a place where a national culture is rising, seeking identification. Mendelsohn referred to this moment as a "fulcrum between periods that later readers consider national pre-history and national history"[70]. Naturally, the pre-dawn of the first world war serves as the immediate pre-history to the first Austrian republic. The Parallel Campaign as it is described throughout the work explicitly seeks to find a unifying cause for Austria, sidelining the interests of the separatist groups which will shortly have their own nations to guide and define. The Austrian republic will also include significant populations of each of the ethnicities formerly included in the Austro-Hungarian empire, and Vienna will retain the apparati and atmosphere of an expansive multiethnic empire throughout the rest of the 20th century like phantom limbs. The national history of the independent Austrian republic, then, is also addressed in *MoE* through its exclusive focus on Vienna and its surroundings -- excluding any excursions to the edges of the empire as featured in Roth's *Radetzkymarsch*, for example. The Austrian republic's neighboring states are present in the text in the same haunting manner in which they appear to the republic in its subsequent national history. Let us therefore consider this criterion satisfied.

Mendelsohn's next contextual demand is that the work develop a following comparable to that of the Bible within its cultural context. Later theorists noted that quite a few of these texts, *Gravity's Rainbow* included, have developed a much more cult following than Christianity's universally known and applied central text. This criterion was clearly non-negotiable for Mendelsohn, however, as it allowed him to rule out *Dead Souls* and *Middlemarch* as members of his elite genre[71]. For this particular criterion, *MoE* may be seen as a borderline case. The work

[70] Mendelsohn, p. 1268
[71] Mendelsohn, p. 1268

does not inspire any official pilgrimages to Vienna reminiscent of Bloomsday in Dublin. Nevertheless, there is an enormous body of scholarly work surrounding the text and an official institute dedicated to the study of not only the novel, but any other papers or data that can be connected to it. Northrop Frye also mentioned the quasi-sacredness of encyclopedic texts in his definition, centering this criterion on an "analogy of revelation."[72] Revelation is something *MoE*'s protagonist hungers for throughout the text, and his hunger ultimately goes unsatisfied. *MoE*'s reception could be seen analogously: earnestly sought, almost reached, but never quite satisfied.

Frye applied the biblical comparison even more deeply than Mendelsohn, asserting that the bible configures totality through its culmination in a "permanently redeemed world" in the form of the Millenium. The kind of epic work that shows this most clearly, according to Frye, was the "contrast-epic," in which a work portrays the mass of society ironically -- naturally Musil's Kakania meets this condition -- in contrast to a new, divine way of living. One example of the latter is offered by Meingast, Clarisse's spiritual guide, another is offered by Hans Sepp, the leader of the young German nationalists. Both of these men act as prophets, asserting their beliefs about the way totality functions or should function without any proof satisfactory to Ulrich's incisive questioning. Ulrich's year off from life might partially fulfill this requirement, as he certainly intends this time as an escape from the failures and emptiness of modern life. The year off however, as mentioned, does not result in any divine revelation. Here again, failure glares. But the failure to reach enlightenment, when seen in tandem with the author's failure to complete the novel, illuminates the earnestness of the attempt to truly find a meaningful and moral way to live, not only as an individual, but as a member of a totality. Although the second part of the novel is titled *Ins Tausendjährige Reich*, alluding to the millenial utopia in which totality is once again given and all accept their place and meaning, the secondary title is (*Der Verbrecher*), which implies that those who do aim for grand purposes end up outside of the real society they live in. This is certainly the case for Ulrich and his sister Agathe, who actively choose to isolate themselves from normal social relations to focus on forging an unnaturally close familial bond. Frye concluded that:

"Hence it is in satire and irony that we should look for the continuing encyclopaedic tradition, and we should expect that the containing form of the ironic or satiric epic would be the pure

[72] Frye, p. 315

cycle, in which every quest, however successful or heroic, has sooner or later to be made over again."[73]

Irony certainly describes the gaze the narrator casts on Meingast and Hans, establishing messianic figures as no longer acceptable in a modern society. The fact that Ulrich's quest is unending, and that he recognizes that whatever relative certainty he is able to secure could always be overturned by new findings absolutely conforms to Frye's definition of ironic encyclopedias. Key to this definition is the tension in the text between earnest and ironic attempts at understanding totality, which will be investigated in more depth further on.

Although reception was a central point for Mendelsohn, it has become much less essential to subsequent definitions of encyclopedic works, such as Franco Moretti's of modern epics. Especially considering Moretti's built-in expectation that the works will fail to appeal to a broad audience, his works rely on intense scholarly rather than popular focus -- a benchmark that *MoE* undeniably attains. Moretti also demands that his texts be "very long and very boring,"[74] characteristics that fit in with his idea of works that are read mainly by scholars and exist in limited numbers due to their remarkable lack of popular appeal. This variety of musty tome certainly describes *MoE*, which is principally famous for being long and "difficult."[75] Failure is also a definitive aspect of Moretti's genre from the perspective of content: another criterion that makes *MoE* again a good candidate for the title of modern epic. As explored in the previous section, Moretti explains this failure as a necessary consequence of the disparity between epic's totalizing world-building and the fractured reality of modern life. This argument was disputed by Saint-Amour, however, as he argued that encyclopedic works under his definition actively worked against epic's totalizing logic, rather than reaching for it and falling short. On closer inspection, both sides of this argument become more legible when the considerable difference in primary literature between the two studies is taken into account. Moretti begins his book with Goethe and moves on to Wagner, while Saint-Amour focuses exclusively on 20th century novels. The argument that *Faust* part II yearns for classical grandeur is hardly debatable, but the same

[73] Frye, p. 322
[74] Moretti, p. 4
[75] Trahms, Von Gisela, et al. "Neue GESAMTAUSGABE: Robert Musils „Der Mann Ohne Eigenschaften' - WELT." *DIE WELT*, 1 Mar. 2017, www.welt.de/kultur/literarischewelt/article162472147/Er-zeigte-uns-wie-man-Urlaub-vom-Leben-nimmt.html.

cannot be said of *Parade's End*, Saint-Amour's central example. But which is more accurate in the case of *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*? The distinction here is between the modern counter-totality of the encyclopedia and the normative, imposed totality of the epic. In either case, failure is categorical, so this criterion must take as its focus not what is or is not achieved, but what was sought.

As has been explored, Lukács located the source of totality in the mythical-natural state he imagined the classical Greeks living in. A work like Goethe's *Faust* clearly harkens classicism in its lyrical form and its adventures over the Earth and into the underworld. A work like *Parade's End*, on the other hand, explicitly stages past epistemologies as obsolete. *Mann ohne Eigenschaften* casts its gaze over myriad worldviews, but those which it gives most weight to are the modern. In fact, while *MoE* takes interest in past epistemologies, these are always counterbalanced with an incisive modern commitment to empiricism, which will not accept any value or norm as inherently meaningful or correct, no matter its historical weight. In this sense, *MoE* gives no particular privilege to the classical perspective.

A discussion of modern epics necessarily juxtaposes the epic form against the most common narrative form in the Western world since the Enlightenment: the novel, which is commonly defined, as Fusillo explored, in contrast to the epic. Although the distinction between the epic and the novel has been fundamental to the work of theorists as revered as Hegel and Bakhtin, not to mention Lukács, these writers were influenced by "the Western obsession with origins," and thus their works "evoke the great dualities on which Western identity is constructed."[76] The novel is focused on private, domestic concerns, while the epic is focused on society; the novel is focused on the individual while the epic concerns the collective. The novel dominates the private sphere while the epic shines in the public. *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*'s unique position between these two poles is another element that can help us to identify it between these formal categories. The work is focused on a single individual whose aim is to find meaning within his own life: a clearly personal goal. However, Ulrich's search for meaning is made up almost entirely of meditations on the state of society, science, and morality: patently public concerns. Although Ulrich is able to find some happiness in the "other condition" (*Anderer Zustand*) with his sister Agathe, this happiness does not directly address any of the concerns that he had been contemplating before reencountering her and therefore does not

[76] Fusilo, Massimo. "Epic, Novel" pp. 34-39

constitute a culmination of his personal journey. In fact, Ulrich's journey has very little to do with himself. There we have the central problem of *MoE*: that the titular man is hardly interested in himself. The situations that Ulrich is thrust into are also used as impetus to discuss societal conditions, but they never disregard their central characters, whose concerns are often highly personal. This dedication to three-dimensional characters whose concerns are lent reason and narrative time constructs the polyphony that reenacts the Viennese public of the time, but out of a multitude of individuals. In this sense, *MoE* certainly fits into Fusillo's very open genre allowance, that epic and novel both be understood as "transcultural constants that can be more or less active from period to period and work to work."[77]

Ultimately, though, Fusillo returns to Moretti's definition of modern epics or opere mondo as legitimate inheritors of the epic genre in that they are "forced to aspire to totality through often failed attempts to create new sacred texts."[78] Thus for Fusillo and Moretti, it is not enough that a text work to gather together all of the shattered bits of the society to reconstruct a totality, but this reconstruction must in some way be heralded as a quasi-sacred text. This condition naturally hearkens back to Mendelsohn, but in this case the sacred-ness of the text can be understood on the side of artistic aspiration rather than reception. The way in which *MoE* could be seen as striving for sacred-ness in this sense would be in its preoccupation with morality. Ulrich wants to know not only what is right for his own particular path in life, but also how this path fits into the greater whole, and also how this can be known, how others should begin to look for such moral and meaningful paths. In that sense, *MoE* could be taken as a guidebook for a new morality characterized by essayism: a sacred text for a rational modern age.

Taken in this sense, *MoE* presents an open and unsystematic approach to understanding life as a totality. Is this totality normative? This question is essential, as normativity is a defining characteristic of imposed totalities, such as those promoted by fascist regimes. Whether or not the theoretical classical totality was normative is up for debate, though Lukács would certainly argue that it was not. Nevertheless, any modern attempts to resurrect a classical style of totality in society would be thought of as normative or prescriptive, since this resurrection would need to be instituted by force. A descriptive totality, on the other hand, does not impose but tries to reveal or uncover some unity that already exists. Instances of this sort are more difficult to find,

[77] Ibid., p. 40
[78] Ibid., p. 52

but *Ulysses* is generally regarded as a prime example, in that its author explicitly stated that his goal was to encapsulate all of Dublin within its pages. By collecting and containing a given totality, such as an entire city, there is no guarantee that the underlying connective tissue, if it exists, will be revealed. *MoE* certainly takes up a similar challenge, endeavoring to include all of the political interests, intellectual strains, modes of fashion, and ways of loving present in the Kakanian capital before the fall of the empire. In that sense, the totality presented within the work is not normative, but descriptive.

MoE also includes, however, explicit searches for the underlying hidden laws which would unite and govern the visible totality. Ulrich is not interested in the norms and customs of his day and age for their own sake, but rather for what they might otherwise be or might reveal about deeper human truths. Stijn de Cauwer has addressed the topic of Ulrich's attitude toward normativity directly in his article, "From Normality to Normativity," in which he connects the views expressed in *MoE* to the work of Gestalt psychologist Georges Canguilhem. Canguilhem argued that it is essential that norms be allowed to shift and be redefined with the times[79]. This is precisely what Ulrich and his associates are attempting throughout every encounter in *MoE*. The Parallel Campaign explicitly seeks an idea which would call Austria to action, but so do the characters outside of the campaign, such as Hans Sepp, Meingast, and Ulrich's father. The difference between Ulrich himself and many of these characters, however, is that many of the other characters believe that once they have established their new norms, laws, or ideologies, these will be better than any that came before them and possibly last for centuries. Although the characters generally acknowledge that they are living in a time of vast technological progress and societal unrest, they do not recognize that these changes are due to continue, sweeping aside their ideas for newer ones increasingly quickly. Since the novel is set a few decades earlier than it was written, it was obvious to even the earliest readers that the ideas argued by most of the characters in the work will lose relevance fairly quickly. This historical perspective casts a shadow of irony over all of these endeavors to establish lasting norms, meaning that normativity as a whole is frowned on by the work structurally.

Thus, *MoE* includes the epic logic through the voices and actions of its characters, but mainly for the purpose of casting this approach in irony or arguing directly against it through the

[79] De Cauwer, Stijn. "From Normality to Normativity: Alberto Moravia and Robert Musil on the Pathology of Normality." *Orbis Litterarum*, vol. 68, no. 5, 2013, pp. 395–410., https://doi.org/10.1111/oli.12003.

voice either of Ulrich or the narrator. *MoE* exhibits the encyclopedic urge to "collect and organize all that can be known"; it has "a desire for a former optimism and freedom, in memory of an imagined former fullness,"[80] but it also recognizes (following Nietzsche, as illustrated by McBride) that that fullness was an illusion from the beginning. In place of any imposed norms or morals, Ulrich advocates for constant awareness of the contingency of our actions. In this sense, his quest aligns with Frye's expectation of the ironic encyclopedia, in that this assessment must be constantly undertaken; the mission is never complete.

The distinction between the totalities present in the epic versus in the encyclopedic novel can also be illuminated by a concept Ercolino borrowed from Nietzsche - that of "the grand style." As he explains in his monograph *The Novel-Essay*: "The blending of styles is the symptom of the loss of the grand style as intended by Nietzsche; it is the definitive sign of the rift of that original, living, totality that knows 'only answers but no questions, only solutions (even if enigmatic ones) but no riddles, only forms but no chaos' (Lukács, *The Theory* 31)."[81] Thus, the grand style is the voice of the epic poet. The encyclopedic author, on the other hand, is tasked with drawing back together all that which has already fallen apart. Here, a lack noted earlier in *MoE* from the perspective of Mendelsohn's definition of encyclopedic novels becomes a significant feature of Musil's work -- the collage of characters, scenes, and storylines all take place within a fairly unitary style. Although the characters exhibit unique identities to the extent that their dialogues can be called Socratic, their overall effect is polyphonic, the style through which these dialogues are reported is singular. In this sense, the mass of fin-de-siecle Viennese society is drawn into an epic in the grand style: subsuming a multitude of voices into one form. The form that overrides all others in *MoE* is not the forcibly totalizing monovocity of the epic poem however. Rather, as Ercolino has thoroughly demonstrated, *MoE* is made up of a collection of essays. Here again ambiguity returns, in that the essay is a constitutively open form, which never quite imposes one definitive view of reality. Therefore, although a totalizing structure is present in the text, it is inherently open, unlike any single imposed ideology. At the same time, the essayistic sections of the text are set alongside dialogues which allow yet more space for alternative perspectives to propagate. Patrizia McBride described this tension thus:

[80] Clark, Hillary. "Encyclopedic Discourse." Sub-stance 21, no. 1 (1992): 95–110 https://www.jstor.org/stable/3685349

[81] Ercolino, Stefano. *The Novel-Essay: 1884-1947*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. P. 111

"As a result, the ideas that are unambiguously argued in the essays become caught in the refraction of competing discourses and perspectives when touched upon in the novel. … Rather it epitomizes an epistemological stance that no longer believes in the existence of a privileged perspective on the world and is instead committed to acknowledging its own partiality by continuously evoking competing standpoints."[82]

This juxtaposition offers yet another example of the way in which *MoE* presents both a totalized, positivist perspective and at the same time goes beyond it. It is especially remarkable that the voice that is set in question is that of the narrator, and this also not in terms of unreliable relation of plot elements or characterizations, but in terms of understanding of the real world. It is perhaps only through this method of disruption that a true instability can be portrayed: when even the voice of the narrator is not granted a privileged authority over the truth.

Essayism may seem to be an inherently partial perspective which thus abandons the ambition for a total perspective by relinquishing its claim to objectivity. Conversely, a potential connection between the essay-mode and the total perspective is brought up explicitly in chapter 62 of *MoE*, as Ulrich is contemplating the possibility of expanding this mode of enquiry into a general life philosophy. First of all, the narrator laments the obsession with progress and rationalization which has conquered the minds of modern men and women. He identifies two attitudes: "Die eine begnügt sich damit, genau zu sein, und hält sich an die Tatsachen; die andere begnügt sich nicht damit, sondern schaut immer auf das Ganze und leitet ihre Erkenntnisse von sogenannten ewigen und großen Wahrheiten her. Die eine gewinnt dabei an Erfolg, und die andere an Umfang und Würde."[83] The first state of mind is that which enables technological progress, practical financial decisions, and utilitarian statecraft. It is useful and necessary in the right contexts. But the second is what lends life meaning. It offers a feeling of eternal truth and connection to a whole, and therefore cannot be disregarded. Its insistence on its own objectivity, however, makes it rigid and unsuitable for nuanced questions of morality or emotional experience. Although this objective approach often tries to address questions of meaning, truth, or beauty, its answers to these questions do not reflect the modern experience in which individuals feel disconnected from each other and from grandiloquent propositions that claim to encompass all possible situations.

[82] McBride, p. 131
[83] *MoE*, p. 248

In the preceding paragraph, the narrator indirectly suggests that religion is one way through which modern people attempt to quench their thirst for meaning and truth, but with no satisfaction:

"Sie überlassen alle Fragen der Schönheit, der Gerechtigkeit, der Liebe und des Glaubens, kurz alle Fragen der Humanität, soweit sie nicht geschäftliche Beteiligung daran haben, am liebsten ihren Frauen, und solange diese noch nicht ganz dazu genügen, einer Abart von Männern, die ihnen von Kelch und Schwert des Leben in tausendjährigen Wendungen erzählen, denen sie leichtsinnig, verdrossen, und skeptisch zuhören, ohne daran zu glauben und ohne an die Möglichkeit zu denken, daß man es auch anders machen könnte."[84]

Thus, the narrator argues that truth, meaning, and beauty had been utterly neglected in Kakania, and he does not seem hopeful that any prophet figure could hold the key to their fulfillment. Religion as a whole, a worldview which Musil characterizes as outdated, comes up repeatedly throughout the work as a possible source of answers to the exact questions Ulrich is pursuing. Uncharacteristically for Ulrich, he dismisses these suggestions with neither quips nor arguments. He neither takes religion seriously enough to subject it to scrutiny, nor does he disregard it to the extent of opening it up to irony. Instead, religion is brushed under the rug in conversations with the sense that it is unfortunately unavailable -- no longer satisfactory, but for largely unspecified reasons. The narrator, on the other hand, takes up arms against religion directly in one essayistic excerpt. Interestingly, the essay intrudes on the narration in a moment at which it could have easily been put into the mouth of the protagonist, signaling that such thoughts are not suitable even for the transgressive conversations Ulrich is always getting himself into.

"Nun sind es aber gerade die Vorstellungen der Intelligenz, was sich mit den Zeiten ändert und unglaubwürdig wird; wenn jemand heute erzählen wollte, Gott habe mit ihm gesprochen, habe ihn schmerzhaft an den Haaren gepackt und zu sich emporgezogen oder sei in einer nicht recht unbegreiflichen, aber lebhaft süßen Weise in seine Brust hineingeschlüpft, so würde diesen bestimmten Vorstellungen, in die er sein Erlebnis kleidet, niemand glauben, am wenigsten natürlich die amtlichen Gottesmänner, weil sie als Kinder eines vernünftigen Zeitalters eine recht menschliche Angst davor haben, von exaltierten und hysterischen Anhängern bloßgestellt zu werden. Das hat zur Folge, daß man entweder Erlebnisse, die im Mittelalter wie im antiken Heidentum zahlreich und deutlich vorhanden gewesen sind, für Einbildungen und Krankheitserscheinungen halten muß oder vor die Vermutung gestellt wird, daß in ihnen etwas enthalten sei, was unabhängig von der mythischen Verbindung ist, in die man es bisher immer gebracht hat; ein reiner Erlebniskern, der auch nach strengen Erfahrungsgrundsätzen glaubwürdig sein müßte und dann selbstverständlich eine überaus wichtige Angelegenheit bedeuten würde, bei weitem ehe man an die zweite Frage kommt, welche Schlüsse daraus auf unsere Beziehungen zur Überwelt zu ziehen seien. Und während der in die Ordnung der

[84] *MoE*, p. 248

theologischen Vernunft gebrachte Glaube überall einen argen Kampf mit Zweifel und Widerspruch der heute herrschenden Vernunft zu bestehen hat, scheint es, daß sich in der Tat das nackte, aller überkommenen begrifflichen Glaubenshüllen entschälte, von den alten religiösen Vorstellungen losgelöste, vielleicht kaum noch ausschliesslich religiös zu nennende Grunderlebnis des mythischen Erfaßtwerdens ungeheuer ausgebreitet hat, und es bildet die Seele jener vielförmigen irrationalen Bewegung, die wie ein Nachtvogel, der sich in den Tag verloren hat, durch unsere Zeit geistert."[85]

This excerpt showcases the commitment the narratorial voice has to reason and rationality; he is willing to believe in any experience that can stand up to rigorous questioning, and is even inclined to grant that mystical experiences are symptoms of some universal core or foundational reality, which if it could be understood, would be transformational for our understanding of humanity. Nevertheless, the essay casts both institutional religions and modern mystical beliefs as ridiculous, completely unfitting in an age of rationality. This particular essay is also enlightening because it can be seen as paradigmatic of the rational attitude taken by the narrator, as well as the nature of topics he takes up for himself.

This disdain for spirituality in particular and for proselytizing totalities in general is further emphasized in later chapters in which a self-styled prophet features in the narration in the form of Meingast. The figure of Meingast allows us to draw meaningful distinctions between his methods of spiritual enlightenment and Ulrich's quest for meaning.

"Walter versicherte, daß dieser Raum, wenn man ihn in Meingasts Abwesenheit beträte, jenes Unbeschreibliche besäße, das ein abgetragener alter Handschuh besitze, der auf einer edlen und energischen Hand getragen worden sei! Und wirklich fühlte sich Meingast mit großem Vergnügen in dieser Umgebung arbeiten, deren kriegerische Einfachheit ihm schmeichelte. Er begriff darin seinen Willen, der die Worte auf dem Papier formte."[86]

The important thing about Meingast, then, is that his power is portrayed, especially by Walter and Clarisse, who are his acolytes, as inexplicable: as coming from some personal well of spiritual force. His spartan surroundings not only connect him to the ascetic tradition that has inspired many prophets throughout history, but in his case also emphasizes that his inspiration comes from nothing outside himself. Meingast takes pleasure in the way his words are formed on the page purely from his own will, not by any inspiration from the divine or from his fellow man. Meingast's method of fabricating philosophies of life is thus directly opposed to Ulrich's, which is founded on interaction with and observation of the people and world around him. Ulrich says more about this in his denunciation of Meingast:

[85] *MoE*, p. 553
[86] *MoE*, p. 782

"'Dieser Meingast lebt davon, daß heute Ahnen und Glauben verwechselt sind … Beinahe alles, was nicht Wissenschaft ist, kann man ja nur ahnen, und das ist etwas, wozu man Leidenschaft und Vorsicht braucht. So wäre eine Methodenlehre dessen, was man nicht weiß, beinahe das gleiche wie eine Methodenlehre des Lebens. Ihr aber 'glaubt', sobald euch einer bloß wie Meingast kommt! Und alle tun das. Und dieses 'Glauben' ist ungefähr ein ebensolches fallen ließet, euch in einen Eierkorb zu setzen, um seinen unbekannten Inhalt ausbrüten!'"

The wisdom that Meingast offers is simplistic and reactionary, and somehow fosters an immense admiration in Walter and Clarisse, to the extent that Walter wants to say to Ulrich: "'Heil heißt doch ursprünglich soviel wie ganz. … Heilbringer mögen sich irren, aber sie machen uns ganz!'"[87]. Clearly, the sort of wisdom Meingast offers is exactly what Walter and many others like him have been hungering for: something to *believe* in rather than to rationally assess. As mentioned in the previous section, many Austrians no longer felt enough connection with the Catholic church to truly believe in its teachings at the turn of the 20th century, but at the same time neither did they feel ready to abandon the feeling of faith[88]. In the wake of institutionalized religion then, various strains of spirituality gained popularity, all of which both Ulrich and the narrator would characterize as dubiously founded precisely because they were meant to be believed and not proven. Walter's rebuttal is also significant, despite his lack of eloquence: the feeling that Meingast's presence gives him is one of *wholeness*, of connection to a meaning, to a totality. Not only do the prophet's followers feel whole in themselves, they also feel the need to share the ideas that have allegedly healed them with others. For this reason Walter cannot stand Ulrich's scorn for Meingast, and for the same reason Ulrich cannot abide Meingast's claims to enlightenment. This difference is further explained by Schurz's assertion that different Weltanschauungen serve different functions:

"Der Zweck einer solchen Weltanschauung liegt nicht primär darin, möglichst wahr zu sein. Jeder Pol des Dreiecks entspricht vielmehr auch einer anderen Grundkategorie von Zwecken. WA's sind in Bezug auf Zwecke plurifunktional. Sie unterscheiden sich unter anderem darin, dass sie unterschiedliche Zwecke unterschiedlich gut erfüllen können. Sowohl fur die Ausbildung eines Lebenssinns wie fur die praktische und psychologische Bewältigung des Lebens ist die Regulation aller drei Zweckdimensionen gleichermaßen notwendig."[89]

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[87] *MoE*, p. 784

[88] Coen, Deborah. *Vienna in the Age of Uncertainty: Science, Liberalism, and Private Life*. University of Chicago Press, 2007. Pp. 1-3

[89] Schurz, Gerhard. "Weltanschauungsanalyse Und Robert Musils Der Mann Ohne Eigenschaften." *Kriterion: Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 21, 2007, pp. 16–45., www.kriterion-journal-of-philosophy.org/kriterion/issues/Kriterion-2007-21/Kriterion-2007-21-16-45-schurz.pdf. P. 21

Thus, while Walter is satisfied with a Weltanschauung that leans predominately on the aesthetic-emotive corner of the *Weltanschauungsdreieck*, Ulrich will never be satisfied without more emphasis on the ethical-political corner, and he also criticizes Meingast's relative neglect of the cognitive corner.

Although Meingast explicitly brands himself as a prophet through his clothing and demeanor, *MoE* features another prophet figure, whose books addressing the crises of the soul in modern times gain wide-spread popularity. This figure is, of course, Paul Arnheim. McBride has remarked that Arnheim's character was strongly influenced by Walter Rathenau, whom Musil saw as a clear embodiment of the type of totalizing perspective that modernity should no longer be tempted by:

"More important, Rathenau exemplified in Musil's eyes the yearning for absolute, all-encompassing perspectives that fed into a pernicious tendency to absolutize insights gained from one discipline or subsystem of society and magnify them into a body of coherent truths, endowed with the force of a new redemptive vision."[90]

Arnheim thinks of himself as able to understand and synthesize information from the world around him: the industrialist who prides himself on his mastery of not only industry, but also matters of the soul. This makes his method of philosophizing more similar to Ulrich's than Meingast's; his *Weltanschauungsdreieck* lends more weight to the cognitive and the ethical, while not neglecting the aesthetic. On the other hand, Arnheim does think of his perspective as unique and as a sign that he is an extraordinary individual, which likens him to Meingast in arrogance. Although the totalizing perspective Meingast claims relies on some underlying, organic, spiritual connection between all things, Arnheim's is explicitly pieced together, acknowledging that the realms of business and culture must be brought together by force. Arnheim sees it, however, as a particular gift of his that he is privy to the boardrooms in which a vast array of knowledge can be brought together to inform opinions that could have significant impact on society, as he says to Diotima:

"'Wenn ein Geschäft eine Ausbreitung erreicht wie die ganz wenigen, von denen ich hier spreche, so gibt es kaum eine Angelegenheit des Lebens, mit der es nicht verflochten wäre. *Es ist ein Kosmos im kleinen*. Sie würden staunen, wenn sie wüßten, welche scheinbar ganz unkommerziellen Fragen, künstlerische, moralische, politische, ich zuweilen in den Unterredungen mit dem Seniorchef zur Sprache bringen muß. Aber die Firma schießt nicht mehr so in die Höhe wie in den Anfangszeiten, die ich die *heroischen* nennen möchte. Es gibt auch für Geschäfte trotz allen Wohlergehens eine geheimnisvolle Grenze des Wachstums wie für alles

[90] McBride, p. 23

Organische. Haben Sie sich schon einmal gefragt, warum über Elefantengröße heute kein Tier mehr hinauswächst? Sie finden das gleiche Geheimnis in der Geschichte der Kunst und in den sonderbaren Beziehungen des Lebens von Völkern, Kulturen und Zeiten.'"[91]

In this speech, Arnheim connects business operations to art, history, politics, and morality, declaring it a "little cosmos" of its own. Along with the explicit comparison of a business to an organism and the allusion to a heroic origin, Arnheim has firmly established that he sees his father's business as a totality in the classical image displayed in epic poetry. Earlier in this same chapter, Arnheim thinks to himself that he sees his role in society as comparable to that of a Catholic Cardinal, but within the capitalist, rather than Catholic, hierarchy[92]. This position suggests that Arnheim feels no personal responsibility to impose his view on others or even to encourage its spread. Rather, Arnheim enjoys the power he already possesses within a system which already conceives of itself as whole and all-encompassing.

From his lofty perspective as a modern capitalist prince, Arnheim essentializes and universalizes the prominent arguments of his day and publishes them as essays which gain extraordinary popularity. Herein, Musil shows that the Austrian public at this time was hungry for the kind of prophet that could repackage the complexities of modern life into bite-size aphorisms and one-size-fits-all everyday wisdoms. In these writings, Arnheim promotes a totalizing discourse which cannot possibly reflect the complexities of the modern world. It is precisely due to the fact that modern life was in fact as complicated as it seemed that any quick-and-easy explanation of how it could all be neatly stitched together would necessarily be incomplete. It is also the reason why the public was so hungry for this very real and prevalent issue to be resolved.

In fact, this tendency to magnify wisdoms from one sub-discipline and apply them to general knowledge of the world is the same tendency which preoccupies Roger Mexico early on in *Gravity's Rainbow* and Pointsman throughout that text. It is also the same urge that propels the young German nationalists in chapters 103 and 113 as well as most of the suggestions sent into the Parallel Campaign. A prime example can be seen in the argument of the dignified older gentleman who writes to the Parallel Campaign to passionately defend the importance of his system of abbreviated writing for the soul and well-being of the nation:

[91] *MoE*, p. 270
[92] *MoE*, p. 269

"Ulrich lernte zu seinem Erstaunen einen Mann kennen, der die scheinbar harmlose Alltagsschrift mit einem unerbittlichen Haß verfolgte. Vom Standpunkt der Ersparnis geistiger Arbeit war die Kurzschrift eine Lebensfrage der sich im Zeichen der Hast vorwärtsentwickelnden Menschheit. Aber auch vom Standpunkt der Moral zeigte sich die Frage Kurz oder Lang von entscheidender Bedeutung."[93]

The man goes on explaining the revolutionary benefits a reform of the officially accepted shorthand would have on the people of Austria for nearly three pages. This scene is a classic example of the polyphonic nature of the narration, of Musil's ironic style, and, naturally, of the way in which both of these devices are employed toward the aim of discrediting claims that are overblown to the point of being totalizing.

The argument for the imposition of totalizing systems is also expressed more directly and aggressively by Ulrich's father in his debate with Professor Schwung over the problem of insanity and culpability under the law. As Jorge Estrada explains in his dissertation *Ethics with Sterne and Musil*, the essential difference between Ulrich's father's approach and professor Schwung's is that Schwung advocates for some consideration of particular circumstances to be taken into account, while Ulrich's Father advocates for a more unilateral approach to the application of laws, without any consideration of the logic that may have governed an action from the actor's own perspective. Ulrich's father describes the situation from a perspective that also showcases the connection he sees between the one conjunction at stake and the fate of law and order as a whole:

"Die Welt zerrisse, wenn alles als wahr gelten dürfte, was dafür gehalten wird, und jeder Wille es erlaubt, der sich selbst so vorkommt. Es ist darum unser alle Pflicht, die eine Wahrheit und den rechten Willen festzustellen und, soweit uns dies gelungen ist, mit unerbittlichem Pflichtbewusstsein darüber zu wachen, daß es auch in der klaren Form wissenschaftlicher Anschauung niedergelegt werde. … Anschliessend an schon vorhandene Gesetzesfassungen und in Erwägung der angeführten Umstände habe ich nämlich in dem vorerwähnten vorberatenden Ausschuss vorgeschlagen, dem betr. § 318 des künftigen Strafrechts die folgende Fassung zu geben: 'Eine Strafbare Handlung ist dann nicht vorhanden, wenn der Täter zur Zeit der Begehung der Handlung sich in einem Zustand von Bewusstlosigkeit oder krankhafter Störung der Geistestätigkeit befand, so daß-' und Professor Schwung unterbreitete einen Vorschlag, der genau mit den gleichen Worten anfing. Dann aber fuhr der seine mit den Worten fort: '-so daß

[93] *MoE*, p. 350. A remarkable parallel exists here between this exemplary letter to the Campaign's fixation on shorthand as an unbelievably influential detail in modern life and GR's use of the word "stenography" as the example of the word that the council on the institution of the Turkish Alphabet in Kyrgyzstan. Both, it can be argued, present written language specifically, even in its minute details, as foundational to our experience and interaction with others, a cornerstone of life in society.

seine freie Willensbestimmung ausgeschlossen war', während der meine den Wortlaut haben sollte: 'so daß er nicht die Fähigkeit besaß, das Unrecht seiner Handlung einzusehen.'"[94]

Further on in this exaggeratedly loquacious letter, Professor Schwung and Ulrich's father advance this quibble to the question of whether their proposals should be united by an "and" or an "or". Although the question of whether actions should be considered reprehensible based on the culprit's understanding of their morality or based on their adherence to the culprit's individual will is a fascinating one, what is more crucial to the present argument is the way in which Ulrich's father attaches this matter to the fabric of world order. From Ulrich's father's perspective, it is essential that all citizens of a given country be held to the same legal standard -- a concept that on its own seems indisputable. But it is precisely in the case of diminished responsibility that this issue comes to be disputed. Ulrich's father argues that the only case in which an actor is not to be punished for a crime they committed is if they were not capable of knowing that it was wrong -- in other words, if they were for whatever reason excluded from or did not have access to the collective set of moral regulations that should govern the actions of everyone in the country without exception. Clearly, this view takes the law, the shared values and norms that govern a society, as primary and immutable, and excuses actions that go against them only in the case that the culprit would have had no possible way of knowing them, in other words, if the culprit was not a part of the totality that acted collectively according to the law. Professor Schwung's alternative case takes the will of the individual as primary, and thus believes that the morality of one's actions should be decided in accordance with one's own logic and intentions. This view sees the law as something that exists separately from the lives of those it governs, and should thus be compared to their actions, which can also be considered logical and valid as long as their actions align with their intentions. In Professor Schwung's view, each individual lives according to their own will, while according to Ulrich's father's view, each individual should be living in accordance with a collective will. This attitude is apparent throughout Ulrich's father's correspondence with his son, which is always written in the most official and correct style, makes mention of all of the officials and dignitaries he knows, and encourages Ulrich to make more of an effort to conform to societal mores, ingratiate himself to figures of authority, and apply his skills to some practical career that would serve stability and peace (notably not progress) in the empire. Ulrich's father's voice shines through the choral

[94] *MoE*, p. 316-7

dissonance of the text then as an advocate for a 19th century aristocratic Austrian lifestyle: do your duty, adhere to the norms, and expect nothing to change.

One would expect Count Leinsdorf, a friend of Ulrich's father and an actual aging Austrian aristocrat, to promote a similarly outmoded and rigid agenda, and in a way he does. But Leinsdorf's character is surprisingly multidimensional, making him a good example of the polyphonic nature of *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*. The reader is introduced to Count Leinsdorf as the leader of the Parallel Campaign: an earnest patriot and dignified servant of the imperial monarchy. His worldview, as conditioned by his privileged upbringing is described thus:

"Religiös und feudal erzogen, niemals im Verkehr mit bürgerlichen Menschen dem Widerspruch ausgesetzt, nicht unbelesen, aber durch die Nachwirkung der geistlichen Pädagogik, die seine Jugend behütet hatte, zeitlebens gehindert, in einem Buch etwas anderes zu erkennen als Übereinstimmung oder irrende Abweichung von seinen eigenen Grundsätzen, kannte er das Weltbild zeitgemäßer Menschen nur aus den Parlaments- und Zeitungskämpfen; und da er genug Wissen besaß, um die vielen Oberflächlichkeiten in diesen zu erkennen, wurde er täglich in seinem Vorurteil bestärkt, daß die wahre, tiefer verstandene bürgerliche Welt nichts anderes sei, als was er selbst meine. Überhaupt war der Zusatz 'der wahre' zu politischen Gesinnungen eine seiner Hilfen, um sich in einer von Gott geschaffenen, aber ihn zu oft verleugnenden Welt zurechtzufinden. Er war fest überzeugt, daß sogar der wahre Sozialismus mit seiner Auffassung übereinstimme."[95]

Clearly, Count Leinsdorf is possessed by a totalizing worldview, which rather than define itself against any factors that would in fact identify themselves as distinct, admits no enemies, but only misunderstandings between friends. In this way, Count Leinsdorf's view of world peace and unity is more inclusive than any other featured in the text. Similar to Ulrich, who is willing to engage with any opponent open to rational debate, Leinsdorf is willing to accept any group who will agree to "von Selbst kommen,"[96] or in other words, to follow along with his agenda. As was necessary in an imperial realm encompassing so many diverse groups, Leinsdorf represents here a very utilitarian position: his allies must not agree with him, but only conform to his plans to some minimal degree. Leinsdorf belongs to the same generation as Ulrich's father, which explains the degree of similarity between Ulrich's father's immutable and uncompromising faith in the necessity of collective adherence to the absolute authority of the law[97] and Leinsdorf's immutable and uncompromising faith in the absolute authority of the church and the monarchy[98].

[95] *MoE*, pp. 89-90
[96] *MoE*, p. 88
[97] *MoE*, p. 316
[98] *MoE*, pp. 87-91

Although Leinsdorf is introduced in this passage as strikingly ignorant of the world around him, and committed to a brand of conservatism that aims to make adjustments only when utterly unavoidable and even these as gradually as possible, nevertheless his character is granted a respectable degree of sensitivity and reason. In fact, it is Count Leinsdorf who initiates nearly all of the slogans which will become the ideological fixation of the Parallel Campaign[99] and he who pushes the campaign to action as much as possible[100].

Thus let us consider it solidly established that although *MoE* does feature many examples of totalizing perspectives, the work itself does not promote this mode of thought. In this case, the totality represented in the work should be thought of as encyclopedic. Saint-Amour's working definition of encyclopedic texts focuses entirely on the content and form of the works, disregarding reception entirely. In a preliminary definition referencing characteristics of Diderot and D'Alembert's original *Encyclopedie*, Saint-Amour names "stylistic and technical polyphony, their complex orientation to time, and their provisioning against catastrophe,"[101] as key features of the "capacious interwar fictions" he analyzes. Regarding polyphony, it has been noted that *MoE* is not nearly as avant-garde as a text like *Ulysses* or *Manhattan Transfer* in terms of incorporating modernist techniques like stream of consciousness or aggressive insertions of advertising or film-like cuts into the text. Nevertheless, *MoE* is undeniably polyphonic according to Bakhtin's original definition of the term, which requires that characters be "not an object of authorial discourse, but rather a fully valid, autonomous carrier of his own individual word."[102]

This polyphony is also central to the construction of a totality of the encyclopedic, rather than epic, variety. Bakhtin used the classical epics as the model of monologicity: the tendency to subsume all discourse into the narrator's authoritative voice. Encyclopedias, on the other hand, never go beyond these contradictions; the contradictions themselves are the point of the work. In *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, the author's voice is undeniably active. This is especially true in the essayistic segments in which the author's insights into modern life completely overtake any narrative advancement or environmental description. These essayistic segments are much more common in part one of *MoE*, however, in the second part interpretation of the meaning and

[99] *MoE*, pp. 87-91
[100] *MoE*, pp. 347-51
[101] Saint-Amour, p. 9
[102] Bakhtin, M., trans. Carol Emerson. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. University of Minnesota Press, 1997. P. 5

matter of modern life is left to the characters. In these debates between characters, each perspective is lent weight, respect, and space to the extent that it becomes fully comprehensible in its own right. This practice is best exemplified by the characters of the Parallel Campaign, each of which represents an embodied and contingent set of interests. Count Leinsdorf, for example, is no shallow trope of the waning days of aristocratic power. On the contrary, he actively works to understand the concerns of his constituents, albeit on his terms, not theirs. We are also shown how Count Leinsdorf feels inhibited by the social mores of his position, despite the extent of his privilege and comfort in this role. Arnheim, likewise, is never portrayed merely as a Prussian, or a businessman, or a pompous son of wealth. Multiple chapters are devoted to Arnheim's multiple and contradictory motivations and entanglements[103], and this depth of character allows the reader to truly believe in Arnheim's utterances, much more so than one would if one saw him merely as a pompous Prussian windbag. The same can be said for General Stumm von Bordwehr, who seems in earlier chapters to stand in for military bureaucracy taken generally, but is later revealed to have a personal history which motivates his engagement with the campaign while also creating distance between him and his fellow soldiers. Bordwehr is also driven by an infatuation with Diotima, which he acts upon by taking the goals of the Campaign as seriously as possible, using the methods his military education has taught him[104]. In the background, Rachel and Soliman carry on a private drama in the shadows and corners of Diotima's home[105] and Bonadea breaks into committee meetings out of jealousy, but with the veil of humanitarian interests[106].

Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften, when taken as a whole text, exhibits so many different fissures in society, highlighting their contradictions without allowing these to in any way damage the connection of the whole. Ulrich cannot and will not fit into the totality, and every other character is only willing to fit in to the extent that the totality represents his own ideals. From the young german nationalists, to Arnheim, to Stumm von Bordwehr, to Diotima, to Leinsdorf, to Ulrich's father, the characters that populate Musil's Vienna all agree that society must come together as one, but each will only accept union around his own ideals, and not the others. The competing gravitational pulls that hold this constellation in balance reveals both the beauty and

[103] *MoE*, pp. 190-4, pp. 428-34, pp. 551-8
[104] *MoE*, pp. 288-90, pp. 346-8, pp.368-75, pp.401-413, pp.500-506
[105] *MoE*, pp. 172-7, pp. 363-8 pp. 540-6, pp. 655-660
[106] *MoE*, pp. 569-78

the functionality of polyphony in *MoE*: each character has his own view of a possible totality and all are held together with respect for both their conflicts and their concurrences.

Saint-Amour made his central criteria the way in which encyclopedic works sought a totality against the nationalistic logic of total war, writing:

"Where the conventions of epic signal a self-enclosed world that already knows what it needs to know about itself, the techniques of modernist counter-epics index competing bodies, idioms, and systems of knowledge and their imperfect possession by communities that are themselves contested objects of knowledge and identification."[107]

The works thus replicate the totalizing energy that was omnipresent in the early 20th century while resisting its political logic. In the following paragraphs, Ulrich's more direct confrontations with the sort of totalities Saint-Amour discusses as needing to be opposed will be discussed, framed by Ulrich's own trajectory from a totalizing hunger for power to a conviction to live ethically in his own way.

Unlike the heroes of many other modern novels, Ulrich is not interested in integrating himself into society as it is, but rather in rethinking the premises on which society is founded in order to forge a way of life that is meaningful. In his younger years, Ulrich longed to be the sort of epic hero who shaped history because his authority is inherent, like Aeneas or Napoleon. Thus, Ulrich pursues greatness first in the military. In this sense, our protagonist begins his adult life following the model of the ancient epics. Although this is mentioned only very briefly in the text, it establishes a fundamental intertext between *MoE* and the epic tradition. Ulrich leaves the military rather quickly, however, as he realizes that martial power is not what it once was and that therefore this path, although seemingly authoritative, will never grant him any power over the aristocracy, meaning that his victory would never be totalizing:

"Der Finanzier hatte eine Unterredung mit dem Kriegsminister, den er persönlich kannte, und die Folge war, daß Ulrich eine längere Aussprache mit seinem Obersten hatte, in der ihm der Unterschied zwischen einem Erzherzog und einem einfachen Offizier klargemacht wurde. Von da an freute ihn der Beruf des Kriegers nicht mehr. Er hatte erwartet, sich auf einer Bühne welterschütternde Abenteuer zu befinden, deren Held er sein werde, und sah mit einem-mal einen betrunkenen jungen Mann auf einem leeren weiten Platz randalieren, dem nur die Steine antworten. Als er das begriff, nahm er Abschied von dieser undankbarer Laufbahn, in der er es soeben bis zum Leutnant gebracht hatte, und verließ den Dienst."[108]

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[107] Saint-Amour, p. 186
[108] *MoE*, p. 36

It is also significant that Ulrich's conversation with his superior officer is prompted by a gauntlet he has thrown to win a woman he loves passionately. Thus, from the ancient epic hero, Ulrich has quickly progressed to a hero of a chivalric romance. Both of these types of heroism are denied him simultaneously by the hierarchical structure of Austro-Hungarian imperial society. This romance is truly significant, although it is narrated excessively briefly, because Ulrich describes it as his first and only experience of true love, and when other characters later suggest to him that he find meaning in life through love, he responds that he has indeed experienced this, but it was not quite the answer to the questions he is pursuing now. This minor plot point serves then as the justification for the complete dismissal of romance from the options for Ulrich's narrative trajectory, again strengthening the work's encyclopedic, rather than novelistic, form.

After his stint in the military, Ulrich continues his pursuit of power through the study of engineering. This shift marks a recognition of the essential differences between industrialized and pre-industrial societies. By becoming a civil engineer, Ulrich reconceptualizes total authority from coercive force to calculated control over the infrastructure that undergirds modern society. Modern technology and the marvels of utilitarian thinking conquer traditional ways of life in Ulrich's newfound understanding of how the world could and should be. In this moment, Ulrich is truly a modern man. But our protagonist is once again disappointed in his choice of profession when he finds that the engineers he works with are uninterested in applying their orderly and objective methods to human life; once again, he is disappointed by the lack of totalizing ambition in this profession. At this point he recognizes that the society in which he lives precludes the integrated heroism he dreams of, instead compartmentalizing men into mastery of efficiently separated sectors. In his movement from civil engineering to mathematics, the extent and proper place of Ulrich's utopian ambitions are finally made clear:

"Es läßt sich verstehen, daß ein Ingenieur in seiner Besonderheit aufgeht, statt in die Freiheit und Weite der Gedankenwelt zu münden, obgleich seine Maschinen bis an die Enden der Erde geliefert werden; denn er braucht ebensowenig fähig zu sein, das Kühne und Neue der Seele seiner Technik auf seine Privatseele zu übertragen, wie eine Maschine imstande ist, die ihr zugrunde liegenden Infinitesimalgleichungen auf sich selbst anzuwenden. Von der Mathematik aber läßt sich das nicht sagen; da ist die neue Denklehre selbst, der Geist selbst, liegen die Quellen der Zeit und der Ursprung einer ungeheuerlichen Umgestaltung."[109]

Thus, Ulrich thirsts for a revolution not of technology or of science or even of political systems, but of the soul. He believes that this great advancement of mankind will be accomplished

[109] *MoE*, p. 39

through scientific methods, which have already done so much to advance industry and infrastructure. He praises the ability positivist methods have to imagine an objective position distanced from the world and all its workings. Ulrich compares engineers, on the other hand, to the machines they construct: simply a part of the system, unable to see beyond it. In this instance, Ulrich is noticing the concrete entanglement of the engineers as components of a global economic structure. He sees that they could have a great deal of power if they so chose, and bemoans the fact that they do not. Although Ulrich compares engineers to the machines they design, they are not the example used by Lukács in *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein*, nevertheless, Lukács' argument is similar: if the workers came to realize their place within the global economy, it would be within their power to change it. Ulrich is not rallying for a Marxist revolution directly, but this similarity does highlight the degree to which Ulrich's ambitions are revolutionary. The main problem Ulrich identifies in society, however, is not the exploitation of labor by capital (truly not a concern of Musil's protagonist in the slightest), but rather the backwardness of human emotion and custom compared to the rapid progress made by science and technology in the early 20th century. This disconnect between the meaning and the material of daily life naturally brings us back to the earlier Lukács, that of *Theorie des Romans*.

The root of Ulrich's problem here can be traced back to the division drawn by Jameson in support of Lukács: that between the concrete and the abstract. Although they belong to a complex hierarchy, the work of the engineers is primarily concrete. Its purpose is to produce efficiently. But the issues that Ulrich is interested in are primarily abstract: questions of ethics and the soul. Ulrich wants to think through these problems with the precision and thoroughness available to more objective, concrete fields. By attempting to unite the problems of the one with the methods of the other, Ulrich mirrors the project of the larger work itself, which, as Phillipe Mach has argued, is the unification of ethics and aesthetics. Mach cites Musil's personal papers and essays extensively to show that the author saw ethics and aesthetics as primordially intertwined. The connection between the two comes from the fact that both aesthetic works and ethical (as opposed to moral) considerations are always focused on the particular instance.[110] Ulrich's obsession with the ethical finds form in his dialogues and in his proposed utopia of essayism, reminding the reader that Ercolino also argued that bringing the essay into the novel

[110] Mach, Philippe. "Ethics and Aesthetics: Reuniting the Siamese Twins." *Monist*, vol. 97, no. 1, 2014, pp. 122–137., https://doi.org/10.5840/monist20149718.

functionally combined philosophy with aesthetics, and the essay is another form that allows the speaker to thoroughly contextualize a specific given phenomenon.[111] Thus, it is through an intense focus on the particular and its connection to its context that *MoE* is able to draw together the abstract and the concrete, within these limited moments of essayistic excursion, but also through the form of the project as a whole.

Although Ulrich's personal ambitions for greatness have already been largely abandoned by the beginning of the novel's action, his style of thinking is still undeniably grandiose. In this sense, Ulrich may be said to embody within himself the tendency of the modern age to think in terms of totalities, although they no longer live in one and can no longer act as the heroes of those stories. Ulrich's personal prehistory can be thought of then as a mythical heroic origin for our protagonist, who is certainly not any kind of active or ambitious hero in the present moment of the narrative, instead firmly conforming to Moretti's model of the hero of the modern epic as a spectator. Although thrust into the position of honorary general secretary of the Parallel Campaign, he uses his position in this organization to imagine the kinds of revolutionary changes he dreamed earlier of imposing by force. His dream at this stage, though it only comes to full and direct articulation at the final meeting of the Campaign, is described thus:

"'Das kommt nur davon, daß die Bemühungen aller, die sich berufen fühlen, den Sinn des Lebens wiederherzustellen, heute das eine gemeinsam haben, daß sie dort, wo man nicht bloß persönliche Ansichten, sondern Wahrheiten gewinnen könnte, das Denken verachten; dafür legen sie sich dort, wo es auf die Unerschöpflichkeit der Ansichten ankommt, auf Schnellbegriffe und Halbwahrheiten fest!' …
Graf Leinsdorf, den das Schweigen, das inzwischen eingetreten war, an die Pflichten eines Realpolitikers erinnert hatte, sagte mahnend: 'Also was soll geschehn? Wir müssen doch wenigstens vorläufig irgend etwas Entscheidendes tun, um den Gefahren für unsere Aktion vorzubeugen!'
Da unternahm Ulrich einen unsinnigen Versuch. 'Erlaucht,' sagte er 'es gibt nur eine einzige Aufgabe für die Parallelaktion: den Anfang einer geistigen Generalinventur zu bilden! Wir müssen ungefähr das tun, was notwendig wäre, wenn ins Jahr 1918 der Jüngste Tag fiele, der alte Geist abgeschlossen werden und ein höherer beginnen sollte. Gründen Sie im Namen Seiner Majestät ein Erdensekretariat der Genauigkeit und Seele; alle anderen Aufgaben sind vorher unlösbar oder nur Scheinaufgaben!'"[112]

The beauty of this suggestion is that it has transcended any need for personal power or the use of force. Unlike all of the other totalizing ideologies or claims that have been explored in this

[111] Ercolino, *Novel-Essay*, p. xviii
[112] *MoE*, pp. 596-7

section, Ulrich's proposed Secretariat of Precision and Soul would serve as a guiding authority dedicated basically to the same task that has been set for the Campaign thus far: to gather all of the most influential "Great ideas" (*große Ideen*) and to assess their applicability to the problem of the collective need for meaning and direction in society. Such an institution would necessitate a fine distinction between asserting what should or must be (*sein müßten*) and what could be (*sein könnten*). In this passage, Ulrich comes closer than ever to advocating for a sort of prophetic millennial renewal of his own, saying that the Parallel Campaign should act as if a whole new spirit (*Geist*) were going to be born in the year 1918, a remark unavoidably endowed with a heavy shadow, as the reader is fully aware that the world will indeed be profoundly changed in this year, but not in the way Ulrich imagines.

Every suggestion made thus far to the Parallel Campaign has asserted that its sole enaction would address nearly all of the problems facing mankind in the modern era, apart from the suggestion immediately before this one, which is a simple military request. This military request entails, however, all of the nationalistic totalizing force that pushes the whole of society together into total warfare, as the reader is of course aware will occur in 1914. The juxtaposition of these two proposals stages the Secretariat explicitly as a counter-totality to the one forged in warfare. Its structure as an institution could also presumably allow for Ulrich's characteristic essayistic approach, which would avoid making any sweeping proclamations without sufficient cause (*Zureichender Grund*). Despite all of these stipulations, clearly the Secretariat would need to make some definitive proclamations in order to fulfill its function as a guiding force in society, and if this were to be carried out in Ulrich's uncompromising manner, nothing would ever be accepted as definitive. Predictably, however, Ulrich's proposal is shot down by all of the other members of the Campaign, and the final meeting is dissolved with these typical words from Count Leinsdorf: "'Also worauf haben wir uns nun schließlich geeinigt?' fragte er, und als niemand eine Antwort fand, fügte er beruhigend hinzu: 'Na, wir werden es ja schließlich noch sehn!'"[113]

The split between practical and literary modes of thinking and living is noticed not only by our protagonist, but also brings suffering to the life of Ulrich's young friend Gerda Fischel. The reader first becomes acquainted with Gerda in chapter 51, which explains the way in which young Gerda is driving her rational, liberal, bank director father up the wall by associating with a

[113] *MoE*, p. 600

group of young German nationalists who preach a wholly impractical, idealistic view of society. The totality that these young men dream of has hardly any relation at all with the reality in which they all live in Musil's narration, and this disconnect is further emphasized by the German nationalists' characterization as utterly impotent and powerless. In a dialogue between Ulrich and Gerda's mother, the situation is described thus:

"'Ist Gerda mit ihm verlobt?' fragte Ulrich vorsichtig.
'Dieser Junge bietet doch nicht die geringste Aussicht auf Versorgung! Seufzte Klementine. 'Wie kann man da von Verlobung reden; aber als ihm Leo das Haus verbot, aß Gerda drei Wochen lang so wenig, daß sie bis auf die Knochen abgemagert ist.' Und plötzlich sagte sie zornig: 'Wissen Sie, mir kommt das wie eine Hypnose vor, wie eine geistige Infektion! Ja, Gerda kommt mir manchmal wie hypnotisiert vor! Der Junge setzt in unserem Haus unaufhörlich seine Weltanschauung auseinander, und Gerda bemerkt nicht die fortgesetzte Beleidigung ihrer Eltern, die darin liegt, obgleich sie sonst immer ein gutes und herzliches Kind gewesen ist.'"[114]

After describing the problem, Klementine asks Ulrich if it would be possible for Gerda to fulfil some marginal role at the Parallel Campaign, which Klementine hopes would satisfy Gerda's obvious need for totalizing, utopian ideals by other means. At this point, Ulrich answers that he does not believe that the Parallel Campaign is ready to serve such a function at this point, but his hope that such an aim could be reached is still alive. Ulrich's reaction in this moment is very telling. He sees Hans as a viable partner for Gerda, ignoring the violence and hate that fuel his ideology. Gerda's attraction to the nationalist cause is explicitly explained in the text as a way through which she expresses her rebellion against her parents, and this oppositional aspect is directed against Ulrich as well when he comes to visit. The first words we hear from Gerda herself on the matter are: "Übrigens werden Sie es doch nie verstehn, daß man mit anderen Menschen zu einer Gemeinschaft ohne Selbstsucht verschmelzen kann!"[115] Here the nationalist totality of total war as theorized by Saint-Amour is clearly visible, and naturally German nationalist ideology was a prime example of this thinking in historical fact. In contrast to the nationalist's view of a people as an organic whole to which the self, in so far as it is recognized as worthy, is easily surrendered, the totality sought by the Parallel Campaign explicitly foregrounds diversity, as it must accept all of the various ethnicities, religions, and political leanings of the erstwhile Austro-Hungarian Empire. Hans' ideas are portrayed as vaunting absolutes, searching for a region of "Unbedingtheit"[116]: a nearly direct antonym to Ulrich's

[114] *MoE*, p. 309
[115] *MoE*, p. 310
[116] *MoE*, p. 313

pursuit of all imaginable possibilities. This distinction brings back to mind that of the epic totality and the encyclopedic; epic totality is organic and absolute, permitting only one voice of authority to command the truth. Encyclopedias on the other hand reach for totality by trying to include as much disparate matter as possible: fighting to reconstruct what has been shattered, thereby revealing the seriousness of the break.

These different conceptions are brought directly to bear on one another in chapter 102, in which Ulrich finally meets Hans in person. From the first moment, the two set into a socratic dialogue on the root of their shared concern:

"(Ulrich) setzte sich darum in den Kreis und fuhr fort: 'Wir machen in den einzelnen Zweigen des menschlichen Könnens unleugbar so viele Fortschritte, daß wir ordentlich das Gefühl haben, ihnen nicht nachkommen zu können; wäre es möglich, daß daraus auch das Gefühl entsteht, wir erlebten keinen Fortschritt? Schließlich ist Fortschritt doch das, was sich aus allen Anstrengungen gemeinsam ergibt, und man kann eigentlich von vornherein sagen, der wirkliche Fortschritt wird immer gerade das sein, was keiner wollte.'
Hans Sepps dunkler Schopf richtete sich wie ein Zitterndes Horn gegen ihn. 'Da sagen Sie es doch selbst: Was keiner wollte! Ein gackerndes Hin und Her; hundert Wege, aber kein Weg! Gedanken also, aber keine Seele! Und kein Charakter! Der Satz springt aus der Seite, das Wort springt aus dem Satz, das Ganze ist kein Ganzes mehr -- sagt schon Nietzsche; ganz abgesehen davon, daß Nietzsches Ichsucht auch ein Daseinsunwert ist! Nennen Sie mir einen einzigen festen, letzten Wert, nach dem zum Beispiel Sie sich in Ihrem Leben richten!'"[117]

In this moment, Hans has struck at the heart of Ulrich's personal mission: to find a value to guide him in life. Hans has found the answer to this question in the abandonment of Liberalism, Humanism, and Progress, as he makes clear in his response to Ulrich's initial remark. Ulrich, on the other hand, as a trained engineer and mathematician, cannot so easily dismiss the work of so many earnest men in pursuit of the advancement of mankind -- and even less so the principles that guided them. Nevertheless, he also cannot muster much of a defense for Progress:

"'Aber Sie müssen zugeben, daß unsere Unwissenheit offenbar eine äußerst glückliche und abwechslungsreiche ist.' Aus dem Hintergrund brummte eine gelassene Stimme: 'Abwechslungsreich! Wissen! Relativer Fortschritt! Das sind Begriffe der mechanischen Denkweise einer vom Kapitalismus zerfaserten Zeit! Mehr brauche ich Ihnen nicht zu sagen--'"[118]

In this response, Ulrich defends living utterly without any principle, and in exchange enjoying the pleasure and variety that modern life offers. Clearly such an argument holds no sway over

[117] *MoE*, pp. 483-4
[118] *MoE*, p. 484

Hans and his followers, who dismiss his comment as mass-market capitalist prattle. Ulrich's next response is more effective though:

"'Ich denke,' sagte Ulrich 'jeder Fortschritt ist zugleich ein Rückschritt. Es gibt Fortschritt immer nur in einem bestimmten Sinn. Und da unser Leben im Ganzen keinen Sinn hat, hat es im Ganzen auch keinen Fortschritt.' … 'Aber man kann auch das Umgekehrte sagen: Wenn unser Leben Fortschritte im einzelnen hat, hat es Sinn im einzelnen. Wenn es aber einmal einen Sinn gehabt hat, zum Beispiel den Göttern Menschen zu opfern oder Hexen zu verbrennen oder das Haar zu pudern, dann bleibt das doch ein sinnvolles Lebensgefühl, auch wenn hygienischere Sitten und Humanität Fortschritte sind. Der Fehler ist, daß der Fortschritt immer mit dem alten Sinn aufräumen will.' … 'Und vielleicht opfern wir heute gerade deshalb noch viele Menschen, weil wir uns die Frage der richtigen Überwindung früherer Menschheitseinfälle nie deutlich gestellt haben!? Es sind das schwer auszudrücken und undurchsichtige Beziehungen.'"[119]

This is an utterly characteristic example of Ulrich's style of reasoning, and the response is also classic: his interlocutors storm out of the room, hurling insults. Hans' parting remark is that all of Ulrich's hot air amounts to nothing more than Leo Fischel's defenses of Liberalism but from a twisted and inhospitable angle. But this is not quite the case. Fischel is satisfied with the march of progress that ought to make life every year more comfortable and humane. Ulrich on the other hand is not convinced that progress, especially when it entails a loss of meaning and connectedness, is a net positive for mankind. He would not go as far as Hans, though, in seeing progress as a net negative for mankind, and thus disregarding the potential benefits of science or global communication. This conversation is crucial among Ulrich's many encounters with men and women of various ideological viewpoints, in that it establishes that Ulrich himself is no longer searching for any one true value or certainty, though he mourns the loss of their passing.

After Hans and his friends storm out, followed by Bank Director Fischel, who was equally frustrated with Ulrich's discourse, Ulrich continues his meditation with Gerda. This continuation of the debate, though Ulrich performs it seemingly mainly out of spite, is essential to our understanding of Ulrich's intellectual methods. With his associates at the Parallel Campaign, this explanation would come across as insultingly basic, but his sympathy and patience for this young group of fanatics has led him to a point where he can patiently explain the fundamentals of his position, namely, how one is to know whether something is true.

"Man nennt das etwas schleierhaft das Gesetz der großen Zahlen. Meint ungefähr, der eine bringt sich aus diesem, der andere aus jenem Grund um, aber bei einer sehr großen Anzahl hebt sich das Zufällige und Persönliche dieser Gründe auf, und was bleibt übrig? Das ist es, was ich Sie

[119] *MoE*, p. 485

fragen will. Denn es bleibt, wie Sie sehen, das übrig, was jeder von uns als Laie ganz glatt den Durchschnitt nennt und wovon man also durchaus nicht recht weiß, was es ist. Lassen Sie mich hinzufügen, daß man dieses Gesetz der großen Zahlen logisch und formal erklären versucht hat, sozusagen als eine Selbstverständlichkeit; man hat im Gegensatz dazu auch behauptet, daß solche Regelmäßigkeit von Erscheinungen, die untereinander nicht ursächlich verknüpft seien, auf die gewöhnliche Weise des Denkens überhaupt nicht erklärt werden könne; und man hat, noch neben vielen anderen Analysen des Phänomens, die Behauptung aufgestellt, daß es sich dabei nicht nur um einzelne Ereignisse handle, sondern auch um *unbekannte Gesetze der Gesamtheit*. Ich will Ihnen mit dem Einzelheiten nicht zusetzen, habe sie auch selbst nicht mehr gegenwärtig, aber *ohne Zweifel wäre es mir persönlich sehr wichtig, zu wissen, ob dahinter unverstandene Gesetze der Gemeinschaft stecken oder ob einfach durch Ironie der Natur das Besondere daraus entsteht, daß nichts Besonderes geschieht, und der höchste Sinn sich als etwas erweist, das durch den Durchschnitt der tiefsten Sinnlosigkeit erreichbar ist.* Es müßte das eine wie das andere Wissen auf unser Lebensgefühl doch einen entscheidenden Einfluß haben!"[120]

Ulrich has here gotten closer than ever to directly stating the central concern of the narrative, so it is worth closely investigating this particular speech. Ulrich begins by explaining a fairly simple sociological phenomenon, which was being discussed by German scholars such as Georg Simmel at the turn of the 20th century[121]. Although it is merely a mathematical phenomenon, Ulrich sees in this fact a potential key to the true laws that may govern humanity as a whole. If someone were to gain access to these laws, naturally what they would be able to see would be a true, scientifically supported totality of mankind. As he says, this is without a doubt personally important to him. However, he also mentions the possibility that thinking on such a large scale reveals that there is no hidden meaning that binds humanity. In this speech, Ulrich draws himself closer to the idealistic thinking of Gerda's friends, but with the condition that knowledge of the totality be scientifically founded and take into account as much data as possible (i.e. all of humanity rather than a particular chosen nation). Ulrich ends his speech by saying that knowledge of these unknown laws would naturally have a major impact on how people live their lives, and particularly how he lives his life. This brings us to the central problem of Ulrich's year off from life: he premises his personal growth on knowledge of a totality, of which knowledge he demands a reasonable level of certainty which is not available. Without this knowledge, Ulrich is not willing to attach himself to any ideology or practice which suggests possible all-encompassing meanings, since he sees them as mere possibilities, no one of greater value than any other.

[120] *MoE*, pp. 488-9, emphasis mine
[121] Simmel, Georg, and Klaus Lichtblau. "Die Großstädte Und Das Geistesleben." *Soziologische Ästhetik*, 2009, pp. 103–114., doi:10.1007/978-3-531-91352-0_11.

The ultimate difference between Gerda and Hans' position here and Ulrich's is summarized in the next outburst:

"'*Wie es sein könnte*! So denken Sie immer; nie werden Sie die Frage zu beantworten suchen, *wie es sein müßte*!'
'Ihr seid so vorschnell. Immer muß ein Ziel, ein Ideal, ein Programm da sein, ein Absolutes. Und was am Ende herauskommt, ist ja doch ein Kompromiß, ein Durchschnitt! Wollen Sie nicht zugeben, daß es auf die Dauer ermüdend und lächerlich ist, immer das Äußerste zu tun und wollen, nur damit etwas Mittleres hervorkommt?'"[122]

While Ulrich is content to contemplate potentialities, Hans and Gerda take it upon themselves to pronounce what *should* be, what *must* be, when the world is just and correct. It becomes clear in this passage the extent to which Hans and Gerda's Weltanschauung conforms to Gerhard Schurz's definition of the term in his article, "Weltanschauungsanalyse und Robert Musils *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*." Schurz asserts that Weltanschauung must have formed opinions about reality in three dimensions: the descriptive (*das Wahre*), the ethical (*das Gute*), and the aesthetic (*das Schöne*)[123]. Hans asserts not only what is true, he also evaluates what is beautiful and good, and finally what should be done. In this sense, Hans' ideology is a perfect example of a Weltanschauung that embraces all three corners of the *Weltanschauungsdreieck*[124], a feature that supports the present argument that this particular Weltanschauung has aggressive totalizing ambitions.

Even in his most ambitious utopian moments, Ulrich is still experimenting, assessing the results of his actions and pushing dialogues to the extreme to test how his interlocutors will respond. This pursuit has no end in sight; perhaps this makes Ulrich's proposed utopia of essayism a truer one than other, more rigid models. The difference here between Ulrich's could (*könnte*) und Gerda and Hans' should or must (*müßte*) is thus an encapsulation of the difference between a totality that is imposed by force, and one that naturally opens to accept the world as a whole.

The discussion of large numbers and possibilities naturally brings us to the shift in probabilistic thinking as so thoroughly outlined by Deborah Coen in *The Age of Uncertainty*. Coen describes the fin de siecle in the Austro-Hungarian empire as a "crisis of rationalism,"

[122] *MoE*, p. 489
[123] Schurz, Gerhard. "Weltanschauungsanalyse Und Robert Musils Der Mann Ohne Eigenschaften." *Kriterion: Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 21, 2007, pp. 16–45., www.kriterion-journal-of-philosophy.org/kriterion/issues/Kriterion-2007-21/Kriterion-2007-21-16-45-schurz.pdf.,
[124] Ibid., p. 20

which especially affected the bourgeois class, who had largely embraced liberal humanism, but found this Weltanschauung to be attacked at the onset of the twentieth century by religious dogmatism on the one hand and radical relativism on the other. Liberalism in 19th century Austria was embraced as "the embodiment of public reason."[125] Due to these specific attacks, liberal reforms of the Austrian education system put a particular focus on probability and probabilistic thinking as a way to embrace the scientific method and empirical rationality against dogmatic adherence to religion or nihilistic abandonment of certainty. Coen describes the Austrian liberal identity in the early 20th century thus:

"Poised in the center, Austrian liberals laid claim to an authority rooted in their ethical character, itself the fruit of a perpetual process of self-cultivation. Against their right-wing challengers they displayed the virtues of a flexible and independent mind. Against socialists and nationalists they vaunted their self-discipline, with which they believed themselves capable of transcending a class- or nation-based perspective."[126]

Coen adds to this definition a few pages later: "In the parlance of Viennese liberalism, their goal was *Vielseitigkeit* (many-sidedness or versatility), the ability to see from perspectives beyond the personal. … The ideal of many-sidedness equated the common (a normative concept) with the normal (a descriptive and statistical concept). In the context of the industrial revolution, the call for many-sidedness was a bid to overcome the specialization required by a modern division of labor and the dehumanizing effects of bureaucratization."[127]

By this definition, Ulrich begins to sound like a liberal. He certainly values independence and flexibility in the face of his opponents on the right, and respects views that go beyond simple categorical thinking. He cultivates as many perspectives as possible and sees communication as the key to enlightenment. He also sees hyper-specialization as a source of discord in modern society. The main difference between Ulrich and the liberals, though, is that our protagonist also prides himself on his rebelliousness and abrasiveness. A better example of the model liberal of the time appears in the text in the form of Gottlieb Hagauer, Ulrich's sister's husband and prominent school principal in rural Austria.

Hagauer is first introduced to the reader as: "'doch einfach der aufgeklärte tüchtige Mensch, der Brave, der die Menschheit auf seinem Felde fördert, ohne sich in Dinge zu mischen, die ihm ferne liegen.'"[128] And this will be Hagauer's prime characteristic: he does his duty to the utmost degree of correctness, and does not bother with any questions that do not fall within his

[125] Coen, *Vienna in the Age of Uncertainty.* Pp. 1-11
[126] Ibid., p. 11
[127] Ibid., p. 24
[128] *MoE*, p. 679

specified purview. It is easy to see, then, why Hagauer and Ulrich's father got along so swimmingly. It is also clear to see, from this description, why Ulrich and Hagauer do not see eye to eye. Although Hagauer is a bright and industrious man, Ulrich is repelled by his lack of individual ingenuity or inquisitiveness. This characteristic in Hagauer seems to serve as a general reprimand for Austrian liberals of the early 20th century that they were not thinking independently enough. Although Ulrich must admit that Hagauer's program "'als das Höchste gilt. Sein Wirken stellt einen soliden kleinen Fortschritt dar.'"[129], it is precisely this practicality, this tiny step in the direction of progress, which Ulrich cannot respect, even though Hagauer's educational program is specifically described as one Ulrich would also support:

"einerseits von dem unersetzlichen Wert des historisch-humanistische Unterrichts für die sittliche Bildung die Rede war und ebenso andererseits von dem unersetzlichen Wert naturwissenschaftlich-mathematischen Unterrichts für die geistige Bildung und drittens von dem unersetzlichen Wert, den das geballte Lebensgefühl des Sports und der militärischen Erziehung für die Bildung zur Tat hat.'"[130]

In fact, this specific balance of mathematical thinking as applied to matters of the soul, and humanities applied to matters of customs and interpersonal interaction, while sport and discipline are also not disregarded, remind the reader most closely of Ulrich's personal routine and practices. Thus, as far as the educational ideas of the liberals were concerned, Ulrich can be counted as fully in agreement (as much as such a willfully contrarian character ever can be). The opposition Ulrich mounts against Hagauer and the movement he represents is precisely in their practicality and reformist pace; this further proves that our protagonist has no patience for anything less than a revolution of the soul. Hagauer's own rationality and discipline serve as a stark contrast to the drastically atypical experiment Ulrich will undertake with his sister.

Ulrich's closeness to liberalism is also touched upon in his encounters with Gerda and Hans, since the young couple accuse him of siding with Gerda's father, who is a passionate defender of the humanitarian and economic policies advanced by liberals. Ulrich admits that he agrees with Mr. Fischel on a great number of topics, but in dialogue, Fischel is portrayed, like Hagauer, as absolutely unable to engage with any position outside his own, no matter how passionately he extols freedom and open-mindedness. Both Fischel and Hagauer are good men at heart and Ulrich agrees with their ideas and principles, thus it is mainly Ulrich's passion and his hunger for more dramatic changes that differentiates him from them. Although Ulrich is defined

[129] *MoE*, p. 682
[130] *MoE*, p. 681

in opposition to Hagauer and Fischel as certainly not the model liberal citizen, his connection to liberal educational values, especially that of probabilistic thinking, cannot be overstated.

The final encounter the reader has with Gerda is a tragic one in which Ulrich's nihilistic, opportunistic side is on display. Hans has continued to inflame Gerda's heart with talk of his grand totality, while doing nothing to address the practicalities of her life. He does not work, he has no intention of marrying her, and beyond that, he provokes and then ignores her burgeoning sexual desire: "Und Hans rieb mit seinen kindischen Zärtlichkeiten ihre Nerven auf; sie behandelte ihn mit Heftigkeit und zuletzt manchmal mit Verachtung, aber Hans antwortete mit noch größerer Heftigkeit, wie eine Knabe, der droht, sich ein Leid anzutun, und schattenhaft berührt, wovon ihre Schultern mager wurden und ihre Haut die Frische verlor."[131] Gerda has wasted away, is unhealthy and anxious from living purely in the realm of fantasy. Although the ideas of a pure totality as expressed by Hans and his acolytes have seduced her, they have ultimately left her chronically unsatisfied to the point of deterioration of her physical health. This situation makes clear to the reader that ideology alone cannot sufficiently nourish human life. Like Ulrich, Gerda and Hans also fail to live in the Other Condition.

It is in this state, desperate for more tangible experience, that Gerda goes to Ulrich's house. Before leaving her house, she reminds herself aloud that Ulrich does not love her ("'Er liebt mich nicht!'"[132]) nevertheless, it is clear from her entry into the home of the man without qualities that this encounter will be intimate. Gerda's certainty of this is ensured through her immediate use of informal pronouns with Ulrich: "'Zu sonderbar!' dachte Ulrich 'Nun spricht sie mich mit einmal Du an!'"[133]. At the beginning, Gerda thinks of her rendezvous with Ulrich thus: "Es waren die ersten Küsse *wirklicher, nicht bloß gespielter und eingebildeter Leidenschaft* gewesen, die sie soeben gegeben und, wie sie fühlte, auch empfangen hatte, und der Widerhall in ihrem Körper war so ungeheuer, als ob sie schon dieser Augenblick zur Frau gemacht hätte."[134] Gerda's hunger for physical touch was immense. And her misguided assurance that there was some genuine passion involved in this interaction is essential to her strong reaction. But as they go on, Ulrich's lack of interest is evident, and this leaves Gerda traumatized. While Hans' distant

[131] *MoE*, p. 627
[132] *MoE*, p. 617
[133] *MoE*, p. 618
[134] *MoE*, p. 619, emphasis mine

dreams wore her out over time, Ulrich's sudden attack of action without any romantic or idealistic motivation comes as a severe shock. In this situation, Ulrich is countering an imbalance to the side of romantic illusions by disregarding ideals he sees as outdated. Hans and Gerda therefore round out Ulrich's personhood by showing his willingness to act without concern for the ethical-aesthetic purity he preaches. Hans' idealism also defines Ulrich's in contrast, by showing the difference between Hans' dream of an organic, racially-based totality and Ulrich's encyclopedic attempts to understand meaning through essayism.

The same anxiety over unconsummated love overtakes Diotima later on, as she can no longer sustain the romantic fantasy that she has been enjoying with Arnheim and needs it to somehow be reflected in the practical world of everyday life, either through marriage or an affair. The problem that both Gerda and Diotima face is that of the split between reality and dreams: between practical, tangible experiences and romantic ideas. And this split is precisely the same that Ulrich is working to sublimate, although he focuses on different manifestations of the problem. Diotima is not as helpless as Gerda, though, and thinks much more practically than Ulrich. For this reason, Diotima goes about searching more actively (as this search had already begun with the Parallel Campaign) for theories of social relation that can be practically applied to her romantic situation, as does Arnheim[135]. This couple balance matters of morality, aesthetics, politics, and practicality beautifully to their liberal-bourgeois taste when they are discussing abstract problems. But when they are faced with the specific and tangible reality of marriage and divorce, they find themselves gridlocked. In their private ruminations, both Arnheim and Diotima reach the conclusion that they do not have the courage to act on the types of ideals they promote in the abstract. Thus, we are left with Ulrich, the only character brave enough to not only consider the world as a whole with rigor and intense focus, but also to act on his convictions -- even when these convictions mainly prompt him to avoid acting, at least he does this intentionally and with principle. In fact, this precise debate is carried out between Ulrich and Diotima in Chapter 114:

Ulrich says, "'Nicht einmal im Laboratorium zeigen sich die Dinge so, wie sie sein sollen. Sie weichen regellos nach allen Richtungen davon ab, und es ist einigermaßen eine Fiktion, daß wir das als Fehler der Ausführung ansehen und in ihrer Mitte einen wahren Wert vermuten. … Alles hat teil am Allgemeinen, und noch dazu ist es besonders. … Wie wollen Sie sich also

[135] *MoE*, pp. 546-551, pp.615-628

entscheiden? Soll 'eine Frau' nach dem Gesetz handeln? Dann kann sie sich gleich nach dem bürgerlichen Gesetz richten. *Moral ist ein durchaus berechtigter Durchschnitts- und Kollektivwert, den man wörtlich und ohne Seitensprünge zu befolgen hat, wo man ihn anerkennt. Einzelfälle aber sind nicht moralisch zu entscheiden, sie haben genauso wenig Moral, genau so viel sie von der Unerschöpflichkeit der Welt besitzen*!'
'Was soll also eine Frau in jener Lage, von der wir gesprochen haben, im wirklichen Leben tun?' fragte sie.
'*Gewährenlassen*!' erwiderte Ulrich.'"[136]

Thus, Ulrich connects Diotima's situation to all of the other considerations he has been mulling over: individual choice, morality and ethics, totality, rationalization, etc. He tells Diotima explicitly -- as this conversation occurs relatively late in book one and Ulrich has come a long way in his understanding of how one should approach issues of morality and ethics -- that she should do nothing (*Gewährenlassen* - not get involved, allow matters to resolve themselves) rather than follow the prescriptions of empty bourgeois morality. After this speech, Ulrich goes on to outline his theory of how one should live as if one were a character in a book. This is the pronouncement that Ulrich will act upon in book two, but Diotima does not see it as a reasonable suggestion. The connection Ulrich draws here between probabilistic thinking in the hard sciences, totality, morality and ethics, and finally the concept of living life according to the laws of fiction, illuminates for the present argument the interconnection of all of these elements. This speech also makes clear the way in which Ulrich understands the concept of acting as if one were a fictional character as fundamentally passive, which explains a great deal of his behaviour throughout the novel.

Book one of *MoE* ends with the protagonist walking home from a meeting of the Parallel Campaign, reflecting on the course his life has taken over the past year and what this could mean. First, Ulrich daydreams about the simplicity of an idyllic life in the countryside, an image in his mand which could easily be compared to Lukács image of the given totality experienced in Homeric times, especially in the sentence, "'Am Land kommen die Götter noch zu den Menschen.'" This image comes to him as he realizes that he is lacking fulfillment, saying to himself:

"Denn der Menge nach ist es ja beiweitem nicht die Hauptvoraussetzung des Glücks, Widersprüche zu lösen, sondern sie verschwinden zu machen, wie sie sich in einer langen Allee die Lücken schließen, und so, wie sich allenthalben die sichtbaren Verhältnisse für das Auge

[136] *MoE*, pp. 572-573

verschieben, daß ein von ihm beherrschtes Bild entsteht, worin das Dringende und Nahe groß erscheint, weiter weg aber selbst das Ungeheuerliche klein, Lücken sich schließen und endlich das Ganze eine ordentliche glatte Rundung erfährt, tun es eben auch die unsichtbare Verhältnisse und werden von Verstand und Gefühl derart verschoben, daß unbewußt etwas entsteht, worin man sich Herr im Hause fühlt. Diese Leistung ist es also,' sagte sich Ulrich 'die ich nicht in wünschenswerter Weise vollbringe.'"[137]

This passage brings us back to the idea of narrative fulfillment as addressed by D.A. Miller: in a work in which the quest set upon the protagonist is founded on a premise which cannot be resolved, the ending will never be truly satisfactory, because conclusions will have to be artificially crafted or shifted to some resolvable alternative[138]. Ulrich recognizes in this monologue that he is not able to look at his own life with a narrative perspective which would endow his actions with meaning and shape them into a totality. Although the solution offered by the countryside fantasy would be merely to invest less mental energy into life's contradictions and complexities -- to push his problems to the side until they are no longer visible, as he suggests with the image of the long alleyway -- Ulrich ends that paragraph by asserting that life in the modern city is indeed complex and there is no way for him to return to previous ways of life:

"man ist jemand und erlebt etwas, aber in der Stadt, wo es tausendmal so viel Erlebnisse gibt, ist man nicht mehr imstande, sie in Beziehung zu sich zu bringen: und so beginnt ja wohl das berüchtigte Abstraktwerden des Lebens.' Aber indem er das dachte, wußte er auch, daß es die Macht des Menschen tausendfach ausdehnt, und wenn es selbst im Einzelnen ihn zehnfach verdünnt, ihn im ganzen noch hundertfach vergrößert, und *ein Rücktausch kam für ihn nicht ernsthaft in Frage*. Und als einer jener scheinbar abseitigen und abstrakten Gedanken, die in seinem Leben oft so unmittelbar Bedeutung gewannen, fiel ihm ein, daß das Gesetz dieses Lebens, nach dem man sich, überlastet und von Einfalt träumend, sehnt, kein anderes sei als das der *erzählerischen Ordnung*!"[139]

Thus, although Ulrich recognizes that the reality of life is not lost with the shift to the city, complexity requires that our existence become more and more abstract: we lose touch with concreteness, with interconnectedness, with the totality. And as a return to simpler times is not possible, at least for Ulrich, our protagonist comes up with an alternative method for achieving a totality of meaning in his life: through narrative logic. This is the moment, at the close of book

[137] *MoE*, p. 649
[138] Miller, p. xiii
[139] *MoE*, pp. 649-50, emphasis mine

one, that the work moves past a critique of other Weltanschauungen and onto the active construction of its own outlook.[140]

It is directly after this episode that Ulrich will hear that his father has died, initiating his reunion with his long-lost sister at the beginning of the following book. In the ensuing relationship Ulrich cultivates with his sister, his explicit purpose is to live entirely in the Other Condition with her, thus fulfilling his need for meaning and connection while also living by the rules of fiction rather than those of the society he belongs to. The relationship between the siblings is a utopian attempt to live a fulfilled life without resorting to any patterns that have already been tried and abandoned by the forward rush of history. This arrangement is therefore an earnest enactment of the principles of essayism that Ulrich has advocated for throughout the text. It is also again an illustration of the connection between ethics and aesthetics: Ulrich terms these rules those of fiction, since fiction considers each case on its own terms, judging the actions of the characters ethically rather than morally, by reason and empathy rather than the arbitrary standards and customs of society. Ulrich sees his relationship with his sister as ethically right and just, because it benefits all parties involved (besides Hagauer, whose loss of his wife seems nevertheless inevitable), while also providing an opportunity for Ulrich to test out a utopian proposal. From a moral perspective, the way the siblings live together is questionable, but this is precisely the point: by eschewing morals, ethics become more visible as the remaining justification for actions.

Ulrich's ultimate goal matches very closely a point made by Cascardi about "the normative challenge set by the novel" in the face of a modernity lacking concrete connection to totality, which he defines thus: "to find a way of achieving coherent form and to fashion a context in which our relationship to values is not rendered 'quixotic or abstract'"[141]. Ulrich fails to achieve this precisely due to the perennial abstractness and quixotic-ness of his attempts. In fact, Ulrich ends up leaning on metadiscourse and becoming a quixotic figure in his own right. This metafictional reaction was also discussed by Cascardi: "The novel seeks to give form to experience in the only way possible in the postepic world -- namely from the position of a detached observer of a 'represented' world."[142] Here Cascardi is describing the modern instinct of both readers and writers to attempt to sublimate the divide between form and life by imagining

[140] This idea was also noted by Schurz, p. 22
[141] Cascardi, p. 614
[142] Cascardi, p. 614

that aesthetic form could encompass lived experience as well. This is precisely Ulrich's strategy in book two, though to an exceptionally active degree.

In comparison to our protagonist, other characters do in fact succeed in understanding their own lives as obtaining a coherent form and existing in connection to a meaningful set of values without resorting to extreme behaviours. One prime example of this is Hagauer, whose life conforms to a trajectory that his fellow citizens approve of and which unites his values with his actions. The reason why Ulrich cannot achieve peace and fulfillment in the same way that Hagauer does is that he is hyper-aware of the constructedness of it all. This hindrance can be drawn back formally to the encyclopedic nature of the work. Hilary Clark defined the encyclopedic as: "Any text (fictional or not) that we would like to call encyclopedic must speculate on its own discursive processes of discovery and arrangement, and on the limitations of these processes, given the fact of time and change."[143] What makes Ulrich's quest ultimately insurmountable is that he cannot accept the primal contingency of all value systems. Herein lies the tension at the center of the work: Ulrich does not have trouble accepting the arbitrary nature of morals and customs when they govern the actions of others, but in relation to himself, Ulrich is deeply uncomfortable with his own lack of motivation for his actions and even his lack of personal qualities. He recognizes the contingency of all Weltanschauungen, which becomes problematic for him particularly when it clashes with his own desire for coherence and meaning. Thus the limitations of discursive processes, as addressed by Clark, plague Ulrich by making it clear to him that human questions will never be answered with the positivistic certainty he yearns for.

Patrizia McBride has verified after thorough investigation of Musil's personal papers and unpublished literary fragments that the second part of *MoE* should have been substantially longer if it had been completed according to the author's well-established plans[144]. The work might also have ended with the outbreak of war or with the protagonist's suicide, according to various plans left in Musil's notes. What we can say unequivocally is that the narrative arc was never brought to a real conclusion. What McBride also emphasizes however, is that the lack of a formal ending is not the only, or even the most important, failure central to a complete understanding of *Der*

[143] Clark, Hillary. "Encyclopedic Discourse." Sub-stance 21, no. 1 (1992): 95–110 https://www.jstor.org/stable/3685349, p. 105

[144] McBride, Patrizia C. *The Void of Ethics: Robert Musil and the Experience of Modernity*. Northwestern Univ. Press, 2006. p. 130

Mann ohne Eigenschaften. The most important failure in this work is that of the protagonist to complete his quest for a shared and meaningful existence. Ulrich never finds an answer to his question of how to live life meaningfully.

The fact that Ulrich fails on his quest is given, but what is it exactly which actually hinders him? As has been discussed, Moretti excuses this failure with the justification that totality on the classical scale is simply no longer accessible to the modern world. This view is supported in the text through Ulrich's chronic frustration with the specialization of society, the fact that each individual has their own specific expertise and shows no interest in the way this fits into a greater whole, not to mention what the rest of that whole consists of. Unlike the classical world in which the meaning and contingency of each person and each task was clear within the context of the whole, in the modern world this whole is not visible, or in the words of Lukács: not imminent. In *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, this lack is taken as the premise of the novel, which, following from Miller, means that in order for the novel to reach its culmination, it should be at least partially resolved. The fact that the novel is not able to resolve this central concern is, naturally, the reason why it is considered unfinished and is also perfectly in line with Moretti's interpretation. The fact that this issue was in the center of the work to begin with, though, allows us to congratulate Musil for committing to a dialectical method of inquiry in the construction of his text. Anna Kornbluh placed this methodical approach at the center of her definition of totality, writing:

"Totality is not the harmony of subject and object but the field of their contradictory connection and disconnection. The theorist who can know contradiction and keep it moving, recognize its power to propel new syntheses and new negations, is the theorist oriented toward totality and toward fulfilling the *totalizing arc of reason, whose endpoint is not stasis but ongoingness*."[145]

In this sense, Ulrich has in fact achieved totality by the end of the text, not in spite of but in fact thanks to his incessant fight against totalizing schemes. The totality Ulrich has achieved is a kind of one-person essayistic utopia in which all propositions are evaluated according to his criteria of reason. Such an achievement is never truly completed, as Kornbluh emphasizes, it is carried out in perpetuity.

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[145] Anna Kornbluh. "Totality" in *Victorian Literature and Culture*, Vol. 47, No. 3, pp. 671–678: p. 673, emphasis mine

Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften was written between 1921 and 1942[146], placing it squarely within the era of literary high modernism. If modernism is taken to mean artistic reflection on the conditions of life in the modern era, then *MoE* must absolutely be included within this category, as the text takes the conditions of life and society and how one is to live in the modern era as its central themes. In terms of Austrian literary modernism in particular, Robert Musil is generally included as a canonical given: his modernism goes without question as it is definitive for the regional genre itself. This is partially due to the fact that Musil's style is so unique, that to list the micro-features of the text would not necessarily connect it to other works from the same time and place. It is also due to the fact that Musil's actively refused to define himself or his work in terms of genre or political stance, as has been affirmed by Cüneyt Arslan in his monograph on the topic.[147] This aloofness, of course, is another point for Musil in Mendelsohn's book of the encyclopedic elite. It is this aloofness that makes Musil into a modernist writer in most open sense: a writer who lived in the early 20th century and reflected aesthetically on the conditions of modernity, or as Arslan puts it: "[Musil] rekuperiert die Moderne für sich in der Perspektive kritischer Selbstreflexion und zukunftsorientierter Unfestlegbarkeit."[148] In this sense, Musil is read as an author of the modern due to his thematic attention to the modern condition, rather than any particularly close adherence to modernist literary conventions. There are, however, many other ways of defining literary modernism, and many ways of reading *MoE* as something beyond a typically modernist text.

In his conceptualization of *MoE* as a novel-essay, Stefano Ercolino argued that Musil's text exhibited features of what Latour refers to as the "nonmodern," that which "dereifies the ontological and epistemological architecture of a modern world designed by the differentiating reason of Descartes's *Discourse on Method*; it is a 'nonmodern' category of thinking (Latour 46–48), which cracks the distinctions upon which modernity grounded itself, such as those between subject and object, reason and unreason, science and art."[149] The argument presented throughout this section has shown the ways in which the protagonist of *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, as well as its narrator, prioritize reason above any other method of intuiting or inventing truths about the world. The text as it is presented in a series of dialogues and

[146] "Robert Musil Curriculum Vitae." *MUSIL*, 2009, www.musilgesellschaft.at/musil.htm.
[147] Arslan, Cüneyt. *Der Mann Ohne Eigenschaften Und Die Wissenschaftliche Weltauffassung: Robert Musil, Die Moderne Und Der Wiener Kreis*. Springer, 2014. Pp. 76-8
[148] Ibid., p. 79
[149] Ercolino, *Novel-Essay*, p. 86

encounters certainly operates on the Cartesian distinction-based logic that served as the foundation for the modern standard of reasoning. Conversely, the text does bring together philosophy and mimesis, as previously discussed, which could be interpreted as a breakdown of one of the foundational categories of modernity. One of Ulrich's primary goals is also to apply the laws and methods of scientific thinking to the world of morality and emotions, which is also seen by all those around him as a breach of fundamental distinctions. Nevertheless, the highest value throughout these endeavors is always placed on reason. Mark Freed has also applied Bruno Latour's thinking to *MoE*, emphasizing the way in which the text seeks to overcome the divide between objective and constructive, or scientific and humanistic, way of thinking. This is undeniably a key motivation behind the text's essayistic style and is directly addressed by the narrator, as previously discussed. As an alternative to the two primary discursive strategies of the modern era, essayism can be characterized as nonmodern, opposed to one of the fundamental binary oppositions underlying modern thought. This is not merely postmodern, Latour argues, because it focuses on the intertwinedness of science and fiction, rather than abandoning all belief in objectivity[150]. As discussed, objective rationality is one of Ulrich's highest values, and as a former engineer and mathematician, he has a certain vested interest in the accurate description of the natural world. It is significant, however, that Ulrich's relation to the *Naturwissenschaften* is through mathematics: a branch which requires no measurement or experimentation, a realm of pure reason. Such a method is grounded only very distantly on the firmly objective epistemology of the natural sciences, thus augmenting the text's distance from a firmly modern grounding.

Perhaps Ulrich values reason so highly precisely because he does not believe he can rely on any commonly held beliefs or customs that have been handed down and often accepted without question. Patrizia McBride's stance on the matter is that Ulrich sees the modern age, following Nietzsche, as uniquely positioned to perceive the illusory nature of all of the convictions of previous eras. This leaves moderns with a void in the center of their ethical (or generally philosophical) considerations: to attempt to fill this void -- a temptation that so many of the characters in *MoE* fall prey to, as we have explored -- would be to live immersed in the modern moment of crisis. To accept the existence of this void, according to McBride pushes one across the boundary into postmodernism, a perspective from which one is able to observe the

[150] Freed, Mark M. "LATOUR, MUSIL, AND THE DISCOURSE OF NONMODERNITY." Symploke 11.1 (2003): 183-96. ProQuest. 23 May 2021.

crisis of modernity with a degree of distance and therefore greater objectivity[151]. Hartmut Böhme, in his article "Eine Zeit ohne Eigenschaften: Robert Musil und die Posthistoire," tempers McBride's claim by writing that: "Die sozialen und kulturellen Strukturen, die heute zur Begründung der Postmoderne aufgeführt werden, hat Musil, ein Klassiker der Moderne, weitgehend bereits in sein Romanprogramm integriert."[152] Thus, Böhme continues to recognize Musil as a pillar of modernism, while highlighting the ways in which the text anticipates postmodern concerns: namely, rationalization, meta-referentiality, subjectivity, and the dominance of institutions. Thus, evaluating the postmodern tendencies of the text independent from extratextual contingencies reveals another layer of epistemological complexity. When we consider that the nonmodern element can be accepted in regard to the text's use of essayism and the postmodern can be accepted within the limited context of Ulrich's later acceptance of the possibility of a firm and categorically true moral center, from McBride's perspective, and add in Böhme's revelation that *MoE*'s thematic concerns align very closely with later postmodern writings, we are able to view this text as a whole without reducing it to broad and only marginally relevant categorical terms.

In this section, *MoE* has been examined as an encyclopedic narrative which not only encompasses the vast world of Vienna around 1900, but also reaches beyond the common thought patterns that governed this time to imagine new modes of understanding human life and relating to ourselves and one another. Thanks to its unfinished state as well as its espousal of essayism as a life philosophy, *MoE* gestures toward an open and rational way of relating to the world, an attitude seemingly at odds with the encyclopedic as a mode of collecting and controlling, but in harmony with the Diderotian project of the *Encyclopedie* as an open form which finds and preserves harmony in contrasts, revealing a glimpse of totality in its cross-sections. In the following section, we will see how *MoE*'s epistemological developments continue to destabilize previously held beliefs about morality, power, and knowledge. In *Gravity's Rainbow*, totality will again be thoroughly investigated and pursued, this time from the other side of a war-forged chasm in time.

[151] McBride, pp. 6-11
[152] Böhme, Hartmut. "Eine Zeit ohne Eigenschaften. Robert Musil und die Posthistoire." *Natur und Subjekt*; Frankfurt a. M. 1988.

5. *Gravity's Rainbow*

To begin with, let us assess the claim that *Gravity's Rainbow* is an encyclopedic text, what this means specifically for the formal attributes of the work, and to what extent this makes a statement about totality. As has been previously addressed, *Gravity's Rainbow* was the work that inspired Mendelsohn to coin the term encyclopedic narrative. It was positioned within this framework as the inheritor of the legacies of all Western literary classics taken together, in that it was proclaimed the encyclopedic narrative of not just one national literary tradition, but of the globalized world. Thus, the historical transition its publication should mark is between the prehistory of the globalized community and its subsequent development. As Mendelsohn's articles were published relatively soon after the publication of *GR*, the author prematurely assumed that this text would meet his reception criteria. Similarly to *MoE*[153], *GR* has a dedicated website[154] which indexes cross references throughout the text. *GR*'s following is a bit more popular than *MoE*'s, which is generally more scholarly, but *GR* is also infamous for being long and difficult which discourages enough readers that it will never have the following that the Bible, *Don Quixote*, or Dante's *Commedia* enjoy.

As far as Northrop Frye's analogy of revelation is concerned, this topic is thoroughly addressed in *GR* through the figure of Tyrone Slothrop. His charismatic rise is a central plotline within the novel, and is mirrored by the cults formed around the rocket. In this way, the messianic cycle is also saturated with irony throughout its trajectory from one single charismatic character to the rumors about him and their growth, to their separation from him as an individual, to the development of rituals, sacred objects, and separate sects of believers. All of this happens so quickly that it is fairly clear that the cycle will be repeated. Another remark Frye made about encyclopedic texts was that they were to include "mini-epics" within the larger frame structure,

[153] Bosse, Anke, et al. "Musil Online." *Musil Online*, Robert Musil Institut Für Literatur-Forschung, 2016, musilonline.at/.
[154] Ware, Tim, et al. "A Literary Wiki Exploring the Novels of Thomas Pynchon." *Thomas Pynchon Wiki - A Literary / Literature Wiki*, 2007, pynchonwiki.com/.

e.g. the Book of Job within the New Testament. A perfect example of this within *Gravity's Rainbow* would be the story of Byron the Bulb[155], which chronicles the life and ambitions of a revolutionary lightbulb who conspires to sabotage the international lightbulb cartel through organization efforts uniting bulbs across grids.

A microcosm of the larger text, Byron's story features a lone hero battling incredibly large and powerful organizations. Due to Byron's extraordinary lifespan, he becomes of particular interest to the monopolists monitoring such things, since his persistent brightness could lower their profits. Just as in Slothrop's narrative thread, an assassination is planned for Byron by those surveilling him, but just like Slothrop, Byron escapes this threat through hardly any skill or even action of his own. Such an unbelievable twist encourages the reader to believe that the hero of the story must indeed be special: the center of yet another plot by another organization, protected by an oppositional force, or perhaps just fated to succeed or at least survive. "Through his years of survival, all these various rescues of Byron happen *as if by* accident."[156] But the events of Byron's, as well as Slothrop's, escape take so many subsequent twists and turns that one begins to believe that either fate or the organization pulling the strings is very powerful or that this story showcases the crowdedness and complexity of postmodern life: chance is multifaceted. The omniscient third person narrator, as in Slothrop's case, stokes paranoia about what could be the driving force behind these unbelievable series of events into a constant state of anxiety.

Along his path, Byron shares his truth: that there is more to the life of a lightbulb than simply supplying illumination, "'But there are other frequencies, above and below the visible band.'". This talk inspires some bulbs to betray Byron and others to praise him. It reaches the point that: "Any talk of Byron's transcendence, of course, was clear subversion."[157] At this point, the major international business cartels have no choice but to forbid discussion of Byron's power. In the meantime, Byron is making contact with bulbs and electrical appliances from all walks of life. This time is clearly analogous to Slothrop's wanderings through the Zone. Naturally, both Byron's and Slothrop's stories share characteristics with the messanic narrative of a hero figure who cannot be crushed by institutional authority, but whose story is then manipulated and repurposed by the same or competing authorities to bolster their power. As

[155] *GR*, 660-9
[156] *GR*, p. 666, emphasis mine
[157] Ibid., p. 667

Mendelsohn noted,[158] Weber termed this cooptation of extraordinary personalities "the routinization of charisma". The story of Byron, then, as well as Slothrop's own story, clearly connect *GR* to the New Testament and its legacy, more than satisfactorily fulfilling Frye's criteria for an ironic encyclopedic epic text.

Beyond the bible, Mendelsohn also mentions that "for the most part, encyclopedic authors set out to imitate epics"[159], a remark that naturally played an even larger role in Moretti's genre theory and Fusillo's support of it. As previously discussed, Moretti's collection of modern epics were written in response to the discrepancy between classical representations of life as a totality and the modern experience of life as fragmented. This societal problem posed by Moretti as the prompt in response to which modern epics were written was perhaps more clearly addressed by Patrizia McBride in *The Void of Ethics*. McBride explains the seeming fragmentariness of modern experience as the result of the loss of a moral center, such as was provided in medieval times by religion or in classical times by myth and connection to nature (theoretically). McBride's thesis thus fits into Lukács' literary history in *Theorie des Romans*: identifying the loss of totality as the void of ethics. What McBride takes further than these other theorists, however, is how this problem comes to be recognized and addressed from a postmodern perspective. The key to the postmodern in McBride's argument, which she adapts from Nietzsche, is the recognition of the void. This recognition would preclude the attempts to return to the lost totality, which is central to the project represented by Moretti's modern epics and by Lukács' valorization of Tolstoy. For this reason, modern epic form becomes untenable in the postmodern context. This does not, however, rule out any other similarities between postmodern works and epics. *Gravity's Rainbow* is, like *MoE*, far more concerned with public and societal processes than with individual psychologies or domestic concerns. Also like *MoE*, though, *GR* depicts the human level through which larger organizations take shape without any heroic delusions. In addition to its oft-cited messianic features, Slothrop's narrative trajectory also displays marked similarities to the Odyssean quest, especially during his wanderings through the Zone. In this section, Slothrop dons a series of disguises, spends extended periods of time in mistresses' secluded lairs[160], and becomes hopelessly disoriented on his journey. But just

[158] Mendelsohn, Edward. "Encyclopedic Narrative from Dante to Pynchon" *Modern Language Notes* 91 (1976): 1267-75, p. 1271
[159] Ibid., p. 1269
[160] *GR*, pp. 294-300: Geli Tripping ; *GR*, pp. 399-404: Margherita Erdmann

as Slothrop is markedly less ascetic and selfless than Jesus, he is also significantly less wily and quick-witted than Odysseus. Both of these deficiencies feed into the argument that his character represents the routinization of charisma, which requires very little if any actual notable personal excellence, since it can function on the basis of extraordinary occurrences and rumors which can manifest without any direct action on the part of the protagonist. These epic characteristics should be taken as functional allusions rather than indicators of a greater formal adherence to epic generic criteria.

Moretti is also relevant to postmodern encyclopedic works through his conceptualization of literary works in general as "problem-solving mechanisms"[161], especially as this viewpoint was inherited by Stefano Ercolino. Ercolino drew the connection between the novel-essay form discussed in the last section with the maximalist novel form that he argues best describes works such as *GR*:

"Among the several modernist masterpieces born under the dark star of twentieth-century literature's widespread symbolic need for the recomposition of a shattered world—from Joyce's Ulysses, T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, and Ezra Pound's *Cantos* to Mann's, Musil's, and Broch's fiction up to the maximalist novel in postmodernity—we are focusing on a rhetorically and symbolically coherent set of texts, illuminated by *this urge for meaning and synthesis*: on a specific genre of the novel, the novel-essay"[162]

Thus, what creates the "rhetorical and symbolic coherence" of early 20th century novel-essays with later 20th century maximalist novels according to Ercolino is the urge for meaning and synthesis. In *MoE*, this need for synthesis was expressed through the encyclopedic impulse to collect as many characters, perspectives, and ideas as possible within the text and to search for a rationally coherent sense of meaning through the embodied juxtaposition of these elements. In *GR*, characters, perspectives, and ideas are again collected to a maximalist degree. Again the reader may feel some hopeful sense that through this great number of encounters, some deeper truth about humanity may be revealed. Quite a few characters within *GR* also feel this hope, although the majority have lost it. Whereas in *MoE*, nearly every character hopes that meaning will be revealed, those that go farther are the characters who are certain that they have already found a meaning worth imposing on others. Thus, *MoE* can be seen from this perspective as a work that takes place in a modern context, with a host of modern characters, but whose protagonist develops a postmodern outlook. *GR*, on the other hand, takes place in a postmodern

[161] Moretti, p. 6
[162] Ercolino, *Novel-Essay*, p. 103, emphasis mine

context, and features just a few characters with a modern outlook, such as Roger Mexico and Dr. Edward Pointsman, both of whom will be discussed in greater detail later on in this section.

As Jorge Estrada put it: *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, in its unfinished state, does a very thorough job of posing a question[163]. In order to pose this question, *MoE* already needed to have accepted the Nietzschean premise that totality and the meaning it lent to previous societies was an illusion all along. This is the void to which Ulrich proposes essayism as a potential solution -- an approach that assesses situations on an individual basis, ethically rather than morally, given the fact that any totalizing logic would be imposed and thus unnatural, false. In the end then, *MoE* accepts its status as an encyclopedic work, portraying epic ways of thinking as belonging to certain characters, but not allowing this logic to overtake the formal structure of the work. *Gravity's Rainbow* takes a similar approach by depicting epic narrative threads, similar to those of *The Odyssey* and the New Testament, but carrying their hero's paths further to show the ways in which the meaning they originally conveyed is constructed, manipulated, and eventually misused. In the final assessment then, both of these works should be categorized as encyclopedic, with explicit references to and uses of epic as well as novelistic characteristics.

Though *MoE* and *GR* share central thematic concerns as well as formal structures, the temporal contexts of the writing does cause a significant break in their worldviews. L.R. Harvey described the difference between modern and postmodern literature as between the epistemological: "Questions such as 'How can I interpret this world of which I am a part? And what am I in it?'" and the ontological: "'Which world is this? What is to be done in it? Which of my selves is to do it?'"[164] This contrast explains the vast disparity in degrees of realism between *MoE* and *GR* as well as the loss of explicit essayistic passages when applied to each of the works as a whole. When applied to the protagonists, however, the epistemological/ontological divide loses clarity. Slothrop is fundamentally searching for his own personal role within a world he is struggling to understand, while Ulrich, the '*Möglichkeitsmensch*', delights in imagining other possible worlds and insisting that the way things are isn't the only way that they could be. His primary question is closer to 'What is to be done?', since he generally has faith in his ability to understand and interpret the world and does not concern himself much with his personal role in

[163] Estrada. *Ethics with Musil and Sterne*, p. 12
[164] Harvey, L.R., (2013) "To Cry from Within or Without? Pynchon and the Modern – Postmodern Divide.", *Orbit: A Journal of American Literature* 2(1). doi: https://doi.org/10.7766/orbit.v2.1.47

society. In this sense, one could argue that Ulrich is a postmodern protagonist in a modern work, while Slothrop is a modern protagonist in a postmodern work[165].

Harvey goes on to infer the implicit assumptions modern and postmodern writers and readers made about fictionality based on the epistemological/ontological gap: "Within the terms of this formalist account, it thus appears that modernist texts *flaunt the fictionality of the epistemological means to the truth* or postulated reality. On the other hand, postmodern texts *vaunt the fictionality of any reassuring noumenal loci.*"[166] In other words, modernist authors disregard the fact that their text is mere fiction and use it as a way of discussing reality and searching for truths. This assumption is made abundantly clear by the mixing of narrative and essayistic segments, the one which should be purely fictional and separate from lived reality, and the other which argues perspectives on actual phenomena which generally do not belong among the pages of novels. In this way, Musil clearly flaunts fictionality. Pynchon, on the other hand, discusses real people, businesses, and events within the fabric of narrative in such a way that the historical and the fictional are utterly intertwined. This style of postmodern encyclopedism in combination with the aggressive encouragement of paranoid thinking patterns through ambiguous phrasing and incredible plot devices vaunt the fictionality of the reader's world. This effect is further intensified by the use of second person pronouns which address the reader directly. Though Musil wrote pointedly about the society to which his contemporary readership for the most belonged, he never addressed them outright. This distinction illustrates the fact that both *MoE* and *GR* are works that are deeply engaged in the reality of their readerships, but which see the relationship between fiction and lived experience differently.

Böhme expounds upon *MoE*'s narrative's ontological positioning by noting the way in which the text blends together descriptions of surroundings, ethnological details of daily life in Kakania, sociological discourse, explanations of statistical reasoning, and fictional discourses, producing an overall effect that is "schwebend, arbiträr, zwiespältig," and making the text ultimately meta-reflexive and self-referential[167]. All of these characteristics could be applied to *GR*, but to an even greater extent; that is to say, the level of ambivalence and provisionality produced in *MoE* will be intensified to utter ontological anarchy in *GR*. Thus it is again clear that

[165] The first statement has in fact already been asserted by Patrizia McBride, while L.R. Harvey argues for the second.
[166] Ibid., p. 5, emphasis mine
[167] Böhme, p. 3

MoE can be seen as approaching the concerns, themes, and even formal techniques and style later further developed into the epitome of postmodern style, as embodied by *GR*.

Aside from differences of Weltanschauung, postmodernism is also definitionaly bound to the spread of global capitalism, resulting in a massive intensification of the reification process which had already been a major focus of critique earlier in the 20th century. The connection between late capitalism and postmodern encyclopedic texts was explicitly covered by Alan Clinton in his article, "Conspiracy of Commodities: Postmodern Encyclopedic Narrative and Crowdedness." Clinton argues that *GR* combines encyclopedic collection of information with a setting in the recent past in an attempt to consolidate the past into an conceptual object that can then be observed from a distance[168]. This perspective builds upon additional layers of distancing already established by the novel's aggressive break from realism and the general lack of an empathizable protagonist[169]. All of these distancing mechanisms serve to produce the encyclopedic narrative as yet another object in a world of inescapable commodification and exchange.

The centrality of commodification to postmodernity is also discussed by Herman and van Ewijk in relation to *GR*. Herman and van Ewijk see each of the interpersonal interactions in *GR* as mere exchanges: of money, sex, information, etc.[170] which are enacted without regard for the other as a full human being with whom one might empathize. This perspective explains the abundance of transgressive sexual encounters throughout the novel, since such acts are much more likely between individuals who view one another as mere objects which can be manipulated purely for one's own physical satisfaction, without regard for the other's well-being. In *MoE*, the relationships between characters are generally more sympathetic. Count Leinsdorf's personal affection for Ulrich is repeatedly narrated, often with ironic intent, but nevertheless conveying the possibility of a degree of platonic devotion. Arnheim and Diotima delight in the union of their minds and souls, and although this may induce a cringe in some readers, for the couple the experience is heavenly, suggesting the existence of deep seraphic love. And naturally,

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[168] Clinton, Alan. "Conspiracy of Commodities: Postmodern Encyclopedic Narrative and Crowdedness" rhizomes.05 fall 2002 http://www.rhizomes.net/issue5/clinton.html, pp. 3-4

[169] The empathizability of Roger Mexico as a prototype of the modern hero/protagonist will be addressed later on this section, but Mexico is absent from a great deal of the narration, leaving the reader alone with Slothrop, whose vices and paranoias have already been introduced to the reader as objects of disdain.

[170] Herman and van Ewijk, "Gravity's Encyclopedia Revisited" pp. 172-5

the bond between Ulrich and Agathe exists only as common property, which cannot be exchanged or broken down into constitutive parts, it is precisely because of this that it approaches totality. Slothrop's relationships with his associates and mistresses, however, are completely different. Their erotic experiences are enjoyed or endured as separate individuals. Their conversations are motivated by need for specific information, and conclude once questions have been answered. One particularly tragic example of this style of relating to others is embodied by Franz Pökler, the Peenemünde rocket engineer who is sent every year on a brief vacation to visit his daughter. Pökler is fairly certain that the girl he meets on vacation is not his daughter and in fact not even the same girl every year, but he accepts the terms of the meeting as if it were a business contract, and tries his best to perform the role of father. In later years, he takes greater liberties on these trips, testing the limits of what he can take from the girl who he sees as offered up to him as a reward for his hard work[171]: a classic example of commodification and dehumanization and thus a clear indicator of postmodern interaction style.

Slothrop is famous for his numerous sexual exploits, both during and prior to his adventures in the Zone. And though sexual encounters do provide for Slothrop breakthroughs in information or advances on his journey through the Zone, it is clear in each encounter that neither Slothrop or his partner feels fully connected to the other. Both see the other as an object of desire, and seek no involvement beyond sexual satisfaction. Ulrich has the same problem with Bonadea; neither the man without qualities nor his paramour understand -- or have any true intention of understanding -- the other's motivations beyond the level necessary to get what they want. In this relationship, however, the characters try to maintain an illusion of personal attraction[172], marking that the world they live in, although thoroughly rationalized, has not been as fully commodified as that portrayed in *GR*.

Herman and van Ewijk would characterize the epistemological shift apparent between *MoE* and *GR* as a "growing awareness" of the limitations of the encyclopedia as a genre that can functionally contain and organize universal knowledge. As previously mentioned, the illusion of completeness produced in *GR*, according to Herman and van Ewijk, comes from "a textuality that embodies 'openness and instability'"[173]. These same characteristics could in fact also be

[171] *GR*, pp. 408-440
[172] *MoE*, pp. 38-41, pp.132-4
[173] Herman and van Ewijk, p. 172

applied to *MoE*, since the openness and acknowledgement of instability are central tenets of essayism. It must be noted, however, that essayism is proposed as a method of facing instability and finding a way to continue to act morally and rationally, whereas the instability present in *GR* does not come with any recommended reaction. Morality is, in fact, a value which has already been thoroughly eroded by the chaos and cruelty of the war before the narration of *GR* begins. The resultant bitterness is discussed by Mexico -- who is as close as we come to the model of a moral and rational modern man in *GR*'s cosmos -- in these terms:

"And the war, well, she *is* Roger's mother, she's *leached at all the soft, vulnerable inclusions of hope* and praise scattered, beneath the mica-dazzle, through Roger's mineral, grave-marker self, washed it all moaning away on her gray tide. He's forgotten his first corpse, or when he first saw someone living die. That's how long it's been going on. Most of his life, it seems. The city he visits nowadays is *death's antechamber: where all the paperwork's done, the contracts signed, the days numbered*." (*GR*, 40, emphasis mine)

Here the war is presented as a valid inspiration to accept the void that bridges the gap between modern and postmodern thinking. *MoE* is set in an infinite antechamber to the first world war: extending the hope and faith in humanity that may have been more justified at such an antebellum period through the whole of the work. In *MoE*, paperwork is seen as slow-moving and unnecessarily complicated, but nevertheless a conceivably viable avenue for change and communication. In *GR*, paperwork is seen as a death sentence; it is functional in a much more cruel and direct manner. Between these two perspectives, two world wars' worth of brutality and chaos loom. It is essential to remember, though, that the perspectives represented in the narration of *MoE*, as well as those in *GR*, have been intentionally historicized, in keeping with the encyclopedic practice of setting a work a few decades previous to the time of its writing in order to discuss the historical development of the original readers' present situation. Thus, Musil was of course well aware of the changes that would befall his realistic fictional universe in 1914. This impending windfall is what makes the utopian dreams of *MoE*'s characters so much more poignant. The war is featured in *MoE* in very limited flashforward sequences, which reveal the same bitterness one reads in Mexico's account of the changes the war has wrought:

"Die arme mußte später erleben, daß in ganz Europa ein Geist des Nationalismus emporkam und mit ihm auch eine Welle der Judenangriffe hochstieg, die ihren Mann sozusagen in ihren Armen aus einem geachteten Freigeist in den Ätzgeist eines bodenfremden Abstämmlings verwandelte. Anfangs hatte sie sich dagegen mit dem ganzen Ingrimm 'eines groß denkenden Herzens' aufgelehnt, aber mit den Jahren wurde sie von der naiv grausamen, immer weiter um sich greifenden Feindseligkeit zermürbt und von dem allgemeinen Vorurteil eingeschüchtert. Ja, sie mußte es sogar erleben, daß sie vor sich selbst bei den Gegensätzen, die sich zwischen ihr und

ihrem Mann allmählich immer heftiger auftaten, -- als er aus Gründen, über die er niemals richtig Auskunft geben wollte, über die Stufe eines Prokuristen nicht wegkam und alle Aussicht verlor, jeweils wirklicher Bankdirektor zu werden -- manches, was sie verletzte, achselzuckend damit erklärte, daß Leos Charakter eben doch dem ihren fremd sei, wenn sie auch gegen Außenstehende die Grundsätze ihrer Jugend niemals preisgab."[174]

It is outside the scope of this study to focus more directly on the wartime transition between idealism and hopelessness, but allow these two passages to sufficiently demonstrate that this shift is present and in fact a constitutive factor of the emotional and epistemological setting of both texts, as both works focus not on the wars themselves, but rather on their larger philosophical and sociological impacts from the before and after perspectives.

The world wars are generally accepted as a major turning point in history, in which vast swathes of the populations of the countries directly impacted were likely to shift to a more postmodern perspective. Alexander Honold emphasizes the importance of war to *MoE*, despite its absence from the direct narration, in his article, "Hysteron Proteron," in which he makes note of the way the future and the past are constantly intertangled throughout *MoE*'s narration[175]. This entanglement is particularly significant, of course, in the case of World War I, which lies ahead of the work's narrative time, but casts a long shadow back over the events of the work. Honold's argument here is similar to Saint-Amour's discussion of the anticipation and anxiety that characterized the interwar period, which he argues can be extended beyond World War II into a "perpetual interwar"[176]. The perpetual interwar is very effectively portrayed by *GR*'s final rocket, whose explosive landing is never narrated and whose sound will never be heard. This connects to the novel's opening rocket, which has already fallen, and thus is experienced as a "screaming," a sound that for other objects would precede arrival, but for the rocket follows, due to its immense speed. The sound of the rocket is thus another example of hysteron proteron, a rhetorical device that unites *MoE* and *GR* and thus illuminates the relevance of the war to the earlier text, as expounded by Honold.

The postmodern period is also marked and intensified by the growth of global business infrastructure, which features prominently in *GR*'s narrative web. International business ventures making an impact on other facets of societal organization also feature in *MoE*, in the plot device

[174] *MoE*, p. 203
[175] Honold, Alexander. "Hysteron Proteron Zur Verschränkung Von Krieg Und Roman Im *Mann Ohne Eigenschaften*." *Variations*, vol. 2007, no. 15, 2007, pp. 17–33., doi:10.3726/85603_17.
[176] Saint-Amour, p. 282

of Arnheim's interest in the Galician oil fields[177], which establishes Arnheim's character at the end of his narrative arc as a businessman above all other performative concerns. Arnheim's machinations connect him explicitly to a military industrial complex which would naturally play a formative role in the real world wars which loom over these fictional characters. As *MoE* presents the world before this rift, however, the military industrial complex takes a backseat to bureaucracy, aristocracy, and ideological fanaticism as the primary motivations for societal-scale action in the narrative. This is also characteristic of Musil's method of side-shadowing as described by Bernstein and Saint-Amour.

Herman and van Ewijk's final crucial point discusses *GR*'s representation of the constructedness of our perceptions of reality. This is executed through several plotlines in the work. The story of Byron the Bulb makes clear that light and electricity, which enable us metaphorically to see -- our most fundamental connection with the outside world, are controlled and monitored by global business ventures whose top priority is, naturally, profit. Likewise, the saga of Imipolex G and IG Farben communicates to the reader that the substances that comprise our physical environment and even the molecules that compose them are vulnerable to manipulation by extremely powerful international firms[178]. Lastly, Tchitcherine's Turkic Alphabet conference expresses the way in which governments have a vested interest in the medium through which we communicate with each other and even ourselves[179]. The scene in which Tchicherine witnesses one of the final oral duels in the Khirgiz community illuminates the extent of the impact the imposition of written language can have on our experience of reality and community[180]. Through all of these factors combined, *GR* strongly emphasizes that every aspect of our lived realities is in fact manmade and manipulable. Again this is an issue that was addressed to a less developed degree in *MoE* in the discussion of the contingency of our worldviews and customs. It is also an oft-noted feature of *MoE*'s famous opening paragraph, which satirizes conventional novelistic opening descriptions of weather conditions by reformulating them into hyper-scientific language. This language choice disorients the reader by reminding them how thoroughly the world around them can be measured, analysed, and

[177] *MoE* pp. 616, 641-4
[178] *GR*, pp. 252-4
[179] *GR*, pp. 357-60: A remarkable coincidence arises here: the word at the center of one of the major debates at this conference is "stenography," which initiates a debate on the various possible characters that could be used to denote a "g" sound. The astute reader will remember that stenography was also one of the world-altering proposals sent into the Parallel Campaign and assessed by Ulrich.
[180] *GR*, pp. 361-5

predicted. Musil did not go as far as to highlight the constructedness of our physical environs and their infrastructure to the extent that Pynchon did, but he did repeatedly note the complete constructedness of our habits and customs (*Sitten und Bräuche*). The topic is brought up explicitly in the Fischel's salon in Ulrich's debates with Hans Sepp and it is also worked into the form of the novel through the contrasts in the characters' perceptions of shared experiences due to their differences in worldview.

Gravity's Rainbow ends, famously, with a rocket hovering over the Orpheus Theater in Los Angeles, approaching tragedy asymptotically, never allowing the bomb to finally fall. Inside the theater, the crowd chants "Come-*on! Start*-the-*show!* Come-*on! Start*-the-*show!*" and just a few lines later, the final words of the novel read: "Now everybody--"[181]. Here we see the totalizing anxiety of perpetual interwar as theorized by Saint-Amour, with an added invitation to the audience to join in on the anxious anticipation. Anxiety in combination with categorical uncertainty and lack of real human connection combine throughout GR to produce an intensely paranoiac atmosphere.

In their overview of the postmodernism as a concept, Voss and Schütze identified a central philosophical strain to be an "aesthetics of disappearance," a term inspired by the work of Paul Virilio and Jean Baudrillard, which they describe as a: "loss of the real, of power, and even of the social, the end of the 'subject' and its great stories of speculation and emancipation,' 'the end of production,' as well as 'the end of history,' and the 'end of (the time of -- D.V.) duration'."[182] Immediately, the literal disappearance of Slothrop jumps into the reader's mind. But there are multiple other angles at which the aesthetics of disappearance can be applied to *GR*'s postmodernity. The end of production and the end of history fit well into the rocket cults, which hunger for ultimate endings: the Hereros through tribal suicide[183] and the passengers of the Anubis[184] through anti-reproductive orgies and the sacrifice of Gottfried, symbol of youth and innocence, to the final rocket launch[185]. The loss of the real naturally ties into the paranoia

[181] *GR*, pp. 774-776
[182] Voss, Dietmar, et al. "Postmodernism in Context: Perspectives of a Structural Change in Society, Literature, and Literary Criticism." *New German Critique*, no. 47, [New German Critique, Duke University Press], 1989, pp. 119–42, https://doi.org/10.2307/488110.
[183] *GR*, pp. 320-3
[184] *GR*, pp. 464-480
[185] *GR*, pp. 735-9

fostered throughout the text. This paranoia goes beyond speculation to an anxious cycle from which one can never be emancipated.

Virilio's claim is closely related to Baudrillard's famous assertion that capitalism in postmodernity has reached its aesthetic stage, and that therefore every aspect of the lives lived under this system is carried out only for the sake of performance[186]. In *GR*, no character's motivation can be interpreted as purely rational; there is always an aspect of performance to their choices. This tension is particularly clearly emphasized through Slothrop's narration, since his anxiety focuses specifically on the degree to which he can trust his own and other's motivations.

Interestingly, Voss and Schütze also cite Musil as a transitory author between the thoroughly modern use of time employed by Proust and Nabokov and the more chaotic postmodern use of time seen in the works of Döblin and Dos Passos[187]. Musil's use of time in *MoE* is a component of the encyclopedic nature of that text, as it is made up of a long series of vignettes or fragments whose relation to one another in time is rarely marked, as Honold also noted[188]. The essayistic intrusions also naturally halt the flow of narrative time, but in a fairly conventional way, as narration or dialogue generally resumes from the point of departure unless there is a chapter break. Narrative time in *GR* also generally moves in a forward direction, but with generous allowances for character-building flashbacks. The order *MoE* adhered to which always returned the reader to the scene they left at the end of an essayistic excursion is completely disregarded in *GR*, where the narrative ranges across continents and characters with absolute freedom. This distinction is felt more starkly due to the fact that *GR* does not make use of chapter divisions, allowing the constituent vignettes to flow into one another. Voss and Schütze note that the postmodern experience of time as constantly interrupted and premised to a much greater extent on automated production and ever-present media filtration than on natural or even industrial rhythms result in "the imaginative practices of modern art and literature los[ing] their semiotic innocence and their critical and expressive meaning."[189] This sentence applies well to one crucial difference between *MoE* and *GR*: the loss of innocence. The boundary of two world wars and the divide between the modern and the postmodern make it impossible for one to set out on an examination of ethics and possibilities in society with all of the earnesty apparent in

[186] Voss and Schütze, p. 121
[187] Voss and Schütze, p. 123
[188] Honold, p. 26
[189] Ibid., p. 128

MoE. The loss of innocence is also already foreshadowed in the sometimes callous and nihilistic actions of Ulrich. On the other hand, Slothrop's actions display at times a charming naivety. The ultimate innocence of modern literary works is, as the sentence specifies, semiotic. This is clear in the essayistic passages that clearly and directly address the lived reality of contemporary readers. In this sense, a loss of semiotic innocence connects back to Harvey's identification of a postmodern turn toward the ontological. Both the loss of epistemic certainty that the reality we lived in is shared, as well as the loss of semiotic innocence make essayism in Musil's style impossible in the postmodern age.

Scholars have argued that Roger Mexico serves as the main novelistic element within the *GR* cosmos. Mexico's main goals at the opening of the novel are to win over his love interest and protect London from the Luftwaffe through the power of statistical analysis. In other words, Mexico is a very conventional modern man, who believes and acts within modern structures. Like Ulrich, Mexico thoroughly believes in rationality and probabilistic thinking. This is in fact the basis for his main mission, which relies on the solidity of data and mathematics for its validity. Mexico will become very frustrated later in the novel when his fairly reasonable expectations in love and war are both met with disappointment. A bright and handsome man, Roger Mexico is often[190] described with the epithet "young," which connotes the innocence of his outlook and attitude. In the reader's first introduction to Mexico and his love interest, Jessica, the character observing them is "taken by an ache in his skin, a simple love for them both that asks nothing but their safety, and that he'll always manage to describe as something else -- 'concern,' you know, 'fondness…'"[191]. Thus, from the beginning Mexico is someone the reader should reasonably be cheering for, a fairly conventional protagonist. Mexico's outlook is explicitly suggested as likely to be aligned with the readers by the narrator in Mexico introduction of himself:

"He's become the Dour Young Man of 'The White Visitation,' the spider hitching together his web of numbers. It's an open secret that he doesn't get on with the rest of his section. How can he? They're all wild talents -- clairvoyants and mad magicians, telekinetics, astral travelers, gatherers of light. Roger's only a statistician. Never had a prophetic dream, never sent or got a telepathic message, never touched the Other World directly. If anything's there it will show in the experimental data won't it, in the numbers… but that's as close or clear as he'll ever get. Any

[190] *GR*, p. 33-35, 40, 55-57, 281-282
[191] *GR*, p. 36

wonder he's a bit short with Psi Section, all the definitely 3-sigma lot up and down his basement corridor? Jesus Christ, *wouldn't you be*?"[192]

There is a great deal of emphasis placed in this passage on the irrationality of most of Mexico's colleagues. The figure most likely to come to the reader's mind here is Pirate Prentice, the character leading the first 30 pages of the novel, who is indeed endowed with supernatural abilities. Pirate's leading role in the opening sequence inaugurates the novel as zany and at a remove from the truth, but Mexico's emergence grounds the world of PISCES and The White Visitation back in a familiar logic. Hence, Mexico has been presented to the reader with various mechanisms to encourage empathic attachment. It is meaningful, also, that the project Mexico is working on, the statistical analysis that tracks the correlation between certain events happening around London and the location of aerial bombings in the city -- will become more and more paranoiacly focused on Slothrop as an individual causal agent. Thus, as the narrative develops and it becomes clear that model novelistic narrative structure is not being followed and that simple expectations deduced from such a logic -- akin to Mexico's -- will not be met, the reader is watching Slothrop with the same increasingly anxious intensity as Mexico himself. Thus, Roger Mexico can be said to represent the reader's modern, novelistic expectations at the beginning of the novel and serves as one possible frame through which to view Slothrop as the narrative develops.

As far as Mexico's statistical quest for truth and salvation, however, no one else is interested; they are working in bureaucracies, not looking for the truth. Jessica's fiance serves as a foil here encouraging Mexico to set aside his obsessions and focus on the real world: her real world of petit bourgeois gatherings and bureaucratic technicalities. But what is real for these characters is not any connection to observable patterns of occurrences. What is real for Jessica's fiance are the papers on his desk, the promotions dangled in front of him, the cocktail parties with wives of his bosses. Marriage contracts, written requests, memos. Foreshadowing the melancholy mundanities that will pull them apart, the narrator makes the following remark during a romantic scene shared by Roger and Jessica:

"It is not death that separates these incarnations, but paper: paper specialties, paper routines. The War, the Empire, will expedite such barriers between our lives. The War needs to divide this way, and to subdivide, though its propaganda will always stress unity, alliance, pulling together. The

[192] *GR*, pp. 40-41

War does not appear to want a folk-consciousness, not even of the sort the German have engineered, ein Volk ein Führer -- it wants a machine of many separate parts, not oneness but a complexity…"[193]

Such an observation, though seemingly very general, does apply acutely to Roger and Jessica, in that Roger says that the "war is his mother," and Jessica is determined to live comfortably within the machinery of empire and bureaucracy. Jessica marches happily along to the drums of war and empire, while Roger is searching for something deeper and more meaningful. This excerpt is crucial also because it directly addresses the idea of imposed, war-driven national totalities ("ein Volk ein Führer") and counter-totalizing impulses, as theorized by Saint-Amour. The mechanism of subdivision and routinization is also precisely the same as that so often maligned by the narrator of *MoE* in his laments for modern times.

In *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, functionaries such as Tuzzi and Stumm von Bordwehr are powerless to make any individual impact on larger structures, because they are only individual men working within a vast machinery of paperwork and ritual. This is dramatized in the anecdote of the match, which explicitly illuminates the way in which such insistent division is counterproductive to the formation of a united national force in war[194]. Naturally, the point of the story is not to suggest that the national totality that the war will need should be expedited, but only to show that it is through this proliferation of bureaucratic structures that people are divided in unproductive ways.

In *Gravity's Rainbow*, on the other hand, individuals are seen as having some effect on larger institutional goals, when they are ambitious and motivated. An example of this is Pointsman, who commands multiple cadres of distracted underlings. The power of Pointsman as an individual is directly reliant upon the distraction or weakness of others, whereas in *MoE*, all of the individual actors within a structure are portrayed as accepting that any schemes of their own design would be futile.[195] Organizations in *GR*, such as IG Farben, are also portrayed as having

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[193] *GR*, p. 133
[194] *MoE*, p. 586
[195] An exception to this rule would be Ulrich's father, who sits in a very powerful position in relation to the writing of the law, and uses the established routes to enact his own opinion. When compared with a man like Pointsman or Laszlo Jamf, however, the miniscule scale of Ulrich's father's impact on society is immediately apparent. The kinds of changes Ulrich's father is able to make are on the scale of proposing a certain specific wording within a proposed review of a legal statute which may or may not be approved, included within the larger code, and later possibly ever applied in court. Another exception would be Hagauer, whose influence over his own school is substantial, but is premised on the fact that his rule conform to the expectations, traditions, and political opinions of those around him. Social pressure plays a prominent role here.

an incredibly broad sphere of influence, meaning that in contrast to the limitations faced by the military and the foreign office in *MoE*'s anecdote of the match, in *GR* institutions are seen as formidably effective. This will become increasingly clear as Roger and Slothrop's stories continue.

Roger's alignment with classical novelistic protagonists is concretized through his relationship to Jessica. He describes this relationship thus:

"He'd seen himself a point on a moving wavefront, propagating through sterile history--a known past, a projectable future. But Jessica was the breaking of the wave. … And (selfishly) that from a somber youth, squarely founded on Death -- along for Death's ride-- he might, with her, find his way to life and to joy."[196]

The customary novelistic plot structure is laid out well here. Unlike the complicated musings and poorly defined desires of a protagonist like Ulrich, the conditions of Mexico's salvation, his narrative resolution, are clear; establish a loving relationship with Jessica, and maybe find some statistical description of the bombardment of London. Such a storyline would make a beautiful classic Hollywood film celebrating the Allied forces' triumph over death and war. This simple and pleasant conventional plotline is offered to the reader early on, and is notable in its contrast to the trials and suspicious intentions of the other characters introduced in the first section. It is not surprising, then, that Roger's attitude toward his coworkers in Psi Section is one of reasonable caution. A modern reader hoping for peace, rationality, and romance can be expected to cling to Mexico as their most certain hope for narrative resolution in this labyrinthine text.

Even Mexico cannot inhabit an island of peace and rationality all his own, however; his plot must also become intertwined with the antics that make *GR* iconic. Paranoia is further justified for the reader then, when it is narrated as a part of Mexico's, rather than Slothrop's experience. This is done earlier on, when Mexico is working in Psi Section and wakes up one morning thinking the following:

"Some spider-statistician: his eyes had actually filled with tears before the Next Idea -- *oh*. Oboy. Turn off that faucet, Dorset, and get hep to *this*. He stood, half-stooped, over the washbasin, paralyzed, putting his worry for Jessica on Hold for a bit, wanting very much to look back over his shoulder, even into the, the old mirror, you know, see what they're up to, but frozen to risk even that … *now* … oh yes a most superb possibility has found seedbed in his brain, and here it is. What if they are all, all these Psi Section freaks here, ganged up on him in secret? O.K.? Yes: suppose they can see into your mind! A-and how about -- what if it's *hypnotism*?"[197]

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[196] *GR*, p. 128
[197] *GR*, pp. 126-7, emphasis in original

The fact that the reader is well aware that hypnotism and mind-reading are canonically confirmed activities that go on at Psi Section serves to justify Mexico's anxieties logically, but on an empathetic level, paranoia shared by the reader and the character is fostered through the rhythm and orthography of the passage. The narrator pushes off Mexico's realization, which is still not quite a certainty, across multiple sentences, all of which are cut abruptly with miniature clauses and emphases. With capital lettering and italics, the narrator marks that this realization will be something big. The realization itself, however, does not inspire any action and could be further investigated. In this sentence it is not the plot-driving element of the modern novel, but rather a paranoia-fueling vignette typical of the postmodern encyclopedia.

Roger's concern in the above-quoted scene is focused on the safety of Jessica. Following in the anticipation of a Hollywood ending, one can still tolerate quite a few obstacles in the way of their love, while still reasonably expecting them to come together in the end. GR is not a conventional modern novel nor a Hollywood film, however, and has no interest in including such a trite resolution even within its encyclopedic vastness. Jessica, then, rather than being Mexico's salvation, will trigger his downfall.

Jessica leaves Roger in a fairly unspectacular way; she tells him directly that their wartime fling has reached its end, and she will be marrying the conventional and contemptible fiance who has been around since the beginning. Roger cries for days or weeks[198], but this alone is not what sets him off. Mexico's depression turns into rage when he realizes that the very lover whose loss he has been mourning was working all along for his enemy: Pointsman[199]. What Roger realizes at this point isn't only the depths to which his enemy would stoop. What he realizes is that both aspects of his wholesome Hollywood quest were manufactured and manipulated by Pointsman. There was never an innocent romance, and there was never a need for statistical analyses of Slothrop's connection to the bombing of London: Pointsman and IG Farben were well aware and in control of it all. This is the moment when we lose our innocent modern protagonist, and the result is an angry rampage. This anger is, in fact, significant, because it marks a tangible reaction to a stimulus. Quite a few characters, though mainly Slothrop himself, have faced this same stimulus -- the knowledge that Slothrop has been under

[198] *GR*, pp. 638-42

[199] *GR*, p. 644 -- this realization is narrated stunningly: "Nothing is beyond Pointsman, he's worse than old Pudding was, no shame at all. He would use anyone -- Gloaming, Katje Borgesius, Pirate Prentice, no one is (Jessica) exempt from his (*Jessica?*) Machiavellian -- Jessica. Oh."

surveillance since his birth and that there is an international network of business cartels and government ministries working to maintain this arrangement, that this is all connected to the rocket, connected to plastics and medications, connected to the economy, connected to the war…. -- and not reacted. It takes our modern hero, our confident, rational statistician, to respond to this realization as a real certainty rather than merely a paranoid possibility. Thus, Mexico responds to *GR*'s plotline epistemologically rather than ontologically; Mexico is a modern man in a postmodern world.

Mexico's anger propels him through a series of offices until he finds Pointsman and expresses his frustration by jumping on top of the conference table surrounded by unnamed cartel executives and urinating on it. The response of the executives is markedly ontological:

"Roger has unbuttoned his fly, taken his cock out, and is now busy pissing on the shiny table, the papers, in the ashtrays and pretty soon on these poker-faced men themselves, who, although executive material all right, men of hair-trigger minds, are still not quite willing to admit that this is happening, you know, in any world that really touches, at too many points, the one *they're* accustomed to."[200]

Again the narration comments on the unfitting nature of Mexico's response in the world of the text. But Mexico's certainty is unshaken, and he continues his onslaught by shouting at Pointsman that the scoundrel will never outrun him: again the Hollywood tropes, Roger has transformed from the lovesick hero to the vengeful antihero. Neither of these are truly fitting or effective in this situation, as neither poses any threat to the inconceivable force of global capital. Further highlighting the comic irreality of our hero's plight, the narrator ends this stand-off -- specifically labelled a "Mexican Stand-off" a few pages previously, tying Roger's name into the Western movie trope -- with a chase scene, introduced thus:

"The security police show up as an anticlimax, although aficionados of the chase scene, those who cannot look at the Taj Mahal, the Uffizi, the Statue of Liberty without thinking chase scene, chase scene, wow yeah Douglas Fairbanks scampering across that moon minaret there -- these enthusiasts may find interest in the following: Roger dives under the table…"[201]

The language used to describe the enthusiast's relish of Hollywood action sequences is set in juxtaposition to an overly formal clause: "these enthusiasts may find…" inviting the reader to disdain or deride this tendency, regardless of the extent to which they may themselves identify with it. Here then, the reader's empathetic attachment to Mexico is wearing thin. His seemingly

[200] *GR*, p. 649
[201] *GR*, p. 649

reasonable worldview has also been exposed as contingent upon media and myths and ineffective in the face of real power.

Our last encounter with Mexico is an overt display of this ineffectualness. Mexico is invited to a dinner party thrown by his former lover's fiance and his echelon of British gentry. Mexico feels attacked by the very opulence and emptiness of the dinner guests, and fantasizes a rebellion against them using the performative weapon of revulsion. Along with his buddy Seaman Bodine, Mexico's childish outbursts of imaginative disgusting dishes eventually devolve the entire party into chaos[202]. The fantasy, overall, is pathetic in its juvenile futility. When confronted with the people he sees as having stolen his love and destroyed his life -- as Mexico has taken to conflating this group in his paranoiac fantasy with a more general "They" which includes Pointsman and other higher-ups in the war effort[203] -- the only resistance he can imagine is strictly performative.

This scene can also be read as a meta-commentary on the language and content of the book, however, in that, as Mendelsohn so aptly put it "only a false sophistication -- or a terminally brutalized sensibility -- can claim not to be repelled by many pages of *GR*"[204]. Roger's intention and the results of his actions in this scene can therefore be read as a context for the use of comparable techniques within the larger text. What is the function of revulsion in this text? If it were only for the sake of a performative rebellion, a prodding for reactions among an overly modest readership, then this scene shows that although that might provoke some reaction, it would hardly be fruitful. The partygoers are outraged and the dinner is ruined, but one is hardly convinced that any future gatherings will be meaningfully altered as a response, besides perhaps a more careful observation of the guest list. Is the point of *GR*'s vulgarity then a self-imposed exile from bourgeois circles? A flaunting of canonical convention? Mendelsohn would be likely to support these two functions, since they further bolster the author's status as a genius and an outsider. But from the perspective of totality, one can read the inclusion of lurid and at times horrible details as a refusal to exclude, in other words, as an aspect of the encyclopedic reflex.

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[202] *GR*, pp. 727-32

[203] GR, p. 727: "Oh yes, isn't that *exactly* what They'll do. Bringing Roger now, at a less than appropriate time and place here in the bosom of the Oppoition, while his life's first authentic love is squirming only to get home and take another wad of Jeremy's sperm so they'll make their day's quota -- in the middle of all that he has to walk (*ow*, fuck) right into the interesting question, which is worse: living on as Their pet, or death?" (emphasis original)

[204] Mendelsohn, "Gravity's Encyclopedia," p. 173

So what is this power Mexico is standing off against? How does it fit into the encyclopedic cosmos of the text and how does it contribute to the text's conception of totality? The primary point of contact for this power, especially from Mexico's perspective, is Dr. Edward Pointsman, the leader of PISCES and a firm believer in Pavlovian psychology. Pointsman's desperate degree of commitment to this theory is obvious from his first introduction to the reader, in which he is running through London's bombed out ruins in the rain, searching for dogs for his experiments. The reader is conditioned from this first encounter to read Pointsman as a threat, because this scene is narrated from the perspective of the dog that the doctor is hunting:

"He has the memory, or reflex, of escaping into similar darkness from an Irish setter who smells of coal smoke and will attack on sight … once from a pack of children, recently from a sudden blast of noiselight, a fall of masonry that caught him on the left hindquarter (still raw, still needs licking). But tonight's threat is something new: not so violent, instead a systematic stealth he isn't used to. … The smell is ether, it emanates from Mr. Edward W.A. Pointsman, F.R.C.S."[205]

These initial characterizations are crucial: stealthy, systematic, smelling of ether, threatening. The smell of ether and the epithetic lab coat (not specifically mentioned in the above excerpt, but nearly constantly present) tie Pointsman into the larger trope of the evil scientist: a man whose every decision is based on blind faith in the empirical, with no ethical consideration allowed. Seen from the outside, Pointsman is cruel in his unflinching imposition of order. For this reason the doctor is positioned as a metonymy for the larger structure of men who pull strings and implement dastardly schemes. The image of pulling strings will be connected directly to Pointsman, incidentally, through the imagery of his laboratory:

"And Dog Vanya, bound atop the test stand, begins to salivate. All other sounds are damped severely: the beams underpinning the lab smothered in sand-filled rooms, sandbags, straw, uniforms of dead men occupying the spaces between the windowless walls … where the country bedlamites sat around, scowling, sniffing nitrous oxide, giggling, weeping at an E-major chord modulating to a G-sharp minor, now are cubical deserts, sand-rooms, keeping the metronome sovereign here in the lab, behind the iron doors, closed hermetically.

The duct of Vanya's submaxillary gland was long ago carried out the bottom of his chin through an incision and sutured in place, leading saliva outside to the collecting funnel, fixed there with the traditional orange Pavlovian Cement of rosin, iron oxide and beeswax."[206]

The torturous, objectifying methods Pointsman subjects his dogs to are here explicitly connected to the experiences of the White Visitations' previous inhabitants (the "bedlamites") as well as to the soldiers, represented through the auspicious presence of their uniforms. Thus, the way in

[205] *GR*, pp. 42-3
[206] *GR*, p. 80

which Pointsman victimizes Vanya can be reasonably read as the same tactics he is accustomed to employing on the human beings under his control. Vanya's reactions to the ticking of a metronome at various speeds are being measured through his quantifiable physical response: the amount of saliva he produces. Although slightly less quantifiable, Slothrop's physical responses are being (and have been being) measured and analysed in the same way, and the anecdote about the asylum inmates' response to musical cues makes the same point: humans, just like animals, respond to conditioned stimuli. Pointsman's complete faith in this doctrine informs all of his strategic operations throughout the text. Using this method, Pointsman is able to manipulate and control a great degree of the behaviour of those around him, and even more importantly, the reader is aware of this ability, which contributes substantially to the potential for paranoid conspiracies to develop.

Pointsman's strategic position within the "They structure" of men who pull the strings is confirmed, though without much detail, in a meeting at the White Visitation narrated on page 230. Slothrop has been carousing in the French Riviera for quite a while at this point, so it may not have been clear to the reader to what extent Pointsman may have had a hand in the goings-on down South. A few pages previously, the Pavlovian nature of the experiment Slothrop is being made to carry out, not to mention its experimental nature, are confirmed by Sir Stephen Dodson-Truck, when he explicitly says: "My 'function' is to observe you. That's my function. You like my function? You like it? *Your* 'function' … is, learn the rocket, inch by inch. *I* have … to send in a daily log of your progress. And that's all I know."[207] What Dodson-Truck has been observing is Slothrop's physiological response to exposure to a particular stimulus -- frankly an obviously Pavlovian set-up. Nevertheless, Pointsman's direct involvement is confirmed, along with the fact that there are some higher-up interests funding this operation:

"The Slothrop group are gathered for their regular meeting in the ARF wing. […] Pointsman is the only one here maintaining his calm. He appears unruffled and strong. His lab coats have even begun lately to take on a Savile Row serenity, suppressed waist, flaring vents, finer material, rather rakishly notched lapels. In this parched and fallow time, he gushes affluence. After the baying has quieted down at last, he speaks, soothing: 'There is no danger.'"

It is clear from this excerpt that Pointsman is the leader of this group, but also that the appearance of consensus among his co-conspirators is a matter of interest to him. This becomes even clearer as the passage continues:

[207] *GR*, p. 219, emphasis original

"'Brigadier Pudding will not go back on any of his commitments,' Pointsman very steady, calm, 'we have made arrangements with him. The details aren't important.'
They never are, in these meetings of his. Treacle has been comfortably sidetracked onto the Mossmoon Issue, Rollo Groast's carping asides never get as far as serious opposition, and are useful in presenting the appearance of open discussion, as are Throwster's episodes of hysteria for distracting the others… So the gathering breaks up, the conspirators head off for coffee, wives, whiskey, sleep, indifference."[208]

Thus, Pointsman's identity as the hinge between the larger structures which provide funding -- i.e. international cartels, the military-industrial complex, government agencies from various countries -- and the specific surveillance apparatus tasked with Slothrop as an individual is spelled out here. It is also shown that, as Dodson-Truck put it, "They aren't even sadists."[209] Most of the members of this committee are just as manipulated as Slothrop himself, and this manipulation is enabled by their indifference and distraction. Pointsman here serves as a representative of imposed totalizing structures then not in the ideological mode personified by Hans Sepp in *MoE*, but in concrete action. Like Hans, in fact, Pointsman's passion and motivation come from a deep ideological conviction: in this case a belief in the methods of Pavlov. Unlike Hans, however, Pointsman has the opportunity in the text to put these convictions into action within the realm of the narration[210]. The problem with Pointsman, then, is not his zealousness, but how this zealousness leads to abuses of power. Such power to act was not granted to any of the characters of *MoE* besides Arnheim, who also does not take advantage of the different opportunities presented to him within the canonical narration. Thus, while personal agency within institutional hierarchies was nearly eliminated in the plot structure of *MoE*, it becomes a driving feature of *GR*. This shift could also be seen as a consequence of the larger epistemological to ontological shift, as the characters of *MoE* are very often hindered or fully halted by considerations of how things *should* be done, whereas the plot of *GR* is very often advanced through conjecture about what *might* have been done. This is why Pointsman can only be read as a crucial hinge within a totalizing structure of empiricism, industry, international

[208] *GR*, pp. 230-1
[209] *GR*, p. 219
[210] One might reasonably assume that in the following years, had Hans Sepp been a real Austrian citizen in 1913, he might have had a chance to put his hateful views into action. This is never narrated, however, so our judgement of Hans as a character rests purely on his worldview, as is perfectly fitting in an encyclopedia of ideas.

business cartels, and military surveillance with a reliance on the paranoiac function of *GR*'s narration.

Irony is artfully woven throughout *Gravity's Rainbow* (and the work of Pynchon in general) through characters' paranoia and an insidious doubt in the reader over whether a given character's suspicions are well-founded or not. Postmodern scholar Brian McHale addressed this topic specifically in his article, "Modernist Reading, Postmodern Text," which specifies many tactics through which the reader of GR is intentionally disoriented and misled to the extent that "ontological certainty" becomes entirely "intractable"[211]. One of the most major contributions to this instability is embodied in Pirate Prentice, the first character to be introduced to the reader and perhaps the most fantastic. Prentice's unique talent is the ability to "manage" the anxieties, fantasies, or ambitions of others. The reader's introduction to Pirate right at the onset of the novel can be seen as a tacit warning that any piece of the narration that follows could have been psychically manipulated; there is never any way of knowing for sure. Clearly, this sets GR on the rather extreme side of the ontological-epistemological shift. Beyond the unreliability of narration due to plot elements such as Prentice's psychic abilities, Slothrop's manic paranoia, or Tchicherine's drug use, the reader is also conditioned to question each episode as it is narrated, since there are many instances in which a certain scene is narrated as if it had truly happened, and later recanted, or narrated as mere rumor or fantasy, and later confirmed to have happened[212]. McHale argues even further that this destabilization of the ontological certainty that readers of modernist texts have come to rely on can be seen as a conditioning in the reader of *GR* of anti-paranoia. Such a thesis illuminates the way in which modern texts encourage their reader to identify patterns in every detail given in a text: an attitude which would obviously constitute paranoia if applied to lived experience[213]. This attitude, though, is precisely that of the totalizing thinker. It is the approach which prompts Ulrich's father to assume that the law speaks for the will of the collective. It is the mindset in which Leinsdorf is able to align every opinion with the authority of god and emperor. It is the method that justifies Pointsman's Pavlovian obsession and Mexico's statistical stubbornness. It is a mode of modern epistemology to which many readers

[211] Brian McHale, 'Modernist Reading, Post-Modern Text: The Case of *Gravity's Rainbow*,' Poetics Today 1 (1979) p. 85-110
[212] McHale, pp. 104-6
[213] Ibid., p. 107

may still be prone to cling, and it is precisely this mode which *Gravity's Rainbow* seeks to undermine. It is also the stance that Ulrich categorically opposed throughout MoE through his dedication to specificity, ethics instead of morality, and essayism. Where Ulrich promotes specific and careful searches for the truth, however, *GR* asserts that the truth is fundamentally unavailable.

If the complex system of surveillance Slothrop imagines were truly extant and functional, this would imply a totalizing structure within the fictional world that would shift Slothrop's beliefs from the delusions of a paranoiac to the discoveries of a shrewd investigator. Details such as Pointsman's meeting and the confession of Sir Dodson-Truck quoted above, not to mention the paper trail and material effects of Slothrop's infant experiences, all confirm the veracity of Slothrop's uniqueness and make more believable a complex system of surveillance constructed just to follow and observe him. Other episodes, however, suggest that Slothrop has taken this all a bit too far in his mind. One particularly dramatic example comes on page 613, when Slothrop's adventures through the Zone are nearing their end: he has already been led, chased, or ferried across vast swathes of Germany, and is now in Cuxhaven, hoping to be able to get his hands on the S-Gerät. At this moment we are let into Slothrop's stream of consciousness:

"And tonight, of all nights, after a week of not bothering him, the police decide to come after Slothrop. Oh yes, yes indeed NNNNNNNN Good Evening Tyrone Slothrop We Have Been Waiting For You. Of Course We Are Here. You Didn't Think We Had Just Faded Away, No, No Tyrone, We Must Hurt You Again If You Are Going To Be That Stupid, Hurt You Again And Again Yes Tyrone You Are So Hopeless So Stupid And Doomed. Are You Really Supposed To Find Anything? What If It Is Death Tyrone? What If We Don't Want You To Find Anything? If We Don't Want To Give You Your Discharge You'll Just Go On Like This Forever Won't You? Maybe We Want You To Only Keep On. You Don't Know Do You Tyrone. What Makes You Think You Can Play As Well As We Can? You Can't. You Think You're Good But You're Really Shit And We All Know It. That Is In Your Dossier. (Laughter. Humming.)

Bodine finds him sitting inside a coat closet, chewing on a velvet ear of his mask. 'You look bad, Rocky. This is Solange. She's a masseuse.' She is smiling, quizzical, a child brought to visit the weird pig in his cave.

'I'm sorry. I'm sorry.' [...] 'This is all some kind of a plot, right?' Slothrop sucking saliva from the velvet pile.

'*Everything* is some kind of a plot, man,' Bodine laughing.

'And yes but, the arrows are pointing all different ways,' Solange illustrating with a dance of hands, red-pointed fingervectors. Which is Slothrop's first news, out loud, that the Zone can sustain many other plots besides those polarized upon himself … that these are the els and busses of an enormous transit system here in the Raketenstadt, more tangled even than Boston's -- and that by riding each branch the proper distance, knowing when to transfer, keeping some state of minimum grace though it might often look like he's headed the wrong way, this network

of all plots may yet carry him to freedom. He understands that he should not be so paranoid of either Bodine or Solange, but ride instead their kind underground awhile, see where it takes him…"[214]

It is justified to insert this passage here nearly in its entirety, because it serves as a narratological hinge, a moment which clarifies Slothrop's personal trajectory as well as his place within the larger structure of the novel. Initially, we are given access to the way in which Slothrop conceptualizes the power of those watching over him: to inflict pain (psychological or physiological unspecified), to withhold official legal documents, and to direct the course of his actions. The "They" speaking in Slothrop's mind now is therefore larger than Pointsman or Dr. Jamf. Larger than the militaries and ministries. The "They" here are in control of the narrative structure; "They" will decide if Slothrop feels satisfied on his search, if he finds something meaningful; if his quest is allowed to end. This meta-narrative intrusion is characteristically postmodern, but it is also indirectly reminiscent of Ulrich's decision to live and act by the principles of narrative. Slothrop has a similar, though far from identical, realization in the latter part of the above excerpt, in that he realizes that narrative logic is manipulable. For Ulrich, this meant shifting his personal narration of the events of his life to help them conform to a more meaningful and ethical structure. For Slothrop, this means that the narrative of his life itself, as he experiences rather than conceptualizes it, can be controlled according to the rules of narrative. Once again, this is an epistemological-ontological difference, as Ulrich still clearly believes in the solidity of his lived experience, whereas Slothrop basically conceives of himself as a fictional character.

This is further supported by the way Slothrop interprets Solange's statement: as a narrative hint, which when taken figuratively opens up his narrative options. This is a very paranoid way to interpret utterances if one assumes that they originate from separate and sovereign individual speakers. If these utterances merely form the fabric of a story in which both speaker and listener are characters, however, then Slothrop's "reading" of Solange's words is valid. Thus, Slothrop's ontological flexibility is clearly on display in this exchange. Subsequently, he choose now how to act morally within given circumstances (an epistemological question) but rather how to construct and interpret his lived experience (an ontological perspective). This distinction also shows Ulrich's proximity to a more ontologically flexible way of thinking when he decides to live and interpret his own life according to the rules of narrative.

[214] GR, pp. 613-4, emphasis in original

The difference here is that Ulrrich does not believe that this shift in his thinking will produce any tangible effect: it is merely a mental exercise. For Slothrop, it is his key to freedom.

Not long before his dissolution, Slothrop experiences a fleeting moment of clarity and connection to a defined totality in memory. Compared to the hellscape of real or imagined surveillance and chaos that he is wandering through, Slothrop remembers the categories and definitions that upheld an ideological structure for him in his youth in Massachusetts.

> "He used to pick and shovel at the spring roads of Berkshire, April afternoons he's lost, 'Chapter 81 work,' they called it, following the scraper that clears the winter's crystal attack-from-within, its white necropolizing … picking up rusted beer cans, rubbers yellow with preterite snot, preterite tears, newspapers, broken glass, pieces of automobile, days when in superstition and fright he could *make it all fit*, seeing clearly in each an entry in a record, a history: his own, his winter's, his country's"[215]

In this scene, Slothrop himself acts as an encyclopedist, taking note of each object he encounters and assigning it a place within the narrative of the community he belongs to. It is notable that the place he assigns to most of these objects is as belonging to the "preterite." This word, which denotes in Calvinist/Puritan theological language those who are not chosen by god to go to heaven, crops up repeatedly throughout *GR*, connecting the text to Slothrop's Massachusetts heritage as well as to the ideas and rhetoric of a brand of protestantism which laid the foundations for the American cultural mythology of the hard-working and thus virtuous and worthy elect and the lazy, sinful, and thus unworthy others. Though these others, the preterite, would usually be overlooked by history just as they had been by contemporary authorities and supposedly by god, Slothrop sees them in every object and structure around him, not only in his memories of America, but also in his journey through the Zone. In fact, the Zonecan be seen as a purgatory populated nearly entirely by preterite: all those left behind in the rubble while figures of authority meet at the Potsdam conference or float down the river in luxury yachts. Slothrop's, as well as the text's, acknowledgement of the preterite, especially in their impact on the material world, brings a level of concreteness, in Jameson's sense, into the text. This passage thus acknowledges the material interconnectedness that structures the world. As the passage continues, Slothrop ties this material dimension to the abstract, and in doing so experiences a brief moment of basking in the totality.

[215] *GR*, p. 638, emphasis in original

"... instructing him, dunce and drifter, in ways deeper than he can explain, have been the faces of children and out the train windows, two bars of dance music somewhere, in some other street at night, needles and branches of a pine tree shaken clear and luminous against night clouds, one circuit diagram out of hundreds in a smudged yellowing sheaf, laughter out of a cornfield in the early morning as he was walking to school, the idling of a motorcycle at one dusk-heavy hour of the summer … and now, in the Zone, later in the day he became a crossroad, after a heavy rain he doesn't recall, Slothrop sees a very think rainbow here, a stout rainbow cock driven down out of pubic clouds into the Earth, green wet valleyed Earth, and his chest fills and he stands crying, not a thing in his head, just feeling natural…"[216]

The connection of the concrete to the abstract, the sublimation of the divisions of elect and preterite allow Slothrop to see fertility returned to the wasteland of the earth. Although his recollections of the people around him remain fragmented, he nevertheless senses the connectedness they all share in, and this allows him to feel "natural," to think nothing, to disconnect from anxieties and paranoias and instead relish the beauty of a shared existence. In this brief moment, Slothrop feels totality.

Even at this time, though, isolated from the chaos and drama of the Zone and free (so he believes) from "Their" surveillance, Slothrop is still dreaming of his papers:

"He likes to spend whole days naked, ants crawling up his legs, butterflies lighting on his shoulders, watching the life on the mountain, getting to know shrikes and capercaillie, badgers and marmots. Any number of directions he ought to be moving in, but he'd rather stay right here for now. Everyplace he's been, Cuxhaven, Berlin, Nice, Zürich, must be watched now. He could still make a try at finding Springer or Blodgett Waxwing. Why does he have this obsession with getting papers? What th' fuck are papers, anyhow? He could try one of the Baltic ports, wait around for Frau Gnahb to put in, and get over to that Denmark or that Sweden. DPs, offices burned, records lost forever -- papers might not mean so much in Europe … waitaminute, so much as *where*, Slothrop? Huh? America? Shit. C'mon--"[217]

Like Tchitcherine's encounter with the Kirghiz Light, Slothrop's idyllic mountain retreat can only be fleeting. He longs for the totality of his homeland; his papers would be his ticket home, official confirmation that he exists. Like Tchitcherine, the more attractive force for him is the manmade one, though Tchitcherine runs toward the rocket and Slothrop, has been chased away from it and now longs only for home. Without his papers, though, Slothrop does not see anyway of getting back to America. It is significant to remember at this point that Slothrop does not have

[216] *GR*, p. 638
[217] *GR*, p. 635

any identification or other papers now not out of his own carelessness, but through the explicit planning of Pointsman and the Schwarzkommando surveillance group[218].

During Slothrop's time in France, our protagonist sees himself contentedly as fitting into the Morettian ideal of modern epic heroism: that is, as a passive spectator, able to take in and judge various aspects of the world around him. But this position is an illusion, as the reader is already aware[219]: Slothrop wants to be an observer, but is himself in fact observed. The deconstruction of the idea of the passive observer is connected in this instance to the deconstruction of the topos of objectivity, which many scholars, principally Hilary Clark, have argued, is at the core of encyclopedism. Slothrop's manipulation and surveillance throughout this section puts on display the contingency of knowledge and the position of the knowledge-collector. Such a meta-level of examination of the observer is not present in *MoE*, for instance, in which Ulrich is mainly left in peace to regard and evaluate any and all information he gathers at his own leisure. Other characters do interrogate Ulrich's conclusions and even his methods, but there is no narration of the way in which Ulrich takes information in and the ways in which this intake may be contingent. This is another aspect of the modern/postmodern distinction that separates *MoE* from *GR*.

Somehow, Slothrop successfully rides the "els and busses" of *GR*'s transit system off of the pages and into freedom[220]. Mendelsohn saw this as an ultimate isolation: "to leave the system is to sacrifice everything, even language, as shown by Slothrop's dissolve."[221] Mendelsohn, then, sees Slothrop as solipsistic, perhaps as a victim of his all-consuming paranoias. One can also read Slothrop's dissolve as a successful end to his purgatorial march through the Zone. As the text mentions, if Tyrone were to die, this would be a win for his father and the cartels that inflicted his fate upon him[222]. But since Slothrop has basically been aware of the truth of his past and probable futures since the text's outset, there is little left for him to find that would justify his

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[218] *GR*, pp. 212-3: "[...] to dazzle him, they think, distract him from what they're taking away, his ID, his service dossier, his past. Well, fuck… you know. He lets it happen."

[219] The careful reader will already be aware of the fact that Slothrop is certainly being surveilled throughout this whole stretch of his journey, as it was decreed by Pointsman in a meeting on page 84: "'We want to expose Slothrop to the German rocket..."

[220] His last mention comes on page 726

[221] Mendelsohn, "Gravity's Encyclopedia", p. 169

[222] *GR*, p. 687: "Even though there is a villain here, serious as death. It is this typical American teenager's own *Father*, trying episode after episode to kill his own son. And the kid knows it. Imagine that. So far he's managed to escape his father's daily little death-plots-- but nobody has said he has to *keep* escaping. He's a cheerful and a plucky enough lad, and doesn't hold any of this against his father particularly. That ol' Broderick's just a murderin' fool, golly what'll he come up with next--"

rambling quest. Unlike Odysseus, Slothrop does not have any yearning lover or even family waiting for him at home. And thus the dissolve. This plot device must also naturally be read as an assault on the conventions of narrative closure or be compared to Hermut Böhme's evaluation of Ulrich's year off from life, which he describes thus:

"Diese Ausgrenzung nur als Zwangsvollstreckung erlitten und im chaotischen Wirbel abgewehrt werden kann. Ulrich vollzieht die Ausgrenzung, die generell herrscht, an sich selbst - das ist der Sinn des "Urlaubs vom Leben" -, um die Folgen dieser Nichtigkeitserklärung des Subjektiven kontrollieren zu können; doch auch um Alternativen zur Hölle der Normalität zu suchen, Subjektformen, die nicht zwangsläufig in Selbstdestruktion, Verbrechen, Wahnsinn, Ideenflucht, Perversion, Paranoia enden - alles Reaktionen, die Musil exemplarisch vorführt."[223]

In this sense, Ulrich takes his place not only alongside Slothrop, but joined by all of the other characters in *GR* who resist totalizing structures through self-destructive methods. Both Slothrop and Ulrich represent particularly effective methods of resisting these structures, because neither of them destroy themselves completely, but merely negate their personal use-value, denying the larger system the benefit of their participation. Slothrop's method is more formally radical while Ulrich's is more modern and comprehensible. Nevertheless, both approaches function to return agency to the protagonists despite their awareness of the ways in which society's (post)modern systems limit their individual sovereignty.

So without Slothrop, how will the book be brought to a close? As Roger Mexico stages performative revolts and Slothrop bids society adieu, *GR*'s center stage is occupied not by any human figure so much as by the rocket. As previously discussed, the rocket is the focus of the final pages of the work. It is also the star of *GR*'s famous first sentence: "A screaming comes across the sky."[224] As Clinton mentioned, the centrality of the rocket to the work can be seen as a key example of the near-equality of human figures and objects to the continuation of the plot[225]. Scott Drake argued in his article, "Resisting Totalizing Structures," that the rocket serves as the "master sign," the leitmotif that should theoretically unite all of the work's disparate plotlines. In this case, it would be only natural that the novel begin and end with the rocket. Drake also remarks, though, that the rocket *fails* to adequately tie together all of the narrative strands[226]. To

[223] Böhme, p. 6
[224] *GR*, p. 3
[225] Clinton, pp. 21-22
[226] Drake, Scott. "Resisting Totalizing Structures: An Aesthetic Shift in Thomas Pynchon's The Crying of Lot 49 and Gravity's Rainbow" in *Critique* Vol. 51 no. 3, pp. 223-240

explain this, Drake thinks of the structure of GR as a whole as a rhizome -- a structure composed of many connected threads, which do not originate from one primary source or tend teleologically toward one pre-given end point. The rhizome is beholden to a "line of flight," however, which Drake describes thus:

"The effect of deterritorialization is to stretch the structure to the point where it flattens out, where the image or concept at the center of the structure, the One, the rocket or the mysterious identity of Tristero that holds the whole together, unravels into nothing more than narrative lines moving in no specific direction. In so doing, the line of flight reveals the image at the heart of a structure as a power marker, as an *imposition that attempts to order the multiplicity of flows in order to keep its own structure alive*. It contains, channels, and directs movement in order to feed its own system."[227]

It is clear from this quote that the rhizome, despite its chaotic appearance, is nevertheless organized through an imposition of structure. This is necessary in the case of a literary work, especially an encyclopedia, because without this central thread, the text will completely lack cohesion. Let it be remembered that Hilary Clark praised the rhizome as a fitting model for the structure of knowledge gathered in an encyclopedic text[228], as it reveals connectedness without reducing the gathered threads to a shared origin or a common destination. In *MoE*, the line of flight is Ulrich. Our protagonist, though not always present himself, serves as the node which connects every other character present in the narration as well as the societal or philosophical concerns that make up the numerous chapters. The same cannot be argued in *GR*, since not every character meets Slothrop, and there are quite a few extended episodes which are entirely unrelated to Slothrop's trajectory, such as the Pökler family history[229] or Jessica and Roger Mexico's romance[230]. Absolutely every character and addendum, however, is in some way related to the rocket. The Hereros are rocket engineers whose knowledge becomes a form of worship[231], Tchicherine is tasked with hunting down Slothrop and Enzian due to their connection to the rocket[232], Franz Pökler is a key rocket engineer[233], and Pirate Prentice and Katje Borjesius are tasked with uncovering confidential information related to the administration and manufacturing of the rocket[234]. Nevertheless, Drake points out that there are also

[227] Ibid., p. 225, emphasis mine
[228] Clark, pp. 105-7
[229] *GR*, pp. 153-160
[230] *GR*, pp. 130-3
[231] *GR*, pp. 74-75
[232] *GR*, pp. 297-8
[233] *GR*, pp. 160-161
[234] *GR*, pp. 536-43

"deterritorializing" movements within the rhizome, particularly in the final hundred pages, which rebel against the authority of the rocket as sign, contesting its authority and by proxy the legitimacy of totalizing forms as such[235].

Although the rocket does emerge triumphant at the end as the reigning leitmotif of the text, its authority is never naturalized. In fact, the contingency of this symbol is constantly invoked: through the narration of its production as well as the narration of the emergence and development of its cult-like following. Another way in which the meaningfulness of the rocket is called into question is in its contrast to the Kirghiz Light. In a scene reminiscent of *Der Zauberberg*'s eminent Snow chapter, Tchicherine rides for hours through the desert to experience the light. In that moment, he is touched by a revelation, an enlightenment, but soon enough this natural truth is forgotten, and his attention returns to the rocket.

"Tchitcherine will reach the Kirghiz Light, but not his birth. He is no aqyn, and his heart was never ready. He will see It just before dawn. He will spend 12 hours then, face-up on the desert, a prehistoric city greater than Babylon lying in stifled mineral sleep a kilometer below his back, as the shadow of the tall rock, rising to a point, dances west to east and Džaqyp Qulan tends him, anxious as a child and doll, and drying foam laces the necks of the two horses. But someday, like the mountains, like the young exiled women in their certain love, in their innocence of him, like the morning earthquakes and the cloud-driving wind, a purge, a war, and millions after millions of souls gone behind him, he will hardly be able to remember It.

But in the Zone, hidden inside the summer Zone, the Rocket is waiting. He will be drawn the same way again…"[236]

The truth that the light represents is here presented as genuinely accessible only to an initiated few - the aqyns - who have mastered a culturally specific knowledge. Without this knowledge, the light is terrifying to behold. Though its secret is not explicitly stated, it is connected to the ruins of ancient cities, to wars and purges, to the force of heartbreak after a certain love. It connects past and future, nature and mankind. The light, as it shines down equally on men, nature, and objects, encompasses totality, but can only be glimpsed directly in rare and fleeting moments.

Just as the light shines down on all of us from the sky, so too does the rocket: screaming down towards us bringing inescapable death. The connection between the path of the rocket and totality is expressed by Katje as she is seducing Slothrop. She sighs:

"Between you and me is not only a rocket trajectory, but also a life. You will come to understand that between the two points, in the five minutes, *it* lives an entire life. You haven't even learned

[235] Drake, p. 225
[236] *GR*, pp. 364-5

the data on our side of the flight profile, the visible or trackable. Beyond them there's so much more, so much none of us know…"

But it is a curve each of them feels, unmistakably. It is the parabola. They must have guessed, once or twice--guessed and refused to believe-- that everything, always, collectively, had been moving toward that purified shape latent in the sky, that shape of no surprise, no second chances, no return. Yet they do move forever under it, reserved for its own black-and-white bad news certainly as if it were the Rainbow, and they its children…"[237]

While Katje swoons at the quasi-mystical unknowability of the rocket, the narrator abstracts her statement a degree further to assert that it is not the rocket itself, which is sublime, but the path it follows into and out of the sky. Indeed, though the rocket as a leitmotif does touch every character in the text, this mode of attachment is a factor how which sort of characters the text chooses to include, and thus is much more meaningful as a statement about the text's construction than about the rocket or what it may be said to represent. What it is that the rocket can be said to represent is more directly addressed in this passage however: something irreversible, something that connects everyone, something always hanging over the heads of man like a guillotine's blade. But the rocket should not be reduced to a mere memento mori. Slothrop's intimate connection to the rocket, as well as Gottfried's, show that the rocket is not only an embodiment of the death drive, but also of the sex drive. These two primal phenomena are also united through the figures of Margherita Erdmann, the porn actress who specialized in suffering violent attacks and maintain a statuesque stillness[238], and Thanatz (whose name is a play on another name for the death drive as used by post-Freudian psychoanalysts) Erdmann's husband, captain of the orgy-yacht the Anubis (whose name is also etymologically related to death), and leader of the mission to fire Gottfried in Rocket 00001[239]. For Gottfried and Slothrop, the union of eros and thanatos is primarily mediated through the compound Imipolex G, the world's first erectile polymer plastic[240].

Imipolex G is a highly artificial human invention. Slothrop's connection to the rocket is the result of scientific experimentation. Gottfried's role has been assigned to him by Blicero. The launching of rocket 00001 is thus revealed to have been intentionally staged as a climax point for all of the plotlines intertwined with the Schwarzkommando, the Schwarzgerät, and other aspects

[237] *GR*, p. 212
[238] *GR*, p. 400 -- this point is also noted by Lino, Marco. "Alpdrücken and the Spectrum of Power in Gravity's Rainbow by Thomas Pynchon." *Imaginary Films in Literature*, 2016, pp. 183–202., doi:10.1163/9789004306332_015. pp. 193-4
[239] *GR*, pp. 564, 723
[240] *GR*, p. 252

of the rocket' symbolic network. The intentional firing of rocket 00001 by civilian actors is also significant, because it enacts a kind of defiance of power structures at the diegetic level. As Lino put it:

"Miklos Thanatz's incitement to sadomasochism [i.e. by his relationship to and ultimate sacrifice of Gottfried] acquires importance, because therein he explicitly recognizes both the type of relationship that power effects in relation to individuals and the possibility of organizing an opposition to the dominant structure."[241]

In fact, this struggle between the dominating structure and the individual struggling for some power of his own, attempting to organize a counterforce which in the end only strengthens the hegemonic force, is the same battle identified by Drake in *The Crying of Lot 49*'s staging of a struggle between competing postal systems. The fact of the existence of underground movements only further legitimates the centralized system they were organized to oppose[242]. The struggle is never resolved in *Lot 49*, as ontological certainty of the existence of Tristero is never firmly established. In *GR*, however, the tension is prolonged through the inability to define what it means to win when the opposing force also seeks its own demise. This is dramatized particularly well in the case of the Erdschweinhöhle, where the Hereros work toward their own extinction[243]. The use of death and destruction as a resistance tactic is unique to *GR*, but echoes of it can be heard in Ulrich's decision to take a year off from life. Ulrich's constant enactment of refusal also establishes his position against totalizing hegemonic structures that call for production, reproduction, efficiency, and pragmatism.

This intentionality on the diegetic level of *GR*'s characters' actions and intentions is mirrored by a highlighting of the constructedness of the text on a formal level. As Drake put it: "The rocket functions as an overarching structure that attempts to supersede the inherent value of the digressive narrative lines to which it is attached in order to direct them back toward its own image and thereby establish its centrality in the novel."[244] The emphasis here is in the tension between the rocket as an imposed totalizing structure and the digressive narratives that propagate and flee from the center in a rhizomatic pattern. It is through this tension that the question of totality itself is problematized.

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[241] Lino, "Alpdrücken", pp. 199-200
[242] Drake, pp. 229
[243] *GR*, pp. 320-3: "Revolutionaries of the Zero, they mean to carry on what began among the old Hereros after the 1904 rebellion failed. They want a negative birth rate. The program is racial suicide. They would finish the extermination the Germans began in 1904."
[244] Drake, p. 237

How would D.A. Miller see this ending? According to Miller's logic, the organization of the text with the rocket as a frame at the beginning and the end, as well as a perennial theme which unites all of the episodes together justifies its identification as the central organizing structure of the novel. If the peace that is presumed to have reigned before the opening of narration is defined as a moment before the rocket is launched, when the parabola has not yet begun its rainbow arch, then peace should be said to return once this literal arch is concluded: when the rocket hits the ground. The problem with this narrative structure is that it is given from the beginning; such a simple trajectory does not really justify the proliferation of plotlines that the text encompasses within this frame. The frame itself, then, highlights the constructedness of narrative, the conceit of fictionality. In this sense, the rocket's role as *GR*'s organizing structure is yet another factor that contributes to the text's fulfillment of the aims of postmodern encyclopedic fiction.

6. Conclusion

Donald A. Pease wrote in his examination of the topos of authorhood that the relationship between the text and lived experience in medieval times was primarily allegorical. This means that individuals would be able to see their own experiences as incarnations of rituals or tropes that were sanctioned and granted meaning by their presence in authorized texts. Pease describes this phenomenon thus:

"To experience an event in allegorical terms was to transpose the event out of the realm of one's personal life into the realm of the applicable authority. Following such a transposition, the event became impersonal -- everyone's spiritual quest rather than one individual's personal biography."[245]

In *MoE*, we see exactly the problems caused by a lack of meaning-granting authority, as despite all of his rationalizing and evaluating, Ulrich is still only an individual and will never be satisfied with a meaning that has only been approved and enacted by and for himself. As much as Ulrich longs to be part of a shared spiritual quest, although his focus is generally strictly restricted to

[245] Burke Seán, and Donald A Pease. "Author." *Authorship: From Plato to the Postmodern: A Reader*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2000, pp. 263–276.

matters outside his own personhood, the text itself fails to move beyond its focus on his thoughts and activities as an organizational thread. In *GR*, on the other hand, because no single character fully takes up the mantle of protagonist, while many characters (and even objects) follow the same trajectory, this trajectory itself begins to take up allegorical meaning that can also be applied outside of the work itself. It is through allegory, then, especially due to the fact that the particular allegory that the text focuses on is so broadly applicable, that the text can be said to approach a description of totality. In this case, *GR* becomes a source of authority in the medieval, allegorical sense, connecting it to the claim made variously by Moretti, Frye, and Mendelsohn that the encyclopedic narrative aspires to the level of a sacred text, i.e. a work whose sublime meaning is also imminently relevant to the lives of its readers, in this case in the sense of providing them a blueprint of narrative paths that may play out in their own lives or the world around them. Such a text is complete in itself, but also a reflection of the whole of the world around it. It does not reduce the contradictions of its component parts, but allows their dissonant chorality to shine. Through repetition with variation, it illuminates a pattern when the reader approaches the whole with a probabilistic mindset, such as that modelled within our two exemplar texts by the figures of Roger Mexico and Ulrich.

This study has labored to describe the ways in which the encyclopedic qualities of *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* and *Gravity's Rainbow* reflect a societal desire for a lost totality, and how this tendency is complicated, resisted, and commented upon by each work's characters, narratological features, and narratorial voice. Although the works were written decades and continents apart, both their thematic and formal similarities lend the works to a comparison which ultimately reveals deeper threads within Western (post)modern epistemology and ontology. It is through such momentous works of art that ideas of the collective and the individual, arts and sciences, being and ethics are enriched. Through the cosmos engendered in these texts and through their comparison, the reader too may catch a fleeting glimpse of human totality.

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Abstract:

Both Thomas Pynchon, in *Gravity's Rainbow*, and Robert Musil, in *Der Mann Ohne Eigenschaften*, attempted to bring totality into their works by showing the ambivalent dynamics between science and art both in content as well in the formal aspects of their monumental texts. As *Der Mann Ohne Eigenschaften* is commonly thought of as the Zeitroman of the Wiener Moderne and *Gravity's Rainbow* is seen as one of the primary works of American postmodern fiction, setting these two texts against one another allows for a pointed and yet far-reaching analysis of the shared and the divergent aspects of literature and thought in two major intellectual capitals of the modern and the postmodern eras, through the lens of two major texts that are emblematic to the point of being outsiders. Both of these epic texts address the accelerating fragmentation of knowledge and society, art and science and fight against the 20th century's tendency toward accelerated rationalization and commodification by trying to pull the world as they knew it back within the immense boundaries of the encyclopedic narrative: a form that demands scientific, literary, and sociological understanding. With help from the genre theorists Franco Moretti and Stefano Ercolino, I will investigate in which ways Musil and Pynchon approached and attempted to encapsulate totality in their novels. This theme will also require a thorough grounding in the epistemological concerns of each work and the ways in which their writing fit into larger societal concerns of the times.

Abstrakt:
Sowohl Thomas Pynchon in *Gravity's Rainbow* als auch Robert Musil in *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* haben versucht, Totalität in ihre Werke zu bringen, indem sie die ambivalente Dynamik zwischen Wissenschaft und Kunst sowohl in den inhaltlichen als auch in den formalen Aspekten ihrer monumentalen Texte zeigten. Da *Der Mann Ohne Eigenschaften* gemeinhin als Zeitroman der Wiener Moderne gilt und *Gravity's Rainbow* als eines der Hauptwerke der amerikanischen Postmoderne, ermöglicht die Gegenüberstellung dieser beiden Texte eine pointierte und doch weitreichende Analyse der gemeinsamen und der divergierenden Aspekte von Literatur und Denken in zwei großen intellektuellen Hauptstädten der Moderne und der Postmoderne, und zwar durch die Linse von zwei großen Texten, die so emblematisch sind, dass sie Außenseiter sind. Beide epischen Texte befassen sich mit der zunehmenden Fragmentierung von Wissen und Gesellschaft, Kunst und Wissenschaft und kämpfen gegen die Tendenz des 20. Jahrhunderts zur beschleunigten Rationalisierung und Kommerzialisierung, indem sie versuchen, die Welt, wie sie sie kannten, in die immensen Grenzen der enzyklopädischen Erzählung zurückzuholen: eine Form, die wissenschaftliches, literarisches und soziologisches Verständnis erfordert. Mit Hilfe der Gattungstheoretiker Franco Moretti und Stefano Ercolino werde ich untersuchen, auf welche Weise Musil und Pynchon sich der Totalität in ihren Romanen annäherten und versuchten, sie zu verkörpern. Dieses Thema erfordert auch eine gründliche Auseinandersetzung mit den erkenntnistheoretischen Anliegen der beiden Werke und mit der Art und Weise, wie sich ihr Schreiben in die größeren gesellschaftlichen Anliegen der jeweiligen Zeit einfügt.