V./"V."/V.?

The text, V., does not use the signifier, "V." to talk of a character, V., in the way that Robinson Crusoe uses the signifier, "Robinson Crusoe," to talk about a character, Robinson Crusoe. Something has changed in/as the novel — almost imperceptibly — in the space of the texts between, texts which we call "history." For a start, V. is always absent, hinted at, forced into a shadowy (non-)existence in the way Bowie mimes out a glass cage which is not "there." V.: she/it is pure signifier — the (as we used to say) conscious pure effect of signification.

In another sense V. (not "V.") is the signifier. The signified of the novel is absent. The signified of the novel might have been V. But V. is absent, as signified, and so is transformed into pure signifier. The signifier is the signified of V. The text is about signification in a world where the transcendent signified is absent. So the opposition, "V." v. V., is broken down, levelled to a single plane of signification. Character (Hamlet) and name ("Hamlet") are fused, for V. exists only as a name, as the effect of naming.

But weren't we also taught another fallacy greater than the confusion of use and mention? Wasn't the gross sin of the English Department to confuse Hamlet and Hamlet? So then V. exists as nothing more than the ensemble of V.'s and "V."s — which are also identical with each other. The text is the ensemble of material graphemes + signifiers. For V. is no thing, res, signified. With the absence of the transcendent signified and the materiality of the signifier, there arrives the graphematic text. Character, name, text: they are fused (melted + wired for explosion). So where can the critic/reader take hold — if they dare? Where the critic/reader has always taken hold: in the repetition of the text-thing-name which is the signifier. V. is

"an asymmetric V to the east where it's dark and there are no more bars"^2
/Section v of chapter 1 (36)/"V-Note, McClintic Sphere. Paola Maij-

Southern Review, 16 (July 1983).
stral.' Nothing but proper nouns" (51)/"Not who, but what: what is she" (53)/"the sentences on V. suddenly acquired a light of their own" (54)/"The V.-jigsaw (55) . . .

Herbert Stencil (the copy, the trace, the one who signifies V. and so is — in another sense — the signifier): V. is his own hunted object. Just like the search for truth, the absent "real," the "beyond talk," the "beyond signification" that signification points to — Stencil's search is pointless. Nothing is pointed to. There is no point — except the point, the full-stop which always follows V. Mercilessly and with great typographical pains, that stop is almost always there — following, shadowing. Beyond V. there is the stop, the closure, the end (as both finitude and goal). But that can never be reached — for we never penetrate beyond the limits of signification. Stencil is doomed to copy, to trace, to iterate ceaselessly the signifier "V." For beyond the repetition of that signifier there is no real closure. The point of it all is a to stop. And to stop is the most difficult thing because for Stencil that can never happen until the limits of the signifier are somehow magically transgressed. V. is

half TV (of which Fergus the man was becoming an extension) (56)/Veronica (=true image), the sewer rat whom the mad priest made a sister/ V., "a future saint — depending on which story you listened to" (123)/. . .

The stories are always multiple. There is no "how it was/is." Rumour, text, dossier, signification and counter-signification circulate, play across and upon each other as (can we say — the (?) text. For there is no longer any "the text" — only multiple repetitions of V., of "V." of V. and of . . . There is only

"talking, talking, nothing but MG-words, inanimate-words he couldn't really talk back at" (27).

The text that cannot be talked back at — where turns cannot be taken to talk — writing. Writing, like that of Fausto Majstral — V.'s ultimate writer, her literal confessor. Fausto, the magisterial author whose texts are fragmented, blown up, blown to the wind. Fausto, in his eternal confessional, writes:

"The writing itself even constitutes another rejection, another 'character' added to the past" (306).

That character we write, us, in our confessions; that signifier-made-man that we so often mistook for a man-made-signifier, forces us to ask "why do we confess?" We confess precisely to make ourselves; to repeat a discourse without which we would not be "selves," let alone ourselves. Power does not have us confess to "find out" about us, to police us, but to ensure we are produced in certain ways from the beginning — if there is a beginning. To control the discourse of confession (the priest, the critic, the judge . . .) is to control the very construction of subjects.

"The word is, in . . . fact, meaningless, based as it is on the false assumption that identity is single, soul continuous" (307).
Dear Wills,

29 Dec and I am at work (minus air-conditioning, 40°+), doing something on Y because we said we would write something on it. I am collecting all sorts of interesting bits from the text which can be put together such that Y reads as a text on 'the sign'. If you have a copy, note how the full stop is used in Y when the subject of Stowell's search that is in question and how the stop is dropped at other times. The title has a stop in it also (please sound above accordingly). I've collected every instance of the use of 'To' and of 'Ye', as well as all the pre-nouns, all references to language, word, texts... and all cases of Sauvian 'oppositionality' (two complementary halves, etc.) of which there are many. This is all I've written so far:

\[
\text{Y, only works as the effect of 'Ye' (the Sq chain of he in the, or as the text Y). Ye is identical with the repetition/repetition and placing of that chain. The novel, Ye, is a novel about the sign. 'Ye', is the Sq of the sign,}
\]

\[
\text{where Ye is one id of the sign, the sign itself is the other id of Ye. The relation of Ye to Ye is the principle for the sign in Ye and that working through in Ye shows the sign to be only one sign, but that or in the act of signifying and no producing - continually - a continually absent (because always in production) Sq - i.e., Ye.}
\]

I also want to point to the absence of identity in Ye. (Building would be better here, these slide show just frame out - become an add on section every 100 pages or so at the end still this is also there in Ye.)

Overall Stowell's search is (along with the other searches in the novel) for the id - the material, corporeal utility outline of concrete, Concrete he's not going to find it. See how everyone hunts things in Ye. See how everyone

\[
\text{‘table proper names’}
\]

Hope all is well with you and Mrs Wills. I am sending a cartoon I did specially for you to remind you of her frameworks. All your stuff is still under the house - we made a plan as yet. I don't think the vines (don't think) like that position. We may have to ride down that position when you get back. For took your bike for a ride last week. He said it rained it. I've been turning it over religiously so all is not bad.

We got our pusses off, but the felines we wanted but a cross between a Persian grey and a grey alley-cat. She is very sweet and unlikely right now but growing all the time. We call her Ye, because she had a place in her tail.

Much love from all of us to both of you,

[Alec]

[Note: "Valley is a common female symbol in dreamers. (Ale, 80)"
V. promises confluence, a coming together, an identity, a point where there is sameness. But if we move up the V, there is only divergence, absence of identity, absence of character. So all the “characters” are caught in the yo-yoing up and down the V between identity and absence: Kurt Mondaugen, the engineer-poet with one eye to the world and one eye on the moon — the one who knows the wise-man, Wittgenstein, also the engineer-poet whose text is present-as-logic and absent-as-mysticism. And Profane, Winsome, Paola, Ploy: they are all wo/men of letters. They are caught too in this spread of signification that V. casts like Medusa from the Med. to the USA in the form of tentacles. Naming, naming, naming... and nothing else. V. is

“V. and a conspiracy” (155) “She’s yielded him only the poor skeleton of a dossier. Most of what he has is inference. He doesn’t know who she is, nor what she is. He’s trying to find out” (155) “Stencil’s words seemed to fall insubstantial” (155) . . .

Stencil talks of (i.e., stencils) Stencil in the third person — he, the trace, traces the copy that he is — that third person. Stencil is he. And V. is she?

“Truthfully he didn’t know what sex V. might be, nor even what genus and species” (226).

Stencil is the trace and V. (at least half) machine. But she/machine is only the effect of talking heads and moving styluses, a conspiracy, a plot/narrative. He’s trying to find out what there is of V. outside of V.-text. Of course there is nothing — only the dossier, this history, his story of V., the totality of just more V.-text. Nothing but noting

“versions of history” (225) “his V-structure” (226) “the ultimate Plot Which Has No Name” (226) “Fausto V” (318) “God v. Caesar” (322)/

Just when the structure looks like a system, a thing, a confluence, a shape, then it lapses back into an arbitrary piece of graphics — just a shape, a stamp, an imprint. The most important thing in the world (Crusoe’s “other”), the motor of history, the key to it all: and then it turns out to be just another signifier. The plot which has no name becomes nothing more than a name. We think, through the word we can find the world — then it turns — and it turns out that the word is all that is the world that is all that is the case. The word is the case:

“the boards and back of a book, the tray in which the compositor has his types before him, that which falls or happens [der Fall], an instance of disease, an odd character, the grammatical relation of a noun, pronoun or adjective to another word... the nominative being imagined as a vertical line, and the oblique cases in various stages of falling...” (Chambers).

V: the symbol for potential difference (electrical). “This word flip was weird” (292) “This word ‘flip’ was weird: which is correct?

“He had found out from this sound man about a two-triode circuit called a flip-flop, which when it was turned on could be one of two ways, depending
on which tube was conducting and which was cut off: set or reset, flip or flop" (293).

Which is correct? Use/mention V. /"V." Flip/flop. A matter of life/death?

"He tried to tell himself meeting V. and dying were separate and un-connected" (386)/"V. in Spain, V. on Crete; V. crippled in Corfu" (388)/"his mental age roughly five. V. had fled" (388)/"V. by this time was a remarkably scattered concept" (389)/... V. is all over. V. is all over the wor(l)d. V. is death (when it is all over). Virginia, Victoria, vicious, Vheissu, Vera, venery, Vogelsang, Venus, vectors... V. is all about. V. is what it is all about. Eternal condemnation to the signifier. Like

"a gentle lady plant pathologist, originally from the Isle of Man, who had the distinction of being the only Manx monoglot in the world and consequently spoke to no one" (419).
“Stencil sketched the entire history of V. that night and strengthened a long
suspicion. That it did add up only to the recurrence of an initial and a few
dead objects” (455).

Not an end, an initial. So now we can free that initial of its delimiting
typography — the quotation and its marks, the citation and (as Derrida is
yet to say) its “entre guillemets” — and so speak only of

\[
\text{V } \text{V } \text{V } \text{V } \text{V}
\]

Fall, m. -c/-e: fall, accident, plunge, downfall, decline, ruin, decay,
collapse, overthrow, drop, lapse, slump, depression, surrender, death,
cadence, case, instance, example, matter, situation, event, circumstance,
evenduality, occurrence, outcome, occasion, case (jur.), case (med.), case
(ling.) (Cassell/Harrap/Langenscheidt).

“Tout signe, linguistique ou non linguistique, parlé ou écrit . . . , en petite
ou en grande unité, peut être cité, mis entre guillemets, par là il peut rompre
avec tout contexte donné, engendrer à l’infini de nouveaux contextes, de
façon absolument non saturable.”

One V would be the transcendental signified regulating the difference
between the animate and the inanimate, accident and intention. V would
be the impossibility of such a transcendental signified. To begin with the
search for V would be indistinguishable from the differences and deferrals
which compose her. But more than this, the dualities animate and
inanimate, intention and accident, would pre-empt the possibility of their
own resolution in that their transcendental signified, V, would have to be
either intention or accident, either animate or inanimate. These dualities
do not allow of a neutral term, they are absolutely binary. Hence their
intersections, their Vs, are catastrophic, they are tropes of the fall. V is the
figure of the fall. Any instance of her is her downfall, and inevitably
involves a situation.

For when we say that these dualities are absolutely binary, that they do not
allow of a neutral term, we do not mean that their difference is irreducible,
unless it is. We mean rather that for them to be absolutely binary, their
difference would have to be irreducible and thus regulated by a trans-
cendental signified. There would thus have to be a V outside of both the
animate and the inanimate, outside of both intention and accident. V can
be posited only as that impossibility, and every instance of V becomes a
case of the fall, displaying the catastrophe that any V-event must imply,
being the occurrence of her own impossibility.

The problem of difference is also one of priority. That is to say that the
problem is immediately posed by the event, any event, itself. The slightest
displacement or derivation, even repetition, institutes the structure within
which difference has the possibility of occurring. Repetition, copy and
stencil are not the reinforcements of the same without being the marks of
difference. Once again only a transcendental principle can regulate the
matter of priority. Some point in the chain which can obscure the fact of its
belonging to the chain well enough or long enough, by virtue of some
system of privilege, to appear to have brought the chain into operation. In
espionage parlance all such links are known as sources. There is no doubt
that V is the source of the hermeneutic V; there is no doubt that if V, then
\( V, V \) is the articulation of such a proposition. It merely instances the
possibility of the sign. But by doing so it implies both the necessity of its
structure, that of the supplement, and hence the impossibility of its
completion, outside of V.

Just as Stencil would seem to posit the necessity of V in order to resolve the
oppositions accident/intention, inanimate/animate, it is as reasonable to
maintain that in order to sustain the oppositions, V is inscribed as a
necessity. For as long as V is absent, there is no absolute priority.

"Who is to say whether I'm here so the people can read the meters or
whether the radiation in me is because they have to measure. Which way
does it go?" (286).

Whereas the geographical and human loci for the occurrence of V remain
plural and imprecise — Vheissu, Valetta, Victoria, Veronica — the body
remains the most common instance of the materiality of this signer, and
the most frequented site for the differences inanimate/animate, and
accident/intention. Either the body is synthetic to a small or large extent
— Bongo-Shaftsbury's arm, Esther's nose, Godolphin's face, the Bad
Priest — or the body is partial, part to a larger machine — yoyoing, the
fetish. Thus the body is designed so as to correct its own accidents, the
accidents of its original design which show design and accident to share the
same structure. Thus the animate comes to be riven by and riveted to the
inanimate, for once it is capable of waste it is composed of decay, and once
it is capable of the extrapolations of (call it) desire, it is nevermore intact,
its context nevermore enclosed.

\[ V \times V \times V \times V \times V \]

Benny Profane's humanist whinge, the fear of a creeping inanimate, relies
on the history of the body being determined teleologically, and on the
possibility of repressing the contradiction which such a notion implies. In
Profane's view of things there is a system of degeneracy which is consistent
with the passing of linear time. From the switch on Bongo-Shaftsbury's
arm, to the murder of 60,000 Hereros, to SHRoud's reference to the
similarity between concentration camp corpses and car bodies piled up in a
wrecker's yard, there runs a straight line with reference to which the
differential increase in the inanimate can be plotted, like a V on its side.
Back at the beginning, in this view of things, there would have been only
the animate, and presumably, pure intention. For this view is repeated by
Maijstral, Itague, and Stencil. The problem would then be, of course (and
this is Profane's problem and Stencil's problem), to explain how the
inanimate and accident come about. Stencil's plotting of the chronology of
V-events assumes that the odd, off-chance occurrences of her bits and
pieces, her random incidences, once plotted, will lead back to a single
controlled event. How randomness could have issued from that single
intention, leaving Stencil with an apparently infinite series of possibilities,
that is Stencil's dilemma.
Dear,

Here Preuss recovering from the many maddening. Jamaika is in jail in Prague. Great for the cannon. I got holding them again to reach the airplane get to be very difficult. I agree about the sign and should in that we'll be able to make something out of it. Absolute difference with the conspiracy nonsense thing.

Off to Bombay soon, soon after we might drink some St. Thomas together. If any remainder, have to Red. "Willy Childe"
The writing of V is a deconstruction of both the teleological system which informs Profane's gripe with the animate and that which informs Stencil's search for V. Teleology becomes not so much a matter of the end as it does a matter of the origin, the initial. As if to problematise the notion of an origin untouched by the differences which now comprise its history, Profane is left with a schlemiel principle which he must convince himself to be pure animate, but which functions remarkably like a machine. And Stencil is left with traces of a V which he must convince himself to be the century's, if not history's, controlling principle, but which adds up to an accident of catastrophic proportions, and still remains capable of being added to.

V V V V V

What keeps the animate alive, keeps it from being inanimate, is the source. For the animate, as shroud is quick enough to point out, is simply discontinued animate. Ideally the animate is discontinued only long enough to return to the animate. Like the partridge droppings in Slab's pear-tree, it will fall inanimate through space only long enough to reach the ground and fertilise the tree. But as Profane discovers in the sewer, on Alligator Patrol, it doesn't quite work that way. Under the street, under the inanimate city, closer to where the real earth throbs, Profane discovers that the space of circulation of waste is vast and long enough for all sorts of unnatural excesses to be introduced. To begin with it had all been contained within the natural order — children were given alligators as pets, animate toys. In no time at all, somewhere within the spaces of that natural order there arrived a state of affairs where

"an old man had killed and boiled a catechumen, had committed sodomy with a rat, had discussed a rodent nunhood with V" (123).

In the event, V had to be there somewhere. In any event V, the event itself, there as a condition of possibility of its own disaster. Within this same waste space the possibility of Stencil happening to tangle with the inanimateness of a bullet from Profane's gun. In the New York sewer. Within the structure of Profane's animate order.

V V V V V

Rachel Owlglass makes a V-connection with Benny Profane through her relationship with Esther, and hence Schoenmaker and Godolphin. She also has, to Profane's mind, an improper relationship with the inanimateness of her MG. It is in this connection that the problematic of the sexual is most raised and so implicated in the problematic of the inanimate. When Rachel first nearly runs him over, she is possibly as inanimate as the car she is driving. Then he catches her in flagrant auto-affection,

"her throat open to the summer constellations... he saw her left hand snake out all pale to fondle the gearshift" (29).

So there is little wonder that the eventual description of their sexual intercourse is a peculiar combination of the biological and the mechanical.
“Ready at the slightest pressure surge in the blood lines, endocrine imbalance, quickening of the nerves at the lovebreeding zones to pivot into some covenant with Profane the schlemihl . . . one hand moved to automatic” (358-59).

We've all heard it said, sex without love (read between women and men with souls) is purely mechanical. But that isn't exactly the point here. Any form of coupling, be it covenant or intumescence, will seem to fall within the structure of the prosthetic. If the supplement is possible, then the supplement of another nature is possible, and nature is no longer simple nature. Sex where Benny Profane is concerned demands the addition of one nature to another. Thus it is necessarily anxiety-producing for him who fears contamination by the inanimate. Sex, procreation, demands accident and chance, as Maijstral will note, implying a line of things further along which he would not go (321). Profane's defence is supposed to be his schlemielhood. But as Rachel points out, once even a "flabby clumsy soul" is "amplified . . . into a Universal Principle" (383).

“A schlemihl is a schlemihl" (147),
it merely assumes the function of a tautology. And tautologies work like clockwork. There are no surprises.

The uneasy coupling of one body with another, the articulateness of the body and the world, whether it be Profane on the street,
“looking for something to make the fact of his own disassembly plausible as that of any machine" (40),
or his erection taking a punt on an employment agency, or Mrs Buffo's suck hour, not to mention the whole range of operation, surgery and prosthesis: these make for a system wherein animate is forever attached to inanimate.

“It works all over, sometimes without stopping, sometimes discontinuous. It breathes, it heats up, it eats. It shits, it fucks" (Deleuze/Guattari).4

As well read, then, Schoenmaker's seduction of Esther. Not just in the context of relationships of power and seduction, the combined effect of being supine, taking Nembutal, and having things inserted into one's nostrils. But also in terms of the automatism of sex.

“She was sexually turned on, was all: as if Schoenmaker had located and flipped a secret switch or clitoris somewhere inside her nasal cavity. A cavity is a cavity after all” (109).

A connection is a connection, once a connection is possible. And the possibilities are limitless, as Melanie discovers, for she dies as a result of it. But her death is caused not simply by an erect and inanimate pole (in any event erect animate poles have been known to cause death as Mondauken would confirm), not simply as a result of the connection of the animate and the inanimate, but rather by a bad connection, a wrong connection. The machine breaks down in her case because a part is missing.
Language

Re sr. as the sd. of V

Do that by working through oppositions

Realist / Psych. => Animist / Animism (fetish)

SR

(Scientist complained)

Conspiracy / Randomness

Confessor

man-machine?

Yo-yo

Fantasy / reality

place / people

V / home

Difference / identity

Names as homonyms?

Signposts

V / V
So Esther gets a nose-job from Schoenmaker, with Trench in attendance, then she gets another sort of job from Schoenmaker, with Trench still looking on, from behind the curtains, in the wings. As if there were the rehearsal and the real thing, subtraction of a piece of the body in one case, addition of a piece of someone else's in the other, it matters little in that any number of possibilities are allowed for just within the space of a repetition. Esther's nos: that says it all.

"No meaning yes . . . No . . . Different . . . No . . . Again . . . No" (109-10).

Once nos can be repeated there is no saying whether the nos are simply repeats, differences, or contraries. And if no cannot even be preserved from yes (the truth-tables overturned), what hope for the sanctity of the animate?

Not only is there something particularly precious about Eigenvalue's showcase teeth (either of their own right or by right of some possible connection with V) but there is also something special about teeth themselves, and hence Eigenvalue's introduction to Psychodontia. In the tooth there is a particular concentration of both essential matter and excrement. A casing of synthetic material surrounds a central nerve. So much so that the nerve can be fully extracted as an alternative to prosthetics.

"The pulp is soft and laced with little blood vessels and nerves. The enamel, mostly calcium, is inanimate" (153).

Without repeating the obvious concerning decay and rot, it remains that teeth bring out both the permissible and the sinister in the matter of prosthesis. False teeth fulfil not only the same function as real teeth, but they also look the same. They are the proof that the animate could live with the inanimate, that it does of necessity, all along. When the Bad Priest's teeth are removed she is said to be

"past speech" (344).

How can something so removeable be so essential to natural speech? How could Psychodontia, a mouth full of paraphernalia, be a talking cure?

Eigenvalue points to a similarity between psychiatry and dentistry in terms of their relationship to confession.

"Back around the turn of the century, psychoanalysis had usurped from the priesthood the role of the father-confessor. Now, it seemed, the analyst in his turn was about to be deposed by, of all people, the dentist" (153).

Exactly in what sense Eigenvalue doesn't really explain. He merely goes on to mention the structure of the tooth with respect to the inanimate, as just mentioned, and then goes on to say that cavities occur for good reason.

"But even if there are several per tooth, there's no conscious organisation there against the life of the pulp, no conspiracy. Yet we have men like
Stencil, who must go about grouping the world's random caries into cabals" (153).

Thus on the one hand Eigenvalue's teeth (which are not his teeth) attract a Stencil who wishes to extract information to an Eigenvalue who wishes to diagnose Stencil's situation. But on the other hand Eigenvalue's teeth (which may or may not be V's teeth, and not just one particular set of teeth but teeth in general as Eigenvalue considers them in relation to things around them) bring together the matter of the animate/inanimate and the matter of intention/accident or conspiracy/randomness, and that within the context of confession. For confession — as Profane's reference to the covenant in connection with sex with Rachel suggests — is another form of coupling. The mechanics of confession involve extraction, transferral, transmutation, trade-off, discard, discount. All of which occurs, need it be repeated, within the simple structure of a repetition.

Confession requires the repetition of real life as anecdote. It is supposed to guarantee that the space of sense which it opens up is restricted to the closed circle between penitent's mouth and confessor's ear. But we all know how much extra to that has occurred, fallen, within the enclosure of the confessional. Almost anything one can imagine. The confessional readily becomes the site of any number of excesses, exaggerations, misinterpretations, the simple excess of the monologue itself — what is one doing talking to someone else when one is really only talking to oneself, since actually talking is what counts most, bringing oneself to say it, to hear the sound of one's own voice, but knowing that someone else is eavesdropping? What is interesting about the confessional is the fact that its paradoxes have a concrete structure. To begin with, for half of Christendom the very institution is an unnecessary supplement. But even within it there is the further concrete structure of the wall or curtain which separates penitent and confessor. The possible fall of one's words through the event of the circulation of their meaning is marked by the curtain, written on the wall. The curtain of the confessional marks the rupture in language. It hangs like a shroud over whatever one says, since one has no idea what exactly is going to happen to what one says. The confessional curtain is at one and the same time the threat of non-absolution, and the trace, even flimsy and fetish-like, of potential difference (V) in one's speech. Thus the space of the confessional, as Fausto Maijstral more than suggests, is the space of writing. The difference in language which is always there. Without writing, that difference doesn't leave its mark. There remains no trace of it. But wherever a trace is left, memory, repetition, text, language is no longer coherent. Its event is also its possible collapse.

Consider once more Benny Profane (unconfessed?), in any case V-connected to Fausto through Paola from the beginning, back in the sewer, trying his best to preserve intact, safe from alligators, the smooth functioning of the disposal of waste from the animate. He is in pursuit, knows he is straying, veers to the left, lands in Fairing's parish. Here what drapes within the structure of confession has gone right off the wall.

"Profane had moved across the frontier" (120).
Henceforth there is little hope of purity. Not even, especially not, in the writing.

"The stories, by the time Profane heard them, were pretty much apocryphal and more fantasy than the record itself warranted. At no point in the twenty or so years the legend had been handed on did it occur to anyone to question the old priest's sanity. It is this way with sewer stories. They just are. Truth or falsity don't apply" (120).

When Profane first comes across V, he discovers what V is all about. Anecdote, fantasy, apocrypha, sewer stories. No context can contain it. One stumbles from one thing to the next, in pursuit of whatever.

This is how the text works, within the structure of prosthesis. Anything will fit the purpose in the extreme. Like Godolphin's cheekbone:

"It's worth a fortune. Before they melted it down it was one of a set of pastoral figurines, eighteenth century — nymphs, shepherdesses — looted from a château" (100).

Why shouldn't it still be worth a fortune when any conglomeration of signs amounts to the awkwardness of a graft, and the work of art, the text, having no origin, cannot be destined for any final form which fulfils it?

When it comes to Fausto's confessions, to his writing, the creeping inanimate theory reveals its contradictions quite clearly. He mentions discontinuity early in the piece.

"The present Fausto can look nowhere but back on the separate stages of his own history. No continuity. No logic" (331).

He himself numbers at least four, discontinuous even if consecutive. The only thing which is common to all four Faustos is writing. Fausto I of the generation of '37, Fausto II of the journals and poems, Fausto III of the indecipherable entries, and Fausto IV of the confession. (And Fausto V, still unwritten.) To say that writing is a problem of context is in one sense to confirm what Fausto's story would seek to demonstrate: that the practice of writing is tied closely to the events which constitute its conditions of possibility, which give rise to it. But to say that writing is a problem of context is also to exploit, to the fullest extent, the concept of dissemination. Fausto's writing is from start to finish in pieces. Even in the confessional, the word breaks up immediately it is spoken. Fausto's writing has certain breaks, written into it. But those breaks number many more than the four he has inscribed. How else could someone called Stencil light upon a single reference, part of a vague recollection, already second or third hand, and make of it the central sense to the story? Unless all writing operated that way. Fausto's confessions tell both of a V who falls to pieces, comes apart, and of writing, like V, which does likewise.

Stencil wishes to discover whether V simply turns up at every earth-shattering event, or whether she is the actual cause of that event; whether
she is real woman or simply clockwork. To make such a judgement, he has to know a lot about V and the more he discovers the more trouble he has deciding what is relevant. The problem of V, as Stencil perceives it, the problem of accident and intention, is also therefore a problem of context. The problem V is first raised in the context of writing. V first occurs to Stencil as a note in a diary, already read and glossed over. He last mentions her in another note left to Maijstral. She has by this time fallen to pieces. All Stencil is following by this time is spare parts. One may well ask why he continues to look for her when it is clear that she has been completely dismantled. But obviously the search can only become more of an obsession when she is in bits and pieces. Stencil's activity grows in intensity in inverse proportion to V's unity. If V is the end of Stencil's search, then V. is about there being no end to it.

A stencil allows for repetition, reproduction if you insist. But, as we have insisted, it is within that same structure that difference occurs. Stencilisation, which describes the construction of V., allows for a variety of relationships between pieces of the text. These pieces are mostly related, or introduced, in terms of a progressive, if incomplete, composite of Stencil's encounters with V. We refer simply to those chapters which do not refer to the present time of the narrative. The Alexandria episode relates a Foreign Office encounter with V presumably constructed from Stencil Père's journals; similarly the Florence episode which occurs in the context of Stencil's conversation with Eigenvalue. Mondaugen's story, although Stencilised, is recounted by the man himself, and the confessions of Fausto Maijstral already exist as written text. The Epilogue is allowed as thirdperson, eye-of-God narrative by even the strictest literary convention. Which leaves "V. in love," as pure invention of Stencil's, at least until we learn that Stencil has it from Porcépic and police records. The episode is in any case introduced with minimal textual support.

"So what year is it."
'It is 1913,' said Stencil.
'Why not,' said Profane" (392).

And indeed.

"V. in love" recounts a fatal accident, or was it intention? "V. in love" recounts the story of the Fetish, the fetish. F/V? The fetish is the deferral of an absence. One does not have to believe Freud or even Lacan to accept that. For a fetishised object replaces the sexual object on the one hand, and introduces the possibility of transfer, ad infinitum, on the other. One does not have to insist about castration in order to accept the fetish within the framework of the supplement, both replacing and adding to. Mélanie is V's fetish -- already supplemented to the tune of a silent "e," making une fétique where the dictionary prefers the masculine. Mélanie brings a number of things together, animate and inanimate, but mostly she extends
the prosthetics of the body outside the frame of the body. A body of parts, replaceable parts, suggested many times already in V, and with respect to V herself, is now complemented by a body which becomes part of a larger machine. And hence the shift in context from a problem which seems directly connected to the inanimate, and would be solved within its own terms, to the larger problem of Stencil's, which raises the whole conspiracy/randomness debate. By this we mean that as long as it is simply a matter of more or less synthetic bodies, of clockwork bodies in the extreme, then the problem of accident and intention remains restricted by the contours of the body. A question of a body with or without a soul, with or without an animate source. But the fetish is another matter. The fetish allows the body to become a shift in (a) gear. Once Mélanie dances with automata, cannot exist without her mirror, becomes V's fetish, becomes Stencil's V's fetish, Stencil's obsession, there is no stopping it. The obsession, intense intention, is inseparable from pure accident.

If the continuity of V's decadence were to have been preserved, or (re-)constructed in V, then there would have been an automatic (reading of) Victorian Wren that

"was being gradually replaced by V.; something entirely different, for which the young century had as yet no name" (410).

It would then be correct to assume an alternative: either she existed as part in a larger scheme which a number of theories of human behaviour — Freudian, behaviourist, etc. — provided for (411), in which she would be no more than

"a purely determined organism, an automaton, constructed, only quaintly, of human flesh" (411).

Either that or she would become by choice an inanimate object of desire. These are the alternatives Stencil outlines once V is in love. Either animate within a conspiratorial intention, or by her own intention inanimate. That is how Stencil reads V, as a continuity producing a puzzling alternative, a Victoria Wren gradually being replaced by V,

"a falling-away from what is human" (405).

V is a puzzle. V, "V" or V, must be at least the possibility of constructing a complete picture from a number of pieces. But V is never a completed picture, never even gets into proper order. For V is a problem with the idea that a continuity can produce difference, a spanner in its works. How can humanity fall away into non-humanity, continuously? How can Victoria Wren, as intact notion (for V, as attempt at her reconstruction, has to assume her to have been somewhere somehow intact) come to be replaced by something that is not Victoria Wren but V? How can something called Stencil, called Profane, called all the other characters and all the other events, come to be grafted on to an intact Victoria Wren, or an intact original V? If V, then how V?
Ferraris

A great machine, a twist here, p.

Rahel / Mo. p. 57, p. 172

V. 1

Prove p. 78

No. 1 - real/assembly

V. 2

City - in

Seven - heart/wants / V.

V. 3

Nearsb. - Rodolphino

p. 88 - context.

p. 90 - context.

p. 110 - seven stories

V. 2

Psychology / Marketing, p. 44.

Psychiatric

p. 211


tension = anxiety, disconcert

Adapt / Mo. p. 264 →
V is the transcendental signified which V deconstructs, in the writing, so that there is henceforth none. V is the necessity and impossibility of such a notion. For otherwise we are left with what we started with, a source which is always already inscribed with its own difference, and which cannot therefore be a source, which cannot but be difference, trace, writing, text. This decadence which V is said to become, is quite simply the event, the sign itself. Every case of V is a case of the fall. The case of V is the catastrophe of a world which cannot sustain absolute difference outside of a transcendent signified and the ruin of sense and meaning which is so implied. Every event involves enough difference to include its own downfall. V is the sign of such a divergence. The hope of retracing each of its vectors to a point of original divergence, or convergence, means stretching it a bit. Apart. Apart. Many parts. To the point where only a thread, a slim chance, the most insignificant trace, can hold it together. A thread of a weave of a text of V.

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