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### Abstract:

In a footnote to "Fast Learner: The Typescript of Pynchon's *V.* at the Harry Ransom Center in Austin," Luc Herman and John Krafft note that the letters Corlies (Cork) Smith graciously provided them for their study of the transformation of the typescript of *V.* (1963) into the published novel "may be identical to those published in an unauthorized limited edition under the title *Of a Fond Ghoul* in 1990." Sounding more confident in "From the Ground Up: The Evolution of the South-West Africa Chapter in Pynchon's *V.*," they write, "Originals of the Smith-Pynchon letters were apparently stolen from the offices of Harper & Row, and an unauthorized facsimile edition was published in 1990 under the title *Of a Fond Ghoul* (a phrase Pynchon proposes in the correspondence as one possible title for his novel). Smith later received photocopies of the letters in the mail." Herman and Krafft were essentially correct in their assumption about the letters they have. Smith received a copy of the extant correspondence between him and Pynchon as it appears in *Of a Fond Ghoul*, but he did not get the book's entire contents. This piece provides archival information on the documents contained in *Of a Fond Ghoul*.

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## Pynchon, In His Absence

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Albert Rolls

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In a footnote to "Fast Learner: The Typescript of Pynchon's *V.* at the Harry Ransom Center in Austin," Luc Herman and John Krafft note that the letters Corlies (Cork) Smith graciously provided them for their study of the transformation of the typescript of *V.* (1963) into the published novel "may be identical to those published in an unauthorized limited edition under the title *Of a Fond Ghoul* in 1990."<sup>1</sup> Sounding more confident in "From the Ground Up: The Evolution of the South-West Africa Chapter in Pynchon's *V.*," they write, "Originals of the Smith-Pynchon letters were apparently stolen from the offices of Harper & Row, and an unauthorized facsimile edition was published in 1990 under the title *Of a Fond Ghoul* (a phrase Pynchon proposes in the correspondence as one possible title for his novel). Smith later received photocopies of the letters in the mail."<sup>2</sup> Herman and Krafft were essentially correct in their assumption about the letters they have. Smith received a copy of the extant correspondence between him and Pynchon as it appears in *Of a Fond Ghoul*,<sup>3</sup> but he did not get the book's entire contents.

*Of a Fond Ghoul* contains forty unnumbered pages, including those that are blank.<sup>4</sup> The first two reproduce pages from two Seattle phonebooks with different addresses and numbers for Pynchon, the second page of which also has a black-and-white photocopy-quality image of Giorgio de Chirico's *The Enigma of the Hour* (c. 1912),<sup>5</sup> a painting Pynchon proposed using for the novel's dust jacket, across the middle, covering several names and numbers. The title page comes next, and on the fourth page from the back, there is a stamp stating which number out of the fifty copies printed one has in hand and the fact that the book is being distributed by the Blown Litter Press after its December 1990 release, the date being given here instead of on a copyright page, which has been left out for obvious reasons. In between, there is the correspondence, which takes up twenty-six pages that are occasionally interrupted by blank ones, followed by two additional items, internal Lippincott memos that are missing from the Smith-Pynchon material obtained by Herman and Krafft. One was written on July 10, 1961 and the other on September 4, 1963.<sup>6</sup>

The first of these memos has "PYNCHON in your absence" — a phrase as appropriate to Pynchon's whereabouts, as we will see, as it was to the person whom the memo addresses — centered above the text like a title and was probably written to Smith. Smith was in Cleveland at an American Library Association convention, which took place between July 9 and July 15 in 1961, and met Patricia Mahool, a friend of Pynchon's from

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college who had "typed most of Tom's manuscript."<sup>7</sup> They discussed the typescript, and he told her a good title might be *The Yo-Yo World of Benny Profane*. Pynchon must have learned about that conversation in July, disapproved of the suggested title, and told Candida Donadio, who must have informed Smith.<sup>8</sup>

The memo-writer informs Smith, or whoever the unnamed recipient of the memo was, that Donadio was delighted to hear that the novel would be published and goes on to say that she will get in touch with Pynchon and tell him the news, though there was some question about where he was living. Donadio had "heard nothing [from him] in *months*" but apparently gave Lippincott two addresses at which he might be found: 4754 22d St., N.E., Seattle 5 and 4709½ 9th St., N.E., Seattle 5. The first corresponds to the address in the page from the Seattle phonebook reprinted on the first page of *Of a Fond Ghoul*, and the second to the one on the second page, which is also the address used by Pynchon after August 1961 when he was writing to Smith as well as Faith and Kirkpatrick Sale, at least until he left Seattle in October or November of 1962 after finishing his review of *V.*'s galleys.<sup>9</sup>

Pynchon, it would seem, moved to the second address between Donadio's last contact with him and when he sent her the typescript, which was delivered to Lippincott via Donadio's office.<sup>10</sup> The second address may have been the return address on the package Donadio had received, probably in the middle of June and apparently without a small personalized note.<sup>11</sup> Because of the lack of contact between the two, Donadio appears to have been uncertain if she had Pynchon's address or someone else's and perhaps thought that he was using the new one to pick up mail, as he had likely done with the two at which Smith wrote to Pynchon prior to August 1961.<sup>12</sup> That, in any case, must have been the thinking at Lippincott, for the memo-writer notes, before passing on the addresses, Donadio "[g]ave me what seems to be a firm address." Those at Lippincott remained uncertain: the memo states that any correspondence should be sent to both addresses, with original material going to the first and copies to the second.

What is more interesting, given what we know about the transformation of the untitled typescript Lippincott received into *V.*, is that Lippincott was willing to publish the book virtually unchanged, having told Donadio that "any suggestions we would have would probably be in the form of questions, and stressed that our enthusiasm would not be tempered in the least if he chose neither to answer nor make changes in response to those questions." This latter remark suggests that Pynchon had acquired a reputation at Lippincott for being unwilling to discuss his work — perhaps because he would say nothing, not even to Donadio, according to Smith,<sup>13</sup> about the novel when Lippincott signed the contract with him in January 1960 and would also not discuss it when he met Smith in Seattle later in 1960<sup>14</sup> — and thus wouldn't be willing to suffer through the usual exchange between writer and editor.

The inability to pin down an exact address at which to write to Pynchon must certainly have added to Lippincott's impression of him, and hence the wariness about approaching him with requests to make changes to his work. Smith, however, did not read Pynchon as unapproachable, noting in his first letter about the typescript that "it needs some work" and promising specifics shortly. Pynchon, in turn, belied his reputation and showed he did not see the impression that he had been making. Indeed, he revealed, when replying to Smith at the end of the month, that he had been waiting for advice, remarking that he agreed with Smith about the typescript's need of work and noting, "I am not (I hope) a 'temperamental author' and I am not about to buck at any suggestions."<sup>15</sup>

The rest of the first memo concerns business, specifically paying the monies Pynchon was owed on the advance, that is, the \$1,000 that he was to get upon his delivery, and Lippincott's acceptance, of the novel.<sup>16</sup> That money could not be paid until some concerns over legal issues had been resolved. Donadio had been working for Herb Jaffe Associates in January 1960, when the contract had been signed and Pynchon had been paid \$500, but by the time *V.* reached Lippincott, Herb Jaffe had sold his agency to Ashley-Steiner. The contract, it was at least believed, had not been automatically transferred to the latter agency, and in order for any payment to be made, the memo says, Jaffe as well as Pynchon would need to sign a "paper" transferring the contract to Ashley-Steiner, where Donadio must have remained for a while before moving to Russell & Volkening.<sup>17</sup> That issue was quickly settled, probably without Pynchon's participation,<sup>18</sup> for a hand-written addendum dated July 17 underneath the body of the text reveals the check had been mailed, likely to Donadio.

The second memo was written about two years later, and while it lacks some of the interest of the first, given that Pynchon is not part of the discussion, it provides a small bit of information about *V.*'s publishing history. At the beginning of September 1963, about two months after the fourth and last printing of the hardcover edition, Lippincott played with the idea of publishing its own paperback edition the following spring, when the Bantam paperback was, in fact, published. The contract it had, not with Bantam, but with The Modern Library, would cause problems.<sup>19</sup> Both contracts allowed Lippincott to publish such an edition, though the one with Bantam stipulated that any Lippincott editions had to cost at least \$2.25, while the one with the Modern Library said they would have to cost at least \$5.00, a provision Lippincott wanted modified, hoping to put to market a paperback for \$2.45. The memo, unsigned, asks the recipient, whose name also does not appear anywhere, to get in touch with Random House, who owned the Modern Library imprint, and attempt to get the necessary permission. The effort proved, a handwritten addendum dated September 24 reveals, unsuccessful. This failure made very little difference to readers in the mid-sixties, though it may have affected readers' experience of the novel since, particularly over the last twenty-five

years, for while Bantam and Jonathan Cape, the British publisher, correct errata in the Lippincott hardcover, Harper Perennial has used the first American edition as its copy text, reproducing the errors that were missed during the copy editing of *V.* as well as introducing new errors when resetting the text in 1999 and 2005.<sup>20</sup>

## End notes

1. Herman and Krafft (2007), p. 18, n. 1.
2. Herman and Krafft (2006), p. 261, n. 1.
3. I'd like to thank John Krafft for confirming this fact. A comparison of the contents of *Of a Fond Ghoul* and the folder of letters that Smith sent Stephen M. Tomaske, which are available in the Huntington Library, also confirms it.
4. Given the lack of page numbers in the book, I use the letters' dates for citation purposes.
5. See Thomas Pynchon, Letter to Corlies M. Smith, March 13, 1962. The editors of *Fond Ghoul* inaccurately date the painting 1914.
6. The years are left out of the dates on the memos, but the first is about Lippincott's decision to accept *V.*, while the second gives the day as Wednesday, which fell on the fourth in 1963.
7. Patricia Mahool (private correspondence). That Mahool was known to Pynchon in Cornell and was Sale's girlfriend is evidenced by the first letter in the Harry Ransom Center, the only letter there that dates from Pynchon's Cornell days. The top of the first page reads "Mahool! . . .," which either ends a paragraph begun on the previous page or serves, as Krafft reads the text, as the salutation, the ellipsis standing in for Sale (private correspondence). A Post Script reads, in part, "hey kirk, dont get pissed off because I addressed this to you and only included pattys name in the salutation. . . ." Without knowing more about the context in which the letter was written, figuring out whether it is incomplete or not rests on one's understanding of "only included pattys name," which could mean that the name was placed, along with Sale's, in the salutation but not on the envelope or that it was the only name used in the salutation despite the letter's being addressed to Sale (see Thomas Pynchon, Letter to Kirkpatrick Sale, undated [c. Jan. 1959]). Mahool doesn't remember anything about the letter but says that Pynchon "always addressed [her] as Mahool" (Private correspondence).
8. The second paragraph of Smith's August 2 letter begins, "I saw Pat Mahool in Cleveland, and it is doubtless from her that you got the title THE YO-YO WORLD OF BENNY PROFANE. I guess Pat (or whoever) didn't make clear that this was simply a title that came to mind long before I had even finished the script." In an interview with Smith, Stephen Tomaske asked him if he remembered Mahool, whom Smith could not clearly recall, but he noted that he had only been in Cleveland once, for an American Library Association convention (see Interview with Corlies M. Smith, Aug. 3, 2001). Mahool, who also worked in the publishing industry during the first half of the 1960s, agrees that the meeting must have taken place at the convention (private correspondence). See also Corlies M. Smith, Letter to Thomas Pynchon, Aug. 2, 1961.
9. See the letters to Faith and Kirkpatrick Sale at the Harry Ransom Center; Pynchon uses the address on one written to Kirkpatrick on May 28, 1962 and one written to Faith about *V.* on Oct. 1, 1962. The next letter, dated November 23, 1962, is from Mexico. For an account of the changes made to the galleys, see Herman, Krafft, and Krafft (2008 [2010]).
10. See Herman and Krafft (2007), p. 2.
11. Herman and Krafft, in "Fast Learner," note that Smith recalls that "since the decision [to accept the novel] had to be cleared with his boss, he must have received the novel perhaps three or four weeks before the beginning of August" (2), when he wrote Pynchon the note. Smith had forgotten that the novel had been approved for publication by July 10, but given the need to have three or four weeks for the boss's approval, Lippincott must have gotten the typescript much

earlier than Smith remembered. We may never learn whether Donadio received a note, as the Pynchon correspondence with her that will eventually become available at the Morgan Library begins in March 1963 (see Gussow). At least two sources suggest that the typescript was not mailed to Donadio. Robert Goolrick, in "Pieces of Pynchon," writes, discussing his trepidation about contacting Donadio when he set out to find Pynchon in 1978, "[A]s it turns out, she loves to talk about Thomas Pynchon, who walked into her office, aged 24, with the manuscript of *V.* in his hand" (see Goolrick). In an interview with Tomaske, Harriet Wasserman, Donadio's secretary for a short period at Herb Jaffe in the 1950s and her assistant during part of the 1960s, claimed to have remembered the episode. "I was sitting in the waiting area where her desk was. She had just recently come to Russell & Volkening. I saw a guy come in with a fedora hat and a belted trench coat, and a box and a mustache. And when he left, she said, 'I just had a call from an editor at *Dial* [Jim Silberman] who said, 'I'm going to send someone over to you. He's either insane or he's a genius.'" And when he left, she said, 'That was the guy.' And it was Thomas Pynchon and it was *V.*" (see Interview with Harriet Wasserman). Wasserman's account lacks an air of credibility. Candida had been representing Pynchon for some time before the typescript of *V.* had been completed, having negotiated the contract before receiving the novel. Moreover, Donadio does not seem to have begun working for Russell & Volkening when she received the typescript, something suggested by the memo's discussion of paying Pynchon the money Lippincott owed him. It is possible, given the fact that Mahool was working for St. Martin's Press when she typed the manuscript, that Pynchon mailed the novel to friends in New York, and after it was retyped, it was delivered to Donadio in the package in which it had arrived: hence her remembering years later that Pynchon personally delivered the typescript, which he would do when he finished *Gravity's Rainbow*. (For the account of Pynchon's delivering *Gravity's Rainbow*, see McLellan.) In any case, once Mahool finished typing the manuscript, it either had to be given directly to Donadio or mailed back to Pynchon for proofing before being sent back to New York.

12. There were two: 4217 11th Street, N.E. Seattle and 4212 Pasadena, Seattle. The conjecture that they may have simply been mailing addresses is Krafft's (private correspondence). The fact that mail sent to the first, in March 1960, was sent "c/o Seidler" adds strength to the conjecture, and although Pynchon may have stayed with David Seidler, a Cornell alumnus who went on to write screenplays in Hollywood, while he looked for his own place, he must certainly have found an apartment by October 6, 1960, the date on the letter with the second address. The prefatory phrase in the memo also suggests that those at Lippincott thought Pynchon might have mail sent to a friend's place.

13. See Stephen M. Tomaske, Interview with Corlies M. Smith, May 10, 2001.

14. See Corlies M. Smith's Letter to Thomas Pynchon, Nov. 10, 1960, thanking Pynchon for meeting him. For Pynchon's refusal to discuss the book's details at the time, see Schaap.

15. Thomas Pynchon, Letter to Corlies M. Smith, Aug. 31, 1961.

16. See Silverman, p. 157.

17. For a brief outline of Donadio's career, see Gelder.

18. Smith's August 2 letter appears to be the first contact between Lippincott and Pynchon after the typescript had been delivered; Smith, after all, remarks, "I gather from Candida that she was finally able to reach you and let you know that we have accepted the novel." It seems unlikely, therefore, that Pynchon had been sent any documents to sign between July 10 and July 17.

19. While Pynchon was aware of the Bantam contract — mentioning it in a letter to Faith Sale dated March 9, 1963 — he may not have known about the Modern Library edition until later. In December 1965, Pynchon received, care of Donadio's office at Russell & Volkening, a short note from Random House that says, "how absolutely delighted we all are that we are going to be able to have *V.* for The Modern Library" (see Letter to Thomas Pynchon, Dec. 15, 1965). Pynchon appears to have sought and received permission to approve the final cover, making good on a promise he had made to himself about future dust jackets. Disappointed with what Lippincott had done with the *V.* cover, he told Faith Sale, who would have known what the problem was, "I

was afraid something like that had happened with the jacket. Next time (if there is a next time) I will (D.V. [*Deo volente*]) design my own" (see Letter to Faith Sale, Oct. 1, 1962). Proofs of the Modern Library jacket were sent, and in June 1966, in a letter thanking James Silberman for reviews of Richard Fariña's *Been Down So Long It Looks Like Up to Me* (1966), Pynchon remarks, "Got the Modern Library dust jacket. Pretty sharp, that Art Nouveau typeface — it fits. Colors, even in rough, look good" (Thomas Pynchon, Letter to James H. Silberman, June 21, 1966). Pynchon remains distrustful of publishers' ability to design apt dust jackets: he is said "to have been involved in the making of [*Mason & Dixon's*] cover" (Cohen, p. 33) and is rumored to have searched "the Web for the right image for the *Inherent Vice* cover," choosing the one that was used (see Ware).

20. I discuss these differences in "The Two V.s of Thomas Pynchon, or From Lippincott to Jonathan Cape and Beyond." A paperback would have given Lippincott the chance to put out a corrected edition, one that could have become the copy text later on. Pynchon, after providing corrections for the Cape and Bantam edition, likely considered the problem solved. He, for example, must not have corrected proofs for the Modern Library V., which contains the errata that appears in the Lippincott hardcover.

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