



ISSN: 2044-4095

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Title: "For every They there ought to be a We": The (Almost) Equivalence of Power and Resistance in *Mason & Dixon* and *Against the Day*
Date: 2014
Volume: 2
Issue: 2
URL: <https://www.pynchon.net/owap/article/view/71>
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7766/orbit.v2.2.71>

Abstract:

Power and resistance are considered two of Pynchon's principal themes, examined thoroughly by scholars. This essay provides an alternative reading of resistance and examines a change in how it is portrayed in *Mason & Dixon* and *Against the Day*; in the latter, it appears as much more powerful than in the former, even as a potential successor to existent authority, and this creates a need to reexamine the dichotomy between authority and preterite. In *Mason & Dixon* there is already a clash between the old and the new regime, religion and science, evident even in the background of the two protagonists; furthermore, the resistance, as is depicted by a nascent movement for American independence, is not a failure; its ideals will transform it into the state tyranny shown in *Vineland*. In *Against the Day*, anarchism, albeit ultimately unsuccessful, is presented as an alternative to capitalism and employs similar techniques to those used by the latter, based on the anonymity of its hierarchy and the victimization not only of those outside its network, the never innocent bourgeois, but also the individuals that follow it. The theoretical framework for such an analysis will need to distance itself from an – otherwise useful – Marxist approach and move towards Foucault's idea of authority as expressed in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*. Resistance is not external to authority; it is an opponent within the power network.

“For every They there ought to be a We”: The (Almost) Equivalence of Power and Resistance in *Mason & Dixon* and *Against the Day*

Georgios Maragos

Introduction

The juxtaposition of power and resistance has always remained at the forefront of the analysis of Thomas Pynchon's works, and various theoretical approaches have been used to tackle an issue that has been prevalent in all his novels.¹ The discussion is usually centered around the preterite and their relation to the anonymous, omnipotent, and perhaps even omniscient forces that rule the world. Something that is not so frequently explicitly stated, however, even if this is implicit in the original Calvinist doctrine, is that the preterite are only a fraction of the population in Pynchon's fictional universe, and that most individuals are not in the same position as a preterite in relation to authority. The focus does indeed lie on the preterite, but many examples can be found where a character either shares and channels part of the power that permeates the world or is in a position to resist that same power, though the two are not mutually exclusive. The purpose of this essay is to locate major instances in *Mason & Dixon* and *Against the Day* where the lines of authority and resistance are blurred, where, to be more exact, resistance, or any other structure within these two works that does not belong to the hierarchy, adopts attitudes and stances similar to those of authority. The two novels can be approached in such a way for two reasons. The first is their position within historical time—a trait that, as we shall soon see, is useful in the type of analysis this particular paper employs—at a period of major changes in the political, financial and societal landscape of the world. *Mason & Dixon* makes quite clear that the Age of Reason is coming to replace the old theocratic regime, accounting for tumultuous times where the old powers can and will be replaced by new ones. Though religion is still powerful, it is threatened by both science and commerce, and this creates fertile grounds for this particular blurring of what is power and what is resistance. *Against the Day*, on the other hand, is not only set before and after the Great War,

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DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7766/orbit.v2.2.71>

which changed the world forever, but also at a time when, as I will show, capitalism makes the final strike in the struggle for dominance against a rather powerful anarchism that is yet about to lose the fight.² The second reason stems from exactly this fact: that resistance is at its most powerful within the Pynchonian oeuvre in these two novels. As I will show, resistance often shares many characteristics with authority and at some points, it is its (almost) equivalent.³ It is also necessary, before proceeding, to state that the analysis in this article does not attempt to address issues of morality with respect to power and resistance. This is a study of positions rather than ethics, especially since resistance and authority are to be considered as parts of the same power network as much antagonistic as they are interconnected. This does not in any way mean that a moral stance cannot or should not be considered, but it is not in the scope of this particular analysis.

Although the examination of power and politics frequently calls for a Marxist approach,⁴ another well-traveled route through which power analyses may be conducted is to be found in the works of Michel Foucault. This is not to disparage Marxist readings but merely to find merit in the Foucauldian approach. The alternative reading of the power play in *Mason & Dixon* and *Against the Day* will be read through Michel Foucault's views on power and authority, especially those found in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, and of course on similar earlier readings of Pynchon's works.⁵ However, these common grounds are not all-encompassing, and Pynchon's writing once again resists a single interpretation.

Finally, before moving on, I would like to note that Pynchon's eight novels and one collection of short stories are here considered according to their predominant historical setting.⁶ Pynchon's consistent themes and motifs allow for such a possibility; so, for the purposes of this essay *Against the Day* comes before *Gravity's Rainbow* and *Inherent Vice* precedes *Vineland*. While this type of chronology is more useful when it is applied within a work of larger scope, for example a monograph or a book-length study, and when it considers all of Thomas Pynchon's works, the present essay was nonetheless written with such a chronology in mind and the nuances of the transition from *Mason & Dixon* to *Against the Day* and beyond are all the more poignant when this kind of historical continuity is taken into account.

From Marx to Foucault in *Mason & Dixon*

For Foucault, power cannot be considered in absolute terms. The first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, where he describes his method, sums up his views on power and resistance. He says: "power is

everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (93). Furthermore, "power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society" (93). This resembles Althusser's notion of ISAs in his famous essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," where power is not just exercised by the state but can be found anywhere within the structures of society. While the state or Repressive State Apparatus functions mainly through violence and less through ideology, the Ideological State Apparatuses, like schools, churches, or culture, which do not belong to the central government, "function massively and predominantly by ideology" (145, author's emphasis); as such, they prove fertile ground for class struggle and can also function with different interests in mind, thus becoming separate nodes of power, however tied to the ideology of the State they can be; Althusser mentions various ISAs, such as families, political factions, trade unions, theater and publishing (151). There is a crucial difference, however, between Althusser's and Foucault's ideas on power: While in Althusser's system the central power predicts, anticipates, or even allows for a certain degree of resistance (which proves to be false), the Foucauldian system, as described in the *History of Sexuality*, contains the possibility of resistance, only of a very different nature: "Where there is power, there is resistance and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" (95). To elaborate further, power is not connected to intention but exists in everything we do. Power relations, whose "existence depends on a multiplicity of points of resistance" (95), is a better term to use, and within these power relations, resistance can arise, but it is never external to the power network. These points of resistance "play the role of the adversary, target, support, or handle" (95). This does not mean that true resistance is impossible, but that by its very nature, it is part of the balance in the system. Additionally, this is not to say that the society of surveillance and the workings of power through Panopticon-like systems do not apply still to Foucault's or, for that matter, Pynchon's writings. One needs to remember, however, that the Panopticon imposes surveillance in the way it is constructed, not because there are actual watchmen in its center. The idea of being monitored is just as strong as the knowledge of it. In such a power system, there is no need for active participation in the exercising of power.

How can Pynchon's work relate to this type of power and resistance? At first glance, power and resistance appear as polar opposites, and intention is crucial and inherent in the system. Across his novels, there is often mention

of the higher echelons, of a (perhaps secret) elite that rules the world, also known as “They.” *Gravity’s Rainbow’s* Proverbs for Paranoids set the tone for most analyses of power, since they provide the foundation for Pynchon’s treatment of it.⁷ I would argue, however, that if we take a closer look at *Mason & Dixon* primarily and then at *Against the Day*, we will see that there is an alternative approach and that there are differences in the identity of power and resistance between those two works and the ones that take place from World War II onwards, or at least nuances that allow for a different interpretation,⁸ especially if the preterite are under less consideration and the focus is turned towards those that are somehow connected to the so-called higher echelons. In order to achieve this in *Mason & Dixon*, one needs to identify the role of individuals, especially Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon, within these structures. As we shall see, the two protagonists differentiate themselves significantly from preterite characters like Benny Profane, Tyrone Slothrop, or Zoyd Wheeler.

Power and control in *Mason & Dixon* is exercised through three different factions or organizational types: religious, scientific, and capitalist. These organizations do not act in collaboration. The Jesuits comprise the first faction; the Royal Society represents science; while the interests of newborn capitalism are safeguarded mainly by the various companies mentioned in the book. In other words, there is no single point where the origins of authority can be assumed to exist, and there is even competition among them, which already undermines the notion of a single global entity that controls everything.

The Jesuits are the old regime, the one that is about to be replaced by the Age of Reason. Even so, they are the most direct ancestor of the anonymous authority that plagues the novels taking place from World War II onwards, and they possess the most advanced technology, be it instant communication devices (*MD* 287), watches that defy thermodynamics (*MD* 317), or spy gadgets that allow hearing through walls (*MD* 328). In this we see two of Pynchon’s obsessions: the use and apparent misuse of thermodynamics in the perpetual-motion watch that borrows “Power” (*MD* 317) from the future, and the obtainment of knowledge and information, this being the pillar of any mechanism of authority.

It is Benjamin Franklin who describes the control that the Jesuits have over communications and its effects:

“Speaking as a Postmaster-General,” Dr. Franklin will later amplify, back in Philadelphia, “– I see our greatest problem as Time,– never

anything, but Time. For any message to reach its recipient, we must reckon in a fix'd delay,- months by ship, days over Land,- whilst via the Jesuit Telegraph, they enjoy their d——'d Marvel of instant Communication,"- far-reaching and free of error, thanks to giant balloons sent to great Altitudes, Mirrors or para- (not to mention dia-) bolickal perfection, beams of light focused to hitherto unimagined intensities,- so, at any rate, say the encrypted reports that find their ways to the desks of highly-plac'd men whose daily task it is, to make sure they know everything,- appropriate to their places,- that must be known. (*MD* 287)

We will soon see Franklin's importance in the power play in *Mason & Dixon*. It is not unusual in Pynchon's novels for the authorities to possess highly advanced means of communication and control of information. It is interesting, however, that even at such an early historical time, Pynchon decides to give the higher echelons the same abilities, even if the Information Age has not yet begun. This, however, is not an anachronism in the full sense of the word (even if the telegraph would not exist until the nineteenth century), since, as James Beniger has shown in his seminal study *The Control Revolution*, control of information had already started to become extremely important for administration and commerce.⁹

The Royal Society, as described in the book, is an advocate of Science and Enlightenment. Given the time period during which *Mason & Dixon* takes place, the Royal Society could be seen as part of the resistance against the oppression of the church. Yet some of its characteristics are strongly reminiscent of the tactics that authority employs; it acts more as an antagonist—who is already powerful—than a revolutionary. If it is oppressed it is not readily apparent within the text. In a humorous passage, the Royal Society proves to be more than the sum of its parts, independent of the temperament of the individuals that comprise it: as individuals the scientists are pleasant enough, but their congregation offers not simply anonymity but a collective identity that is vastly different from their own: "Taken one at a time,— dear Tom Birch, august Hadley the Quadrant's Eponym, Mr. Short, Dr. Morton,— excellent minds, invigorating Company, — but when they got all in a Herd,— bless us, the Stubbornness!" (270) In essence, it is their position in the system rather than their personality that dictates their disposition and, subsequently, their decisions. The Royal Society, in turn, dictates to a great degree the actions of the protagonists in the novel, sending them around the world for astronomical observations and geographical surveying. In fact, Charles Mason's ambition is to become the Royal Astronomer, which would

mean that he not only is a part of this particular group of people but that his aspirations are much higher than simple participation. Considering that Jeremiah Dixon is loosely associated with the Jesuits, this raises the question: What is the position of the two scientists within the power scheme? It is certain that they are not preterite, excluded from the system (besides, the preterite seem to resist a completely Foucauldian interpretation); they are links in the chain of command, yet have little knowledge of their position or importance. They are caught in the network of power, which is not only exercised on them but also exercised by them. Before they leave South Africa the police official who had welcomed them to the country comes to offer his goodbyes:

"Good luck, Fellows. Tell them at the Desk, I was not such a bad Egg, no?"

"What desk is that," ask Mason and Dixon.

"What Desk? In London, off some well-kept Street, in a tidy House, there will be someone at a Desk, to whom you'll tell all you have seen."

"Not in England, Sir," Mason protests. (*MD* 102)

This is a very important passage, even beyond its Kafkaesque imagery, because it shows not only the workings of power but also the perception of power. The police official sees the two scientists as representatives of an authority he cannot quite reach. He perhaps sees himself outside the hierarchy, when it is clear to the reader that he is not, and is looking for the good graces of the higher echelons. In Pynchon's universe the non-preterite, that is, the individual who wields even a tiny amount of power over other people, who is part of the network of power, be it because of either her/his position or her/his disposition, thinks that s/he is one (or more) step away from acquiring power. And that is the case even if, within the confines of the novel, s/he can exercise, knowingly or unknowingly, some degree of it; this is all the more true in *Mason & Dixon* and, as we shall presently see, *Against the Day*. Power is always above us. As far as the police official is concerned, Mason and Dixon are a part of the higher echelons, but that is not the case from their own point of view. The anonymous authority and the need to personify it is something that even Mason and Dixon themselves feel. In an otherwise seemingly lighthearted conversation, Dixon asks his colleague, "Whom are we working for, Mason?" only to hear Mason's answer "I rather thought, one day, you would be the one to tell me" (*MD* 347). The individual here considers himself neither an essential, irreplaceable part of the system

nor an outsider. As Palmeri points out in relation to the Foucauldian qualities of the two scientists in their ethical stance against oppressive systems, they neither deny their responsibility, nor exaggerate their effectiveness (cf. 34). Under certain conditions, one can be found in a position of power and authority, as is clearly the case here. And 'position' is the key word. Both Mason and Dixon are found in a place where they have the ability to exercise power, because it comes from the position they have in an organization. They are not marginalized, yet they feel marginalized. By the end of the text both of them catch glimpses of a grander scheme and manage to present themselves as opponents of the organizations that were controlling them. In the beginning, though, if they had to be characterized somehow, then they would be the Master's creatures that the preterite get to tickle, since they cannot touch the Master himself.

This is even more evident in the case of Dixon and his affiliation with the Jesuits, who are particularly interested in the work that Dixon will do on the line and are satisfied that one of them will be there. They also make no requests or demands about gathering information and spying on the project. The project is, after all, his own:

we would be expecting no reports, no Espionage, no action of any kind,- for the marking of the Line will be undertaken without our Engagement,- we only wish Assurance that someone we know is there, materially, upon the Parallel. No more. [...] In the all but inconceivably remote event we did wish to reach you,- why aye, one does hear of Devices already in position, which could find you faster than any known Packet or Express. (*MD* 230)

There are two things to be noted in these passages. First, Dixon appears to be working for an organization without needing to be active in it. He is, willingly or not, a part of the network, a cog in the machine, and his presence also ensures the presence of the machine. Second, those devices that can find Dixon so fast are reminiscent of the Panopticon, the prison built in a way that made the prisoners feel like they are being monitored at all times, even if there is no one watching them. Dixon may or may not be under constant surveillance, but he *feels* that he is.

So where can resistance be found? There are, in fact, at least two types of resistance in *Mason & Dixon*. The first is organized resistance, which will be my main focus, and the second is the resistance of the individual, which is equally or perhaps even more important and can come from any part of the network (see for example Dixon's incident with the "Slave-Driver";

MD 695-97). In the case of organized resistance, of all of Pynchon's novels *Mason & Dixon* best represents the eagerness of some facets of resistance to become authority. At the same time, however, they are also part of the elite. These two concepts, while they overlap significantly here and elsewhere in Pynchon's oeuvre, are not one and the same; the authority, in any form, is also part of the elite, but the elite is not necessarily part of the, at least current, authority.

In the case of organized resistance, the main representatives are the historical figures who, at the time when the main events of the novel are happening, feel a growing dissatisfaction with the situation in the colonies. Of these figures, Benjamin Franklin features most prominently and so will be at the center of the analysis here. His appearance, wearing "tinted lenses of Spectacles of his own Invention" (MD 266), underlines his creativity and ingenuity, traits that would be or are considered necessary for the prosperity of the nation that was about to form. Franklin is described as the "American Prometheus" (MD 565), both protector and an exemplary model for the Americans.

The novel makes sure to place Benjamin Franklin on both sides of the coin. One of his ideas, for example, to oppose and damage the British rule in America is to make the country a place where "laissez-faire" economic practices are the norm, where capitalism reigns in a purer form than today, though containing the modern world's capitalistic practices. His "wise advice" to the two scientists is to "Never pay the Retail Price" (MD 267) when it comes to medicines and to never use the English shops. National independence presupposes financial independence.

Walter Isaacson, in his biography of Franklin, writes that Franklin was "most influential in inventing the type of society America would become" and that his rise to prominence from being unknown was "quintessentially American" (492).¹⁰ This should not be interpreted under a solely positive light, especially if the evolution of the country within Pynchon's literary universe is taken into account. The America of *Vineland* already exists within Franklin's America. Pynchon suggests that this sort of revolution, the one based on the principles of capitalism, will be nothing but a change in leadership, something that would not happen immediately—since by the end of the book America is still the land of hope and new beginnings—but rather gradually, through the world of *Against the Day*, *Gravity's Rainbow*, and *Inherent Vice*. In another humorous moment, Pynchon stresses the similarities between the new nation and the British monarchy by having "Native Vendors" sell "unflattering toy images including those of the King and Mr. Franklin" (MD 548).

Two aspects hide within the lightheartedness of this passage: evidence of commercialization and an effort to equate monarchy and British imperialism with the type of democracy that the United States would become in Pynchon's fictional universe. This, of course, is an analysis that is impossible without taking into account the novels that take place in the twentieth century and also Pynchon's critique of modern society in his non-fictional works.

Finally, Benjamin Franklin's actions often bring to mind those of power. He tries to turn the scientists against each other in order to further his goals, noble or otherwise. He asks Mason to spy on Dixon and to "relate the Minutes of it all" (*MD* 269) to him. He then asks the same of Dixon, but the Quaker does not seem to grasp the notion of betraying his friend. In any case, Benjamin Franklin seems determined to employ any means necessary to succeed, and this divide and conquer strategy would seem more appropriate for an anonymous authority than for any marginalized preterite or even a simple individual. As far as the reader is concerned, sympathizing with the protagonists of the novel means that Franklin needs to be considered a representative of the elite, like von Göll in *Gravity's Rainbow*, who is adamant about his being part of that so-called elite.

Franklin is also shown as part of the elite in a rather humorous encounter Dixon has with a strange elf-like tribe of Cabbalists with Irish accents. They live in isolation, at the fringes of the system, cut off not only from current society but also from future events. To them, the American revolution means something that the reader might have already surmised:

[...] this Age sees a corruption and disabling of ancient Magick. Projectors, Brokers of Capital, Insurancers, Peddlers upon the global Scale, Enterprisers, and Quacks,- these are the last poor fallen and feckless inheritors of a Knowledge they can never use, but in the service of Greed. The coming Rebellion is theirs,- Franklin, and that Lot,- and Heaven help the rest of us, if they prevail. *MD* 487-88)

The Age of Reason brings greed, the Enlightenment brings the demise of the Old Magic, and these are sacrifices that were made to reach the world we have now. David Cowart, in his article "Luddite Vision: *Mason & Dixon*," considers Franklin a "*hero of the Enlightenment*" (351), but abiding by his (or the Enlightenment's) principles leads to no utopia.

There is, however, another form of resistance, the resistance of the individual that does not rely on acquiring power but on anonymity, on actually staying at the fringes in order to create or try to create a small autonomous world independent of the network of power. In that sense,

Reverend Cherrycoke offers us one of the few acts of true resistance when he declines to sign the documents he writes and is persecuted for that: "[...] my name had never been my own,— rather belonging, all this time, to the Authorities, who forbade to change it, or withhold it, as 'twere a Ring upon the Collar of a Beast, ever waiting for the Lead to be fasten'd on" (*MD* 10). It is obvious here that anonymity can be used both by those in power and those that work against it. There are, however, different flavors of anonymity, since it also exists beyond the scope of organized resistance's desire to replace authority (thus, as we have seen, rendering it nothing more but an alternative of practically the same nature). Anonymity, when referring to the individual, is a method of avoiding confrontation, of hiding one's identity. When it applies to authority, it is to maintain a distance from that same individual, to hide the origins of control. Once more, control is the key word in both cases, and especially control of information. The less information disclosed, the more freedom of movement or action both an individual and an organized group can have, but in the former, anonymity is a method of hiding and blending in (until, as in the case of Reverend Cherrycoke, one is made to sign, to give a name to his or her activities), and in the latter it is part of an effort to distance the acts of power from its assignors.

Anonymity, Resistance and *Against the Day*

This anonymity (especially anonymity-as-resistance) is an excellent transition to start discussing *Against the Day*, since it is again used in two very different ways: the first in the same manner as above; a person with no name and no papers (or multiple ones) could easily evade the authorities, just like the ancestor of the Zombini family, but that was before the modern era when a person's identity is defined by his or her record: "Today we are used to thinking of identity as no more than the contents of one's dossier. Back then one man might have multiple identities, 'documents' might easily be forged or fictional" (*AtD* 570). This is hardly developed, however, and the second is much different and in the same vein as the anonymity of the higher echelons, but this time it applies more to the resistance. Authority has a clear representative in Scarsdale Vibe, even though, especially in the *Chums of Chance* chapters, there is frequent discussion of a certain "They" and their motives.

The main expression of resistance in *Against the Day* is, of course, the anarchist movement. What needs to be examined here, however, is whether it shares some of its qualities and tactics with authority. At first glance, the two are quite distinct, mainly in their motives, since they find themselves

as opponents, but a closer look reveals similarities in the ways they treat and accept the individual. When Lew Basnight, the private investigator, attends an anarchist meeting, he is surprised to see it comprised of regular Americans, people with personal lives, hopes, dreams and fears:

There was a kind of general assumption around the shop that laboring men and women were more or less evil, surely misguided, and not quite American, maybe not quite human. But here was this hall full of Americans, no question, even the foreign-born, if you thought about where they had come from and what they must've been hoping to find over here and so forth. American in their prayers anyway, and maybe a few hadn't shaved for a while, but it was hard to see how any fit the bearded, wild-eyed, bomb-rolling Red description too close, in fact give them a good night's sleep and a square meal or two, and even a veteran detective'd have a hard time telling the difference from regular Americans. Yet here they were expressing the most subversive thoughts [...]. (*AtD* 50)

The people mentioned here by Lew Basnight are individuals associated with what can only of course be characterized as resistance. What the P.I. *perceives* is people with altered identities, perhaps brainwashed by forces unknown to him, trying to fight against the status quo and establish their own idea of a well-governed society. What he *fails to realize* is that he himself is in a similar situation, with the only difference being the fact that his efforts are focused on maintaining the current state of affairs, even though, by the end of the book and his glimpse at the formation of the movie industry, he will clearly see both sides of the coin.

Basnight's observations would not be useful if Pynchon did not make sure to depict organized anarchy in a way strongly reminiscent of authority. First of all, the Jesuits have already lost; religion is being replaced or displaced. There is mention of churches that were repurposed as cinemas (*AtD* 450), alternative communication networks that are borderline religious (*AtD* 613) and, finally, a priest, Reverend Moss Gatlin, who is the one to explain anarchist dogma to Webb Traverse.

The priest's (or anarchism's) dogma is fairly simple: "there are no innocent bourgeoisie" (*AtD* 87), a phrase strongly reminiscent of what Emile Henry, the French anarchist, had said during his trial¹¹ after planting a bomb at a train station's café. The priest elaborates:

Being born into this don't automatically make you innocent. But when you're reaching a point in your life where you understand

who is fucking who –beg pardon, Lord– who’s taking it and who’s not, that’s when you’re obliged to choose how much you’ll go along with. If you are not devoting every breath of every day waking and sleeping to destroying those who slaughter the innocent as easy as signing a check, then how innocent are you willing to call yourself? It must be negotiated with the day, from those absolute terms. (*AtD* 87)

This is an interesting passage in several respects. If only the methods and not the motives are taken into account, then the rhetoric used by the priest sounds a lot like that of original sin and also eerily similar to false dilemmas such as “you’re either with us or against us,” a phrase that, in its many variations, has been attributed not only to George W. Bush, but also to Jesus Christ, Lenin, and Hilary Clinton.¹² It is also no accident that the anarchist stance “must be negotiated with the day,” which is an obvious antithesis to the title of the novel. Even if the content of the word, the meaning of the sentence taken literally, is different, the style shows that anarchism, in this case at least and perhaps in any case, is not truly *against the day*. Pynchon is after all playing a lot with prepositions and the term “the day” throughout the novel. While the phrase “against the day” appears only once in the text (805), to denote the everyday struggle of the people within the confines of their routine, there are dozens of instances where the term “the day” is used with numerous other prepositions (with, for, unto, over, of, from), even excluding standard phrases like “carry on with the day” or “the special of the day”.

After facing that dilemma and, subsequently, having been absorbed within anarchism through a quasi-religious experience (*AtD* 87)—another indication that anarchism is a lot more than a system of resistance to power—, Webb Traverse becomes another node in the system, one that connects both, seemingly opposing, sides. He is both part of an organization that seeks power and a citizen, husband, father, a member, in other words, of the bourgeoisie, in order not to raise suspicions, even though the second part is not simply a disguise.

This is important because the end of Webb Traverse reveals his role both as a member of the anarchist network and as an individual. Before his capture he has no problem embracing his double identity, as he had no qualms about violence in the name of his organization. He is fully aware that death can find him at any moment and that he can be easily replaced. However, once he is captured, he is no longer a cog in the machine, he is an individual, as powerless as any preterite found in Pynchon's novels. It is quite interesting that during his torture, two things happen. First, he loses his faith in the struggle to which he was committed, his will to

sacrifice himself to help create, even through death, what he sees as a better society. Not only does he have second thoughts, he knows that his secret, anarchist identity is the false one and that his being a family man is more important for him than anything else. This may sound sentimental, but it also means that as soon as he makes this decision, he immediately falls off the grid, he is no longer *with* anarchism. This favorable attitude towards parenthood—which is also apparent in *Bleeding Edge*—in the case of Webb Traverse supersedes Pynchon's possible, if any, "commendation of industrial terrorism" and "support of political violence" (Hume 164).

The second thing that happened is that Deuce and Sloat, his torturers, are not interested in acquiring information from him to help them deter the perceived threat of terrorism: "It didn't look like these two were fixing to ask him any questions, because neither had spared him any pain that he could tell, pain and information being convertible, like gold and dollars, practically at a fixed rate" (*AtD* 197). This was torture for the sake of torture, this was revenge for Webb's past self, but also acknowledgment that he is no longer useful to anyone, that he will be forgotten, passed over; except by his family, that is. The subsequent events of the novel essentially stem from this moment. His three sons' acts of resistance (or simple defiance) are not dictated by their position in society but their wills as individuals. It is worth noting the fact that the brothers did try to join organized resistance, only to end up following their own rhythms and desires.

Conclusion

In conclusion, what is resistance wants to become power, and anarchism in *Against the Day* is no different. This is extraneous to any moral judgments about which side is correct and which side wants the proverbial good of the people. What was sought after was a study of positions within the network of power and *Mason & Dixon's* revolutionaries and *Against the Day's* anarchism prove invaluable for such research. However, in Pynchon's fictional universe, the early twentieth century is the last time when resistance is allowed to have such aspirations. By the end of *Against the Day*, there are signs that anarchism has lost and capitalism has managed to retain its power, and from then on the gap would remain the same or even widen. There is a pattern here. The further we move towards the end of the twentieth century, the weaker, the more mundane or delusional the resistance is depicted by Pynchon. The turning point seems to be *Against the Day*, and especially the last two hundred or so pages, where, even after the death of Scarsdale Vibe, capitalist control starts gaining more and more power, while organized

resistance is at best a failure and at worst laughable. It is perhaps no accident that the first signs of this are to be seen in Hollywood in the industrialization of the entertainment industry, as witnessed by Lew Basnight in the closing chapters of *Against the Day*. What was revolutionary and had the potential of even offering the possibility of time travel (through the work of Merle Rideout and Roswell Bounce), becomes mere entertainment for the people, an industry which hires Deuce Kindred himself to work for them. The network of power does not necessarily dissolve and is still a useful analytical tool, but the balance shifts heavily to one side and this makes it easier for other kinds of criticism, such as that of the Frankfurt School, to analyze subsequent society.

End notes

1. See for example Bersani, Braudy, or Slade.
2. These changes in the economy and their importance are shown, for example, in Tiina Käkälä-Puumala's essay "'There Is Money Everywhere': Representation, Authority, and the Money Form in Thomas Pynchon's *Against the Day*". Anarchism's position within this context is also important and this analysis will take into account, while also deviating from, Graham Benton's analysis of anarchism in his paper "Daydreams and Dynamite: Anarchist Strategies of Resistance and Paths for Transformation in *Against the Day*." Benton says that Pynchon is "wary of fully endorsing an anarchist position because he recognizes such a position to be open to any number of violent corruptions and betrayals" (191). I seek to take this conclusion one step further and argue that these traits make anarchism resemble authority a lot more than previously thought.
3. I use "almost" because without it the position of authority and resistance within the network of power would not be accounted for.
4. See, for example, Samuel Thomas's Adornean approach in *Pynchon and the Political*, a work that has informed this essay both in content and, as will soon be shown, in form.
5. Frank Palmeri, for instance, has studied the parallels between Pynchon and Foucault and asserts that "the late works of both authors see human beings less as automata, objects of control, and more as creatures with some capacity for effective action, self-discipline, and self-control" (16). This is merely the starting point, and the similarities between Pynchon's two novels that are examined here and Foucault's theories can go even deeper, since Palmeri's focus lies more on the essence of postmodernism and not the juxtaposition of power and resistance. Other essays that use

Foucault to analyze Pynchon are Margaret Lynd's "Science, Narrative, and Agency in *Gravity's Rainbow*", Will McConnell's "Pynchon, Foucault, Power, and Strategies of Resistance" and Martin Paul Eve's "Whose Line is it Anyway?: Enlightenment, revolution, and ipseic ethics in the works of Thomas Pynchon".

6. This chronology has gained more traction lately, but this essay is primarily influenced by its use in Samuel Thomas' *Pynchon and the Political*.

7. In many papers, particularly earlier ones written before the publication of *Mason & Dixon* or *Against the Day*, paranoia is acknowledged as a central theme in Pynchon. For example in their 1974 paper "Science as Metaphor: Thomas Pynchon and *Gravity's Rainbow*," Friedman and Pütz state that "paranoia has to be the dominant condition of the human mind" (358) in Pynchon's novels.

8. As Sascha Pöhlmann states in his *Pynchon's Postnational Imagination*, "[n]o structure of control is ever completely all-encompassing in *Mason & Dixon*" (265).

9. Beniger discerns an unbroken chain of events that led to the information society the world has been witnessing in the twentieth century. "Just as the Commercial Revolution depended on capital and labor freed by advanced agriculture [...] and the Industrial Revolution presupposed a commercial system for capital allocations and the distribution of goods, the most recent technological revolution developed in response to problems arising out of advanced industrialization—an ever-mounting crisis of control" (10). Pynchon moves back on that same chain, sees the minute traces of the changes to come and gives them the importance that they would have a couple of centuries down the road.

10. For a more detailed account of Franklin's role in *Mason & Dixon*, see Thomas Schaub's work presented during International Pynchon Week 2013: Schaub, Thomas. "'Lightning in America': The Role of Benjamin Franklin in Pynchon's *Mason & Dixon*". Durham University, International Pynchon Week, 5 August 2013 (presented by Sascha Pöhlmann).

11. See for example Abidor; Henry.

12. For just the first of these, see Bush 2001.

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