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ARTICLE

"A Dual Man [and Oeuvre], Aimed Two Ways at Once": The Two Directions of Pynchon's Life and Thought

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The paper argues that Pynchon's publishing career underscores a biographical divide in Pynchon's consciousness between his commitment to marginalized, anti-orthodox modes of being, particularly those valued by the counter-culture that emerged in the 1960s in the US, and the value of classical, to use a term from Pynchon's Ford Foundation statement, modes of being, not simply in his fiction but in his letters and other biographical documents that have come to light.

Apparently responding to a comment about the possibility of his writing something autobiographical, Thomas Pynchon observed in a 1978 letter to Candida Donadio, "As for spilling my life story, I try to do that all the time. Nobody ever wants to listen for some strange reason" (Gussow). When he wrote those words, Pynchon's bibliography primarily contained fiction, the short stories and the first three novels. His only nonfiction was his Watts article and the short piece on Oakley Hall's *Warlock* (1958), that is, if we discount the pieces in high-school publications, the articles he wrote for Boeing, a couple of letters to the editor, and some occasional writings that saw print even though they weren't expressly written for publication. The introductions that have autobiographical elements were to come later, so one is tempted to accept "that, 'classicism' aside," as Borris Kachka writes, "all of [Pynchon's] books are in some way autobiographical" (157). The problem with accepting such a statement at face value is that one is then tempted to allow the "autobiographical context," as David Foster Wallace calls it in his review of Edwin Williamson's *Borges: A Life*, to explain the work.

Kachka himself indulges in such a maneuver. Helping to build a narrative that casts *Bleeding Edge* as Pynchon's return home to New York,¹ he calls Horst, who is engaged in a sort of homecoming, the novel's "Pynchon stand-in." Horst, after all, "confesses at Ikea that his 'ideal living space is a not too ratty motel room in the deep Midwest, somewhere up in the badlands' [298]" (158), a supposed allusion to Pynchon's life in the 1970s and early 1980s when he led, it is commonly assumed, a peripatetic existence. Horst also spends perhaps too much time inside watching television, something that reflects, the evidence suggests, a habit Pynchon has or had. The equation, nonetheless, is too straightforward. If we are looking for stand-ins for the author in *Bleeding Edge*, Maxine, whose home has always been New York, serves our purpose as much as Horst, something demonstrated by her "conscious effort not to go near" (51) Time Square since it was cleaned up, a protest against what I call in

Parts of this essay were published in *Berfrois* under the title "*Inherent Vice's* Two Directions" (February 13, 2014).

¹ J. K. Trotter calls the novel "something of a homecoming" in his review for *The Atlantic Wire*.

my review of the novel "the connection between commercialization and the flattening of life's choices" (Rolls, 2013b). Pynchon had recognized such a connection as early as 1962, complaining in a letter from Seattle to Kirkpatrick Sale that "little old ladies on relief have been evicted to make way for tourists" coming to town for the Seattle World Fair, which Pynchon described as an excuse for retailers to raise prices. He thus promised to boycott the Fair, going on to worry, in terms Maxine echoes to express her nostalgia for the old Time Square, that if Seattle's city planners get their way, "Skid Road will go, the winos will be made to shave and join AA, they'll turn Pioneer Square into a parking lot" (May 28, 1962).

Pynchon's self-presentation through *Bleeding Edge's* characters, if we accept that Horst and Maxine share identifying characteristics with their creator, illustrates a double-sidedness to his understanding of his own character, as if Pynchon saw himself, as does Fausto of *V's* "Generation of '37"—the year of Pynchon's birth and the apocalyptic temperature of the story "Entropy"—as "a dual man, aimed two ways at once: toward peace and simplicity on the one hand, towards an exhausted intellectual searching on the other" (*V.* 309). From the very beginning of his career, such duality has been a feature of Pynchon's use of authorial stand-ins. The main characters of *V's* two plotlines may be read as such. Profane could be categorized as a Pynchon figure because Pynchon, at least if reports are accurate, slept over Kirkpatrick Sale's "spare tub" (Nichols 68),² as Profane sleeps in Kook's family's tub (cf. *V.* 36), or because both of them did public road work (cf. Siegel, *Lineland*, 86). We could, however, just as easily develop a correspondence between Pynchon and Stencil, if only because Pynchon loosely appropriated that character's biography for himself, telling Earl Ganz, likely when he was first developing the character, in another documented instance of his fashioning fake biographies (See Rolls 2013a, for other instances) that his father "was a diplomat [. . .] had something to do with intelligence," that his childhood

² Nichols only notes that the tub was a friend's. Sale worked at *The New Leader* before Pynchon went to Seattle, and Pynchon, according to a 1965 "Between Issues" feature of that publication, told those in the office whom Kirk introduced him to that he was sleeping on a "pad in Kirk's bathtub" (2).

reading included top-secret dossiers, and that he had—a little late for Stencil's childhood but still—lived in London in the latter years of the war and remembered "[t]he buzz bombs" (Ganz 13). Pynchon, at least conceptually, identifies himself as inhabiting both of what Lee Konstantinou calls "Stencil's and Profane's irreconcilable positions" (91), that of the quester, or the postwar modernist, and of the anti-quester, or the post-Beat hipster (cf. Konstantinou 55, 90). We might portray other characters who can be associated with Pynchon in similar ways, possibly even Oedipa and Mucho,³ but by the time we get to Maxine and Horst, Maxine—a post-Reagan version of *Inherent Vice's* Doc Sportello—has taken, as did Doc before her, the position of a hipster-like figure who is also a quester, and Horst, a sort of anti-quester, seems to be in the process of reconciling himself to the quester he failed to hold onto earlier in his life.

Trying to determine in unambiguous terms which character might be an authorial stand-in from novel to novel is not necessarily a simple exercise. That is not to say that Pynchon's novels lack characters who serve as figurations of the author in some respect; it is to say that while the stand-ins may attest to the autobiographical character of the oeuvre—which, it can be said, offers material for an implied biography, perhaps the very biography Pynchon told Donadio readers would be able to discern if they would only "listen" carefully enough—those stand-ins are, at best, suggestive elements of the life story. Attuning oneself to the autobiographical resonances in Pynchon's fiction is not to expect biography to provide an interpretive grid that can be positioned over the work so that its meaning can be explained, nor should we expect to be able to "use the work to interpret the life" (111), which Susan Sontag, drawing on Walter Benjamin, suggests would be a better approach. Rather, the work and the biography should together provide the threads with which the critic-biographer weaves the text s/he is writing so that

³ For the relevance of the much discussed Oedipa connection, see below. Mucho's connection is more tangential, though Mathew Winston was told—truthfully or not—by someone that Pynchon "thought about becoming a disc jockey, an interest," Winston goes on to note, "which emerges in the character of Mucho" (51–52), whose time as a used car salesman also has an autobiographical association with Pynchon. George Stevens, a Lippincott executive, told Cork Smith, upon reading "Low-lands" when it was submitted to *New World Writing*, "I don't know what you like about this thing. I think this guy will be selling used Chevrolets within a year" (Silverman 157).

background and foreground don't simply come together but are shown to meet at certain points of convergence. Some of these points may involve characters and the people, including the author, whom they are modeled after; other points, which are less clearly autobiographical but are perhaps more interesting, can be just as revealing, if not more so.

I

The introduction of the name "Denis" in *Inherent Vice* (2009), along with the story about Denis's stop at a local drugstore, is one of those points. The name, because of the pronunciation, and the drugstore tale are, at least when first encountered, groan-inducing. Hence James Parker begins his review with the quip, "If Thomas Pynchon were a stand-up comedian, and *Inherent Vice* his newest routine, the heckling would start around page 10. 'So Doc,' relates a character called Denis (whose name, we are informed, is commonly pronounced to rhyme with—heh, heh—'penis'), 'I'm up on Dunecrest, you know the drugstore there, and like I noticed their sign, "Drug"? "Store"? Okay? Walked past it a thousand times, never *really saw it*—Drug, Store! man, far out, so I went in and Smilin Steve was at the counter and I said, like, "Yes, hi, I'd like some drugs, please. . . .'" The forced play on the name and the too easily arrived-at drug pun both strike the reader as sophomoric, while the pun seems clichéd, further below Pynchon's intelligence than we would like to think he would stoop. To discount them and move on, or throw the book across the room as Parker half implies we should do, however, would be to lose sight of "that high magic to low puns" (CL49, 129). To do so would not only cause us to blind ourselves to the sensibility of a man who reportedly staged a pie fight near his Manhattan Beach apartment in the late 1960s and who, his friend Phyllis Gebauer recalled, enjoys the corniest of humor,⁴ but would also prevent us from appreciating the ingenuity of *Inherent Vice* and, ultimately, Pynchon's take on the Sixties and what followed. The fictional moment has the power to expand further into the fiction and, from there, the life.

⁴ Speaking of Pynchon at the launch party for an exhibit of signed Pynchon first editions at UCLA, Gebauer recalled, "He's a great charades player. He's great at puns. They're awful" (See Kellogg).

Denis's name and the play on the idea of the drugstore unite two parts of what is sometimes, both within the novel and elsewhere, accepted as a strict binary division between the straight world and drug culture,⁵ capturing a recurring concern of *Inherent Vice*, the question of which side one is on—an issue that *Vineland* (1990) also addresses and that Coy Harlingen raises more openly in Paul Thomas Anderson's 2014 filmic adaptation of *Inherent Vice*⁶—and establishing one of the more subtle elements of the novel's textual environment. The pun on "drugs," in a somewhat obvious way, calls attention to and undermines the division between substances that contribute to the formation of the freak community and those prescribed by doctors, as does Pat Dubonnet's disappointment with a career reduced to "penny-ante collars, kids under the pier dealing their moms' downers" (47). Indeed, the name of the drugstore employee whom Denis asks for drugs, Smilin Steve, as well as Denis's and Doc's familiarity with him, marks him as someone more likely to be connected to a place like Tommy's, where for an extra fifty cents one could get a joint wrapped in wax paper in one's "cheezburger" (IV73). The breakdown of the division, at least between the licit and the illicit use of drugs, is also worked into and undermined within Doc's professional environment apropos of Dr. Buddy Tubeside's "B₁₂" clinic from which the doctor, in order to keep things flowing smoothly in the so-called straight world, distributes amphetamines to a collection of melancholy housewives, actors looking for work, professional schmoozers, and tired stewardii, along with the occasional legitimate B₁₂-deprived cases, who presumably get the vitamin (cf. 13).

That Tubeside is distributing amphetamines complicates the issue. That drug, along with downers, is associated, at least in part, with members of the criminal underworld as opposed to hippies, a distinction the straight world isn't inclined

⁵ Richard H. Blum observes in his monumental study *Society and Drugs* that "the straight and hippie worlds share a common belief that they stand opposed and distant from each other" (351). The distinction between the two worlds is, of course, not so straightforward and is partly a perspective derived from intuition rather than careful analysis. Andrew Reese, a pseudonymous former addict, for instance, observes that for drug users, "the straight symbolizes the dominant society" (8), even though Reese acknowledges at the time he was writing, the mid-1970s, that "the lines defining the user and the straight person are becoming blurred" (6) due to the fashionableness of drug use.

⁶ In the movie trailer, the clip in which Coy asks the question is followed by a clip in which Doc says "Good question," though the two clips are from different parts of the movie.

to acknowledge. Doc feels obliged to explain to Lieutenant "Bigfoot" Bjornsen, for instance, that Glen Charlock and his associates have "totally the wrong drug profile, too many reds, too much speed" (26), for Doc to be counted as one of them. Bigfoot ignores the lesson, insisting on including Doc in the same category as Glen when he remarks in malicious jest that Glen's murderer might "turn out to be one of those perpetrators who *specially like* to murder hippies" (29). This complication adds to the sense that the simple equation of drug use with the counterculture is losing its significance or has always been imprecise. Just as the distinction between hippies and Nazi bikers has no significance for those charged with maintaining the straight world's order, because both groups are associated with drugs, the distinction between "Flatland" culture and hippie culture is not necessarily one that needs to be acknowledged. Drugs pervade both of them.

The play on the name "Denis" gestures toward the same issue, demonstrating the novel's use of what might be dubbed learned low humor. Whether it rhymes with penis or not, the name is English for the Greek *Dionysios* or the Latin *Dionysius* and is "from the Greek, [follower of or] 'belonging to the god of wine'" (*Standard Dictionary of Facts*, 811). Pynchon's pronunciation joke, at the very least, calls attention to the pre-Christian significance of the name, alluding to the phallic element of the Dionysian cult and perhaps also to Phales, "the personified phallus," as Lowell Edmunds describes that particular companion of Dionysus (6), whose name also serves as a partial homonym of the name of the male sexual organ. Doc can, then, be seen in the role of Dionysus, an element of Pynchon's characterization of him to which we will return. In the Christian era, however, the name Dionysius is associated with Dionysius the Areopagite, the Athenian judge whom St. Paul converted (Acts 17:34) and who took on importance to Christian theology after an anonymous sixth-century author—the Pseudo-Dionysius—attributed his work to Dionysius. The minor Biblical figure thereafter came to be associated with a major strain of medieval theology, particularly the establishment of the most influential vision of the angelic hierarchies (cf. Arthur). He is, in short, not simply a figure associated with the established order but one who was counted among its architects.

Denis's name thereby points to both a Dionysian register and an Apollonian register, making Denis, metaphorically speaking, a site of Sixties' conflict, much as a drunken Jack Kerouac made himself one, no doubt obviously, during an appearance on William Buckley's *Firing Line* in 1968. Kerouac observed of the hippie movement—while discussing the relationship between the Beats and the hippies and the part he played in influencing the latter—"apparently it's some kind of Dionysian movement in late civilization, and which I did not intend any more than I suppose Dionysius did, or whatever his name was." Kerouac went on to say, "Although I'm not Dionysius the Areopagite, I should have been," befuddling Buckley, perhaps with good reason. From the context, it is unclear whether Kerouac is confusing the Christian figure with a Greek follower of the wine god or playing off Buckley's description of him as one who "fought his way out of the Beat generation and is now thought exactly orthodox," a characterization Kerouac offers support for when he gives a thumbs down at the mention of Allen Ginsberg, who was in the audience; when he belittles leftists or communists, Lawrence Ferlinghetti in particular, placing them in an associative chain that includes "hoodlums"—just as Bigfoot lumps hippies in with Nazi bikers—all of whom Kerouac complains jumped on his back, in the sense of standing on the shoulders of one's predecessors and/or of burdening him with the weight of their expectations; and when he reveals that he, as well as his family, had always voted Republican (Buckley).⁷

Denis, it is true, seems to represent a pure Dionysian figure, and not simply because of his drug use. Intoxication, after all, is only one aspect of the Dionysian spirit. Denis, like those imbued with that spirit, "feels himself not only united, reconciled, and fused with his neighbor, but as one with him, as if the veil of *māyā* had been torn aside and were now merely fluttering in tatters before the mysterious primordial unity" (Nietzsche 37). The Sixties' manifestation of such a feeling is dissipating—though it may have been confined to mere moments and Denis, in any

⁷ I'd like to thank Roy Benjamin for drawing my attention to this interview.

case, isn't prepared to accept the change—not simply in the post-Manson-murder culture of 1970 but also in the members of the freak community. The problem, including Denis's lack of awareness, is made particularly evident as Japonica's car passes "Wallach's Music City, where each of a long row of audition booths inside had its own lighted window" and behind each of which "appeared a hippie freak or small party of hippie freaks, each listening on headphones to a different rock 'n' roll album and moving around at a different rhythm" (IV 176). The experience of those listeners is contrasted with free outdoor concerts "where thousands of people congregated [. . . and] blended together into a single public self, because everybody was having the same experience" (IV 176).

Denis finds himself within a larger variation of the dissipation of *Vineland's* PR³ the night Weed Atman is shot:

Something was going on up on campus. [. . .] There had been no posters or announcements or indeed anyplace left for communication to come from, only the gathering, in falling dark and confusion without limit, around the fountain in the Plaza where PR³ers in their youth had frolicked stoned and nude. Now, with the black rearing silhouette of the Nixon Monument against the sunset, [. . .] suddenly no one recognized anyone's face, and each was isolated in a sea of strangers. A common feeling, reported in interviews later, was of a clear break just ahead with everything they'd known. Some said "end," others "transition." (VL 244)

Denis doesn't feel, as the PR³ers do, the contrast between past moments of communal unity and the isolated present, or he willfully ignores it. Intent on digging the moment, he waves, yells, and flashes peace signs in an attempt to forge a connection with each of the booth dwellers, but he goes unnoticed, a nonreaction to his advances that he tries to disregard with the aid of a pun, the magic of which fails to transform the moment: "Far out. Maybe they're all stoned. Hey! That must be why they call those things *headphones*! [. . .] Think about that, man! Like, *headphones*, right?" (IV 176). Denis's punning on *head* here is an attempt to will his audience to

ignore his isolation from the freaks in Wallach's as well as their isolation from each other.⁸ The context undermines that intention: offering intoxication as an excuse for their and his own seclusion undoes the power of the analogy between intoxication and the Dionysian spirit by suggesting that drugs can undermine the sense of community at the heart of hippie culture and generate the "*principium individuationis*" (Nietzsche 36), the principle of Apollo. Denis, in fact, has glorified that principle and demonstrated, if unwittingly, that taking drugs is not necessarily, as Karen M. Staller explains doing so was thought to be in the Sixties, "a communal experience that bond[s] the youth community together" (80). Indeed, the assumption that those in the record-store audition booths are stoned marks the freaks as easily recognizable members of a certain demographic. They have become little more than isolated consumers with "no more primary choices [. . .] to make" (SL 9). They are, as Pynchon writes of his generation's relationship to the Beats, "onlookers: the parade had gone by and [they are] already getting everything secondhand" (SL 9), a condition emphasized by the fact that the beats to which each is listening are supplied for the sake of a sale. Their audition for the freak show, to put it another way, is not simply too late but rendered inauthentic by its participation in the commercial simulation of gestures of resistance during those volatile days when "revolution," as *Vineland* puts it, "went blending into commerce" (VL 308).

Hope and Coy Harlingen's plotline partakes of a parallel dynamic, serving as a microcosmic, heroin-inspired variation on the cultural change Denis's experience illustrates. Hope and Coy connect in a toilet stall. Having just smuggled heroin into California from Mexico in balloons they had swallowed, they accidentally come together to discharge their load, Hope with her "'finger already down [her] throat, and there Coy sat, gringo digestion, about to take a gigantic shit. [They] both let go at about the

⁸ Pynchon also plays with a pun on *head* in *Vineland* to make a similar point. The teenaged head of A & R at Indolent Records, screams "Department *head!* [. . .] everybody around here's a department . . . *head!* Ha! Ha! Ha!" (VL 283). Here, the multiple *heads* suggest a loss of cohesion to the enterprise, that is, the loss of community or the emergence of an entropic communal body—or a corporate body in the sense Norman O. Brown uses the term in *Love's Body* (cf. 128)—that is composed of isolated heads without any members, making it impossible to envisage "an energy diffused throughout the whole body, and capable of displacement from one part to another" (Brown 127).

same time, barf and shit all over the place [. . .] and to complicate things of course he had this hardon" (*IV* 37–38). They had become, to appropriate a formula from a different context, "abjected anarchistic, formless and fluid Dionysian bod[ies]" (Vagelis Siropoulos, cited in Yebra 192), that is, they embody in that moment the abject, as Julia Kristeva defines it, encompassed as they are by excrement and vomit, but not to demarcate the boundaries separating their selves from that which is other. Rather, they return, metaphorically speaking, to the gap between infancy and subjecthood, where such boundaries are not yet fully established, and prepare to fuse, something suggested by the complication raised by Coy's hardon. His erection demonstrates his lacking a feeling of loathing despite being covered in vomit—which Jacques "Derrida once, in fact, explicitly privileged [. . .] as the disgustingly unassimilable 'other' of the beautiful and the moral, serving philosophy therefore as 'an elixir, even in the very quintessence of bad taste'" (Jay 239)—and signals his desire "to reintegrate [with his other half] [. . .], to make two into one, and to bridge the gulf between one human being and another," which is love's function as Plato's Aristophanes explains it in the *Symposium* (191d) when he tells the myth of the Androgynes, those originary creatures in whom man and woman were unified.

Hope and Coy's subsequent marriage, "less than two weeks later" (*IV* 39), supplements—with all the ambiguity Derrida brings to that term—the moment. Marrying "on the interesting theory that two can score as cheaply as one" (*IV* 39), they follow a drug inspired variation of the biblical notion that "the two shall become one flesh" (Matthew 19:5), transforming the spirituality of marriage into a reiteration of their material achievement in the stall, a site to which their need to score had brought them. Their heroin addiction, however, undermines their oneness, particularly after Amethyst, their daughter, is born, leading them to understand that they were "dragging each other down" and needed to "come up with something" (*IV* 192) to escape the "cycle" (to appropriate Hope's description of middle-class life) "of choices that are no choices at all" (*IV* 38) that they have become trapped within, a trap Hope herself links to middle-class life when she makes an analogy between shooting up and drinking cocktails. The trap, in fact, is undermining the health of the period, which was sometimes called the Age of Aquarius, the birthstone of which is now the "swollen,

red-faced, vacant" (IV 38) Amethyst. Hope and Coy's understanding that their common addiction is a drag on their aspirations, or perhaps on their chance of having any aspirations beyond "a world of hassle reduced to the one simple issue of scoring" (IV 38), seems to reveal that a middle-class mindset had always been an element of their sensibilities and had merely been manifesting itself in a form not immediately recognizable as such. Their existence, like Denis's name, points in two directions.

Drugs, at least heroin and amphetamines, are linked in the novel to the same kind of consumption that lulls those in the middle class into their contentment and also to an inability to find or sustain the type of unity Coy and Hope—who "should've met cute" (37) as *Nineteen-Eighty Four's* Winston and Julia do (See Pynchon's Foreword, xxii)⁹—stumble upon in the bathroom stall. Certain drugs are presented

⁹ The verbal echo establishes an association between Pynchon's understanding of Winston and Julia's relationship and his fashioning of Coy and Hope's. The association is of the negative variety, however. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, we have a trajectory, Pynchon writes, from "boy dislikes girl, boy and girl meet cute, first thing you know boy and girl are in love, then they get separated, finally they get back together. This is what transpires . . . sort of. But there's no happy ending" (xxii). In Orwell's novel, as Pynchon reads it, love, a revolutionary energy, provides an escape from the all-encompassing tyranny of the novel's culture, and that tyranny is capable, expectedly, of crushing the love. In *Inherent Vice*, boy and girl meet squalid—despite cuteness being everywhere and love being drawn on, as in Orwell, to counter cultural hegemony—and their relationship's development is woven into the tyranny, that is, the addiction, that controls them. They, too, separate—as Coy embraces the tyranny represented through Vigilant California by the Golden Fang, an organization that is presented as being analogous to Big Brother in that it seeks to have a controlling hand in all aspects of American life, including, as a supplier of heroin, the drug culture—and then get back together, reuniting for that happy ending that is missing in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and thereby suggesting a cute coming together that is capable of actually countering the forces of control, despite the overuse of the word *love*, which not only renders it practically meaningless but also enables it to be coopted for the sake of control, for example, for "hustling people into sex activities they might not, given the choice, much care to engage in" (IV 5).

The echo can be traced back to *Gravity's Rainbow* (see GR Wiki), which establishes an association between Coy and Hope (and between Winston and Julia) and *Gravity's Rainbow's* Roger and Jessica, who have "what Hollywood likes to call a 'cute meet'" (38): the war takes on the guise of Big Brother, though a feminized version, "she is Roger's mother" (39), a trope that emerges after Jessica's quip, "Does your mother know *you're* out like this" (39), i.e., does the controlling force in your life know what you're doing. Their love leads them to find an escape, hidden from the mother's view: "It is marginal, hungry, chilly— most times they're too paranoid to risk a fire— but it's something they want to keep, so much that to keep it they will take on more than propaganda has ever asked them for. They are in love. Fuck the war" (41–42), "an attitude [that] cannot," Luc Herman and Steven C. Weisenburger observe, "overcome [the couple's] dependence on the conflict. They wouldn't be together without the

as analogues of television, the new opium of the people, an idea familiar from Dr. Deeply's tubal detox organization, the "National Endowment for Video Education and Rehabilitation" (NEVER), in *Vineland* (VL 33). In *Inherent Vice*, the commonalities between drugs and television are hinted at, with regard to amphetamines, in Dr. Tubeside's name but are more pointedly brought to the fore when Denis sets up, as if it were a television, the twenty kilos of heroin Doc had hidden in a box that originally contained a twenty-five-inch color TV: "And dig it, Doc, if you watch long enough . . . see how it begins to sort of . . . change?" (IV 339) Doc and, soon after, Jade/Ashley acquiesce in the observation, and they all gather like "some wholesome family [. . .] to gaze tubeward," or, I guess, heroinward, and gobble their snacks, just as Bigfoot imagines some family doing "on a future homesite" (IV 22) in Channel View Estates.

Inherent Vice is no simple piece of nostalgia, as some critics complained upon its release. It is an examination of the consumerist tendencies that link members of the Sixties' counterculture to mainstream culture, and of Pynchon's response to that problem. Pynchon, at least by the early 1970s, recognized and apparently felt distraught over what was happening, seeing that the way that things were developing was undermining the power of the period's social movements. In a 1974 letter to David Shetzline and Mary (M. F.) Beal, Pynchon discusses an upcoming rally for the impeachment of Richard Nixon, satirizing its purpose by suggesting that it will be more of a social event for the fashionably leftist than a politically engaged expression of outrage: "Maybe I am wrong not to show up, after all think of all that great neurotic pussy that always shows up at things like—oh, aww, gee Mary, I'm sorry! I meant 'vagina,' of course!—like that, and all the biggies who'll be there. [. . .]" Correcting himself by writing that he meant "vagina" does not change the tenor of the comment, but Pynchon is doing something other than being a boorish man, even though in the two places where the joke turns up in the fiction (see *Vineland* 73 and *Against*

war" (108), much as there would be no Coy–Hope without heroin addiction or Winston–Julia without Big Brother. The war, of course, proves more like Big Brother than heroin addiction, for the love that is dependent on it doesn't develop into a happy ending: the love passes after V-E Day. It's as if drugs, even the ones that have a negative connotation in Pynchon's oeuvre, retain something positive about them, at least when compared to war or totalitarian regimes.

the Day 438), substituting the word *pussy* with *vagina* serves as a superficial correction meant to appease a listener's sensibility rather than to illustrate an alteration in the thinking of the speaker. Pynchon, after all, likely wasn't expecting Beal and Shetzline to believe he would consider going to the rally to pick up a woman that he had never met. Those who know Pynchon don't regard him as a man capable of such behavior. As Mary Tharaldsen, who lived with him for a number of years, told Boris Kachka, "He was very withdrawn, and the one way he could make connections with women would be through his friends" (153).¹⁰ The letter projects the superficiality displayed by Pynchon's fictional characters who utter the joke onto those who will be attending the rally, among whom Pynchon was not to be counted. Replacing the offensive *pussy* with the PC *vagina* is analogous to exchanging the nightclub scene for that of the political rally, because the protest's value lies in its creating an opportunity to meet women and see celebrities, who will be there not merely to protest but also to be seen, or consumed. Pynchon associates the type of cultural consumption that will be on display with lateness, that is, the secondhand reception and simulation of gestures and attitudes associated with those who developed them: he thus asks in the letter, "Why didn't they have one [an anti-Nixon rally] in '68?"

Hippies, Pynchon suggests, were—perhaps were always already—in the process of being absorbed into the world they opposed, becoming just another subset of the larger community, not necessarily as Shasta Fay seems to have become, "all in flatland gear [. . .] looking just like she swore she'd never look" (*IV* 1), but in hippie gear, a uniform that identifies the market to which they belong. They might wear the clothes, listen to the music, take the drugs, and attend the political rallies, but they do so in a spirit that subverts the hope hippie culture represented for those of a certain disposition, Pynchon apparently one of them. They are, as Brock Vond puts it in *Vineland*, "amateurs, consumers, short attention spans, out there for the thrills, pick up a chick, score some dope, nothing political" (*VL* 270). Brock's characterization of those who

¹⁰ Indeed, according to Chrissie Wexler, Pynchon "broke up more than one marriage, because he was too shy to find someone on his own. He made friends with couples and went off with the wife" (*Lineland* 78). Tharaldsen confirmed this observation, telling Kachka, "That seems to be his *modus operandi*. [. . .] It's a pattern" (153).

make up the counterculture, ninety percent of its members in his estimation, seems to be confirmed by the name PR³. It suggests that the PR³ protesters—in contrast to V's McClintic Sphere, whose "name was chosen because a sphere is a non-square in 3 dimensions" (Nov. 23, 1962)¹¹—are, despite superficial appearances, square, or cubed, which we would realize if we could see them as three dimensional, or as rounded, characters rather than unrecognizable faces on the scene. "Movement coordinators" thus find them to be kids who hadn't "been doing any analysis. Not only was nobody thinking about the real situation, nobody was even brainlessly reacting to it. Instead they were busy surrounding [themselves] with a classically retrograde cult of personality" (VL 205) developed around Weed. Such "politically disguised hero worship engenders fascism" (205), as Robert R. Hill observes, or, perhaps it would be more correct to say, is rooted in the same impulse that fascism is rooted in. That the PR³ers' spontaneous revolt is maintained as a community apropos of that fascist impulse points to their inability to commit to revolutionary ideals or their republic to serve as a nostalgic representation of a "serious 1960s model of social reciprocity" (202), as Hill maintains it is, despite his noting that Pynchon understands it is flawed. They don't put in, to cite Sphere, "the slow, frustrating and hard work" (V. 365) needed to escape, as Joanna Freer writes in another context, the "negative choice between simple acquiescence in the victory of the oppressors and all out war" (70).

The ostensible communal cohesion of the PR³, because it is developed without analysis, is not analogous in Pynchon's oeuvre to some model for which we should strive. It is more like the media-generated national cohesion that authorities in *Bleeding Edge* attempt to forge in the aftermath of 9/11, an event that provides a rallying cause around which national consensus can be justified and embraced or enforced. The emerging official narrative, which takes on the role of charismatic leader in the novel's post-9/11 atmosphere—something that establishes a link in Pynchon's thought between such leaders and the language they use to establish

¹¹ Pynchon tells Faith he had just found out that Thelonius Monk's middle name was Sphere. He was concerned that he would have to change the name of the character Sphere in *V* for legal reasons.

followings—offers the population the idea that it is safely ensconced “inside some extended national Family” (VL 269), to appropriate Brock’s notion about the deeper meaning of the majority of hippies’ behavior. That narrative infuses traces of its perspective into the language that we become obliged to use to talk about what happened. Take, for example, “Ground Zero,” the name given to the site of the collapsed Twin Towers. It is “a Cold War term taken from the scenarios of nuclear war so popular in the early sixties. This was nowhere near a Soviet nuclear strike on downtown Manhattan, yet those who repeat ‘Ground Zero’ over and over do so without shame or concern for etymology. The purpose is to get people cranked up in a certain way. Cranked up, scared, and helpless” (BE 328). From a certain perspective, it doesn’t matter if some, to return to Vond’s formulation, are “listening to the wrong music, breathing the wrong smoke, admiring the wrong personalities” (VL 269), that is, if they are attending to or serving as oppositional voices—which in *Bleeding Edge* are represented by those developing a “different [darker] picture [. . .] in the vast undefined anarchism of cyberspace” (BE 327)—so long as what they speak echoes the voice of officialdom each time, in the example from *Bleeding Edge*, they name the site where the atrocity took place.

Ground Zero, as I have argued elsewhere, thereby enters a commercial environment, coming to serve as “a product, the brand name of which has been genericized without having to compete with an alternative brand, and the press, ‘the Newspaper of Record’ (388) in particular, coming to serve as just a medium through which to conduct the advertising campaign” (Rolls, 2013b).¹² Such commercialization manifests itself in a different form in Pynchon’s representation of the unraveling of the Sixties but generates the same effect, undermining the power of dissidence by coopting its language for the purpose of connecting it to what it opposes. This element of Pynchon’s thinking is made clear when Bigfoot appears in the commercials for Channel View Estates wearing an “ankle-length velvet cape in paisley print of so many jangling ‘psychedelic’ hues” (IV 9), a look Paul Thomas Anderson, according to the script (9), sought to duplicate on film. Anderson also planned to use children—who,

¹² Portions of the preceding paragraph are taken from my review of *Bleeding Edge*.

in the novel, are portrayed as users of phrases associated with hippies—but opted for having Bigfoot alone in a large oval on the television screen. Bigfoot's diction mimics that of the counterculture—as it includes "hey man," "pad," "grooviest," "buzz kill," "rip off," "check this out," "out of sight," and "right on"—while he hawks the value of the future homes. Images of a middle-class housing development and the Dominguez flood control channel flash in the background. Anderson's changes may capture the implications of the novel's use of the commercial better than a closer duplication of Pynchon's vague description of the particular ad would have. Pynchon is able to depict Bigfoot's work in the series of Channel-View-Estates commercials, whereas Anderson is obliged to focus on one. Anderson's juxtaposition of the hippie-looking spokesman and stills of middle-class life suggests the counterculture can be incorporated into the American Dream, just as the idea of a hippie-looking spokesman's appearance in a repetitive series normalizes his presence.¹³

Housing estates can channel, to play on the name Pynchon gives Mickey Wolfmann's project, the flood of dissidents if such people can be led to perceive the embracing of the American Dream in terms compatible with their idiomatic attitudes. The cost of their accepting the pitch and taking the mortgage that will accompany, according to the movie, the no-money-down offer and of holding a straight-world job to pay for it will undercut their ability to be counter to anything and turn each of them into a representation of what Pynchon calls in his Watts article "the *little* man—meaning not so much any member of the power structure [the Man] as just your average white L.A. taxpayer, registered voter, property owner; employed, stable, mortgaged and the rest" (80). That element of the project is evinced by the fact that Tariq Khalil's neighborhood has been torn down to make way for the development, a revenge for Watts as Tariq sees it (cf. *IV* 17). The thinking about those to be placed in

¹³ For a discussion of the domestication of hippies on television, see Aniko Bodroghkozy's *Groove Tube*, 61–92. Bodroghkozy's interest is how television sought to place hippies in a sanitized light, thereby making viewers accustomed to their presence. Pynchon's Bigfoot commercials draw on that aspect of presenting hippies, but they also present suburban housing estates to hippies so that the lifestyle associated with suburban homes could be accommodated to the counterculture, and hippies could be duped into domesticating themselves.

the housing estate is, however, also analogous to the thinking about Watts residents that Pynchon ascribes to the L.A. power structure, now transposed to deal with at least the white elements of the counterculture: "Give them a little property, and they will be less tolerant of arson; get them to go in hock for a car or color TV, and they'll be more likely to hold down a steady job" ("Watts," 84). Wolfmann's plan to give away housing would have helped to counter the ability of "the Man" to turn hippies into "little men" and get them to abandon their tolerance for elements of the countercultural to which they do not necessarily belong.

II

The Sixties or its values—despite the critique of the ease with which those following its ethos became consumers of its features and thereby allowed those in power to commercialize it—remain a positive force in Pynchon's thought. The idealism of the period is recalled by March Kelleher in *Bleeding Edge*; her admiration for certain techies is derived from their spirit, which she hasn't "seen anything like [. . .] since the sixties. These kids are out to change the world. 'Information has to be free'" (116). The association between early twenty-first-century hackers and the Sixties' counterculture links the setting free of information to drugs, just as *Inherent Vice*'s "ARPAnet trip [is] like acid, a whole 'nother strange world" (*IV* 195), logging on to which, to use today's terminology, feels "like doing psychedelics" (*IV* 365) after a while. For Pynchon, the use of drugs, particularly LSD and marijuana—although Takeshi's amphetamine consumption in *Vineland* seems also to be included, suggesting context, as well as the particular substance, is important—is, as David Cowart puts it, "a metaphor serving the vision of a different social reality" (98). Even in his nonfiction, Pynchon calls marijuana, as late as 1984, "that useful substance" (*SL* 8), and in his introduction to *The Teachings of Don B*, he observes of Texas—recalling his understanding of its landscape, both in the mid-1960s when he lived in Houston and in the present tense—"The nearest venue for dope, sex, and rock 'n' roll, then as now, was Austin" (xix), a historical mischaracterization but symbolically accurate if the triad of Sixties' revolution is understood as something other than physical reality, for within Texas, Austin represents an alternative world.

The Sixties, as we are to understand it, isn't so much the decade as the mythology of the decade, as evidenced in *Inherent Vice* by the figure of Vehi, who can indulge in "systematic daily [acid] tripping" (IV 105), a fantasy of and about acidheads but, given the tolerance that one immediately builds up to the drug, not actually possible.¹⁴ If Pynchon were shooting for realism, he would have written "weekly tripping." The more powerful illustration of this element of Pynchon's thinking is expressed in Zoyd and Mucho's recollection of that "windowpane, down in Laguna." Zoyd begins the exchange with "God, I knew then, I knew. . . ." Mucho continues:

"Uh-huh, me too. That you were never going to die. Ha! No wonder the state panicked. How are they supposed to control a population that knows it'll never die? When that was always their last big chip, when they thought they had the power of life and death. But acid gave us the X-ray vision to see through that one, so of course they had to take it away from us." (VL 313–14)

What we have here, as Pynchon describes it in "Is It O.K. to Be a Luddite?," is

a profound unwillingness to give up elements of faith [or, in this context, to ignore new insights], however 'irrational,' to an emerging technopolitical order that might or might not know what it was doing. [. . .] To insist on the

¹⁴ One can double the dosage the following day, but the amount of acid one would need to take to trip daily would quickly become a problem. The tolerance wears off after a few days. For the fantasy, see Tom Burke, "Princess Leda's Castle in the Air," an article—originally appearing in the March 1970 issue of *Esquire*—that investigates L.A.'s cult scene in 1970 in the aftermath of the murder of Sharon Tate and briefly touches on the paranoia of the police with regard to cults: a Beverly Hills policeman, "several weeks before" Charles Manson was arrested, asserts, "When they find the killer, they'll find him to be a dooper and a hellhound," that is, one of the "Satanist dope fiends" (308) that he claims are destroying the town. Another of Burke's sources, "a singer of some note[—who] asks not to be identified" (305) and who was marginally involved, her comments suggest, in the cult scene, the emergence of which she attributes to regular acid consumption—observes, "Ken Kesey finally saw what would happen as a result of daily tripping. Even Leary has begun to dig it. . . ." (306). The central figure of the piece, Leda, also claims to "drop acid daily" and believes she is about to replace Timothy Leary, a "misuser of sacred chemicals," as the "spiritual leader" of the counterculture: "I give acid to persons who have never dropped it without telling them. I think of this as the administering of Holy Communion . . ." (311). She is a dark version of Vehi, who gives Doc acid without clearly telling him what he is getting.

miraculous is to deny to the machine at least some of its claims on us, to assert the limited wish that living things, earthly and otherwise, may on occasion become Bad and Big enough to take part in transcendent doings. (173)

The Sixties, as anthropomorphized metaphor, is the Dionysian body as Badass, not a Ned Lud, the historical figure whose name grew bigger than the man, but "King (or Captain) Ludd," the mythologized character that such growth created. Like other literary Badasses, Pynchon's Sixties is pulled together from fragments, the disparate voices of the counterculture—college kids, surfers, hippies, Afro-American militants, and various leftists¹⁵—and, like the makers of such legendary creatures, Mary Shelley and Horace Walpole in particular, Pynchon's narrator uses "voices not [his] own" ("Luddite" 172), noting of Zoyd and Mucho's exchange, "It was the way people used to talk" (VL 314).

The "used to" registers not just the disconnect between the narrator's voice and that of the Sixties but also the loss of the hope that was present in the voice of the past, thereby suggesting the elimination of the possibility of change and raising the question: What can we do to recover what has been lost? Pynchon's letter to Shetzline and Beal, like *Inherent Vice*, is also concerned with this question or, more specifically, the problem of deciding what to do in the face of what Pynchon calls in *Bleeding Edge* the "stupefied consensus about what life is to be" (BE 51), a consensus that is regaining its strength as "the Psychedelic Sixties, this little parenthesis of light" (IV 254), comes to a close, a conclusion that is associated in the novel with the movie *He Ran All the Way* (1951), "John Garfield's last picture before the antisubversives finally did him in, and it had the smell of blacklist all over it" (254).¹⁶ In the

¹⁵ See Freer, particularly 12–13 for a concise overview of this point.

¹⁶ The connection between the period about which Pynchon is writing and the period in which Garfield's 1951 movie appeared is historically apt: both time periods are at the end of their particular eras. As Louis Menand observes about the late 1940s and early 1950s in a discussion of Jack Kerouac's *On The Road* (1957) "The bits and pieces of America that the book captures [from the period between 1947 to 1950, when Kerouac took the road trips the book is based on . . .] are carefully selected to represent a way of life that is coming to an end in the postwar boom, a way of life before televisions and washing machines and fast food, when millions of people lived patched-together existences and men wandered the country—'ramblin' round,' in the Guthrie song—following the seasons in search of

letter, claiming he is "[h]aving what the CIA calls a 'mid-life crisis,'"—a phrase taken, according to the footnote, from "Ellsberg's dossier," that is, the Pentagon Papers—Pynchon muses about finding "another hustle [. . .] cannot dig to live a 'literary' life no more, maybe will try to learn putting cane seats in chairs, something clear and useful like that anyway, shit, you must know what I mean." The alternative that he imagines to the "literary" life he had been trying to live is comparable in its significance (at least as he presents it in the letter) to "a lump of hash," which, he writes, he had made inquiries about while travelling around the West coast on Greyhound buses in the fall of 1973. "I lost [it] someplace," he continues, "in Humboldt County 3 years ago and am still brooding about [it . . .] yes, SYMBOLIC! all right, that occurred to me too: that lump of hash was my good times all right, besides being real, secular Good Shit." His learning a manual skill and finding a lump of hash three-years gone are not, of course, ideas to be taken at face value. Rather, Pynchon's thinking about them is a symptom of his brooding over an apparent lack of possibilities. They are notions that point toward a past and a possible future that contain value in contrast to a present devoid of any clear plans beyond those afforded by aimless travel, something Pynchon, if what he tells Shetzline and Beal is to be believed, had been pursuing for two years or so. Pynchon suggests he is going to curtail such travel, as he is "keying [his] plans on Geraldine [his then-girlfriend], part of a general resolution not to impose shit on her" by turning his own peripatetic life into an oppressive force.¹⁷

Pynchon portrays himself as someone caught on a threshold, the one at the exit of the psychedelic parenthesis, itself a liminal period,¹⁸ unable to go back and unsure about how to go forward. The following year he seems to have been feeling better about his profession. He wrote to Candida Donadio to tell her about a novel he was working on that would deal with Mason and Dixon, a subject he may have been

work. [. . .] [T]hey are pictures of a world not yet made plump and uniform by postwar affluence and consumerism."

¹⁷ Note the contrast here to Pynchon's comments on an advantage to reclusiveness in his June 2, 1963, letter to Faith Sale, remarking, "one of the advantages in being a recluse is that you can make your own plans, and barring war or natural catastrophe, comply with them." The plans he was discussing involved visiting Faith and Kirk in Ghana, where the two were headed.

¹⁸ For a discussion of the 1960s as a liminal moment, see Freer, 25–37.

considering writing about as early as 1970, if not before.¹⁹ This project—as well as another one, a book said to be titled “The Japanese Insurance Adjuster” that was rumored to feature the Japanese movie monster Mothra and that never came to fruition but traces of which seem to be present in *Vineland*²⁰—was, it is reasonable to assume, Pynchon’s attempt to revive the possibilities of his writing. Writing “was all I was good for” (March 27, 1964),²¹ he had speculated when he considered giving it up to pursue a bachelor’s degree in mathematics in the early 1960s. The following decade, he continued to feel caught, addressing in an undated letter to Michael Stephens, a member of Columbia University’s Writing Program, “the sad state of American publishing” which was, Pynchon writes, “[. . .] proving more & more dangerous to my mental health’ and [he] suggests that if he could find a budget time-machine, he might go back twenty years and [repeating the phrase from a decade earlier] ‘[. . .] look around for another hustle.’”²²

The fiction reflects Pynchon’s state of in-betweenness. The apparent Mothra-based elements of *Vineland* involve Takeshi Fumimoto—who is introduced “standing at the edge of a gigantic animal footprint” (VL 142)—during a peripatetic period, when his “one fixed address,” now that he is “out on his own,” is “a cubicle in outer Ueno he shared rent on” (VL 143). The edge that he is standing on, at least in *Vineland* if not in “The Japanese Insurance Adjuster,” is also the edge of a new phase

¹⁹ See Gussow for the 1975 letter to Donadio; see Kachka for a friend’s remembering Pynchon mentioning a novel about Mason and Dixon as early as 1970 (cf. 51).

²⁰ Bill Roeder, reporting on the existence of both projects in 1978, noted that Pynchon was said to have “walked the 233-mile length of the Mason-Dixon line (7)” for research purposes.

²¹ Pynchon told Kirkpatrick and Faith Sale (March 27, 1964) at the time that he was working on four projects but getting nowhere with any of them and revealed that his going to Berkeley following Farina’s wedding was spurred by his interest in returning to college. The shock of the Kennedy assassination, coupled with personal stress (perhaps having to do with his attraction to Mary Ann Tharaldsen, Siedler’s wife, who would soon go to Mexico to live with him [See Kachka 51]) almost led him to give up on writing but his being turned down by Berkeley led him to think there wasn’t anything else for him to do.

²² The text is from Between the Covers Rare Books’ listing for two Pynchon letters regarding Tomasz Mirkowicz, who had tried to contact Pynchon about doing Polish translations of his work, probably in the mid-1980s and likely around the time Melanie Jackson was shopping *Slow Learner* around, given the frustration Pynchon expresses over his dealings with the publishing industry.

of his life, between his life as an independent investigator of insurance claims for Wawazume Life & Non-Life and his life with DL Chastain, freelancing in the Karmic adjustment business among the Thanatoids. More strikingly, *Mason & Dixon* has a liminal space, the line between the North and the South, at its center, a space that, as the story of the making of the line comes to an end, is imagined as potentially endless:

Suppose that Mason and Dixon and their Line cross Ohio after all. [. . .] The under-lying Condition of their Lives is quickly establish'd as the Need to keep, as others a permanent address, a perfect Latitude,— no fix'd place, rather a fix'd Motion[. . .] Whenever they do stop moving [. . .] they lose their Invisibility." (MD 706–07)

The pursuit of limitless potential, something Pynchon may have sought in his own analogue of the line, *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973)—a project thought about as something like "an endless novel" (Gordon 171) when it was being worked on—must, even if imaginary, be interrupted, and Mason and Dixon's equally imaginary discovery of "the first new Planet" (MD 708), Uranus, fifteen years before the fact, sends them eastward in the hope of settling into a life of material excess, a detail that suggests America's potential got lost in the pursuit of wealth for its own sake.²³ The return trip is complicated by the extension of the line over the Atlantic and by the itinerant community that comes to form around its "transnoctially charter'd 'Atlantick Company'" (MD 714). The two, now feeling neither "British enough anymore, nor quite American," settle into retirement on this mid-Atlantic line—a doubly liminal

²³ A similar concern can be found in the construction of the history of Peter Pinguid in *The Crying of Lot 49*. Pinguid becomes, in "the very first military confrontation between Russia and America [. . .] our first casualty" (50). He does not die; rather he violates "his upbringing and code of honor [. . .] and for the rest of his life he did little more than acquire wealth" (51), abandoning, in short, the struggle. Discussing *Mason & Dixon* in relation to "Is It O.K. to Be a Luddite," David Cowart, in *Thomas Pynchon & the Dark Passages of History*, locates the issue in Pynchon's concern with "the struggle between scientific rationalism and the perennial yearning for mystical possibility" (139). Replacing such yearning for capitalistic gain or what it inevitably leads to, Soviet Marxism (CL49), is to give up on the potential offered by "Worlds alternative to this one" (M&D 359).

space, that is, longitudinally and latitudinally so—"content to reside like Ferrymen or Bridge-keepers, ever in a Ubiquity of Flow, before a ceaseless Spectacle of Transition" (*MD* 714).²⁴

In 1983—after what Pynchon refers to as "this decade of Writer's Block I seem to be having & all"—he was "feeling more and more these days like a one-shot flash-in-the-pan amateur," as he remarked in a letter to Donald Barthelme. As he had done in his 1974 letter to Shetzline and Beal, Pynchon presents himself to Barthelme as a wanderer, telling him that he remained, Takeshi-like, without a "fixed address" and was "between coasts, Arkansas or Lubbock or someplace like 'at'"²⁵ on March 17, when the literary dinner to which Barthelme had invited him took place. The year after the Barthelme dinner, the sources Helen Dudar drew upon for her *Chicago Tribune Bookworld* article, "Lifting the Veil on Life of a Literary Recluse," offered accounts that correspond to that self-presentation: "What can be gathered personally about Pynchon from those who have shared his company is that he is a restless, rootless man who lives, as unencumbered as possible, from place to place and coast to coast in borrowed or sublet quarters" (35).²⁶ The idea of the peripatetic Pynchon, however,

²⁴ Pynchon has thwarted easy closure since *V*, ending that novel with Stencil's heading off to investigate another lead—even though it seems to the reader that he has followed his mystery to her/its dissolution—and with Profane's being stuck on Malta without a clear plan about how to get back home. The fantasy that closes the completion of the line in *Mason & Dixon* is a continuation of the trend, Pynchon's interests being like young folks: "What is most appealing about [them], after all, is the changes, not the still photograph of finished character but the movie, the soul in flux" (*SL* 23). Pynchon's decision to keep his image and life story out of the media may be, in part, an attempt to avoid being reduced to a "still photograph" or the narrative equivalent of one.

²⁵ Although written while Pynchon is away from New York, the letter to Barthelme suggests Pynchon had been in New York the previous couple or so years, and it was during this period that he first became involved with Melanie Jackson, who was, by the time of his writing Barthelme, his agent.

²⁶ Kirkpatrick Sale is likely the source for this sentence. Kachka notes that "Pynchon broke off contact after Sale talked to a reporter" (157), and Dudar's article is the first one since the articles that appeared immediately after the publication of *V*. that a writer managed to get information about Pynchon from his friends. Dudar reports, "If [Pynchon] is camping in your house for a spell, he may quarrel with your preschool child about the television shows they will watch; his tastes run to the sort of junk embraced by any addict committed to pop culture" (35); Sale told Kachka that he remembers Pynchon "arguing with his kids over which cartoons to watch" (153). Sale, who was among the circle in which Barthelme hung out, and Pynchon may not have been in contact in the period in which Sale spoke with Dudar, even though Pynchon was in New York in the early 1980s. Sale may even have talked for

was something of an artifice, even if Pynchon himself had fashioned it.²⁷ He was living at the Sales' place in the year before *Gravity's Rainbow* appeared, well within the two-year period in which he told Shetzline and Beal he had been drifting, and in the years before his writing to Barthelme he must have spent considerable time in New York City, possibly settling there after returning from Britain, where he travelled around 1978, and staying a long enough time to establish a close relationship with Melanie Jackson in the lead up to his break with Donadio and much of his past. Barthelme, in any case, thought Pynchon was there, even though Pynchon seems to have been keeping his distance from those he hung out with in the early 1970s. He feels the need to draw Barthelme's attention to his change of agents—a change that took place at the beginning of 1982, although the events leading up to it took place in 1981, more than a year before his receiving the invitation—and notes that he may have seen Barthelme "on the street once last year or maybe the year before, in the Village, but [. . .] failed to say hello."

that reason, giving Dudar secondhand information, the rumors circulating about Pynchon in the early 1980s among those whom he hung out with around the time *Gravity's Rainbow* was published.

²⁷ After completing the manuscript of *Gravity's Rainbow* Pynchon's residence wasn't as stable as it was during the period in which he lived in Manhattan Beach, CA, but the evidence suggests he did not spend his time living out of hotels, as Kachka would have us believe (cf. 158). Pynchon left for the West Coast in the Fall of 1974 but was back in New York in January of 1974 and was up around Middletown, NY, later that year (cf. Blumenthal), a region he seems to have stayed in for a while. He spent time with Richard Conolloy, an English teacher at Rockland Community College (RCC), who introduced him to Jay Carter England, a jazz musician who taught at RCC, and his wife Barbara, who was friends, or became friends, with a woman in the area named Geraldine, possibly Pynchon's girlfriend and the reason for his staying in the area (Glassow, private correspondence).

Pynchon, then, seems to have stuck around the East coast until 1976. Smith, in fact, told Tomaske that Pynchon occasionally went to dinner with Smith and his wife, Sheila, along with Candida, in the '70s (2001). Pynchon shows up in Trinidad, CA, around 1976 and stays there until 1977 (Kachka 154 and Glassow, private correspondence; Glassow is Kachka's "Pynchon tracker," 154). He was in Britain around the time of the publication of Larry Kramer's *Faggots* (1978), both Hitchens (176) and Maschler (96–97) reveal, returning to the U.S. soon afterwards. He likely remained in New York for a good part of the next few years. It was during this period, around 1981, that he began dating Melanie Jackson, and Donadio "told others Pynchon had been staying in Donadio's apartment (platonically)" when that relationship, almost certainly without her knowing about it, began (Kachka 154). He may have moved in with Jackson after that arrangement fell apart.

If Pynchon had fallen into a state of aimlessness, it seems to have been more of a mental than a physical state, even if he turned to the road from time to time. The dilemma faced by the characters in *Inherent Vice*, whether they are aware of it or not, is in some respects the one Pynchon seems to have faced after the publication of *Gravity's Rainbow* and for an extended period afterward, that is, dealing with the loss of hopefulness, along with his own lack of productivity, that the previous decade's social movements had unleashed. Pynchon seems to have filled the void, in part, by watching T.V. In the mid-1970s, when Judith Pynchon was asked what her brother might be doing at the moment, she replied, "Probably watching *The Brady Bunch*. It's his favorite show" ("That Which Seemingly Influenced"). *Vineland* may thus come off, at least to David Foster Wallace, as if Pynchon had "spent 20 years smoking pot and watching TV." (Max 152). The fostering of such an impression may serve as a Pynchonian, rather than Pynchonesque, commentary on the numbing quality of contemporary American life, the shadow of which, in the novel, is Thanatoid life: "But we watch a lot of Tube" becomes "Uhk ee ahkhh uh akh uh Oomb" (VL 170), if we may be allowed to take this mouth-filled utterance as a synecdochic representation of the relationship between living Americans and Thanatoids. Watching the Tube is not simply, or primarily, a point of convergence for the two groups nor merely a characteristic element of the lives of each. Rather, Thanatoid watching is an imprecise, because mostly passive, repetition of American watching. "There'll never be a Thanatoid sitcom [. . .] 'cause all they could show'd be scenes of Thanatoids watchin' the Tube!" (VL 171); a yearly televised Thanatoid Roast is the only thinkable possibility—an idea that is itself presented as a joke during a Thanatoid Roast—that they'll end up on the active side of the screen. American life, by contrast, attempts or hopes, at least partially, to join tube-rhythms and become fit for television: "Be all right again soon. [. . .] Only a couple more commercials, just hold on, Prair" (VL 105) illustrates a typical approach to the world. The extreme version of this tendency is expressed in Hector Zuñiga, whose tubal addiction feeds his dependence on the "Tubal fantasies about his profession" (VL 345) that "ke[ep] him going" (VL 344), while simultaneously distancing him from what is truly important to his life, that is, undermining his ability to enjoy the love he feels

for his wife, much as heroin addiction in *Inherent Vice* is a barrier to participating in a loving relationship.²⁸

Whether *Vineland's* exploration of the influence of television on American life is meant to serve as a critique or not,²⁹ the tube presides over the novel not simply because it is a medium in which characters' lives have become immersed but also because of the role played by Takeshi, who is, or was, a character in a television show: his last appearance in Pynchon's fiction, that is, the last time we hear about him in *Gravity's Rainbow*, was as one half of the comical kamikaze duo in "a seventh rerun of the Takeshi and Ichizo Show" (*GR* 738). The answer to the implied question behind DL's statement, "I can't imagine you in anybody's air force, let alone the kamikaze, who, I understand from the history books, were fairly picky about who flew for 'em" (*VL* 175), is that his role shaded into fiction, the televised, comedic variety. Takeshi reappears in *Vineland* as the outlaw, the Badass writ small, or the agent "of the poor [or preterit, who is ...] more skilled and knowledgeable in the arts of karmic readjustment" (xi), as Pynchon puts it in his introduction to Jim Dodge's *Stone Junction*, than us average folk. DL is "still finding out what he could do. And couldn't" (*VL* 100), and she later notes, "I know he's got all kinds of people after him, and some others he won't even tell me about. For years now, I've been his accomplice in ... I don't know what you'd call it, a life of international crime?" (*VL* 381). Takeshi may be left in the background for much of the novel, but he serves as its spirit, opening up the path through which Prairie's plotline moves forward: his business card, the giri chit

²⁸ Hector may have allowed his tubal addiction—"the television set, a 19-inch French Provincial floor model, [having been named] as correspondent" (348) in his divorce proceedings—to destroy his marriage, but he continues to long for his wife. Dancing with Frenesi in Vegas, "Hector was interested to find himself with a hardon, not for Frenesi who was here, but for Debbi who wasn't, that girl in the Mormon makeup who'd always held the pink slip to his heart, and the memory of the last time they'd danced together, to the radio, in the kitchen, with the lights off, and the night of love and sex strangely as always intermingled" (350). The drug destroys Hope and Coy's marriage as well as limits, Doc speculates, Shasta's options during her period on Gordita beach: "Doc, aside from being just about the only dooper she knew who didn't use heroin, which freed up a lot of time for both of them, had never figured out what else she might've seen in him" (11).

²⁹ Brian McHale explores the ambiguity of the novel's treatment of television (cf. 116–25).

(VL 100), brings Prairie into contact with DL and the information DL and those she is in contact with from 24fps can provide to piece together Frenesi's story, the one we, Pynchon's readers, learn about. He also comes forward to whisk Prairie away from danger, keeping her out of Brock's hands, allowing her investigation to continue, and providing her with the opportunity to reunite with her mother.

His own investigative days having come to an end, Takeshi's skill in karmic adjustment lies in his ability, both with Prairie and among the Thanatoids, to facilitate his clients' investigations into the stories they need to resolve, enabling them to direct their narratives into healthier paths. Hence, despite his warning against seeking revenge, Takeshi is "running traces on" (VL 174) those whom Ortho Bob would exact it on, but he notes, "Death, in Modern Karmic Adjustment, got removed from the process" (VL 175). "The cycles of birth and death" (VL 174) had proved too slow, giving rise to a market in information and hope to those in the present, because while it had sometimes taken centuries for a balance to be found, these days "[t]he amount of memory on a chip doubles every year and a half!" Still, "[t]he state of the art will only allow this to move so fast!" (VL 174) The doppelganger of Brock, Takeshi, gathers information, not to control those informing and those informed against in what N. Katherine Hayles calls the "snitch system" (15), but to return control to those who have lost it.

The question asked in the novel might be "Who was saved?" (VL 29), but the question posed by the novel is how do we use what we know or can find out to resolve the failure that left few, if any, saved and get past the inertia that returned in the wake of that counterculture's collapse, thereby establishing an environment, at least on a personal level, in which hope can be fostered. Through raising this issue, Pynchon writes himself into the novel as a Karmic Adjustment agent, but the art he fashions—meant to enable us to take control of our place in the narrative of the day—can only enable things to move so fast, even in the Computer Age, as Pynchon calls it in "Is It O.K. to Be a Luddite?," when "all the cats are jumping out of all the bags and even beginning to mingle [. . . , when a]nybody with the time, literacy and access fee [. . .] can get together with just about any piece of specialized knowledge s/he may need" (169). It's not, as David Porush puts it, whether "machinery and

metaphor collaborate [. . .] in service of darkness or light" (42); it's that they collaborate for either darkness or light depending on whose in control. There are the Vonds, who offer, to return to the *Stone Junction* introduction, "the threat, indeed promise, of control without mercy that lay in wait down the comely vistas of freedom that computer-folk were imagining" (xii), and there are the Takeshis, the outlaws who may find a way to lead us to such comely vistas. But even if the latter prove incapable of doing so, there is, as Maxine notes in a different context, "never going to be recourse for you in the straight world. The only help you'll find now will be from some kind of outlaw" (*BE* 175).

III

The Sixties, Pynchon seems to have hoped, had the potential to move the country beyond its tendency to accept stasis, a hope, he recognized, that had been undercut within the period and finally faded away with the rise of 1980s culture, when, to use the terms established in *Vineland*, the Nixonian reaction came to be so assimilated into the cultural norm that young people, usually regarded as a source of hope in Pynchon's writing, started "comín in all on their own [around 1981] askín about careers" (*VL* 347) as undercover agents, or snitches. The important year, symbolically speaking, is 1984, thanks partly to Orwell but also, perhaps, to biographical events. That was the year *Slow Learner* appeared with an autobiographical introduction that offers, along with the deprecating commentary on Pynchon's early stories, a quasi-positive take on the present, one in which Pynchon can still, if somewhat anachronistically as *Vineland* evidences, tout the benefits of marijuana and assert "rock 'n' roll will never die" (*SL* 23). The introduction is, at least in part, about why we should be glad things—cultural and, in relation to Pynchon's own work anyway, literary—are no longer the way they were back in the 1950s. Part of the cultural point is highlighted in the discussion of the end of "The Small Rain," where, Pynchon notes, "some kind of sexual encounter appears to take place, though you'd never know it from the text. The language suddenly gets too fancy to read" (*SL* 6). Explaining, even justifying, that obscurity, Pynchon goes on to write, "I think, looking back, that there might have been a general nervousness [about sex]

in the whole college-age subculture. A tendency to self-censorship. [. . .] Today," he asserts, "this all seems a dead issue, but back then it was a felt constraint on folks's writing" (SL 6).

The issue of confining oneself to print-appropriate language, Pynchon would soon discover, wasn't quite dead yet. After writing the introduction, he found himself battling the entrenched conservatism of the *New York Times Book Review*, which pulled "Is It O.K. to Be a Luddite?" from its pages just as the issue in which it was originally set to appear was ready to print. The problem, Rebecca Sinkler reports (cf. 69), was Abe Rosenthal, the executive editor; he considered the word *badass* too vulgar for the paper and wanted it removed. Pynchon, objecting to being censored, refused to find a more acceptable term. He won his battle with Rosenthal: the essay was published with the "offensive" term in the *Book Review* on October 28, 1984. But being asked to censor himself may have been a problem in itself, reminding Pynchon of his youthful self-repression and serving as one more sign that the gains of the Sixties were too quickly being taken away or had never been grasped in their full potential from the beginning.³⁰ *Slow Learner's* introduction suggests as much. There, tying literary failures to cultural failures, Pynchon connects his generation's limited success in taking advantage of the divergent directions in fiction that emergent voices were showing them they could take with the limited nature of the success of the "new left" later in the '60s," noting that he and his contemporaries did not consciously understand that they should have been "groping after a synthesis" and recalling, in the sentence that follows, the "failure of college kids and blue-collar workers to get together politically" (7).

The problem manifests itself in *Vineland* in the allegorical struggle over Frenesi, who, in one sense, "embodies the 1960s," as Dieter Meindl points out (202). The struggle is not the one between Weed, the problematic and therefore doomed representative of the counterculture, and Vond, the archetypal establishment figure, but the one between Vond and Sasha/Zoyd, a combination of the old left, which sees the counterculture as "stupid potheads" (VL 297), or "hippie bums" (VL 304),

³⁰ For a discussion of the use of and battle over obscenity laws, see Herman and Weisenburger 51–58.

and the counterculture, which doesn't necessarily acknowledge the importance of the old fight, as evidenced by Zoyd's "working gypsy construction jobs," when he met Frenesi, and by his "scab activities" (VL 319), as his Vineland ex-in-laws regard his continuing to work such jobs. Even in the face of a common enemy, Sasha and Zoyd are initially unable to come together. Zoyd, attempting to enlist Sasha in his cause, is rebuffed as if he were another adversary: "I'm not going to fink on my own daughter," she declares, leaving Zoyd to call attention to their common cause: "OK then, how about Brock Vond, who we both know for what he is, exactly the kind of criminal fascist you've been takin' honest shots at all your life—are you gonna be loyal to somebody like that?" (VL 58) They are, in any case, unable to save Frenesi. She has already flown back to Vond, having failed at being a genuine leftist revolutionary, despite her continued commitment, in some respects, to the old left's ideal—as revealed by her refusal to cross a picket line after years of working for the forces her upbringing taught her to oppose. She is incapable of synthesizing, as needs to be done, old and new, and remains, despite appearances, "so inappropriate" (VL 56), as Sasha realizes, for the period's countercultural opposition.

Sasha and Zoyd finally agree, despite their mutual distrust, to establish a truce for the sake of Prairie. They understand that "no judge would waste the time deciding whose rap sheet was more disreputable—if it was a choice between a lifelong Red grandmother and a dope fiend father, Prairie would end up as a ward of the court, and no question, they had to keep her out of that" (VL 57). The indifference of the authorities, Vond in the abstract, to the distinction between different forms of opposition prompts a compromise. Vineland County, an escape for the hippies and a place with a history tied to America's leftist past, serves as a geographical metaphor for that compromise: it is a place where the next generation can be sheltered from fascist control but where the late-1960s left and earlier leftist movements remain unable to unite. They merely come to tolerate each other, while the children develop their own modes of opposition, approaching conventional cultural forms through parody. These parodies, however, come across as unintentional. The kids who are presenting them, if not the narrator, are engaged in earnest attempts to reconcile themselves to the world that has been provided for them. Isaiah's dream of establishing a

Disney-like chain of "violence centers, each on the scale, perhaps, of a small theme park" that is meant to attract a "family clientele" (VL 19), for instance, is a mistakenly—not, at least from the character's perspective, sarcastically—skewed presentation of a so-called acceptable American cultural form. The reader may wonder if Isaiah's idea is a Disneyfication of punk or a punkification of Disney.

Pynchon simultaneously celebrates and questions the value of the Sixties' social movement, hence the ambiguity of *Vineland's* PR³ as well as the double, contradictory significance of Denis's name and of Coy and Hope's existence in *Inherent Vice*. Such ambiguity can be taken to connote that those involved in the period's counter-cultural movements were, as Pynchon represents them, caught in America's paralysis, something Doc draws attention to while musing about the involvement of the Golden Fang in the heroin trade and the rehabilitation industry: "Get them coming and going, twice as much revenue and no worries about new customers—as long as American life was something to be escaped from, the cartel could always be sure of a bottomless pool of new customers" (IV 192). Whether one has gone, dropped out, or come, returned to the fold—or perhaps the order is reversed in Doc's mind—one can't escape the culture in which "[f]rom the time we were little kids, they brainwashed us all with all kinds of jive about how lucky America was, is and will continue to be, world without end, amen, and how lucky we were to be living in it. They taught us Dr. Johnson's line ass backward, that there's much to be enjoyed, little to be endured, and we, saps and too young to know better, believed it" (Pynchon qtd. in Siegel, "Revolution" 186). Oedipa comes to think of the culture as one characterized by "the exitlessness, [. . .] the absence of surprise to life, that harrows the head of everybody American you know" (CL49 170). It is the culture that the Golden Fang facilitates "a progressive knotting into" (GR 3). That organization thereby serves as negative of *The Crying of Lot 49's* Tristero, a network that supports "a disentanglement from" (GR 3) such monotony, revealing the possibility of alternatives, if not "a real alternative" (CL49 170). Such is the case whichever of the four hypotheses about the Tristero's origin that Oedipa posits near the novel's end turn out to be true, for it is through her investigation of the Tristero that she becomes aware that exits are conceivable. Truth is beside the point.

From the start, Oedipa treats the Tristero network as "a secret richness and concealed density of dream" (CL49 170) and continues to do so after positing her symmetrical hypotheses, something evinced by her showing up at the auction prepared to cause "a scene violent enough to bring the cops into it" (CL49 183). In other words, she remains prepared to turn her problem over to the authorities so that the Tristero's deviance can be revealed and brought under control. Her search for the truth of the Tristero, after all, is an attempt to accommodate its existence to her world. She approaches it as an orthodox Freudian, at least as described by Dr. Hilarius, approaches the unconscious, that is, as something that "would be like any other room, once the light was let in. That the dark shapes would resolve into toy horses and Biedermeyer furniture" (CL49 135). The shapes don't become manageable. The Tristero functions the same way, or could generate the same effect, whether it's a hoax or not. Beyond the possibility that the Tristero is an actual network, at least two of Oedipa's articulated scenarios are shown to be capable of producing the alienating effects that Oedipa suffers for believing in the network: Dr. Hilarius's belief in an Israeli threat corresponds to Oedipa's fantasizing the whole thing, and he is taken away in a strait jacket, a confirmed nut, and the alteration LSD produces in Mucho corresponds to Oedipa's fear that she is hallucinating it. (Drugs aren't simply, as Cowart writes, "to *Vineland* what the Tristero is to *Lot 49*" [98]; they are to Mucho what the Tristero is to Oedipa.)

The possibility that she has become a pawn in an elaborate plot orchestrated by Pierce may also have its analogue in Metzger's "elaborate, seduction, plot" (CL49 31), which, beyond seeming the logical "starting point for" her discovery of the Tristero, serves in a way as a microcosm of the macrocosmic plot, hinting at the doubleness that Oedipa will discover in American culture. The seduction takes place before a television, well-established by the 1960s as "a medium of hopeless consensus" (1), as Lynn Spigel and Michael Curtin observe, just as the movie industry had been an homogenized medium: "All those movies had happy endings" (CL49 34), Oedipa notes, implicitly associating them, because of their sameness, with her "fat deckful of days which seemed [. . .] more or less identical" (CL49 11). Metzger gets her to admit "all" is really "most," and *Cashiered*—the movie on the local station that replaces

NBC's family-oriented *Bonanza* in Oedipa's evening plans—proves to be among the exceptions, much as was the night Pierce called the last time she spoke with him and as is this evening, during which Metzger develops the game "Strip Botticelli" (*CL49* 36) and Oedipa strips off, layer after layer, her life's attire. The suggestion here may be that television had the possibility of offering, at least at the local level, access to alternative narratives, though not at the national level, where success depends on the creation of a homogenized audience, something that links the major networks, by analogy, to the Golden Fang and thus heroin addiction. Pynchon hence notes in *Vineland*, "Minute the Tube got hold of you folks that was it, that whole alternative America, el deado meato" (*VL* 373). Developing the medium so that it would accommodate itself to a national stage undermined the hope it could have given, not because communal unity is necessarily negative but because the type of communal unity is grounded in distraction, or mindless pleasures, something Mucho realizes: "Give us too much to process, fill up every minute, keep us distracted, it's what the Tube is for, and though it kills me to say it, it's what rock and roll is becoming—just another way to claim our attention" (*VL* 314).³¹

Whatever the status of the seduction may be—a starting point for Oedipa's discovery, a microcosmic representation of it, or both—the world from which Oedipa has come, the one mothered over by "Secretaries James and Foster and Senator Joseph," has been left on "another pattern of track" (*CL49* 104). The reference here is to Oedipa's college years on the Cornell campus of the 1950s—when "[o]ne year [. . .] was much like another" (*SL* 14)—a campus so unlike the one Oedipa observes in Berkeley.³² An allusion to her recent life—her Tupperware, Republican milieu with

³¹ Note that Pynchon writes "rock and roll" in Mucho's dialogue rather than "rock 'n' roll." The formality is perhaps an indication that the music has been coopted. If so, *Vineland* registers disillusionment with a genre of music that Pynchon regarded as oppositional from its beginnings in the 1950s (cf. *SL* 8). The informal "rock 'n' roll" is used exclusively in *Slow Learner* and *Bleeding Edge*, while *Vineland* has "rock and roll" throughout. The two spellings make their way into *Inherent Vice*, the formal "and" appearing just twice, the first time in a sentence uttered by Bigfoot (139) and the second in a sentence from the *Golden Fang Procedures Handbook* (170) in Dr. Blatnoyd's office.

³² J. Kerry Grant has observed that Oedipa may not have attended Cornell (10), noting that her description of her college as "a somnolent Siwash" (103) "suggests otherwise" (Grant 10), for a siwash is, "[a]ccording to the *New Dictionary of American Slang*, 'Any small college; the archetypical small college'"

its seemingly identical days—is also present. Oedipa's married life was as deeply conformist as her college one, but both are, for her, "impossible to find ever again" (CL49 104). Her marriage therefore ends, as we learn in *Vineland*, in an amicable divorce, implying that the disenfranchised, Mucho now also among them, are splintered but nonetheless share a common position. The Cornell Oedipa attended, however, is also the one Pynchon attended. He is around Oedipa's age, and his Cornell, although "doing its duty to act *in loco parentis*" (Introduction to *Been Down* vii) by imposing strict curfews and doing its best to curtail erotic activity among students, was not always as bleak as Oedipa recalls: the university's "extraordinary meddling was not seriously protested until the Spring of 1958," when "like a preview of the '60s, students got together on the issue, wrote letters, rallied, demonstrated, and finally, a couple of thousand strong, by torchlight in the curfew hours between May 23rd and 24th, marched to and stormed the home of the University president" (vii), as Pynchon recalls in his introduction to Richard Fariña's *Been Down So Long It Looks Like Up to Me* (1966). Pynchon's "not seriously" suggests there were small gestures of rebellion before the May events, just as the "widely and immediately recognized [odor of marijuana smoke the day revolution reached *Vineland's* College of the Surf] later led historians of the incident to question the drug innocence of this student body" (VL 205). Oedipa's world had never been as conformist as she saw it; she just hadn't been very attentive to her surroundings.

If that Cornell protest was like a preview, an early appearance of the light that would later fill the parenthesis, the significance of its visibility remained unclear—either because broadening awareness of the events came apropos of rumor, at least as Pynchon asks us to envision them in his introduction to Fariña's novel (cf. vii), or because those events would only retroactively appear as a preview to anything, much as Pynchon's belief that Fariña "caught something" "in the guitar break of ["Peggy Sue"] [. . .], some flash of things to come" is likely a "retro-fantasy" (ix).

(Grant 80). Siwash, however, seems to be used metaphorically and is, therefore, capitalized; in comparison to campuses like that of Berkeley in the 1960s, the 1950s campus of even a large university like Cornell seems like that of a siwash.

The significance of the protest, as Pynchon understands it looking back, was like the "sunrise over the library slope at Cornell" (*CL49* 10) that Oedipa recalls but that no one, including Oedipa, had faced, because everyone was looking the wrong way.³³ To return to Oedipa's track metaphor, divergent patterns were being laid down even if some were not clearly seen: Oedipa has left the one made by Senator Joseph and his ilk in favor of the one to which her encounter with the Tristero has led her. She has wandered onto a track "beyond the appearance of the legacy America," a beyond that Oedipa comes to recognize must exist even if "there was just America," for "if there was just America then it seemed the only way she could continue, and manage to be at all relevant to it, was as an alien" (*CL49* 182). She has become a member of an other world, the presence of which her investigation of the Tristero has enabled her, if not to find for the first time, to recognize as an alternative position from which to project herself into America or observe what has been projected.

That other world—filled with individuals and groups that may be, but are not necessarily, connected through W.A.S.T.E—is one where the Peter Pinguid Society has leaned so far Right that it is against Industrial Capitalism; where squatters stay along railroad tracks, in abandoned freight cars, "behind smiling billboards along" highways, and "in junkyards [. . .] or [. . .] up some pole in a lineman's tent"; where drifters, Americans, speak "their [alternative] language carefully, scholarly, as if they were in exile from somewhere else invisible yet congruent with the cheered land [Oedipa] lived in" (*CL49* 180); where inventors attempt to reestablish their individuality beyond a culture of teamwork; where an underworld of failed suicides communicate their discontent; where isolates maintain a society that is held together by the members' separation from each other; where children live through their dreams in the urban night; where anarchists distribute their literature, perhaps since the century's start; where death cults attempt to find converts among the disenfranchised and victims among the well-adjusted; where misfits prepare for the day that dolphins

³³ John Krafft tells me that it was related to him that going out to see the sunrise was a seduction ploy at Cornell in the '50s (private correspondence), a notion that fits in with the idea that the sunrise recalled by Oedipa can be read as an unrecognized harbinger of what was to come, which includes the sexual revolution.

will displace humans; where an African-American woman reiterates a ritual of miscarriage; and where numerous others, subjected to a variety of different alienations, or "species of withdrawal," lie in wait for their inheritance, even though they have surely "forgotten by now what it was" (*CL49* 180).

Oedipa's entrance into the cultural moment referred to as the Sixties is enacted on the tracks at the end of the novel, an idea retroactively emphasized by *Inherent Vice*. As Scott McClintock observes, "The sentence, 'Behind the hieroglyphic streets there would either be a transcendent meaning or only the earth,' is recalled in *Inherent Vice* in the epigraph to the novel, 'Under the paving stones, the beach!' which is graffiti from the 1968 student rebellion in France" (108). We might add that the possible existence of the AC-DC, or Alameda County Death Cult, in the world of *Lot 49* prefigures Charles Manson's cult, the existence of which haunts the world of *Inherent Vice*. We might also add that for those behind the hieroglyphic streets the communication in front of those streets, that which comes from the "cheered land," registers only as "the dumb voltages flickering their miles, the night long, in the thousands of unheard messages" (*CL49* 180). The voices of those inhabiting the surface world are to them, those who belong to the underground, what the voices Oedipa is "beginning to [. . .] listen to" (*SL* 22), to borrow from Pynchon's description of his own development, were to her in her sheltered existence in Kinneret-Among-The-Pines. Those on either side of the divide listen to those on the other without full comprehension. The correspondences between *The Crying of Lot 49* and *Inherent Vice* suggest that the two novels are parallel works in Pynchon's fictional oeuvre: Oedipa is the counterpart to Doc, finding herself on the threshold of the entrance to the parenthesis, whose light may have first begun to appear during that Cornell sunrise from which everyone had been looking away, but attempting to keep what it will contain, or what may have always been underneath the Republic's surface, at bay. The "central truth" she hopes to find is meant to satisfy, as Cyrus R. K. Patell puts it, "a desire for order and significance at all costs, a desire above all to be 'inside, safe' instead of 'outside, lost'" (130).

Doc, on the threshold of the exit, strives to counter the Golden Fang's insinuation of itself into the alternatives. He presents himself, the moment he comes to

see that cartel's hold on both America's mainstream and countercultural life, as a figure who may be capable of finding a way out of the impasse the Golden Fang seems capable of manipulating for its own advantage, telling Coy, "if I did just run a fast check and happened to find some angle you maybe haven't thought of—" (*IV* 192). Doc has already proved capable of facilitating such an escape, though on a smaller scale, saving himself, Denis, and Jade from the pursuit of the group of zombies, whose presence at the Boards' residence ought to remind us of Mucho's remark about what rock n roll is becoming and also of *Vineland's* Thanatoids, even though they are the negative of Zombies. The Thanatoids are who they are, in part, because they have been pacified, of which the distraction offered by television is symbolic, a condition some among the living, those who "discover they were already Thanatoids without knowing it" (*VL* 384),³⁴ also suffer. Zombies, by contrast, are the media-in-pursuit-of-pacification, a logical part of the Golden Fang, the implied presence of which at The Boards' house—due to Coy's taking up residence there—suggests it is co-opting not just drug use but rock 'n' roll, the growing superficiality of which as a subversive force has earlier been made manifest in the audition booths of Wallach's Music City as well as by Mucho in *Vineland*. The episode also establishes a connection between the threshold on which *Inherent Vice's* world is situated and the underworld, a connection that is both Classical—in the sense that it is connected with the dead—and criminal—in that a criminal enterprise is, to use a metaphor from the drug trade, stepping on every aspect of American life.³⁵

It is as a liberator that Doc assumes the role of Dionysus, one of the few figures in Greek mythology to successfully return someone—his mother, Semele—from the underworld, at least in one tradition. In another tradition, he is associated with Persephone, even as her son, delivering his initiates from the punishment associated with the underworld: "Dionysus is responsible for deliverance," an Orphic

³⁴ For the connection to television, see McHale, 118.

³⁵ The criminal connotations of this underworld, and Doc's ability to facilitate escape from it, are implied because it is during the Zombie episode that the reader learns Jade's real name, Ashley, and finds out something substantial about her. She thereby develops into something more than a simple low-level stock figure of the Los Angeles underworld. She has a backstory and a real name just like a real person.

fragment cited by Damascius reads, "and for this very reason the god is called Deliverer" (qtd. in Graf and Iles Johnson, 132).³⁶ Indeed, the very nature of Doc's profession, at least as he pursues or tries to pursue it, is Dionysian, accounting for his ability to participate "in the same business" as Bigfoot (IV 26) and the FBI (IV 74) and separate himself, as much as possible, from its negative elements, despite the doubts about his doing so that Shasta raises near the novel's end. These doubts lead him to recall those cases that seem to place his career on the Apollonian side of things, serving to bind the principals of his cases, Japonica chief among them, to worlds they would be better off escaping. The most obvious instance of Doc's serving as a Dionysian PI is in his willingness to look into Coy's situation and his ability to enable Coy's return to Hope. Hope, however, isn't there for everyone. "Glen Charlock is still dead" (IV 258). Wolfmann's return, as well as his disappearance, is brought about through the offices of the Feds and the Golden Fang, and he reassumes the role he had played before he set out to undermine the workings of the straight world by providing free real estate. Shasta, meanwhile, is back at the beach, looking as if she had never left: she is neither saved nor damned, the reader, like Doc, being left unsure what to think.

Being unsure what to think is part of the process of coming to terms with Pynchon's take on the Sixties as well as the America that has emerged since its passing. Thus *Inherent Vice* closes with Doc driving through the fog. Less metaphorically, both *Vineland* and *Inherent Vice* ask us to construct an opposition between the forces of freedom and the forces of control, but the characters, Vond excepted, that are apparently meant to represent one or the other side of that opposition often find themselves positioned on each side simultaneously. For instance, *Vineland's* Hector, due to his tubal addiction, comes to serve in Frenesi's narrative, admittedly in a smaller way, the same role as Takeshi serves in Prairie's narrative. He guides Frenesi, as Takeshi guides Prairie, to the place where she can return to her family and thereby allows her to reconnect with her leftist roots. Hector, too, has become an outlaw, the one who was present at some level from the moment he arrived in Zoyd's life

³⁶ For the Semele tradition, see Otto 67. For the Persephone tradition, see Edmonds 56–61.

"with the outlaw hat and cop sideburns" (VL 23) and who is presently on the lam, seeking to develop a documentary outside official channels, despite the fact that it is meant to forward the day's antidrug hysteria, which he has been able to manipulate to get funding. Determining what side he is on, as opposed to the one he believes he is on, is a dizzying task because his approach to serving the powers that be undercuts their control.

The breakdown of the Dionysian/Apollonian opposition is more pointedly stressed in *Inherent Vice*. Doc might be a Dionysian PI, but he can't completely separate himself from the Apollonian elements of his profession: hence the import of Shasta's characterization of him as a "co[p] who never wanted to be [a] co[p]" (IV 313) and Chastity Bjornsen's moniker for him, "Mr. Moral Turpitude" (IV 260). (What exactly, we might ask, is Bigfoot telling his wife about Doc?) Similarly, the cops are not fully Apollonian. The culture of law enforcement is held together by a Dionysian element, "[t]he bond between partners," which "was nearly the only thing that Doc had ever found to admire about the LAPD" (IV 66). Such a bond comes to tie the novel's strands together, uniting Doc to Bigfoot, and the Dionysian and the Apollonian by implication, in a relationship that is only superficially antagonistic. Almost the first thing we find out about Bigfoot is that he's Doc's "old cop budd[y]" (IV 8). Doc deflects the characterization, observing that Bigfoot would more likely arrest him than help him. The next morning we learn that Bigfoot has been looking for him, something Doc tries to portray as a pursuit: "Why didn't he just kick my door down like he usually does?" (IV 13) His reasons for looking for Doc, in any case, are not related to harassing him for criminal behavior. If they were, he could have brought up the subject after Charlock's murder, when he has Doc in custody, perhaps even as an excuse to hold him longer. What is going on is probably closer to what goes on between the two after Doc returns from Vegas, when Bigfoot is again looking for him.

Bigfoot calls Doc, evidently not for the first time over the days Doc has been away, to check in on him after his being impossible to find. "You know how anxious we get" (IV 259), Bigfoot observes. The observation seems, on first reading, aggressive, that of a cop frustrated over not knowing Doc's (or a suspect's) whereabouts,

but in light of Bigfoot's warning the following morning that Doc doesn't "want to be fucking with this" (*IV* 264), meaning the case of Coy's staged death, it takes on the air of genuine concern, albeit somewhat concealed. The exchange leading up to the warning is one Doc seems to want to avoid. Upon hearing that Bigfoot is looking for him, he heads out of Wavos's backdoor, an attempt to slip away, we are led to believe, but the lieutenant is waiting. Bigfoot immediately turns on the cop, declaring "I'm not planning to inflict bodily harm" and then blaming his abstaining from violence on the era's influence over him: "Part of this godforsaken hippie era and its erosion of masculine values I expect" (*IV* 263). Bigfoot, in effect, calls attention to his affinity to and for Doc, who starts in on his harassed-victim routine, acting as if he needs to worry about getting shot. The prop he uses, the Wyatt Earp mustache cup that he brought Bigfoot from Vegas, undercuts the seriousness of his fears. (The gift evinces that they really are "buddies.") The two then exchange nervous apologies about the phone call the previous night, clearly demonstrating their emotional investment in each other and the clichéd masculine inability to express it, something that enables them to obscure from themselves the strength of their bond, although not apparently from Sauncho, who grasps the significance of their banter when Doc is in custody. Describing their back-and-forth as "embarrassing," Sauncho—who, if his name has homonymic significance, may play the interpretive sidekick to the quixotic reader who buys into the surface fiction of Doc and Bigfoot's antipathy to each other—remarks, sophomorically but revealingly, "Maybe you two should find somewhere besides an interrogation cubicle" (*IV* 30).

The reason Bigfoot has been looking for Doc near the novel's end is to update him on new developments, the death of El Drano: the meeting is one Doc must have expected on some level or he wouldn't have brought Bigfoot's gift. The holding of such meetings is part of a pattern: throughout the novel, the two continually look for each other to share or seek information about cases, the value of which cooperation is highlighted by way of contrast with Doc's seemingly pointless visit to Dubonnet to inquire about Coy. Doc and Bigfoot have become, in effect, partners, something Paul Thomas Anderson calls attention to when he has Adrian Prussia, in a line that is original to the movie, remark to Bigfoot about Doc, "This you're new partner

[. . .]?" (Anderson 57) Prussia is being sarcastic, mocking Bigfoot, but both the denotative meaning and the sarcastic intent of the comment are to the point. Doc and Bigfoot may coordinate their efforts, but they do so in a backhand manner, as if they themselves can't believe they are working with each other. Hence Doc asks "[w]here'd be the nameless, unspoken-of-partner to watch Doc's back for him?" (IV 285) when he is looking through Indelicato's case file: the novel's answer is Bigfoot, who is close by when Puck is holding Doc prisoner and when Doc exchanges the heroin for Coy.

But conscious intimacy is off limits, so when Doc attempts to reach past the surface shtick and find out about Bigfoot's life, asking about whether he has a wife and kids, to discover what *Vineland* refers to as the "cops-are-only-human-got-to-do-their-job" story (VL 345),³⁷ Bigfoot keeps up the mask, remarking, "I hope this isn't some kind of veiled hippie threat" (IV 32). For Bigfoot, he and Doc should be involved in what Pynchon in his Watts essay calls "a ritual exchange" (80), the rules of which Doc has broken at the very moment that Bigfoot attempts to destroy the dynamic of their partner-like relationship, reinforcing the ritual formality that has been breaking down as they grow closer by recruiting Doc to become a paid informant. Doc responds to the cop, not the man he has just attempted to learn about, and for the moment allows the ritual to proceed as expected: "Nothing personal, but yours is the last wallet I'd ever want money out of" (IV 33). The partnership seems always to be on the cusp of breaking down as well as of solidifying. Bigfoot isn't Doc's brother nor the keeper he needs, though it is, "Too bad, in a way" (IV 350), as Doc tells Denis, the only time Doc allows his relationship to Bigfoot to be seen by his friends as anything other than antagonistic. Each thus holds back as well as gives, particularly

³⁷ In his foreword to Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Pynchon confirms *Vineland's* take on "crime dramas," which he notes are "themselves forms of social control" (xv), but his characterization of Bigfoot complicates that position. Bigfoot's humanity is allowed to come through, but he acts as if his job requires him to conceal it. There is a comparable moment in *Vineland* when Hector complains that Zoyd hasn't asked him about his wife and kids, but the point is different. Hector, who is unsuccessful at manipulating the ritual to turn Zoyd, tries another approach, attempting to develop intimacy, but that approach, particularly at the moment we observe it, is a ruse. Hector is divorced, cut off from his family in his tubal fantasy, but he must have previously sought to develop such intimacy to turn Zoyd, who already knows, it is clear, about Debbi and the kids.

when information is involved. Doc, for instance, never mentions Shasta's visit to him about Wolfmann nor that he had talked with Puck Beaverton in Vegas, while Bigfoot suggests with his warning that he knows more than he is saying and, of course, never reveals anything about his murdered partner. Rather, he provides clues that direct Doc where to look.

The relationship, however, works, or, to be more precise, it becomes a working relationship when it is necessary for it to be one. Neither Doc nor Bigfoot may solve the main cases, Charlock's murder and Wolfmann's disappearance, which weren't, considering the involvement of the FBI and the Golden Fang/Vigilant California, really cases, or cases to be solved, to begin with and which Bigfoot himself may be more closely involved with than he is able to let on, as Doc's chat with Art Tweedle (cf. *IV* 201–02) reveals. But each wraps up a separate, more or less related case with the help of the other. Bigfoot steers Doc to Prussia, enabling Doc to exact the kind of extra-judicial justice that only an outlaw can. Bigfoot, in turn, enables Doc to rescue Coy from the Golden Fang, putting in Doc's possession the twenty kilos of the Golden Fang's heroin that can be exchanged for Coy's freedom. Bigfoot's involvement here confirms Doc's fears about not only his profession but his era, which he links with and contrasts to the era of screen PIs through Garfield's career. "PIs are doomed," at least as they once were—that is, as independents, outside the system, who bring to those within it what they need to know—or as we have been taught to think about them via what we have seen on screen, from which all Doc's examples come, examples he contrasts with recent television cops: "Once there was all these great old PIs—[. . .] always end up solvin the crime while the cops are followin wrong leads and gettin in the way" (*IV* 97).

Resolving the situation Coy finds himself in follows a process that inverts the one for which Doc feels nostalgia. Doc, while the only one who is willing to try to save Coy, is the one running around with no real idea about what to do, and it is Bigfoot who steps in with the solution, a cop who is not only, in this instance in any case, "no more threat to nobody's freedom than some dad in a sitcom" (97) but also, if not a liberator, a facilitator of liberation, sharing with Doc what Hector shares with Takeshi. That Bigfoot's presence is necessary for Doc to be successful—just

as Hector's presence, as well as Takeshi's, is necessary for Prairie to connect with Frenesi—is telling. Pynchon recognizes a pure adherence to the Dionysian principle is as problematic as a rigorous acceptance of the Apollonian principle. Rigorous adherence to either of them leaves one unliberated, caught in a system from which escaping is necessary. Japonica's problem, for instance, is that she may escape her father but does not find liberation, having merely exchanged her repressive home for Blatnoyd's milieu of excess in the novel's present. Doc's dealing with her is, therefore, morally ambiguous; a situation into which to deliver her is lacking. That is, in a sense, the problem Oedipa faces at the end of *Lot 49*, which is perhaps why she continues to consider getting the police involved. Her situation, nonetheless, is more positive than Japonica's; having become aware of the necessity of escaping, even if she remains uncertain about acting on that awareness, seems to be enough.

Pynchon's fiction, from at least *Lot 49* to *Inherent Vice*, develops from an emphasis on finding the means to escape to an emphasis on the need to find liberation. The development seems personal. Pynchon, after all, aligns himself early in his career with Oedipa—whom we watch negotiate the process of breaking out of her tower—via their similar ages and educations and maybe their shared Republican backgrounds.³⁸ In the 1980s, he figures himself in the guise of a Takeshi—as the two are presented as lacking fixed addresses and as tangentially connected to Northern California, where Pynchon spent some time in the mid-1970s as well as the mid-1980s; Takeshi provides those willing to go to him new perspectives on the stories to which they are bound so that they can fashion their own exits from the karmic traps in which they are caught. Pynchon, in 2009, presents himself as Doc—whose voice he furnishes in

³⁸ Oedipa is a "Young Republican" (76), and Pynchon grew up in a Republican household: his father was a prominent Republican in Oyster Bay, serving as the town's Republican leader for a time and, from 1959 to 1962, as the Superintendent of Highways, the position he held when he was appointed Town Supervisor at the end of 1962 (See *New York Times* [December 5, 1962]). Pynchon, Sr., failed to win the election the following year due to a scandal over an asphalt company's overcharging the town during his tenure as superintendent and his receiving gifts, including box seats to a World Series game, meals, turkeys, and flowers, from the company, some of which he obliquely admitted to taking: "I received some poinsettias and I managed to keep one alive, and it will give me great pleasure to put one on your political grave," he told Milton Lipson, the county commissioner of accounts and the Democrat investigating the allegations against him.

the trailer for *Inherent Vice*—a somewhat settled-down liberator—“You know I have an office now? just like a day job and everything?” (*IV* 1)—who makes it his job to cure those he works for of their need to remain trapped, reworking, as he does with Coy, their position within the narratives they believe they must live.

A positive synthesis of the Dionysian and Apollonian, if we rely on the terminology that *Inherent Vice* suggests we use, has been achieved, perhaps the one Pynchon felt he had neglected to grope after early in his career, when the terminology he would likely have used was that of Romanticism and Classicism. At the time, he imagined “his autobiography sharing with literary history this structuring, countervailing pull of two superpowers—Romanticism and Classicism—locked in a great war” (697), Steven Weisenburger observes in his discussion of the autobiographical sketch that Pynchon wrote for the Statement of Purpose that he submitted to the Ford Foundation in 1959.³⁹ The conflict, readers who have paid attention to Pynchon’s appearances in the press might think, has been a lifelong struggle. He is a man who “is more than highbrow,” Chrissie Wexler described him for James Bone in the 1990s. “He is the highest of broweries,” she went on. Yet writing to celebrate his friend Phyllis Gebauer’s donation of books that he signed for her to UCLA, he joked as if he were still in Manhattan Beach, hanging out with the types to whom Doc might find himself passing joints: “I was planning to skydive into the middle of these

³⁹ What led Pynchon to submit a statement of purpose, not an application per se, for the Ford Foundation Program for the Humanities and Arts grant—which was to pay \$7,500 to writers, poets or fiction writers, who were to be attached to an opera or theater company for a year with the hope, not obligation, that they would write a libretto or play—is actually more surprising than Weisenburger reveals. Tomaske, who discovered the Pynchon document and sought for permission to reproduce it from Pynchon through his agent, also received access to the entire Foundation file for the program. The process the Foundation followed to find writers, these documents show, was to seek out nominations, asking “240 writers, critics, musicians, publishers and others professionally engaged in the theatrical or literary world ... to nominate not more than two poets or novelists for the program” (Cited in Tomaske’s Notes for a Paper on the Ford Foundation Document). Pynchon did not blindly apply for a grant that stipulated that the writers who would be awarded it be proven talents. Someone, likely one of his professors, the name of whom the Foundation file does not record, nominated Pynchon, and the biographical statement Weisenburger discusses was written in response to material Pynchon received from the Foundation.

proceedings. [. . .] Thank you for your teaching,' he continued. 'Good work and good vibes to everybody there.'"

Competing Interests

The author declares that they have no competing interests.

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