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ARTICLE

Utopia and Debt in Postmodernity; or, Time Management in *Inherent Vice*

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The category of postmodernism has come under renewed scrutiny in recent years. Indeed, it has become rather commonplace to pronounce the death or obsolescence of postmodernism today. Unsurprisingly, the increasingly questioned status of postmodernism also impacts the field of Pynchon studies. This article reads *Inherent Vice* as symptomatic not of the end but of a transformation of postmodernism and postmodernity. Pynchon's novel simultaneously registers a contemporary intensification of postmodern/late capitalism and, crucially, participates in a minor current in postmodernism, one which insists on collective agency and utopian thinking despite the atomization and isolation of subjects accomplished by late capitalism and which, against all odds, remembers how to think historically—or better, invents new ways of thinking historically.

1. Pynchon and the Postmodern

There is no doubting Thomas Pynchon's centrality to the postmodern canon.¹ However,

¹ It is an understatement to call the critical literature on Pynchon "vast": in his introduction to *Marginal Forces/Cultural Centers: Tolson, Pynchon, and the Politics of the Canon*, Michael Bérubé comments on the incredible proliferation of Pynchon scholarship, including "over four hundred articles" as of 1992 (Michael Bérubé, *Marginal Forces/Cultural Centers: Tolson, Pynchon, and the Politics of the Canon* [Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell UP, 1992], p. 3). By 2007, "there [were] 1,184 articles on Pynchon in the MLA database . . ." (Rachel Adams, "The Ends of America, the Ends of Postmodernism," in *After Postmodernism*, ed. Andrew Hoberek, *Twentieth-Century Literature* 53.3 [2007], pp. 248–72, here p. 269 n4). Today (2016), that number is somewhere upwards of 1,700.

A preponderance of Pynchon criticism links him inextricably to the postmodern. Indeed, Inger H. Dalsgaard, Luc Herman, and Brian McHale introduce *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Pynchon* (2012) by insisting that "[i]t is impossible to conceive of postmodernism in literature without reference to Pynchon's fiction" (Dalsgaard, Herman, and McHale, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Pynchon* [Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2012], p. 1), while Simon Malpas and Andrew Taylor call him "the most elusive and important writer of American postmodernity" (Malpas and Taylor, *Thomas Pynchon* [Manchester: Manchester UP, 2013], p. 1). A small sample of the scholarship suffices to indicate the range of postmodern themes and concepts that Pynchon's work is widely taken to represent. See, e.g., on postmodern allegory: John Dugdale, *Thomas Pynchon: Allusive Parables of Power* (New York: St. Martin's, 1990), p. 142; Deborah Madsen, *The Postmodernist Allegories of Thomas Pynchon* (New York: St. Martin's P, 1991). On the canonization of postmodern literature: Bérubé, *Marginal Forces/Cultural Centers*, esp. pp. 267–315. On postmodern difference: Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 1988), p. 6; David Witzling, *Everybody's America: Thomas Pynchon, Race, and the Cultures of Postmodernism* (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 7. On the postmodern epic form: W. Gilbert Adair, *The American Epic Novel in the Late Twentieth Century: The Super-Genre of the Imperial State* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen P, 2008), pp. 113–60; Elaine B. Safer, *The Contemporary American Comic Epic: The Novels of Barth, Pynchon, Gaddis, and Kesey* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1988), pp. 79–110. On historiographic metafiction: Hutcheon, *Poetics*, pp. 120, 133; Brian McHale, *Constructing Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 152 and "Mason & Dixon in the Zone, or, A Brief Poetics of Pynchon-Space," in *Pynchon and "Mason & Dixon,"* ed. Brooke Horvath and Irving Malin (Newark: U of Delaware P; London: Associated UPs, 2000), pp. 43–62, here p. 47; Timothy S. Murphy, "To Have Done with Postmodernism: A Plea (or Provocation) for Globalization Studies," in *Fiction's Present*, ed. R. M. Berry and Jeffrey Di Leo, *symplekē* 12.1–2 (2004): 20–34, here p. 31; Sascha Pöhlmann, *Pynchon's Postnational Imagination* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2010), p. 239; cf. Shawn Smith, *Pynchon and History: Metahistorical Resonance and Postmodern Narrative Form in the Novels of Thomas Pynchon*. (New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 8–9. On fantastic historiography: Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism; or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke UP, 1991), p. 368. On (mis)reading as a postmodern strategy: McHale, *Constructing*, pp. 59–141. On paranoia: Emily Apter, "On Oneworldedness: Or Paranoia as a World System," *American Literary History* 18.2 (2006): 365–89; Alan W. Brownlie, *Thomas Pynchon's Narratives: Subjectivity and Problems of Knowing* (New York: Lang, 2000), p. 1; Samuel Chase Coale, *Paradigms of Paranoia: The Culture of Conspiracy in Contemporary American Fiction* (Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 2005), pp. 135–77; David Cowart, "The Luddite Vision: *Mason & Dixon*," *American Literature*

the currency of postmodern critical approaches to Pynchon—perhaps even the currency of Pynchon, period—will of course rise or fall with the fortunes of the larger discourse of which they are a part: postmodernism itself.² And although postmodernism has never

71.2 (1999): 341–63, here p. 359; Dwight Eddins, *The Gnostic Pynchon* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1990), pp. 12–13; Richard Hardack, “Consciousness without Borders: Narratology in *Against the Day* and the Works of Thomas Pynchon,” *Criticism: A Quarterly for Literature and the Arts* 52.1 (2010): 91–128, here pp. 104, 109–10; Molly Hite, *Ideas of Order in the Novels of Thomas Pynchon* (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1983), p.10; Madsen, *Postmodernist Allegories*, pp. 23, 88; McHale, *Constructing*, p. 178 and *Postmodernist Fiction* (New York: Methuen, 1987), p. 96; Timothy Melley, *Empire of Conspiracy: The Culture of Paranoia in Postwar America* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell UP, 2000), pp. 12–13, 81–106, et passim; John Johnston, “Toward the Schizo-Text: Paranoia as Semiotic Regime in *The Crying of Lot 49*,” in *New Essays on “The Crying of Lot 49*,” ed. Patrick O’Donnell (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991), pp. 47–78; Richard Olehla, “The Quest for the Holy Word: Lacan’s Name-of-the-Father, Paranoia and Possible Madness in *The Crying of Lot 49*,” *Literaria Pragensia: Studies in Literature and Culture* 18 (2008): 58–76; Frank Palmeri, “Other than Postmodern?—Foucault, Pynchon, Hybridity, Ethics,” *Postmodern Culture* 12.1 (2001): 39 pars., here par. 4; Mark Richard Siegel, *Pynchon: Creative Paranoia in “Gravity’s Rainbow”* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat P, 1978); Thomas Slade, *Thomas Pynchon* (1974), 2nd ed. (New York: Lang, 1990), p. 7. On pastiche: Alex Callinicos, *Against Postmodernism: A Marxist Critique* (New York: St. Martin’s P, 1989), p. 2; Smith, *Pynchon and History*, pp. 113–14. On parody in the postmodern: David Cowart, “Attenuated Postmodernism: Pynchon’s *Vineland*,” in *The Vineland Papers: Critical Takes on Pynchon’s Novel*, ed. Geoffrey Green, Donald J. Greiner, and Larry McCaffery (Normal, Ill.: Dalkey Archive P, 1994), pp. 3–13 ; Eddins, *The Gnostic Pynchon*, p. xi; Hite, *Ideas of Order*, p. 5; Hutcheon, *Poetics*, pp. 130–31; Witzling, *Everybody’s America*, p. 31. On the postmodern picaresque: McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, p. 173. On schizophrenia: Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p. 375; Johnston, “Toward the Schizo-Text.” On postmodern space: Elizabeth Jane Wall Hinds, “Introduction: The Times of *Mason & Dixon*,” in *The Multiple Worlds of Pynchon’s “Mason & Dixon”: Eighteenth-Century Contexts, Postmodern Observations*, ed. Hinds (Rochester, N.Y.: Camden House, 2005), pp. 3–24, here pp. 4–5; Zofia Kolbuszewska, *The Poetics of Chronotope in the Novels of Thomas Pynchon* (Lublin, Poland: Learned Society of the Catholic U of Lublin, 2000), esp. pp. 117–47, 183–216; McHale, “Mason & Dixon in the Zone, or, A Brief Poetics of Pynchon-Space,” in *Pynchon and “Mason & Dixon*,” ed. Horvath and Malin, pp. 43–62; Samuel Thomas, *Pynchon and the Political* (New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 19–40. On postmodern fiction as the intersection of literary and theoretical “writing practices”: Alec McHoul and David Wills, *Writing Pynchon: Strategies in Fictional Analysis* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1990). On the transition from modernism to postmodernism: McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, pp. 21–25 and “What Was Postmodernism?,” *electronic book review* 20 Dec. 2007, accessed 23 Nov. 2011 at <http://www.electronicbookreview.com/thread/fictionspresent/tense>; Maarten van Delden, “Modernism, the New Criticism and Thomas Pynchon’s *V*,” *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 23.2 (1990): 22–32.

² As Ali Chetwynd argues in his cogent review of *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Pynchon*, the close identification of Pynchon with the postmodern is central to the perspective which unifies the companion’s essays (see esp. David Cowart, “Pynchon in Literary History,” *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Pynchon*, ed. Dalsgaard, Herman, and McHale, pp. 83–96; and McHale, “Pynchon’s Postmodernism,” *Cambridge Companion*, pp. 97–111). However, both Chetwynd and Simon de

been uncontested, as either a periodizing term, an aesthetic, or a cultural dominant, it has come under renewed scrutiny in the wake of escalating economic globalization and widespread opposition to neoliberalism. Indeed, it has become almost commonplace to pronounce the death or obsolescence of postmodernism today.³ Even such onetime proponents of postmodernism as Ihab Hassan and Linda Hutcheon have recently remarked upon postmodernism's passing. For Hassan, whose books *The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Literature* (1971; 2nd ed. 1982) and *The Postmodern Turn: Essays in Postmodern Theory and Culture* (1987) helped disseminate the postmodernist paradigm in literary studies, postmodernism as an aesthetic category began, by 2001, to give way to "postmodernity (the inclusive geopolitical process) [which] refers to an interactive, planetary phenomenon wherein tribalism and imperialism, myth and technology, margins and centers . . . play out their conflictual energies." In short, postmodernity means capitalist globalization. The earlier "cultural postmodernism" continues to live on, but as a "ghost" or "revenant" that has "metastasized into sterile, campy, kitschy, jokey, dead-end games or sheer media stunts."⁴

Bourcier articulate the historiographic stagnation that threatens to reify Pynchon in an age when "postmodern natives" are no longer scandalized by postmodern aesthetics (de Bourcier, "Reading McHale Reading Pynchon, or, Is Pynchon Still a Postmodernist?", *Orbit: Writing around Pynchon* 2.2 [2014]: pp. 9–12, accessed 8 July 2015 at <https://www.pynchon.net/articles/10.7766/orbit.v2.2.68/>). "What's missing" in the companion's canonical account of Pynchon, Chetwynd writes, "is a sense of how Pynchon's relevance might endure once the identification between the contemporary and the canonically postmodern finally becomes untenable" (Chetwynd, rev. of *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Pynchon*, ed. Dalsgaard, Herman, and McHale, *College Literature: A Journal of Critical Literary Studies* 39.4 [2012]: 142–45, here p. 145).

³ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, for example, critique postmodernism (and poststructuralism) on the grounds that it actually aids and abets global neoliberalism, notwithstanding the antisystemic aspirations of postmodernism's leading theorists (Hardt and Negri, *Empire* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 2000], pp. 137–56). See also, e.g., Andrew Hoberek (ed.), *After Postmodernism, Twentieth-Century Literature* 53.3 (2007): 233–393; R. M. Berry and Jeffrey Di Leo (eds.), *Fiction's Present, symplokē* 12.1–2 (2004): 7–190; Alan Kirby, *Digimodernism: How New Technologies Dismantle the Postmodern and Reconfigure Our Culture* (New York: Continuum, 2009).

⁴ Ihab Hassan, "From Postmodernism to Postmodernity: The Local/Global Context," *Philosophy and Literature* 25 (2001): 1–13, here pp. 3, 5.

Hutcheon, whose study *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (1988) remains the canonical account of historiographic metafiction—postmodernism’s answer to the historical novel, which self-referentially draws attention to its own fictiveness in order to interrogate not just the past but the discursive means by which we access and represent it—makes an analogous distinction between postmodernism and postmodernity. In her follow-up book, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (1989), Hutcheon distinguishes between postmodernism as a “cultural notion” and “postmodernity as the designation of a social and philosophical period or ‘condition.’”⁵ By the time Hutcheon writes the retrospective epilogue to the second edition (2002), postmodernism, she claims, has died—“Let’s just say: it’s over”—and is succeeded socially and politically, in postmodernity, by “various forms of identity politics” that have become entrenched in the academy and elsewhere.⁶

It is thus unsurprising that the increasingly questioned status of postmodernism also affects the field of Pynchon studies. In broad terms, arguments about Pynchon’s postmodernism tend to follow one of two lines. The first group of arguments proposes that postmodernism is no longer an appropriate aesthetic and/or periodizing category in Pynchon studies.⁷ For instance, David Cowart suggests that

⁵ Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* [1989], 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 23. “Condition” here alludes to Jean-François Lyotard’s seminal text *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* [1979], trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1984). In addition, for contemporary readers, the word also evokes David Harvey’s groundbreaking study *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1990).

⁶ Hutcheon, *Politics*, p. 166. Interestingly, for both Hutcheon and Hassan, postmodernism “was done in by its own success,” as Andrew Hoberek puts it (“Introduction: After Postmodernism,” in *After Postmodernism*, ed. Hoberek, pp. 233–47, here p. 233): it permeates what Hassan clearly sees as a degraded mass culture, and it is ubiquitous in “institutionalized” form for Hutcheon (Hutcheon, *Politics*, p. 166). The same holds for Minsoo Kang, who locates the death of postmodernism in the commercial success of *The Last Action Hero* (1993): “there’s no surer sign of an intellectual idea’s final demise than its total appropriation by mass culture” (qtd. in Hoberek, “Introduction,” p. 233).

⁷ In fact, the question of Pynchon’s postmodernism has occupied critics for some time. As the title of his essay “Encyclopedic Narrative: From Dante to Pynchon” (1976) indicates, Edward Mendelson classes *Gravity’s Rainbow* as the latest in a long line of “encyclopedic narratives” including Goethe’s *Faust* and Joyce’s *Ulysses*, among others (Mendelson, “Encyclopedic Narrative: From Dante to Pynchon,” *MLN* 91.6 (1976): 1267–75, here p. 1267; see also Mendelson, “Gravity’s Encyclopedia,” in *Mindful Pleasures: Essays on Thomas Pynchon*, ed. George Levine and David Leverenz [Boston: Little,

Vineland, in its reactivation of “two kinds of realism: social and magic,” is less a case of “indeterminate postmodernist ‘play’” than of “totalizing modernist ‘purpose.’”⁸ Similarly, Frank Palmeri reads *Vineland* and *Mason & Dixon* as constituting an “other than postmodern” period, distinguished from high postmodernism by its “move[ment] away from the representation of extreme paranoia, toward a vision of local ethico-political possibilities and a greater acceptance of hybrids that combine human and machine or human and animal traits.”⁹ Brian McHale likewise argues that *Against the Day* views disaster—both World War I, diegetically, and 9/11, contextually—from the nether side, narrating an “experience of aftermath” that signals a “changed tense” in postmodernism.¹⁰ To varying degrees, such readings as these deem postmodernism and postmodernity obsolete.

Many other critics, however, argue for alternative conceptions of the postmodern, not for its obsolescence. Crucially, such arguments tend to acknowledge historical shifts in today’s postmodernity—thus concurring with the obsolescence argument that our historical moment is indeed somehow notably different than the high-water postmodernism of the 1980s¹¹—while also seeking to rehabilitate postmodernism from some of its best known and sometimes most damning critiques. For example, Dennis M. Lensing reads *Mason & Dixon* as “a new sort of postmodern novel” that gestures toward “possible means of transcending the ideological shortcomings

Brown, 1976], pp. 161–95). Nonetheless, the recent trend in Pynchon studies that I discuss here represents a new development in comparison with Mendelson, for two reasons. First, Mendelson’s view would very soon become supplanted by the critical dominance of postmodernism in literary studies generally and in Pynchon studies particularly. The critics I discuss here, in contrast, represent a growing and emergent development in Pynchon criticism much more than a momentary fad. Second, whereas Mendelson’s classification of *Gravity’s Rainbow* harkened back to an earlier, mostly modern European tradition, the current questioning of Pynchon’s status as postmodernist gestures instead toward some new (even if hypothetical or imagined), global social and historical reality. See also Luc Herman, who questions the conventional aligning of *Gravity’s Rainbow* with a postmodern aesthetic of parody (Herman, “Parody in *Gravity’s Rainbow* (1973) by Thomas Pynchon,” *European Journal of English Studies* 3.2 [1999]: 206–25, here p. 209).

⁸ Cowart, “Attenuated Postmodernism,” pp. 3–4.

⁹ Palmeri, “Other Than Postmodern?,” par. 5.

¹⁰ McHale, “What Was Postmodernism?”

¹¹ Cf. Phillip E. Wegner, *Life between Two Deaths, 1989–2001: U.S. Culture in the Long Nineties* (Durham, N.C.: Duke UP, 2009).

and limitations identified by Fredric Jameson.”¹² On Lensing’s take, *Mason & Dixon* mobilizes nostalgia critically and parodically “in order to perform precisely the historical—and this, in a form supposedly most resistant to historical awareness: the postmodern narrative.”¹³ Likewise, Shawn Smith also proposes that Pynchon’s fictions are better equipped for political and historical intervention than conventional assessments of the postmodern would allow: “the ‘postmodern’ . . . characteristics of Pynchon’s fiction are rhetorical and poetic expressions of a philosophy of history, a coherent vision of the past and how it haunts the present.”¹⁴

Especially important in this approach to Pynchon have been the arguments of Sascha Pöhlmann. In *Pynchon’s Postnational Imagination* (2010), Pöhlmann makes a compelling case for reading *Gravity’s Rainbow* and *Mason & Dixon* in political and historical terms as examples of “postnational parageography,”¹⁵ a critical practice consisting of the overlay of new maps—spaces like the Zone in *Gravity’s Rainbow* or the strange realms abutting Mason and Dixon’s Visto—onto more familiar ones.¹⁶ According to Pöhlmann, postmodern fiction’s performance of parageography “can result in the superficial playfulness often ascribed to postmodern texts, [but] it also

¹² Dennis Lensing, “Postmodernism at Sea: The Quest for Longitude in Thomas Pynchon’s *Mason & Dixon* and Umberto Eco’s *The Island of the Day Before*,” in *The Multiple Worlds of Pynchon’s “Mason & Dixon”: Eighteenth-Century Contexts, Postmodern Observations*, ed. Elizabeth Jane Wall Hinds (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2005), pp. 125–44, here pp. 126–27. The “limitations” Lensing alludes to are well known: in *Postmodernism; or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991), Jameson characterizes postmodernity as “an age that has forgotten how to think historically” (p. ix). He goes on to catalogue symptoms of postmodern culture, including “a new kind of flatness or depthlessness, a new . . . superficiality in the most literal sense,” “the waning of affect” (pp. 9, 10) and, perhaps most notably, the apparent toothlessness of pastiche in postmodern culture:

Pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar or unique, idiosyncratic style, the wearing of a linguistic mask, speech in a dead language. But it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without any of parody’s ulterior motives, amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter and of any conviction that alongside the abnormal tongue you have momentarily borrowed, some healthy linguistic normality still exists. Pastiche is thus blank parody, a statue with blind eyeballs. . . . (p. 17)

¹³ Lensing, “Postmodernism at Sea,” p. 138.

¹⁴ Smith, *Pynchon and History*, p. 2.

¹⁵ Pöhlmann, *Pynchon’s Postnational Imagination*, pp. 177–359.

¹⁶ Pöhlmann, *Pynchon’s Postnational Imagination*, pp. 141–51.

results in a *political* playfulness that says things can be different from what they are” and which stakes its claims in an emergent postnationalist order of globalization.¹⁷ This political payoff of postmodern texts—which, of course, is supposed to have been impossible in postmodern culture according to dominant interpretations of Jameson—leads Pöhlmann elsewhere to propose: “We may have to stop calling Thomas Pynchon a postmodern writer . . . not because his works are not postmodern, but because they are more than that.”¹⁸ Like Lensing, Pöhlmann sees Pynchon’s novels working through postmodernism, “reject[ing] postmodern strategies while at the same time employing them”¹⁹—or, as Jameson puts it in an interview, “undo[ing] postmodernism homeopathically by the methods of postmodernism.”²⁰ Collectively, such readings signal if not a sea change in Pynchon criticism and postmodernism studies, then at least a widening fissure or a crucial set of problems worth investigating.²¹

¹⁷ Pöhlmann, *Pynchon's Postnational Imagination*, p. 147. Similarly, Timothy S. Murphy suggests that Pynchon can be read as a cultural corollary to the politics of “counter-globalization” (Murphy, “To Have Done with Postmodernism,” p. 31).

¹⁸ Pöhlmann, “Introduction: The Complex Text,” in *Against the Grain: Reading Pynchon's Counternarratives*, ed. Pöhlmann (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010), pp. 9–34, here p. 9.

¹⁹ Pöhlmann, “Introduction,” p. 12.

²⁰ Anders Stephanson, “Regarding Postmodernism: A Conversation with Fredric Jameson,” in *Postmodernism/Jameson/Critique*, ed. Douglas Kellner (Washington, D.C.: Maisonneuve P, 1989), pp. 43–74, here p. 59. It thus seems at times that little more than a hair’s breadth separates the “obsolescent postmodernism” and “alternative postmodernism” arguments. Lensing, for example, seems to straddle this divide: while his critical response to Jameson seems to suggest expanded political potential for postmodern cultural expression than is canonically recognized, he also concludes that *Mason & Dixon* points toward “a future beyond the postmodern” (Lensing, “Postmodernism at Sea,” p. 142). McHale’s assessment of Pynchon’s postmodernism in *Against the Day*, discussed above, is similarly ambivalent.

²¹ An interesting alternative to these perspectives is that of Joanna Freer in *Thomas Pynchon and American Counterculture* (2014). While Freer does not ultimately challenge the notion that Pynchon’s literature is postmodern—for example, the reader’s uncertainty in choosing between Mucho Maas’s “uncritical acceptance” of LSD and Oedipa Maas’s “hysterical panic” over acid-tripping is the result of Pynchon’s “postmodern technique” (Freer, *Thomas Pynchon and American Counterculture* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014], p. 72)—she reads Pynchon in the context of counterculture rather than postmodernism, partly to avoid the “critical false association of postmodernism with insularity,” but also because she reads Pynchon’s postmodernism as “motivated primarily by countercultural values” (p. 6). As will become clear shortly, my reading of *Inherent Vice* is consistent with her take to the extent that postmodern aesthetic practices are ultimately political in both cases, even if I maintain a firmer, more explicit commitment to the category of postmodernism.

But if postmodernism and postmodernity constitute the vast backdrop against which Pynchon's oeuvre must unavoidably be situated, it is equally imperative always to read Pynchon relative to the history and legacy of the 1960s. Pynchon's (so far) three California novels—*The Crying of Lot 49*, *Vineland*, and *Inherent Vice*—are anchored in the 1960s.²² All three novels attest to capitalism's sweeping response to the radical potentials opened up during that decade, and *Vineland* and *Inherent Vice* allegorically register the end of the '60s as an experience of subjugation under a hegemonic and increasingly globalized late capitalism. For example, both *Crying's* Oedipa Maas and *Vineland's* Prairie Wheeler attempt to access collectivities from which they remain excluded—Oedipa by the gnostic secrecy of the Trystero, Prairie by the historical gulf between the radicalism of the 1960s and lived experience under Reagan in 1980s. Praxis is thus essentially foreign to Oedipa, who catches occasional glimpses of the Trystero from the outside just as she remains an observer of student radicalism on the Berkeley campus.²³ Similarly, praxis is impossible on all but the most local scales for Prairie, and even then it remains provisional and dubious, as in her inconclusive reconciliations with her family and with Weed Atman's '60s radicalism.²⁴ Moreover, the antinomian impossibilities of Oedipa's speculations symptomatically register the paranoia of Cold War politics, just as the inescapability and utter hegemony of television in *Vineland* attest to the saturation of the postmodern

²² The decade of the 1960s is central not only to Pynchon's California novels but also to the politics of his historical novels; similarly, it is a central reference for much of the criticism as well. See, e.g., Jeff Baker, "Plucking the American Albatross: Pynchon's Irrealism in *Mason & Dixon*," in *Pynchon and "Mason & Dixon"*, ed. Brooke Horvath and Irving Malin (Newark: U of Delaware P; London: Associated UPs, 2000), pp. 167–88; David Cowart, "Pynchon and the Sixties," *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* 41.1 (1999): 3–12; Erik Dussere, "Flirters, Deserters, Wimps, and Pimps: Thomas Pynchon's Two Americas," *Contemporary Literature* 51.3 (2010): 565–95; Andrew Gordon, "Smoking Dope with Thomas Pynchon: A Sixties Memoir," in *The Vineland Papers: Critical Takes on Pynchon's Novel*, ed. Geoffrey Green, Donald J. Greiner, and Larry McCaffery (Normal, Ill.: Dalkey Archive P, 1994), pp. 167–78; Heinz Ickstadt, "History, Utopia and Transcendence in the Space-Time of *Against the Day*," *Pynchon Notes* 54–55 (2008): 216–44, here pp. 235–39; Skip Willman, "Spectres of Marx in Thomas Pynchon's *Vineland*," *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* 51 (2010): 198–222.

²³ Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49* [1966] (New York: Harper Perennial, 2006), pp. 82–83. Hereafter cited parenthetically as *CL49*.

²⁴ See Thomas Pynchon, *Vineland* [1990] (New York: Viking, 1997), pp. 366–67, 384–85. Hereafter cited parenthetically as *VL*.

by spectacle and simulacra. Similarly, in *Inherent Vice*, set in 1970, hippie Larry “Doc” Sportello’s recuperation into state apparatuses as a private investigator, the futility of his pursuit of the international cartel (among other things) known as the Golden Fang, and his firsthand experiences of the commodification of time and human life in the form of debt all gesture toward the totalizing control of late capitalism itself. For Doc, the end of the ’60s is a closure of a “brief parenthesis of light,”²⁵ after which we remain entrapped and disoriented in the fog of neoliberal globalization.

In many ways, Doc’s dilemma is our own: his struggles to settle accounts with the end of the ’60s resonate with contemporary theoretical attempts to articulate our own historical moment and, in some cases, to settle our accounts with postmodernism and postmodernity. However, what sets *Inherent Vice* apart both from theoretical pronouncements of postmodernism’s death and from the symptomatic pessimism of Pynchon’s other California novels is a utopianism that preserves a spirit not only of the radical possibilities of the ’60s but also of a certain minor postmodernism (think Deleuze, not Foucault).²⁶ Granted, *Inherent Vice* is certainly a critical symptomology of our own contemporary regime of debt under neoliberal capitalism; what the novel allegorically suggests, however, is that neither utopianism nor postmodernism is dead.

In this article, I argue that *Inherent Vice* reveals not symptoms of postmodernism’s end as a *fait accompli* but rather a postmodern utopian hope for an escape from neoliberal capitalism and its regime of exchange and debt, a hope grounded in Doc’s

²⁵ Thomas Pynchon, *Inherent Vice* (New York: Penguin, 2009), p. 254. Hereafter cited parenthetically as *IV*.

²⁶ Insofar as postmodernism is associated with the saturation of the social whole by global capitalism, it is tempting (and common) to conclude that like Foucault’s panoptic surveillance, postmodern capitalism permits no escape or resistance—there is nothing outside the market—and modernist literature of novelty and originality in the vein of Ezra Pound is thus left, as John Barth famously put it, exhausted (Barth, “The Literature of Exhaustion” [1967], in *The American Novel since World War II*, ed. Marcus Klein [Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett, 1969], pp. 267–79). In contrast, I want to argue that Pynchon (among other postmodern writers) performs a postmodernism more akin to Deleuze’s notion of minor literature, which works within a dominant code or discourse to enable “one’s potential becoming to the extent that one deviates from the [hegemonic, majoritarian] model” (Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* [1980], trans. Brian Massumi [Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1987], p. 105). On surveillance, see, e.g., Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* [1975], trans. Alan Sheridan [1977] (New York: Vintage, 1995), pp. 195–228.

epiphanic discoveries, his experience and acceptance of grace beyond exchange, and a utopian phenomenology of time itself. The novel thus evinces both the continuing relevance of postmodernism as an aesthetic category and the political imperative to think through postmodernity as an historical-economic totality in order to imagine and enact alternatives. Pynchon's novel simultaneously registers the expansion and intensification of postmodern global capitalism and, crucially, participates in a minor, counterhegemonic current in postmodernism, one which insists on collective agency and utopian thinking despite the atomization and isolation of subjects accomplished by late capitalism and which, against all odds, remembers how to think historically—or better, invents new ways of thinking historically.

2. Debt and Exchange in *Inherent Vice*

The political allegory of *Inherent Vice* begins by constructing an economy of exchange and debt that entraps characters in webs of obligation, more often than not in direct opposition to individual commitments and personal loyalties. In the opening scene, Doc, a private investigator, is approached by Shasta Fay Hepworth, a recent ex-lover who wants Doc to take on a case involving a possible conspiracy against a married man with whom she is having an affair, and whose later abduction Doc spends most of the novel trying to solve. Shasta's request reactivates a variety of conflicting interests and competing motives. Doc is bound by professional obligation to pursue the case diligently, but he also remains sexually attracted to Shasta: "Okay, nothing romantic tonight. Bummer" (IV 1). That lingering attraction is itself opposed by Doc's cynicism concerning love: "the word [*love*] these days was being way too overused. Anybody with any claim to hipness 'loved' everybody" (IV 5; cf. 288).²⁷ Furthermore,

²⁷ Doc's comment on love continues a theme that runs throughout the California novels. Recall Inamorati Anonymous, the support group for recovering love addicts in *The Crying of Lot 49* (CL49 93–94), as well as the cynical depiction of Frenesi Gates's conception of love in *Vineland* (VL 217). All three of these instances suggest that romantic love, at least in its ideologically overdetermined forms, holds little political promise for the left. In contrast, the historical novels encourage a different perspective on love. Those novels primarily deal not with the sentiments of romantic love but rather with practices of sex and desire, especially those labeled deviant or subversive. Moreover, love, sex, and desire in the historical novels repeatedly function as a means for establishing or sustaining oppositional collectivities. Taken together, these contrasting portrayals of love in Pynchon's canon, I suggest, highlight both the radical political potential of love and its susceptibility to recuperation in the guise of

both Shasta's new appearance and her lover's implied cultural status run counter to Doc's own ethos: she wears "flatland gear" (*IV* 1), in contrast to the beach attire that Doc remembers²⁸—"sandals, bottom half of a flower-print bikini, faded Country Joe & the Fish T-shirt"—while her lover is a "[g]entleman of the straightworld persuasion" rather than a member of the hippie counterculture with which Shasta had run and of which Doc is still a part (*IV* 1, 2).²⁹ These social and cultural differences also indicate a vast economic disparity between Doc and the lover, Mickey Wolfmann, a wealthy Los Angeles real-estate mogul with land holdings scattered throughout California and Nevada. In taking on the case, Doc is compelled to act in the interests of the propertied class and against those of his own.

In an important sense, Doc's double binds appreciably raise the stakes when it comes to Pynchon's social vision. In a compelling ethical reading of *Inherent Vice* and *Against the Day*, Ali Chetwynd argues that Pynchon's novels since *Vineland* demonstrate a newfound fascination with "irreconcilable, competing obligation."³⁰ This obligation, according to Chetwynd, compels Pynchon's recent characters to action and decision, to "necessary choices" (938), emphasizing ethical questions over the epistemological ones that, for example, drive Oedipa's search for the Trystero or Sidney Stencil's quest for V. This shift has significant consequences "when we ask what kind of relationship Pynchon wants his reader to find between the subjunctive and their indicative world. This is plausibly the central question of his career, and the recent novels' prioritising of obligation reflects a prioritising of the indicative as the realm for achievement" (Chetwynd, "Inherent" 945). While *Inherent Vice*, like all

ideological narratives. On the politics of love, see also Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, p. 413; *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004), pp. 351–52; and esp. *Commonwealth* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap–Harvard UP, 2009), pp. 179–88.

²⁸ *Flatland* refers to middleclass inland suburbs near foothills of a handful of coastal mountain ranges, in distinction to beach communities such as Gordita Beach, Doc's residence and, on Sean McCann's take, a fictionalized Manhattan Beach (McCann, "Lighting Up on Gordita Beach," *The Common Review* 14 April 2010, p. 54), Pynchon's home during the composition of *Gravity's Rainbow*.

²⁹ Crucially, *Inherent Vice* is thus unique among the California novels in that it is in a sense also an historical novel, given the gap between its 1970 plot and its 2009 publication.

³⁰ Ali Chetwynd, "Inherent Obligation: The Distinctive Difficulties in and of Recent Pynchon," *English Studies: A Journal of English Language and Literature* 95.8 (2014): 923–48, here p. 925. Hereafter cited parenthetically as "Inherent."

of Pynchon's novels, takes recourse to fantasy, hallucination, and other varieties of subjunctive discourse, it does so, Chetwynd suggests, in the service of effecting real, indicative change. In what follows, I aim to demonstrate that this ethics of obligation, this duty to choose, provides a critical counterpoint to the economy of debt, exchange, and time that sustains the capitalist status quo in *Inherent Vice*.

Irreconcilable oppositions between obligations proper to Doc's subject position and those imposed by professional duties are in fact characteristic of his PI work more generally. His politics, values, and lifestyle are rooted in hippie counterculture, but they are also at odds with his work; his occupation and his hippie persona seem only tenuously reconciled in the name of his agency, LSD Investigations—"Location, Surveillance, Detection"—and in another character's description of him as "a private gumshoe, or do I mean gumsandal" (*IV* 14, 239). These tensions reverberate beyond questions of lifestyle or image. Doc's personal loyalties are with the working class, yet he effectively serves capitalist interests, and not only in the Wolfmann case. Betrayal of his own class is a fundamental precondition for entry into PI work: when his car is repossessed, the repo firm Gotcha! Searches and Settlements "hire[s] him on as a skip-tracer trainee and let[s] him work off the debt" (*IV* 51). Regardless of good intentions and personal convictions, Doc's subsequent career enacts a double bind between his class loyalties—he often takes on cases with no hope for compensation, except perhaps in the form of "a small favor down the line"—and an occupation that nonetheless makes him a "hopeless stooge of the creditor class" (*IV* 314, 303). Antinomy thus governs Doc's daily life, his social interactions, and even his very subjectivity.

However, antinomy in *Inherent Vice* is not exclusively internal in that sense; Doc also has an externalized foil in the figure of Lieutenant Christian "Bigfoot" Bjornsen, a detective with the LAPD. The relationship between Doc and Bigfoot dramatizes and externalizes the tensions that inhere within Doc's own individual subjectivity; simultaneously, it highlights the awkward proximity of Doc's countercultural values and his establishment-serving occupation as well as the ultimate impossibility of reconciling or synthesizing the two. Bigfoot personifies straightworld disdain for countercultures. He tolerates Doc only to the extent that the tactics and demands

of his detective work require; invariably, he condescendingly refers to Doc as “hippie scum,” accuses him of “some kind of [Charles] Mansonoid conspiracy,” bemoans Doc’s “unabridged paranoid hippie monologues,” and scarcely masks his indignation at having to collaborate with Doc (*IV* 22, 29, 138).³¹ And yet collaborate they must, since each periodically has intelligence that the other needs. Bigfoot acknowledges their mutual dependence early on when he offers to hire Doc as a snitch for the LAPD (*IV* 32). The state-sanctioned economy of information represented by Bigfoot cannot function effectively without recourse to the unofficial economies and casual networks of information that are Doc’s stock in trade. For his part, and despite his revulsion at the notion of being purchased by the police, Doc is willing to accept a tip from Bigfoot that links the Wolfmann case with a seemingly unrelated missing-person investigation (*IV* 210–12).³² On more than one occasion, therefore, Doc and Bigfoot appear to be doubles of each other, unified in their antinomian opposition. Doc observes this reciprocal effect when he notes that each has a “*mysterious power* to ruin [the] other’s day” (*IV* 33). Even more telling is Doc’s fear that his kinship with

³¹ Bigfoot’s allegation of “Mansonoid conspiracy” opens onto a series of Charles Manson allusions throughout the novel. Many of these highlight the ways in which Bigfoot and other straightworlders identify all hippies with Manson and the Family. Regarding hospitality, one character complains that “[. . .]Manson and the gang have fucked that up for everybody,” since nobody is willing any longer to open their home to strangers (*IV* 38). In addition, the LAPD institutes a profiling program, “Cult-watch,” in which “males with shoulder-length or longer hair,” on account of hairstyle alone, can be questioned by police (*IV* 179). Bigfoot himself, despite his own association of all hippies with Manson, admits that “fear” of Manson dominates L.A. culture, including the LAPD (*IV* 208). Crucially, however, the hippie character Denis implies that Manson hysteria is actually part of a larger vicious circle, in which fear and hostility are in fact what produce Manson in the first place: “Southern California [. . . has n]o sympathy for weirdness[. . .]. And people wonder why Charlie Manson’s the way he is” (*IV* 135). Bigfoot’s association of Doc’s hippie ethos with Manson and the Family thus indexes the larger conservative backlash under Nixon against not just hippies but 1960s culture more generally. For other references to Manson and/or the Family, see *IV* 48, 53, 107, 119, 138, 199, 280, 283, 292–93, 304, 308, 311, and 332.

³² Notions of selling out or being bought off constitute an ongoing concern of Doc’s and a recurrent theme in *Inherent Vice*; for example, like Bigfoot, FBI agents Flatweed and Borderline attempt to purchase Doc’s cooperation (*IV* 75). Other characters suspected of selling out include Bigfoot himself, Shasta, and Coy Harlingen, whose apparent death from heroin overdose and subsequent reappearance are connected with the Golden Fang as well as right-wing political groups. See, e.g., *IV* 84, 95, 122, and 257. On betrayal more generally in *Inherent Vice*, see Thomas Hill Schaub, “*The Crying of Lot 49* and Other California Novels,” in *Cambridge Companion*, pp. 30–43, here pp. 38–41.

Bigfoot might efface the difference between them altogether and lapse into sheer identity—an impression that Shasta echoes when she describes the pair as “[b]oth [. . .] cops who never wanted to be cops” (*IV* 313; cf. 207).³³ Like the strange and perhaps untenable conjoining of counterculture and establishment in the name “LSD Investigations,” Doc’s relationship with Bigfoot assembles a set of oppositions that can be neither reconciled nor avoided.

While both Doc and Bigfoot work in intelligence, the opposition between them corresponds to incommensurability in the epistemological models and practical methods used by each one in his detective work—and, crucially, these models and methods reflect fundamentally incompatible economic principles, as I show below. Bigfoot takes a pragmatic, commonsense approach to empirical evidence, one that is appropriate for life “[h]ere on Earth,” in contradistinction to the otherworldly, hallucinatory realms in which he derisively locates Doc and other hippies (*IV* 23). Because his empiricism assumes evidence to be accessible to careful observation and sound interpretation, surveillance—the gathering of evidence—is possible everywhere, at all times. When Doc asks whether someone might be listening in on a private conversation, Bigfoot responds: “Everybody. Nobody. Does it matter?” (*IV* 272). Bigfoot’s premise here is that the paranoia he attributes to Doc is ultimately pointless, since no amount of conspiratorial speculation can trump empirical observation and commonsense judgment.³⁴ One must of course discriminate between relevant and irrelevant evidence and draw the proper connections—“Figure it out. Use what’s left of your brain” (*IV* 272)—but those tasks fall to clear-minded induction, not hippie intuition. Detective work for Bigfoot thus entails the collection and the careful, calculated interpretation of a broad base of empirical evidence. In this, Bigfoot is consistent with larger patterns of intelligence-gathering practices used by state agencies in the

³³ In order to distinguish my own ellipses from Pynchon’s, I enclose mine in brackets. Ellipses in quotations from all other sources are my own.

³⁴ Bigfoot’s calling Doc paranoid is not unjustified. Doc often uses paranoid speculation as a means of cataloguing potential outcomes of his cases, such as when he considers possible perpetrators of Mickey’s abduction and their motives, or when he explores conspiratorial connections among the FBI, the mob, and Mickey (*IV* 95–96, 220–21; see also 193–94, 217, 293, 306, 350).

novel. In particular, the ARPAnet (Advanced Research Project Agency Network), a precursor to the internet, is susceptible to surveillance via wiretapping (*IV* 258). One character even predicts that electronic surveillance will eventually advance so far that “someday everybody’s gonna wake up to find they’re under surveillance they can’t escape. Skips won’t be able to skip no more[. . .]. It’s all data. Ones and zeros. All recoverable. Eternally present” (*IV* 365). From the perspective of Bigfoot’s hard-boiled pragmatism, this exhaustive surveillance is the first step toward total mastery of information: if, as he holds, the methodical application of common sense and sound judgment reveals the truth that underlies collected evidence, then having all possible evidence is tantamount to having access to all knowledge.

Doc’s methodology, by contrast, relies on mental experiences expressly ridiculed by Bigfoot: epiphanies, or, as Doc remembers Bigfoot calling them, “hippiphanies” (*IV* 207). Notwithstanding Doc’s methodological use of paranoia, it is ultimately epiphany that guides Doc toward the most useful leads and valid conclusions—and, crucially, that enables *Inherent Vice*’s unique political allegory and prevents the novel from merely repeating what by now would be worn-out tropes from the Pynchon canon. Just as Bigfoot’s reliance on observation and surveillance marks his membership in the official law-enforcement establishment, Doc’s epiphanies are a trademark of his belonging to drug subculture: they tend overwhelmingly to be induced or facilitated by the use of drugs. Early on, when Doc speculates—correctly, it turns out—that Sloane Wolfmann, Mickey’s wife, and Riggs Warbling, her yoga trainer, are having an affair, the narrator attributes Doc’s insight to drug use: “if acid-tripping was good for anything, it helped you tune to [. . .] unlisted frequencies,” that is, to connections and details that remain lost on sober straightworlders (*IV* 61). Doc thus exhibits “a more nonlinear awareness than may be entirely compatible with the venerable sin of Sloth [or the less prestigious sin of drug use]—some inner alertness or tension” that, while not the result of effort or labor alone, is nonetheless clearly something other and more than the vulgar, stereotypical version of tuning in, turning on, and dropping out.³⁵ *Inherent Vice* abounds with similar narcotic epiphanies.

³⁵ Thomas Pynchon, “Nearer, My Couch, to Thee,” *New York Times Book Review* 6 June 1993, accessed

After Shasta mysteriously disappears like Mickey before her, Doc has an acid trip in which he sees her onboard a ship at sea (*IV* 109–10). This apparent hallucination, however, is also confirmed by Shasta as real in some sense when she later recalls having “felt” Doc’s presence, “like . . . being haunted” (*IV* 306). Moreover, shortly before the novel’s climax, Doc escapes captivity at the hands of Adrian Prussia—a loan shark connected with the disappearances of Mickey and Shasta as well as the long-ago murder of Bigfoot’s partner—thanks in part to “some kind of flashback”: “he [Doc] understood for a second and a half that he belonged to a single and ancient martial tradition in which resisting authority, subduing hired guns, defending your old lady’s honor all amounted to the same thing” (*IV* 326). Doc’s epiphanies clearly stand as a countercultural foil to Bigfoot’s straightworld pragmatism. What is surprising is that they work: narcotic epiphanies improbably yet consistently lead Doc toward essential clues and otherwise hidden connections which, according to Bigfoot’s assumptions, are properly discovered only through sober realism.

Such epiphanic experiences as these have elicited dismissal of *Inherent Vice* from some critics; for example, Kathryn Hume “doubt[s] the substantial nature of such visions” in comparison with more-obviously fantastical passages in other novels, and she argues that in other moments, Doc’s “sensitivity is treated as if it were an allergy rather than an insight given him from on high.”³⁶ Likewise, for Celia Wallhead, drug use represents “[o]ne of the inherent flaws of hippiedom,” liable to result in an addiction as controlling as fascism.³⁷ On the contrary, I read the function of Doc’s pot smoking as akin to what Henry Veggian calls the “stoner realism” of *Vineland*.³⁸

20 November 2011 at <https://www.nytimes.com/books/97/05/18/reviews/pynchon-sloth.html>. Hereafter cited parenthetically as “NMC.”

³⁶ Kathryn Hume, “Pynchon’s Alternate Realities from *V.* to *Inherent Vice*,” *Orbit: Writing around Pynchon* 2.1 (2013): 19 pp., pp. 7, 13, accessed 12 October 2015 at <https://www.pynchon.net/articles/10.7766/orbit.v2.1.50/>.

³⁷ Celia Wallhead, “The Unavoidable Flaws in Hippiedom and Fascism in Thomas Pynchon’s *Inherent Vice*,” in *Thomas Pynchon and the (De)VICES of Global (Post)modernity*, ed. Zofia Kolbuszewska (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2012), pp. 69–86, here p. 72.

³⁸ Henry Veggian, “Profane Illuminations: Postmodernism, Realism, and the Holytail Marijuana Crop in Thomas Pynchon’s *Vineland*,” in *Pynchon’s California*, ed. Scott McClintock and John Miller (Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 2014), pp. 135–63, here p. 149.

Not only do those epiphanies actually turn out to be true, time and again, but they also allow what is perhaps an even closer linkage between subjunctive and indicative levels than the episodes from other novels that Hume prefers. Simultaneously valorizing countercultural practices and contributing materially (if unconventionally) to the novel's detective plot, Doc's epiphanies have both political and aesthetic significance; as Veggian points out with respect to *Vineland*:

Critics who endorse the common critical assumption of postmodern fiction—that it 'rewraps' earlier modes in a new fabric—would perhaps object . . . that *Vineland* [or *Inherent Vice*] merely dresses . . . classical realism [or detective fiction] in frivolous postmodern attire. This seems the critical analog of reducing the effects of various drugs (and marijuana in particular) to fragmented subjectivities insofar as both avoid contending with the evidence.³⁹

The evidence suggests not just that Doc's epiphanies work, but that Doc's stoner realism is effective enough to both collaborate and contend with the sober realism of Bigfoot and the LAPD.

However, what is most important about the contrast between Doc's and Bigfoot's methods, between stoner and sober realism, is that more than competing epistemologies, they correspond also to competing economic principles, each of which entails a fundamentally different relation to debt. Bigfoot's realist epistemology and pragmatist method take a calculative, rational approach to all observation, evidence, and knowledge; his detective work is disciplined and goal-directed. Following from this, evidence is nothing other than information or intelligence to be gathered, managed, and distributed as necessity and common sense dictate. Access to information is granted or denied based on instrumental calculations: Bigfoot shares tips with Doc and later reveals select details concerning the death of his former partner because, as the narrative eventually shows, he is ultimately attempting to manipulate Doc in pursuit of vengeance for his partner's murder (see *IV* 328–29). Investigation,

³⁹ Veggian, "Profane Illuminations," p. 146.

intelligence, and interpretation—the act, object, and end of surveillance—are therefore subject to laws of exchange and equivalence. Bigfoot shares intelligence only when he receives something in return; as he admonishes Doc, “nobody owes you anything” (IV 273). Knowledge must be paid for.⁴⁰ In Bigfoot’s accounting, there is no such thing as a free hunch.

Knowledge is therefore a commodity to Bigfoot, and paying for it means balancing debits with credits—that is, managing debt. The concept of debt is utterly central to the economic relations that structure *Inherent Vice*, even when debt is not monetized. Bigfoot seeks revenge for his partner’s murder as a way to satisfy an obligation: “. . . I owed him so much” (IV 331). Debt arranges characters into columns of creditors and debtors, perpetuating a whole series of dues and repayments that further concentrate wealth under capitalism.⁴¹ Recall that Doc first enters the PI field as a way to work off his own debt, collecting from others on behalf of the same capitalist class that repossesses his car. Relationships of debt indenture vast swaths of the novel’s social world, including, for example, what the narrator calls “plasticratic yachtsfolk.” Sauncho Smilax, a maritime lawyer, explains: “It isn’t new money exactly, [. . .] more like new debt. Everything they own, including their sailboats, they’ve bought on credit cards [. . .] that you send away for by filling out the back of a match cover” (IV 90). The fly-by-night character of credit card companies whose applications are found on matchbooks cannot but evoke the scandalous predatory lending practices that led to the 2007 crisis in the U.S. housing market. Subprime home loans, of course, were attractive to lenders for the same reason long shots are enticing to gamblers: the greater the risk, the greater the potential profit. When liquid assets fall short of a commodity’s price, debt—the “indebted consumption [by] wage earners” that helps sustain profits under finance capitalism when “wages [themselves] are

⁴⁰ A pun, coming a few pages after the conversation between Doc and Bigfoot that I have just quoted, comically alludes to the occasionally dear price of such knowledge. In an echo of the Book of Job, the restaurant The Price of Wisdom is upstairs from the bar Ruby’s Lounge; or, “THE PRICE OF WISDOM IS ABOVE RUBY’S[. . .]” (IV 276; cf. Job 28:18).

⁴¹ The reconcentration of wealth among the wealthy, of course, is a hallmark of neoliberal capitalism. See David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005), esp. pp. 5–38.

reduced and precarized"⁴²—therefore provides a means for not only keeping capital in circulation in order to satisfy desire for commodities but also accelerating and exacerbating the “radical imbalance[s]” on which, according to Slavoj Žižek, capitalist drive depends.⁴³ Relations of debt are therefore crucial for maintaining consumer demand and class inequality under capitalism.

It is in light of debt’s role in capitalism that the subversive qualities of Doc’s epiphanies begin to appear. Those epiphanies violate the laws of commodification, exchange, and debt that determine Bigfoot’s management of intelligence. Whereas knowledge only ever comes with a price in Bigfoot’s system, Doc’s epiphanies simply arrive, unbidden and unexpected. Therefore, the notion of exchange value that underwrites both capitalist circulation and Bigfoot’s commerce in intelligence has no corollary in epiphany: exchange value presupposes commensurability between commodity and money, or between intelligence and whatever payment Bigfoot demands, but there is no comparable counterbalance to epiphany.

The logic of epiphany thus constitutes a radical alternative to the capitalist market of exchange. *Inherent Vice’s* resident expert on epiphany, as well as a host of other

⁴² Christian Marazzi, *The Violence of Finance Capitalism*, trans. Kristina Lebedeva (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2010), p. 34.

⁴³ Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge, Mass.: Massachusetts Institute of Technology P, 2006), p. 63. As Richard Dienst points out, this relation between debt and radical imbalance results in a vicious circle of expropriation: “Insofar as all those debts will be held and enforced by a class of creditors keen to preserve the prerogatives of free-ranging capital, the only economic trend that seems certain to continue is the ongoing transfer of wealth to those who already have a lot of it” (Dienst, *The Bonds of Debt* [London: Verso, 2011], p. 28). Moreover, the contemporary regime of debt also becomes one more vehicle for capitalist biopower, as Stefano Lucarelli argues: debt and financialization produce the ideological ruse that “[individual] wealth depends more on financial markets than [on] demands for wages . . .” (Lucarelli, “Financialization as Biopower,” in *Crisis in the Global Economy: Financial Markets, Social Struggles, and New Political Scenarios* [2009], ed. Andrea Fumagalli and Sandro Mezzadra, trans. Jason Francis McGimsey [Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2010], pp. 119–38, here p. 126). On Lucarelli’s take, such a precept exacerbates the tendency of real wages to fall and was a major contributor to the 2007 subprime mortgage crisis (“Financialization as Biopower,” pp. 131–37). David Graeber’s pathbreaking study, *Debt: The First 5,000 Years* (2011)—a theoretical touchstone for the Occupy movement—provides a sweeping comparative historical overview of debt that is simultaneously an anarchist-inflected critique of the interrelations among debt and interest, international finance, militarism, global immiseration, and commonsense morality (Graeber, *Debt: The First 5,000 Years* [Brooklyn: Melville House, 2011]).

mystical, mythological, and occult knowledges, is the character Sortilège, whose name alludes to practices of divination.⁴⁴ When Doc comes down from his first acid trip, disturbed and disoriented, it is Sortilège who explains that hallucinatory experiences help reveal “some secret aspect of our personality” (*IV* 106), a proposition that reverberates in acid-users’ attunement to “unlisted frequencies” and in Doc’s investigative use of hallucinations and flashbacks. Sortilège also articulates the structure of epiphanic experience in a way that highlights its crucial differences from capitalist exchange: “Sortilège, who liked finding new uses for the term ‘Beyond,’ thought this [i.e. an inexplicable and unexpected divulging of information] was a form of grace and that he [Doc] should just accept it, because at any instant it could go away as easily as it came” (*IV* 224). Although Sortilège is referring specifically to an awkward personal confession made to Doc by one of his clients, it is nonetheless applicable to the logic of epiphanic experience in general. In both cases, knowledge comes without either warning or intention, violating normal expectations and conventions. More importantly, the excessiveness and incommensurability with quotidian experience signified in the term “Beyond,” here rendered a proper noun, emphasize the impossibility of determining an equivalent value for epiphany or of assimilating it into a regime of economic exchange. Rather, epiphany as “grace” has something of the character of Derrida’s notion of the gift: like the workings of grace, a gift must be “something that remains inaccessible, unpresentable, and as a consequence secret,” lest it impose an obligation on the receiver and thus fall back into the logic of economic transaction.⁴⁵ However, unlike Derrida’s gift—which is necessarily and constitutively impossible, along with other acts that would satisfy unconditional, absolute

⁴⁴ The *OED* defines *sortilege* as “[t]he practice of casting lots in order to decide something or to forecast the future; divination based on this procedure or performed in some other way . . .” (“*sortilege*, n. 1,” *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2012, accessed 8 Apr. 2012).

⁴⁵ Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death* [1992], trans. David Wills (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995), p. 29. Cf. Geoffrey Bennington’s explanation: “your gratitude toward a gift I give you functions as a payment in return or in exchange, and then the gift is no longer strictly speaking a gift” (Bennington and Derrida, *Jacques Derrida*, trans. Bennington [Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1993], p. 188).

ethical laws⁴⁶—Doc’s epiphanies actually happen.⁴⁷ They therefore count, in *Inherent Vice*’s figuration of late capitalism and alternative regimes of exchange, as live possibilities carrying all the weight of Jameson’s notion of symbolic acts.⁴⁸ That is, the novel imagines a system for the distribution of information that is utterly independent of exchange; what Bigfoot must purchase, earn, or barter for as a commodity, Doc receives as a gift of grace.

Narcotic epiphanies might be hallucinatory, but that doesn’t mean they don’t really happen. Like symbolic acts, Doc’s epiphanies require both political and aesthetic interpretation. Politically, they represent an escape from the capitalist market, a breakdown in equivalence and exchange value. Aesthetically, however, they do indeed take the form of hallucinations: experiences that a hardboiled realist like Bigfoot would never recognize as authoritative, authentic, or conclusive. Nonetheless, given the independent confirmations and remarkable accuracy of Doc’s epiphanies, the hallucinatory nature of these experiences must count as something other than pure fantasy or sheer illusion. Rather, to the extent that they reveal truths—even partial ones—they are better understood, metaphorically, in terms of alternative perceptions of light itself. Doc’s epiphanic hallucinations allow him to see aspects of reality that remain hidden from ordinary, sober experience. In photography, filters modify or absorb some of the light that enters a camera lens, but they still document

⁴⁶ Among the impossible ethical imperatives analyzed by Derrida are forgiveness (“On Forgiveness,” trans. Michael Hughes, in *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* [London: Routledge, 2001], pp. 25–60); hospitality (*Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle Invites Jacques Derrida to Respond* [1997], trans. Rachel Bowlby [Stanford: Stanford UP, 2000]), democracy (*Rogues: Two Essays on Reason* [2003], trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas [Stanford: Stanford UP, 2005]), justice (“Force of Law: The ‘Mystical Foundation of Authority’” [1990/1994], trans. Mary Quaintance, in *Acts of Religion*, ed. Gil Anidjar [New York: Routledge, 2002], pp. 230–98), and mourning (*Memoires: For Paul de Man*, trans. Cecile Lindsay, Jonathan Culler, and Eduardo Cadava [New York: Columbia UP, 1986]; *The Work of Mourning*, ed. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas [Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2001]), to cite some of the best-known cases.

⁴⁷ Cf. Chetwynd’s critique of “the ethics of mere alterity”: on his take, the ethics of *Inherent Vice* are “deliberative not in the Derridean sense of oscillating contemplation but in the requirement to weigh options toward necessary choices” (“Inherent” 926, 938).

⁴⁸ See, e.g., Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell UP, 1981), pp. 74–83.

the physical presence of light, not falsify it.⁴⁹ Astronomers use filters on telescopes to block interference, sharpen images of celestial bodies, and reveal selected wavelengths of light, resulting in greater accuracy and utility of the images obtained. And infrared technologies register wavelengths of light beyond the threshold of visibility to the human eye—but infrared light is indeed real, despite the fact that we humans can't see it. In a similar vein, Doc's hallucinations do not obscure reality—they illuminate it.

Epiphanies therefore provide a crucial analogue in *Inherent Vice* to the luminous senses of the word *day* in *Against the Day*. In that novel, oppositional and radical subjects such as Webb Traverse grasp history and politics in a *contre-jour* lighting that strongly emphasizes visual contrast and, metaphorically, reaffirms characters' commitment to antisystemic political causes.⁵⁰ Similarly, Doc's epiphanic experiences exploit alternatives to the wholesome, straightworld light of day to take a non-normative, subversive perspective on social reality.

The illumination enabled by Doc's epiphanies stands as the utopian other to an alternative dimension of *day* that functions as a means of commodification and expropriation. Crucially, just as *day* is bivalent in *Against the Day*, alternately denoting both light and time (the *contre-jour* characters are also against their day, opposed to the dominant logic of their historical moment), the predominant transcoding of *day* in *Inherent Vice's* portrayal of capitalist exchange also transposes *day* from the context of illumination to its parallel context of temporality. For the novel's capitalists and creditors, time itself becomes one more object of exchange and circulation. As Puck Beaverton, one of Adrian Prussia's stooges, explains to Doc during his

⁴⁹ See Roland Barthes's discussion of photographic presence in his classic *Camera Lucida*: "I call 'photographic referent' not the *optionally* real thing to which an image or sign refers [as in most signifying systems] but the *necessarily* real thing which has been placed before the lens, without which there would be no photograph . . . [I]n Photography I can never deny that *the thing has been there*" (Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* [1980], trans. Richard Howard [New York: Hill, Wang, 1981], p. 76).

⁵⁰ See Thomas Pynchon, *Against the Day* (New York: Penguin, 2006), pp. 171 ff.; hereafter cited parenthetically as *AD*. On *contre-jour* lighting in photography, see Roger W. Hicks, "Against-the-Light Photography," in *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph*, ed. Robin Lenman (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005), pp. 17–19.

captivity, “what people were buying, when they paid interest, was time”—specifically, time to raise money before a loan comes due. Continuing on, Puck connects the time purchased by interest to the retribution leveled by loan sharks against delinquent debtors: “the only fair way to deal with that was to take their own personal time away from them again [. . . through s]evere injury[. . .]. Time they thought they had all to themselves would have to be spent now on stays in hospitals, visits to doctors, physical therapy, everything taking longer because they couldn’t move around so good” (IV 320–21). Thus, the principle of exchange value dominates not only the literal marketplace of consumer goods and Bigfoot’s management of intelligence, but also phenomenological experiences of freedom, pain and suffering, and even mortal life itself—loan sharks repossess time “up to and including the time [a debtor has] left to live” (IV 321). Once subjectivity and experience are measured in terms of exchange value, time itself comes to play a role analogous to money: like money, time becomes a privileged abstraction in terms of which other goods are valued. Moreover, time and money are mutually convertible, allowing otherwise disparate categories like outstanding debt and human suffering to be balanced against each other. This holds not only for loan sharks but for the creditor system generally: when Doc works off his debt as a repo man at Gotcha!, he is paying the firm a quantity of time commensurate with his monetary obligation, commensurability itself being determined by dynamics of the market. Like money, much of time’s value originates in finitude and inequality: if money and time were inexhaustible or shared in common, expropriation would be a zero-sum game. Control over the distribution of time is thus a lynchpin of the regime of debt.

Between commodified, repossessed time and epiphanic illumination, then, *Inherent Vice* follows *Against the Day* in mobilizing conceptual and connotative associations with *day*. Moreover, the luminous and temporal thematics associated with the term accumulate in *Inherent Vice* beyond the central examples I have just given. Indeed, while Doc’s epiphanies are the most notable instance of subversive, antisystemic uses of light, they are not alone. For instance, evading the FBI, Doc’s friend Tito Stavrou drives his limo fast enough to compress approaching light and redshift receding light (IV 249); these phenomena are ordinarily produced by the Doppler effect, working over cosmic distances and detectable only by suitably sensitive equipment.

In the context of dodging a repressive apparatus of the state, such a conceit amounts to a superhuman effort at revolutionary flight. Moreover, epiphanic illumination and relativistic redshift both seemingly violate the laws that structure commonsense empiricism and Newtonian physics, underscoring the kinship between alternative lighting in *Inherent Vice* and revolutionary *contre-jour* symbolism in *Against the Day*.

However, antisystemic lighting in *Inherent Vice* is also opposed by recuperative uses of light by the creditor system and hegemonic U.S. culture. In an analepsis recalling a failed dope run, Doc compares unforgiving sunlight to “the sort of perfect daylight you always saw on TV cop shows” (*IV* 164), a visible analogue to the unquestionable authority of rational empiricism in Bigfoot’s investigative method. The police dramas with which Doc associates perfect daylight also open onto a broader social and political critique. *Inherent Vice* singles out police dramas as especially pernicious forms of the eroticization of fascist authority and the demonization of subversion as criminal behavior—the latter coinciding with the ideological effacement of the distinction between Charles Manson and hippies generally (see note 31). *Inherent Vice* makes much of the fundamentally conservative function of series like *Adam-12* (aired 1968–75), *Hawaii Five-O* (1968–80), *The Mod Squad* (1968–73), and others (see, e.g., *IV* 32, 97, 261). Moreover, Bigfoot himself is frequently and derisively described using imagery drawn from TV shows like these or, even worse, painted as a TV-cop-wannabe. Early on, Bigfoot strikes Doc as emerging “[r]ight out of the background of some *Adam-12* episode, a show which Bigfoot had in fact moonlighted on once or twice”; even a colleague in the LAPD resentfully implies that Bigfoot would jump at the chance to star in a made-for-TV movie about the Manson case (*IV* 32, 48). The “perfect daylight” that reminds Doc of cop TV is thus necessarily incompatible with epiphanic light.⁵¹

⁵¹ In addition to its critique of cop dramas, *Inherent Vice* also follows its predecessor in the California trilogy, *Vineland*, in presenting television in general as a vehicle for ideology: “some wholesome family will quite soon be gathering night after night, to gaze tubeward [note the echo of *Vineland*’s “Tube”], gobble their nutritious snacks, perhaps after the kids are in bed even attempt some procreational foreplay[. . .]” (*IV* 22). However, just as *Vineland* does not dismiss the moving image entirely but rather contrasts reactionary television with radical documentary film, *Inherent Vice* discriminates among genres of television. During a narcotic epiphany that I have already discussed, the three revolutionary-heroic practices central to that epiphany—“resisting authority, subduing hired guns, [and] defending your old lady’s honor”—correspond to three pairs of cartoon rivals: “Dagwood and Mr. Dithers, Bugs

However, even more threatening to Doc's epiphanic illumination are fog, haze, and smog. Fog obscures and disorients. At times, the confusion produced by fog is analogous to (non-epiphanic) drug experiences: "all was fuzzed, as if by the fog of dope" (IV 45).⁵² At other times, fog and related phenomena symptomatically indicate baleful effects of late capitalism. Driving through fog, Doc experiences familiar city streets as an "alien atmosphere, with daylight diminished, visibility reduced to half a block, and all colors, including those of traffic signals, shifted radically elsewhere in the spectrum" (IV 50). As Wallhead suggests, this fog "is meant to be both literal and symbolic" (69). Under such foggy conditions, given the difficulty of getting one's bearings, cognitive mapping in the original geographical sense of the term becomes simultaneously all but impossible yet all the more crucial—just as the totalizing aesthetic practice of cognitive mapping, in Jameson's account, is precisely what postmodernism tends to prevent, even as cognitive mapping simultaneously provides the "vocation" of radical politics in postmodernity.⁵³ Indeed, under the right circumstances, fog produces a perceptual depthlessness analogous to postmodernism's privileging of surfaces over depths: "The third dimension grew less and less reliable—a row of four taillights ahead could either belong to two separate cars in adjoining lanes a safe distance away, or be a pair of double lights on the same vehicle, right in front of your nose, no way to tell" (IV 367).

Unsurprisingly, smog is associated with the urban sprawl emblematic of L.A. and the American automobile culture to which sprawl gives rise: freeways run

[Bunny] and Yosemite Sam, [and] Popeye and Bluto" (IV 326). Moreover, in a conversation with Sauncho, Doc laments the triumph of cops over PIs as screen heroes, the latter "always smarter and more professional than the cops, always [. . .] solvin the crime while the cops are followin the wrong leads and gettin in the way" (IV 97). This discrimination between television genres implies that not all of them are equally reactionary, despite the medium's predominately reactionary systemic function. It also recalls Pynchon's distinction between a Luddite and a "technophobic crazy" (Thomas Pynchon, "Is It O.K. to Be a Luddite?", *New York Times Book Review* 28 Oct. 1984, accessed 20 Nov. 2011 at <https://www.nytimes.com/books/97/05/18/reviews/pynchon-luddite.html>). On Bigfoot as TV/movie cop, see also IV 9–10, 202, 328.

⁵² Indeed, this link between non-epiphanic drug use and fog is crucial to the reading of "haze" that Wallhead develops. However, not only do weed and acid serve productive functions for Doc's PI work, but also, as I go on to show, fog takes on a more positive utopian valence in *Inherent Vice* as well.

⁵³ Fredric Jameson, "Cognitive Mapping," in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1988), pp. 347–57, here p. 354–55; Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p. 54.

through “great horizonless fields of housing, under [. . .] the white bombardment of a sun smogged into only a smear of probability, out in whose light you began to wonder if anything you’d call psychedelic could ever happen” (IV 19). These observations by Doc link together several important symbolic features of smog. Produced by commuters traveling from suburban “fields of housing,” smog attests to the ideological victory of middleclass consumerism in postmodernity while also highlighting the straightworld intolerance that renders “anything you’d call psychedelic” seemingly impossible. As such, smog represents conformity and a foreclosure of the radical alternatives metonymically associated with hippie culture and drug experiences: “smoglight [is] appropriate to ends or conditions settled for, too often after only token negotiation” (IV 316). The notion of settling—often indistinguishable from selling out, or even betrayal—reopens the question, central to Pynchon’s oeuvre, of the legacy of the 1960s and fidelity to that decade’s radical political potential. Visual obscurity in *Inherent Vice* is thus all at once a matter of phenomenology, culture, economics, politics, and ultimately history itself.

As such, fog pertains not only to the thematic field of visibility (day as light) but also to that of temporality (day as time), where it joins the commodification of time in the guise of interest as capitalism’s two crucial ideological uses of time and temporality. However, capitalism does not have a monopoly on time. As well as an object of capitalist exchange and the postmodern waning of historicity, time is also a site of contestation and radical struggle. More than just a missing-person investigation, Doc’s pursuit of the Wolfmann case is a claim staked in the history of the 1960s and, even more importantly, in the future of radical politics.

3. Pynchon’s Postmodern Utopianism

Doc’s investigation dramatizes those historical and political struggles by pitting the epiphanic logic of grace against the system of capitalist exchange. As I argued above, the incommensurability of grace subverts capitalist circulation by rendering exchange value impossible. However, under capitalism, violations of the rule of exchange value by grace must never go unpunished. Indeed, an offense as venial as “rogue profit-sharing activities”—profit-sharing not even an instance of grace but

rather a reform that merely adjusts the distribution of profits—is enough to sentence the dentist Rudy Blatnoyd to death (*IV* 318).

Similarly, capitalism's interdiction against grace is ultimately what accounts for Mickey's disappearance. Like any good capitalist, Mickey has an extensive history of strategic philanthropy. Philanthropy, however, yields returns: tax breaks, good publicity, legislative consideration or other political favors, and so forth. As such, philanthropy poses no threat to capitalist exchange; it merely counts as one more item in the debit column, to be repaid with one form or another of credit down the road. Mickey transgresses when he crosses a threshold between profitable philanthropy and unmitigated, unprofitable giving: "This was the deepest shit he could get in. All because of this idea[. . .]. All the money he ever made—he was working on a way to just give it back" (*IV* 150).⁵⁴ His crime is to envision a utopian community that would provide housing without rent or profit, called *Arrepentimiento*: "Spanish for 'sorry about that.' His idea was, anybody could go live there for free, didn't matter who you were, show up and if there's a unit open it's yours" (*IV* 248). The operative logic of *Arrepentimiento* therefore would not be profitable exchange, the capitalist justification for philanthropy, but excessive grace, approaching the Derridean notions of not only the gift but also hospitality, in its unquestioning, unconditional welcome to the other who simply "show[s] up."⁵⁵

Mickey's utopian vision not only fails to honor the capitalist imperative to accumulate but also, in so doing, counts as a radical threat to the whole system this imperative supports. Describing Mickey's plan, an FBI agent expresses the same vitriol and abhorrence for marginalized subjectivities that Bigfoot typically reserves

⁵⁴ Mickey's generosity thus actualizes Oedipia's temptation to redistribute Pierce Inverarity's estate among W.A.S.T.E. users in *The Crying of Lot 49*, while Mickey's punishment confirms Oedipia's apprehension concerning likely reactions to such a move ("they'd call her names, proclaim her [. . .] a redistributionist and pinko[. . .]" [*CL49* 150]).

⁵⁵ Notably, both the would-be tenants of *Arrepentimiento* and the other welcomed by Derridean hospitality are *arrivants*, those who arrive. Articulating the law of unconditional hospitality, Derrida writes: "Let us say yes to *who or what turns up*, before any determination, before any anticipation, before any *identification* . . ." (Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, p. 77)—or, in Pynchon's words, "didn't matter who you were, [just] show up."

for hippies: “Suddenly he decides to *change his life* and give away millions to an assortment of degenerates—Negroes, longhairs, drifters” (IV 244). Those recipients are a far cry from charitable groups, political campaigns, and other entities whose straightworld respectability underwrites their continued receipt of capitalist philanthropy. Given the middle class’s demonization of Charles Manson and its equation of Manson with hippies generally—as well as its parallel moral denunciation of Black Nationalism, which it blankets with the label “Black Nationalist Hate Groups” (IV 74)—Mickey’s hospitality to what Deleuze and Guattari call minoritarian subjects would undermine commonsense acceptance of middleclass ideologies and practices while enabling new collective associations and manners of living that fall outside the jurisdiction of circulation and exchange.⁵⁶

It comes as no surprise, then, that the reigning capitalist order in *Inherent Vice* resorts to any means necessary to prevent Arrepentimiento from becoming reality. In fact, Mickey’s entrenchment within that order is precisely what facilitates his punishment. Several of his business connections link him to a secretive capitalist network known as the Golden Fang. On site at Channel View Estates, one of Mickey’s housing developments currently under construction, is Chick Planet Massage, an erotic massage parlor that also provides a front for a Golden Fang heroin operation (IV 20–22, 159). In addition, Mickey apparently is a donor to the Chryskylodon Institute, “a high-rent loony bin” and rehab facility in the city of Ojai, where Tito reports Mickey had requested to be picked up shortly before his disappearance (IV 111, 184; cf. 60). Significantly, the institute’s Greek name translates roughly as “gold tooth” or “[g]old fang” (IV 185). Furthermore, Prussia’s henchman Puck also works as a bodyguard for Mickey and has ties to a known heroin dealer (IV 149, 211). Prussia himself is connected to the Golden Fang: his file at the District Attorney’s office, Doc eventually discovers, includes a photograph of him holding “CIA Nixonhead funny-money”—counterfeit twenties featuring a portrait of Nixon—in front of the *Golden Fang*, a schooner recently spotted near L.A. (IV 286). Much like Oedipa’s quest for the Trystero in *The Crying of Lot 49*, sorting out both the hydra-headed Golden Fang and

⁵⁶ See, e.g., Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 105.

Mickey's many tangled connections to it occupies Doc for most of the novel: "Let's see—it's a schooner that smuggles in goods. It's a shadowy holding company. Now it's a Southeast Asian heroin cartel. Maybe Mickey's in on it" (*IV* 159); "if the Golden Fang could get its customers strung out, why not [. . .] also sell them a program to help them kick?" (*IV* 192); or, in the words of a bust of Thomas Jefferson that speaks to Doc during a late epiphany, "the Golden Fang not only traffick in Enslavement, they peddle the implements of Liberation as well" (*IV* 294). The Golden Fang seems to be everywhere, except where you want to find it ("Doc [. . .] thought he saw something [. . .]. But the fog coming in made everything deceptive" [*IV* 87]). Like capitalism itself, it is ubiquitous and unavoidable, but also unobservable.⁵⁷

Except, that is, when the Golden Fang chooses to reveal itself. In an epiphanic hallucination late in the novel, Doc meets the Golden Fang incarnate, a "presence, tall and cloaked, with oversize and wickedly pointed gold canines, and luminous eyes," who personifies the darkest underbelly of capitalist society and admits to killing Blatnoyd, the profit-sharing dentist: "they have named themselves after their worst fear. I am the unthinkable vengeance they turn to when one of them has grown insupportably troublesome, when all other sanctions have failed" (*IV* 318). As a fearsome symbolic embodiment of a ruthless market corrective—explicitly linked, moreover, to corporate entities—the Golden Fang stands as a figuration for the capitalist corporation. In his groundbreaking study of cultural representations of corporate personhood, Ralph Clare provocatively claims that "the corporation . . . is both a form of the capitalist mode of production and part of the superstructure as well"; that is, in addition to its classically economic function as the dominant agent under global capitalism, the corporation also produces ideological effects through its representations in contemporary literature and culture. Thus, "the way in which a corporation is represented can tell us much about how . . . specific anxieties are related to larger

⁵⁷ Cf. the narrator's description of capitalists in Las Vegas: "Somewhere out of the light the landlord, the finance company, the loan-shark community sat invisible and unspeaking, tapping feet in expensive shoes, weighing options for punishment, leniency—even, rarely, mercy" (*IV* 229; note also the dim lighting).

economic concerns.”⁵⁸ Specifically, the Golden Fang seems to register anxiety about both the swift severity of its corrections to economic heterodoxy—witness Blatnoyd’s fate—and the ubiquity of corporate capitalism in postmodernity, its interpenetration of spaces, both social and geographical, formerly relatively autonomous from the workings of capital. Hence, Doug Haynes reads the Golden Fang as a transitional economic figure between “Fordism and its more flexible successor” (read: neoliberal globalization) and as the geographical extension of the latter into East Asia in the Vietnam War era.⁵⁹ As such, the Golden Fang gestures as well toward our own 21st-century global capitalism, permitting the strange temporal torsion of “looking back at something looking forward” explored by Wallhead (69).⁶⁰ Like others among Pynchon’s novels, then, *Inherent Vice* chronicles not just the passage out of the ‘60s but also, simultaneously, the historical emergence of our own present.

Marked as that present is by the incorporation and privatization of hitherto autonomous pockets within the social whole, it is no surprise that in addition to the variety of financial interests noted above, the Golden Fang is also connected to two powerful repressive apparatuses that operate in the novel. The first of these is organized crime, which covertly controls much of Las Vegas, where Mickey is ultimately apprehended and which is near the site of Arrepentimiento. The second is the LAPD, which, Doc eventually learns, contracts Prussia to perform hits on a long “list of wrongdoers the Department would happily see out of the way,” especially “politicals—black and Chicano activists, antiwar protesters, campus bombers, and

⁵⁸ Ralph Clare, *Fictions Inc.: The Corporation in Postmodern Fiction, Film, and Popular Culture* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers UP, 2014), pp. 13, 3.

⁵⁹ Doug Haynes, “Under the Beach, the Paving-Stones! The Fate of Fordism in Pynchon’s *Inherent Vice*,” *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* 55.1 (2014): 1–16, here p. 6.

⁶⁰ Like the 1899 attack on New York that parallels 9/11 in *Against the Day* (see AD 150–53), the criminalization in *Inherent Vice* of Black Nationalists like Tariq Khalil—also, notably, a Muslim—stands in Wallhead’s reading as an anticipation of post-9/11 “paranoid vigilance” colored by xenophobia and Islamophobia (76). I might add as well that the theme of debt collection, most of all by loan sharks and hired thugs, seems to document contemporary concern over predatory lending (and no lender is more predatory than a loan shark, above all the Golden Fang). See also Jeff T. Johnson, “The Haze Pervades: Thomas Pynchon’s *Inherent Vice*,” *Fanzine* 10 Jan. 2009, accessed 18 Oct. 2015 at <http://thefanzine.com/the-haze-pervades-thomas-pynchons-inherent-vice/>; Wallhead develops her temporal perspective on *Inherent Vice* partly on the basis of Johnson’s review.

assorted other pinko fucks" (*IV* 323). Both the mob and the cops would have obvious reason to prevent the founding of Mickey's utopian community: namely, its disabling of capitalist exchange through grace and its embrace of and material support for new collectivities. The one nullifies exchange value, thereby removing all grounds for equivalence and thus for capitalist drive itself.⁶¹ The other awakens—and worse still for the Golden Fang and company, might actually be able to satisfy—desires for collective forms of living that give the lie to the capitalist ideology of atomized consumer subjectivity and to the social and political conservatism that derides utopian thinking as hippie delusion.

It therefore matters little that Mickey returns to L.A. in the company of the FBI instead of meeting a fate similar to Blatnoyd's. Doc sees Mickey with FBI agents in Las Vegas—"Hard to say if they had him in custody or if they were conducting him on [...] a walk-through" of a casino—and he later learns that Mickey has "made a deal with the Justice Department," which oversees the FBI (*IV* 243, 252). If anything, however, these facts attest more to the pervasive hegemony of capitalist drive and exchange than to any weakness on the part of the Golden Fang. The Justice Department would rather Mickey than a mobster purchase and renovate a Vegas casino (*IV* 240), but that preference in no way translates into a warm welcome for Arrepentimiento or its inhabitants. The feds have as much interest in preventing Mickey's plan as the Golden Fang does; both parties share, if nothing else, an allegiance to capitalist exchange and class structure, which evinces capitalism's saturation of the social whole. It is everywhere but, for that very reason, nowhere localizable: "like the space aliens of nearby Area 51, [Mickey's] abductors remain inaccessible to ordinary legal remedy" (*IV* 361).

In place of a legal remedy, then, *Inherent Vice* imagines a hallucinatory, epiphanic one. The groundwork for the novel's imaginary solution is laid over the course of a single fateful day, the events of which propel Doc toward several crucial resolutions.⁶² The day in question begins with a brief, seemingly innocent marker of the passage of

⁶¹ See Žižek, *The Parallax View*, p. 61.

⁶² My reading of this day is indebted to work done by pseudonymous editors on the *Pynchon Wiki*, who deserve thanks and recognition for the invaluable resources they provide for Pynchon's readers. See "Real Time and Narrative Time in *Inherent Vice*," *Pynchon Wiki: "Inherent Vice*," accessed 11 Oct. 2011 at http://inherent-vice.pynchonwiki.com/wiki/index.php?title=Real_Time_and_Narrative_Time_in_Inherent_Vice.

time: “Next day was as they say another day” (*IV* 281). As the day unfolds, however, it becomes progressively clearer that it is not just another day like any other but rather another day altogether, of an entirely different temporal order than just any old day: “The clock [. . .] read some hour that it could not possibly be” (*IV* 282). Yet despite the day’s objective impossibility, it, like Doc’s epiphanic hallucinations, nonetheless reveals subversive truths and produces real results.

The day’s first revelation grants Doc critical information illuminating Prussia’s connections with Bigfoot, Mickey, and the Golden Fang—and it comes as a gift. Doc gains access that day to the sealed Department of Justice file on Prussia. The file provides Doc with several key pieces of information which, first, reveal Prussia’s responsibility for the death of Vincent Indelicato, Bigfoot’s late partner, whose identity Doc only now discovers; recount Prussia’s history as a “contract killer” for the LAPD; connect Prussia with Mickey through the latter’s hiring of his former employees; and finally, implicate Prussia in the Golden Fang’s counterfeiting racket (*IV* 283–86). What is crucial is the means by which Doc gains access to this information: at great personal and professional risk to herself, Penny Kimball, a deputy in the District Attorney’s office and a sometime romantic interest of Doc’s, shares the file with Doc—she gives him access. This episode thus mediates between Bigfoot’s capitalist economy of intelligence, in accordance with which the Justice Department compiles and distributes Prussia’s file, and the epiphanic logic of grace, which shapes the dynamics of Penny’s gift to Doc.

Grace and epiphany figure even more prominently as the day progresses. As useful as Doc’s access to the DOJ file is, it is only the first of the day’s many significant events and, for a political interpretation of *Inherent Vice*, far from the most important. As the day continues, epiphanies accumulate concerning politics and economics, and crucial groundwork is laid for Doc’s final, dramatic epiphany concerning history itself—namely, his conviction that political revolution is still, in postmodernity, both possible and desirable, despite the odds.

This last epiphany only comes in the novel’s final pages, but Doc’s experiences throughout the day help prepare him for its arrival. Earlier, Doc gets “caught in a low-level bummer he couldn’t find a way out of, about how the Psychedelic Sixties, this little parenthesis of light, might close after all, and be lost, taken back into darkness . . .

how a certain hand might reach terribly out of darkness and reclaim the time, easy as taking a joint from a dooper and stubbing it out for good" (*IV* 254–55). Doc's premonition of the closure of the 1960s connects several themes that I have been developing throughout this article. The apparent inescapability of historical closure ("he couldn't find a way out") and the futility of resisting it ("easy as taking a joint from a dooper") attest to the ubiquity of capitalism under real subsumption⁶³ and to its naturalization as so-called human nature, a.k.a. ideology. Moreover, that ideological naturalization results in part from the conceit of capitalism's invisible hand, recast here in sinister light as a force of recuperation exercising monopolistic control over history. If the '60s is a joint, capitalism bogarts time. The passage bespeaks the irreversibility of history and lost opportunities ("stubbing it out for good"—there will never be another '60s) at the same time as it also expresses a sense of the uniqueness of the 1960s as a utopian moment, a "parenthesis of light" to which Pynchon's entire career is in many ways a single, massive literary testament. Finally, these lines bundle together several of the metaphorical functions of *day* in this novel and in *Against the Day*: utopianism is here a "parenthesis of light," while the agent of its cancellation emerges "out of darkness" to "reclaim [. . .] time." The utopian light of the '60s is thus engulfed in capitalism's systemic darkness, a darkness that confuses and disorients. Like a loan shark's thug collecting time as payment on interest, the invisible hand of the market and the long arm of the state force compliance from late capitalism's delinquent decade.

⁶³ In Marxian discourse, *real subsumption* and *formal subsumption* name contrasting processes by which capitalism subsumes or incorporates hitherto external, noncapitalist markets. Under formal subsumption, capitalism takes up intact processes of production that developed independently of capitalism (think, for example, of the commodification of artisanally produced goods). Under real subsumption, on the other hand, capitalism does not merely incorporate previously independent processes of production but also, in so doing, fundamentally and materially transforms those processes (think of factory farming), including relations of production. Real subsumption is thus a means of social production and reproduction. See Karl Marx, "Results of the Immediate Process of Production," in *Capital, Volume 1: A Critique of Political Economy* [1867], trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin, 1990), pp. 948–1084, esp. 1019–38; see also Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, pp. 254–56, 269–72. On real subsumption and social reproduction, see Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft)* [1939], trans. Martin Nicolaus (New York: Penguin, 1973), pp. 483–549; and Antonio Negri, *Marx beyond Marx: Lessons on the "Grundrisse"* [1984], trans. Harry Cleaver, Michael Ryan, and Maurizio Viano, ed. Jim Fleming (Brooklyn: Autonomedia; London: Pluto P, 1991), pp. 105–25.

Doc's anticipation of the fate of the 1960s represents an attempt to accept that decade's passing, but it remains a "bummer," bound up with sentimental nostalgia. Later experiences inch Doc toward a more critical assessment. On the same day as he reads the dossier on Prussia, Doc recognizes nostalgia as "a fool's attempt to find his way back into a past that despite them both [i.e., Doc and Shasta] had gone on into the future it did" (IV 314). The day thus reinforces Doc's thoughts on historical irreversibility and the futility of nostalgia. Postmodern utopianism seeks not a return to earlier moments of radical possibility (the '60s, but also the Popular Front '30s of the Traverse family in *Vineland*, pre-WWI anarchism in *Against the Day*, or the American Revolution in *Mason & Dixon*); rather, it urges, as the Rev^d Wicks Cherrycoke puts it in *Mason & Dixon*, that we maintain multiple "life-line[s] back into a Past we risk [. . .] losing our forebears in forever."⁶⁴ If utopianism in the U.S. is to survive the death of the '60s, Pynchon suggests, it must relinquish nostalgic attachments to the past, but without thereby betraying its inheritance, and instead grasp in the present the makings of alternate futures.

Doc's subsequent epiphanies help him begin to adopt this perspective. Later that day, in a pizza joint called the Plastic Nickel and frequented by a wide variety of drug users, Doc experiences a hallucinatory epiphany in which he converses with a plastic bust of Thomas Jefferson. The epiphany begins with Jefferson's admonition that "the Golden Fang not only traffick in Enslavement, they peddle the implements of Liberation as well." Jefferson goes on to lecture Doc on the importance of revolution:

"The tree of Liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants[. . .]. It is its natural Manure."

"Yeah, and what about when the patriots and the tyrants turn out to be the same people?" said Doc, "like, we've got this president now . . ."

"As long as they bleed," explained Jefferson, "is the thing." (IV 294)⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Thomas Pynchon, *Mason & Dixon* (New York: Picador-Holt, 1997), p. 349. Hereafter cited parenthetically as *MD*.

⁶⁵ Pynchon's Jefferson is thus much like Michael Hardt's. Hardt compellingly locates Jefferson not in a tradition of American nationalism but rather in a revolutionary tradition whose heirs have included Lenin, Che Guevara, Mao, and Subcommandante Marcos. For Jefferson—both on Hardt's take and under Pynchon's treatment—"the processes of constituent power . . . must continually disrupt and

The epiphany concludes with Jefferson advising Doc not to “trust” the Golden Fang or any parties connected to it, but then “[falling] abruptly silent” when Doc’s dining companions return to the table, just as he is preparing to offer some crucial recommendations for Doc’s next step (“What you *do* have to do, however, is—”) (*IV* 295).

Doc’s hallucinated conversation with Jefferson is significant for several reasons. On the basic level of the novel’s plot and Doc’s investigative quest, Jefferson’s comments corroborate Doc’s suspicions concerning the Golden Fang’s promotion of apparently conflictive ends as a way to maximize profit (think heroin and rehab). More importantly, this is the first time in the novel that Doc openly entertains ideas of political revolution, as opposed to cultural or social revolution, and political violence. His insinuation that Nixon is both a patriot and a tyrant, immediately after Jefferson calls for bloodshed, marks a shift from decrying evils of the fascist state to flirting with direct action against it.

As in the rest of Pynchon’s oeuvre, commitment to the preterite remains central to the politics of *Inherent Vice*. Fittingly, then, the day that brings Doc his epiphanic flash of revolutionary consciousness also witnesses critical reflection concerning his impact on the preterite and his complicity in their exploitation. Following his conversation with Jefferson, Doc begins to question the effective political and economic loyalties performed by his work as a PI (as opposed to the affective loyalties he unambiguously feels for hippie counterculture, the working class, and so forth). He goes so far as to speculate that his own contradictory politics might have formerly driven Shasta to use heroin, “just to be back for a while among the junkie fellowship, to have a break from this hopeless stooge of the creditor class” (*IV* 303). In addition to expressing a multifaceted sense of guilt, Doc tellingly contrasts political commitments in terms of their respective forms of collectivity. Heroin users might be junkies—and it should be noted that heroin is endowed in Pynchon’s canon with virtually none of the liberatory or radical potential associated with other drugs such as pot

force open an establishment of constituted power” (Michael Hardt, “Thomas Jefferson, or, The Transition of Democracy,” in *The Declaration of Independence*, by Thomas Jefferson [London: Verso, 2007], pp. vii–xxv, here p. xii).

and acid—but junkies nonetheless partake in a “fellowship.” The notion of fellowship—crucially, the same word used to describe the collective bond of the “Mobility to be” in *Mason & Dixon* (MD 759)—is perhaps colored here by Pynchon’s longstanding revaluation of the categories of elect and preterite; I have in mind the rhetoric, prominent especially among smaller Protestant churches, touting fellowship (and using the word *fellowship*) as a chief benefit of church life. However, in keeping with Pynchon’s valorization of the preterite, fellowship is here associated not with upstanding middleclass churchgoers but with drug users. It is they who foster an accepting, mutually supportive community.

By contrast, Doc describes the collectivity of the elect with the word *class*, more analytically rigorous than *fellowship* but also, when applied to “creditors,” lacking a sense of common belonging predicated on anything other than the accumulation of wealth. The capitalist accumulation of wealth tends both to presuppose and to construct subjectivities as isolated agents engaged in competition rather than collaboration: hence, Doc is not a fellow member of that class—or even, say, a helper or apprentice, either of which could imply some kind of personal connection between Doc and the “creditor class”—but rather a mere “stooge.” There is a payoff, however: in order to remain a faithful stooge of capitalism, one needs to buy into the myth of upward mobility. Doc’s recognition that he is but a stooge casts into doubt the social function of his PI work, along with the capitalist system it supports: “Forget who—*what* was he working for anymore?” (IV 314). The shift from *who* to *what* is analogous to the difference between ethical critique, which evaluates actions of individual agents in terms of moral categories, and political critique, which focuses instead on systems of exploitation and power. As Doc’s investigation zeroes in on the Golden Fang—decidedly a *what* rather than a *who*—and as he scrutinizes the political consequences of his own practices, he approaches a standpoint that grasps capitalist society systemically, as a network coordinating and controlling flows of wealth.

It is in flouting the rules and dynamics which govern those flows that the full significance of this epiphanic day finally emerges. The excessive grace demonstrated in epiphanic experience not only structures the day’s individual epiphanies but also, crucially, underwrites the day itself: the day does not belong to the hegemonic official

history of late capitalism but is rather a gift whose temporality cannot be assimilated into the quotidian experience of postmodern time. Doc's extra day thus exploits the nature of the postmodern "video time" emergent in Doc's 1970 but raised to the n^{th} degree in our own 21st century: Doc "may for now at least have found the illusion, the effect, of controlling, reversing, slowing, speeding and repeating time—even imagining that we can escape it" ("NMC"). In terms of "real" historical time, *Inherent Vice* is dated more exactly than perhaps any other novel by Pynchon (*Bleeding Edge* being the exception). To be precise, the plot runs from Tuesday, 24 March to Friday, 8 May 1970. These dates are anchored by references to basketball games during the 1970 NBA playoffs; using the historical dates of those games in conjunction with narrative time markers—which the narrator, in the main, is remarkably diligent in providing—it is possible to date every day of the narrative. In the chronology that emerges, Doc's epiphanic day is impossible to account for (see Appendix). The day does not exist on the calendars of empirical history. It is literally an extra day: recall the narrator's announcement, "Next day was as they say another day," and the clock "read[ing] some hour that it could not possibly be." This freely given day must originate, therefore, in some utopian, revolutionary temporal order that stands outside the dark history of a capitalism which chokes parentheses of light, an order whose distribution of wealth—time is money—can only scandalize a credit economy that generates profit by commodifying time.⁶⁶ Another day, indeed.

Over the subsequent four days that conclude *Inherent Vice*, the potentially revolutionary fruits of this extra day flower as a series of epiphanies concerning history, culminating in the novel's final utopian vision of a future beyond the capitalist regime of debt and exchange. By the beginning of the penultimate chapter, the erosion of Doc's nostalgia begun during the extra day develops into a critical assessment of nostalgia's fundamental limitations. Examining a series of enlarged stills taken from security-camera footage at Channel View Estates, Doc is unable to identify his subject of interest. Phenomenologically, his initial experience of the defamiliarization resulting

⁶⁶ In connection with this point, it is worth recalling the crucial role played by historically specific, economically determined conceptions of time that Pynchon highlights in his discussion of sloth as a violation of "clock-time" ("NMC").

from the images' poor resolution resembles an LSD hallucination: "each image [...] began to float apart into little blobs of color." Just as in properly narcotic epiphanies, the visual decomposition of the images begins to morph into an intuition, in this case of "some kind of limit" circumscribing the past, "whatever had happened." Then, in a bolt of realization characteristic of epiphanic experience, Doc's perceptual difficulties with the images become simultaneously an allegory for the impossibility of historical return and for the bad faith of nostalgia for the past: "It was like finding the gateway to the past unguarded, unforbidden because it didn't have to be. Built into the act of return finally was this glittering mosaic of doubt" (*IV* 351). Nostalgia receives no interdiction because it poses no meaningful threat to capitalist order: as long as nostalgia remains content to mourn (as in *Vineland*), it stops short of identifying openings in the present through which radical inheritances from the past might be channeled toward a revolutionary, utopian future (as in *Mason & Dixon*). Because its primary critical function is to emphasize present failures of past promises, nostalgia for the past remains trapped in an experience of history whose continuing usefulness for praxis, by virtue of the very pastness of the past and the irrevocability of history's forward momentum, is dubious at best. As pleasing and poignant as nostalgic memories or reconstructions are, they remain "glittering mosaics of doubt." (Or, even worse, their glitter is none other than the luster of the commodity: the reduction of history to period style under the postmodern waning of historicity, disseminated as media commodities to consumers of television like *Prairie Wheeler*.)⁶⁷ Only a bad faith that refuses to believe in historical change and history itself (think *Thanatoids*)—or, perhaps, a bad analysis that fails to recognize commodities as such (think *Isaiah Two Four's* bourgeois, post-hippie parents [*VL* 20])—can fail to see this structural failure of nostalgia for the past, its "inherent vice" (*IV* 351).

Doc's extra day and this ensuing epiphany are what reveal the inherent vice of nostalgia for the past and discredit it as a political strategy. Pynchon takes the novel's title from actuarial terminology. As Sauncho explains to Doc, the term *inherent vice* applies to unavoidable and therefore uninsurable risks, "like eggs break[ing]"

⁶⁷ See Jameson, *Postmodernism*, pp. 16–25.

(*IV* 351). No two ways about it: no matter what, eggs break. Likewise, time passes. A nostalgic insistence on reassembling the past from its Humpty-Dumpty fragments cannot thereby circumvent the movement of a history that has already contained and commodified what in the 1960s used to be radical.

Eschewing nostalgia, *Inherent Vice* expresses a utopian impulse through the discourse of mythology in order to highlight in stark relief the futurity and possibility foreclosed by exchange and commodification. The myth of the lost continent of Lemuria, in particular—"The Atlantis of the Pacific" (*IV* 101)—functions as a corrective to nostalgia. Moreover, it is also connected to epiphany and grace, and not merely because Sortilège is its most vocal believer. Like epiphany, Lemuria cannot be summoned; rather, Sortilège claims, it arrives on its own, unexpectedly: "We can't find a way to return to Lemuria, so it's returning to us. Rising up out of the ocean" (*IV* 167). Furthermore, also like epiphany, the myth shines alternative light on the present, illuminating the gulf between empirical reality and the alternative, utopian possibilities of myth. Unlike that of nostalgia, the function of the Lemuria myth is therefore pedagogical rather than mournful, and because it refuses mourning, it is not subject to nostalgia's inherent vice.

Through the myth of Lemuria, grace and epiphany register the imaginative and revolutionary sterility of the present, just as they reveal the political and historical insufficiency of nostalgia. In the wake of the insights gained by Doc during the novel's extra day, the myth of Lemuria allows Doc to assess the shortcomings of present-day mainstream U.S. culture. Stuck in rush-hour freeway traffic—a source of the smog that symbolizes a foreshortening of historical perspective—he imagines how Angelenos would react to the resurfacing of Lemuria: "People [. . .] saw only what they'd all agreed to see, they believed what was on the tube or in the morning papers[. . .], and it was all their dream about being wised up, about the truth setting them free. What good would Lemuria do them?" (*IV* 315). The failure to recognize the utopian, epiphanic, or hallucinatory truths of Lemuria is an index of the impoverishment of the utopian imagination by capitalist media apparatuses; their enshrinement of exchange value and ideological construction of common sense, among other things, preclude the grace that Sortilège sees in Lemuria's return and the epiphanic insight that pierces through the fog of postmodernity.

If Doc's critical appraisal of the present by means of epiphany takes the form here of imaginative, hypothetical speculation revealing the limitations of common-sense experience, elsewhere it illuminates and indicts the underlying material basis of middleclass common sense, eventually flowering into a full-fledged critique of class society. The first step of this process following Doc's comparison of L.A. with Lemuria is his encounter with the Golden Fang incarnate. That epiphany, I have argued, allegorizes capitalism's absolute allergy toward grace and its brutal efficacy at enforcing the rule of profit. In addition, it has the effect of clarifying Doc's sense of class identity and renewing Doc's loyalties to preterite subjectivities—loyalties that he had begun to doubt. Following his Golden Fang hallucination, as well as his stern education in time and interest under Puck's tutelage, Doc demonstrates a newfound stridency as an advocate for capitalism's dispossessed. When Golden Fang member Crocker Fenway accuses Doc of being an inauthentic hippie because he pays rent—*prima facie* an absurd charge, since it assumes that there are viable, actually existing alternatives to the capitalist housing market—Doc responds: "when the first landlord decided to stiff the first renter for his security deposit, your whole fucking class lost everybody's respect" (*IV* 346). In addition to denouncing injustice, Doc's retort also identifies the contradiction and hypocrisy occupying the gap between the logic of commensurability inherent in exchange, with its pretenses to so-called fair market value, and the compulsion to maximize profit, by whatever means. The pursuit of profit, of course, tends toward expropriation pure and simple, or what David Harvey calls "accumulation by dispossession."⁶⁸ Unchecked, however, capitalist

⁶⁸ Real estate is thus, in many ways, a synecdoche for global neoliberal capitalism more generally: like Hardt and Negri's Empire, which aspires to eternity (*Empire*, pp. xiv–xv et passim), a real estate development like Channel View Estates "has no history" (Bill Millard, "Pynchon's Coast: *Inherent Vice* and the Twilight of the Spatially Specific," in *Pynchon's California*, pp. 65–90, here p. 69). Moreover, as several Marxist and Autonomist theorists have made clear, rent in particular is central to neoliberal capitalism's reconcentration of wealth. See Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, pp. 141–42, 257–58; Marazzi, *The Violence of Finance Capitalism*, pp. 44–66; Antonio Negri, "Postface: A Reflection on Rent in the 'Great Crisis' of 2007 and Beyond," in *Crisis in the Global Economy*, pp. 263–71; and Carlo Vercellone, "The Crisis of the Law of Value and the Becoming-Rent of Profit: Notes on the Systemic Crisis of Cognitive Capitalism," in *Crisis in the Global Economy*, pp. 85–118. On accumulation by dispossession, see David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003), pp. 137–82.

expropriation can also lead to the unintended consequences of class solidarity and resistance, as Doc reminds Fenway: “After a while that starts to add up. For years [. . .] there’s been all this class hatred, slowly building. Where do you think that’s headed?” (IV 347). Doc is markedly more radical here than in such earlier critiques of capitalism as his complaint that suburbia prevents “anything psychedelic,” or even the “bummer” he feels at the passing of the 1960s. Whereas those instances grapple with cultural incompatibilities between the bourgeoisie and hippie counterculture—what Jameson might call symptomatic expressions—Doc’s confrontation with Fenway grasps antagonism in material terms as an inevitable product of capitalist class society—of real contradiction. His threat that working-class and lumpen subjects might one day “turn into a savage mob” (IV 347) is nothing short of an anticipation of class consciousness and revolution itself. If the Lemuria myth exposes the feebleness of the middle class in imagining alternative worlds, and the Golden Fang hallucination reveals the cruelty of the pursuit of profit, Doc’s diatribe against Fenway apprehends exploitation and immiseration in the present as fuel for a dramatic explosion of revolutionary futurity.

That futurity constitutes the final temporal horizon against which Doc’s epiphanies emerge over the novel’s closing chapters; crucially—and in marked contrast with Pynchon’s other two California novels—that futurity also remains open. Surprisingly, even Bigfoot acknowledges the possibility of revolutionary historical change: “Like a record on a turntable, all it takes is one groove’s difference and the universe can be on into a whole ‘nother song” (IV 334). The topography of history in Bigfoot’s analogy resembles another figure familiar to readers of Pynchon: a well-known passage from *V.* imagines history as a cloth “rippled with gathers in its fabric,” forming “sinuous cycles” of “crest[s]” and troughs.⁶⁹ Bigfoot’s simile for history is congruent to the extent that grooves in a record likewise form a concentric series of peaks and valleys. However, his simile differs from the earlier metaphor when it comes to historical agency: the “fold[s]” and “gathers” of the fabric of history in *V.* obscure historical

⁶⁹ Thomas Pynchon, *V.* [1963] (New York: Harper Perennial, 2005), pp. 161–62. Hereafter cited parenthetically as *V.*

connections among past, present, and future, condemning subjects to stumble ineptly through the passage of time, blinkered and impotent—"We are [. . .] lost to any sense of a continuous tradition" (V. 162)—while Bigfoot's turntable of history can be accelerated by the revolutionary skipping of a track or two.

Lest *Inherent Vice's* metaphor for history and time be too quickly dismissed on account of its source, I point out that Doc likens it to a drug experience: "Been doing a little acid, there, Bigfoot?" (IV 334). Although Doc's quip clearly is playfully antagonistic banter, it is also more than that. Not only does Bigfoot's comparison, like hallucinations, stretch the limits of credibility, but it also, as do Doc's epiphanies, defies the odds in turning out to be true. In Doc's view, historical change really is possible. Despite the ideological dominance of capitalism's blinding daylight, the Golden Fang's complementary mastery of darkness and its commodification of time, and the closure of the utopian "Psychedelic Sixties, this little parenthesis of light"—a closure registered not only here but also in the alienation and deferral suffered by Oedipa in *The Crying of Lot 49* and the nostalgic recuperation of radicalism in *Vineland*—revolution can still happen in the world of *Inherent Vice*.

In the first of the novel's final two epiphanic moments, revolution takes the form of alternate history combined with a utopian future, as if someone had skipped a track or even changed the record on Bigfoot's turntable. Dreaming, Doc witnesses the redemption of "the schooner *Golden Fang*, which [has] reassumed its old working identity, as well as its real name, *Preserved*" (IV 340). Four factors make Doc's dream of the ship's restoration significant. First, and most obviously, the ontological status and quasi-hallucinatory nature of dreams in general are consistent with Doc's narcotic epiphanies, which bear a similar relation to sober waking reality. Second, the very act of renaming further connects the dream to epiphany. When Doc views Shasta aboard the *Golden Fang*, in an earlier epiphanic hallucination, his "Lemurian spirit guide" chastises him for using that name: "*Preserved*, Kamukea silently corrected him" (IV 109). Thus the boat's names alternately attest to its subsumption under late capitalism and submission to the law of exchange or, conversely, insist on a utopianism that perseveres despite all that, preserved somehow by epiphanic grace.

Third, if the renaming of the ship counts as a performative speech act that installs grace in place of exchange, it also has economic reverberations. At one point in its storied past, the *Preserved* had been owned by (fictitious) actor Burke Stodger—like John Garfield, a victim of blacklisting and McCarthyism. Following a mysterious disappearance and an absence of “a couple years,” Stodger resurfaces to star in “a big-budget major-studio project called *Commie Confidential*,” while the *Preserved*, “refitted stem to stern,” reappears as the *Golden Fang* (IV 92–93). The restoration of the ship’s original name in Doc’s dream, then, renounces those deals with the devil while reaffirming working-class solidarity (the *Preserved* had been a fishing schooner) as well as anti-systemic leftist revolt.

Fourth and finally, the somnolent return of the past and the notion of preservation grasp history in a fundamentally epiphanic way. Unlike nostalgia’s attempts to reconstruct a mosaic from fragments of the past—which is the only way to proceed in empirical discourse, since all that is left of a recuperated, neutralized past is fragments and ruins—Doc’s dream restores the past of the *Preserved* in a wholeness that flouts common sense. Mosaics are made incrementally, bit by glittering bit, much like the way Bigfoot manages intelligence, amassing a broad base of evidence and assigning to each datum a commensurate exchange value. In both cases, the whole emerges over time and through careful application of method. In contrast, Doc’s epiphanies arrive in a flash, usually fully formed, irrespective of orthodox epistemologies and commonsense methodologies. Thus the schooner is not reassembled out of fragments but rather preserved as an integral whole, as if by supernatural or magical means: “the [. . .] exorcist [. . .] clear[ed] away the dark residues of blood and betrayal[. . .]. Whatever evil had possessed her was now gone for good” (IV 340). The ship’s redemption through grace does not reassemble a lost past; it writes history anew.

Crucially, that rewritten, epiphanic history also opens onto a utopian future, one in which the radical democratic potential of the U.S. so poignantly articulated at times in *Mason & Dixon* escapes the capitalist recuperation that has produced the indicative reality of actually existing America. In Doc’s dream, Sauncho delivers “a kind of courtroom summary” that is also simultaneously a eulogy for the *Preserved*

and a commentary on history: “. . .yet there is no avoiding [. . .] the years of promise, gone and unrecoverable, of the land almost allowed to claim its better destiny, only to have the claim jumped by evildoers known all too well, and taken instead and held hostage to the future we must live in now forever.” Thus far, Sauncho has exuded nostalgic lament. Continuing on, however, his valediction passes from the funereal discourse of mourning—“May we trust that this blessed ship is bound for some better shore”—to the mythical discourse of alternative futures: “some better shore, some undrowned Lemuria, risen and redeemed, where the American fate, mercifully, failed to transpire . . .” (IV 341). Sauncho’s commentary reproduces in miniature the evolution of the historical thinking fostered by Doc’s extra day and developed through epiphany: it critiques the present, focusing on failed promises and betrayals of the past, à la *Vineland*; it figures a mythical past that reveals the paucity of imagination at the heart of the ideological regime of common sense; and it projects a utopian future engendered by Lemuria’s imaginary restoration, which is at the same time an experience of grace arising from “the sea of time, the sea of memory and forgetfulness” (IV 341). Epiphany thus leads Doc to an historical perspective from which he can unflinchingly assess the failures of the past and the consequent limitations on the present without giving up on utopian futurity in the process. His refusal to abandon utopian hope allows him to conceive of the future as a live possibility and as an open field of contestation—a far cry from the deferral and foreclosure symptomatically registered in *The Crying of Lot 49* and *Vineland*.

The utopian dimension of Doc’s emergent historical consciousness reaches its theoretical and poetic climax in the closing pages of the novel. *Inherent Vice* ends with a grand gesture toward utopian futurity. Driving, once again, through the fog—the same fog whose erosion of the third dimension I have read as a metaphor for postmodern depthlessness—Doc experiences a resounding epiphanic moment of collectivity, grace, and utopian anticipation. This experience begins with the unexpected formation of a temporary collectivity: as a precaution against the hazards of driving in fog, Doc and other drivers spontaneously form “a convoy of unknown size [. . .] like a caravan in a desert of perception” (IV 368). Both uncommodified and voluntary, the convoy defies capitalism on two fronts. Like Mickey’s aborted utopian

community at Arrepentimiento, it acknowledges and validates a desire for collective living, the very existence of which reveals purportedly natural or innate individualism to be the ideological construct that it is. Further, as freely given assistance that stands beyond the profit motive and capitalist exchange, the convoy operates in accordance with the principle of excessive, generous grace. It therefore creates a temporary, contingent utopian community in the midst of the fog of late capitalism.

This collective experience of grace shared in common occasions Doc's most sweeping and dramatic historical epiphany, one that is a matter simultaneously of temporality and visibility. In the final paragraph, Doc entertains two scenarios. First, he imagines that the fog will linger and prove inescapable. This inescapability prompts many critics to read the novel's political message as pessimistic. For example, Hume sees *Inherent Vice* as "Pynchon's nightmare and worst case scenario, namely that this is all we have."⁷⁰ On this take, we are trapped in an all-consuming capitalism that extinguishes utopian hope like the joint "stubb[ed] out for good" by the conservative triumph over '60s radicalism (*IV* 255). Even more discouraging is Wallhead's reading of the conclusion. For Wallhead, "the haze pervades and opposites become difficult to distinguish," to the point that "the sixties cultural carnival" of "the body and the senses" transforms into "the sadism and violence of the Manson family," and liberated individualism becomes "herd culture" (83, 85). Such readings of political futility depend upon the fact that, as Wallhead points out, "[w]e know the future" (69)—we know that *Vineland* comes next. What Wallhead's and Hume's readings neglect, however, is the doubled temporality of the novel that codes our own present back into this narrative of the end of the '60s. We might know Doc's future, but we don't know our own, and that is precisely, as Walter Benjamin so famously puts it, "the strait gate through which the Messiah might enter."⁷¹

Doc perceives, however slim, an opening onto futurity, so he wrests the fog symbolically from the clutches of capitalism and claims it for the preterite: "Maybe

⁷⁰ Kathryn Hume, "Pynchon's Alternate Realities," p. 17.

⁷¹ Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt [1955], trans. Harry Zorn [1968] (London: Pimlico, 1999), pp. 245–55, here p. 255.

[. . .] it would stay this way for days, maybe he'd have to just keep driving [. . .] across a border where nobody could tell anymore in the fog who was Mexican, who was Anglo, who was anybody" (*IV* 369). Whereas fog predominately functions in *Inherent Vice* as a figure of capitalism's pervasiveness and its capacity for ideological, political, and historical disorientation, here it renders incomprehensible the categories according to which privilege is granted or revoked. Doc puts opacity to work against the social order it had previously sustained; as Stephen Hock puts it in his reading of the freeway in Pynchon's California novels, "the fog frustrates the capacity of the freeway to order and map the land, momentarily allowing the land to elude the control of the networks of modern power and capital."⁷² Instead of fostering class striation, the fog now obliterates class privilege. Instead of masking the ideological means for policing identities, the fog renders race and ethnicity not merely indeterminate but also irrelevant to social status. Released from class fetters and overdetermined identities that trap them in their being—as Fenway reminds Doc, capitalist class relations depend on the social classes "*being in place*" (*IV* 347)⁷³—subjectivities are free to pursue their own becoming. Fog becomes a tool for liberation and revolution.⁷⁴

The second possibility imagined by Doc pushes this liberatory, revolutionary thinking further still, at the same time that it layers an historical dimension atop the visual symbolism reclaimed in Doc's previous speculation. I quote the novel's final lines:

Then again, he might run out of gas before that happened, and have to leave the caravan, and pull over on the shoulder, and wait. For whatever

⁷² Stephen Hock, "Maybe He'd Have to Just Keep Driving, or Pynchon on the Freeway," in *Pynchon's California*, pp. 201–19, here p. 216.

⁷³ As Millard convincingly argues, the idea of place both accounts for Pynchon's general proclivity for rendering individual characters generic but portraying collectivities as unique and distinctive, and functions as a crucial component in his novels' "anatomiz[ing]" of social systems (Millard, "Pynchon's Coast," p. 86; see also pp. 69–70, 83–87).

⁷⁴ The fog at the end of *Inherent Vice* is therefore somewhat akin to the clouds that provide cover for Slothrop during his pie fight with Major Marvy in *Gravity's Rainbow* (Thomas Pynchon, *Gravity's Rainbow* [New York: Viking, 1973; rpt.: New York: Penguin, 1995], p. 335). In both cases, the weather facilitates logics and practices that empower preterite subjectivities against capitalism and constituted power.

would happen. For a forgotten joint to materialize in his pocket. For the CHP [California Highway Patrol] to come by and choose not to hassle him. For a restless blonde in a Stingray to stop and offer him a ride. For the fog to burn away, and for something else this time, somehow, to be there instead.
(IV 369)

For Haynes, these final lines indicate that “utopian dreams have dwindled to an almost desperate desire.”⁷⁵ That reading, however, seems to miss the point of utopianism: it is precisely in moments of defeat that utopianism is most necessary. Even in the Thermidor of Nixon’s 1970s, on the eve of the Reagan/Thatcher ’80s, Doc holds fast to utopian hope and the possibility of antisystemic praxis.

Contrary to the pessimism attributed to the novel by critics, *Inherent Vice* ends with utopianism. Although Doc’s withdrawal from the caravan foreshortens his participation in a collectivity, it also, in light of the symbolism of free-ways and traffic, signifies a refusal of the workaday pragmatism that gets the middle class from suburb to office and back. Rather than pursue a utilitarian goal, Doc waits. This waiting is different, however, than Oedipa’s at the end of *The Crying of Lot 49*: whereas Oedipa awaits a resolution that never arrives, Doc’s waiting extends an epiphanic welcome to “whatever would happen.” The answer to be provided by the crying of lot 49 would presumably account for Oedipa’s decentered, chaotic world, but the imaginary contents that fill the slot of Doc’s “whatever” all exhibit one form or another of unaccountable utopian grace. Any pothead who has ever discovered weed when there was none to be found knows well the generosity of that moment. Moreover, in a novel where drug use is not merely a means for self-discovery or spiritual revelation of a strictly metaphysical variety, but rather a figuration of knowledge of the social world and human history, the fortuitous finding of an unaccounted reefer amounts to a potential opening onto further epiphanies that can be put to political use. Meanwhile, the highway patrol’s simply letting Doc be is also a gift of time—time which,

⁷⁵ Doug Haynes, “Under the Beach, the Paving-Stones!”, p. 15.

according to the anti-hippie police agenda in Doc's California (see note 31), ought to be spent on interrogation, running license plate numbers, checking warrants, and all-around "hassle." Even bumming a lift from "a restless blonde" has the chance of widening the social field in which Doc is able to act; at the very least, it presents an opportunity for forming, however briefly, a common bond with an erstwhile stranger.

Make no mistake, then: Doc's "whatever" is not nonchalance, not a stoner's indifference. On the contrary, "whatever" is the name Giorgio Agamben gives to humanity itself: "The Whatever in question here relates to singularity not in its indifference . . . but only in its being *such as it is*."⁷⁶ Whatever extends a welcome to all the contingency of human(s) as such, and it is this aleatory encounter, with all the unexpectedness and unpredictability of grace, that makes Doc's epiphanies and the political training they impart not just meaningful but possible: "if humans were or had to be this or that substance, this or that destiny, no ethical experience would be possible—there would be only tasks to be done" (CC 43). Doc's increasingly militant rejections of capitalist exchange, state repression and control, and class striations would be impossible without the variability and contingency heralded by "whatever." And so also, finally, would be the forms of solidarity established through the love of "whatever" that the novel's conclusion hints at: "What the State cannot tolerate in any way . . . is that the singularities form a community without affirming an identity, that humans co-belong without any representable condition of belonging . . ." (CC 85–86). Far from being the worst-case scenario assessed by Hume, the unholy union of opposites read by Wallhead, or the whimper of desperation heard by Haynes, Doc's "whatever" is the very precondition for solidarity and praxis and an instance of radical, unaccountable grace.

But the most radical, utopian incarnation of this grace, of course, is the final line. The dream of "something else" is ultimately at the core of utopia itself, insofar as utopia is marked most of all by its difference from things as they are. This

⁷⁶ Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community* [1990], trans. Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1993), p. 1. Hereafter cited parenthetically as CC.

dream is unlikely, its realization inexplicable: Doc is at a loss to imagine how it might come about, except through a vague “somehow.” But “somehow” is also precisely how grace works: somehow, an acid trip reveals Shasta’s whereabouts and implicates the *Golden Fang* in her disappearance and in Mickey’s. Somehow, Doc receives the gift of an uncounted day, the events of which, somehow, catalyze his political commitments and transform his perspective on history. And somehow, the fog of postmodern capitalism—of debt, exchange, the monetization of time itself—might finally lift, revealing a landscape miraculously transformed, somehow, into something else. Something else is utopia; somehow is revolutionary grace.

This imaginary anticipation of utopia and revolution provides a reference point for charting Doc’s politicization. At the beginning of *Inherent Vice*, Doc perceives and experiences politics primarily as a function of culture: Mickey is “straightworld,” not bourgeois; Shasta’s getup is “flatland,” not conservative or middleclass (*IV* 2, 1). Even his antagonism toward Bigfoot is motivated not by a critical awareness of the fascist social function of the police but by cultural opposition between hip and square, in light of which Bigfoot is less an agent of the state than an extra on *Adam-12*: “Jive-ass sideburns, stupid mustache, haircut from a barber college [. . .] far from any current definition of hipness” (*IV* 32). Doc stands outside and opposed to the dominant culture, but he conceives of that opposition culturally and aesthetically, not politically. It is only as the epiphanies accumulate that Doc begins thinking of himself as not only countercultural but also counterhegemonic.⁷⁷ By the end, of course, his political stance and historical perspective cohere into a radical imagination of a social order other than capitalist.

The remarkable, persistent utopianism of *Inherent Vice’s* symptomology, otherwise an instrument for detecting and identifying symptoms of closure under

⁷⁷ Doc’s development thus charts a trajectory between what Freer identifies as Mucho’s cheap and easy cultural resistance and Oedipa’s hard-fought “endeavor to confront, comprehend, and transcend the ‘exitlessness’ and ‘absence of surprise to life’ that troubles contemporary America” (Freer, *Thomas Pynchon and American Counterculture*, p. 70).

capitalism, is perhaps an indicator of the novel's symptomological success. Despite the herculean difficulty of finding utopian openings in global capitalism—or rather, precisely because of that difficulty—the latter appears, in many ways, to be clinging desperately to its remaining vestiges of legitimacy as a just system for distributing wealth. Since recent global recession has proved capitalism incapable of providing equitably for the needs of all, and since neoliberalism leaves virtually no room for any but the most inconsequential reforms, it is all the more expedient and timely to reject capitalism and the neoliberal state altogether. Such rejection is evident in widespread revolt (for example, the Arab Spring, Occupy, Black Lives Matter, minimum-wage movements), just as it is registered symptomatically as fomenting class hatred in *Inherent Vice*. The externality to capitalism of *Inherent Vice's* utopias attests to a mounting, widespread desire to supplant capitalism with “something else”—the novel's ultimate codeword for utopia.

Utopian possibilities, of course, are always long shots. Yet Pynchon's fiction provides an invaluable aid to their realization in relentlessly mapping the terrain of global capitalism, searching out and identifying its vulnerabilities, and insisting on the necessity of sustaining utopian impulses against stacked odds and nigh-invincible adversaries—which is really what utopian thinking is all about anyway. The end of postmodernity is a critical utopian project, not a transparent historical fact. Utopian thinking is indispensable if there is to be any hope that the fog of postmodernity and late capitalism might someday, somehow, finally lift, revealing something else and escorting all of us to “some better shore, some undrowned Lemuria, risen and redeemed” (IV 341). Until then, alongside Pynchon, we work and think through a postmodernism that is still with us, holding out utopian hope that we reach whatever lies beyond.

Competing Interests

The author declares that they have no competing interests.

Appendix

History and Dates in *Inherent Vice*.

| Day of narrative | Time markers | NBA playoff references | Date (1970) |
|------------------|--|---|---------------------|
| 1 | "This happened [...] every Tuesday ..." (11) | | Tuesday, 24 March |
| 2 | "Doc finally woke up [...] and had breakfast[...]" (12) | | Wednesday, 25 March |
| 3 | "At the office next day" (34) | | Thursday, 26 March |
| 4 | "Today, after a deceptively sunny and uneventful spin" (50) | | Friday, 27 March |
| 5 | "Doc called Sauncho next morning" (89) | | Saturday, 28 March |
| 6 | "Sunrise was on the way" (98) | | Sunday, 29 March |
| 7 | The previous day ends with Doc on a drug trip; after a chapter break, Doc converses with Aunt Reet, apparently during business hours (111 ff.) | "Doc was home watching division semifinals between the 76ers and Milwaukee[...]" (113) The Milwaukee Bucks defeated the Philadelphia 76ers four games to one; games were played on 25, 27, 30 March, 1, and 3 April. | Monday, 30 March |
| 8 | "Next morning" (117); the day ends with Doc watching a televised Nixon rally (123) | | Tuesday, 31 March |
| 9 | "that afternoon" (124) | | Wednesday, 1 April |
| 10 | Doc "visit[s] Bigfoot now," during business hours (137) | "wasn't it something like this postseason the Lakers were having, and did he happen to catch that game with Phoenix" (138) The Los Angeles Lakers and the Phoenix Suns played in the Western Division Semifinals on 25, 29 March, 2, 4, 5, 7, and 9 April. Game 2 (29 March) was played before Doc's reference, but recently enough to justify calling it "that game." | Thursday, 2 April |

Contd.

| Day of narrative | Time markers | NBA playoff references | Date (1970) |
|------------------|--|------------------------|---------------------|
| 11 | "Around lunchtime next day" (142) | | Friday, 3 April |
| 12 | "Looking forward to a peaceful morning" (145); Doc orders "the All-Nighter Special" after last call (162) | | Saturday, 4 April |
| 13 | Doc goes to his office the next day (163) | | Sunday, 5 April |
| | <i>INTERLUDE: Doc's car is in the shop for 'a few days' (180), but based on historical events anchoring the second half of the novel, the period must actually be 20 days. In addition, Riggs Warbling, previously clean-shaven, has 'a couple weeks' start on a beard' on the twentieth day of the narrative (250).</i> | | |
| 14 | "I'll buy you lunch" (182) | | Saturday, 25 April |
| 15 | "reaching the Ojai turnoff just before lunchtime" (186), but after Doc has lunch with Tito and has a phone conversation; since Doc must also drive to Ojai, it is reasonable to conclude that his trip occurs the day after his lunch with Tito | | Sunday, 26 April |
| 16 | "Next morning" (197) | | Monday, 27 April |
| 18 | "early afternoon" (232) | | Wednesday, 29 April |
| 19 | "next morning" (246) | | Thursday, 30 April |
| 20 | "in the first light" (249); "Doc didn't fall asleep till close to dawn" (255) | | Friday, 1 May |
| 21 | "Around nightfall"—the narrative resumes after a full day of driving with Tito (256) | | Saturday, 2 May |
| 22 | "Next morning [...] Doc was [...] going through the Sunday Times" (261) | | Sunday, 3 May |

Contd.

| Day of narrative | Time markers | NBA playoff references | Date (1970) |
|------------------|--|--|------------------|
| 23 | Doc visits the Hall of Justice during business hours (275) | <p>“the playoffs, even though it was Eastern Division tonight, might still be on” (280)</p> <p>Game 5 of the NBA Finals was played on this date. “Eastern <i>Division</i>” is most likely Doc’s mistaken reference to the Eastern time zone: New York hosted game 5, so the game would likely be over by the time Doc gets to his TV set in the Pacific time zone.</p> <p>The Lakers and the New York Knicks played in the NBA Finals on 24, 27, 29 April, 1, 4, 6, and 8 May.</p> | Monday, 4 May |
| 24 | “Next day was as they say another day” (281); “The clock [...] read some hour that it could not possibly be” (282) | <p><i>This is an extra day, unaccountable in any calendar</i></p> | |
| 25 | “still another classic day” (315) | | Tuesday, 5 May |
| 26 | “around noon” (340) | | Wednesday, 6 May |
| 28 | “Next morning” (354) | <p>“the Lakers would lose Game 7 of the finals to the Knicks[...]” (364)</p> <p>Game 7 of the NBA Finals was played on 8 May.</p> | Friday, 8 May |

This table supplements and formalizes material first developed for the *Pynchon Wiki*; see “Real Time and Narrative Time in *Inherent Vice*,” *Pynchon Wiki*: “*Inherent Vice*,” accessed from http://inherent-vice.pynchonwiki.com/wiki/index.php?title=Real_Time_and_Narrative_Time_in_Inherent_Vice on 11 Oct. 2011. Dates and results of NBA playoff games are taken from “1970 NBA Playoffs Summary,” *Basketball-Reference.com*, accessed from http://www.basketball-reference.com/playoffs/NBA_1970.html on 6 Oct. 2012.

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