

International Pynchon Week 2008
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Abstracts

Dr. Keith O'Neill (SUNY-Dutchess): "Against the Master: Pynchon's Wellsian Art"

Thomas Pynchon's *Against the Day* situates itself on several thresholds: between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, between gaslight and electric light, between fantasy and rationalized "reality." This paper proposes that another key crossroads in the book is a literary one, between populist and "high" literary forms. Specifically, I look at the novel's references, both implicit and explicit, to two writers occupying very different spaces at the *fin de siècle*: H. G. Wells and Henry James. James is commonly read as a progenitor of the twentieth-century avant-garde, whose "mastery" at presenting the depths of human consciousness is understood to be the beginnings of modernist literary fiction. Wells, by contrast, is regarded as a populist writer whose importance is qualified as being that of an early practitioner of science fiction. The works of James, in other words, became the embodiment of high culture—dense, sophisticated, technically innovative—while those of Wells became synonymous with familiar aspects of low culture—shallow, childish, and plot-driven. Wells and James clearly saw a difference between their works in their own time; after a decade of friendly correspondence, they had a famous falling out over their respective positions on the novel: James declared his distaste for Wells's "diversity" and politics, while Wells satirized James's "unity" and lack of politics. Indeed, this call for politics on Wells's part has shadowed him in the last hundred years: his brand of socialism has marked him as too topical, too didactic for the purview of lasting art.

At its outset, Pynchon's latest novel announces itself as being part of the same disreputable literary territory as Wells's work: *Against the Day* incorporates elements of the ghettoized genres of western, pulp, serial and science fictions, and, in that the book sympathizes with the anarchic Traverses, Pynchon's politics are clearly Wellsian as well. Indeed, the novel's reference to James in the opening scene, in which the literate canine Pugnax reads *The Princess Casamassima* (1886), suggests that James's highbrow literature is, well, for the dogs. James's novel is strongly critical of exactly the kind of politics Pynchon offers as a viable option—at least at the turn of the twentieth century. This paper proposes to see *Against the Day* as a response to the James-Wells split, and as an announcement that perhaps the art of the novel revered in the last hundred years was only one way the genre can go: Pynchon's return to a populist or "low" genre is in fact a radical political gesture. After a century of the primacy of individual perception and consciousness, Pynchon's novel rejects James's mastery and the High Modernism that technique helped inaugurate. Along the way, we shall also visit the sometimes-hostile reception of *Against the Day* in the press, where contemporary reviewers have policed elitist aesthetic values by applying the same "faults" to Pynchon that have dimmed Wells's literary status to this point.

Gilles Chamerois (Brest University) : "The Incorporation of, Among Other Things, America in *Against the Day*"

"Chicago was the first expression of American thought as a unity; one must start there." So wrote Henry Adams in the "Chicago (1893)" chapter of his *Education*. To address the question of why Pynchon too chose to start there, I will be guided by yet another important book that opens with the World's Columbian Exposition, Alan Trachtenberg's *The Incorporation of America*. More precisely, the book opens with Frederick Jackson Turner's speech on the end of the Frontier, given during the World's Fair, and closes on the White City, after having delineated the process of incorporation which in the Gilded Age transformed the American geography, economy, and culture. We will follow the way in which these three strands are intertwined in *Against the Day*, focusing on the specific references to economic incorporation and linking them with the geographical and cultural incorporation of the West, for example with dime novels — *Against the Day* is in some way a score of dime novels wrapped into one. More than just highlighting Pynchon's extraordinary mastery of yet

another Zeitgeist, this analysis may be a way to approach what must be one of the central if arduous interrogations at the heart of Pynchon's work, that of the relation between ideal and matter, a question that is also at the heart of America.

The process of incorporation should not only be seen as a move towards the ideal of a single, transcendent economic entity, the subsuming of a diverse geography into a name, America, open to all misappropriations, or an organisation of annoyingly anarchic matter in the direction of an ideal cultural order. It is also, seen from another, symmetrical, angle, an incarnation of sorts, the embodiment of those ideals. To try to comprehend the two angles at the same time, the novel concerns itself with the various hinges between matter and concept, and in particular shows what we would think of as non-corporal, prominently light and maps, as being ghostly situated between matter and a concept at a further remove: æther in the case of light, a primeval "map of all maps" in the case of maps, model or invisible cities in the case of cities, the latent image in the case of photography.

And "America" in the case of America Inc.. The Puritans saw the Old Testament as typological of the New, and both as a prefiguration for the American experiment. As the Frontier drew to an end, America had to turn to the world at large to continue fulfilling its destiny, becoming more and more an America of the mind — but was it ever anything else?— and the American experiment had to turn into the "capitalistic experiment". Likewise the first half of *Against the Day* seems to take stock of the end of the Frontier in America, before mapping out onto the larger context of the second part of the book. Thus each text is an incarnation of a text that came before it, and an ideal prefiguration of the one that comes after, and America itself is nothing more than its "manifest destiny," again a double-edged sword: all that takes place there is the manifestation of a destiny written beforehand, and is as well the manifest text of a future destiny. America is, to use the title of a chapter in Hubert Damisch's *Skyline: the Narcissistic City*, "the scene of life of the future". In probing this scenic quality, Damisch tries to follow to its utmost conclusions Trachtenberg's seminal work, and so does, I feel, *Against the Day*, apocryphal Bible-cum-dime-novel for a new century.

Manlio Della Marca (University of Rome "Sapienza"): "All That Is Solid Melts Into Air": Between Hardware and Software. Memory and Signs in Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*"

All That Is Solid Melts Into Air is the title of an intriguing book on modernity by Marshall Berman, but at the same time "All that is solid melts into air" is a quotation from *The Communist Manifesto*: "Alles Ständische und Stehende verdampft." There is no doubt that Marx and Engels by using this image of fluidification foreshadowed some of the coming features of the modern and postmodern societies in which we live. No wonder that sociologist Zygmunt Bauman in *Liquid Modernity*, after reminding us that fluidity is the state of gases and liquids, argues that the transformation from solid societies into fluid – or liquid – societies should be considered as one of the distinguishing features of a new phase of modernity. A new stage which has been named in different ways but is generally referred to as postmodernity or second modernity. According to Bauman, the transition from modernity to postmodernity is also the passage from a heavy, hardware-focused modernity to a light, fluid, software-based modernity. From materiality to immateriality.

This paper focuses on Thomas Pynchon's postmodern novel *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966). On the one hand, it is an attempt to chart how the tension between hardware and software impacts the ways in which individual and collective memory is shaped. On the other, it proposes to read Pynchon's story as a general reflection on the value of the dissolving signs of our postmodern age.

The first part will discuss how memory exposed to fluidification, to dematerialization, generates two clusters of images recurring throughout the novel: one of hard materiality (junk, waste) which seemingly appears as an attempt to stabilize memory, and another of fluid, dissolving realities (spectral figures, the media). Because memory, junk and waste constitute the backbone of another canonical postmodern novel too, DeLillo's *Underworld* (1997), some passages from it will be analyzed. Then, we will move on to explore another level on which *The Crying of Lot 49* addresses the

theme of memory. In fact, Oedipa's quest for memory is closely linked to some events endowed with a founding status in American history: the fights between the pioneers and the Native Americans, and the Civil War. The problem is that Oedipa's effort to reconstruct these events is constantly frustrated by the impossibility to have access to the facts unless through the memories of other people, memories that are often dissolving and, not rarely, based on contrasting, unstable, oral narrations. Thus Pynchon deconstructs American history, or better the myth of America, at its roots. The supposed historical truth on which America was founded is wasting, wasted. Even worse: it is simply waste or maybe W.A.S.T.E. .

To inscriptions and symbols is devoted the second part of this paper which is concerned with the different signs showing up in the novel. Once again, the polarity between hardware and software plays a central role, intersecting here a reflection on the value of signs. Indeed, the post horn symbol appears on different kinds of material (media). Maybe the latter is only the surface, the signifier not the signified, so to speak, but the doubt that in this novel "the medium is the message" becomes stronger the more we read. This impression is reinforced when we are told that only two things remain of the fight between the Indians – who were not real Indians – and the post riders: a bronze historical marker and "a cross traced by one of the victims in the dust." Once again, a hard sign – the bronze plaque – is juxtaposed to a fading, unstable sign hinting at another mysterious story of America's foundation, the inscription "Croaton." Even Oedipa's search first for the (paper)back and then for the (hard)cover edition of Wharfinger's collected plays, is perhaps a variation on the tension between software and hardware.

The paper ends by following Oedipa as she looks down a slope to the town of San Narciso. What she sees is a "printed radio circuit" endowed with "a hieroglyphic sense of concealed meaning, of an intent to communicate." A powerful image weaving together hardware and software, past and present. Maybe a disturbing image of America. Maybe a reflection on the difficulty in finding a meaning, in decoding, the intricacy of signs at the base of our postmodern age.

Celia Wallhead (University of Granada): "Kit and Kim: Espionage in *Against the Day*"

Almost every major character in Pynchon's *Against the Day* is a spy. It is said of Derrick Theign: "... Theign, who might as well have worn sandwich-boards fore and aft reading SPY." (706) While Kit is spying on Tesla, Colfax Vibe is spying on him. The Chums of Chance (and their Russian counterparts) have a distinct advantage in their spying, in that they see everything from the vantage-point of Google-Earth. Yashmeen, whose foster-father, Auberon Halfcourt, is spying in Kashgar in western China, works for the TWITS. There are amateurs and professionals: Nigel and Neville, who also have Russian counterparts, Misha and Grisha; Cyprian Latewood and Bevis Moistleigh. Lew Basnight does it for a living, as he is a professional investigator. Scarsdale Vibe pays people like Foley Walker to arrange it for him.

The Russian balloonists under Captain Igor Padzhitnoff fly in a skyship called BOL'SHAIA IGRA, or "The Great Game." (123) This is a direct reference to Rudyard Kipling's novel *Kim*, published in 1901. Kipling sets his story in India in what was for him the present, hence the time period coincides with that of *Against the Day*, which overtly spans from the 1893 World's Columbus Exposition to just after the First World War, round about 1922. Kipling's young protagonist is torn between two tendencies in his identity: he is a Sahib, and as such, gets involved in "The Great Game", but having been brought up in India, his spiritual side is attracted to a Tibetan lama and he becomes his follower.

When Pynchon's narrator next refers explicitly to the subject of espionage, he says: "styled by Mr. Kipling, in a simpler day, 'The Great Game.'" (226-7) It is as if the narrator is speaking from the days of the Cold War (the concept of the Great Game having been taken originally by the Russians from chess), or later, for example, the beginning of the twenty-first century, and looking back to the beginning of the twentieth century, and seeing it as "simpler" then. *Against the Day*, therefore, contains, amongst its myriad subjects and styles, a postmodern reworking of the spy-adventure story with specific reference to Kipling.

While investigating this possibility, I have come across many parallels between the two novels. They are basically quest stories, but there are conflicting quests, involving the material and the

spiritual or non-material. The travels of the characters give the impression of a “plotless” novel, where unity is provided through images and symbols: in *Kim*, they are the Wheel of Life and the mystical river, both of which appear in the Pynchon. There are similarities between Kim and Kit: they are both fatherless and they have their education paid for by someone interested in them. They feel alone, homeless, and have identity crises through split personality. Parallels between Kim and some of the other spies in the Pynchon are that there is no contact with the “Upper Command”, messages are passed in similar ways, disguises are used, the latest weapons are involved. There is foretelling of the future, with the war looming ahead as a sort of apocalypse.

Kim is the least pessimistic of Kipling’s works, but of the two moral precepts underlying the novel, one is negative but unavoidable: a recognition of man’s mortal insufficiency. Pynchon’s postmodernism eschews any moralising, but the threat of death is ever-present in all his works. Furthermore, his rejection of any monolithic vision is not dissimilar to Kipling’s other moral precept in *Kim*: the appeal for ecumenical understanding.

Finally, *Kim* is infused with light: Indian scenes are illuminated in a very positive way. Pynchon focusses upon light, as the title indicates, but his use of light/dark, day/night/, matter/antimatter and other similar binaries, is far more complex, as indeed, is his novel in general.

Michael Sinding (Justus-Liebig University, Giessen): “Crusades Begin as Pilgrimages: Pynchon’s New Medievalisms”

“Medievalism” concerns the influence of *ideas* about the Middle Ages rather than the direct influence of medieval culture. The operation of such historical fantasy was first explored in Umberto Eco’s cultural journalism of the 1980s, and has since grown into a sub-field of cultural and historical scholarship. The medievalist forces shaping Pynchon’s historical, literary and moral imagination remain underexplored.

Speaking urgently to modern American culture, seeking “directions we should be moving in”, Pynchon compares the pros and cons of other ages and cultures with his own. As in Adams’s *Education*, Pynchon’s Middle Ages play an important symbolic role in this project, deserving consideration alongside his other uses of the past (e.g. Weisenburger, “End”, “Haunted”). Medievalist writers bulk large in Pynchon’s early influences. These include both those he admired, and those whose views he opposed. His major “models” of the Middle Ages are the following:

- Helen Waddell’s counter-cultural Middle Ages of the “Wandering Scholars”.
- Henry Adams’s theory/ image of a medieval unity of forces splitting into modern multiplicity (echoed by T. S. Eliot and others).
- Jacob Grimm’s view of Heathen cultures resisting their demonization by a spreading Christianity.
- Wagner’s operas about legendary quests by Christian minstrel-knights.
- Several thinkers provide a focus on the end of the Middle Ages as the origin of the modern West: Machiavelli’s virtú/ Fortuna contrast; and Max Weber’s and Norman O. Brown’s analyses of Martin Luther’s Protestant legacy of capitalist rationalism and repression.
- The “Sloth” essay sees God and sin as closer in the Middle Ages, but sees an ambiguous evolution: sloth means detachment from conventional obligations, but also despair about change.
- The “Luddite” essay sees opposition to industrialization and its “emerging technopolitical order” in the Gothic vision of the Middle Ages as a world still vital with magic.

These models inform Pynchon’s way with cultural allusion, rather than getting detailed portrayals of their own. To some extent their internal oppositions shape up into a bigger opposition, an “apocalyptic showdown” we can put in terms of the agon of influence (an ethical as well as aesthetic dilemma): Adams-Eliot-Wagner vs. Waddell-Grimm-Walpole. In a more precise reading, the medieval stands at the furthest reach of cultural memory (Pynchon’s own family can be traced back to the eleventh century [Hollander 8]), and functions as the source of the modern world and also as the Other that

defines it by contrast. But it is a dual Other. The early Pynchon rejects the medieval along with Adams's vision of its cultural homogeneity. There develops a critique of such nostalgia for an alabaster Christian unity, then a recognition of the cultural value of an alternative nostalgia—for an unofficial subversive folk culture of nature, art and magic.

Against a background of Pynchon's previous medievalisms, from *Slow Learner* to *Mason & Dixon*, I will explore continuities and new developments in *Against the Day*. Continuities include:

- the tracing of historical forces to turning points to the Middle Ages
- important use of medieval religious thought, including Sins, Virtues, and allegory
- the discovery of magic, miracle, and other worlds as forces for hope against an exploitative technopolitical order
- the association of "monstrous" retributive forces with medievalist imagery and stories (the "Hidden People" in caves of Iceland spar; the Tatzelwurms as forces of an "older Germany," seen as priests of cathedral-mountains [654-63], etc.)
- combining these, the central use of themes of Pilgrimage and Crusade

New aspects include:

- the "Western" (the Traverses) and "detective" (Lew Basnight) stories, seen by Pynchon as American analogues of knightly adventures
- underworld dwellers—miners, Hollow Earthers—seen as gnomes, dwarves; contrasting with skydwelling Chums of Chance
- a broader transnational scope, which issues in versions of the Middle Ages from Asian history and culture—notably the search for the secret Buddhist city of Shambhala, and the view of Venice as an ancient intersection of Western and Eastern empires (705)
- the clearer connection of magic, miracle, and other worlds with dream visions and dream journeys; and leading to technoscientific obsession with time travel and bilocation
- the idea that Crusades began as Pilgrimages (436)

To tie together these new developments, I will focus on the Chums' mission to locate the *Sfinciuno Itinerary*, a 14th-15th century map of post-Polo routes into Asia, created by the Venetian Doge-in-exile. The map may be for market routes; it may lead to the hidden city of Shambhala; but may also be "allegory and hidden symbolism" (248). The searches for the map and the city epitomize Pynchon's new sense of the interrelations of Pilgrimage and Crusade.

Michael Harris (Central College, Pella, Iowa): "The Tao of Thomas Pynchon"

In 2003, Robert Kohn published an essay, "Seven Buddhist Themes in Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*," in the journal *Religion & Literature*. To my knowledge, this is one of the only studies of this subject in Pynchon criticism. The subject of religion, let alone eastern religion, does not frequently receive mention in discussions of Pynchon's work. Nevertheless, it is clear from fairly numerous references in his novels – from *V.* to *Against the Day* – that Pynchon is knowledgeable on this subject. I would like to present an individual essay at the International Pynchon Conference at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, June 11-14, 2008, on this recurring aspect of Pynchon's writing. In this essay, I intend to argue that Pynchon's referencing of Buddhism and Hinduism is not only a signifier worth taking seriously, but is also a meaningful structuring device that he increasingly uses in his longer narratives, such as *Gravity's Rainbow*, *Mason & Dixon*, and *Against the Day*.

I have only the skeletal idea of this essay mapped out at this point, but I will mention some of the ideas I hope to bring into my essay. In *Gravity's Rainbow*, Tyrone Slothrop's late wanderings through the Zone have been interpreted in a variety of ways. Although this view is not often mentioned, one can see distinct parallels between Slothrop's experience in the Zone and the path of enlightenment that is part of most Asian religious traditions, including Buddhism and Hinduism. In the novel, Pynchon

criticizes the Calvinist distinction between the elect and the preterite. In contrast to that system, the narrative offers an alternative view of life as a cycle – a process of birth and rebirth – more familiar in eastern religion. At the beginning of part four in the novel, the narrator relates that Slothrop “is closer to being a spiritual medium than he’s been yet, and he doesn’t even know it” (622). Slothrop encounters a number of signs and symbols during his wanderings, including the mandala, which in Buddhist and Taoist traditions refers to a place marked off for meditation, or something sacred to focus the eyes on during meditation.

In *Mason & Dixon*, eastern religion again enters the narrative in a significant way – for instance, in the ideas and viewpoint of Zhang, the Chinese mystic. Zhang’s perspective on the Visto being marked out by Mason and Dixon serves as a counterpoint to the western enterprise of marking a boundary as an indicator of ownership of the land. “Boundary!” Zhang exclaims at one point, “Ev’rywhere else on earth, Boundaries follow Nature, – coast-lines, ridge-tops, river-banks, – so honoring the Dragon or *Shan* within, from which Landscape ever takes its form. To mark a right Line upon the Earth is to inflict upon the Dragon’s very Flesh, a sword-slash, a long, perfect scar, impossible for any [. . .] to see as other than hateful Assault” (542). Zhang’s commentary undercuts the western utilitarian, proprietary view of land underlying the surveyors’ project, in favor of a view that endows the earth with sacred, occult properties, as is typical in eastern religion. By the end of the narrative, that involves the surveyors in a Slothrop-like circuitous wandering toward an unknown, possible enlightenment, Mason and Dixon both begin to question the purposes and interests they are serving by drawing up the linear border.

In his essay “The Luddite Vision: *Mason & Dixon*,” David Cowart remarks that in that novel Pynchon underscores the “spiritual realities [that] have been obscured by centuries of what Derrida calls ‘logo-centric metaphysics.’ One can argue [. . .] the mounting evidence of Pynchon’s spiritual and metaphysical (even religious) seriousness.” Cowart’s essay appeared before the publication of *Against the Day*, but that novel certainly confirms the accuracy of his observation; I would add that Pynchon’s increasing interest in spirituality is derived primarily from eastern religious views and practices. This novel includes several important vectors relating to Buddhism/Hinduism. Kit Traverse, a promising mathematician who studies first at Yale and then at Göttingen, eventually devotes himself to the (in part) spiritual quest of locating the mythic, lost city of Shambala in Tibet. Shambala, of course, possesses sacred significance for Buddhists. This search represents an antidote to Kit’s realization that he has been, up until now, essentially a pawn of Scarsdale Vibe, the same man who has had his father Webb killed. Slothrop’s wanderings in the Zone in *Gravity’s Rainbow*, are a similar cathartic response to the experiments conducted on him by Laszlo Jamf. The “aimless” wandering thus becomes a means of escape from the control and exploitation practiced on Kit and Slothrop by “Them.”

In typical Pynchon fashion, however, the narrative thread involving Kit Traverse, is suddenly dropped, and for a significant portion of the novel, the reader instead follows the trio of Cyprian Latewood, Yashmeen Halfcourt, and Reef Traverse, as they navigate their way through the Balkans during the period leading up to the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), followed shortly by the outbreak of World War I. This narrative thread also bears distinct similarity to a spiritual wandering, familiar in eastern religion. Latewood, who eventually leaves Yashmeen and Reef to live in a monastery, follows a trajectory similar to Slothrop’s path toward enlightenment in *Gravity’s Rainbow*. In a novel relentlessly critical of various kinds of spurious religiosity, Pynchon’s narrator endows Latewood with a noteworthy seriousness – all the more surprising (at least for a Pynchon novel) for the fact that Latewood is homosexual. Thus, in *Against the Day*, as in *Gravity’s Rainbow*, Pynchon uses eastern religion in part as a structuring device involving a spiritual wandering toward a possible enlightenment.

It is also significant for my purposes in this essay that Pynchon frequently criticizes Christianity for its complicity with the European rational order and its attendant colonizing impulse at work in this period of world history. Furthermore, I would like to link Pynchon’s critique of “history” and cause and effect present in the aforementioned novels with the Buddhist rejection of the essential self and linear chronology. Buddhism teaches one to be mindful of the moment and practice compassion for

others in that moment; this mindfulness is achieved, of course, through meditation. The act of reading a Pynchon novel itself bears intriguing similarities to Buddhist meditation. The Pynchon reader soon learns to pay attention, not to the unfolding of a grand narrative, but to the message conveyed by the narrator – something communicated page by page, sentence by sentence, moment by moment. I do not intend to try to prove that Pynchon is a Buddhist; that is beyond my scope. But I hope to show that his writing is informed by the author’s awareness of eastern religion.

Charles Hollander (independent scholar): “Pynchon, Satire, and the Moral Instinct”

“Evolution has endowed us with ethical impulses.” So writes Steven Pinker, formerly a student of Noam Chomsky, in his recent article, “The Moral Instinct,” (*The New York Times Magazine*, Jan. 13, 2008, p.32). Satire has often been viewed by some critics as largely a matter of manners and morals, time and place bound, and therefore not quite as important as some other genres. “The Moral Instinct” has broadened my view of satire, enlarging it, making it more universal and common to all places and times where literature exists. Having a sense of right and wrong may be one of those things that make us human, may be a defining characteristic of our humanity. Playing on our moral sense, Satire becomes the kind of artifact (like tragedy) that illustrates back to us the best and worst of what our humanity can be. And if satire is based on common biologically based traits that help define our humanity, Pynchon becomes a much larger player in the culture of our global village. Pynchon, concerned with the relationship of the individual to the state as he is, and translated into 26 languages (and counting), has become our first global writer, in Marshall McLuhan’s sense of world-wide village communication. As each of the world’s nations has to deal with its version of what Pynchon writes about (the relationship of individual to the state, and attendant difficulties), I believe he will sooner or later come to be recognized as the world’s first global satirist. As Dante, perhaps the greatest satirist in the Western Canon, came to be recognized as central to the European civilization’s ethos for the next five or six hundred years by establishing new rules, I believe Pynchon (the self-sought spiritual heir to Dante’s oeuvre, in Harold Bloom’s sense) and the carrier of Dante’s torch in our generation; will come to stand, perhaps to some degree already stands, as our Dante to the new global civilization’s ethos . Forty-three presenters, representing fifteen nations to this conference, to a certain degree provide a measure of how Pynchon’s international stature is growing.

Jeffrey Severs (Wake Forest University): “Pynchon’s Dogs”

We might someday see the mysterious epigraph to *Vineland* – “Every dog has his day / and a good dog / just might have two days,” from Johnny Copeland – as a hinge moment in Pynchon’s career: before it, dogs fare rather poorly in his work, their trademark version being Pointsman’s Pavlovian experimental subjects in *Gravity’s Rainbow*. After the epigraph, though, Pynchon’s dogs do seem to start having their day, that special, second chance Copeland implies: Desmond, the Wheelers’ dog, is one hero of *Vineland*, as some critics have pointed out, going from being harassed by birds on the opening page to doing a star turn in the novel’s final line by carrying one of his captured harassers “home.” More prominent than Desmond are the highly intelligent dogs of the two later novels: the Learned English Dog of *Mason & Dixon* and Pugnax, the Henry James reader and Chums of Chance crew member of *Against the Day*.

Are these dogs as trifling as they may first appear, marks of the essential Pynchon goofiness? This paper suggests otherwise. In it I begin by giving a detailed backstory for the appearance of the learned and educable Pynchon dog in his ongoing obsession with the figure of the werewolf. As Manfred Kopp points out in analyzing werewolf figures in *Mason & Dixon*, Pynchon often echoes Hobbes’s formula in *Leviathan* that “man is a wolf to man.” I go further than Kopp in reading across the oeuvre for werewolves and in claiming that, through this hybrid of canine and man, Pynchon repeatedly asks fundamental questions about sovereignty in its political and self-possession senses: if

the U.S. did go fascist, how would it happen? What is the process of werewolf-like madness by which ordinary citizens might become totalitarians? On its second page *V.* sounds an overture to a career full of such “abruptness” and what McClintic Sphere will later in the novel call “flipping”: there we see “normal night’s dream turning to nightmare. Dog into wolf, light into twilight.” The book will later connect the wolf image to both the Germans’ dress rehearsal for the Holocaust in Südwestafrika (where Mondaugen hears the incessant call of the strand wolf) and the betrayals of the 1956 New York cast (who are, in the August heat, on the verge of “[w]erewolf season”). In its central conceit *Gravity’s Rainbow* expands on Sphere’s speculations about the innocent American “flipping” and going mad: conditioning by Nazi Laszlo Jamf may have flipped the one and zero of stimulus and response in Slothrop’s brain, and – “a monster,” says Pointsman – he unwittingly brings Nazi rockets in the wake of his sexual love. And *Gravity’s Rainbow* follows in *V.*’s werewolf vein too by reserving the image for two enforcers of totalitarian regimes: Tchitcherine and Blicero. The former is seen donning a wolf-head costume, and the latter, we hear, grows on the Lüneburg Heath, “in his final madness,” “into another animal... a werewolf... but with no humanity left in his eyes.” These “werewolf season” phenomena seem to be impelled by the “dog days” of August in which the “world start[s] to run more and more afoul of the inanimate,” as the almanac section of *V.* warns; and so perhaps – in one of those career-long strands of meaning Pynchon’s allusions often seem to suggest – the dog-men of learning in the later books are corrections to the totalitarian dog-men of old. These new dogs have their day, or have their two days, or perhaps stand against the dog days’ arrival.

I use Giorgio Agamben’s treatment of the *wulfesheud* of Germanic folklore in *Homo Sacer: Sovereignty and Bare Life* to make explicit the connection between the presence of werewolves and the failed transition from Hobbes’s state of nature to the city of sovereign right that these animal-men have historically connoted – a state of political limbo played on extensively in the apartment of a wolf-man named Lupescu in “Mortality and Mercy in Vienna,” Pynchon’s very first published story. Though this paper runs the risk of taking on too much for the available time, I hope to use these early examples of werewolves to lead up to a new way of seeing the importance of Pugnax in particular. Through his name – from the Latin for pugnacious, war-like – and contrastingly gentlemanly demeanor, Pynchon seems to place his transformation at odds with the descent into war the book as a whole documents. He is, we are told, “a dog of no particular breed,” and as such he seems to bear important connections to the themes of hybridity and genetic diversity available in other parts of the book, including the name of one Traverse son, Reef (a coral reef?). As Tony Tanner long ago pointed out, one of the few grounds for optimism in *Gravity’s Rainbow* seems to lie in the genetic endurance Pynchon sees in the smell of Pirate’s bananas: “the high intricacy to the weaving of [the odor’s] molecules, sharing the conjuror’s secret by which – though it is not often Death is told so clearly to fuck off – the living genetic chains prove even labyrinthine enough to preserve some human face down ten or twenty generations,” an “assertion-through-structure” allowed to “prevail” amid the brutality of the war. One way of seeing the undeniably increased hopefulness of Pynchon’s work in *Vineland* and after is to track the turn from the bad hybridity of the werewolf to the “hybrid vigor” he seems to be playing on through figures like Pugnax. In this paper I hope to give that learned American dog the pre-history he deserves.

Dr. Caroline Hamilton (University of Sydney): “*Contre-Jour: History and Storytelling in Against the Day*”

Contre-jour, French for “against daylight,” refers to photographs taken when the camera is pointing directly toward the source of light. The effect of such photographs is to render the subject in silhouette against a bright, sometimes glaring, background. This paper will take the technique of *contre-jour* as a means for interpreting Pynchon’s latest novel, reading the work in terms of its attempt to capture history and story together in a single, if ever expanding, moment. *Against the Day* betrays an effort to challenge the simple dimensions of narrative and approach it from every possible angle.

Against the Day is set against a historical backdrop, it is, then, an oppositional narrative. The story it tells resides *against* history rather than strictly *in* it. Very rarely, for instance, does Pynchon provide specific dates, preferring instead to allude to important historical moments in the loose past of “sometime then.” Much of the narrative action is indistinct and locations and scenarios are difficult to pin down to specifics. Such a technique is reminiscent of the stylistics of the *contre-jour* photograph

which offers the viewer a striking and poetic image without any trace of fine detail. As with the *contre-jour*, in which the light throws the subject into sharp contrast, this novel blends the cliché with the poetic. Light and dark are given resonance through their clash. The significant aspect of the *contre-jour* style is the way in which it is able to be both general and specific: by erasing fine detail in favour of the dark shadow the artist is able to approach the notion of a universal subject.

Against the Day deliberately exceeds our ability to keep everything in our heads; we cannot take it all in at once. As we read we find ourselves mirroring our own relation to history: we are forgetful looking backward and frustrated looking forward. Pynchon, this paper will argue, is presenting readers with a version of history as storytelling. According to Deleuze, "there are two times, one of which is composed only of interlocking presents; the other is constantly decomposed into elongated pasts and future" (*Logic of Sense*, 62). Encountering this text it is apparent that there are other layers hidden underneath the plain text, narrative worlds shifted slightly out of focus, alternative histories, counter-narratives. The solution, it would seem, is to place oneself in apposition to the text. To stand in relation to the novel as the subject stands in relation to the source of light before a photograph is taken. That is, to position oneself as reader not *in* the text but *against* it.

Rod Taveira (University of Sydney): "‘Shadow Factories’: Allegorical Technologies of Entertainment in *Against the Day*"

In one of the better reviews to appear upon its publication, John Clute wrote of the characters in *Against the Day*: "They flicker in and out of view as though lit from behind.... [they] illuminate the stories of the old world that their Author has placed before us in funeral array; they are codes to spell his book with." Apart from describing a mode of representation that utilises a *contre-jour* technique, Clute recognises the cinematic temporality of what he calls Pynchon's "aubade," where the coming day whitewashes, "in funeral array," the modernity to follow.

Writing on Proust, Jameson notes: "if we stare at our immediate experience head-on, with a will towards assimilating it all at once, without mediation, we lose it, but the real thing comes in, as it were, at the corner of the eye, and while we are consciously intent on something else." At the corner of our eye is that point of contrast between the light and the dark, that forever collapsible, irresolved limit where opposites exist in apposition. "So smoothly Chick missed the moment, the photo came to life" (1037). Enabled by the Lorandite that also powers the world-annihilator (the Q-weapon), the Integroscope animates Photography. And the "movies" it projects are the "real life" domestic and city symphony genres of, respectively, the very earliest cinema (viz. the Lumiere Brother's first films) up to the last period of silent film (viz. Ruttmann's *Berlin*, Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera*). These also comprise the genres "utilised" by Pynchon in *Against the Day* – the evocations of Venice and Paris, the dramas of Webb and Rideout families, themselves sprawling in a larger textual field.

Pynchon's parody is also a *contre-jour* technique, where the essence of something is got at not by its transparent representation, but through contrast, illuminating its internal contradictions. However, like seeing through Iceland Spar, where silver is not only doubled, but accompanied by gold, we have not a binary scheme of apprehension, but following John Barrell's study of the "psychopathology of imperialism," a triangular dynamic of "this/that/the *other* thing." This introduces the important temporal and ultimately allegorical dimension to the reading of *Against the Day*. This is seen in a play between sameness and difference. For example, one character's mode of killing *changes* with the onward march of history: Deuce can be readily hired to kill a troublesome anarchist with a minimum of legal and financial impedimenta in the late 19th century American West, but must become a nocturnal serial killer stalking female, orgy-going movie extras in Hollywood in the 1920s. But another's character's mode of perception *persists* across time and space: "... yet somehow more than everyday déjà vu, the old two-places-at-once condition, kicking up again, [Lew] couldn't be sure if he was remembering this or, worse, *foreseeing* her in some way, so that he had to worry about the possibility that not only might Jardine Maraca be dead but also that *is had not happened yet*" (1058). It is precisely this *other* thing, this *punctum* that Barthes describes in photographs of the about-to-die (*Camera Lucida*), that pricks the reader, the forwards-backwards motion that this paper will follow, asking what it is to mean.

Following Tom Gunning's revisionist history of so-called "primitive cinema," *Against the Day* is read in an "aesthetic of attractions," drawing from the technologies of entertainment that created a new public sphere following the Chicago World's Fair in 1893. "The movement from still to moving image," writes Gunning, "accented the unbelievable and extraordinary nature of the apparatus itself. But in doing so, it also undid any naïve belief in the reality of the image." In a similar way, *Against the Day*, in its unrestrained use of the fantastic and pataphysical, undoes belief in "reality" insofar as this reality is all there is. Using the faculty of mimesis that Walter Benjamin saw reawakened by the advent of film, *Against the Day* imagines and heralds a kind of luciferous public sphere where memory coalesces with image, thought and affect so "the mimetic element in language can, like a flame, manifest itself through a kind of bearer" (Benjamin).

James Gourley (University of Western Sydney): "Reading *Against the Day* in the Modern Context"

The terrorist attacks in New York, Washington and Pittsburgh on September 11, 2001, have become a vital mobilising force for fiction, especially amongst the most canonical American authors writing today. Not long after the attacks Jean Baudrillard wrote that, "[t]he whole play of history and power is disrupted by this event, but so, too, are the conditions of analysis." Taking these "conditions of analysis" as my starting point I will argue that *Against the Day* can be read as a counter-narrative which takes these new conditions into account. Pynchon, rather than focusing on the specific events that created the possibility of the 9/11 attacks, has looked into the past, investigating historical concerns, and especially acknowledging the much closer relationship America has with terrorism and anarchism than is generally acknowledged in the anti-terrorist discourse of the present.

In *Against the Day* Pynchon proposes that modern history is a war between utopian and totalitarian impulses. The novel is a commentary on counter-culture and hegemony, anarchism and corporatism, nature and *techne*, eros and death, entropy and order. As a work it reflects upon the state of modern history and current politics proposing that the only reasonable place to reside in such a world is somewhere between the extremes. As such, for Pynchon, it is not a question of oppositions but appositions.

I will argue that Pynchon has adopted a specific register and mode, seemingly governed by the metahistory of Hayden White, in which historical reinterpretation allows and facilitates comment on the present day. In effect, *Against the Day*, can then be defined as a '9/11 novel', merely differing from other texts in the method through which societal analysis is achieved. As a narrative about terrorism *Against the Day* is then literally against the day, against its present time and against history. It is re-examining both past and present in terms of new conditions of analysis.

I will conclude that the emergence and growth of the '9/11 novel' constitutes a reassertion of the importance of fictional discourse, and indeed, a statement that posits fiction as the most functional discourse for the analysis of terrorism. Using Baudrillard's emphasis on the changing conditions of analysis, I will argue that the dominance of terrorism has resulted in a return to the questioning of the role and purpose of literary fiction; a premise that is, in itself, against the current thinking of the day.

Frank Palmeri (University of Miami): "Plutocratic Dystopia, Anarchist Utopias in Pynchon's *Against the Day*"

Pynchon organizes his historical and fictional recreation of the years between 1895 and 1920, around the opposition between owners and workers. The rich are the owners of mines, banks, and new technologies of communication and destruction. Although their embodiment in Scarsdale Vibe may seem stereotypical or exaggerated, Vibe's life, attitudes, and dealings correspond closely with those of

Vanderbilt, Carnegie, Rockefeller, Gould, and Huntington detailed by Matthew Josephson in *The Robber Barons* (1934, 1962). (Pynchon already used Gould and Huntington as models for Pierce Inverarity in *The Crying of Lot 49*, the execution of whose will leads Oedipa Maas to discover the underside of America.) For example, Vibe comes to southeast Colorado to oversee the response to the miners' strike as a substitute for Rockefeller, the actual owner of the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company (996). Although Vibe receives the bullets that he so well deserves just before the militia attacks, it is he and others like him who are responsible for the killing and burning of miners' families at the Ludlow camp (1014-17), the crushing of the strike in Torino, the torture and killing of Webb Traverse and other union activists, as well as the impoverishing, demeaning, and killing of millions of miners in North America, Southern Europe, and Mexico, among and beside some of whom Reef and Frank work at various points in the novel. Vibe and the others like him are responsible for the dystopian nightmares that recur throughout the narrative, including the pursuit and experimental use of secret weapons and the buying of scientists and mathematicians. It is this world of which the socialist newspaperman in Paris after the War can still conversationally but accurately say, "We're in Hell, you know" (1077).

In opposition to the many dystopian organizations, visions, and projects in the novel, Pynchon counterposes a number of diminished utopias. One of the most striking of these is the anarchist community at Yz-les-Bains in southern France, where all are welcome to live for free, participate in the replacement of governments by more practical arrangements, and not even engage in bombings. There are also revolutionary groups, non-Western groups, and the natural technologies that lead to visions, such as the cactus that the Turahumare shaman has Frank eat, and that leads him to encounter and kill one of his father's murderers. Perhaps the most unusual and surprising utopia proves to be the *Inconvenience*, which in the last pages of the novel has expanded and been transformed from a balloon carrying a stilted and obnoxious crew of boy adventurers into what seems to be a space station populated not only with young men but with young women and children adventurers, as well as animals of various kinds, a city of thousands now seeming not to need to descend to earth any more for provisions or missions. It has become an interplanetary ark, in other words, a counter-Earth.

The salient difference between these two kinds of place represented by the text is that the dystopia exists; it is the world, both historically and at present, whereas the reduced utopias are fantastic and often depend on imaginary technologies. On the other hand, the novel concludes with its vision of a starship moving toward grace, a conclusion that is less bleak and focused on death than those of Pynchon's other novels.

Graham Benton (California State University, Maritime): "Daydreams and Dynamite: Anarchist Possibility in Thomas Pynchon's *Against the Day*"

Anarchist political philosophy is clearly important to Pynchon and has been a force in all of his novels. As I've written elsewhere, Pynchon not only creates specific anarchist and crypto-anarchist characters and agencies, but he also treats with suspicion many state-sponsored institutions that serve to maintain and regulate social order. His texts are informed by an anarchist perspective which interrogates order-making impulses on multiple discursive fronts; furthermore, while anarchism appears as a thematized subject within the texts, the form of these novels enact what may be called an "anarchist aesthetic": the heady narrative strands, with their shifting inflections of genre and radical disjunctions of tone and style, reflect an anarchist sensibility that emphasizes heterogeneity, fragmentation, and experimentation. While Pynchon frequently invokes a concept of anarchism as a powerful mechanism for social engineering, as a utopic horizon, and as a valued political philosophy, he is also wary of fully endorsing an anarchist position because he recognizes such a position to be open to any number of violent corruptions and betrayals. Pynchon teases out the possibilities that a progressive anarchist stand may proffer, but also makes a serious contribution to anarchist discourse by amplifying and interrogating the flaws inherent in anarchist theory.

If the anarchist dimension in Pynchon's previous novels is often eclipsed by the dizzying encyclopedic narrative threads, in *Against the Day* this dimension is explicitly fore-grounded and dramatized. The novel is saturated with anarchist ideas, self-identified anarchists, and anarchist activity both historical and imagined. There are anarchist bombers, anarchist hunters, anarchist saloons, anarchist wagons, and anarchist coffee houses all of which are set in locales rich in anarchist history: post-Haymarket Chicago, the Balkans, the mines of Colorado, and revolutionary Russia. As the most recent mark in Pynchon's ongoing meditation on anarchist political practices and sensibilities, this essay seeks to interrogate *Against the Day's* treatment of anarchism by situating it against the earlier novels -- to see how his vision has changed, to see what has been gained, and what might have been lost. Attention will be given to Pynchon's representations of both American and European anarchist traditions, and to his continuously-evolving and challenging vision of freedom and resistance.

Stefen Showers (Knox College, Illinois): "Mathematics in Thomas Pynchon's *Against the Day*"

In 1964, a Pynchon letter indicates that a negative review of *V.*, combined with significant doubts about his own ability to plot effectively, led to Pynchon's questioning his future as a writer. Eventually, it was a rejection from the Cal-Berkeley graduate mathematics department that returned him to writing fiction. But mathematics has ever since remains integral to the Pynchonian vision. In this paper, I will discuss in detail the significance of mathematical concepts and mathematicians in *Against The Day*. In particular, I will be examining Pynchon's discussion of the ubiquitous Hamiltonian *quaternion* and its conceptual competitor, the *vector*; non-Euclidean geometries—particularly, spherical geometry—and the fourth (and *n*th) dimension; divergences from the Law of Identity; and, most significantly of all, Pynchon's description of characters, narratives, and diegetic levels in the text through specific mathematical terminology.

In tracing the significance of Pynchon's use of *mathematics-as-metaphor*, I will argue also that the mathematical shaping of *Against the Day* is crucial in understanding the socio-political commentary of Pynchon's novel. Pynchon engages the history of mathematics, as it existed at this specific moment in history, for a definite purpose. G. H. Hardy proposed in his *A Mathematician's Apology* the essential morality of mathematics, a contingent 'purity' based solely on its arbitrariness as a closely self-referential system and, more importantly, its lack of application in the real world. *If it can't be used for anything*, Hardy reasoned, *then it can't be used for evil*.

This conception of a pure mathematics, and the search for it, was integral to the historical moment. Hardy's *Apology* was an effort to justify the role of mathematics and mathematicians in the second Great War. So, in a weird sort of symmetry, it is key to notice that Pynchon's presentation of his novel uses mathematical terms, metaphors, and real-to-history occurrences in the mathematics world to follow history to the inevitable outcome, as history has shown us—the first Great War. Like all the other binaries within *Against the Day*, Pynchon's narrative thus engages Hardy's.

As if it were some vast proof of the *reductio ad absurdum* nature, in Pynchon's newest fusion of fiction and history, up is down. In one fell swoop, Pynchon chronicles the anarchist's cause to be free and lawless as exactly what the real mathematicians of the era (many of whom appear in the book) were hoping to attain for their bound and structured subject. As a former student of mathematics, Pynchon would be aware of the real historical context of mathematics at the turn of the 20th century. It was a time marked by the struggle to cease the subject from simply describing the natural world, to allow it to describe even the unnatural, becoming thereby useless to real world application and thus exactly what Hardy was heralding as 'pure'.

So not only does Pynchon analogize the modes of 'pure' mathematical self-reference to fictional self-referentiality (which explains many of the counter-intuitive, *unnatural*, events within the text), but the central drama of *Against the Day* is precisely this complex between a highly logical, rigorous, well-ordered mode of thinking and the absolute necessity of absolute freedom of the unquantifiable human life.

Terry Reilly (University of Fairbanks, Alaska): “Narrating Tesla in *Against the Day*: I.G.L.O.O., H.A.A.R.P., and Other Forms of Ionospheric Weirdness”

From Mondaugen's machine to measure sferics in *V.* to the references to I.G.L.O.O. in *Against the Day*, Pynchon's narratives have repeatedly called attention to the ionosphere as a liminal, perhaps magical place between the lower atmosphere and deep space. Because it is too thin for balloons and conventional aircraft and too dense for rockets, the ionosphere remains relatively unexplored and unexplorable by direct observation from manned craft. Instead, it has been observed remotely for centuries and thus has been the source of a number of speculative narratives, from myths and legends among the indigenous northern people, to strange hypotheses and conspiracy theories in contemporary scientific and popular literature. Moreover, as the locale of the aurora borealis, lost radio transmissions, and perhaps the ghost of Ludwig Wittgenstein, the ionosphere represents a quintessential Pynchonesque "place"--a locale that much like the Zone in *GR* or the "Wedge" in *M&D* allows Pynchon to take historical and scientific data and rework it into a narrative that illuminates and underscores its magical and paranormal features.

Mark Quinn (University College Dublin): “In the Shadow of the Masters: Dante, Joyce and Pynchon”

In this paper, through a close reading of sections of Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973), I will argue that Dante's *Commedia* is one of the key source texts that Pynchon draws on when constructing his novel. The manner in which Pynchon incorporates thematic structures from Dante's *Commedia* to provide the building blocks for his own text, is distinctly reminiscent of the kind of literary symbiosis practised by Joyce, that which Eliot called the 'mythical method'. This act of cultural assemblage on Pynchon's part is not simply recourse to postmodern pastiche however, but is intended to set the stage for a highly charged complex parody. Whereas Joyce used this mythmaking technique on a grand scale, Pynchon chooses to work in miniature and restricts his deployment of the 'mythical method', to a single episode of *Gravity's Rainbow*. While Joyce looked to Homer for inspiration, Pynchon instead chooses Dante Alighieri's *Commedia* to provide a structural and thematic model for arguably the most controversial and infamous episode in *GR*, where Brigadier Pudding meets his dominatrix Katje Borgesius. The names of Joyce and Pynchon are frequently uttered in the same breath and comparisons between *Ulysses* and *Gravity's Rainbow* are commonplace. As yet however, there has been no major comparative study of the two novels and the degree to which Pynchon may have been influenced by Joyce. Here, I will argue that Dante and Joyce may be key figures in understanding the fictional world in which Pudding and Katje move and the nature of *Gravity's Rainbow* itself.

The identification of this Dantesque parody and the author's engagement in doublecoding presents the reader with a number of unique interpretive problems, and suggests that Pynchon's use of language is far more playful and complex than appears at first sight. Like Joyce and Pound, Pynchon's language is "charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree." This close comparative reading also underlines the degree to which Pynchon draws on and is influenced by canonical transatlantic literatures and their translations by leading scholars.

In the thirty-four years since *Gravity's Rainbow's* publication, the extent to which Pynchon draws on Dante's metaphysical poem has yet to be acknowledged. One of the possible reasons for this oversight, is the reluctance of critics and readers to pursue the various metafictional signposts that are littered throughout Pynchon's text. Here, I will suggest that *Gravity's Rainbow* should not merely be considered as a highly complex historical novel, which takes the immediate aftermath of World War II and V-2 rockets as its central themes. The novel should also be viewed in terms of the historical period (1960s/1970s) in which it was written; when many writers were actively inventing new forms and modes of narration through metafiction, that took writing and the act of creation as their subject. This paper will identify and explore Pynchon's deployment of the mythical method as an important

metafictional technique, and consider the ramifications that this has for the act of reading and for the reader's reception of the text.

The notion that a thinly veiled sacred parody lies at the heart of the Pudding and Katje episode is extremely significant when one considers that this passage is rumoured to have been responsible for Pynchon being denied the Pulitzer Prize when the novel was first published, as certain members of the Board considered the episode, to be "turgid", "obscene" and "unreadable". Not only will this reading demonstrate Pynchon's debt to Dante and Joyce, it will also shed light on the inherent artistry and complexity underpinning Pynchon's craft, and in so doing, question the actions of the Pulitzer Board in 1974.

Clément Lévy (Université Jean Monnet Saint-Etienne): "As Far as Pynchon 'Loves Cameras'"

While Thomas Pynchon is famous for eluding photographers and journalists, nearly all of his works allude to photography. Both *Gravity's Rainbow* and *Against the Day* use the sub-ject of photography significantly as a theme but also as a metaphor.

Recent research on photography, such as the studies done by Phillip Gochenour and Jes-sica Durgan, have produced interesting results. Furthermore the current work done on *Against the Day* in Tim Ware's wiki and on the Pynchon List promises to be fruitful.

But with the new improvements in digital technologies, references to sensitive films used as negatives to store and then reproduce pictures took another meaning. Eventhough an old methods of recording images, it turned into a retro fetish. Old German cameras abound in Pynchon's novels, and this requires further investigation: is Thomas Pynchon a Leica enthusiast? And yet, the author's interest for technology and culture encompasses both Daguerreotypes and cable news-networks (especially in *Vineland*). He seems to have a real interest for the becoming of photography in a time when truth is no longer believed to be frameable and captured on film as fixed testimonies revealed on photographic paper, but rather on streams of moving pictures watched on screens and saved on servers.

Our study will thus deal with picture and media in Pynchon's novels but also with the strange aura of photographic picture that Roland Barthes helped to define (*Camera Luci-da*, 1980) and which seems to be now fading out. We aim to discuss the role played in Pynchon's narrative by optical instrument in general, and cameras of course, but also by observation, be it the astronomers' gaze to the stars or the intense look of a Women's Auxiliary Air Force scrutinizing reconnaissance photographs in World War II Great Britain. We shall also study the dancing movement (as Henri Cartier-Bresson put it) of the photo-grapher or film-maker, and the way pictures are whizzed across the world and disappear from our screens as soon as they are displayed. This connection between image-shooters and viewers has to be conceived in terms of fear and desire. Works by Paul Virilio, Jean Baudrillard, and Gilles Deleuze will help us to find a way between a social and political conception of picture, and its representation in Pynchon's fictional works.

"Realism, Surrealism, and Awe: The Artistic Expression of Thomas Pynchon and Neo Rauch" By Charlie Wesley, PhD candidate, Binghamton University

On November 21st, 2006 Thomas Pynchon's newest text, *Against the Day*, was released in the United States. Exactly six months later, on May 21st of 2007, the German painter Neo Rauch opened an exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City entitled *para*. This paper will examine the artistic and thematic connections between Pynchon's text and Rauch's exhibition in order to question how realism is imagined by both artists, who share an indebtedness to surrealist themes in their works. To these ends, this

paper asks what artistic expression in images and text attempts to undertake in our current historical moment, and what “realism” actually constitutes for the 21st century.

Pynchon’s literature, inspired by a surrealist ethos, suggests a will *toward* realism as a result of carefully chosen - though disparate - themes, characters, and settings. *Against the Day*, which constantly switches between the real and the unreal, beauty and terror, and a myriad of other opposites, evokes *awe* in its readers, a word that today has been reduced to the banal colloquialism “awesome.” Pynchon, like Rauch, seeks to reinstate the contradictory sense of fear and beauty “awe” evokes through the work of his artistic expression.

Neo Rauch echoes Pynchon’s artistic project, stating, “our everyday life can be permeated with disparate constellations, so that the unreal can temporarily but quite clearly get the upper hand” (78). Assuming that fiction is a medium through which effects are produced on the reader by way of a relationship between the author, reader, and text, I am suggesting that the effects Pynchon produces with his prose evokes a vision of reality that privileges the complexity and sur-reality of lived experience. In other words, Pynchon’s prose, like Rauch’s brushstrokes, begin to blur the line between the real and the surreal.

Various connections within the works give the relationship between *Against The Day* and *para* a fantastic, even Pynchonesque quality. To illustrate this point, note that the viewing entitled *para* was, according to Rauch, a way of joyfully affirming possibility within the confines of an artistic pattern, much like Pynchon’s “surrealist ethos.” After all, what could be more evocative of Pynchon’s text than the piece from *para* entitled “Paranoia?”



Neo Rauch - Paranoia

Toon Staes (University of Antwerp): “‘When You Come to a Fork in the Road’ – Marcuse, *Gravity’s Rainbow* and *Against the Day*”

In an effort to establish a parallel between the intellectual subversion in *Gravity’s Rainbow* and that in *Against the Day*, this paper will draw on Herbert Marcuse’s critique of modern technocracy. Starting from the forks in the road, “tracks of departure to all manner of alternate Histories,” (Pynchon, *AtD* 682), I will exemplify how Pynchon goes beyond official, teleological history in an attempt to restore the flattened one-dimensional man to his full multidimensional autonomy. It may seem that the various plots of control and containment neatly frame Pynchon’s characters according to the demands of advanced industrial society, but “there’s always the chance those little folks in the pictures will choose different paths than the originals.” (Pynchon, *AtD* 1049)

Against the Day shares with *Gravity’s Rainbow* a skepticism towards the culture of social conformism and passivity installed by the rationalized use of language and technology. More than three decades after the publication of *Gravity’s Rainbow*, Thomas Pynchon starts his latest novel with the singling up of all lines: “unshaped freedom being rationalized into movement only in straight lines and at right angles and a progressive reduction of choices.” (Pynchon, *AtD* 10) The mediated truth that is imposed in the public domain through discourse closes all meaning down to the presupposed

meaning, “the closed white version of reality” as the anarchist Squalidozzi calls it in *Gravity’s Rainbow* (Pynchon, *GR* 264). Since the corporate structures – Tyrone Slothrop’s “They,” Scarsdale Vibe’s “we” – appear to be insurmountable, effective dissent is neutralized, and there seems to be no other option than to join the one-dimensional synthesis of opinions. In the words of the political philosopher Herbert Marcuse, modern technocracy generates the “Happy Consciousness [,] the belief that the real is rational and that the system delivers the goods.” (Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* 84)

Dissent is co-opted, repressive tolerance bars any real change. The result is an impression of technological determinism: the system’s configuration is exactly how it is meant to be. As Scarsdale Vibe puts it: “money will beget money ... It is simple, it is inevitable, it has begun.” (Pynchon, *AtD* 1001) It is this impression of determinism that further imprisons the participants in the system: progress is always in favor of the established power structures. Instead of diversity we get sterility. Instead of autonomous individuals we get one-dimensional characters framed in the structures favoring death.

Both *Gravity’s Rainbow* and *Against the Day* point to the necessary incompleteness of any final explanation, but it can be argued that Marcuse’s claim that advanced industrial society bars authentic liberty resonates in Pynchon’s novels. What is more, it is exactly the insight into this necessary incompleteness that still allows for certain possibilities: “progress in freedom demands progress in the consciousness of freedom.” (Marcuse, *Repressive Tolerance* 12) What Marcuse refers to is the possibility of intellectual subversion, the effort to go against the established train of thought and find the forks in the road that step outside teleological history. A well-known example from *Gravity’s Rainbow* would be Slothrop’s evolution through the Zone, which can be seen as a liberation from a fixed one-dimensional identity into the free range of possibilities of the multidimensional man. Similarly, in *Against the Day* we get a host of characters trying to restore their autonomy and find the tracks of departure, the “denial of inevitability, an opening out from the point of embarkation, beginning the moment all lines are singled up, ... an expanding of possibility.” (Pynchon, *AtD* 821)

William Clarke (University of Warwick): “‘It’s My Job, I can’t Back Out’: The ‘House’ and coercive property relations in Pynchon’s *Vineland*”

This paper takes as its frame the work of political historian Ellen Meiksins Wood, who maintains that most attempts to understand the history of capitalism have tended also to naturalize it, imputing a transhistorical, latent tendency (with Adam Smith) to ‘truck, barter and exchange’ onto the whole of human history. This in turn results in an often unintentional mis-comprehension of *modern* capitalism, as the liberation of a natural tendency (a tendency towards free exchange) from the unnatural constraints that tradition or outworn political systems have placed upon it. Wood posits, against such a vision of Capitalism as latent *opportunity*, a ‘Culture of Improvement’ that arose from coercive medieval English property relations. This ‘pristine culture of capitalism’ never managed to shake the inner contradictions of its uniquely English theory of property (which impelled landlords and tenants alike to continually increase the rate of profit), even as it was exported throughout Europe and the British Empire, and subsequently defined the trajectory of our contemporary, ‘globalized’ capitalist expansion. Today, as Wood’s latest book *Empire of Capital* (2003) shows, that coercive Culture of Improvement is caught in a most peculiarly capitalist bind, as the purely economic ‘sphere’ both struggles to liberate itself from the boundaries of the nation state even as it is dependent upon the nation state to provide the extra-economic force required to enforce and to reproduce the ‘laws’ (imperatives) of the market.

Vineland, I would maintain, easily lends itself to just such a reading of property relations, for there is always such a coercive ‘Culture of Improvement’ which underlies every seemingly free commercial opportunity in the novel. *Vineland* is bookended by the threat of extra-economic ‘persuasion’ – by Zoyd’s compulsory transfenestration on the one hand and by the sudden cancellation of Brock Vond and his C.A.M.P. anti-marijuana crusade on the other. The tentacles of the shadowy ‘They’ who control the ‘House’ that Vond can only dream of entering are cast across the globe: they figure the ‘insurance’ scam that could have kept the cash-starved Kahuna Airlines from having to

endure mid-air paramilitary boardings, and are obviously connected both to the 'Chipco incident' . They are also the key to the entire subplot involving the FBI, the 'YakMaf grapevine' and DL's tale of indentured servitude (first to Sensei, then to Ralph Wayvone and finally to Takeshi Fumimota and his 'demented karmology hustle').

Against this larger story of international commerce and coercion, I want to examine the specific moments of local anxiety that surface in various characters' relations to property: in each case, behind the veil of opportunity lies hidden coercion. I will begin with Isaiah Two Four and his drive to find seed money for his 'chain of family violence centers' , which leads him first to attempt to haggle with an anxious Zoyd for a co-signature on a loan. When that falls through, he and his band are compelled to perform at the bizarrely appointed estate of Ralph Wayvone and his son Ralph Jr, whose family business is now a 'wholly owned subsidiary' . I then explicitly connect Ralph and DL's relationship to the business concerns of the order of Ninja nuns to which DL belongs, as well as to her and Takeshi's offices in the heart of a junk-bond fuelled real estate renaissance. I then end by examining how the 'Noir Center', the Casino and offices of Ernie Triggerman are all interpenetrated by vectors of coercion, as Prairie and Ché reminisce about the pre- 'mean and lean times' at the mall, as Hector and Frenesi conduct a two-step negotiation over Frenesi's appearance in Hector's film, and as Hector exacts his tithe from the 'scared straight' Hollywood producers Triggerman and Sid Liftoff, whose own offices undergo a complete metamorphosis when the Feds pull into town.

Ali Chetwynd (Sofia, Bulgaria): "Pynchon's Vocabulary of Curves: Circular Motion Metaphors Beyond the Rocket Arch"

Molly Hite in 'Ideas of Order in the Novels of Thomas Pynchon' posits that Pynchon's technique relies upon the juxtaposition of multiple versions of 'order' rather than allowing one to hold a privileged centre place. Great attention has been paid to elucidating some of the architectonic metaphors in Pynchon, particularly his recurrent shapes the V-arrow and the rocket-parabola rainbow. However, there are other recurrent shapes, structures and geometries in Pynchon, both in local images and architectonic structure. This paper offers an elucidation of some of Pynchon's other metaphors of circular motion, aiming to commence definitions for what Gloaming in Gravity's Rainbow calls 'a Vocabulary of Curves.'

The well-discussed 'rocket curve' has been elucidated primarily as a symbol of symmetry, binary cause and effect. In fact, a rocket's arch over the earth is not a symmetrical 'rainbow' shape, but the widest arc of a spiral, a centripetal movement that has no symmetry. Any once-propelled object subject to gravity above a globe will describe a non-symmetrical centripetal orbit, drawn not back 'down to earth' but toward the central gravitational point of the globe. The characters through whom the vision of the arc as a model of symmetry is elaborated are those like Katje or Pointsman whose worldview is already fundamentally teleological and based in cause-effect. This is only one interpretation among many, but has generally been seen as encompassing. The real Rainbow's physical properties as a full circle of light, only half of which can be perceived, relates to the ideas of futility and entropy encapsulated in Pynchon's vision of closed circles, as discussed by Hite and Edward Mendelson. Slothrop's recurrent vision of rainbows as 'cocks into the earth' is shown to be fallaciously teleological. Slade suggests that 'Slothrop's destiny is to escape the cycle,' and the paper examines the link between Slothrop's fall into a centripetal orbit of the rocket and the rocket's own centripetal arc, both unsurvivalably in Slade's words 'approaching the final zero in an asymptotic curve.'

Pynchon's work is shown to abound with local and scientifically specific instances of vortical or spiral phenomena, shapes described by centripetal approach. From the whirlpool and water-spout that dictate the ending of V, to the arctic polar vortex alluded to in *Against The Day*, Pynchon frequently brings specific real-world examples of vortical phenomena into his plots. The significance of these, and of specific uses of the word 'vortex', is shown to associate them with the same linking of sex and death as has generally been attributed to the symmetrical rocket-parabola image. However, as with a

4-dimensional model of a vortex path, like that described by Charles Hinton, Pynchon's vortices represent a way in and a way out. Further instances of vortical images and the word 'vortex' are shown to associate with clearing and freedom of choice.

Images of centripetality, centrifugality, concentricity and orbit, such as are shown to abound in Pynchon, all rely on the existence of a gravitational centre. Mendelson's popularised notion of Pynchon as a writer of de-centred narratives is questioned, and Hite's idea that 'absent centre functions as a structural trope motivating the radical pluralism of these worlds' is shown to apply equally to the existence of a present but unknowable centre. The phrase 'holy-center-approaching' from Gravity's Rainbow is examined in Physical terms; the architectonic example of Slothrop's progress is recapitulated; he approaches the logical hermeneutic 'centre' of the novel – the rocket – but it is the gravitational and hermeneutic force of this 'centre' which dissolves his character. We are not shown that there is no hermeneutic centre to the world of Pynchon, only that it cannot be perceived, understood and survived at once, or by one character.

Critical uses of phrases like 'centripetal' or 'orbiting' to describe Pynchon's style or protagonists are examined, especially Mendelson's idea that 'Romantic Modernism' and Slothrop are subject to the same futile mental 'centripetality.' The modern and postmodern implications of Pynchon's structural metaphors, the 'centredness' of Pynchon's work, are considered in the context of Gadamer's hermeneutic philosophy, and Lyotard's definitions of postmodernity. Pynchon is shown not so much incredulous towards meta-narratives as unwilling to privilege one above another. The well-explicated idea of the cause-effect rocket arc and the idea proposed in this paper of a vortical structure to GR are shown not to be mutually exclusive, and images that correspond to both are taken from *Against the Day*.

Georgios Maragos (Panteion University, Athens): "A Medium no Longer: How Communication and Information Become Objectives in Thomas Pynchon's Works"

Media and networks of communication are abundant in Thomas Pynchon's works and are, as many critics have underlined, of prime importance in the understanding of the American author's universe. In fact, they are so important that they cease being means to an end and become the goal itself. "There's a real conversion factor between information and lives", as is stated in Gravity's Rainbow; a side in a war does not gain advantage by acquiring information; information is why wars are happening in the first place.

There is a mystical, almost religious essence in this. Information is considered equal to one's country or god or profit, all of which have been considered causes of war outside Pynchon's universe. And, of course, the media (and by media here I don't only mean mass media), which carry this information, are found synecdochically to possess religious characteristics as well. One should not think, however, that Thomas Pynchon is an advocate of a new religion of the media. Harold Bloom calls him a Cabbalist, but that corresponds to the author's style, the structure of his novels and his erudition; his critique is highly political, in the manner of Walter Benjamin who, in one of his earlier texts, tried to read capitalism as a religion.

This line of argument would perhaps not be possible (or, at least, it would be really difficult to deduce) if *Against the Day* was not published. In this presentation, I intend to describe in a short and comprehensive way, the various forms that media acquire within Pynchon's work, until they escalate to their mystical qualities in *Against the Day* (qualities that can also be found in previous works, but not as strong). Communications through the gas pipes, the explanation of the Tunguska event as an effort to communication, the magical machine that uses a photograph to show the past, present and future of a person, the mirrors that distort maps that need specific mirrors to be read, the mysterious Tesla machine that delivers messages from unknown sources, are all evidence towards the spiritual character of

media, information and communication. On the other hand, magic in Pynchon has a basis and that is science and technology. Disregarding contemporary technical difficulties Pynchon allows the machines and the scientists to perform (secular) miracles, in a way quite different than science fiction. However, both of them point towards one thing: communication. Pynchon gives precedence to that; science and technology, in many cases, are not where Pynchon stops, but seem to exist in order to serve the distribution of information.

Media, on a first level, are described as factors of the shaping of consciousness in modern day era. Pop culture (television, music etc.) is a prime agent of that and is brilliantly described inside Pynchon's novels. On a second level, there is, of course, control. Media become not only the way for an invisible authority ("They") to control people, but also an aspect of them. On the third level, we encounter the mystical side of media. They will fill the seat of an absent god, a god that modernity can no longer tolerate. Media and those who control them (they are one and the same thing, like the Trinity or Allah and the Koran) become omniscient and omnipotent and control works in a subtler, but more powerful way.

As a primarily media theorist and then a literary theorist, I will base the presentation on Marshall McLuhan and Friedrich Kittler (without disregarding literary and social theorists, who have written on the subject of media) and will try to decipher how Thomas Pynchon uses these religious aspects of media as criticism against and towards today's interconnected society.

Francisco Collado-Rodríguez (Universidad de Zaragoza): "Science, Intertextuality, and the Role of V. in Pynchon's *Against the Day* (or the Literary Effects of Trauma in Contemporary America)"

"In all chaos there is a cosmos, in all disorder a secret order, in all caprice a fixed law, for everything that works is grounded on its opposite."
Carl Jung, "The Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious"

In my book *El orden del caos: Literatura, política y posthumanidad en la narrativa de Thomas Pynchon* (2004), I engaged the task of finding an underlying order behind the apparent chaos of Pynchon's literary universe. If the (paranoiac) quest for elusive meaning is a central motif in most of Pynchon's works, my main thesis was that Pynchon's fiction presents a chaotic universe that hides an underpinning order. In my study, I approached Pynchon from the fields of modernist anthropology and the new science, using a diversity of critical perspectives that started in a narratological reading of the texts. To substantiate my thesis, I analyzed the pervading presence of four basic aspects in Pynchon's oeuvre:

- 1- The author's debt to literary history, as it is made present in his use of intertextuality and parody.
- 2- His textualization of scientific discourse.
- 3- The resulting literary construction of a complex, (post)human universe where the past is nostalgically looked upon while the present is simultaneously subverted.
- 4- His pervasive and cabalistic use of alphabetic letters as burlesque symbols of his own discursive proclivity.

I ended up placing Pynchon's novels in parodic relation to a wide spectrum, namely the rationalistic project of the Western Enlightenment, together with the modernist epistemological nightmare, and his present postmodern scenario. However, what stimulated the central motif in my analysis of Pynchon's narrative was the double play of "energy" and "entropy," both in the discourses of the different historical periods Pynchon's books address, and in the writer's literary project itself. The scientific and cultural context of the late 19th century witnessed the advent of the notion of entropy. Originated in the field of thermodynamics, this second law somehow came to contradict the first law of thermodynamics, which states that energy cannot be created nor destroyed. In contrast, the second law proposed that there is a steady loss of energy, or rather, that the amount of energy available

for reuse in closed systems gradually diminishes. As far as the available energy in the universe is continuously decreasing under the advance of entropy, entropic theories are inevitably pessimistic, predicting extinction and disorder. By the beginning of the 20th century, both energy and entropy were as much a part of the language of the physical sciences as of the human sciences. If, as suggested by historian Henry Adams, energy moves religious and spiritual systems (from Venus to Virgin), and becomes—in the form of dynamos or radium—the creator (and destroyer) of the modern world, in his works Pynchon extends the role of energy to other systems. They can be informational (signal and noise), cabalistic (in between magic and science), literary (parody and intertextuality), or political (central or marginal). In this interpretation, however, entropy poses a constant threat to those systems; it represents the call of disorder, loss, disjunction, and chaos. If Adams had already dramatized in his writings the search for energy (whether as Virgin or Dynamo) in a universe threatened by entropy, in the second half of the twentieth century Thomas Pynchon retakes the historian's quest in a parodic, utterly playful and postmodern vein with the thereabouts of energy systematically represented by the letter "V." Such search becomes Pynchon's pervasive literary motif all along his works until *Against the Day*. Correspondingly, I propose to analyze Pynchon's latest novel in relation to the four basic aspects above mentioned. I will pay special attention to his use of intratextual devices that call the attentive reader's attention to the writer's previous works and to his peculiar use of cabalistic symbolism, where "V" appears again as the reiterative letter of a complex quest for knowledge that this time establishes evident connections with early American terrorism, a notion that stimulates an ethical reflection on the present traumatic situation of the United States.

Colin A. Clarke (SUNY-Suffolk Community College): "Exploding the Western: Pynchon, Wister, and Cooper"

In *Mason & Dixon*, Pynchon's American frontier is a place abuzz with diversity, including French, German, Swedish, and British immigrants, in addition to a wide variety of Native American Indian tribes, Africans both free and enslaved, Jesuit missionaries, Chinese agents, and even a were-beaver. The frontier is alive with the sounds, smells, and tastes of these cultures, all colliding, mingling, and emerging into a conglomerate that strikes one as distinctly American. There is a sense of hybridity and democracy that permeates the American frontier section of the novel that suggests the ripening fruit of the great American experiment. *Against the Day*, which begins roughly one hundred years after the close of *Mason & Dixon*, effectively undermines, in an accurate but not entirely unique way, the frontier optimism to be found in the earlier novel. *Against the Day*, in fact, begins as the American frontier was officially considered closed, by the 1890 census and the proclamations of Frederick Jackson Turner. In its closing, we see what little remains of the hybridity and dialogism which was so distinctive in the frontier in *Mason & Dixon*. The frontier in *Against the Day*, which is largely the mining and saloon towns of Colorado and Utah, retains much of the mystery and violence that could be found on the colonial American frontier in *Mason & Dixon*, but it lacks the diversity, from the languages spoken to the food consumed. In this development, Pynchon is following the arc of the frontier as it can be traced in some of the most influential frontier works of the previous centuries. James Fenimore Cooper, in his Leatherstocking novels, established the vanishing frontier through his protagonist Natty Bumppo, who had as many names in that liminal and contested space between "savage" nature and civilization as there were languages spoken there, from his given Christian name to his various nicknames, including but not limited to Hawk-eye, Pathfinder, and La Longue Carabine. Cooper describes, and I think laments, the passing of the diversity of the frontier most dramatically in *The Last of the Mohicans*, in which Bumppo has mastered the line between "savage" and civilized by knowing the languages and customs of those who walk it. However, as these languages collide in the novel, we see the essentially polyglossic nature of the frontier gradually being reduced. In the dramatic climax of the novel, the characters most associated with hybridity – the mixed-blood Cora and the title character, Uncas – die, while the homogeneous Alice and Heyward emerge as the future of the colonies. As the Leatherstocking novels follow Bumppo ever westward in search of the frontier life he cherishes, the readers recognize that he is a dying breed pursuing an imaginary line that is destined to vanish. In the novel often recognized as the first true Western novel, but which surely

draws a great deal from Cooper's work, Owen Wister's *The Virginian* boils the Western down to its most essential ingredients: the hero, now with only one name to Bumppo's many; the Eastern schoolmarm in need of both the hero's ear and his heart; and the villain, who dies in the classic Western showdown. Beyond the rare and only shadowy presence of Native American Indians, the frontier has been homogenized, and the young American hero must eventually look elsewhere for challenge and adventure. Like the Chums of Chance, he must go back east, or abroad.

In this paper, I will discuss how Pynchon, in *Mason & Dixon* and *Against the Day*, follows the same progressions of the frontier as Cooper and Wister. However, this paper will also demonstrate the very significant ways in which Pynchon departs from his forbears. Whereas the Western often focuses on the triumphs of the individual as hero, Pynchon's West, just after the official closing of the frontier, is dominated by corporations, who use the recognizable Western figures of the lawman (Lew Basnight), the vigilante (the Kieselguhr Kid), and the mercenary gunman (Deuce Kindred), for their own ends. Also, in a stark departure from the Western trope as established by Cooper and Wister (in which Bumppo and the Virginian were always, could only be, heroes, made villains only by bad men, and always redeemed), Pynchon's characters are not static in their roles; lawmen become vigilantes, hunters become prey, and none are able to withstand or even understand the forces on the frontier and far beyond it that seem to control their fates.

Luc Herman (University of Antwerp) and John Krafft (Miami University-Hamilton): "Race in Early Pynchon: Rewriting Sphere in V."

The typescript of *V.* at the Harry Ransom Center in Austin invites an analysis of Pynchon's early engagement with race. A comparison with the final version shows that Pynchon markedly reduced the character of the African American saxophone player, McClintic Sphere. It seems this change was induced by Pynchon's editor at J.B. Lippincott, Corlies Smith. When, on February 23, 1962, Smith finally reacts in a letter to the first version of *V.* he has received the preceding summer, the editor in fact issues a warning to the author with respect to the function of the black jazz musician in the novel.

Smith's third and "most major suggestion," as he calls it in the letter, is to cut Sphere, "because he strikes something of a false note in that he somehow leads the reader to believe that the Negro problem is going to become at least a side issue." Smith submits it is not Pynchon's intention to write a "Protest Novel," and so, to avoid that kind of reading, Sphere has to go. The editor is aware that the jazz player is involved in the "Paola-Ruby business," but he nevertheless advises Pynchon that Sphere "is not crucial in his actions upon the other characters" and that Paola Maijstral can "disappear for a while" from the plot.

In his reply of March 13, Pynchon first agrees that "Protest" is not his intention, but then defends the presence of Sphere because of his connection with Paola and his importance to the 1956 plot in general. So the character stays in. But comparing, for example, typescript chapter 23 with section IV of the published novel's chapter 10 shows that Pynchon did notably reduce the race angle and the "doctrinaire liberal" friendship between Sphere and a white New York character, Rooney Winsome, who is also "obsessed with Paola" (13 Mar. 1962). The passages Pynchon removed provide additional information about Sphere, and perhaps even complicate the widely held positive image of him based largely on his famous line "keep cool, but care" (*V.*, 366). Indeed, Sphere appears so streetwise in the typescript that the line might even be construed as ironic on his part rather than as the straightforward ethical suggestion it has most often been taken for. Using the author's juggling with Sphere so as to position ourselves with reference to already existing work on the subject of race in early Pynchon (Holton, Patell, Witzling, Weisenburger), we will attempt to contextualize Pynchon's racial stance in *V.* as a stage in between the romantic primitivism that seems to inform "Low-lands" and the ambiguity of "The Secret Integration."

Simon de Bourcier (University of East Anglia): “Travels in the Fourth Dimension in Thomas Pynchon’s *Against the Day*”

This paper examines the different narrative and figural uses to which Pynchon puts the idea of the Fourth Dimension in *Against the Day*. The Fourth Dimension represents many things in the novel: a means of explaining the magical and miraculous; a means of *accomplishing* the magical and miraculous; the dwelling place of spirits or angels; the direction in which alternate worlds and lives are separated from our own; and others. Above all ‘the Fourth Dimension’ is understood to mean time, although of this interpretation too there are a number of distinct inflections.

Examples of all these versions and interpretations of the Fourth Dimension can be found in the long tradition of writing on the subject, whether mathematical or metaphysical, speculative or wholly fictional. This paper compares Pynchon’s writing about the Fourth Dimension in *Against the Day* to some texts from the period spanned by the main narrative of the novel itself, from the 1880s until just after the First World War.

For Charles Howard Hinton and P. D. Ouspensky the three-dimensional world is the shadow of a higher, four-dimensional reality. The Fourth Dimension is the home of eerie ‘Watchers’, who may or may not be the dead, in H. G. Wells’s ‘The Plattner Story’, and ‘only a kind of space’ to be traversed in *The Time Machine*. Most importantly, however, for none of these writers does the Fourth Dimension have a single, fixed meaning. It bears, for each of them, the weight of a multitude of speculations. Pynchon’s appropriation of the idea reflects these multiple, shifting possibilities.

The action of *Against the Day* is set against the historical moment in which an idea that had a purely mathematical existence, and a life in speculative and fantastic literature, became part of the orthodox scientific understanding of the physical universe. In 1909, the same year in which Ouspensky published *Chetvertoe Izmerenie (The Fourth Dimension)*, Hermann Minkowski’s *Raum und Zeit (Space and Time)* first described the four-dimensional space-time continuum upon which Einstein built his General Theory of Relativity. Minkowski is a character in the fictional world of *Against the Day*, delivering a lecture at the Candlebrow time-travel conference attended by Merle Rideout and Roswell Bounce. Hinton, Wells and Ouspensky are all mentioned too (Pynchon anachronistically has Ouspensky’s *Fourth Dimension* in print several years early), as is Lenin’s attack on the idealist implications of four-dimensional thinking.

Such widely variant versions of the Fourth Dimension, and the texts with which they are associated, can be heard as distinct voices within Pynchon’s text, exhibited in the kind of dialogic relation described by Mikhail Bakhtin’s theory of heteroglossia. While this implies that the narrative maintains a degree of critical distance from the voices it appropriates, a dialogic structure also allows Pynchon to avail himself of the narrative opportunities presented by the Fourth Dimension. These include the spatialization of time, the manifestation of the immaterial, and the realisation of the abstract; for Pynchon, as for Wells, the Fourth Dimension provides a rationale for the magical manipulations of time and space by fiction itself.

Travel through the Fourth Dimension can be seen as a modern variant on the ancient mythological topos of the journey to the land of the dead, or as a metafictional step to one side of naturalistic narrative. The characters of *Against the Day* inhabit a moment of history at which such departures from the quotidian seem on the verge of acquiring a solid scientific justification as the Fourth Dimension enters the scientific mainstream. The fictionalising of the apparent impossibilities implied by the theories of mathematical physics is one of Pynchon’s narrative strategies for interrogating the relationship between descriptions of the world and lived experience, a relationship that is a major theme of all his novels.

By comparing Pynchon’s travels in the Fourth Dimension to those of Hinton, Wells, and others, this paper hopes to show that the narrative possibilities which the Fourth Dimension enables for Pynchon have recognisable shapes that can be seen in the texts he alludes to. However, he also cites them with an ironic distance that historicizes and satirises those texts even as he borrows from them.

Inger H. Dalsgaard (University of Aarhus): “Fast Forward/Rewind: Against the Direction of Time”

What may have seemed under the old dispensation like time wasted and unrecoverable is now perhaps not quite as simply structured.

Thomas Pynchon
“Nearer, My Couch, to Thee”

In his 1993 *NY Times Book Review* essay on the deadly sin of sloth and the fate of spiritual direction, Pynchon plays with the idea of playing with time. With the “timely invention” of the VCR, television time is no longer a regulated pace of forward-moving clock time but can be reshaped at will: “we may for now at least have found the illusion, the effect, of controlling, reversing, slowing, speeding and repeating time – even imagining we can escape it”. With the addition of a remote control the possibility of zapping means that viewers are no longer trapped in the play mode of just one channel either.

In his latest novel Thomas Pynchon introduces a new concept of time travel in his narrative arsenal of temporal distortions, reversals and dissections. *Against the Day* provides another technology of apparent time travel: Dr Zoot’s pre-owned time machine which creates a window between the Chums of Chance and the Trespassers and temporal relations which may be fast, slow, forward, reversed or even rewound. While the Chums of Chance themselves defy the normal pace of time in their super-circumnavigation of the tale, the many references to alternate histories, quaternion and quantum mechanical many-worlds theories suggest any number of vectors among which other characters may channel-hop.

This paper seeks to hit a pause button on the proliferation of temporal possibilities and hauntings in *Against the Day* by setting a cue point in “Nearer, My Couch, to Thee” and focusing on the promise and failure of technology to break the tyranny of time in those texts. The experience which the Chums of Chance have with the time machine, their encounter with Trespassers, and their temporary grounding at Candlebrow U. allow me to consider the extent to which an interpretation of such events can be said to have been prefigured in Pynchon’s 1993 apologia for sloth, which outlined spiritual, temporal and technological directions in the past and future.

J. Paul Narkunas (City University of New York/John Jay College): “Time’s Fractured Arrows: Pynchon’s *Against the Day*, Ethnic Genocide, and the ‘Macedonian Question’”

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari describe an “apparatus of capture” as dynamic nodes of virtually infinite modulations of control that can transform from moment to moment, affected by the fluctuating variables immanent to the network of power relations. Pynchon’s *Against the Day* meticulously documents a complex apparatus of capture: Indeterminate vectors of possibility, including the imagination, the invisible, the unknown, space, time, *aether*, and even human collectivities themselves (Anarchists, Labor dissenters, revolutionaries, nationalists, populists, scientists, intelligence agencies, and mystics) converge and become rationalized, conducted, and domesticated within nations by consolidating forces of capital and state. Differences and potentialities become entombed by citizen-subjects, smoothing over still contested national frameworks. The looming “capitalist/Christer gridwork” (1083) covering the western United States, or Scarsdale Vibe’s transnational empire of capital, even reconfigure human and non-human intelligence (Tesla, Kit Traverse, Vanderjuice) as merely capital in reserve over which both centralizing forces of governance (states) and capital compete. For this reason, I think *Against the Day* ends with the spectrum of human imagination and

invention as nodes within the apparatus of capture. Pynchon's later focus on the California film industry has film domesticating light, time, space, and even human subjectivity; film becomes the space of imagination and thought, irrespective of human agency.

Regardless of Pynchon's portrayal of the human imagination, *Against the Day* is also a genealogy of those moments of flux, of unrealized possibilities and potential convergences of force that may have offered an alternative world history that seems utterly inconceivable from our present hyper-controlled apparatus of capture. Using Pynchon's *Against the Day*, I will interrogate the following quandary: What does it mean for a nation to remain a question? *Against the Day* interestingly dramatizes various unresolved "national questions" at a historical moment when states are consolidating "people" within their territories into nations and citizenries that they govern in the Balkans, Central Asia (on the cusp of oil discovery), and the Americas (Mexico and the United States). As a result, "Anarchist bomber-dandy," Reef Traverse, and "vectorial mathematician," Yashmeen Halfcourt, and the Traverse-Halfcourt offspring, Ljubica, find themselves ensconced in the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), an effect of the unresolved "Macedonian Question." Pynchon portrays them running from Albanians, Turks, Serbs, Bulgarians, Macedonians, and Greeks who are all fighting over a fluctuating territory. "The Macedonian Question," one of the most vexing diplomatic issues of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, was an effect of the Treaties of San Stefano and Berlin (1878) after the Russo-Turkish war, and divided up the Balkan region in the wake of the Ottoman Empire's slow disintegration.¹ The division of human collectivities was less along ethnic, linguistic, religious, and national consciousness lines, than the balance of power ambitions of the British, Russian, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires. For this paper, I will discuss how Pynchon's use of "the Macedonian Question" and the attendant Balkan wars demonstrate how state forces regulate humans by fostering genocidal racial and ethnic struggles in order to maintain their power. Both Christian and Muslim empires encouraged nationalist and religious differences and cultivated internecine struggles between peoples as long as they did not challenge the respective empire's dominion. In the process, unresolved national questions remained, but were reconfigured in Europe as the effect of systematic "Balkan irrationalities" (from being colonized by an Islamic empire), and a constructed myth of century's old ethnic hatreds. The latter argument emerged repeatedly in the Euro-American press as the reasons for the Balkan Wars, WWI (Black Hand), WWII (Catholic Ustashe), and the genocides of the 1990's which took place while Pynchon was crafting *Against the Day*. Using Michel Foucault's reflections on state racism in *Society Must Be Defended* as a guide, I probe the "Macedonian question" with Pynchon to show how nations, states, and empires shift power from concepts of politics and religion to the biological ones of race and ethnicity as a mechanism of control. Juxtaposing the minor histories of revolutionary movements in early postcolonial contexts of Mexico and the United States with the emerging nationalist, religious and anarchist movements in the Balkans striving for postcolonialism from the Ottoman, British, Russian, and Austro-Hungarian empires allows Pynchon to offer a novel counternarrative on nation-states and collectivities in *Against the Day*. He also creates a fascinating historical convergence between the European power's 19th century "Eastern Question" and the United State's consolidation of capital and state on the western United States (the US's "Western Question"?).

Lovorka Gruic-Grmusa (University of Rijeka): "Intrigue, Revenge and Bloodshed: Mapping the Balkans in *Against the Day*"

¹ While Serbia gained national sovereignty in the region, other nations were restored to the umbrella of the Ottoman (Bulgaria, Macedonia) or Austro-Hungarian empires (Bosnia). Indeed, as a balance to Russia's ambitions in the region, including the taking of Constantinople, Britain and France negotiated a return of Thrace (present day southern Bulgaria) and present day Macedonia to the Ottomans. The Ottomans, at this moment in history, were heavily indebted to Britain, France, and the Austro-Hungarians, and therefore were easily controllable, while the Russians and their client state of Bulgaria were not. The Treaty of Berlin also marked the rapid fragmentation of the Ottoman empire's millet system paying homage to the Sultan, and galvanized nationalist independence movements amongst Christian Slavs in Serbia, Bulgaria, and the still unresolved territory of Macedonia within the Muslim empire.

Thomas Pynchon, America's famous recluse of prodigious literary fecundity, draws extensively on historical contexts, articulating his concerns about the bloody origins of modernity. *Against the Day* (2006) continues this tradition by focusing on the intricate and violent history of the Balkans: "The Balkan Peninsula is the boardinghouse dining-room of Europe... dangerously crowded, eternally hungry, toxic with mutual antagonism" (808). In the novel, the Balkans serve as a case study of the "toxic" clashes of different nationalities and ethnic groups that have deeply marked late twentieth and twenty-first century transnational politics, with the genocidal politics in Bosnia and Kosovo mirroring ethnic bloodshed in Rwanda, Iraq, and other sites across the globe.

Against the Day opens in 1893 Chicago, ventures in the wild West, Siberia, Iceland, and Central Asia, and focuses on South East Europe on the verge of World War I: "Against what looms in the twilight of the European future" (543), closing with a brief postwar epilogue. With this novel Pynchon tracks down the menacing and the dark (against the light of the day), the cloaked layers of history that "emerged one on another as from a mist, a distant country of painful complexity" (853). This secluded place "with centuries of blood as security" (853) might have the answers, Pynchon implies, to why ethnic and national conflicts seem to be so deeply ingrained in the last two centuries.

Balkan instabilities and wars have risen from religious, ethnic and political diversities of the peoples that both populated and conquered these places, making this region the poster child for a globalized society in which national and ethnic tensions run high. Paradoxically, the Balkan peninsula, notwithstanding all of its bloodshed, has anticipated twentieth century globalization in the sense that its inhabitants have lived on and off the same land, changing rulers and borders, sometimes constrained to migration, each authority leaving a mark, whether Turkish, Austro-Hungarian or Italian. The violence sometimes subsided, the masses worn down by centuries-long conflicts, sharing the same neighbourhood although practicing different religious and cultural heritages, forced into interdependence because of the social, political and cultural connectivity.

But peace never lasted for long in this region because "localized poor people" wanted independence from "globalized rich people." Vlado Clissan, one of Pynchon's characters and a leader of Croatian Uskoks, comments that: "The Venetians... hanged Uskoks, sank our ships, destroyed our fortress. Dispersed the rest of us, completing what the Turks had begun. Since then, four hundred years, we have been exiles in our own land" (819). The last part of the quotation underlines that turbulence in the Balkans has always been more than the growing gap between rich and poor, for it is a very diverse ethno-linguistic region, an area where Orthodox and Catholic Christianity collide, as well as a frontier between Islam and Christianity. No wonder that Clissan, the "spokesperson" of Croatian sentiments, felt exiled. (This proper name illustrates the linguistic complexities that abound in the text. Is Pynchon mocking the readers by spelling the Croatian last name—Klisan, from the town of Klis in Dalmatia—in the Italian way, or is he simply drawing attention to the consequences of the Venetian rule and the flattening of cultural diversities?)

Westerners mostly avoid and isolate these lands, gazing on them as if on a menacing zone that separates Europe's well-ordered civilization from the unruliness of the Orient. Nevertheless, the peninsula possesses a rare unspoiled and untamed beauty "as a charm against Balkan misfortune" (887). Although Pynchon is talking about a beautiful woman (Yashmeen) in this quotation, who during the intercourse (with Reef) transforms, he is hinting at the region and its invaders who "had arrived as... agent(s) of transfiguring—not so much because of as *against*... (their) dogged re-penetrations" (887). If interpreted in this way, the passage suggests that it is only natural that Yash and Reef named their child Ljubica (Croatian: Violet), for Freudian associations that accompany the word include rape, violence and unacceptable sexual desire (the couple practiced sex with a third man/woman), which Pynchon's narrator mockingly explains: "south Slavic politics as well as sex-practices... were widely believed to include irregularities of gender. 'Croatia-Slavonia!'" (704) This underlines the stereotypic belief that "Balkan mentality" implies a predilection for exaggeration and indecency, but it also shows that Pynchon has done an extensive historical research of the area.

The age-old conflicts in the Balkans contribute to the view that the inhabitants of this region have animosity somehow ingrained in their genes: "the whole history of those Balkan peoples is revenge, back and forth, families against families, and it never ends" (1003). It is questionable if the disputes will ever end for good and if the peninsula's dwellers will ever find their Shambhala—a place of peace, tranquility and happiness that the characters of Pynchon's novel try to reach. One thing is certain, most of the natives of this region have for too long lived "against the day," just so they can reach the next morning alive,

“most had difficulty remembering the earlier rise of heart, the sense of overture and possibility, and went back once again to seeking only orgasm, hallucination, stupor, sleep, to fetch them through the night and prepare them against the day” (805).

Samuel Thomas (Durham University): “Metković to Mostar: Pynchon and the Balkans”

“Best procedure when considering the Balkans,” instructed Renfrew, “is not to look at components singly — one begins to run about the room screaming after a while — but all together, everything in a single timeless snapshot, the way master chess players are said to regard the board” *Against the Day* (689).

The aims of this paper on Pynchon and the Balkans are threefold. Firstly, the paper will attempt to both map and analyze a distinct line of geo-political engagement within Pynchon’s work. Pynchon’s representation of the Balkans begins with the ending of ‘Under the Rose’, surfaces periodically through veiled references and song in *Gravity’s Rainbow* (“Who’d ever think-it, could start such a flap?” goes the ditty about the sanjak of Novi Pazar) and culminates in the sustained treatment of diplomacy, empire and violence in the region that forms such a significant part of *Against the Day*. The paper will therefore explore how the representation of the Balkans, as an imaginative, mythic and geographic space, can be used to deepen our understanding of Pynchon’s political sensibilities. By focusing on a range of examples from *Against the Day* (the Narodna Odbrana, the cult of Tesla, Sleepcoat’s musicology project and so on, as well as the broader portrait of the First Balkan War), the paper demonstrates how an uncompromisingly complex conception of macro- and micro-logical political power emerges from Pynchon’s Balkan visions. I will argue that Pynchon’s engagement with Balkan history and culture — with its fluctuating boundaries, its bloody nationalisms and unique ethnic and religious diversity — is not merely an example of the meta-fictional whimsy so often cited as a dominant characteristic of his work. Rather, Pynchon’s depiction of the Balkans can be read in terms of a non-dogmatic but committed “geo-political aesthetic” (to borrow Jameson’s phrase) that forces us to re-conceive the recording of European history, as well as entrenched notions of resistance, warfare and political violence. Besides consolidating many of Pynchon’s long-held preoccupations — strange cosmologies, fragile folk cultures and outlaw(ed) traditions, the Balkans function as a crucial point of orientation in Pynchon’s mapping of global conflict, where dangerous but also productive political faultlines are drawn and redrawn. Expanding on some of the arguments put forward in my book, *Pynchon and the Political*, the paper examines the role of the Balkans in his work with a view to making concrete distinctions between the “snarled-up politics” of corporate or imperial skullduggery and the “snarled-up politics” of legitimate struggle against a supervening hegemony.

Secondly, in a broader sense, the paper will attempt to show how the representation of conflict in the Balkan region (at “local” or “ground” level alongside the trans-national interests played out through the Hapsburgs, the Ottomans and the Balkan league) supports the claim that a quasi-Adornian conception of Enlightenment underpins Pynchon’s emerging “late style”. That is to say, a conception of Enlightenment which is deeply suspicious of the claims of pure instrumentality yet at the same time maintains a properly critical attitude to the folkloric, “blood and soil” communal structures offered as an alternative.

Lastly, the paper will also address the notion of “Balkanism”, a relative of Edward Said’s well-established theory of “Orientalism” developed by Slavoj Žižek. According to Žižek, the “carnival” mode so often used to represent elements of Balkan history (in the films of Emir Kusturica, for example) typifies the knotted co-ordinates of “postmodern racism”. Or, put another way, a form of racism in which an apparently anarchic and/or celebratory aesthetic operates in complicity with the “libidinal economy” of political violence — the “poetry”, as it were, of “ethnic cleansing”. In light of this, the paper will briefly consider the extent to which Pynchon may himself be guilty of such “Balkanism” and the various ways in which *Against the Day* resists and subverts this verdict. Ultimately, by exploring the importance of the Balkan region in Pynchon’s work, I intend to show

how *Against the Day*, for all its comic wonders and highjinks, represents an ever-intensifying awareness of the real “price” of capitalism, an ever-more unflinching and sophisticated engagement with violence, with legitimacy, and with the possibilities and pitfalls of resistance.

Fabienne Collignon (University of Glasgow): “A Vortex, Inside Light”

Against the Day begins with the ‘celebrated aeronautics club known as the Chums of Chance ascend[ing] briskly into the morning’ and beholding a sight, much like one relayed by a satellite, of the ‘features left behind on the ground having now dwindled to all but microscopic size’². Much of Pynchon’s latest text travels down, into mines and caves, towards the underground organisations of revolutionaries and ‘Wall Street operatives’ (319); its concentration is directed toward the excavation of concentric spheres, great hollow cavities at the centre of the earth, worlds within worlds. In many ways, then, *Against the Day* explores hidden dimensions, the curious twilight properties of luminous spaces, encompassing the poles as much as maps – plots that perpetrate, in Henri Lefebvre’s words, an ‘illusion of transparency’³ – and consequently provides a topography whose distinguishing traits feature orders beyond the immediately evident.

Such world-views, of alternative planes of existence, are frequently talked about in terms of light, of layered optical arrangements, and of double refractions; as such, the nature and properties of beams of light adopt sinister attributes, and reveal their conditions of duplicity, or even multiplicity. In the course of this long novel, light, invariably, is in the service of ‘military wisdom’ and other destructive orders, thus carrying a fundamental ideological, as well as tactically utilised, violence, directed against elements of dissent and hostile to darkness, which ‘[comes] for many to seem like a form of compassion’ (1008). Its circulation, thus, is no longer associated with beauty or utopia, as Claude Bragdon thinks in his 1918 publication *Architecture and Democracy*, but, instead, demonstrates its complicity in scenes of crime, in regimes of terror and wreckage. As light reveals its deceptive personality and arrangements, buried underneath its dazzling splendour, it is disclosed not as solid or honest, as it feigns, but as void, containing a hollow half-world within.

This paper seeks to draw parallels between the Hollow Earth theory, as elaborated on by Walter Kafton-Minkel, David Standish, John Cleves Symmes, and, of course, Thomas Pynchon, in *Against the Day*, *Mason & Dixon* and *V*, and relate it to the analyses of Walter Benjamin and Henri Lefebvre, both of whom record the secret trends of spatial organization, and linger around places that are on the verge of something else, whose outsides veil, according to Lefebvre, the existence of an ‘indefinite multitude of spaces, each one piled upon, or perhaps contained within, the next’ (8). The paper will then focus on the intimate associations between conceptions of obscured strata, of a void at the core of the world, and the temperament and properties of light, its diffusions, refractions and opacities, by utilizing the works of Anthony Vidler, Reyner Banham, Michel Foucault and Michel De Certeau.

Zofia Kolbuszewska (University of Lublin): “Heliography and Paramorphosis: Thomas Pynchon’s DeLIGHTful Counter-Narratives”

Not only is light, as many reviewers of *Against the Day* note, an important motif and theme in the novel but it also links disparate strands of narration in the novel. The title itself, if read as a translation of ‘contre-jour,’ French term referring to photographs taken when the camera is pointing directly toward the source of light, suggests light as a counterpoint to political and commercial enterprises, intellectual efforts and ethical endeavors. Therefore light can perhaps be regarded as emblematic of and the original (lost) source of counternarratives of enlightenment, purity, and innocence in the novel.

² Pynchon, Thomas. *Against the Day*. London: Jonathan Cape, 2006: 3.

³ Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith. Oxford & Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991: 28.

This paper will survey and investigate the uses to which light is put in Pynchon's novels from *V.* to *Against the Day*. The writer offers interesting, if at times—seemingly—contradictory, perceptions about the relationships of light and realities presented in his texts. This is so perhaps because these realities are complex and many-faceted. Pynchon relies on light as a source for metaphors (especially *Gravity's Rainbow*, *Mason & Dixon*, *Against the Day*), images and associations but also as a factor inherent in the texture of the world. In investigating usages to which the motif of light is put in Pynchon's novels, this paper will draw, among other things, on the phenomenology of photography propounded by Edouard Pontremoli and Roland Barthes's and Walter Benjamin's analyses of the cultural significance of the photograph, as well as touching on the historical vicissitudes of light as a philosophical and scientific concept.

An allusion to Hawthorne's use of daguerrotypes in *The House of the Seven Gables*, Pynchon's 'heliography' is an exploration of how light (al)chemically bound in photographs or film helps reveal ambiguity of characters, their psychological states, political leanings, ethical choices (*Vineland*), as well as ontological and spiritual status (*Gravity's Rainbow*, *Vineland*). This is so because in permeating surfaces light in Pynchon's texts appears to reveal the unattainable beyond darkly rather than unequivocally. Pynchon also dramatizes attempts of powers that be to harness light to serve capitalism and military-industrial complex. However the writer also suggests a possibility of tapping into the liberating and spiritual power of light (see the Kirghiz Light in *Gravity's Rainbow*), whose double refraction facilitates a subjunctive reconfiguration of the corrupt world's spiritual double in the process of 'paramorphosis' (*Against the Day*). In doing so Pynchon seems to forge an arching trajectory (a rainbow?) linking pre-modern image of the world as a continuum where the macrocosm is reflected in the microcosm—and studied by such suppressed dark doubles of contemporary sciences as alchemy and astrology—with a fragmented image of reality envisioned by contemporary science thus creating a heterotopic space.

Varying degrees of light's purity (non-artificiality), appearing in material and historically contingent reality, mark the characters' (including Byrone the Bulb !) bearings on their quest for enlightenment attainable perhaps only in explosive (anarchist?) flashes of Walter Benjamin's 'Jetztzeit.'

Jessica Lawson (University of Iowa): “The Real and Only Fucking Is Done on Paper’: Penetrative Readings and Pynchon’s Sexual Text”

Gravity's Rainbow is an exercise in interpretive paranoia, both for the characters as they attempt to read their world, and for the reader of the text presenting that world. Like the characters within this novel, its reader has enough information to deduce the presence of a code, but is waylaid in the attempt to decipher by snares placed in the message. More broadly, these characters also present the reader with a myriad of available methods of textual engagement with which to negotiate the path through the blast sites of the story. These methods are not even relegated to the intellectual, but rather, they cross-pollinate with other, physical and visceral approaches, putting a paranoid twist on the text's Barthesian pleasures.

In this paper, I will argue that *Gravity's Rainbow* compares, conflates and complicates literary intercourse with sexual intercourse, making writing and reading inherently sexual practices. Readers in and of the novel work to gain access, to find points of entrance, to probe, to penetrate, to occupy some position other than passive reception. Pirate Prentice creates one template for sexualized reading practice, as he engages with two documents enclosed in his rocket-delivered mail. Using the erotic line drawing from one of these documents, he fantasizes and reaches orgasm, spreading his semen on the second document to decode a chemically embedded message. In other words, Pirate is presented with a text, which he imaginatively engages, giving something of himself to the page in the process, all of which reveals another, hidden text. Pirate is an attentive close reader, who makes the text yield legible meaning through a sexualized version of conventional interpretive practices. Legibility and the lack thereof are also central concerns for the person and penis of Tyrone Slothrop. He both encodes his sexual practices on a map of London and attempts to decode his lovers, he both wishes to encode his name upon the falling and phallic rockets and can't ever quite decode the mysterious behavior of

“The White Visitation,” whose scientists are themselves trying to decode the connection between Slothrop’s erections and rocketry.

Moving from the precedents of sexual reading set early in the novel, I will examine different and particularized approaches to the erotic, which are complemented by equally specific practices of inscription and interpretation. Pointsman’s pedophilia, his desire to inscribe children with “new words of himself,” creates sexual texts that are assumed passive and without audience, waste papers that corner Pynchon’s readers themselves with an extended second person address. Equally particular are the racially charged battles for cultural reinscription that accompany several episodes of anal sex, from Slothrop’s toilet fantasy to Blicero and Enzian’s sexual translations. Slothrop and Greta embody their source text in a temporally fractured conflation of film with sadomasochism and role play. Finally, with this vocabulary of sexual and textual methodologies at hand, I will consider the interpenetrative possibilities for a reader’s engagement with *Gravity’s Rainbow* itself. Through a return to Pirate Prentice, I will argue that reading *Gravity’s Rainbow* is itself a kind of fantasy management. We are passive in that we yield our mental interior to the paranoia-inducing linguistic entrances engineered by Thomas Pynchon. Yet we bring these signs to life through the act of reading, engaging in a literary role play that positions us as subsidiary authors who manage the fantasy. We may work like the penetrating rocket, destroying language in our wake, or instead we may attempt to co-ordinate and couple with the book, fertilizing the text in the act of interpretation. *Gravity’s Rainbow* allows for interpenetration, a reading practice in which we both give and take, submit and manage, put out and produce.

Richard Hardack (University of California, Berkeley): “Say Something Once, Why Say It Again?: Eternal Return and Free Indirect Radicalism in *Against the Day*”

That this has all happened before, but cannot be compared to anything now, is a proviso that applies as much to *Against the Day* (*ATD*) as *Gravity’s Rainbow* (*GR*). *ATD* is structured around a series of short-term and long-range repetitions, where characters repeat specific phrases the narrator has used, and vice versa, and most events and speeches are echoed and doubled. What is most striking about the narrative style of *ATD*--aside from the narrator’s addresses to the reader and references to an already existing future--is its use of such repetitive phrasing every few pages.

Using Leo Bersani’s assessment of *style indirect libre* (or free indirect speech) in encyclopedic novels, and Dorrit Cohn’s theories of transparent (invisible?) minds and what she terms “psycho-narration,” I argue that Pynchon’s use of repetition in narration parallels, and helps stage, the repetition of characters and events in his novels. Through this use of radical free indirect discourse, consciousness itself is relentlessly ventriloquized or echoed, and located outside individual identity. Such echoes in *ATD*--from the adumbration of the Sentient Rocksters from *GR* to the Traverses from *Vineland*--suggests a paranoid fatalism some of his characters are seeking to evade (for example, when Slothrop disappears from “narrative” altogether).

In *ATD*, Pynchon’s form of repetitive narration plays with time, relativity, and refraction: for example, “questions arose as to the timing, the ‘simultaneousness’ of [the event in Siberia]. . . . something which had not quite happened yet . . . [and] only seemed to occur in the present, though really originating in the future. Was it . . . the general war . . . collapsed into a single event?” (797) In other words, the event is itself only an echo between past and future, of one (part of a) text and another: it exists only in the repetition. When characters across pages, chapters and even texts echo one another, it suggests a slow collapse into a single, or at least a connected, form of consciousness. Sometimes Pynchon’s use of this *style indirect libre* is obvious: the narrator tells us of a “maze of islands that so confounded the Argonauts even before history began”; on the very next page, Vlado tells Yashmeen of narratives “sometimes even older than the Argonaut’s expedition—before history.” (818-9) Here the character is either picking up the narrator’s voice directly or the narrator is directly adumbrating the character’s speech: as often happens in Pynchon, cause and effect, origin and echo, are unstable, and minor alterations seem to confirm repetition, not difference.

Some repetitions function as mere echoes: Dally mentions "That Krakatoa" (506) and fifty pages later Thorn emblematically invokes a time machine to go to Krakatoa. (554) Hunter says "It never does that" and a few pages later Humfried iterates, "Even in Russia this never occurs" (584,588); Gunther makes "repeated consultations with the Prussian dueling bible," and soon after Lew makes a "quick consultation in *Kelly's Suburban Dictionary*."(600,609) But many of these inexplicable "variations" also occur across space and time: Swome tells Kit, "you don't suffer from 'nerves', I hope," and in the next section Gunther asks Kit, "How could anyone's nerves here remain unafflicted?"(630, 633) It as if characters across sections, in different times and places, and even among texts are continuing conversations, and mere echoes turn into more sinister patterns.

Pynchon also uses what we might term "transitive narration" throughout *ATD*, where one characters thoughts (or the narrator's) are picked up by another: for instance, soon after Kit sees the despair in Fleetwood's face, and the narrator asks "what life could he expect as one more murderer with his money in Randshares" (791), Padzhitnoff asks Randolph, "What do you think of Rand shares?"(795) These repetitions are unsettling because they suggest that invisible forces, or hidden connections, control even our syntax. The narrator most of all engages in such temporal and figurative ventriloquism, becoming, appropriately for the novel, a time machine moving backward and forward, for example here staging multiple immersions in the "mobility": the narrator tells us that Theign finds that "immersion in the Italian mobility comforted him" (708); Cyprian soon after is similarly described as "not so much seeking exotic flirtation as to be absorbed somehow into a mobility"(715); and finally Reef is "soon absorbed into a mobility of hundreds of separate futures."(746)

Such phrasings partly enact Pynchon's conceit, in *ATD* and many of his works, that all events are somehow simultaneous, and part of the same grid or network, and even that all people might be the same person. Through these "strange links," everything began "instead happening simultaneously" on opposite sides of the world.(112) Each speech is made "'here . . . but also simultaneously'. . . [through] the mysterious shamanic power known as bilocation."(143) Through "the little-understood enigmata of the simultaneous . . . their gunners were abolishing time . . .," a conceit perfectly adapted to the artificial temporalities of narrative.(256)

The apotheosis of such psycho-narrative collapse occurs when we learn that "Renfrew and Werfner were one and the same person," a revelation that itself echoes many of Pynchon's earlier works: as occurs throughout the text, they "somehow had the paranormal power to be in *at least* two places at the same time . . . known in the Psychic field for about fifty years as 'bilocation.'"(685-86) (Pynchon frequently updates Melville's depiction of Moby Dick--which is repeatedly described as "ubiquitous" and spotted in more than one place at the same time--for example describing a tornado "which is indisputably *always the same tornado*," the whirlwind of eternal return.)(453).

These repetitions serve as inter- as well as intratextual echoes, situating *ATD* as the successor of *Lot 49* and *GR*. Mucho Maas in *Lot 49* (who also makes an appearance in *Vineland*) concludes that "Everybody who says the same words is **the same person**," (106) and in *Gravity's Rainbow* we are told, "you can't tell me the two 'I says' were both part of the same statement,' unless, 'that's asking me to be unreasonably,' unless it's really true that, 'credulous, and around *you* that's a form of,' that we're **the same person**, and that the whole exchange was ONE SINGLE THOUGHT yaaagggghhh . . ."(emphases mine: 739) In *ATD*, repetition causes geography itself to meet the same fate, the same reduction to one space and time, with the continents forming "one great mass . . . with Inner Asia at its heart."(242) Cast against that collapse into eternal return are what we might term free indirect radicals, or a variety of anarchists, who seek to find a geography or politics without repetition and return, outside the Zone, like the Argentinian Pampas existing only for a moment in *Gravity's Rainbow*.