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To:
Monica

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Abbreviations

Throughout this book, Thomas Pynchon's longer works are cited parenthetically in the text using the following abbreviations:

V	*V.* (1963)
CL	*The Crying of Lot 49* (1966)
GR	*Gravity's Rainbow* (1973)
SL	*Slow Learner* (1984)
VL	*Vineland* (1990)
MD	*Mason & Dixon* (1997)
AD	*Against the Day* (2006)
IV	*Inherent Vice* (2009)
BE	*Bleeding Edge* (2013)

Preface: It Never Rains in Pynchon's California

And you can't deny that living is easy
If you never look behind the scenery

Bad Religion, "Los Angeles is Burning"

In a 2007 essay significantly titled "The Ends of America, the Ends of Postmodernism," Rachel Adams poses a topical question: "If Los Angeles is the city that taught us how to be postmodern, might it also be the place where we begin to imagine what comes after?" (248). The answer given by Ali Dehdarirad in this book is a thundering yes. Not only has the Golden State been culturally associated with noir fiction, Hollywood, and the movies; with drugs, hippies, and the counterculture; more generically, with the "second act" that a writer like Francis Scott Fitzgerald felt was the right of every American life. Since the Eighties, California has been endlessly scrutinized, exploited, discussed, and taken as a paradigm of the postmodern condition by a number of influential scholars such as Fredric Jameson, Edward Soja, Mike Davis, Jean Baudrillard. The reader of *"From Faraway California"* will find in the following pages a comprehensive chart of their ideas and theories related to the topic.

As a matter of fact, many of these analyses were not meant as a compliment to the region: "There is nothing to match flying over Los Angeles," wrote Baudrillard in *America*, before adding that "only Hieronymus Bosch's hell can match this inferno effect" (1988, 51). Davis famously described L.A. as a "fortress" city and an "apocalypse theme park," because in the Nineties "nearly two million Southern Californians were directly touched by disaster-related death, injury, or damage to their homes and businesses" (1998, 7). Yet, according to

Davis, Southern California has always worked as a double paradigm, a "utopia into a utopia," where "prosperity becomes pathology" (Bonchino 83) as soon as its model of violence was exported worldwide by post-apocalyptic novels and films such as *Blade Runner*. This was already true in 1965, when a "native daughter" like Joan Didion managed to pinpoint California's paradoxical nature by describing it as "a place in which a boom mentality and a sense of Chekhovian loss meet in uneasy suspension" (Didion 172).

In his by now classic study on postmodernism, Jameson famously identified two buildings, the Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles and Frank Gehry's house in Santa Monica, as paradigmatic of postmodern hyperspace — or "Californianity" (115), a term he himself invented while surreptitiously (and in a true postmodern spirit) attributing it to Roland Barthes. Jameson was convinced that though the Bonaventure Hotel "reconstructs a nostalgic Southern California in aspic: orange trees, fountains, flowering vines, and clean air," it is just an illusory mirrored surface that aims at reflecting away "not only the misery of the larger city, but also its irrepressible vibrancy and quest for authenticity" (420). In other words, to quote Davis again, "the problem with postmodern theory is that it abolishes the side [of Los Angeles] that regards the real city" (Bonchino 93). One of the merits of Dehdarirad's study is that it deals with Pynchon's California by employing a wide interdisciplinary approach that tackles the "real-and-imagined" space of the region, taking its cue from Soja's theory of "Thirdspace" as well as from the fields of urban studies, geocriticism, and environmental studies.

Pynchon's California trilogy — *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966), *Vineland* (1990), and *Inherent Vice* (2009) — is the territory reconnoitered by Dehdarirad in his keen analysis of the author's "aesthetics of space," the *locus* where Pynchon's peculiar "Californianity" emerges as constitutive of his idiosyncratic version of postmodernism, as well as the battleground where such postmodernity is overcome. In fact, Pynchon's California is more than a mere background to the hundreds of characters and situations unfolding in each novel. It is a (mostly urban) social territory painstakingly rendered in every detail — both an accurate historical reconstruction and a reflection on the region's present history. The superimposition of past and present — Pynchon's masterful technique of representing the past in such a way as to open the perception of it up to the present's consciousness, in order to prevent it from being conclusive – finds in his California novels its most original application,

as the author's own trailer for *Inherent Vice* makes clear. Here Pynchon's voice impersonating Doc Sportello, the novel's protagonist, describes the 1970s highways leading from L.A. International Airport to the fictional Gordita Beach, and then immediately corrects himself:

> Well, no, actually this *used* to be this… – later on, all this is going to go high-rise, high rent, high intensity… right now, back in 1970, what it is is just high.

Pynchon's California is all here, in this paradoxical superimposition of past and present: "right now, back in 1970." "*From Faraway California"* shows how Pynchon's oeuvre can be also read as a detailed cartographic representation of the evolving West-Coast cityscape during the Sixties and up to the new millennium. In this regard, it is interesting to notice how one of the most relevant U.S. postmodernist writers anticipated some of the major developments in urban studies, such as the postmetropolitan transition and the phenomenon of gentrification.

But there is more. Pynchon's detailed, realistic, and sometimes anachronistic California is deconstructed by its very characters and, especially, its narrators, as soon as it is recreated in the novels. To quote just some examples, in *The Crying of Lot 49*, Fallopian makes fun of the inaccuracy of documentation and all the "bureaucratic morass" of what he calls "Californiana crap" (*CL* 59), while *Inherent Vice*'s narrator makes it clear that "by this point in California history, enough hippie metaphysics had oozed in among surfing folks that even the regulars […] began to shift their feet and look around for other things to do" (*IV* 84). Whether the narrator is describing the pot farms of Mendocino, Humboldt, and Trinity Counties (the so-called Emerald Triangle) that serve as a model for fictional Vineland, or the communities of Redondo and Manhattan Beach (where Pynchon supposedly lived for a period) that inspired Doc's Gordita Beach as well as Oedipa's San Narciso, we can be sure that the author and his characters are perfectly aware of what John Freeman calls the "schism – between what California represents in popular imagination and what it is, what it means to live there, to be from there" (xi).

In the second part of the book, Dehdarirad explores those mythic, oneiric territories that surface against the light of California's historical and socio-political dimension. Here we find Pynchon's overheated imagination at its best, when in *Inherent Vice* he describes the lost continent of Lemuria as "the Atlantis of the Pacific," whose survivors

"had settled on the coast of California" (*IV* 90), or when he describes the eerie machinations of the Trystero in *The Crying of Lot 49*, or the uncanny world of the Thanatoids in *Vineland*. In shaping such alternative spaces, Pynchon digs material out of California's mythical past, its legends and foundation myths. Nonetheless, each narrator metafictionally disrupts these fabrications, exposing their fictionality and ridiculing the characters — and the naive readers — who still trust them. Pynchon is painfully aware that the land in California was twice stolen from the populations who lived there, and that "this coast, this watershed, was sacred and magical," so he concocts "the Yurok people called *woge*, creatures like humans but smaller, who had been living here when the first humans came" (*VL* 163). Indeed, even if, to imperfectly quote Hammond's popular lyrics, it never rains in Pynchon's California, his West Coast "rang true, sure rang true" — at least, as true as a real-and-imagined historiographic metafictional representation of the utopian/dystopian hyperspace of postmodernism giving gradually way to whatever comes after it may actually be.

In the wake of Brian McHale's much-quoted account of Pynchon's novels as near-punctual milestones of different phases of postmodernism, scholars have tended to consider Pynchon's later works as belonging to a post-postmodernist aesthetics — or even to reread his whole career from a contemporary (and sometimes anachronistic) pre-post-postmodernist perspective. Rightly noting how Pynchon in *Bleeding Edge* has finally moved on by "making fun either of postmodernism or those who theorize it (or both)," Sascha Pöhlmann asks for "a revision of Pynchon's often canonically assumed postmodernism" (2019, 17-18) and identifies *Against the Day* (2006) as the novel that "transcends the aesthetics and cultural concerns of postmodernism with regard to its critique of the national and to its complex attitude toward representation, imagination, and reality" (24). Elsewhere I have argued that *Inherent Vice* marks Pynchon's personal "long goodbye" to the Californian hard-boiled fiction — "those good old-time L.A. murder mysteries" (*IV* 168-9) — as well as his attempt to "redeem" postmodernist fiction from its paranoid obsession (Simonetti 2012). In 2016, Tore Rye Andersen has included *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973) and *Mason & Dixon* (1997) among the novels that testify the emergence of Pynchon's global perspective, while in an insightful 2021 essay he has convincingly demonstrated how *Gravity's Rainbow* anticipated the con-

cepts of Anthropocene and planetarity well before such terms started to circulate in the academic jargon.

Equally far from "erasing" or dismissing Pynchon's postmodernism and from attempting to resuscitate stale critical paradigms, Dehdarirad's analysis of the California Trilogy takes its cue from classic theories of the postmodern sensibility as well as from the most recent developments in Pynchon studies to explore the author's truly "planetary" mapping of California in his fiction. The idea of planetarity, first introduced by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her 2003 study *Death of a Discipline*, was further developed in the 2015 anthology *The Planetary Turn: Relationality and Geoaesthetics in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Amy J. Elias and Christian Moraru. The concept can be described as a critical-theoretical mode that "attempts a move away from the totalizing paradigm of modern-age globalization – and thus a critique or critical 'completion' of globalism – as well as from the irony and hermeneutics of suspicion typical of what came to be known as postmodernism" (Elias and Moraru xi). In other words, "planetary humanities" can be perceived as a multidisciplinary field of study that views the planet Earth as a complex reality of people, culture, and the environment deeply embedded in an interplanetary system — a model that, at the dawn of the Anthropocene and in the light of the emergent decolonial/postcolonial divide, is able to acknowledge the oneness of the planet as an alternative "to the arrogance of the cartographic reading of world lit" (Spivak 73).

In this regard, Andersen is certainly right in positing Pynchon along with Cormac McCarthy as a precursor of this planetary dimension in U.S. contemporary fiction, though in his most recent essay he limits his analysis to *Against the Day* and *Gravity's Rainbow*. Interestingly enough, the plots of both these novels end in California. Thus, we find the "apocalyptic" version of 1960s California in *Gravity's Rainbow*, where a rocket crashes into a movie theater, and a "noir" version of 1920s California in *Against the Day*, where one of the characters, Lew Basnight, ends up as a private detective, operating in a Los Angeles "that made Chicago seem innocent as a playground" (*AD* 1046).

In fact, Pynchon's peculiar real-and-imagined California is already prefigured in his historical novels, especially in *Mason & Dixon*, where at the book's almost exact midpoint the narrator imagines that the two surveyors might not stop their journey West, but could go all the way until they reach the end of the continent:

> Suppose that Mason and Dixon and their Line cross Ohio after all, and continue West by the customary ten-minute increments,– each installment of the Story finding the Party advanc'd into yet another set of lives, another Difficulty to be resolv'd before it can move on again. […] The under-lying Condition of their Lives is quickly establish'd as the Need to keep, as others a permanent address, a perfect Latitude,– no fix'd place, rather a fix'd Motion,– Westering. (*MD* 682-3)

The Latin word for West, "occaso" (occident), derives from the verb "occidere," to fall, to set, to lie down. In this sense, to go West means always to approach the end, to die. As Nathanael West wrote in *The Day of the Locust*, that is also the place where a large part of society "had come to California to die" (3).

Nonetheless, immediately after the reflection on Mason and Dixon's hypothetical journey — that one is tempted to consider as the symbolic end of (Pynchon's) postmodernism as well as a fulfillment of Spengler's "downfall of the occident," — the narrator opens a new space for planetary possibilities:

> Were they to be taken together, themselves light and dark Sides of a single Planet, with America the Sun, an Observation Point on high may be chosen, from which they may be seen to pass across a Face serene and benevolent at that Distance, tho' from the Distance of the Planet, often, Winter as Summer, harsh and inimical. (*MD* 683)

Moving to a planetary perspective from which one could see both sides of the Earth (and California as well), the narrator takes advantage of the other meaning of the word "occaso" as the root for "occasion," implying possibility, opportunity, opening. Thus, it is implied that Mason and Dixon might continue "ever behind the sunset, safe till the next Territory to the West be seen and recorded, measur'd and tied in" (*MD* 334), until they could arrive in a city whose inhabitants worship an invisible God that, after the surveyors' scientific measurements and observations, "turns out to be the new Planet, which, a decade and a half later, will be known first as the Georgian, and then as Herschel, after its official discoverer, and more lately as Uranus" (*MD* 684). Thus, the protagonists' voyage "into the savage Vacancy ever before them" (*MD* 685), their journey towards *occaso* — the end of the continent that mirrors the author's journey to the (bleeding) edge of postmodernism — may bring about the discovery of another planet, that is, the opening of a new frontier.

As already seen, Dehdarirad is always careful to integrate such a cosmic perspective with an analysis of the concrete historical and social developments of "planet California" as it is lucidly represented and somehow foreshadowed in Pynchon's fiction. In his introduction to *Writing Los Angeles*, David L. Ulin has described the City of Angels as a "idiosyncratic hybrid of the urban and the elemental, a metropolis carved from the desert and ringed by ocean and mountains" (xvi). Truly enough, the present book offers analyses of other privileged spaces of Pynchon's California — namely, the desert and the beach, with all their political and social implications. Nonetheless, except for a few brief detours, the discourse remains focused on the urban environment, that in our twenty-first century has truly reached a "planetary" dimension. In fact, in 2014, Neil Brenner and Christian Schmid have introduced the concept of "planetary urbanization" as an emergent framework responding to a shift in perspective in the field of urban studies and aimed at finding a new conceptual lexicon to deal with a major reconfiguration of the social and spatial structures of urbanism. In their opinion,

> The urban can no longer be understood with reference to a particular "type" of settlement space, whether defined as a city, a city-region, a metropolis, a metropolitan region, a megalopolis, an edge city or otherwise. (Brenner and Schmid 162)

Pynchon had already foreseen such a development in 1966, when he let Oedipa understand that "San Narciso had no boundaries. No one knew yet how to draw them" (*CL* 123), and that "behind the hieroglyphic streets there would either be a transcendent meaning, or only the earth" (125), or maybe, the Earth. In the end, though Bernard Duyfhuizen has argued that all Pynchon's novels are in some degree "detective" novels, I believe we could reasonably state they are all "California" novels too. Be it the fatal grip of the all-pervasive Trystero, the maternal embrace of Vinland the Good, or the predatory Golden Fang haunting the Golden State, from California there is no escape, because California never ends.[1]

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[1] David Kipen, in his preface to *Dear Los Angeles. The City in Diaries and Letters 1542 to 2018*, states that "way back when, for a lark, Angelenos used to plant 'Now Entering Los Angeles City Limits' signs in faraway places" because in their mind "L.A. *had* no limits." Yet, since "a driver only sees an 'Entering Los Angeles' sign on the way

Originally conceived as a Ph.D. dissertation defended at Sapienza University in Rome, the present study was reworked and expanded during the Covid-19 pandemic, when its author had no possibility of traveling or doing research outside of Italy. However, as Didion knew all too well, even under normal conditions the trip to California "is one of those trips on which the destination flickers chimerically on the horizon, ever receding, ever diminishing" (131). For this reason, Dehdarirad's study proposes to adopt a "planetary" perspective, far "from faraway California" but very close to the core of Pynchon's inner poetics. The result is a lucid journey into the real-and-imagined space of Pynchon's fiction set in California, America's factory of dreams and nightmares — a journey into the past, present and future of postmodernist literature and urban studies, as well as into the probable future of our own planet.

In fact, in a 2019 article called "The Fires," William T. Vollmann — a writer born and raised in California who is considered Pynchon's brightest heir but who, according to "The Washington Post," looks more like a Pynchon character — reported on "the horrendous Carr Fire," a large wildfire that began on July 23, 2018 and burned 229,651 acres of land in Shasta and Trinity Counties in California. Vollmann described it as an anticipation of what will happen to our planet if the global warming theory is accurate (as it almost certainly is). In this sense, too, California can literally show us not only what comes after postmodernism, but also — and crucially — our near future, no matter how long we deny it or pretend not to see it. Vollmann concludes his reportage with a sentence that may represent the best comment on Pynchon's "planetary" California: "Then Greg and I drove out of the future, although I kept my mask on for much of the way back to Sacramento. The next day there was hardly a tint of gray in the sky" (Freeman 81). Where is rain when we need it most?

Paolo Simonetti

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into town, never the way out," it results that "L.A. is the place Angelenos are forever approaching but can never quite get to" (17).

Introduction: "The Map is Not the Territory"

1. "Some Kind of a Legacy"[1]: Pynchon's Postmodernism

Thomas Pynchon's novels are undoubtedly among the highest achievements of U.S. literature between the second half of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first. In 2003, Harold Bloom observed that Pynchon is among the "four living American novelists" who "deserve our praise."[2] In *The Western Canon*, the influential critic considered him on a par with the greatest American novelists such as Melville, Hawthorne, Twain, and James.[3] In a similar fashion, as early as 1976, Richard Poirier described Pynchon as "the epitome of an American writer out of the great classics of the nineteenth century – Hawthorne, Emerson, and Melville especially" (29).

Although we know very little about his personal life, there is an enormous body of criticism on Pynchon's fiction and its importance in the definition of literary postmodernism. In his seminal book on postmodernism, Fredric Jameson provided a shortlist of iconic postmodernists which includes Pynchon together with other important figures such as William Burroughs, Ishmael Reed, and Phillip Glass.[4] In 2012, Brian McHale suggested that "the fiction of Thomas Pynchon appears

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1 Pynchon 1966a, 113.

2 Bloom 2003. In 2005, he reiterated this stance in *Novelists and Novels*: "There is a line of descent that moves from *Moby-Dick* through Faulkner to McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*, which for me stands with Philip Roth's *Sabbath's Theater*, Don DeLillo's *Underworld*, and Pynchon's *Mason & Dixon* as the four grand narratives composed by living Americans" (2).

3 Bloom 1994, 288.

4 Jameson 1991, 1.

to be universally regarded as central" (97) to the canon of postmodernism. Similarly, in 2015, he went on to argue that:

> No literary career, perhaps no career of any kind, is more intimately involved with the trajectory of postmodernism, from beginning to end, and even beyond the end, than Thomas Pynchon's. Pynchon's novels bookend postmodernism and keep pace with all of its successively unfolding phases, from the onset (*The Crying of Lot 49*, 1966) through its rebranding and peak phase (*Gravity's Rainbow*, 1973), to the post-1989 interregnum (*Vineland*, 1990), all the way down to the new millennium and the emergence of postpostmodernism. (187–88)

Responding to the question *What was postmodernism?*, McHale takes us upon a journey of familiarity with Pynchon's postmodernism from the outset to the present day. In his argument, it becomes exceedingly clear that without Pynchon's fiction there might have never been such an imperative "to develop a theory of literary postmodernism" (2012, 97).

With postmodernism as a palimpsest in the background, many studies have analyzed Pynchon's novels from different points of view, focusing on a various range of themes. To mention but a few recent ones, in *Thomas Pynchon: The Demon in the Text* (2019), Albert Rolls offers a three-dimensional reading of Pynchon based on the relationship between Thomas Pynchon as a public figure, Tom Pynchon as a private individual, and the reader. In *Pynchon's Sound of Music* (2020), Christian Hänggi meticulously addresses the multifaceted layers of music and its meaning in Pynchon's work. Keita Hatooka's *Thomas Pynchon's Animal Tales* (2022) examines the depiction of animals in his fiction with intriguing insights concerning nonhuman beings. There have also been numerous thematic collections of essays on Pynchon's fiction such as *Dream Tonight of Peacock Tails: Essays on the Fiftieth Anniversary of Thomas Pynchon's V.* (Simonetti and Rossi 2015), *Thomas Pynchon, Sex, and Gender* (Chetwynd, Freer, and Maragos 2018), *Thomas Pynchon in Context* (Dalsgaard 2019), and *The New Pynchon Studies* (Freer 2019).

California holds a peculiar place in Pynchon's fiction, as a place where the fate of America and any possible hope for redemption are evoked. Though Pynchon was born and currently lives in New York, his life and professional career are likewise rooted in California. Indeed, in a recent *New York Times* article, published on December 14, 2022, Jennifer Schuessler explains the logic behind Pynchon's decision

to sell his papers to the Huntington Library in San Marino, California. She reports that several years ago the library's curator of literary collections, Karla Nielsen, wrote to Pynchon's literary agent, and his wife Melanie Jackson, "making the Huntington's case" to access the papers. Schuessler explains that, to do so, Nielsen "played the California card, highlighting the library's extensive holdings relating to the state." As Nielsen observed, "There's a logic to his archive coming to California."

Although the article touches upon a range of issues, such as the author's elusiveness from the public eye, the impossibility of knowing about his composition methods, "writing process," and "correspondence relating to the publishing process" or having access to his "private letters or other personal material," one of the most important themes that Schuessler brings to our attention is the significance of California to Pynchon's mind. In fact, she tells us about the role that the Huntington's president, Karen Lawrence, played in the effort to buy Pynchon's papers. As Lawrence suggested, the variety of the collections at the Huntington "resonates with the kind of complex, almost epic fiction that Pynchon writes." In this respect, the importance of this California-based private institution is emphasized by Jackson Pynchon's correspondence with the Huntington, who, according to Schuessler's report, is described as having "compiled and represented the archive." Indeed, the writer's son said that "When we learned of the scale and rigor of their independent scholarly programs, […] we were confident that the Pynchon archive had found its home" — a home situated in (Southern) California, the major setting of Pynchon's so-called California trilogy.

Pynchon's fiction has not been exclusively, or even strongly, associated with California (in the way that Philip K. Dick's or Raymond Chandler's works have become representative of that setting). Nevertheless, the significance of the California novels in Pynchon's canon is revealing of the fact that the author, who as a young writer spent a part of his life on the West Coast, somehow identifies himself and his works with the spirit of California. Thus, in some way, Pynchon's whole career as well as his authorial persona embody an image of America herself.

Nevertheless, despite the already existing material, a specific analysis of Pynchon's spatial imaginary is still missing. As far as California is concerned, it may seem strange that it is quite absent as a setting in the writer's multi-dimensional debut novel, *V.* — a "New York novel" that reads as a Baedeker guide of the world, spanning from the

United States to Malta, from Paris to Florence to the mythical city of Vheissu. Nonetheless, at the beginning of chapter four, the narrator mentions "a paperback copy of Bridey Murphy's *The Search for Bridey Murphy*" (*V* 42) — a bestselling novel "written by a Colorado businessman to tell people there was life after death." When one considers the title of Morey Bernstein's novel and its plot, which recounts life in nineteenth-century Ireland as unraveled by Miss Murphy, one of the first things that strikes the reader is the theme of quest. Indeed, the search to reveal the true identity of a woman is an issue that spreads all over the narrative both in Pynchon's *V.* and Bernstein's book. As one might surmise, the theme of quest prevails throughout Pynchon's fiction. Nevertheless, the abovementioned thematic similarity speaks to the bigger framework of his work insofar as *V.*'s ironical narrator tells us that *The Search for Bridey Murphy* "touched upon metempsychosis, faith healing, extrasensory perception and the rest of a weird canon of twentieth-century metaphysics we've come to associate with the city of Los Angeles and similar regions" (42). Significantly enough, these themes will also surface in Pynchon's California novels.

As it is well known, Southern California plays an important role in Pynchon's second book, so much so that one could say the fictional city of San Narciso and the San Francisco urban area are the true protagonists of the story. As we learn from the beginning of chapter three, upon her arrival in San Narciso, Pynchon's protagonist Oedipa Mass had thought as though "there were revelation in progress all around" (27) in her endless quest to unravel the truth about the shady postal organization the Tristero as well as the meaning of her ex-lover's testament. Confused by the proliferation of the Tristero signs in her nocturnal wandering on the streets of San Francisco, later on she thinks to "drift […] at random" (69) in the hope of "getting the whole thing to go away and disintegrate." However, through her drifting in San Francisco at night she comes closer to know about what the narrator describes as "a calculated withdrawal, from the life of the Republic" (78) by so many "citizens, deliberately choosing not to communicate by U. S. Mail."

In at least two other novels, namely *Vineland* and *Inherent Vice*, California has a salient presence, providing not only the setting of the plot, but also influencing the style and the structure of Pynchon's writing. *Vineland* depicts fictional Vineland County in the redwoods of Northern California as its setting with occasional flashbacks to the

Los Angeles urban flatland. When the protagonist of the novel Zoyd Wheeler joins an L.A. "busful of northbound hippies" (271) in "the trek northward" (263) to Vineland, the reader comes across detailed descriptions of this imaginary county in Northern California. As the narrator relates, at some point Zoyd woke up to

> the smell of redwood trees in the rain through the open bus windows, tunnels of unbelievably tall straight red trees whose tops could not be seen pressing in to either side. […] The storm lashed the night, […] the highway was interrupted by flooding creeks and minor slides that often obliged the bus to creep around inches from the edge of Totality. (272)

Vineland County is depicted as "A Harbor of Refuge" (273), with "plenty of redwoods left to get lost in" (263), for this group of ex-hippies from Reagan's oppressive policies. Through the description of Southern California's urban landscape, with Golden Gate Bridge representing "a transition, in the metaphysics of the region" (271), and Northern California's suburban geography and its rural hinterland, the narrator touches upon the difficulties that Zoyd and other characters of his generation have to face in the wake of the war on drugs and Reaganomics. At the same time, it is interesting that Vineland County is described to someday become "a Eureka-Crescent City-Vineland megalopolis" (273) — a significant theme in the book as far as my analysis regarding the "postmetropolitan transition" (Soja 2014, 21) is concerned.

As for *Inherent Vice*, the importance of California is first and foremost indicated by a 2009 promotional video, narrated by Pynchon himself, for the novel in which he briefly tells us about fictional Gordita Beach, California. In fact, Gordita Beach plays a fundamental role in the book as the main setting where the plot unfolds for the most part as well as the base for the hippie protagonist Doc Sportello's detective operations, like *Vineland*'s Zoyd who used to live "down south […], sharing a house in Gordita Beach" (*VL* 22) before having to move northward. At the same time, through the beach the reader gets in touch with several seminal issues in the narrative such as the development of suburbia for political purposes of social control and the natural and built geographies of California. For instance, As Doc and his friend Sortilège walk south down the alleys of Gordita Beach, they smell crude oil in the air. Later in the novel, we learn that Sortilège's boyfriend, Spike, and a friend of his have a common interest in respect for the natural environment and they film Stateside environmental

abuse. The description of their filming experience is horrifying as they have seen too much of the natural environment "napalmed, polluted, defoliated till the laterite beneath was sun-baked solid and useless" (86). Here, Gordita beach is described as "a houseboat anchored in a tar pit" (87) as the black, gooey "oil spilled from tankers washed up on the beach." Indeed, Both Spike and Sortilège are concerned that Southern California's natural landscape is being destroyed.

Such scenes highlight planetary concerns as a result of environmental recklessness, within an unregulated economic, industrial system maintaining unstainable patterns of energy production and consumption. In bringing to the fore these ecological preoccupations of prime importance and the dire consequences of human activity on the natural environment, heedless of more-than-human life, the space of California in Pynchon's novels plays a cornucopian role. In *Ecology of Fear* Mike Davis used terms such as "apocalyptic threat" (71) and "apocalyptic temper" (353) throughout the book to describe the gravity of ecological hazards to everyday life in Southern California caused by unsatiable "market-driven urbanization" (11), which "has transgressed environmental common sense" for generations.

To take a more recent example, in the literary realm, we can think of the California-born and based writer William T. Vollmann, who is often described as "the literary son of Thomas Pynchon" (Streitfeld 22). Although from the outset of his career critics have been eager to compare his work to that of Pynchon's, Vollmann doesn't see eye to eye with them. When asked in an interview about Pynchon's possible influence on his debut novel *You Bright and Risen Angels*, Vollmann responded: "I hadn't read *Gravity's Rainbow* until after *Angels* came out, even though I'd read the other Pynchon books. But I don't think my stuff is a lot like Pynchon's" (qtd. in McCaffery 2015, 41).

Whatever the case, among likely thematic and stylistic similarities between the two writers, one can think of the representation of environmental concerns in their works — a theme that has been increasingly important to everyday life in California in the wake of worsening climate calamities such as wildfires, floods, extreme heat and cold, and other severe weather conditions. In a 1991 interview with Larry McCaffery, Vollmann observed that "environmental problems, which we brought about ourselves very directly, continue to operate and cause a lot of death and suffering and transform the country" (qtd. in McCaffery 2009, 117). More than two decades later, he mentioned such

ecological concerns, this time specifically about California's ongoing environmental problems, in a 2022 interview with Paolo Simonetti:

> In Sacramento, where I live, we are number two for flood risk after New Orleans. And with the climate change, the fire season now is so terrible that the last three or four years, very often even as early as July or until October, you wake up in the middle of the night and the room is full of smoke and you think, "what am I gonna do?" It's going on fire and there's no place to go and you're just coughing, you're trying to breathe through a handkerchief. And so I'm thinking, "yeah, I don't know how long my stuff can survive physically." (4)

Bearing that in mind, Los Angeles was the subject of Pynchon's famous article for *The New York Times*, entitled "A Journey Into the Mind of Watts," where he addressed the social and racial problems of the black residents in Southern L.A.'s Watts neighborhood as a result of the 1965 Watts riots. Here Pynchon almost offers a cartographic depiction of that neighborhood by representing certain fundamental issues like segregationist land practices as he leads the reader through the dark reality of Watts. Other than the issue of urban gentrification, Pynchon deals with several significant cultural dynamics such as social and economic injustice — a topic which will pop up later in *Inherent Vice*, once again through spatial tropes. Highlighting that the black and white cultures "do not understand each other," in his essay Pynchon criticizes "L.A.'s racial sickness" that has been afflicting Watt's black community.

It has been suggested that the title of Pynchon's first novel, *V.*, shows the two different directions of his later novels.[5] On the one hand there are the big historical novels, *Gravity's Rainbow*, *Mason & Dixon*, and *Against the Day*, and on the other there are the smaller novels that have been grouped together as the California trilogy: *The Crying of Lot 49* published in 1966, *Vineland* in 1990, and *Inherent Vice* in 2009. In 2012, Thomas Schaub observed that these three shorter novels can be rightly considered a trilogy of California novels which "return again and again to the same place and time: more or less from 1964 to 1971" (30). On the significance of this period, he further mentioned that "the mid to late 1960s represent a watershed moment not only in the nation's life but in Pynchon's own" (35). Indeed, Pynchon published *Lot*

[5] See Simonetti 2015a, 6-7.

49 a couple of years before the national sea change that started in 1968 — a novel written in the middle of the sixties which reflects the revolutionary spirit of those years.

In 2013, Pynchon's most recent novel to date, *Bleeding Edge*, came out, opening new ways of categorizing his novels. For instance, McClintock and Miller have propounded the idea that *Bleeding Edge* is "sprinkled with brief recollections of California by secondary characters who, like Pynchon himself, have transplanted themselves Back East" (2014b, 14). One such character in the novel is Vyrva McElmo, the nonchalant wife of a minor dotcom transplant from "Silicon Valley to Silicon Alley" (*BE* 9). In her first interaction with Maxine Tarnow, Vyrva greets the protagonist while "gliding across the porch through the crowd, taking much longer than she has to, a West Coast thing" (9). Through this character the narrator describes the cultural contrast between the East Coast lifestyle, being fast-paced and obsessed with time, and the West Coast way of life, described as leisurely and slow: "Vyrva is a sweetheart but not nearly time-obsessed enough" (9). As she tells Maxine, "I'm just hangin out, waitin for my stock options to vest?" (10), which seems to be a reflection of "California sunshine, snorkel-deep waters, most of the time anyway."

Thus, in order to understand Pynchon's poetics of space in his fiction one should undoubtedly take heed of California's fundamental role both in his professional career as well as his personal life. On that score, it is important to investigate how Pynchon's work addresses certain themes that are usually associated with (Southern) California in U.S. literature: the dreamland of natural beauty, easy lifestyles along the West Coast as the geographical end of the frontier, the land of classic noir fiction and Hollywood, and the American dream. Such an examination becomes all the more compelling when one considers that Pynchon was reportedly living in the West Coast while writing *Gravity's Rainbow*.[6]

In her 2007 article, Rachel Adams observed that "Few critical readings of *The Crying of Lot 49* remark on its treatment of place, despite the fact that it anticipates the writings of the many critics who would find California the locus of postmodernity in the 1980s and 1990s" (254). Indeed, little critical attention has been given to Pynchon's urban imagination in a substantive manner. While questions of geography

[6] See Krafft 2019.

and cartography in his fiction have been commonly addressed, there has never been a well-developed engagement with the urban aspect of Pynchon's geographical imaginary. Truly enough, Nicholas Spencer's analysis of "critical space" (1) in *Gravity's Rainbow* in relation to Lefebvre's critical theory, Brian Jarvis' examination of the underground imaginary in Pynchon's novels through the 1990s, Sascha Pöhlmann's investigation of postnational spaces in *Gravity's Rainbow* and *Mason & Dixon*, David Seed's exploration of *V.* as "an urban novel" (1988, 74), and a variety of other critical studies offer useful insights into Pynchon's spatial imagination. Nonetheless, there is still a lamentable lack of sustained critical consideration of specifically urban phenomena in Pynchon's fiction. In this respect, Utku Mogultay's "spatial and urban" (10) approach in analyzing *Against the Day* is a promising work that calls for more research on "Pynchon's urban imaginaries" (5).

As the present book aims at showing, Pynchon showers us with numberless urban spatial issues in his oeuvre. One can observe such a tendency from the very first pages of his debut novel in which the reader comes across a description of the streets, where one of the book's protagonists, Benny Profane, has been laboring:

> Since his discharge from the Navy Profane had been road-laboring and when there wasn't work just traveling, up and down the east coast like a yo-yo; and this had been going on for maybe a year and a half. After that long of more named pavements than he'd care to count, Profane had grown a little leery of streets, especially streets like this. They had in fact all fused into a single abstracted Street, which come the full moon he would have nightmares about. (*V.* 2)

More specifically, Pynchon's trilogy offers various representations of urban geographical issues concerning California, though not exclusively. Among other passages, we can think of a salient scene in *Vineland* where Pynchon raises several important spatial themes regarding California:

> the cable television companies showed up in the county, got into skirmishes that included exchanges of gunfire between gangs of rival cable riggers, eager to claim souls for their distant principals, fighting it out house by house, with the Board of Supervisors compelled eventually to partition the county into Cable Zones, which in time became political units in their own right as the Tubal entrepreneurs went extending their webs even where there weren't enough residents per linear mile

> to pay the rigging cost, they could make that up in town, and besides, they had faith in the future of California real estate. (275)

California's history of geographical expansion and land development policies, privatization policies favoring real estate entrepreneurs, and the declining trend of union jobs are only a few among many salient spatial topics hinted at in the above episode. I will take up this passage again in chapter two as part of my argument on the way the dynamics at work in *Vineland* can help better understand urban geographical processes such as the postmetropolitan transition.

In 2014, Scott McClintock and John Miller published *Pynchon's California*, a collection of essays that offer insightful analyses of the California space in the trilogy. After observing that the critical status of the California novels has been commonly underestimated by critics and readers, McClintock and Miller refer to "the organization of two recent books surveying all of Pynchon's work" (2014b, 7), each of which includes a separate chapter on *Gravity's Rainbow*, *Mason & Dixon*, and *Against the Day* while allocating only a single chapter considering the three California books together. Such an observation corroborates the need to analyze the representation of California in the trilogy in a more comprehensive manner rather than addressing them all together in one book chapter. Nevertheless, McClintock and Miller themselves suggest that "the literary value of the California books, taken individually, may in some ways correspond to their physical heft" (7). In fact, their 2019 article "West Coast" is another example of many works reading Pynchon's California fiction synoptically.

Moreover, the general critical approach of the articles in *Pynchon's California* is mostly that of analyzing various issues, such as religion, spirituality, or the conventions of the detective fiction, in relation to the California setting rather than foregrounding the question of Pynchon's spatial imaginary from a specifically urban spatial point of view. As such, they almost never engage with specific concepts in urban studies, such as "city region or regional city" (Soja 2014, 197), "Citistāt" (Dear and Flusty 1998, 65), "Integral Urbanism" (Ellin 2006, xxv), and the like, which are fundamental to my critical reading of Pynchon's novels.

While the essays in McClintock and Miller's book focus on certain themes from different perspectives with regard to the California space, like sacrality, drugs, and family and sentimentality, they do not always take into consideration these themes to the fullest in all the three nov-

els. Furthermore, in a book entitled *Pynchon's California* it would have been compelling to include a chapter specially dedicated to Pynchon's representation of the evolution of California's natural and built environments in the span of almost half a century — a missing contribution that would have shed useful light on his evolving treatment of space. In fact, to my knowledge, no study to date in Pynchon criticism has analyzed the California novels allocating a separate section to the examination of each novel through a comprehensive, critical approach at a book-length level.

In this regard, my approach in analyzing the space of California in the trilogy is different: I will address the representation of space in Pynchon's fiction from a specifically urban geographical standpoint by analyzing the development of certain specialized concepts in the field of urban and regional studies in relation to his novels, such as theoretical and empirical research by Edward Soja, Michael Dear, Steven Flusty, and Nan Ellin. In other words, my goal is to depict the role of Pynchon's fiction in helping better understand, or at the very least represent, certain aspects of urban spatial issues in the contemporary city, which have consequential effects on the daily lives of its citizens. In this respect, one of the most significant urban models that will be analyzed throughout the trilogy is Edward Soja's concept of the postmetropolitan transition from the modern industrial metropolis to the poly-centered, networked "postmetropolis" (2000, 147), together with its social and cultural repercussions like the urbanization of injustice, problems of urban gentrification through spatial dynamics, and capitalist economic exploitation by enforcing urban geographical planning. Other related urban trends in the contemporary city will be closely investigated to help further explain the development of the postmetropolitan transition in relation to the California novels, among which are the processes of the "crisis-generated urban restructuring" (Soja 2014, 17) and the urbanization of suburbia, "restructuringgenerated crisis" (Soja 1996b, 426) in the postmetropolis, "*regional urbanization*" (Soja 2014, 9) and the beginning of "a *new regionalism*" (142), the formation of the "city region" (197), Chicago and Los Angeles Schools of Urbanism, and a number of other influential urban models and processes.

With that in mind, and on a more cautious note, my hope is that the geocritical and urban analyses of Pynchon's work might shed light on what might take place with regard to the future of urbanism, especially the postmetropolitan transition toward the formation of the "city

region" (Soja 2014, 197). In this respect, Pynchon's fiction is mostly analyzed in relation to Soja's urban theory. At the same time, I will draw on the works of prominent scholars in urban and regional studies who have benefited from Soja's theorization to build upon his ideas. On that score, for instance, a significant concept in order to better understand the representation of urban spaces in *Inherent Vice* is Neil Brenner and Christian Schmid's notion of "planetary urbanization" (160), which is in tune with Soja's concept of "a *new regionalism*" (2014, 142). Moreover, and in line with the environmental concerns in the novel, one might further think of the concept of "extended urbanization" (Brenner 201) which deals not only with urban questions related to cities and city regions but also broader operational landscapes that have to do with environmental planning such as water and waste disposal management.

This helps me make a foray into the environmental aspect of Pynchon's fiction, especially in chapter three, where I combine urban and environmental analyses. Undoubtedly, environment, and more broadly nature, has a significant presence in the myriad of various themes in Pynchon's oeuvre. In this respect, an important trope is that of oil production and its detrimental effects to the environment. For instance, the reader of *Inherent Vice* learns about Spike's obsession with "the El Segundo oil refinery and tanks just up the coast" (87). We are told that the crude oil spilled from tankers on Gordita Beach was so thick and sticky that "Anybody who walked on the beach got it on the bottoms of their feet" (87). In a mocking tone, the narrator says that there were two solutions to this environmental problem: some "liked to let it just accumulate till it was thick as huarache soles, thereby saving him the price of a pair of sandals. Others, more fastidious, incorporated regular foot-cleaning into their day, like shaving or brushing their teeth" (87), which Spike sardonically calls "some . . . little . . . fucking detail" as he scrapes off the soles of his feet.

In the wake of peak oil and the importance of sustainable energy sources, such concerns in Pynchon's fiction are of utmost significance, in the era of the Anthropocene, on a planet increasingly exploited to give service to human beings with no concern for other-than-human life on Earth. Whether we think of the initial pages of the novel where "the crews of oil tankers" (9) figure "the exhaust phrases" of the traffic "echoing out to sea" for "wildlife," while "sliding along […] an exotic coast" in Gordita Beach, or when the narrator recounts that Doc had to

live "another petroleum-scented day at the beach" (275), *Inherent Vice* indicates that human-centeredness can have serious consequences for the planet as well as humanity. Arguing that Pynchon's fiction shows anthropocenic and planetary concerns, for instance, in 2021 Tore Rye Andersen observed that *Gravity's Rainbow*'s "elaborate reflections on the true nature of war, which serve to underscore how destructive a force human beings really are" (11), herald the Anthropocene condition. Along the same lines, in 2019 Pieter Vermeulen suggested that *Against the Day* shares with scholarly Anthropocene discourses the concern of "reimagining the (only ever imaginary) modern divorce between nature and society, between the human and the nonhuman" (70).

Such representations of the natural space in Pynchon's fiction show the necessity of more efficient systems of environmental organization in order to hopefully move away from an overarching anthropocentric logic toward the realization of a more sustainable kind of socio-environmental development in our societies. An important corollary of this urgent environmental discourse with regard to Pynchon's fiction is the idea of leaving behind such characteristics as irony and playfulness, usually associated with postmodernism, toward more concrete, or one might say sincere, solutions. Although it is impossible to shun the notion that Pynchon's work has been fundamental to understand literary postmodernism, it is likewise important to recognize the impossibility of pigeonholing his fiction within the unstable borders of that critical category. As Sascha Pöhlmann has suggested, Pynchon "may have moved well beyond the postmodern in his own writing" (2019, 17). Observing that in *Bleeding Edge*, "the writer of American postmodernism is commenting on post-postmodernism" (17), he argues that *Against the Day* interrogates Pynchon's canonically assumed position as a postmodernist writer and "sharpens our focus on the neglected non-postmodernist aspects of his works." Following the emergence of the Anthropocene and peak oil, and the significance of a sustainable future, I believe that the latest stage of Pynchon's fiction shows something beyond postmodernist aesthetics. Indeed, the delineation of anthropogenic planetary harm in his work, especially in the new millennium, which evinces the urgency of practical measures in dealing with environmental hazards, heralds the idea that Pynchon's twenty-first century fiction has moved beyond the established framework of postmodernist theory as it no longer fits the theoretical glove of postmodernism.

Thus, while *"From Faraway California"* builds upon some of the useful insights in McClintock and Miller's book, it goes further by providing a comprehensive analysis of space from four different critical standpoints (urban/geographical, historical/political, fictional/mythological, and theoretical) across the trilogy. More significantly, in each chapter specific sections are dedicated to the question of Pynchon's spatiality from nearly the second half of the twentieth century to the first decade of the new millennium. That is, by putting space at the forefront of all critical analyses, this book aims to contemplate the development of Pynchon's urban spatial vision in the trilogy within a historical framework while offering an in-depth exploration of spatial themes from different critical standpoints.

Hence, in each chapter, by and large, space is addressed from the four abovementioned critical viewpoints. In doing so, discussions of geocriticism and cartography, as well as concepts derived from the fields of urban studies and geography, deal with Pynchon's spatiality in a straightforward manner. At the same time, other related discourses, whether political, literary, or theoretical, contribute to understanding the spatial dimension of Pynchon's fiction indirectly. Every discussion about space in Pynchon's fiction in chapter one is further developed almost in a parallel fashion in chapters two and three. By doing so, the book offers the possibility not only to observe the development of each specific discourse in a comparative way but also to view them overall as parts of the larger argument I am making in this book, that is, how Pynchon's spatial imaginary and representation in the California trilogy develops over the course of time.

As little known as it still is, Pynchon's biography is the essential starting point. Going back to as early as Pynchon's possible experience as a highway construction employee in the summer, his stint in the U.S. Navy, his travels to Mexico after Kennedy's assassination, his years on the California Coast, and finally his back and forth movements between the East and the West Coasts, chapter one traces the way in which such experiences might have influenced the representation of real and fictional places in Pynchon's early fiction.

Drawing mostly on the works of Bertrand Westphal and Robert Tally, I also provide a theoretical definition of geocriticism through which to analyze Pynchon's novels. Relying on an understanding of geocriticism as a viable analytical approach to understand the complexities of the literary text in a transdisciplinary manner, I proceed to draw a

geocritical comparison between the fictional city of San Narciso in *Lot 49* and California's Orange County. In doing so, I argue that the novel's representation of cityspace can be read in connection with Edward Soja's concept of the postmetropolitan transition. In *Lot 49*, there are significant indications of the urbanization of California suburbia in the context of the 1960s urban crisis. Such an urban spatial analysis will be later investigated comparatively in *Vineland* and *Inherent Vice*. Examining Pynchon's San Narciso in relation to Orange County in light of their history of geographical development**,** my analysis of the political space in *Lot 49* helps better understand the novel's narrative structure in depicting the 1960s as a moment, and a landscape, of socio-political turmoil that influenced Pynchon's career.

Finally, in the last part of chapter one, I put forth a definition of Soja's concept of "Thirdspace" (1996a, 1) with regard to Pynchon's fiction, thereby explaining the need for a comprehensive analysis of the ways in which various representations of Thirdspace surface in the California trilogy. In this respect, I will show how Soja's notion of Thirdspace has been employed, and in some cases built upon, by a number of scholars, such as Brian Jarvis, in relation to Pynchon's fiction. Understanding Thirdspace as a critical "thirding-as-Othering" (60), I go on to examine the possibility of an alternative reality in *Lot 49* by reading fictional San Narciso through the optic of Thirdspace.

Chapter two begins with a reflection on how *Vineland* shows a kind of shift or watershed in Pynchon's writing career. There have been several critical works which posit that the second California book shows a sentimental or political turn in Pynchon's fiction. Addressing the development of his novels through the lens of spatiality, I argue that *Vineland* offers up salient insights into the representation of Pynchon's urban spatial imagination in the course of time. Here, I seek to delineate the significance of the seventeen-year gap between the publication of *Gravity's Rainbow* and *Vineland* in terms of the author's spatial imaginary. Through an analysis of the postmetropolitan transition in relation to the fictional town of Vineland, I posit that Pynchon's vision of city structure instantiates the changing nature of the modern metropolis. In comparison with *Lot 49*, *Vineland* takes a step further in highlighting the urbanization of California suburbs in the service of state and capitalist apparatuses — a claim which I will explain through Dear and Flusty's model of "postmodern urbanism."

A geocritical comparison between the fictive College of the Surf and Trasero County, as described in the novel, and California's San Diego and Orange Counties in the sixties sheds useful light on the historical and political dimensions of Pynchon's critical thought. Reading *Vineland*, one frequently comes across fictional places like Vineland County and Gordita Beach. At the same time, we encounter a host of oneiric worlds such as those of the Thanatoids and the *woge*. Analyzing the way in which fictional places in the novel might hint at certain political and cultural trends from the 1960s to the 1980s in the U.S., I move on to examine the possibility of understanding the creation of mythical spaces as part of a bigger spatial pattern in the trilogy. Concentrating on the concept of Thirdspace, thus, I show that the novel offers an alternative reality through the conceptualization of imaginary Vineland as a counter-hegemonic mapping that resists authoritarian policies of policing space. In order to better explain the evolution of "third space," I will further touch upon Westphal's concept of "the entre-deux (in-between)" (69), which refers to a space that is neither the first space nor the second but "both one and the other at the same time" (Serres 24).

Tackling Pynchon's growing engagement with the issue of spatiality in the new millennium, in chapter three I hold that *Inherent Vice* brings Pynchon's spatial awareness to a further stage where the representations of the desert, the beach, and the Ocean are fundamental. Indeed, in "'Postmetropolitan Transition' and 'Regional Urbanization' in *Inherent Vice*" I try to describe how the depictions of these places adumbrate the postmetropolitan transition by blending the urban, suburban, and nonurban ways of life. In this respect, I contend that the urban spatial representations in the novel hint at the latest phase of Soja's understanding of the postmetropolitan transition, namely a shift from the metropolitan to a regional model of urbanization. Furthermore, I argue that the delineations of these liminal spaces indicate a more important issue in the twenty-century city, that is, social and economic fragility in the aftermath of the postmetropolitan transition. Broadening the scope of "*regional urbanization*" (Soja 2014, 9), I go on to suggest that, building upon Soja's urban theory, Brenner's notion of "extended urbanization" (201) throws useful light on the environmental aspect of Pynchon's spatial representation insofar as it engages with the issues of environmental organization in the twenty-first century.

Moreover, the representations of cityspace in the California trilogy herald the emergence and development of the postmetropolitan transition which roughly coincide with three important moments in the history of the U.S., i.e., the Watts riots of 1965, the 1992 Los Angeles Justice Riots, and the 2008 economic recession. In this respect, *Inherent Vice* depicts not only signs of a change in Pynchon's conceptualization of city structure but it bespeaks the importance of social and economic injustice in the contemporary metropolis as a result of urban restructuring.

In "Under the Paving Stones, the Beach!" space is analyzed, by and large, from the viewpoint of politics in a historical optic. In this part, I endeavor to deal with the spaces of freedom and action against the dominant structure of power, as represented in Pynchon's fiction. Through such an analysis, one can see a progression among the California novels in the way their author deals with the space of protest from a historical point of view. In *Lot 49*, Pynchon was writing in the middle of the revolutionary fervor of the counterculture. Through Oedipa's visit to the University of Berkeley, Pynchon depicts the change in the campus dynamic and the youth's attitude. The Tristero system itself shows the hope of subversion and new possibilities in the political panorama of America where young people tried to achieve some space of freedom inside the prevailing system of control. *Vineland* depicts the demise of the countercultural energies under the repressive order of political surveillance by the Nixon and Reagan administrations where the space of liberty and possibility, much desired in *Lot 49*, is almost entirely subdued. Such is the case with Zoyd Wheeler, who is not able to do anything fruitful insofar as his life is conditioned by the violent actions of the federal agent Brock Vond. In fact, the cooption of Frenesi by Brock is another example of the death of the counterculture. If *Lot 49* promises some hope of freedom for the counterculture and *Vineland* shows the fading trend of such spaces of dissent, *Inherent Vice* retrospectively reflects upon the present political atmosphere and poses the question as to whether it is feasible to identify some space of possibility for the American nation and resist the cooption of America herself by the "agencies of command and control" (265).

Finally, "From the Beach to the Ocean" opens a new window into the depiction of mythical spaces in Pynchon's work. In this regard, the representation of the mythological, sunken continent of Lemuria in *Inherent Vice* plays an important role in the development of the

narrative. Furthermore, it indicates exploitative social and political processes at work in the U.S. society, as well as the role of the organized crime — represented by the shadowy heroin cartel which Pynchon calls the Golden Fang — in shaping those corrupt programs. Moving forward, I tackle the issue of alternative realities and how the California landscape might, or might not, provide a redemption in the novel. This brings the discussion to analyzing space on a theoretical level where it becomes important to concentrate on the concept of Thirdspace to examine the possibility of an alternative reality. Although Soja passed away at the end of 2015, as Sophie Didier has suggested, "we can still pull today the threads brought up in *Postmetropolis*" concerning "issues such as the fight against inequalities, urban fragmentation and spatial justice" like "the debate on the urban condition of minorities in the United States, and especially the African-American minority" (10).

Taking into consideration the span of some forty-three years between the publication of the first and the third California novels, the analyses of space in the trilogy demonstrate the importance of examining the trilogy from a specifically spatial standpoint. Furthermore, we come to realize a number of significant issues about his fiction that have been usually relegated to the shadow of considering his works under the umbrella of literary postmodernism, and various theoretical attempts to define it, antirealism, and an abstruse writing style, among other things.

While there is some partial truth to these ideas, Pynchon's literary production goes well above and beyond such labels. Indeed, the spatial analyses in the present book endeavor to show his oeuvre in a different light by demonstrating Pynchon's attention, from the beginning of his career, to significant matters such as the changing structure of the contemporary metropolis as well as issues concerning urban life and planning. Analyzing such consequential questions in his fiction, one comes to realize Pynchon's awareness of urban geographical phenomena and processes, such as urban renewal projects, and their costly impacts on the daily lives of the citizens. In this regard, the geocritical and urban analyses of the California books can be better understood in light of what has been described as the Spatial Turn, which has been increasingly important to literary criticism and cultural studies. Therefore, before moving on to the novels, a number of important issues in this respect should be first addressed.

2. "It All Comes Together"[7] in Pynchon's California: Spatial Turn, Geocriticism, and the Postmodern City-maze

Before World War II, the dominant discourse in critical theory was quite exclusively linked to time and history. In the nineteenth century, often noted as the century of history, space was relegated to an afterthought of time in understanding the world and human affairs. Under modern consciousness, historicism submerged "the geographical or spatial imagination," as Soja observed (1989, 140). The result of such a historicist thought was linearizing time and marginalizing space by purporting the idea of temporal "stages" of development, characterizing the past as a progressive succession of events inevitably leading to the present.[8] In the realm of literature, one can think of such a teleological reading of history and its antithesis as a trademark of modernism. In this regard, critics have often mentioned Stephen Dedalus' understanding of history in Joyce's *Ulysses* as a chaotic, nightmarish entity as opposed to Garrett Deasy's linear characterization of it as moving toward a single, unified outcome: "History, Stephen said, is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake", to which Mr. Deasy, the school headmaster where Stephen teaches history, answers, "All human history moves towards one great goal, the manifestation of God" (31).

After the Second World War, nevertheless, an interest in space in relation to a new aesthetic sensibility, known as postmodernism, started to germinate. At the forefront of this new way to think about space were two seminal figures, namely Henri Lefebvre and Michel Foucault.[9] With the urban crisis of the 1960s, especially in Paris, a new impetus was born which specifically aimed at countering the long-standing hegemony of historical theoretical discourses. As such, discussions of space became increasingly important for literary and cultural studies; so much so that the term *Spatial Turn* was invented.

As one of the key theorists in initiating the Spatial Turn, in 1996 Soja argued that spatiality as a "third existential dimension" (1996a, 3) was "infusing the traditional coupling of historicality-sociality," of-

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7 See Soja 2014, 17.

8 See Toulmin and Goodfield 1965, 232, Kern 1990, 377, and Kern 1983.

9 From the late 1960s onward, in their writings, both Lefebvre and Foucault endeavored to reverse a hundred years of historicist dominance over spatial thinking. On the ontological and epistemological parity of space and time, see Foucault 1986 and Lefebvre 1991.

fering new ways of interpreting the world. Putting spatial thinking at the center of the formation of knowledge, Soja argued that "the Spatial Turn is fundamentally an attempt to develop a more creative and critically effective balancing of the spatial/geographical and the temporal/historical imaginations" (2009, 12).

As a more practical example, one can think of Fredric Jameson's famous conceptualization of the Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles. He maintains that the Bonaventure depicts "an alarming disjunction" (43) between body experience and the built environment. Calling it a "postmodern hyperspace," he explains that "this mutation in space" represented in the Bonaventure goes beyond the ability of the human body "to locate itself […] and cognitively to map its position in a mappable external world" (47). In order for the individual to situate themselves again and reconquer a sense of place, there needs to be "an articulated ensemble […] which the individual subject can map and remap along the moments of mobile, alternative trajectories" (50), which he dubs "the cognitive map." Jameson underlines that the aesthetic of his cultural form, "an aesthetic of *cognitive mapping*" (50), is appropriate to our present situation as it fundamentally raises "spatial issues."

One critical approach of literary and cultural analyses that has emerged out of a focus on the issue of space is geocriticism. The term *geocriticism* was coined by Bertrand Westphal in 2008 in a book of that title and was later elaborated upon by Robert Tally. Although Tally understands the concept of geocriticism in a more interdisciplinary sense, both scholars put space first. For Westphal, geocriticism refers to a "geocentered" (112) approach to literature and cultural studies in which a certain place serves as the pivotal point for a host of exploratory critical practices. In 2001, he edited *Le rivage des mythes* — a collection of essays which analyze different representations of the Mediterranean region. By instantiating various points of view regarding a certain place, such as the Mediterranean, geocriticism provides the possibility to transcend the fixed images of that place.

Underscoring interdisciplinarity, for Tally, geocriticism "attempts to understand the real and fictional spaces that we inhabit, cross through, imagine" (2011, x). He believes that geocriticism is a critical spatial instrument, within the category of spatial literary studies, used to analyze literary texts. At the same time, it is a useful approach that brings spatial practices together with social criticism to "uncover hid-

den relations of power in those other spaces that a critical theory less attuned to spatiality might well overlook" (2013, 114).[10]

As far as Pynchon's fiction is concerned, there are many reasons why a geocritical analysis is compelling. Pynchon's novels deal with a vast number of real and imagined places and spaces. To mention only a few names from his first novel *V.*, the narrative engages in various places around the world such as New York, Paris, Florence, Malta, Africa, and the Middle East. In fact, on the back cover of the paperback edition of the novel, released by Penguin in 2007, the infinite list of the countries and cities is summed up by the phrase "constantly moving between locations across the globe." As Brian Jarvis has observed, there is "an acute geographical awareness in Pynchon's work from the outset" (1998, 53). Similarly, Pynchon's fiction provides us with a host of imaginary spaces, from the fictional "Vheissu" in *V.* and the Zone in *Gravity's Rainbow* to the Hollow Earth in *Mason & Dixon*, a sailing airship traveling beneath desert sand or through the world via Symmes' Hole in *Against the Day*, and the cyberspace of the Deep Web and the software DeepArcher in *Bleeding Edge*.

Moreover, in Pynchon's fiction space is developed as a conscious theme that brings forth and interacts with many important issues. For instance, Nicholas Spencer has argued that Pynchon is "especially concerned with the imposition of spatial power through transformations of urban space" (139). Suggesting that social power for Pynchon is inherently spatial in nature, Spencer goes on to posit that in his novels the urban domain acts as a catalyst in "the social, economic, and political restructurings of postmodernity" (139). In tune with the idea of the Spatial Turn, *Gravity's Rainbow* "represents a definitive replacement of historical with spatial dialectics" (Spencer 139-140). Indeed, in a 1969 letter to Thomas F. Hirsch, Pynchon wrote about the number done on the pre-colonial Herero head by the German missionaries and "the imposition of a culture valuing analysis and differentiation on a culture that valued unity and integration" (qtd. in Seed 241). As regards the contrast between "the shape of a Herero village with the Cartesian grid system," he observed that "The physical shape of a city is an infallible due to where the people who built it are at. It has to do with our deepest responses to change, death, being human" (qtd. in Seed 241).

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[10] For an insightful debate on the definition of spatial literary studies, see Hones 2018 and Tally 2020.

Regarding Pynchon's vision in terms of the literary representation of the cityspace, Richard Lehan argued that his fiction "helped create a postmodern discourse that determines how we conceptualize the literary city as imagined reality" (280). Lehan maintains that Pynchon's fiction played a central role in the cultural and literary changes to the modernist tradition, leading to what came to be widely recognized as literary postmodernism. He contends that Pynchon's work gave rise to a novel urban consciousness where "Pynchon sees the modern city as the end of a historical process" (269). In *V.* and *The Crying of Lot 49*, he argues, "the city becomes a very different realm of meaning" (267) in which "consciousness is lost in the indeterminate maze that becomes the postmodern city."

The idea of the postmodern city as an infinite maze, where the protagonist is involved in the quest for some endlessly deferred meaning, reflects the notion of a non-linear development of time. In other words, Oedipa's labyrinthine search in San Narciso represents the creation of a postmodern cityspace which challenges the modernist notion of temporal phases of development. Pynchon's depiction of urban space in the novel playfully refutes the idea of teleological, progressive transformations in history. As John Berger observed in 1969, "We hear a lot about the crisis of the modern novel. What this involves, fundamentally, is a change in the mode of narration. It is scarcely any longer possible to tell a straight story sequentially unfolding in time" (46). In fact, Oedipa's quest spreads over a "real-and-imagined" (Soja 1996a, 6) territory from Northern to Southern California where following the cues in history and texts does not amount to any tangible solution to the Tristero mystery. Reminding us of Stephen's vision of history in *Ulysses*, Oedipa's certainties about her life are thrown into stark disarray as she seeks to make sense of Inverarity's legacy that immediately becomes America's legacy — a history of violence, subjugation, and marginalization that the protagonist will have to face in order to find her place in a world of countless projections of reality.

Such representations of the city as urban mazes, reflecting the minds of the characters as well as the readers, are a typical feature of postmodern poetics. Against the backdrop of John Barth's groundbreaking essay "The Literature of Exhaustion" (1967), we can think of his famous short story "Lost in the Funhouse" (1968), where the adjective *lost* in the title preempts the possibility of any solution right at the outset. The reader is as lost as the characters, though some degree of solace is offered by the

announcement that being lost takes place in a funhouse. The Jamesian "house of fiction" with a thousand windows here becomes a crazed hall of mirrors in a luna park. Indeed, the very beginning line of the story throws light on this issue by posing an interesting question: "For whom is the funhouse fun?" "Perhaps for lovers," the narrator comments, but to Ambrose, the protagonist, "it is a place of fear and confusion." The funhouse, therefore, is nothing but an "illusion of reality" (59). If what remains of the city is only illusion, a labyrinthic "city of glass" to quote the title of Paul Auster's iconic short novel, then the reader needs to go beyond the coordinates of the modernist cartography to situate themselves in such an unsettling condition.

While the narrator keeps commenting on the status of the story in a self-aware fashion, on how the plot, narrative, and language should develop, one of the significant scenes which illustrates the idea of a postmodern depiction of space occurs when Ambrose is confined in the funhouse maze. Here there is a destabilization of any notion of linear, theological development where the protagonist wonders "at the endless replication of his image in the mirrors" (74). This mirror multiplication suggests the idea of a labyrinth where space is fragmented, nonlinear, and blind. In fact, as we learn, Ambrose "*lost himself in the reflection*" (74) where "the necessity for an observer makes perfect observation impossible." The metaphor of the reflection in the mirrors further suggests the impossibility of linearity in the space of narration. The postmodern narrative space is characterized by multifaceted layers of meaning with a fragmentary nature which does not lend itself to a unique interpretation as the grand narratives of modernism did. Indeed, the narrator tells us that Ambrose "strayed into the pass wherein he lingers yet" (74) with no ultimate solution or possibility of love between him and Magda, the girl he fancies.

That Ambrose remains isolated within the dark confines of the funhouse labyrinth reminds the reader of the elusive representations of cityspace in *Lot 49* as if Oedipa were imprisoned in the maze of Inverarity's construction of reality. Further contemplation on Oedipa's impossibility of discovering the meaning of the Tristero, and the multiplication of its signs throughout the streets of San Narciso, resonates with a number of theoretical works on the spirit, characteristics, or condition of postmodernism.[11] Reflecting that it is impossible

[11] For instance, one can think of Jean-François Lyotard's famous work *The Postmodern*

to assign absolute meanings to the outside world, in "The Habitations of the Word" (1984), William Gass argued that "The word is like the soul itself, that intermediary thing which moves between the realms of Being and Becoming" (97).[12] One of the most seminal issues in his article is to show how the notions of "writing" and "composition" are different — an idea that is very much present in a novel like *Lot 49*. The crux of Gass' discussion is the suggestion that the written word is not *the* word but *a* word, that is, one interpretation of that written word, among others. Put otherwise, it is impossible to obtain the truth from the written text insofar as language might be understood in multiple ways. In this respect, in the postmodern age, words are "composed" rather than "written."

In *Lot 49* when Oedipa encounters Randolph Driblette, the director of the "Courier's Tragedy," to obtain a script of the play, the first thing he tells her is that it is useless to search for meaning in texts: "It was written to entertain people. [...], it doesn't mean anything" (48). As Gass observes, "the written word which is no longer a surrogate for the real one […] is a murderer of meaning" (1984, 98). When Oedipa asks Driblette why he changed Wharfinger's original version of the play, he says, "you're […] So hung up with words, […] The words, who cares?" (*CL* 49). His answer implies that there are no longer objective realities. In fact, Driblette is a creator of meaning not a writer of words: "Wharfinger supplied words and a yarn. I gave them life" (50). This calls to mind Linda Hutcheon's notion of "historiographic metafiction" (5) as "novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages." Hutcheon suggests that "We cannot know the past except through its texts" (16). However, if a text is "a piece of systematic plagiarism" (Gass 1984, 98), then we can never know the historical truth, nor can Oedipa. Further complicating the puzzling search of truth in the novel is Pynchon's use of ur-

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Condition in which he characterizes the difference between the modern and the postmodern as mainly a question of knowledge. In his understanding, the modern is "any science that legitimates itself with reference to a metadiscourse […] making an explicit appeal to some grand narrative" (xxiii), while the postmodern is described as the "incredulity towards metanarratives" (xxiv).

[12] This brings to mind several reflections on the status of language in the postmodern condition, among which one can think of McHale's characterization of the postmodern as a shift from epistemological to ontological concerns: "postmodernist fiction differs from modernist fiction just as a poetics dominated by ontological issues differs from one dominated by epistemological issues" (1987, xii).

ban spatial elements, which runs like a leitmotif throughout. Driblette finds the text of the play in an anthology "at Zapf's Used Books over by the freeway" (*CL* 48) with "a skull on the cover" — a depiction that already undermines the hope of achieving any revelation. Zapf's store is located near the freeway which not only reminds the reader of the labyrinth, where the protagonist is trying to find a way out, but also of the endless deferral of truth.[13]

2.1. GeoUrbanism: A Dual Approach of Spatial Analysis

Referring to the Bonaventure Hotel's architectural style, Lehan observes that for Jameson "Los Angeles becomes the city beyond knowing" (277) just as in Pynchon's *Lot 49* "the mind can no longer decode the city" (271). While Lehan's argument with regard to the rise of a postmodern urban aesthetics in Pynchon's fiction is deftly put, I believe that Pynchon's novels represent and reflect upon our contemporary urban condition insofar as they provide us with instruments to contemplate the complexities of the postmodern city. Therefore, if Pynchon's fiction is so much concerned with the theme of space and its various implications, a geocritical analysis of his novels becomes essential.

Moreover, another important tool to analyze the spatiality of Pynchon's work is urbanism as his fiction is strongly urban. Whether we think of Benny Profane's haphazard rambles on the streets of New York in *V.*, Oedipa Maas' wanderings in search of the Tristero signs on San Francisco streets in *Lot 49*, Doc Sportello's investigations in the fictional Gordita Beach in *Inherent Vice*, or Maxine Tarnow's investigations in the urban texture of New York City as a former fraud examin-

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[13] All this can be related to the antirealist attitude of postmodern writers. In a heated debate with John Gardner, Gass observed that literature is no longer language. Responding to Gardner's idea of the writer's moral responsibility to the world in *On Moral Fiction*, Gass argued that "the fiction writer doesn't *describe* the world, […] rather, he *creates* one" (McCaffery 1979, 136). Therefore, *the* word becomes *a* word that "calls for interpretation" (Gass 1984, 98). When Oedipa goes to Professor Bortz to find about the original version of the Courier's Tragedy, he observes that Driblette "felt hardly any responsibility toward the word, really; but to the invisible field surrounding the play, its spirit" (95). As such, Oedipa never gets to know the truth insofar as it is impossible to pin down the unequivocal meaning of words: "a text is actually a pastiche of quotation, a piece of systematic plagiarism, and the writer merely a sluice through which language streams" (Gass 1984, 98). In other words, the written word is made up, created, projected and, thus, open to interpretation: "it can be stolen, reproduced, counterfeited, defaced, defamed" (Gass 1984, 98).

er in *Bleeding Edge*, we are engaged with the archetypes of the urban novel.

However, these observations are mostly based on the conventional definition of the genre of urban fiction, which identifies urban literature as any text set in a city and dealing with certain issues related to the urban condition, such as crime, drug use, and violence.[14] This definition is so general that it cannot take account of the social and spatial complexities of the urban context that would be otherwise available through a meticulous urban analysis. My understanding of urban fiction is informed by the belief that an urban novel is a work that specifically contributes to some aspect of urban studies. This idea originates from the burgeoning field of urban humanities, one of the significant manifestations of the Spatial Turn, which emphasizes the interaction of urban planning and (environmental) design with various disciplines of the humanities.[15]

For instance, borrowing from the works of Edward Soja and David Harvey in "the field of contemporary critical geography/spatial theory/urban politics" (2017b, 142), Diana Benea has argued that the configurations of real and fictional places in *Inherent Vice* reflect "the question of spatial/social justice" (141). At the same time, she asks "whether the novel suggests any possibility of reimagining urban" (142) and "social space" in Los Angeles. In a recent work, Utku Mogultay has observed that "Pynchon's urban imaginaries still lack sustained and in- depth consideration" (5). Digging into the geographies of fin-de-siècle modernity, he investigates how *Against the Day* reimagines the classical understanding of the modern industrial city.

The quotation which I used as the title of section 2, "It All Comes Together" in Pynchon's California, is an allusion to Soja's description of his long study on Los Angeles. Starting from the Watts Riots of 1965, Soja explains that L.A. seemed to be a particular urban region in the industrial world that could "explain practically everything that was

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[14] For a more thorough definition of urban fiction, also referred to as street fiction, street lit, hip-hop lit, or ghetto fiction, see Hill et al. 2008.

[15] Since the advent of the Spatial Turn, a variety of disciplines and critical approaches has been developed to describe this resurgent interest in space. For instance, in 2015, the American Association of Geographers launched a new journal entitled *GeoHumanities*, featuring interdisciplinary interactions at the conjunction of geography and humanities disciplines. Likewise, the Urban Humanities Initiative, originated at UCLA, advocates urban humanities as an emerging field at the intersection of urban planning, design, and the humanities.

happening in cities everywhere" (2014, 17). So "It all comes together in Los Angeles," the scholars proclaimed. Nevertheless, as the spatiality of the postmodern city was moving in new directions, it became necessary to create "a new perspective on the changing worlds of Los Angeles" (18) while developing a geographical "broad-based postmodern critical perspective" on urban change. Ever since then, postmodern urbanism has been constantly revisited by urban scholars.

From this premise, I am going to address the spatiality of Pynchon's California novels through the lenses of geocriticism and urbanism, or geourbanism as one might call it. What is compelling about such a dual approach of spatial analysis in Pynchon's fiction is the idea of "coming all together" where however "nothing" (*GR* 446) seems to be "connected to anything." In other words, it seems that Pynchon's work is a world in which "everything is connected but nothing adds up" (Knight 2000, 233). Therefore, a geourban paradigm of investigation would allow for viewing the change in the conceptualization of space in Pynchon's oeuvre through an alternative perspective. Bearing this in mind, an examination of Soja's trilogy on space and social theory with regard to the California books becomes imperative. As for Soja Los Angeles is a starting point, continuously being updated on the urbanity of the contemporary world, Pynchon's depiction of California creatively instantiates the changing urban condition of the post-war contemporary metropolis.[16] Both authors address the California space in different phases of their works to analyze or represent the social and political consequences of the organization of space in U.S. society. At the most basic level, one can also think of the fact that both Soja and Pynchon are New Yorkers who lived in California and dealt with that space in their works, while having reflected on the space of New York as well.

As for Pynchon's fiction, *V.* (1963) and *Bleeding Edge* (2013) are New York novels which were written before and after the California novels, respectively. As such, one might find certain narrative strategies in *V.*, in representing the space of New York, which have been used in the trilogy to depict the California space. For example, from the outset of *V.* Pynchon uses the trope of the road to portray the character Benny through his "road-laboring" (*V* 2) as well as his helter-skelter travels on the New York shuttle. Such depictions of the New York metropol-

[16] Among others, see Soja's trilogy of books on space and social theory: Soja 1996a, 2000, and 2010.

itan space through Benny's aimless meanderings are similar to the representations of the urban space in San Francisco and fictional San Narciso in *Lot 49* where, contrary to *V.*'s protagonist, Oedipa hopes to discover something meaningful during her wanderings. Interestingly, this spatial crisscrossing between the East Coast and the West Coast is taken up later in *Bleeding Edge*, where the protagonist, a defrocked fraud investigator, embarks on a pro bono investigation about a New York-based computer security firm. Like in Oedipa's case, in pursuit of a mysterious organization, in the course of Maxine's investigations in *Bleeding Edge* the reader comes across various representations of the urban space and the cyberspace of the program DeepArcher, as near the end of the book we learn that Maxine has been experiencing "virtuality creep lately" (353). In this regard, the urbanization of suburbia is a topic which links Pynchon's spatial imaginary from New York to California and vice versa. Indeed, *Bleeding Edge*'s narrator laments over the eastern end of once-rural Long Island, "the relentless suburbanizing, miles of mowed yards, contractor hardpan, beaverboard and asphalt shingling, treeless acres, all concentrating, all collapsing, into this terminal toehold before the long Atlantic wilderness (157-58).

3. A Journey into the Mind of Literary California

The California coast has always been crucial in the cultural imagination of the American nation. Of course, California is the end of the westward expansion of European civilization, the land of the Gold Rush and later of Hollywood, both promising the American dream. It came to represent the Biblical "promised land" of salvation and the sunny region of mild climate where it "never rains" — a mythical land that has been advertised through the images of the Malibu beaches and Disneyland, the iconic Hollywood sign as a "city upon a hill" luring generations of would-be actors and confidence men. Nonetheless, there is also the proverbial other side of the coin insofar as California represents the power of myth "both to inspire and to disappoint" (McClintock and Miller 2019, 39). As one character in Don DeLillo's *White Noise* (1985) offers an explanation as to why he hates California: "brush fires, coastal erosion, earthquakes, mass killings, et cetera. We can relax and enjoy these disasters because in our hearts we feel that California deserves what it gets. Californians invented the concept of life-style. This alone warrants their doom" (55).

As another literary representation of this notion, one need only think of Nathanael West's *The Day of the Locust* (1939), where the description of "the people who come to California to die" (4, 26, 68, 147) becomes immediately a central idea recurrently repeated throughout. The novel shows that those who come to Los Angeles to pursue their desires are often faced with the reality of that city as an urban hell, which is anticipated in the title of the protagonist's apocalyptic painting *The Burning of Los Angeles*. The crowd scene depicts the city on fire, implying the frustration of the multitudes by the filmland and the underbelly of the American/California dream. To use Raymond Chandler's words — a representative of another seminal genre set in California, noir fiction — in addressing his publisher in 1954, Los Angeles "has become a grotesque and impossible place for a human being to live in" (qtd. in Kipen 30). But even West himself, after having moved to Los Angeles, described Hollywood in rather pessimistic terms. Writing to *Contempo* Magazine's editors, Milton and Minna Abernethy, on July 27, 1933 he observed that "This place is not at all what I expected. […] And so far I've bumped into none of the things I expected and was prepared for by reports and plays like Once in a Life Time" (qtd. in Abernethy).

To mention one more classic example, we may think of John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), which depicts the plight of the migrant farmers to California and the corruption of the agricultural system. The novel recounts the story of the Joad family and their journey from Oklahoma to California as part of the Dust Bowl migration of the 1930s. However, when they arrive there, the family has to come to terms with a completely different reality than that which they had imagined: the poverty of field workers, low wages, homelessness, and hunger. An interesting detail in the novel is the way in which the representation of the road already heralds the troubles of the family before reaching the dreamland of California. As they get close to the California state line, Grandma dies and their car becomes a hearse carrying her corpse — an apocalyptic reminder that California is "an ironic ending point for a misbegotten manifest destiny" (Hicks et al 394).[17]

[17] While there is a host of literary examples about this dialectical vison of California, one can think of the promise of the California dream long before it was officially a state. Going back to colonial times, Garci Rodríguez Ordóñez de Montalvo's novel *The Adventures of Esplandián* recounts the adventures of a Spanish knight who comes across an exotic island which he describes as California: "Know then, that on the

As it is widely recognized, classic "noir" is the traditional genre that represents (Southern) California. It is a label that is usually attached to literary works that address the dark side of middle-class American's aspirations. In doing so, Hollywood screenwriters played a significant role in producing what we know as classic "noir" literature. Pynchon is well aware of this literary tradition and we can observe many parallels between his California novels and works of this genre. For instance, the genre in these works is the detective story: in *Lot 49* Oedipa becomes an obsessive questor, trying to make sense of her ex-boyfriend's will. *Vineland* rotates around Prairie Wheeler's search to reveal the mystery about her mother. In *Inherent Vice* Doc Sportello tries to uncover the plot behind a ruthless land developer's mysterious disappearance. As such, the structure of the California novels reminds the reader of the "noir" genre, not least because they all include plots of detection set in the land of classic "noir," California. In fact, in a review of *Inherent Vice*, Bernard Duyfhuizen has observed that all of Pynchon's novels are somewhat "'detective' stories."[18] Nonetheless, as usual, Pynchon's fiction does not readily lend itself to any such totalizing categorizations. While one can find similarities between the California books and works written in the "noir" genre, Pynchon's ironic stance usually parodies such expectations and labels.

Although Pynchon addresses the California space in the trilogy, his fascination with the Golden state goes well beyond these three novels. As in *Vineland*, at the end of *Against the Day* we find a number of fam-

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right hand of the Indies, there is an island called California, very close to the side of the Terrestrial Paradise."

[18] As for *Inherent Vice*, he observes that the course of Doc's investigations indicates a common theme in the hard-boiled detective genre, of which Pynchon makes a playful parody. Yet, Duyfhuizen is at his best when he posits that it is the entire milieu of L.A., and not merely the characters or institutions like the Golden fang, where the "moral ambiguity" (*IV* 11) of the novel is located — a promising suggestion that is not followed through as the review comes to an end. Drawing upon Duyfhuizen's idea, I believe that analyzing the representation of space in Pynchon's fiction in relation to the detective genre might help better understand the importance of (California) space as a narrative tool in Pynchon's work to set in motion or sometimes reflect upon the detective story or the critical framework of that genre. Returning to *Inherent Vice*, one might assume that the detective framework serves, at least partially, to give shape to the book's sprawling narrative. In this regard, there are further interactions between the spatial representations and the detective structure insomuch as through that genre the reader comes to know about the dark underbelly of California's land development programs, where Los Angeles is depicted as a sprawling bulk of highways and byways and real estate concepts.

ily reunions in 1920s California. In fact, the California chapters play a significant role in *Against the Day* since they indicate the relationship between the genre of detective fiction and the representation of the urban space. Near the end of *Against the Day* we are shown the character Lew Basnight who has developed into a detective, through the usual noir setting of Los Angeles in the 1920s, and is confronted with a Chandleresque West Coast noir mystery in tracking down a missing woman. Lew beings his career as a Chicago-based antiunion operative for a detective agency. In this narrative strand, the reader comes across a picturesque, idealized depiction of a Chicago evening by detective Lew: "the light's still in the sky and the lamps are just being lit along the big avenues […], and the girls are all out of the offices and shops […], and the steak houses are cranking up for the evening trade, and the plate-glass windows are shining" (*AD* 56). Nevertheless, when he takes to walking in the metropolis, Lew faces the complex reality of urban life in that city as it turns into a realm of illegibility: "Was it still Chicago?" (172). In effect, in the course of his detective job, he comes to learn that "American geography had gone all peculiar" (150).

Lew then becomes a "Psychical Detective" (227) for a London-based secret organization. Here, he comes to know London as an illusory city with a phantasmagoric cityscape, covered by structures which "at twilight somehow leached all color from the immediate surroundings" (225), and buildings that emerge as "a ragged arrangement of voids and unlighted windows" (232). Finally, he turns into a noir detective in the familiar fictional noir Los Angeles in his quest to find a missing girl, where he tries to make sense of the sleazy underside of that metropolis, lurking underneath a scintillating eternal appearance. Indeed, in this detective story line, the booster imagery of Los Angeles as a salubrious city of sunshine and open air is subverted.[19]

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[19] Analyzing these three different urban scenarios in *Against the Day*, from Chicago in the 1890s to London in the 1900s and finally to Los Angeles in the 1920s can provide intriguing insights in terms of the interrelation between the urban space and the detective genre. On that score, Mogultay has provided some promising analyses. For instance, he has argued that through Lew's "ambulatory" (163) exploration of the Chicago cityscape, Pynchon challenges the conventional idea that the figure of the detective can offer "reassuring representations of urban space" (Howell 360). Although Mogultay has carefully addressed the cityscapes of London and Los Angeles as well, it would be useful to consider these three detective narrative strands in relation to the novel's larger mystery plot, namely the Traverse brothers' attempt to track down their father's murderers. More ambitiously, one could investigate *Against the Day*'s detective subplots in connection with other Pynchonian mystery

In *Gravity's Rainbow* the importance of the California space is bespoken by the presence of the Los Angeles movie theatre manager, the adenoidal Nixon figure, Richard M. Zhlubb, cruising the L.A. freeways. Here, Pynchon uses the trope of the highways to remind the reader of Nixon's oppressive policies in handling the countercultural movements. Mr. Zhlubb rides the California freeways hunting for the "freaks" (776) queueing for the theater who show "full disrespect for the Prohibitions." In such a condition, the California highways become an essential locus in the novel that suggests a sense of foreboding. This feeling is further emphasized by the ending scene which features a rocket positioned right above the fictive Orpheus movie theater in 1970s Los Angeles. This might indicate that the sunny Southern California obliquely represented in the section "COUNTDOWN," where everybody "walks around suntanned, and red-eyed from one irritant or another" (774), is shadowed by the ominous presence of the rocket. At the same time, the final song in the novel invites the reader, in the contemporary present, to take part in it even though this Los Angeles might represent only a space of faint hope.

Regarding *Mason & Dixon*, Stephen Hock has observed that although this work is not among Pynchon's California books, "the nominal connection that Pynchon draws between the Northmen's 11th-century Vineland and California's late 20th-century Vineland indicates how Pynchon's oeuvre, taken as a whole, positions California as the end result of the history of European settlement in the North American continent" (202). As we know, in *Mason & Dixon* the two British surveyors work under contract to draw an artificial line between Pennsylvania and Maryland. Imposing the Mason–Dixon line on America's open space, they constantly move toward west.

With that in mind, it is useful to notice that the California novels share some distinguishing characteristics which make it compelling to analyze them under one umbrella. Firstly, all the three books are set during the 1960s — a decade in which Pynchon himself lived in the West Coast. Set around 1965, *Lot 49*, as David Cowart has suggested, is "quintessentially a sixties document" (1980, 29). It is no overstatement to say that the sixties were the stepping stone for Pynchon's success-

narrative threads. Such an examination would shed light on the significance of (West Coast) space in Pynchon's fiction as a narrative instrument to unfold, or complicate, the mystery plot and at times ruminate on the critical structure of the detective genre.

ful career; so much so that 24 years after the publication of *Lot 49*, in 1990, Pynchon would set many parts of his second California novel, *Vineland*, in the 1960s, though the California depicted here is much different from the space that was the protagonist of *Lot 49*. Quite twenty years later, in 2009, Pynchon would come back one last time to the West Coast and write *Inherent Vice*, a novel once again about the sixties and set in 1970 California. Moreover, differently from the other mostly historiographical novels, the California books deal with three different stages of Pynchon's life: *Lot 49* was published during the early stage of his career, *Vineland* came out almost at the time of his marriage, and *Inherent Vice* belongs to the later phase of his career.

In many ways *Lot 49* reflects the controversial spirit of the sixties America in representing both the countercultural possibilities as well as the overreaching oppression within the American society. The novel, set roughly at the time of its writing, invokes the possibility of redemption and at once undermines that hope by refusing to provide a rock-bottom solution. Essential in Oedipa's quest is the dominant role of the dead real state entrepreneur Pierce Inverarity who controls the land and her world as from the underworld. This may reflect the general sensation in the sixties that the governmental policies of control were gradually intruding into the freedom of people's daily lives. Seen from a larger angle, this points to the fact that Pynchon's imagination of the sixties has changed in the course of time insofar as both *Vineland* and *Inherent Vice* are works of a more mature writer who looks back on a bygone decade nostalgically.

Another common thread running through the California trilogy is that in all the three novels there is a more accessible plot that mostly revolves around one single protagonist who undertakes a rather linear quest, as opposed to the bigger novels where the reader comes across the interwoven web of multilayered plots. Therefore, they are shorter in length and, structurally, less complex compared with the encyclopedic works.

4. Fictional Spaces in the California Trilogy and across Pynchon's Work

In almost all of Pynchon's novels there is some reference to supernatural or mythical places such as the elusive location "Vheissu" in *V.*, the imaginary territory of the Thanatoids in *Vineland*, Pynchon's version

of the Delaware Wedge in *Mason & Dixon*, the mythological land of Shambhala in *Against the Day*, and the disappeared continents of Lemuria and Atlantis in *Inherent Vice*. The creation of these metaphysical places in the novels helps the author come up with alternative ways of portraying space and time to create narratives that challenge the already accepted understanding of reality. Indeed, these incongruous spaces can be described as a kind of counter-map to the static space of the map as we know it.

In this respect, one might say that California represents one of the most mythical places, if not the most mythical one, in the U.S. For instance, Pynchon's fictional Vineland, in the eponymous novel, bears testimony to California's status as a "real-and-imagined" (Soja 1996a, 6) territory simultaneously. As Cowart has observed, Pynchon's second California book celebrates "the myth of American promise" (1994, 9). Indeed, California is a unique real place which however might be considered as mythical as the metaphysical spaces depicted throughout Pynchon' fiction. As such, a consideration of the representation of these supernatural places across his work would be useful both to better understand Pynchon's narrative technique in depicting such spaces as well as to find out the relationship that these mythical depictions might bear to those represented in the California books.

On that score, in *Mason & Dixon* there is a small "Wedge" (313) of ambiguous territory, located neither in Maryland nor Pennsylvania, which creates an alternate domain in the novel. It is an unexpected angle in the territory which comes out of some calculation errors of the lines by the surveyors. An anomalous space, "the Wedge" (313) is the reflection of a territory that does not lend itself to any measurement. As we learn from Pynchon's narrator in *Inherent Vice*, "the map is not the territory" (157), or better yet, in Jean Baudrillard's words, "The territory no longer precedes the map, nor does it survive it. It is nevertheless the map that precedes the territory" (1983, 3).

Arguing that "There's no escape from the cartographic paradox" (1), the geographer Mark Monmonier suggested that "to present a useful and truthful picture," maps "must distort reality." In this regard, the impossibility of mapping the space of "the Wedge" (313) in *Mason & Dixon* is similar to the representation of the fictional Yoknapatawpha County in William Faulkner's work. The word Yoknapatawpha means "split land," which makes one think of the dividing Mason-Dixon Line. However, in Pynchon's novel, "the Wedge" (313) is depicted as

though it were a revolt by the natural environment against the forced imposition of human will on the unmappable territory. As the character Sortilège in *Inherent Vice* mentions, "like any living creature, Earth has an immune system too, and sooner or later she's going to start rejecting agents of disease" (87).

But more importantly, Faulkner did map Yoknapatawpha County twice. In 1936, he provided a map of that imaginary county for the endpapers of *Absalom, Absalom!*, and in 1946, for Malcolm Cowley's edited volume *The Portable Faulkner*. Interestingly, the second cartographic mapping included significant deletions and additions. Although Faulkner drew the map of a fictitious place, such variations between the two versions indicate what Baudrillard called "hyperreality" (1983, 17), that is, "today it is the territory whose shreds slowly rot across the extent of the map" (3). Therefore, just like Mason and Dixon's failed effort to map the untamable corner of "the Wedge" (313), the textual Yoknapatawpha County could never depict a whole picture of the landscape representing Faulkner's own Lafayette County — a suggestion made by the geographer Charles Aiken in *William Faulkner and the Southern Landscape*.[20]

Such loopholes in the representation of the landscape allow for the creation of alternative spaces of hope in Pynchon's work and one can find intriguing links among them across his novels. In fact, in *Mason & Dixon* "the Wedge" (313) can be linked to the final paragraph of *Inherent Vice* and the fog that envelopes the main character, blocking him from viewing the way in front of him. The protagonist's attempt to make out the road and connect with other drivers emphasizes the idea of an alternative possibility through resistance to the fixed order of the world, which I will expound on later in chapter three.

So long as *Against the Day* is concerned, it provides the reader with episodes that open a different window into Pynchon's depiction of supernatural spaces. The Chums of Chance are a group of adolescent balloonists whose view of the urban landscape oscillates between the aerial and the ground perspectives. Near the end of the novel, it dawns on them that they have gone off the map and have come upon the "Counter-Earth" (1023). Although the narrator says that it was "As if all maps and charts had suddenly become unreadable" (1026), we learn that it seemed they were "on the Earth they had never [...] left."

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[20] Aiken 2009, 26.

In this paradoxical condition, the Chums find themselves "lost" and yet "would be rescued" (1035). Stumbling on the Counter-Earth gives birth to the possibility of an alternative way of understanding the new terrain, "not exhausted by the geographical" (1026), other than the rationalized space of the map as they know it. This movement from the mapped to an undetermined space provides the boys with the possibility of moving toward building a "supranational idea" (1087), instantiated in the ending scene of the novel in the annual gathering up above the sky.

Against the Day showers us with such scenes. Elsewhere, when the narrator tells us about "the great stone Arch known as the Tushuk Tash" (771), in the span of a couple of paragraphs there is an explosion where the character Kit Traverse has a view of a city "vivid in these distances" (772). This episode reminds us of Shambhala, a holy city in the novel located somewhere in Central Asia. Nevertheless, there is also the suggestion that it is merely an illusion as the narrator recounts that "soon enough it would be absorbed into the same gray confusion of exitless ravines" (772). In Central Asia, Kit is looking for Shambhala in his feverish visions where, on the shore of what he recognizes as Lake Baikal, he can briefly see "a city, crystalline, redemptive" (1084), even though he is not at the site of the lake when he experiences that vision. One can draw connections between Shambhala and the fictional realm of Vheissu in *V.* or the imaginary location Shangri-La, in James Hilton's *Lost Horizon*, given that Pynchon mentions that mythical place in *Vineland*. However, the linking thread between all these fictitious geographical representations is the impossibility of pinning them down on the map. While it sounds an oxymoronic statement to draw the map of a non-existent place, such an impossibility points to the concomitant existence of possible alternative realms beyond ours, as implied in these novels.

In *Gravity's Rainbow*, there is the supernatural space of the séance that makes it possible to communicate with the dead, such as the assassinated German statesman and industrialist Walter Rathenau. This reminds the reader of the ghost of Mason's late wife in *Mason & Dixon* who puts us in touch with the territory of the dead through her visits to Mason. In *Gravity's Rainbow*, we learn that during the séance in Berlin an "elite" (171) group from "the corporate Nazi crowd" is gathered to get in touch with "the late foreign minister" (170). Speaking from the world of the dead, through the character Peter Sachsa, the mur-

dered financier and politician informs the Nazi group that "all you believe real is illusion" (173), undermining the hope of pinpointing hard and fast realities in the world and underscoring the possibility of alternative ones.

The California trilogy too offers a host of such fictional spaces. As we shall see, in *Lot 49*, the creation of a space of resistance by the WASTE members to the hegemony of the official structure of power is the representation of an alternative reality that questions the legitimacy of the incumbent apparatus of control. Indeed, one can think of the Tristero itself as an imaginary, in-between space where the threshold of some revelation might be situated. In Pynchon's second California novel, there are environs inhabited by the mythological creatures called the *Woge* who had been living in Vineland before the influx of the first humans. Here, the withdrawal of these imaginary creatures into the surrounding landscape can be read within the larger framework of the 1960s counterculture. In *Inherent Vice*, there is the Ouija board episode that can be related to the mythical continent of Lemuria. When Doc receives a mysterious postcard from his ex-girlfriend Shasta Fay Hepworth, he interprets the picture on its front as "a message from someplace besides a Pacific island" (136) and decides to go the address given by the Ouija-board. With that in mind, all these scenes call attention to the way that the powerful systems of control have been shaping the world and yet they suggest that there might be alternative possibilities to counter the hegemony of such apparatuses of power.

In this respect, an intriguing offshoot from this discourse is how urban planning, under those systems of power and control, has been forming our habitats. As David Harvey argued in 1973, there is a hidden undercurrent of urban geography that works to sustain urban injustice.[21] Given that urban planning has significant impacts on the social spaces of society, it is essential that city planning be done in such a way to address issues of spatial justice, whether it is in terms of gentrification of space, economic exploitation, or democratic social action.[22] I will discuss this matter in some detail in chapter three. Nevertheless, as an attempt to move in the direction of a more spatially

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[21] In *Social Justice and the City*, Harvey uses the term "liberal formulations" (21) through which he addresses the daily processes of decision-making at locational level, by developers, retailers, planners, etc., that lead to the creation of an unjust urban geography in the industrial capitalist city.

[22] The pivotal point in Soja's definition of the concept of spatial justice is the centrality

(and hence socially) just and sustainable society, we can think of Nan Ellin's concept of "Integral Urbanism" (2006 xxv) which aims to "To inform, inspire, and incite a better human habitat" in the twenty-first century metropolis.[23] These urban geographical processes are fertile ground for innovative research in Pynchon studies that have not been yet addressed in a systematic way and call for further research. As such, the present book endeavors to provide insights and analyses of these spatial phenomena, especially in (relation to) Pynchon's trilogy, where they fit my broader argument of urbanism in analyzing Pynchon's conceptualization of urban spaces.

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of geography inherently embedded in the nature of justice which is "a vital part of how justice and injustice are socially constructed and evolve over time" (Soja 2010, 1).

[23] Noting that "Failure to address urban problems holistically has indeed taken its toll" (2006, xxxiv) on the twenty-first century metropolis, Ellin describes "Integral Urbanism" as a possible solution to address the "inability to apply a wide-angle lens to the many issues that bear upon the shape of our environment," including "the decline of central cities, social isolation, and environmental degradation." In 2012, she expanded her previous work through the concept of "good Urbanism" providing useful insights on how to create thriving, not surviving, environments which "support humanity more optimally, places that sustain us rather than strain us" (1).

I. "This City that Can Never Be": Pynchon's Vision of (City) Space in *The Crying of Lot 49*

1. The Spatial Dimension in Pynchon's Early Life and Career

In April 1964 Pynchon told his then literary agent Candida Donadio that he was facing a creative crisis, with four novels in process. He went on to say that "If they come out on paper anything like they are inside my head then it will be the literary event of the millennium" (Gussow). Writing about the memories of Mary Ann Tharaldsen, Pynchon's girlfriend in the mid-sixties, in a 2013 article Boris Kachka tells us that Pynchon "often worked on multiple books at once—three or four in the mid-sixties—and a friend remembers him bringing up the subject of 1997's *Mason & Dixon* in 1970." With several novels simultaneously in progress, it is enticing to think that from the outset Pynchon had a clear idea of what he aimed to achieve in his literary career. It is this attitude, or perhaps we shall say poetical vision, that tempts one to think that Pynchon was on his way to speculate about, and perhaps anticipate, a variety of important socio-political and cultural processes within the American society — the very same trends which find expression in his novels.

In his essay, Kachka mentions that Pynchon's father "was Oyster Bay's superintendent of highways and then, briefly, town supervisor (the equivalent of mayor), until he was accused of complicity in a scheme to overpay a road-surfacing company." Similarly, in 1977, Jules Siegel wrote that Pynchon's father "was commissioner of roads for the town of Oyster Bay, Long Island, and Tom worked with the road crews in the summer" (122). If true, that experience might have prepared Pynchon to address spatial themes in his fiction and probably affected his portrayal of the natural and built environments. In fact,

in his period of summer employment, he might have been involved in the type of roadwork depicted by his characters Tyrone Slothrop in *Gravity's Rainbow* and Benny Profane in *V.* Luc Herman and John Krafft observe that an early version of *V.* in typescript contained a chapter entitled "Millennium" (14), which was not included in the published version of the novel. They suggest that, in that chapter, Pynchon's description of the road workers on Stony Bridge Lane, "getting drunk, making mischief, wasting time" (19), as well as "city government corruption" might have something to do with his "personal experience as a summer employee, and to his personal knowledge as the son of a local-government official and prominent Republican whose career would in fact be touched by scandal in 1963" (19).

Pynchon was born and grew up in the suburban town of Glen Cove near Oyster Bay, Long Island, New York. Later in California, he lived in suburban places such as Manhattan beach, which probably helped him depict such spaces in his work. Indeed, between 1976 and 1977 he might have spent more than a year in "a small redwood cabin in Trinidad, California, separated by 300 feet of trees from the lush, rocky shore of the Pacific" (Kachka). Being "an author on the run," his highly conscientious effort to remain unknown made him move "from Mexico to California, from Texas to London, trying to preserve his anonymity and privacy" (Gussow). Part of his geographical mobility was due to his tendency to hide from the public eye. On that score, one can think of Pynchon's seclusion from society as a technique that underscores the idea of postmodern authorship. Understanding history and fiction as human constructs, in the postmodern condition, the writer is a "scriptor" (Barthes 5) of texts open to interpretation.[1]

After he won the National Book Award for *Gravity's Rainbow*, Pynchon might have gone back to New York from Manhattan Beach. The

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[1] As Gass, among others, argued, the writer is "merely a sluice through which language streams" (1984, 98) and, thus, his words "can be stolen, reproduced, counterfeited." We know that there have been many rumors about Pynchon's identity and whereabouts. Some have gone as far as suggesting that his fiction is the work of a group of people that goes by that name. Such doubts about Pynchon and his work reflect the postmodern idea of authorship and the fact that one can never know the truth insofar as the writer is not a conveyor of an unequivocal reality. Pynchon's absence from society calls to mind Roland Barthes' famous essay "The Death of the Author" in which he argued that a text is "a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash" (5). In this respect, the reclusive quality of Pynchon's life emphasizes the postmodern notion of the author as a "scriptor" (Barthes 4) of texts that call for interpretation.

Shetzlines, whom Pynchon occasionally visited in rural Oregon, remember his unusual lifestyle at their house. As we learn from Kachka's essay, Shetzline's ex-wife Mary Beal recalls "once, at a party out in the woods, a man they knew 'outed Tom as a famous writer.'" Although the people in the area were only country folk who did not read literary novels, "It mortified Tom to the point where he left the following day" (Kachka). Unsatisfied with New York, in an unpublished letter to the Shetzlines, he wrote that, together with a girlfriend, he might head "across the sea" (Kachka) or probably move back West. "Yes, it does sound like 'aimless drifting,'" (Kachka) wrote Pynchon, as he was moving back and forth around the country like one of his yo-yo protagonists. Pynchon's dissatisfaction made him a restless traveler — a condition that gave him the chance to become familiar with different types of land/city-scapes around the world. When in 1955 he left engineering physics at Cornell to enlist in U.S. Navy, "He wrote much later about feeling in college 'a sense of that other world humming out there'—a sense that would surely nag him from one city to another for the rest of his life" (Kachka).

As far as Pynchon's early fiction is concerned, there are significant traces that call attention to his fictional creation and/or representation of urban/suburban spaces. From the very outset of *V.*, we learn that Benny Profane "had been road-laboring" (2) ever since he was discharged from the Navy. Herman and Krafft mention that, in "Millennium," Profane tells a story about road labor to Fina Mendoza, whom he'd like to have as his girlfriend. By "the end of typescript chapter 9," Fina asks Profane about his past: "What was it like on the road (TS 149)," to which he answers with a story about road labor. Calling *V.* "an urban novel" (1988, 74), David Seed has observed that Profane fails to grasp the significance of his repeated nightmare of a street: "The lights gleamed unflickering on hydrants; manhole covers which lay around in the street. There were neon signs scattered here and there, spelling out words he wouldn't remember when he woke" (*V* 17). He argues that "In such an urban novel, it is not surprising that the street should become an emblem of threatening anonymity" (1998, 74) where "Profane fears his own disassembly in this street." Furthermore, the novel engages with the metropolitan space of New York as Profane, a self-declared schlemiel, travels backward and forward in a haphazard manner on the Times Square-Grand Central shuttle. Profane's "yo-yoing" in the urban space of New York is nothing but traveling in

a meaningless manner in a novel where the Yo-Yo is a representation of "motion without meaning" (Slade 1994, 73).

The theme of aimless wandering on the subway reminds us of DeLillo's *Libra*. The very opening of the novel shows the protagonist, the author's version of Lee Harvey Oswald, who rides "the subway to the ends of the city, two hundred miles of track" (1). Just like *V.*'s Profane, *Libra*'s protagonist rides the subway aimlessly "just to ride" (1). One can also think of Profane's yo-yo-like movements not only in terms of his fortuitous ramblings back and forth within the metropolitan cityspace but also as he reluctantly bounces down to the underworld of Manhattan sewers, hunting alligators, and back up to the street level to make money. There is a similar spatial dynamic in DeLillo's novel where Oswald moves away from his small room in the Bronx to the underworld of the New York subway, where he feels "on the edge of no-control" (1).

This double urban spatial structure might reflect the narrative structure of the novels. In *V.* the reader comes across two different story lines: the novel's present between the years 1955 and 1956, and the historical sections from 1898 to 1943. Likewise, in *Libra* there is a double historical structure: episodes about Oswald's life from boyhood in the Bronx until John F. Kennedy's assassination and a parallel story line in which a CIA archivist tires to reconstruct the assassination from fragments of information. In both works, the spatial representations serve to reflect upon the complexities of how history might be understood in the postmodern condition. In DeLillo's novel the two different narrative directions represent centrifugal and centripetal energies in history. *Libra* addresses the becoming of history by rolling moments upon one another, while at the same time escaping from the entry point to history and submitting to the narrative stream. Through "Stencil fils" (209), in *V.*, Pynchon depicts the difficulties of assigning any shape or meaning to history, indicating that any such attempt would produce no clear solution. As Hayden White put it, "Neither the reality nor the meaning of history is 'out there' in the form of a story awaiting only a historian to discern its outline and identify the plot that comprises its meaning" (487). Indeed, the depiction of the mysterious V. in Pynchon's book servs to foreground the possibility of a mythical historical figure only to be subverted later as an embodiment of the entropic energies of an exhausted civilization.

In other words, in neither novel is there a comprehensive answer to the mystery. In Pynchon's text, Herbert Stencil's imaginative tour

through the historical chapters in his obsessive quest for the elusive lady V., indicated in his father's journal, is not successful. Representing a similar faith, near the end of the novel, Profane declares that "I haven't learned a goddamn thing" (211). In the epigraph to part one of *Libra*, we learn that one can find happiness "where there is no borderline between one's personal world, and the world in general" — an idea that is reflected in the description of the subway as a place where the protagonist seems to be "on the edge" (1) of some hidden "power" as he lays his hands against the car glass at the front of the train. Indeed, to Oswald, the subway was a "purer form" (2) of "the famous city above." Nevertheless, his eventual experience in the USSR does not lead to the desired happiness indicated in the epigraph.

Pynchon's short story "Low-Lands" offers cues indicating that, even before writing *V.*, he was aware of urban developments and the changing American cityscape. When the protagonist Dennis Flange together with his old navy friend Pig Bodine, and a garbage collector acquaintance named Rocco, head for the Long-Island local garbage dump for a place to sleep, the narrator relates that "They headed south, into that part of the Island which is nothing but housing developments and shopping centers" (46). We also learn that the dump was "sunk fifty feet below the streets of the sprawling housing development which surrounded it" (47). While Rocco dumps the load, what strikes Flange is

> this thought that one day, perhaps fifty years from now, perhaps more, there would no longer be any hole: the bottom would be level with the streets of the development, and houses would be built on it too. As if some maddeningly slow elevator were carrying you toward a known level to confer with some inevitable face on matters which had already been decided. (47)

This might suggest Pynchon's interest in urban geographical developments in the U.S. and their possible effects on the citizens' lives. At the same time one can think of these spatial representations in relation to the narrative itself. In this respect, there seems to be an allusion to T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land" as Flange enters the garbage dump, a literal wasteland. The narrator relates that

> Anyone who has looked at the open sea under a special kind of illumination or in a mood conducive to metaphor will tell you of the curious illusion that the ocean, despite its movement, has a certain solidity; it

> becomes a gray or glaucous desert, a waste land which stretches away to the horizon, and all you would have to do would be to step over the lifelines to walk away over its surface; if you carried a tent and enough provisions you could journey from city to city that way. (48)

One of the first critics to suggest that "Low-Lands" is "almost a parody" (1990, 11) of "The Waste Land" was Joseph Slade, who argued that Bolingbroke, the watchman at the garbage dump, is the "king of the waste land" (11). Pynchon's depiction of Bolingbroke as the "uncontested ruler" (49) of the dump, or a "a discrete kingdom," seems to be a mockery of the Fisher King in Eliot's poem, which undercuts the authenticity of that encounter. Indeed, in the ending scene of the story, Flange accepts to join Nerissa in her room, a gypsy girl who lives at the dump and introduces him to her pet rat and friend Hyacinth. The name of Nerissa's pet is reminiscent of Eliot's hyacinth girl, a symbol of fertility and rejuvenation in the poem. Although that moment of possibility in "The Waste Land" is not capitalized on, Pynchon's short story seems to offer a parody of that encounter in the poem by naming Nerissa's rat Hyacinth. Even if we compare Eliot's Hyacinth girl with Nerissa herself as the girl who owns Hyacinth the rat — so if we consider Nerissa as the Hyacinth girl — the result of the encounter still seems to be parodic. For one thing, Nerissa lives in a room made of discarded materials among the piles of garbage and she further tells Flange that many years ago an old woman called Violetta had read her fortune and had foreseen that she would marry a tall, blonde Anglo. The old fortune teller woman is a reminder of Madam Sosostris in "The Waste Land." However, even though in Eliot's poem, Madam Sosostris' predictions are foreboding, in Pynchon's short story when Nerissa asks Flange to stay with her, and contrary to what happens in the Hyacinth girl episode in "The Waste Land," Flange agrees to her request.

Most often Pynchon's fiction addresses the socio-economic problems of the underclass and, in doing so, he regularly uses spatial tropes and strategies to portray them. In his famous essay "A Journey Into the Mind of Watts," Pynchon wrote about the aftermath of the Watts riots of 1965 where he criticized white people's attitude toward the black residents of Watts. Depicting the atmosphere of racial problems, Pynchon guides us through the Watts neighborhood of South Los Angeles by addressing the issues of segregationist land use and urban gentri-

fication. As he observes, "Watts is country which lies, psychologically, uncounted miles further than most whites seem at present willing to travel." Nevertheless, Pynchon's cartographic representation of Watts, and its dark undercurrents, at the same time offers a potential alternative aspect of life through Simon Rodia's Watts Towers.

He explains that for over 30 years an Italian immigrant named Rodia put together "all kinds of scrap and waste" from the Watts landscape, "both the real and the emotional one," to convert a part of the neighborhood to the Towers. By doing so, Rodia created an alternative reality, an imaginary space of hope, which was "his own dream of how things should have been: a fantasy […] encrusted with a dazzling mosaic of Watts debris." At some point in *V.*, we learn that Stencil momentarily leaves the pursuit of the unknown female *V.* as he is "waiting for Paola to reveal how she fitted into this grand Gothic pile of inferences he was hard at work creating" (103). Just like Stencil, who becomes an "architect-by-necessity of intrigues" (103), Rodia is an assembler of the "Watts debris" whose towers can be considered as a parody of Antoni Gaudí's modern architecture, not least the famous Sagrada Família. One can think of Rodia's towers, made of glass splinters and urban garbage on the Watts streets, as a type of postmodern architecture that reflects the fragmentary nature of reality and the impossibility of conveying any original meaning, while at the same time portraying a mushrooming corpus of competing, yet hardly attainable, realities. Pynchon's "mosaic of Watts debris" in his article calls to mind Eliot's "heap of broken images" in "The Waste land." Nevertheless, while in Eliot's poem this phrase is preceded by the adjective *only*, as the "only" reality that "son of man" can know, in Pynchon's article the adjective *dazzling* comes before that description, which might be understood in, at least, two possible ways: either as the representation of hope for the immigrant worker as an alternative possibility made of the very bits of discarded materials in the urban environment of Watts, or indeed as something dazzling which makes one lose their clear vision because of its shining, blinding light. In the latter case, the dazzling assemblage could reflect a different reality indicated by the pieces of garbage and waste on the streets of Watts representing an image of poverty and injustice, as Pynchon identifies.

Pynchon's journalistic reference to Rodia's Watts Towers resonates with similar depictions in the works of other important writers. For instance, in DeLillo's *Underworld*, the protagonist Nick Shay thinks

of the towers as a "great strange architectural cluster" (124) that represents "an idiosyncrasy out of someone's innocent anarchist visions, […] a man whose narrative is mostly blank spaces." One can interpret the question of anarchy in relation to Pynchon's early short story "Entropy," where it is treated as a theme of possibility — a topic which Pynchon deals with more extensively later in his work. In DeLillo's novel, it is important that Rodia be described as an architect of waste whose final product is "riddled with epiphanies" (224). In other words, it is as though the novel suggested "a reverence for waste, for the redemptive qualities of the things we use and discard" (371). This architectural representation of the waste towers seems to offer some hope for people like Rodia, who created his own "narrative" (124) out of useless materials and "blank spaces." At the same time, *Underworld*'s narrator relates that when he finished the towers, Rodia gave away the land and his art: "He left Watts and went away, he said, to die" (124), which undermines the possibility of any redemptive solution indicated in the novel.

Regarding *Lot 49*, Charles Hollander has suggested that "the suburban community Kinneret-Among-The-Pines" (74), where Oedipa's home is located, seems to be a "mocking of pretentious Jewish suburbs built on Long Island during the postwar boom of the late 1940s and 1950s, when Pynchon was growing up there." Although it is difficult to say whether Pynchon had recourse to personal experience in depicting Kinneret, there are interesting similarities between the author and the protagonist of his novel. Before visiting Professor Bortz, Oedipa stops by the Berkeley campus of the University of California where she comes across a different atmosphere than her own experience of college. The narrator relates that "this Berkeley was like no somnolent Siwash out of her own past at all" (65), namely the second part of the 1950s that was "Another world" (64). Joanna Freer has suggested that "Writing this, Pynchon is expressing his own direct experience of a change in campus dynamic" (2014, 42).[2]

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[2] Pynchon observes that in his early work he felt "an unkind impatience with fiction" (*SL* 19) which he "felt then to be 'too autobiographical.'" He explains, "I had come up with the notion that one's personal life had nothing to do with fiction, when the truth […] is nearly the direct opposite" (*SL* 19). Nevertheless, critics usually agree that in the introduction to *Slow Learner*, where Pynchon criticizes his own writing, he might be ironic. This is the case when he says in *Lot 49*, "I seem to have forgotten most of what I thought I'd learned up till then" (20). But even earlier than 1984, in an August 1961 letter written while working on *V.*, Pynchon told his editor that

The Northern California town of Kinneret underscores, on the one hand, Pynchon's awareness of the California suburban space and, on the other, emphasizes the anxieties of a protagonist who is on the verge of some "hierophany" (*CL* 18). The creation of this suburban town helps Pynchon set in motion a quest for the protagonist of his novel where she comes across several experiences which resonate with some important events in the historical and cultural panorama of U.S. society during the 1960s.[3] Having been named executor of the estate of her ex-lover, "a California real estate mogul" (1), Pierce Inverarity, she desperately tries to make sense of his will. She leaves Kinneret and travels south to San Narciso, a fictional town near Los Angeles where Inverarity has lots of assets. Through this imaginary cartography, Pynchon's novel presents Inverarity as a wealthy tycoon who has been developing the land relentlessly. En route to understanding her ex-boyfriend's testament, Oedipa runs across a mysterious postal delivery service called the Tristero, defeated by the rival Thurn und Taxis in the 18th century. However, the Tristero continued to exist underground up into the present to take revenge. This opens an ever-increasing series of clues as to what the Tristero mystery might be. As the protagonist embarks on an endless journey to find about Inverarity's will and the Tristero, the reader comes to know about the urban space of Southern California represented in the novel. It is sometimes through a night walk as Oedipa decides to "drift" (69) like a flâneur on San Francisco streets, sometimes by describing the sprawling pattern of the houses and the streets in San Narciso, and at times via the description of the road as an "illusion" (14) when the protagonist for the first time drives on the highway in that fictitious town.

Moving through the urban environment of Southern California, Oedipa often runs into a muted post horn symbol with one loop and the slogan W.A.S.T.E — an acronym for "We Await Silent Tristero's Empire" (116). While exploring Inverarity's testament, she uncovers puzzling coincidences which, she thinks, might be evidence for Tristero's existence. However, with the proliferation of the signs and the

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he didn't "know dick about writing novels yet." However, as Herman has argued, "both the statement in the letter and his later self-presentation in *Slow Learner* can be construed as instances of modesty" (19).

[3] Regarding *Vineland* and *Inherent Vice*, for instance, Cowart has argued that Pynchon "derives his picture of the place [California] and the decade [sixties] from personal experience as augmented by a host of popular culture sources" (2011, 134).

lack of any hard and fast proof, Oedipa wonders whether the mysterious communication system really exists or it is only part of her imagination. This makes her sink into paranoia where she comes to think that the Tristero might be a conspiracy and "a plot has been mounted against" (107) her. Oedipa's impossibility to uncover the truth, despite the excess of information, reminds one of a similar scene in Richard Powers' *The Gold Bug Variations*, albeit published almost a year after Pynchon's *Vineland*. The character Stuart Ressler is a promising molecular biologist in 1957 who is decoding the DNA molecule at the University of Illinois. Through Stuart's vision we come to know that knowledge is "always hopelessly outstripped by available information" (593), the result of which is that "we lag behind ourselves." The novel suggests that, in the postmodern condition, no matter how hard one tries, the quest for knowledge, as in Oedipa's case, is always surpassed by the excess of data. To quote from DeLillo's *Libra*, "There is a world inside the world" (13, 47, 153, 277) — an oft repeated sentence in the novel which bespeaks the multiple layers of meaning and the unattainability of truth.

As for Powers' novel, it is no accident that the book indicates the difficulty of decoding data and understanding words by presenting a sort of puzzle for us to decrypt even before the novel itself begins:

RLS CMW DJP RFP J?O CEP JJN PRG
ZTS MCJ JEH BLM CRR PLC JCM MEP
JNH JDM RBS J?H BJP PJP SCB TLC
KES REP RCP DTH I?H CRB JSB SDG

This makes the reader wonder what the meaning of this seemingly haphazard combination of letters and occasional question marks could be. One can consider this as a "motto" (Herman and Lernout 162), "an acknowledgments page" (Neilson 21), or a narrative technique to set in motion the mystery of the plot and DNA coding, not least in two specific scenes where the novel engages with the issue of code-breaking.[4] However one understands this issue, as in Pynchon's novel, there is the difficulty of deciphering codes. Like in *Lot 49* where in the final

[4] Near the beginning of the novel, we learn that Ressler's boss at the University of Illinois has ordered him to review a series of fifteen groups of three letters, and one with two letters, which the young biologist has come across (47-48). In another episode, a young reference librarian named Jan O'Deigh discusses a congratulatory telegram message between two characters on winning the Nobel Prize (218-20).

scene Oedipa is (not) on the cusp of uncovering the truth, *The Gold Bug Variations* poses a similar notion of the impossibility of drawing conclusions by pursing available information. In other words, any attempt to decode these four mysterious lines of thirty-two groups of three letters in Powers' novel may provide no ultimate solution insofar as it might, or not, lie elsewhere outside the text. Although Powers' book was written at a later stage of postmodernism, it poses similar concerns about the search of truth as in Pynchon's text. Indeed, *Lot 49* ends as Oedipa is attending an auction, waiting for the bidding of the Tristero "forgeries" (110), which were supposed to be sold as "lot 49." In the end, however, she remains with so many "fatigued brain cells between herself and the truth" (59) and she seems to have no other choice but to "Keep it bouncing" (112): "that's all the secret," Inverarity had told her once before his death.

2. Reading *The Crying of Lot 49*: A Geocritical Exploration

Drawing on *The Crying of Lot 49*, Robert Tally makes a compelling case for the role of literary works in creating imaginary maps. He briefly touches on the scene in the novel where Oedipa decides to read over Inverarity's testament to make sense of things going on "in her republic" (112). Suspecting that Pierce might have left "an organized something behind after his […] annihilation" (51), she comes to think that "it was part of her duty […] to bestow life on what had persisted, […] all in a soaring dome around her," much like the "Rapunzel-like" (11) tower depicted in Remedios Varo's painting. Oedipa writes down an important sentence in her memo book: "Shall I project a world?" (51). Tally argues that "Projecting a world" seems a suitable phrase for highlighting the role of literature "As a means of understanding the world" (2013, 42). Literature's function, in his view, is to gather the information of life and sort it out based on a certain plan to help readers better understand and navigate some parts of their world. This role underscores a significant aspect of geocriticism, which aims to understand real world places by recourse to their literary projection.[5] In Bertrand Westphal's words, "geocriticism tends to favor a geocentered

[5] A similar discussion on the importance of the literary text in helping understand real places can be found in Marc Brosseau's 1995 essay where he argues that "literature and literary theory may provide valuable food for thought" (89) for geographers. He observes that humanistic geographers have been emphasizing the significance of

approach, which places place at the center of debate" (112). In this respect, *Lot 49*, and a great deal of Pynchon's fiction, is arguably suitable for a geocritical analysis. In the realm of literature and culture, where imaginary spaces "call for new cartographic approaches, new forms of representation" (Tally 2013, 42-43), Pynchon's fiction excels in depicting those fictive spatial representations that could be considered as instances of alternative realities in his work.

Essential to understanding my argument is the idea that geocriticism is a practical approach/instrument to understand and explain the complexities of the texts that I shall analyze. On a broad scale, this analytical approach brings together and draws on a variety of disciplines, in cultural and literary studies, in order to investigate how they interact with the novels. Nevertheless, I am more interested in how the geocritical analysis of a given text can contribute to the understanding of the narrative structure. In other words, geocriticism here addresses a fundamental question: how can making sense of real places by understanding their fictionality, and vice versa, be useful in terms of the literary understanding of a text?

Any attempt to define geocriticism in the span of a couple of paragraphs will not provide us with anything more than an oversimplification of its main characteristics. Nonetheless, at issue here is an important matter: how do we apply a geocritical approach to a certain work of literature? In lieu of a theoretical exploration of the "elements of geocriticism" (Westphal 111), I build my discussion on the premise that geocriticism, as an analytical instrument, addresses certain parts and aspects of a text in such a way that our understanding of that narrative becomes clearer.[6] By making sense of the text, it becomes easier to make sense of the world and our places in it. As such, when applied to a literary text, geocriticism allows for investigating the ways in which the representations of real and literary places help better understand (or in some cases complicate) the architectural structure of a novel.

Taking my cue from this practical understanding of geocriticism, I will indicate a number of significant instances from *Lot 49* of how Pynchon's novel is suitable for a geocritical analysis. In doing so, the fictional city of San Narciso in the novel assumes multiple functions.

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literature for geographical subject matters. Along similar lines in 2017 he reiterated that, today, "geographers' use of literature is normalized as a disciplinary practice" (9).

[6] For a nuanced theoretical discussion of geocriticism, see Westphal 2011.

For one thing, it throws light on Oedipa's quest for "a transcendent meaning" (*CL* 114) behind "the hieroglyphic streets" of Inverarity's San Narciso in understanding the Tristero mystery. For another, it elucidates the significance of certain places in Southern California, possibly Orange County, in the socio-political context of sixties America, which I will discuss comprehensively through an urban analysis of the text in the next section. It is important that we understand how these places offer insights into spatial tropes in the novel insofar as it becomes easier to interpret the overall structure of the narrative in its social and historical context. Furthermore, such an understanding helps explain the possibility of an alternative reality in the book as a long-standing issue of concern among Pynchon scholars.

3. From Pynchon's San Narciso to California's Orange County: Inside the "Postmetropolitan Transition"

Bertrand Westphal observes that the referentiality operating between fiction and reality is a continuous "oscillation" (86) where we can never pinpoint the exact referent and its representation. The level of correlation between the two can differ in a "modular fashion" (101) from zero to infinity. Keeping this in mind, in this part, I examine how *Lot 49*'s San Narciso might represent such places as Orange County in Southern California. Mobilizing my discussion is a sense that Pynchon's invented San Narciso may signal the onset of certain spatial trends in California during the socio-political transformation of the 1960s.[7] The Watts riots of 1965 marked the beginning of a notable spatial development, in terms of postmodern theory, which finds expression in Pynchon's novel. The sixties urban crisis evinced the end of the postwar economic boom in the advanced industrial countries. As a result, a new mode of industrial capitalism was needed to guarantee economic growth. The "crisis-generated urban restructuring" (Soja 2014, 17) of the modern metropolis was an attempt to restore sustainable economic

[7] In the introduction to *Slow Leaner* Pynchon observes that as long as Eisenhower was president, "One year of those times was much like another […] Until John Kennedy […] began to get some attention" (14). With Kennedy as U.S. President things started to change and Pynchon's description of him in *Gravity's Rainbow* seems to convey the writer's sympathy for the late President: "Slothrop admires him from a distance—he's athletic, and kind, and one of the most well-liked fellows in Slothrop's class" (71).

benefits within a new system of industrial capitalism.[8] Soja argued that the postwar crisis-driven restructuring led to the formation of, what he dubbed, the "postmetropolitan transition" (2014, 140) from the modern industrial metropolis to the poly-centered, globalized "postmetropolis" (2000, 147).

Urban restructuring in the last half of the twentieth century highlighted a change in the urban condition of the world, especially western European and north American cities, that has been constantly developing after WWII. As the modern metropolis was going through a sea change, it became impossible to define the city based on the modernist model of the third urban revolution with a prominent center and definitive suburban and rural parts around it.[9] In terms of urban restructuring, LA has been "representative not just of postmodern urbanism but of a new kind of emerging modern metropolis" (Soja 2014, 18). Indeed, it was claimed that most of the major industrialized city regions of the world followed the LA model insofar as they "were growing like LA, no longer sprouting centrifugally from a dominant central city or 'old downtown' but concentrating in new nodes or 'edge cities' scattered across the suburban fringes" (18). Soja observed that the Los Angeles urban region is experiencing "an enveloping paradigm shift from the familiar metropolitan model of urbanization […] to a new regional urbanization process" (22). While the new urban developments, the edge cities or outer cities, were becoming increasingly important, the inner city too was undergoing a significant change as it became the new center for the immigrant working poor. Soja explained that "this epochal shift from metropolitan to regional urbanization" in LA and elsewhere "can be described as the urbanization of suburbia, eroding the classical […] division between urban and suburban ways of life" (22). He referred to this continuous reconfiguration of the modern metropolis as the "postmetropolitan transition" (21).

From an urban point of view, perhaps the most important indication of the postmetropolitan transition in *Lot 49* is the sprawling pat-

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[8] See Soja1996a.

[9] Soja argued that the third urban revolution formed the underpinnings of "urban industrial capitalism" (2000, xv) whose product was the modern industrial city — a capitalist metropolis that set demarcation lines between urban, suburban, and rural parts. Nevertheless, since the 1960s urban crisis, such well-defined monocentric models of cityspace have become outdated, so much so that in 2000 Soja raised the question of "whether what we are witnessing today […] may be the start of a fourth Urban Revolution" (xv) and the emergence of the "postmetropolis."

tern of the urbanization of suburbia in San Narciso. In this respect, Gerd Hurm has argued that "the grid is a crucial metaphor" (300) in *Lot 49*. "Connecting the grid to the post-industrial Californian city," he suggests that "the contemporary landscape which *The Crying of Lot 49* presents" (311) is the sprawling "cityscape of the postindustrial capitalism" as an emergent urban form. He explains that by the 1960s the grid had become "an appropriate metaphor to mark the end of the dichotomy between the city and the country in the United States" (300) and "By 1970, nine out of ten Californians lived in the sprawling areas." Indeed, during her six-month visit to California, as early as 1888 Harriet Harper described Los Angeles and the area around it as a growing urban network: "There is no end to those newly-sprung places. They form a perfect net-work about Los Angeles" (5). In an optimistic tone, in a letter dated May 14, 1888, she wrote that "Undoubtedly Southern California is the garden spot of America, and judging from its past prosperity and progress it must hold a magnificent future" (6). Thus, it can be argued that Pynchon's novel points to the emergence of a new form of metropolis adumbrated by a change in the pattern of urban geographical developments in Southern California. In this new urban form, "the old model of singular centrality and distinct urban and suburban worlds" (Soja 2014, 204) in the metropolis is no longer applicable as it once was.

Soja argued that the postmetropolitan transition led to the formation of an urban development, namely "Exopolis" (1996a, 239), through which the city turned "inside-out" and at the same time "outside-in."[10] In simpler words, the postmetropolitan transition highlights "various aspects of the ongoing deconstruction and reconstitution of the modern metropolis" (21). For example, Soja explained that until the1960s, Orange County was being developed only by the "decentralization" (2014, 85) of Los Angeles. From then onward, with the onset of the "recentralization" (85) of Los Angeles, suburban "low-density" cities started to grow much faster than before. Deconstruction and reconstruction processes led to the urbanization of once suburban Orange County and the suburbanization of the once monocentric metropolis of Los Angeles. The end result of the postmetropol-

[10] In 1992, Soja used the term *Exopolis* to refer to the new amorphous developments of suburbia that have been named as "edge cities, outer cities, boomburbs, metroburbia, suburban cities, in-between cities" (2014, 21).

itan transition is the creation of a new urban form that Soja described as the "postmetropolis."[11]

In *Lot 49*, San Narciso can be described as a sort of exopolis. It is the place where Inverarity has expanded his power by land speculation. He has "put down the plinth course of capital on which everything afterward" has "been built" (*CL* 13). He has brought together many pieces from different parts of the world to create his own version of the city. To construct "Fangoso Lagoons" (18), one of his last major housing development projects, he has "decorated" the bottom of "Lake Inverarity" (34) with the bones of American soldiers from the Second World War for the entertainment of scuba divers. The character Manny Di Presso explains to Oedipa and Inverarity's lawyer Metzger that his client Tony Jaguar brought the drowned bones of the soldiers, from "Lago di Pietà" (37) in Italy, to San Narciso and sold them to Inverarity. However, Tony alleges, "Inverarity never paid him" (37) for the bones. When Metzger asks Di Presso which construction firm his client worked for, he says, the "ones Inverarity had bought into, they got the contracts" (37). At this point, Oedipa inquires how road builders might be permitted to sell human bones, to which Metzger answers: "Old cemeteries have to be ripped up" (37). He further explains, "Like in the path of the East San Narciso Freeway, it had no right to be there, so we just barrelled on through" (37). Here, the novel shows how highway construction readily ruins the San Narciso landscape, without having any scruples about the memory of dead people, which reminds us of Mason and Dixon's Line as an arbitrary, coercing imposition on the natural, open space. As *Lot 49*'s narrator recounts, the human bones are used to produce bone charcoal for a company called "Beaconsfield Cigarettes" (20). More importantly, lying behind all this bone business is Inverarity's highway construction interest. As Di Presso's comment suggests, Inverarity's highway construction was assisted by a corrupt system of capital: "No bribes, no freeways" (37).

Later in the novel, when Oedipa goes to Genghis Cohen's, he offers her "homemade dandelion wine" (60). Cohen explains that he "picked the dandelions in a cemetery, two years ago. Now the cemetery is gone. They took it out for the East San Narciso Freeway" (60). This

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[11] Soja later explained that this new urban form is indicative of "a broader trend that can be found in many metropolitan regions" (2014, 9): "*regional urbanization*" that is the "end state of urban restructuring" (25) whose product is a "polynucleated, networked, and globalized *city region* or […] *regional city*" (10).

episode is a reminder of U.S. governments' policies of urban development in California suburbs, especially during Nixon-Reagan years, in order to revive the capitalist economy and practice socio-political control through construction programs. Pynchon's novel suggests that the building of the freeway system was motivated by capitalist interests, even though it meant the destruction of the cemetery. The highway's function was to connect California's sprawling suburbia to one another and the labyrinth of suburban routes to the center.

However, in Pynchon's book, despite the destruction of the cemetery to build the San Narciso Freeway, it seems as though the California landscape would not completely succumb to the unrelenting forces of land development and highway construction. When Cohen tells Oedipa that in spring the dandelions bloom again, it sounds to her "As if their home cemetery in some way still did exist, in a land where you could somehow walk, and not need the East San Narciso Freeway" (62). The imagination of a visionary land beyond the freeway is indicative of a momentary relief in the mind of the protagonist, who thinks that in that other land "bones still could rest in peace, nourishing ghosts of dandelions […] As if the dead really do persist, even in a bottle of wine" (62). Oedipa's vision of an alternative reality, where an ambulatory way of exploring the land would still be possible, is particularly interesting when one considers California's notorious automobile culture, or "this freeway madness" (68) as the narrator puts it. Such an admonitory attitude toward the excessive use of cars in California has been a noticeable issue for many writers and urbanists. For instance, writing to his stepson Malcolm Franklin, in 1942, Faulkner diagnosed "a doomed way of life" (qtd. in Blotner 166) in Los Angeles where the "economy and geography was fixed and invented by the automobile." In a similar fashion, in 1976, Aaron Paley expressed his disappointment about a lifestyle that is centered around an exclusive automobile culture: "I can't understand L.A.—It's totally given up its public spaces to the car. The only places left for meaningful interaction are private areas" (qtd. in Kipen 216).

In this respect, a relevant issue in *Lot 49*, and the trilogy in general, is California's car culture that goes together with the construction of the highways. For example, *Vineland*'s narrator describes one character's devotion to driving on the freeway as follows: "she liked to cruise at around 80, weaving and tailgating to maintain her speed. 'We are children of the freeway,' she sang, fingertips on the wheel, boot on

the gas" (284). As more freeways were built, the mass production of cars and parking lots became necessary — another way for corporate America to gain more while selling the American dream. Nevertheless, in *Lot 49* neither the road nor the car offers any meaning or sense of liberation to the characters. Oedipa's driving experience on the highway provides her with nothing but an "illusion" (14). Her husband Mucho Maas works as a salesman for used cars before becoming a disk jockey at a radio station called KCUF. While working at the car lot, he has a recurring nightmare about the sign N.A.D.A., an acronym for National Automobile Dealers' Association. As he tells Oedipa, the sign in the car lot makes him "scared" (91): "Just this creaking metal sign that said nada, nada, against the blue sky. I used to wake up hollering." From an urban point of view, all these scenes in Pynchon's novel, addressing the unlimited construction of highways and the production of cars, bespeak important factors in facilitating the urbanization of suburbia.[12] Indeed, the book's depiction of Inverarity's unrestrained freeway construction and the development of the California suburban space, farcically done "in most kosher fashion" (37), calls to mind the expansion of the coastal areas in Southern California, such as those in Orange County, during the 1960s.

To take another example of how Pynchon depicts fundamental change in the California cityscape during the sixties, we can think of Oedipa passing by Yoyodyne Inc. in fictional San Narciso. When she looks down onto "the ordered swirl of houses and streets" (*CL* 13), she thinks of them as producing the same "astonishing clarity" of the electric circuit when she had opened a transistor radio. "The vast sprawl of houses" (13) could be considered as a form of the urbanization of the peripheral city and a hint at the "dispersal and decentralization" (Soja 2014, 206) of Los Angeles through the urbanization of suburbia. Deciding to stop at the next motel, Oedipa wonders "what the road really was" (*CL* 14). She refers to the image of the California road as the "illusion of speed, freedom" (14). The highway offers solely a mirage of an "unreeling landscape" (14) and, if anything, it indicates Oedipa's sense of entrapment in the intertwined network of Inverarity's capital printed on the land in the form of spatial constructions. What indeed

[12] Soja argued that the mass production and consumption of cars and highways led to the automobile-driven mass suburbanization while "Fordism and its associated Keynesian policies of welfare provision […] were themselves products of crisis-generated restructuring" (2014, 163).

highway construction was meant to do was reinforcing the state power and control as well as serving the capitalist interests of the wealthy. The web of highways and the maze of roads in the novel hint at the issue of control through urban geographical constructions — a central theme in *Lot 49* and more broadly in Pynchon's oeuvre. Indeed, the grid of routes is the grid of control insofar as it all goes back to Inverarity, who represents corporate economy. Hurm has suggested that Inverarity's multiple identities embody "deindividualaized corporate power" (311). He observes that the novel's grids of highways "time and again evoke this new quality of control" in the U.S. and represent "the sprawling metropolis of late consumer capitalism" (300).

Oedipa thinks that the road is "this hypodermic needle, inserted somewhere ahead into the vein of a freeway, a vein nourishing the mainliner L.A., keeping it happy, coherent, protected from pain" (14). The road is the ligament that connects San Narciso, and other peripheral places, to Los Angeles for its capitalist benefits by facilitating the circulation of capital from the periphery to the center. The fragmented outgrowth of San Narciso, constructed through the web of highways, nourishes urban Los Angeles and protects it from "whatever passes, with a city, for pain" (14). This can be related to the narrative structure insofar as Oedipa too awakens from a suburban life and moves toward a bigger world in which she meets the reality of life in Inverarity's America. As Stephen Hock has argued, "the freeway in *The Crying of Lot 49* appears juxtaposed with the web of commerce and repressive political power that Pynchon associates with modern capital" (208). Through the grid of the roads, suburban areas such as San Narciso sustain metropolitan L.A. and they are, in turn, sustained by the westward development of the city — a process that is indicative of the postmetropolitan transition.

The center for such conservative economic and political policies of the Republicans in the 1960s was Orange County. Emphasizing the importance of the conservative doctrines of Southern California, as early as 1969, Kevin Phillips suggested that "perhaps no other political impetus in the nation is so important as the middle-class upheaval of the Sun country, and Southern California in particular" (435). Pynchon's fictional San Narciso might represent those important bases of Republican ideology in Southern California, such as Orange County, in the 1960s. As such, it is worth performing a geocritical analysis of the common political and historical characteristics between San Narciso and these places.

In *Lot 49*, Pynchon's narrator tells us that "like many named places in California" (13), San Narciso "was less an identifiable city than a grouping of concepts—census tracts, special purpose bond-issue districts, shopping nuclei, all overlaid with access roads to its own freeway." Here, one is reminded of the British actor John Gielgud's letter to his mother in 1952 in which he described the sprawling city of Los Angeles as "a horror of ugliness, flat as your hand and crawling with cars" (qtd. in Mangan 157). However, the narrator's above depiction of San Narciso in the novel is perhaps the best way to think of a possible description of exopolis in Pynchon's fiction. As a restructuring of urban spatial form, Soja explains that the term *Exopolis* refers to "the city without" (1996a, 238) — a notion that stresses the "oxymoronic ambiguity" and "city-full non city-ness" of this urban development. He observes that these new urban spatial developments, such as edge cities or outer cities under the umbrella of exopolis, "are not only exo-cities, orbiting outside; they are ex-cities as well, no longer what the city used to be" (238-39). This definition reminds the reader of San Narciso's sprawling pattern of urbanization and commercial development, breaking out of the conventional confines of the modernist industrial city.

As we learn from the narration, San Narciso as "a grouping" (*CL* 13) of various independent spatial developments, spread around the land and connected together through the highway system, cannot be defined as a proper city. The description of San Narciso in the novel reinforces the idea of the formation of the exopolis in the Los Angeles urban region as a salient component in the development of the postmetropolis. In the context of the 1960s urban crisis, I believe that Pynchon's fictional San Narciso as a "grouping" (13) of urban spatial constructs represents the emergence of "the polynucleated network of agglomerations surrounding the City of Los Angeles" (Soja 2014, 200).[13] San Narciso foreshadows the concept of the postmetropolitan transition, through which centrality becomes ubiquitous and the center-periphery distinction, in terms of urban importance, loses ground. In fact, San Narciso has no clear boundaries: "No one knew yet how to draw them" (*CL*

[13] The idea of spatial urban "grouping" (*CL* 13) in Pynchon's novel reminds the urban-minded reader of the concept of *agglomeration* in geography. Seen through a larger perspective, I believe that in *Lot 49* San Narciso is arguably representative of "the polycentric network of agglomerations" (Soja 2014, 211) that initiated the constitution of the Los Angeles city region. It is, however, important to remember that here *agglomeration* does not refer to the idea of centrality as the city core.

111). Nor does it have a defined center: before Oedipa and Metzger play Strip Botticelli — a game in which Oedipa should remove one clothing item for each question Metzger gets right — the narrator tells us about "a commercial for a Turkish bath in downtown San Narciso, *wherever* downtown was" (23; emphasis added). Linked by infinite miles of highway, the sprawling suburbia of Southern California around Los Angeles in Pynchon's novel herald that "residents no longer live in cities unified around a central core but in 'concepts' determined by negotiations among corporations, developers, and politicians" (Adams 254).

Overlooking San Narciso for the first time, Oedipa senses an intimation of meaningful order. However, as she moves to street level things do not seem to follow any spatial order. Exiting the freeway, she proceeds "onto a highway she thought went toward Los Angeles" (*CL* 14). But she finds herself in "a neighborhood that was little more than the road's skinny right-of-way, lined by auto lots, escrow services, drive-ins, small office buildings and factories" (14). Oedipa passes through a town that seems to be a zoned assemblage of taxable entities. This Southern California town, like San Narciso, seems to be "a grouping of concepts" (13) put together as one of Inverarity's projects. As Robert Fisher has observed, the subject of the work of Pynchon's *Lot 49* is "the more recent form of the postindustrial city" (258) as the novel "reflects the entropic fragmented metropolis."

In all the abovementioned scenes, a common denominator in Oedipa's encounters with the urban environment is the impossibility of communication with it. Most famously, the narrator recounts that there was "a hieroglyphic sense of concealed meaning" (*CL* 13) to the outward pattern of San Narciso's urban sprawl as well as a "printed circuit" when she had replaced the battery of a transistor radio. This fragmentary trait of the built environment in the novel has a significant implication not only in terms of the urban geographical analysis but also with regard to the narrative architecture insofar as it resonates with the space of narration. As far as the space of composition is concerned, one can, indeed, think of the idea of architecture. On that score, in a number of interviews, Gass has expressed his interest in the way that architects materialize the relationship between the architectural and literary forms, and comparing the author to an architect who structures the narrative, not merely a writer of words.[14] In *The Tunnel*,

[14] See Abowitz 2003 and Kaposi 2003.

for instance, the reader is reminded of what he described as "the relation of architectural structure to fictional structure" (qtd. in Kaposi 135) through the protagonist's introspective autobiography. William Kohler's disjunctive autobiography is some seven-hundred pages of his sensational memories of life, and various recollections and impressions, combined in a synchronical order. A seminal detail in representing the meandering structure of Kohler's autobiography is the depiction of the suburb in postwar America. In other words, the fragmented structure of the postwar urban sprawl in *The Tunnel* resonates with Kohler's act of writing and the rambling structure through which he conveys his memories of life.

We can think of this urban-fictional relationship in Gass' novel in relation to Oedipa's first visit to San Narciso where she is confronted with a typical vison of Southern California sprawl. The land contributes to the protagonist's sense of confusion as she cannot understand the meaning of the hints she comes across throughout the text. Oedipa's impossibility of connecting with the fragmentary urban space indicates the limits of communication through language as in *The Tunnel* the structure of the text, not least the fragmented representation of the postwar American suburbs, serves Gass to reveal the protagonist's consciousness rather than telling the story of his life. Such a difficulty of relating the protagonist's life story in a cogent, coherent manner bears a peculiar resemblance to a line in *Inherent Vice*, where Pynchon's narrator recounts that Doc's professors in junior college had taught him "the useful notion that the word is not the thing" (157).

Before concluding this part, I would like to underscore that the idea of San Narciso as an assemblage of concepts has a significant implication in *Lot 49*: it underscores the fleeting quality of Oedipa's revelations, scattered all over San Narciso, regarding the shady postal system of the Tristero. Not being "an identifiable city" highlights the artificial quality of San Narciso devised by Inverarity, who represents the capitalist interests of wealthy tycoons in tune with the New Right policies of indiscriminate privatization. John Miller has suggested that San Narciso is "a conceptual edifice" (2013, 227) that Inverarity is constructing on the land and can be considered as "one example of the act of 'projecting a world.'" Indeed, Pynchon's narrator tells us that "San Narciso was a name" (*CL* 111), a name that can become an "incident," a "loss," a concept, and "a name again" as it is "assumed back into the American continuity of crust and mantle."

The impossibility of really knowing San Narciso, which seems to morph from one semblance to another, emphasizes the difficulty of knowing Inverarity's intentions in leaving Oedipa his testament. In this respect, his construction projects represent the act of writing arbitrary names, such as San Narciso, on Southern California's "dull […] earth" (*CL* 13) like on a piece of paper. In other words, there is a transient quality to the built landscape in Southern California where developers like Inverarity ceaselessly (re)build and (re)write the land. One might think of this unstable quality of the landscape in relation to the endless replication of the initial letters WASTE throughout San Narciso where the land itself becomes a palimpsest on which construction developments, like words, are (re)constructed. That is to say, the very land of San Narciso becomes a text, or a bearer of unreadable words, that cannot reveal any meaning to Oedipa concerning the will or the Tristero. This impossibility of communication through words, suggested by the depiction of the natural and built geographies of California in Pynchon's novel, points to the idea that in the postmodern condition language is no longer a conveyer of unique meanings. To use Gass' words, the postmodern writer divorces "language from its usual referential qualities" (qtd. in McCaffery 1979, 137) by manipulating it to devise something new, as Inverarity creates his own reality in *Lot 49*. This is suggested at the beginning of the text where Oedipa remembers her last phone call with Inverarity in which he had spoken in a variety of voices from "heavy Slavic tones" (*CL* 6) to "his Lamont Cranston voice." Inverarity's speaking in constantly changing tones is reminiscent of the unstable characteristic of words which remain unintelligible to Oedipa as they make her feel "exposed, finessed, put down" (6).

The difficulty of connecting with the environment Oedipa is surrounded by and the problem of understanding words bring to mind a later novel where the "inexhaustible space" (Auster 4) of New York City is an endless labyrinth to its protagonist. In Paul Auster's *City of Glass*, the narrator relates that no matter how well Quinn "came to know its neighborhoods and streets, it always left him with the feeling of being lost" (4). That Oedipa is unable to make sense of the Tristero mystery or Inverarity's testament, notwithstanding the mushrooming body of evidence, reminds us of the protagonist in *City of Glass* almost twenty years after the publication of Pynchon's novel. In the course of his detective job, Quinn comes to the conclusion that he has been

wrong all along his writing career to think that "the key to good detective work was a close observation of details. The more accurate the scrutiny, the more successful the results" (65). Nevertheless, just like Oedipa's quest aimed at creating meaning by connecting the proliferating dots, Quinn's detective investigation to unravel the truth about the paroled Peter Stillman's linguistic project yields no solution in the end. As in *Lot 49*, Auster's protagonist runs across letters in the metropolitan space of which he cannot make sense. When finally he guesses that the map of old Stillman's meanderings in the city seems an attempt to reproduce the phrase "THE TOWER OF BABEL" (70), the question becomes what that phrase could possibly mean. However, the narrator tells us that "The letters were not letters at all. He had seen them only because he had wanted to see them" (71). In such a condition words become bearers of transitory meanings. In this respect, an important feature in both novels is that the impossibility of knowing the truth through words is underscored by the depiction of the urban space. As Quinn's walks do not add up to any meaningful perception of Stillman's project and his haphazard rambles through Manhattan streets, Oedipa's wanderings on the streets of Southern California lead to no definitive solution.

4. A Historical Analogy between the Geographical Development Backgrounds of San Narciso and Orange County

With the understanding that both San Narciso and Orange County could be, respectively, fictional and actual instances of the exopolis, a historical analysis of how their urban geographical backgrounds compare with each other seems in order. San Narciso is a Southern California defense industry city where the conservative missile production company Yoyodyne and the "right-wing Peter Pinguid Society" (*CL* 77) are situated. Mark Greif observes that "Yoyodyne Inc., the enormous defense contractor in Pynchon's fictional world, is a titan of bomb making" (229) and reminds the reader of the aerospace industry in Orange County. A city near Los Angeles, San Narciso is the place where the real estate mogul Inverarity has a share in every development plan and construction. He had explained to Oedipa that "part of being a founding father" (*CL* 14) was to own a large part of such a giant of aerospace industry. Inverarity's goal is to exert power and

control on the land insofar as San Narciso, and America herself as Oedipa later suspects, is becoming his own "legacy" (112). Indeed, near the end of the novel, the narrator tells us about Inverarity's "need to possess, to alter the land, to bring new skylines, personal antagonisms, growth rates into being" (112). John Miller has suggested that "San Narciso seems to be located in the Simi Valley, north of Los Angeles, where the defense contractor Rocketdyne, the model for Pynchon's Yoyodyne, had a testing center in the 1960s" (2013, 228). As we know, from February 1960 to September 1962, Pynchon worked at the Boeing Airplane Co. in Seattle and, thus, it is plausible to think that his personal experience as a technical writer, for *Bomarc Service News*, might have inspired his descriptions of Yoyodyne.[15] Pynchon's San Narciso is the base for those "giants of the aerospace industry" (*CL* 14), such as Yoyodyne, as "an anchor of the new conspiratorial and paranoid right-wing culture of the greater Los Angeles area's Orange County, where aerospace development and libertarian Republicanism grew side by side" (Greif 229).

Greif suggests that as Oedipa becomes increasingly aware of "the fabric of Orange County in the mid-1960s and its dark underweave" (242), she becomes "furious with the Volkswagen Beetles she sees everywhere on the state's freeways and cloverleafs: 'She drove savagely along the freeway, hunting for Volkswagens.'" He overtly suggests that Oedipa's location in this scene is Orange County. From the narration, it becomes clear that her immediate location after the mention of Orange County is "a phone booth" (*CL* 110) in a midnight scene where Oedipa finds herself "in a desolate, unfamiliar, unlit district of San Narciso." The narrator wonders what "the probate judge" would "have to say about spreading some kind of a legacy among them all, all those nameless" (113) — perhaps something about the Tristero's secret. Pynchon's narrator goes on to say that "He'd be on her ass in a microsecond, […] proclaim her through all Orange County as a redistributionist and pinko."

Interestingly, Oedipa's sense of isolation is heightened by the representation of the natural and built environments in this scene, as we learn that "there could be no barriers between herself and the rest of the land" (111). Oedipa has to come to terms with the reality that following the Tristero signs in San Narciso might amount to no definitive

[15] See Wisnicki 2000–01 and Severs 2016.

result. Indeed, at some point, San Narciso as the place that promises some hope of revelation is described as "lost" (111) and it gives up "its residue of uniqueness for her." At the same time, the natural elements seem to be incapable of providing her with any comfort. In "her isolation complete" (111), as she tries to face toward the sea, we are told that "she'd lost her bearings." Immediately afterward, when she turns around in the hope of relating to the natural landscape, she "could find no mountains either" (111). After succinctly learning about Oedipa's loneliness in this presumably Orange County night, the reader is reminded that the setting is still San Narciso. Thus, the only way in which Greif's aforementioned observation would make sense is if San Narciso resembles Orange County, or any of its major cities, in terms of the socio-political abuse of power through the spatial policies of urban development.

Orange County was shown as the promise of the realization of the American dream during Nixon's Presidency. Similarly, San Narciso is the place where Oedipa for the first time perceives some revelation: "So in her first minute of San Narciso, a revelation also trembled just past the threshold of her understanding" (13). From the very first moment, Oedipa feels "an intent to communicate" (13). Nevertheless, like various places in Orange County, San Narciso is filled with military bases. Pynchon's fictional mapping reflects on California's history of geographical development at a time of socio-cultural crisis when America was experiencing a decade of upheaval.[16] The creation of this imaginary city provides Pynchon with a powerful instrument to challenge the political making of that geographical history.

Drawing on Baudrillard, Soja argued that the implementation of "simulacra" (65) in Orange County served the political purposes of fraud. Indeed, Nixon greatly contributed to the transformation of Orange County into "a haven of real estate based on the idealized image of California" (Westphal 89). As a result of the simulation of reality that promised the American dream, the so-called "scamscapes" (Soja 1996a,

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[16] *Lot 49* adumbrates the events that led to the transition in the socio-cultural panorama of U.S. society from the 1950s to the 1960s. Oedipa becomes aware of the supposedly subversive system the Tristero that underscores the feeling of rupture within the sixties. This new perception, the "secret richness" (106) she has stumbled onto, reminds one of the new possibilities in the sixties. From the introduction to *Slow Learner*, it seems that Pynchon didn't enjoy the 1950s: "Youth of course was wasted on me at the time" (8), he wrote with his usual irony. With the sixties, however, he explains, "We were at a transition point" (*SL* 10).

274) of fraud were created.[17] These fraudulent spatial constructions drastically changed the suburban Orange County as it was undergoing the policies of urban restructuring. In *Lot 49*, Inverarity is the typical real estate tycoon who has created such a fantastic simulation of reality at "Fangoso Lagoons" (18). We learn that at the bottom of the lake "lay restored galleons, imported from the Bahamas; Atlantean fragments of columns and friezes from the Canaries; real human skeletons from Italy; giant clamshells from Indonesia" (18). These are all exotic images that promise not "an-Other" (Soja 1996a, 10) reality but a mere simulation of it. In other words, Inverarity is creating his personal version of San Narciso by transforming the California suburbia and "projecting" an entire new world of his own devising on the landscape.

Inverarity's financial fingerprints can be seen all over San Narciso as he has extensively expanded his construction business and decorated the land with idealized images of reality. In fact, Oedipa is shown something beyond the mere established image of reality which might be a new "mode of being" (McHale 1987, 106), other than the "zeroes and ones" (*CL* 114) in the "matrices of a great digital computer" where she is entrapped, or perhaps only an "illusion" (14). As the narrator recounts, "Behind the hieroglyphic streets there would either be a transcendent meaning, or only the earth" (114). However, the more Oedipa digs into Inverarity's testament, the more she feels paranoid and trapped in the complicated network of his assets, from which there seems to be no way out. As Amy Elias has argued, Pynchon invokes paranoia "as the only hermeneutic compatible with a world in which social systems are run by powerful but protected and secretive global tycoons" (126). San Narciso seems to offer, and simultaneously undermine, the very possibility of a better life for the protagonist. Only the Tristero, if truly subversive, could redeem Oedipa's dream. The protagonist's sense of entrapment in Inverarity's San Narciso, and the hope that the Tristero quest would lead to an alternative world, reflects some of the revolutionary historical events of the 1960s. At the same time, it represents the state's policies, such as the urbanization of suburbia in Orange County, to keep the population under control through the "dispersal and decentralization" (Soja 2014, 206) of Los Angeles.

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[17] Soja described a "scamscape" (2014, 2) as "a constructed geography filled with trickery, misrepresentation, and often innovative forms of fraud." For a thorough definition, see Soja 1996a.

During the Reagan era, the urbanization process was particularly speeded up. Casey Shoop has suggested that Reagan's "Californianization of American politics and culture" (62) created a "condition of living in a postmodern world saturated with competing image projections." This brings us to the concept of "simulacrum" — "an exact copy of something that may never have existed" (Soja 2003, 10). The Tristero just like the Dark figure in Varo's painting might, or might not, be there. It can be described in terms of an interstice or a liminal space inside real space as though it did not really exist. It is an invisible system of communication that can be seen only by certain people who belong to the WASTE. The dark figure is at the center of the painting on the verge of revealing something to Oedipa, but at the same time it is blocking from view something that Pynchon refuses to share with us. What is indeed available is an image of that reality. During the Nixon-Reagan years, the simulation of reality in places such as Orange County was used to create a world of make-believe for the nation and execute the New Right's political agenda. These and other similarities make it convincing to think that Pynchon may have been motivated by real places in Orange County, or more generally Southern California, in depicting San Narciso. As such, a nuanced comparison between San Narciso and Orange County, in terms of their peculiar historical and political backgrounds, highlights Oedipa's fantasies for "Another mode of meaning behind the obvious" (*CL* 114) through the Tristero quest. At the same time, it would shed light on her fear of being left with nothing in the end but Inverarity's all-consuming machine America.

5. Understanding *The Crying of Lot 49* through San Narciso: A Political Landscape of Crisis

So far, I have argued that in the controversial years of the sixties San Narciso, as indicative of certain urban geographical transformations in California, is representative of what we could call the Orange County experience. It is, likewise, important to realize how such an analogy can contribute to understanding the novel's structure as far as Oedipa's quest for an alternative reality is concerned. In this regard, San Narciso highlights that moment of crisis for a suburban housewife who, having to execute her ex-lover's will, awakens from her drowsy life at a time when the youth counterculture was taking shape from the suburbs' bland pavements. The ordinary life of *Lot 49*'s protagonist transforms

radically when she comes across the mysterious Tristero organization and the possibility of "an-Other" reality. In "Smoking Dope with Thomas Pynchon: A Sixties Memoir" Andrew Gordon wrote, "The time was ripe, America was ours, and we were going to change the world: Paradise Now or Apocalypse Now" (167). Gordon draws on his brief encounter with Pynchon, and the content of the novelist's works, to describe the disillusionment of the 1960 as a decade of unrealized promises. Indeed, throughout the sixties America was going through a socio-cultural upheaval and was experiencing a time of crisis.[18]

During that decade, Orange County was a safe house, so to speak, for Republicans and their conservative policies. In 1968, Nixon became U.S. President as the candidate of law and order and new leadership in the Vietnam War. However, his repressive policies clashed with the goals of the countercultural movements. Indeed, both Nixon and Reagan in the sixties saw the university as a threatening enemy.[19] In Pynchon's oeuvre, there are various scenes that represent his perspective on the contentious socio-political atmosphere of the 1960s in the U.S. In *Vineland*, for instance, there is a clash between the forces of the federal prosecutor Brock Vond and the students at the People's Republic of Rock and Roll under the leadership of a mathematics professor who is murdered on the campus. On the importance of the decade, Cowart suggests that "Pynchon thinks of the sixties as a crossroads of American history" (2011, 134). However, "In *Lot 49* […] this struggle remains undecided" (134). In the end, Oedipa still has to pass the interim she

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[18] One of the most important political events of the 1960s was Kennedy's assassination which came to be regarded, by some critics, as the starting point of postmodernism. In an unpublished letter, dated April 11, 1964, Pynchon explained to his friend Robert Hillock how he "felt about him [Kennedy], which as you know was favorable." He went on to say that the assassination "hit me harder than I will probably ever tell anybody." Diagnosing this event as the symptom of a larger problem, he wrote that it shows "something is wrong" with America as a country and "a civilized democracy": "If Oswald found it in himself to do what he did, […] so could we, and that bothers me."

[19] As we know from the declassified Nixon White House tapes, on December 14, 1972, Nixon told his national security adviser, Henry Kissinger, that "The press is the enemy. […] The professors are the enemy." As for Pynchon's fiction, near the end of *Gravity's Rainbow* we encounter Richard M. Zhlubb, a satirical caricature of Nixon, who is shown as the destroyer of the counterculture and an antithesis to Kennedy. Such depictions of Nixon are no exception to Pynchon's work. In *The Public Burning*, Robert Coover depicts Nixon as a pathetic politician devoted to a manipulative Uncle Sam by whom he gets sodomized. Philip Roth's surrealistic political satire *Our Gang* paints a parodic portrait of Nixon through the character Trick E. Dixon who ends up in Hell, running against Satan for the office of head devil. Also depicting Nixon and Watergate is Gore Vidal's political play *An Evening with Richard Nixon*.

finds herself in so as to be illuminated about "the Tristero 'forgeries'" (*CL* 110) that are "to be sold, as lot 49."

This transition might be positive or negative insofar as a third alternative may come true or not. The auctioneer on the last page of the novel, the priestlike figure Loren Passerine in the company of men with "pale, cruel faces" (115), appears to be threatening, perhaps with bad news for Oedipa. He seems "like a puppet-master" (115) with a "relentless" smile "as if saying, I'm surprised you actually came." But, on the verge of revelation, Oedipa and the reader are left hanging. Joseph Slade has argued that in *Lot 49* Pynchon "perceives the emerging forces of postindustrialism" (1982, 55) because "America and its industrialism have reached an impasse." He suggests that "only new and charismatic energies can forestall entropy and redeem America's democratic promise" (55). Since these energies are novel, Oedipa is unable to tell whether they are good or bad. In the final pages of the novel, she comes to wonder whether she has been only played with by Inverarity or in effect there is meaning behind the hieroglyphic streets and the proliferation of the Tristero signs. Slade concludes that Oedipa, a child of the 1950s, does not, and cannot, know of a transition in America: "she merely senses crisis" (55).

One can find such a sense of crisis in a number of works that came out around the time of *Lot 49*'s publication. In Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* (1961), for example, the impossibility of achieving definitive solutions, among other things, is demonstrated by the fact that the protagonist Captain Yossarian and his cohorts in the U.S. Army Air Force cannot reach the necessary number of missions during WWII to go home. Each time they get ready to celebrate the end of their duty, the number of their missions to fly is increased by Colonel Cathcart: Yossarian flew "six missions in six days […] and that was as close as he had ever been able to come to going home. The next day Colonel Cathcart was there, […] raising the number of missions required from twenty-five to thirty" (35). This continuous rise in the number of missions makes Yossarian's friend Hungry Joe have recurring nightmares of "orders sending him home that never came" (35). Such a circular condition heralds the notion of postmodern irony and the new reality that words cannot be interpreted literally as no ultimate answers may be granted. The inability to reach a meaningful end, or understand words clearly, is further represented in the text by the fact that the character Major Major has to sign endless official documents. As the narrator relates: "No matter

how many times he signed one, it always came back for still another signature, and he began to despair of ever being free of any of them" (62). In other words, he has to deal with a host of documents which, ironically, "did not concern him at all" (62). These instances in *Catch-22* represent the same feeling of anxiety and crisis in the postmodern condition which engulfs *Lot 49*'s Oedipa on the verge of some revelation.

In so far as for Pynchon spatial constructions and forms bespeak political and cultural conditions of society, the geocritical examination here underscores Oedipa's inability to make sense of metastasizing knowledge feeling before her even though she comes across transitory revelations about the Tristero. At the same time, it highlights the protagonist's moment of crisis, on the cusp of some mysterious discovery, reflecting the position of the average U.S. citizen in the context of the sixties socio-cultural crisis. On that score, places such as Orange County, and San Narciso, in hindsight show us that decade as a temporary moment of hope in America. The postwar economic boom brought many people into the area, "making Orange County the new frontier West of the second half of the twentieth century" (McGirr 39). These new possibilities revived the American dream for many in Orange County. However, the private business owners detested the regulating role of the federal government, which became a significant factor in favor of the New Right later in the 1960s. Policies of urban restructuring were promoted by the state to create a fantastic image of hope and, at the same time, implement strategies of policing space. As Mike Davis noted, Southern California's excessive obsession with security and "space policing" (2006, 155) has made the region a fortress.[20]

However, with the Watts Riots of 1965 as the beginning of the end of the postwar economic boom, the capitalist system was facing a dire problem. The urbanization of suburbia through the construction of the exopolis, in places such as Orange County, was an attempted "spatial fix" (Harvey 2006, xviii) to that problem.[21] These urban geographical developments and spatial strategies of expanding California

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[20] Using the term "fortress Los Angeles" (154), in *City of Quartz* Davis argued how the spatial polices of control have transformed L.A. into a "carceral city" (155) where "security-obsessed urbanism" excludes the working poor from the affluent "forbidden city" (157).

[21] Soja argued that crisis-generated restructuring was a spatial strategy which included a "spatial fix," that is, "a reshaping of geography and the built environment in the hope of meeting the emerging needs of the post-Fordist […] New Economy" (2014, 163). Harvey defined his theory of "the spatial fix" (2006, xviii) "(understood as

suburbs took place through neoconservative Republican policies. The birthplace of Nixon and the most significant of California counties for Republicans, Orange County heavily underwent urban restructuring throughout the sixties and thereafter.

In this regard, in *Lot 49* Pynchon questions the political history of land development policies in California, and America by extension, through the creation of imaginary San Narciso. To use Richard Rodriguez' words, California is "America's America" (273), which reminds one of Eric Knight's *You Play the Black and the Red Comes Up*, published under the pseudonym Richard Hallas. Writing to a friend in 1935, Knight described it as a "swift novel of California" in which every character is "mad, miserably and futilely mad…insane. *It truly reflects the country*" (qtd. in Kipen 309; emphasis added). As the narrator recounts, he and a "bunch of floaters […] were all heading for California" (2) in search of the myth that "there was a man there going to be elected Governor who would take all the money away from the millionaires and give fifty dollars a week to every man without a job." Whether California represents America or not, the urbanization of suburbia transformed "much of the American landscape into a relatively undifferentiated type of residential space" (Millard 73). The development of the peripheral city San Narciso underscores the fragmentation of the California suburban space, and its sprawling pattern, which in turn adumbrates the postmetropolitan transition.

6. Thirdspace in Pynchon's Oeuvre

According to Tharaldsen, after Kennedy's assassination Pynchon went back to Mexico City, where "he read—mainly Latin American writers like Jorge Luis Borges" (Kachka). Curiously, Pynchon was fascinated by Borges' writing and it can be imagined that he might have read short stories such as "The Aleph." This reminds one of Soja's use of the concept of the Aleph as a starting point to interpret the "imbricated conceptualizations of Thirdspace" (1996a, 54). The Aleph as a point "in space that contains all other points" (Borges 10) is ultimately similar to his notion of Thirdspace. Given Pynchon's fascination with Borges, it might be surmised that Pynchon would have used some insights from his works like "The Aleph" in crafting his own fiction.

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geographical expansions and restructurings) as a temporary solution to crises." For the full definition of "the spatial fix," see Harvey 2006.

Drawing on the work of Henri Lefebvre, Soja noted that the spatiality of human life has been always peripheral to its historical and social aspects in the production of knowledge. Based on a rebalanced position of spatiality in the critical "trialectics of spatiality-historicality-sociality" (1996a, 10), he theorized the concept of Thirdspace. Soja argued that the prevailing geographical imagination has centered around "a dual mode of thinking about space" : a Firstspace perspective "fixed mainly on the concrete materiality of spatial forms" and a Secondspace "conceived in ideas about space" (10).[22] But the central argument of Soja's *Thirdspac*e is that there is a third way of understanding the social production of human spatiality which is a "fully *lived space*, a simultaneously real-and-imagined, actual-and-virtual, locus of structured individual and collective experience and agency" (11).[23]

This Thirdspace perspective is the result of what Soja called a critical "thirding-as-Othering" (1996a, 60), "a rejection of the either/or logic of binary thinking" (2014, 177). Noting that the modernist literature was flooded by these binaries, he explains that the aim of such a critical thirding is to open up "these 'big dichotomies' to different alternatives, starting with a third possibility" (177). Given this understanding of Soja's critical thirding, one is reminded of *Lot 49*'s protagonist and her longing for a better chance of life in America other than the conventional system she is used to. Before moving on to Pynchon's novel, however, it is important to underscore that Soja's spatial thirding proposes "an-Other" (177) space that is "transgressive" (Westphal 37) and calls to think of spatiality in innovative ways.[24]

As far as the critical analysis of Pynchon's fiction through the lens of Thirdspace (or third space) is concerned, there have been some works that have, to some extent, addressed this aspect of his novels. Drawing upon Soja's theorization of Thirdspace in an essay on *V.*, Paolo Simonetti suggests that "We can say that Pynchon's Malta becomes a Thirdspace" (2015b, 164). The aim of his analysis is primarily "to understand the ironic function of the epilogue" (156). However, he touches upon Malta as a sort of Thirdspace: "a place that allows no separation between history and mythology, biography and fiction, and that resists every attempt to be cracked" (164). This argument can be further sup-

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22 See Soja 2000, 10-11.

23 See Soja 2014, 177.

24 See Westphal 2011, 72.

ported by the fact that in the epilogue of *V.* Malta is described as a place where "all history seemed simultaneously present" (481). This brings to mind Borges's "Aleph," a point where the narrator sees "the earth and in the earth the Aleph" (14). In tune with Simonetti's analysis, Malta, as a place that brings all history together in one point, might be an example of the Aleph and the Aleph that of Thirdspace.

Monica Spiridon has argued that "The urban area of San Narciso … bears a perfect analogy with the theoretical model of a so-called Third Space" (199) even though she does not expound how such an analogy is possible. Drawing upon Soja's work, she suggests that "the twentieth century Californian metropolis San Narciso" (198) is "a fictitious equivalent of Los Angeles" that is "identified by cultural geography, by urbanism, by architecture, by the visual and the verbal arts as a Third Space" (197). Whether or not San Narciso is specifically a fictional representation of Los Angeles, it is intriguing that Spiridon discusses San Narciso in terms of Soja's Thirdspace and this analogy should be explained in more detail.

Regarding *Lot 49*, we can further think of the opening of chapter three that reminds us of Oedipa's first minute in San Narciso where she had felt as if "there were revelation in progress all around her" (27). The narrator relates that "Much of the revelation was to come through the stamp collection Pierce had left … —thousands of little colored windows into deep vistas of space and time" (27). Inverarity's stamp collection brings various spatiotemporal settings together, as though trying to contain history, and is supposed to reveal something to Oedipa. Therefore, it is suggestive of some hidden meaning which nevertheless, like the elusive Lady V. or the mysterious Tristero, is fleeing from us. A miniscule world of many other worlds, the stamp collection, like Thirdspace, encompasses and at the same time goes beyond all other spaces.

Brian Jarvis has argued that "Pynchon's historiography triangulates then and now to produce a third space" and "History, in this process, is spatialized" (2012, 224). He observes that "Unlike the West of Cormac McCarthy, or Paul Auster's New York, there is no one distinctive Pynchonian place; instead, frenetic travel between multiple locations is his geographical trademark" (224-25). While it is true that there is no Faulknerian Yoknapatawpha County or Lovecraftian Lovecraft Country in Pynchon's fiction, one can argue that at least in his trilogy the representation of the California landscape offers a host of cultural and mythical references to otherworldly spaces.

Although these arguments provide important insights into the spatial aspect of Pynchon's novels through the lens of Thirdspace, for the most part they remain starting points. Hence, I believe that it is imperative to delve into the Thirdspace dimension of his literary production, maybe Pynchon's Thirdspace, to fully appreciate his spatial imagination. One might consider a reading of Pynchon's fiction through the medium of Thirdspace as an instance of an alternative reality in his work. Within the much-debated argument of alternative worlds in Pynchon's fiction, a few pages of the introduction were dedicated to discussing the peculiarity of fictional spaces throughout his oeuvre. These alternate depictions of space usually oppose hegemonic systems of power that have shaped the world as we know it. In this regard, the connecting thread between the issue of alternative realities in Pynchon's fiction and Soja's spatial trialectics, is that "the exploration of Thirdspace must be […] guided by […] the translation of knowledge into action in a conscious – and consciously spatial – effort to improve the world in some significant way" (1996a, 22).

6.1. San Narciso and Thirdspace: In Search of an Alternative Reality in *The Crying of Lot 49*

In tune with the idea of deconstructing modernist binary systems, "core-periphery, […] city-countryside, perceived and conceived space" (2014, 177), in the final pages of *Lot 49* Pynchon often emphasizes the need for a third alternative. Oedipa comes to think that the only available options are the "ones and zeroes" (114). Frank Kermode has noted that ultimately Oedipa finds herself caught between the fear of two extreme possibilities. The problem in her world is that there might be a total but malevolent order or no order at all.[25] However, Oedipa's quest is directed toward a third possibility that would be other than these two. At some point in *The Courier's Tragedy* "an ambiguity, begins to creep in among the words" (*CL* 44) and "a new mode of expression takes over." Tony Tanner sees this "new mode" as existing "between the literal and the metaphorical" (178). Whether the Tristero can provide that third possibility, or it is nothing but part of the system, Oedipa desperately craves for an alternative option.

[25] Kermode 1978, 164.

Near the end of the novel, the narrator relates that Oedipa "had dedicated herself […] to making sense of what Inverarity had left behind, never suspecting that the legacy was America" (111-12). Oedipa hopes to find "some American essence" (Cowart 2011, 134) and California as the end of the frontier might (not) grant it. Pynchon's protagonist seeks "another set of possibilities to replace those that had conditioned the land" (*CL* 113). In fact, Oedipa "had heard all about excluded middles; they were bad shit, to be avoided" (114). She wonders "how had it ever happened here, with the chances once so good for diversity?" (114).

Oedipa's thoughts on the bygone possibilities in America's past can be linked to a host of significant moments across Pynchon's work that contemplate alternative histories and realities. Most often these alternative worlds are rooted in different policies and understandings of organizing space. For instance, in *Mason & Dixon* Pynchon depicts America as a promising land with infinite possibilities that is, nevertheless, being transformed into a place under the hegemony of the British colonial rule. The surveyors Mason and Dixon draw the line, dividing Pennsylvania from Maryland, that will carry their name. Working under contract for the king of England to enact their mission in America, they contribute to an act of changing "all from subjunctive to declarative, reducing Possibilities to Simplicities" (*MD* 334). America's open space is shown as the symbol of "subjunctive Hopes" where "'tis not yet mapp'd, nor written down, nor ever, by the majority of Mankind, seen" (334). However, this irrational, free space is being exploited, or "striated" (Deleuze and Guattari 474), for the profit of Britannia. Pynchon's meditation on America's past mobilizes an alternative possibility that reflects on its geographical history as having the potential of "diversity" (*CL* 114), as opposed to the overreaching order of homogeneity that serves "the ends of Governments" (*MD* 334).[26]

Regarding *Lot 49*, Cowart argues that "The overarching symbol of marginalization, a collective Other in this novel, is the Tristero" (2011, 61). He observes that "Oedipa discovers a kind of exploded version of this Other in the disaffected groups" (61). In his view, "Pynchon's

[26] In a 1969 letter about his use of South-West African materials in chapter 9 of *V.*, Pynchon expresses his concern that "the number done on the Herero head by the Germans is the same number done on the American Indian head by our own colonists" (qtd. in Seed 241). He highlights the systemic exclusion of modes of being other than the official metanarrative of colonial powers that imposes its standardizing hegemony on its subjects.

whole program in *Lot 49* is to expose this forgotten reality, this seldom visible but always present America" (61). This "collective Other" (61) as a unique entity, which includes all the disgruntled and "disinherited" (*CL* 103), might offer an alternative "mode of being" (McHale 1987, 106) beyond the established ways of thought in our lifeworlds and the binary options in the narrative. A salient characteristic of Thirdspace is that it encompasses "a multiplicity of perspectives" (Soja 1996a, 5) without "privileging one over another." Trying to overcome "the agony of the real" (1978, 7-8), in Baudrillard's words, Oedipa is looking for meaning in a world that is permeated by the proliferation of Tristero signs which has made the "distinction between the authentic and the simulated" impossible. In her nocturnal lingering in San Francisco she runs into a host of muted post horns which are indicative of the WASTE system. The members of WASTE have deliberately chosen not to communicate by U.S. Mail as "a calculated withdrawal, from the life of the Republic" (*CL* 78). We are told that the withdrawal is "private" and "unpublicized" for "they could not have withdrawn into a vacuum" (78). Therefore, "there had to exist the separate, silent, unsuspected world" (78) where they could continue to resist and show, to Oedipa and the reader, "a counterculture made up of preterites and losers" (Berressem 2012, 169). This is perhaps a reminder of Pynchon's own withdrawal from the capitalist society of America that he would later criticize in *Against the Day*.

Nevertheless, this act of withdrawal could be in itself an alternative way of life in a world controlled by private interests of such tycoons as Inverarity. It challenges that "either/or" (*SL* 9) condition of "exitlessness" (*CL* 107) and "absence of surprise to life" in Inverarity's America which Oedipa craves to get rid of by making sense of the Tristero revelations. *Lot 49*'s ending does not reveal whether the Tristero is a truly subversive system capable of taking on the capitalist world of San Narciso and corporate America. However, I believe that this marginalized retraction of the WASTE members could be considered in itself "a real alternative" (107) reality in the novel, manifesting itself to Oedipa silently and enigmatically, as do the Tristero signs. Indeed, in a review of Brian Jarvis's *Postmodern Cartographies*, David Seed has observed that Pynchon's fiction "'explores the possibilities of waste as a redemptive force' by narrating progression into the marginalized spaces of American culture" (2000, 523-24).

If it is true that the WASTE members consider themselves "disinherited" (*CL* 103) and forced to isolation, because of the monopoly of

Thurn and Taxis against the Tristero, it is, too, a "calculated withdrawal" (78). The important word here is *calculated* because it reinforces the possibility of considering the withdrawal of the WASTE community as an alternative way of being in the novel's heavily ordered world of "ones and zeroes" (114). We might say that the act of withdrawal by the WASTE members is a conscious choice, rather than merely being forced to withdraw from a world monopolized by U.S. Mail or a wealthy California real estate developer. The narrator tells us that these individuals, waiting for "SILENT TRISTERO'S EMPIRE" (106) and deliberately communicating by WASTE system, were denied many things in the American society. Nevertheless, if there is one thing that they definitely own, it is the withdrawal: "Whatever else was being denied them out of hate, indifference to the power of their vote, […] this withdrawal was their own" (78). They have chosen to withdraw into their "separate, silent, unsuspected world" (78) and they are actively silent in their deliberate withdrawal. As the silent Tristero has gone underground and vowed to revenge itself on its illegitimate rival at some point in the future, the WASTE members, too, have withdrawn into silence and refuse to use the official national postal service. Persistent in their act of withdrawal, they pursue an alternate communication system that uses different locations as a spatial mechanism against the hegemony of the official postal network. For the Tristero's followers, therefore, the margin is a "location of radical openness and possibility" (hooks 235). As bell hooks has argued, there is "a definite distinction between that marginality which is imposed by oppressive structures and that marginality one chooses as site of resistance—as location of radical openness and possibility. This site of resistance is continually formed in that segregated culture of opposition that is our critical response to domination" (235).[27] In this understanding, Amer-

[27] In *Yearning*, hooks tries to offer an alternative to modernist binary oppositions by embracing the multiplicity of spaces, created by difference, that allows for the construction of communities of resistance. hook's alternative spaces are those of resistance by the oppressed from the margin: "For me this space of radical openness is a margin—a profound edge. Locating oneself there is difficult yet necessary" (228-29). In her opinion, "Understanding marginality as position and place of resistance is crucial for oppressed" (231). She concludes her argument by an invitation: "This is an intervention. A message from that space in the margin that is a site of creativity and power, that inclusive space where we recover ourselves, where we move in solidarity to erase the category colonized/colonizer" (234). Considering marginality as a space of resistance and possibility for the oppressed, the withdrawal of the WASTE members from American society in *Lot 49* becomes more than mere

ica is not simply a lost reality, "a very Rubbish-Tip for subjunctive Hopes" (*MD* 334), but also a space "for all that may yet be true."

Oedipa wonders if "she'd be hounded someday as far as joining Tristero itself, if it existed, in […] its waiting. The waiting above all; if not for another set of possibilities […], then at least, […] waiting for a symmetry of choices to break down" (113-14). In order for an alternative reality to take place in the land, the WASTE members wait and so should Oedipa. The withdrawal, and "The waiting" (113), might lead to what she has been yearning for ever since she saw *The Courier's Tragedy*: "a symmetry of choices" (113-14). In other words, the novel seems to promise an alternative possibility, through Tristero's subversive energies, which might not be able to substitute the ruling forces of the land but at least it could mobilize an included middle, so to speak, transcending the deep-rooted hegemony of "That America coded in Inverarity's testament" (113). In this sense, the withdrawal is a thirding-as-Othering that might offer a Thirdspace in the novel and challenge the established ways of understanding life in capitalist San Narciso.

Analyzing these marginal forces in the novel's California suburbs makes it easier to conceive of an alternative reality in a closed system, namely America, that has supposedly left no room for imagination. Oedipa's encounter with the old sailor is a transitory moment of relief when she is "overcome all at once by a need to touch him" (*CL* 79). Feeling "insulated" (11) in a world where communication is impossible, it is as though she wanted to hang on to this moment which seems to offer her some genuine compassion, with the old man crying in her arms. The sailor, who has a tattooed post horn on the back of his left hand, asks her to deliver a love letter for him "under the freeway" (79). In doing so, she realizes that mail can be posted in containers that most people consider as waste cans. Delivering the old man's letter, Oedipa might have finally participated in the W.A.S.T.E. system and the Tristero. But if the Tristero were only a conspiracy or part of her paranoia, she would have still taken part in an alternate network of alienated individuals through the night streets of San Francisco as well as alternative spaces and locations of communication other than the official postal system.

Oedipa's dance with the "deaf-mute delegates" (82) at a party in a hotel lobby is another miraculous moment in the novel. A few drunk

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marginalization by the oppressive systems of control. Rather, as indicated in the novel, it can be viewed as "an-Other" site of possibility and creativity.

men take her to the ballroom where she is seized by a young man to dance. The narrator tells us that, "Each couple on the floor danced whatever was in the fellow's head" (82). Oedipa wonders how long it would go on before any collisions happen: "There would have to be collisions" (82) but none comes. Astonishingly, "She was danced for half an hour, by mysterious consensus, […] without having felt any touch but the touch of her partner" (82). She thinks that this is what Jesús Arrabal would have called "an anarchist miracle" (75). He had told her that a miracle is "another world's intrusion into this one" through which "the soul's talent for consensus allows the masses to work together without effort" (75).

Despite the tight system of control, Oedipa's nocturnal meditation on Tristero's nature, while lingering in San Francisco, demonstrates transitory revelations in her encounters with the low lives of the city. It is as though her new understanding would make way to penetrate into the rigid framework of control imposed on the land through spatial constructions upheld by the power of capital and corporate America, of which Inverarity is representative. In fact, Oedipa's new cognizance is beyond "a case of either/or" (*SL* 9) and is "an expansion of possibilities." In the above instances, the suburbs, the periphery, the marginalized, and the "Preterite" (*GR* 116) are a collective entity that allows for the explanation of an alternative space in the novel. These might be best described as spaces "under erasure" (1978, 99) to use Brian McHale's worlds. The culmination of such moments is when Oedipa asks Driblette why he felt differently about the Trystero than Wharfinger, the writer of the play. Driblette, unwilling or not knowing how to answer, says if he were to "drain" (*CL* 49) into the Pacific, what Oedipa had seen that night, "that little world" on stage, would have vanished, too. When Oedipa inquires why he has modified Wharfinger's original play, he says that he is "the projector at the planetarium" (49) and "all the closed little universe visible in the circle of that stage" is his very own projection. This indicates that an alternative world might lie somewhere but at the same time, like Driblette's projection, it could vanish into thin air. After all, Oedipa's big question is whether she shall "*project a world*" (51) by bestowing life on Inverarity's will and creating meaning, on her own, out of a hodgepodge of cues that all lead to the Tristero.

II. From Southern to Northern California: The (Im)Possibility of a Postmodern Redemption in *Vineland*

1. 1990: A Turning Point in Pynchon's Work and Spatial Imaginary

The extraordinary success of *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973) had created such an atmosphere of high expectations that the publication of *Vineland* in 1990 left some critics and readers disappointed. Having been exposed to the complexity of the monumental *Gravity's Rainbow*, many Pynchon aficionados did not find *Vineland*'s more accessible style, content, and scope on a par with its intricately multifaceted predecessor. David Foster Wallace wrote to Jonathan Franzen that *Vineland* was "heartbreakingly inferior" and "I get the strong sense he's spent twenty years smoking pot and watching TV" (qtd. in Kachka). In an early review, the critic John Leonard observed that *Vineland* is "a breather between biggies. It doesn't feel like something obsessed-about and fine-tuned for the seventeen years since *Gravity's Rainbow*" (281). Elsewhere, Frank Kermode referred to Pynchon's fourth novel as "a disappointing book" that lacks "the extended fictive virtuosity of *Gravity's Rainbow*" (1990, 3).

Although such negative comparisons with Pynchon's previous works were probably inevitable, there was also a positive, and sometimes mixed, critical reception of *Vineland* from the very beginning. These relatively favorable reviews highlighted the readability of the novel, its accessibility to the reader, particular attention to contemporary American politics in the Nixon-Reagan era, and a more presumably hopeful vision of humanity's prospects based on the notion of collectivity and a communal consciousness. Praising "the intellectual and imaginative energy" that Pynchon brings to "the landscape, the

culture, and the language" in *Vineland*, Edward Mendelson observed that the world of this novel "is richer and more various than the world of almost any American novel in recent memory" (40). Richard Powers considered *Vineland* "one of those entertaining, accessible novels that grows harder, richer, more problematic on second reading" (1990, 694, 697). Describing it as "a riot of genres and genre parodies," he suggested that the narrative of *Vineland* "is an interrogation of power, a flexing of imagination and observation, an urgent verbal gag straining to redeem what innocence is left us by the State" (694, 697).

One can observe that *Vineland*'s reception was very much equivocal after its publication. However, in the course of time, scholars dug more deeply into the multifarious layers of meaning represented in the novel and began to appreciate its critical heft. As David Cowart observed in 2011, "Even if one must admit that *Vineland* falls short of the extraordinary work of Pynchon's early career, it remains a remarkable achievement" (110). I believe that *Vineland* holds a particularly distinctive place in Pynchon's oeuvre. Indeed, it has been suggested that the seventeen-year gap between the two novels indicates the outset of a new phase in his career insofar as "the literary energy that shaped Pynchon's work in the sixties and seventies seems to be flowing into fresh channels" (Cowart 2011, 94). While this claim can be further supported by the beginning of a new stage in Pynchon's personal life, it is also noticeable that the fourth novel is roughly located in the middle of his career and in the center of the California trilogy, at least up to the present.[1] Furthermore, *Vineland* was Pynchon's first novel after the publication of *Slow Learner* (1984) where, for the first and only time in his career, he reflected critically on his work. As such, the critics had a unique opportunity to read a Pynchon novel in light of an autobiographical critique of his own writing, published a couple of years before the novel, though the self-critique has been usually considered to be yet another stance of irony.

There are significant hints that make it plausible to think that *Vineland* shows a sort of shift or turn in Pynchon's writing career. However, my point here is to show that with *Vineland* something new happens in Pynchon's work that is worth being addressed in itself and in relation

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[1] Pynchon married his literary agent, Melanie Jackson, in the same year that *Vineland* was published and had a son a year later. He even "told friends he was seeing a lot more of his parents" (Kachka) — an intriguing detail for a writer who has been trying to remain out of the public eye all along his career.

to the rest of his fiction. I shall say more about this later, especially in section three where I will address the concepts of the postmetropolitan transition and postmodern urbanism as represented in Pynchon's book. The idea of a watershed in Pynchon's fiction has been addressed from several critical perspectives. Highlighting the notion of familial consciousness, Joanna Freer has suggested that from *Vineland* onward "Pynchon comes to view the family as a social ideal and even as a last bastion of *communitas* in self-interested times" (2014, 144). Likewise, recently there has been a cumulative corpus of Pynchon scholarship that argues for a political turn in his fiction. These works usually draw a distinction between early and later Pynchon by considering *Vineland* as a turning point that suggests the onset of a new politics in his novels. Diana Benea suggests that critics failed to appreciate how *Vineland* represented a turn in Pynchon's work, positing that from then onward his novels offer "possibilities of ethical and political agency" (2017a, 13). Drawing on the distinctions between *Vineland* and *Gravity's Rainbow*, Sean Carswell argues that "post-*Gravity's Rainbow* novels in many ways" (3) are distinguished by a new politics. More recently, Freer has observed that "the 'political turn' in Pynchon criticism did not become a consolidated trend until the 2000s" (2019b, 5).[2] Nevertheless, until we know more of the chronological order of Pynchon's writing, as opposed to the publication order of his novels, as well as his working method and drafts, we cannot decisively speak of any change in Pynchon's oeuvre and writing. In effect, the order of the publication of his works might, or might not, correspond to the composition chronology, which in large part remains to be discovered.[3]

While all of these works present valuable arguments, my understanding of a turning point in Pynchon's fiction is different. First of all, these books mainly argue for a sentimental, ethical, or political turn in Pynchon's work whereas my discussion engages with the idea of a watershed moment in his oeuvre from a specifically spatial viewpoint.

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[2] Elsewhere, she argued that "The recent, more widespread recognition of the various approaches to reading the political in Pynchon's writing has fueled what could be called a 'political turn' in Pynchon criticism" (2019b, 178).

[3] In 1964, Pynchon famously told his literary agent about working on four novels simultaneously. On that score, one can think of how the saga of the Traverse family spreads across several of Pynchon's novels. This makes the reader wonder whether all these episodes were born out of one initial narrative nexus from which they then diverged or else Pynchon would have intended to make a larger organic whole at a later stage by putting together the novels.

Therefore, the political and historical questions, raised and discussed in this book, explicate the spatial dimension — in *"From Faraway California"* space comes first. Second, and more importantly, the notion of *Vineland* as a turning point underscores a noticeable development in Pynchon's urban spatial imagination that, nevertheless, has connections and continuities with his earlier and later works. Situated at the heart of the trilogy, *Vineland*, as I will show in this chapter, indicates that Pynchon's urban geographical imaginary evolves in intriguing ways, providing new paths for critical analyses.

2. From Early Career to *Vineland*: Pynchon's Evolving Conceptualization of Space

Published in 1966, *Lot 49* depicts its protagonist's awareness of some source of novel energy, perhaps within the 1960s U.S. society. Oedipa's drifting on the streets of San Francisco seems to unfold to her some meaning about the WASTE system, she herself as a U.S. citizen, and above all America. When she mails the old sailor's letter under the freeway, we learn that "On the swinging part were hand-painted the initials W.A.S.T.E." (*CL* 81). Oedipa decides to lie in wait for anyone else who might use the WASTE mailbox, and around noon a carrier shows up to take out the letters. She chases the, presumably, WASTE postman in a neighborhood unknown to her. However, having finished his job, the carrier leads the protagonist "down the street to a pseudo-Mexican apartment house" (82). The narrator tells us that Oedipa "was back where she'd started, and could not believe 24 hours had passed" (82). The streets of California are shown to offer hints toward the realization of meaning regarding the Tristero. Nevertheless, those momentary revelations seem to be undermined by the fact that her walk under the highway and the chase of the, supposedly, WASTE mailman lead to no redemption in the turbulent life of *Lot 49*'s protagonist. The novel's spatial dimension, in tune with the historical and cultural context of the sixties, offers a vision in which change toward a better America seems possible. Nevertheless, that optimistic view gravitates toward a liminal position as the freeway undercuts the possibility of any revelation in the end.

Gravity's Rainbow delineates another aspect of Pynchon's spatial imagination concerning California. The text hints at the sixties counterculture where California might be considered as a space of possibil-

ities. At the same time, Pynchon's book shows the beginning of the end of the hippie counterculture through, amongst other things, the representation of the California highways.[4] Pynchon dedicates one part of the novel to depicting a caricature of Nixon through the fictional character Richard M. Zhlubb, "night manager of the Orpheus Theatre" (*GR* 775) in Los Angeles. The manager rides the L.A. freeways complaining about the countercultural "freaks": "No, one hesitates to say it, but the Santa Monica is a freeway for [hippie] freaks" (776). He mentions that they come "gibbering in at you from all sides, swarming in, rolling their eyes through the side windows," showing their disrespect for Mr. Zhlubb. Nonetheless, he has already thought of a proper place for them "down in Orange County. Right next to Disneyland" (775), which according to Herman and Weisenburger "foretells a concentration camp" (67).

Furthermore, a rocket positioned right above the fictive L.A. Orpheus theater, in the final segment of the novel titled "Descent," subverts Los Angeles as a promising place with future possibilities, insofar as "the pointed tip of the Rocket" (*GR* 781) reaches the theater and threatens to take the world with it. In *Gravity's Rainbow*, Nixon's paranoiac policies of surveillance are emphasized through the representation of L.A. highways, as Zhlubb represents repressive political forces that try to shut down any glimpse of hope for the counterculture by taking control of the highway and the land. As Stephen Hock has observed, "the freeway functions as an emblem of the possibilities that Pynchon locates in California" (202). At the same time, "the portrait of the freeway that Pynchon draws marks the freeway predominantly as a carrier of death and destruction in the service of modern capital and power" (201). In effect, the depiction of California freeways in the above example from *Gravity's Rainbow*, or in Oedipa's first encounter with the maze of the roads in San Narciso, hints at the policies of the urbanization of California suburbia for political and economic purposes.

With *Vineland*, it is as though after a seventeen-year hiatus the unanswered questions in the previous novels, not least in *Lot 49*, had been resurrected. For example, a significant issue to which Pynchon most of-

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[4] N. Katherine Hayles has observed that in *Vineland* Pynchon asks the question "how profoundly the American revolution of the sixties failed" (77). Drawing on this observation, Luc Herman and Steven Weisenburger argue that, when writing *Gravity's Rainbow*, Pynchon was "already posing that question in 1973" (61).

ten goes back in his novels is the possibility of an alternative America.[5] Nevertheless, although Pynchon revisits certain issues explored in the previous books, this does not negate the existence of some differences between the second California novel and his earlier fiction. As we shall see, from an urban geographical point of view, for instance, *Vineland* adumbrates an evolution in Pynchon's understanding and representation of spatial processes. To mention another example, regarding the theme of the quest in the novel, Cowart has observed that "Instead of a Herbert Stencil, an Oedipa Maas, or a Tyrone Slothrop in search of a master key, one tends in *Vineland* to encounter characters in pursuit of assorted modest grails" (2011, 96).

Vineland recounts the story of Frenesi Gates, a 1960s hippie radical and member of a militant film collective that documented the state's oppressive actions against the counterculture. Moving constantly between the sixties and the novel's present in 1984, we come to know other characters surrounding Frenesi in the past and present whose lives are affected by her actions. She betrayed the group and abandoned her husband Zoyd Wheeler and her young daughter Prairie. The novel's opening shows Zoyd who lives with Prairie, now 14 years of age. He becomes aware that Brock Vond, the federal prosecutor chasing his ex-wife, is targeting Prairie as a way to find her mother. Back in the sixties Brock was the person who convinced Frenesi to betray her friends, leading to the fall of the People's Republic of Rock and Roll — initially the College of the Surf that later declared independence from the U.S.

The College is situated in Pynchon's fictional Trasero County between San Diego and Orange Counties. The imaginary cartography of Trasero County highlights a number of significant issues in Southern California's history of geographical development: the militarization of the land, the urbanization of suburbia, and the expansion of Republican ideology. The novel's narrative technique features a double timeline which casts further light on spatial developments in California from the sixties to the eighties. For example, we come to know about Zoyd's movement up north to the fictive Vineland County where he tries to hide away from Brock. This provides the reader with the pos-

[5] One can trace the importance of this issue to his mind even in his non-fiction writing. For instance, apropos the novel *DeFord*, written by Pynchon's friend David Shetzline in 1968, he wrote that "This is an extraordinary book […] For at its heart is an awareness that the America which should have been is not the America we ourselves live in; that the dissonances set up between the two grow wider and more tragic."

sibility to observe some significant urban geographical developments that bespeak the urbanization of suburbia in California as a state policy. To escape Brock, Zoyd sends Prairie away where she meets up with DL, a ninja and an old friend of Frenesi's. As in the previous novels, in *Vineland* Pynchon mobilizes the theme of the quest where Prairie embarks on a trip to find the real story about her mother. Through DL, she learns about her mother's radical activities in the sixties and her love story with Brock who turned her into a government informer. At the end of the novel, all of the main characters get together in Vineland at the large annual reunion of Frenesi's extended family, from which Brock is excluded. Trying to kidnap Prairie in a helicopter, the funding for his secret program is cut and he is hauled up. The book ends somewhat ambiguously as Prairie wishes that Brock would come back and carry her away.

3. Creating Vineland: "Postmetropolitan Transition" and Postmodern Urbanism

> *It is not merely the pattern of the city itself, but every institution, organization, and association composing the city that will be transformed by this development.*
>
> Lewis Mumford, *The City in History*

When the former hippie Zoyd Wheeler is forced to leave his house because of a drug setup by Brock Vond, he seeks refuge from the federal prosecutor's troubles in Vineland with his daughter Prairie and his friend Van Meter. As Van tells Zoyd, "'ere's worse places for a desperado to hide out. […] every guy up here looks just like we do. You're dern near invisible already" (274). Indeed, it is exactly as if Vineland were "A Harbor of Refuge" (273) for the sixties hippies, such as Zoyd, who have lost their hope of change in the wake of oppressive federal policies inasmuch as they have become almost invisible. Since that invisibility provides this group of isolated countercultural radicals with a certain level of freedom, Vineland is like the last refuge on earth for them as a place where they might be immune from state persecution.

When they enter Vineland, we learn that "the primary sea coast, forest, riverbanks and bay were still not much different from what early visitors in Spanish and Russian ships had seen" (274). But even in such a suburban area, as Zoyd is driving, they come across a "federal

building, jaggedly faceted, obsidian black, standing apart, inside a vast parking lot whose fences were topped with concertina wire" (273). For the benefit of Zoyd, who is surprised at the sight of the federal structure, Van explains that "it just landed one night," "sitting there in the morning when everybody woke up" (273). This could have something to do with Pynchon's concern with the expansion of the military-industrial bases in California suburbs throughout the sixties. In the previous chapter, I argued how this idea can be purported through a comparison between San Narciso and any major Southern California town, such as those in Orange County. However, the issue at hand is the presence of a state building in suburban Vineland, recalling the Republican policies that promoted the construction of military bases in California suburbia. Whether or not this military case is compelling, the novel offers a significant detail that reinforces the urban dimension of the novel. This part of the country, as a safe house for those isolated souls like Zoyd, seems to be monopolized by real estate outfits. These companies have recently discovered this suburban area, empty of inhabitants, and compete to own the land for future construction:

> the cable television companies showed up in the county, got into skirmishes that included exchanges of gunfire between gangs of rival cable riggers, eager to claim souls for their distant principals, fighting it out house by house, with the Board of Supervisors compelled eventually to partition the county into Cable Zones, which in time became political units in their own right as the Tubal entrepreneurs went extending their webs even where there weren't enough residents per linear mile to pay the rigging cost, they could make that up in town, and besides, they had faith in the future of California real estate. (275)

These entrepreneurs extended their sphere of power and control on the land for the purposes of developing future construction in California — a factor that changed the shape of the Vineland landscape and the structure of the County.

Concerning the development and exploitation of Northern California's natural space, it is interesting to think how an author belonging to the generation of writers after Pynchon has returned to this theme nearly two decades after the publication of *Vineland*. Almost twenty years younger than the master, on might say, in *The Overstorey* Powers recounts the story of nine American individuals, with different backgrounds, whose lives are engaged with the redwood trees of Northern

California and Oregon. In their effort to save the redwood forests and the natural habitat, they get into violent altercations with the police and ultimately it seems as though they have no choice but to yield to the overreaching forces of capital and political governance. As the narrator puts it, "Action from Washington isn't the answer to this showdown. It's the *cause*" (328). Indeed, the main reason why this small group of environmental activists cannot help preserve Northern California's natural space is that the logging companies, in their practice of capitalist economic profiteering to the detriment of the environment, are supported by the law enforcement apparatus and federal forces. *The Overstory* not only reminds the reader of the abovementioned scene in *Vineland*, but it also calls to mind the withdrawal of the mythological creatures the *Woge* to the natural landscape around them. In the wake of official oppression, Powers' characters scatter to different places and retire to the humdrum life of an average U.S. citizen. Thus, the representation of the natural space in these works helps the reader see a connection between the portrayal of the ex-hippies and their faith in Pynchon's novel and the depiction of the lives of these nine environmentalists in Powers' book.

Vineland's delineation of land appropriation by cable television companies is a reminder of crisis-generated urban restructuring through the post-war urbanization of suburbia. As previously indicated, Orange County was the conservative headquarters for Republican policies throughout the 1960s, where the California landscape went through a process of suburban urbanization. In much the same way, in *Vineland*, the exploitation of Northern California open land, by private businesses, suggests a green light to the construction activities of the entrepreneurs who are modifying the California landscape for their economic gains. Soja argued that the urbanization of suburbia was meant to distribute minority populations so they can be controlled more easily, without having to confront social rebellion and protest. At the same time, it sought to make the American dream, including single-family houses, come true, ensuring new ways of economic profitability for the capitalist system. In other words, urban geographical planning was used as a mechanism, a "spatial fix" (Harvey 2006, xviii), to realize socio-political goals.[6]

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[6] As socio-political organizations can affect the spatial organization of our lived spaces, urban planning has the power to impact every social and political institution in it.

With Reagan's policies of small government and huge tax cuts for the wealthy, rich companies, as in Pynchon's novel, grew more powerful in practicing their economic plans with an increasingly disappearing middle-class America. As the narrator relates,

> Developers in and out of state had also discovered this shoreline in the way of the wind, with its concealed tranquilities and false passages, this surprise fish-trap in the everyday coast. All born to be suburbs, in their opinion, and the sooner the better. It meant work, but too much of it nonunion and bought shamefully cheap. (275)

As it can be observed in this scene, the real estate speculators started to take over the Vineland shore and its landscape for their construction benefits. Reagan's economic policies, known as Reaganomics, gave extraordinary leverage to the top rich, and the criticism of such programs, that changed the American landscape, is very much present in *Vineland*. Indeed, I believe that the urban geographical development of Vineland County in the novel is a reflection of the policies of the urbanization of suburbia. Interestingly enough, the spatial modification of Vineland County, in Pynchon's book, takes place through a political struggle of power. By appropriating the landscape, the developers achieve more political power and aim for future real estate development in this peripheral Northern California County.

The changing structure of the California landscape in Pynchon's fiction is by no means limited to the California trilogy. For reasons related to an important issue in the larger picture of *Vineland*'s narrative structure, it is useful to touch upon a scene from *Gravity's Rainbow* that constitutes the starting point of Stefan Mattessich's introduction to *Lines of Flight*— an interesting work that investigates the sixties counterculture in Pynchon's oeuvre. Mattessich observes that near the end of *Gravity's Rainbow* the narrator describes one of Slothrop's encounters with Seaman Bodine. Bodine sings a song about "some nameless sailor stuck in wartime San Diego" (*GR* 759) who wishes to escape by going "back north, to Humboldt County." He argues that this detail

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In *The City in History*, Lewis Mumford spoke of the consequences of "a new urban order" (567) on the social, cultural, and political aspects of society. Pynchon has denied reading any of Mumford's books. However, in a 1969 letter he recommended that Mr. Hirsch "read Lewis Mumford" (qtd. in Seed 241) on the city form. It is also noticeable that Pynchon "actually consulted Jane Jacobs' *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961)" (Seed 1988, 263).

in the novel resonates with a "later moment in American society: the counterculture's return to the land, to nature, and to a simpler and more communal way of life" (Mattessich 1) — the exact theme and setting which Pynchon addressed in *Vineland*.

Nevertheless, my argument here is that the geographical movement from San Diego to Humboldt County sheds useful light on an important spatial issue, regarding the California urban/suburban space, that intersects with some salient socio-political events in America's history. The sailor's hope in Pynchon' novel to move from Southern to Northern California – from a major, industrial city to a rural, agricultural one – can be explained in terms of the diminishing urban center-periphery paradigm in city regions, heralded in the previous chapter. In *Vineland*, through a double temporal setting from the 1960s to the 1980s, we observe the movement of a group of hippies from Southern to Northern California. From an urban perspective, this indicates that *Vineland* shows some level of similarity with *Lot 49* as far as the postmetropolitan transition and the concept of ubiquitous centrality in the postmetropolis are concerned. At the same time, it shows that something new is going on in Pynchon's second California book. While in *Lot 49* the main action of the plot takes place in the urban cityscape of Los Angeles, and the periphery upholds the urban center through the grid of roads and real estate construction, in *Vineland* it is in the suburban town of Vineland that the plot for the most part unfolds.

Whereas in both novels there is a shrinking center-periphery paradigm, where the two parts and those in between are connected through the maze of highways and byways, from *Lot 49* to *Vineland* the center of action changes from urban flatland to suburbia. The contrast in the representation of urban space between the two novels has been touched upon by some scholars, among whom are Hanjo Berressem and Diana Benea.[7] Nevertheless, neither scholar has explicitly explained how this urban spatial change takes place from one novel to the other or, for that matter, has investigated the significance of this geographical modification in a well-developed, sustained manner. In fact, both essays suffice to mention the pattern of change and move on to examine their issues of interest. In what follows, I delve into the heart of this urban geographical development in *Vineland* in order to both explicate it in the novel and examine its significance in relation to

[7] See Berressem 2014 and Benea 2017b.

the larger picture of the trilogy and Pynchon's evolving imagination of cityspace.

Vineland shows some continuity with *Lot 49* in terms of the urbanization of suburbia. A case in point is the state and corporate economy's urban policies such as the cable television companies' development of the rural area in Pynchon's fictional Vineland. Such policies follow the path of Pierce Inverarity's construction projects in California suburbia for the capitalist interests of real estate developers. However, there is also a difference in the urbanization pattern in these books. In *Vineland*, the hippie radicals seek shelter in the redwood forests of Northern California which depicts a movement toward a rural setting. This variation in Pynchon's representation of cityspace could have something to do with the interval between the publication of *Gravity's Rainbow* and *Vineland* and the issue of government "command and control" (*IV* 213) under Reagan. In *Vineland*, such a movement toward the suburbs signals an urban spatial change where the periphery and beyond are becoming as central as the center itself.

From an urban standpoint, the postmetropolitan transition toward the formation of the global postmetropolis in *Vineland* can perhaps be best explained through what Soja defined as a shift from "the crisis-generated restructuring that followed the events of 1965" to an era of "restructuringgenerated crisis that surfaced in 1992" (1996b, 426). Curiously, in 1990, when Pynchon published the novel, Soja was theorizing this shift in his treatment of the postmetropolitan transition. Only two years after the publication of Mike Davis' apocalyptic *City of Quartz*, the Los Angeles riots broke out that showed the onset of a new metropolitan period of crises originating out of the new social and spatial conditions of postmetropolitan urbanism. From the 1960s urban crisis to the beginning of a new metropolitan period of crises in the nineties, Los Angeles went through a dramatic transformation. Somewhat paradoxical, this new crisis emerged out of the very spatial policies that helped address the 1960s urban crisis. One of the most significant of these spatial practices was "the restructuring of urban form into the stretched fabric of Exopolis" (1996b, 457). We can observe traces of Exopolis, the restructuring of urban spatial form, in *Vineland* through the geographical movement of the sixties countercultural hippies from the Southland to the North that indicates the formation of city regions in the U.S. through the urbanization of suburbia. With a change in the postmetropolitan transition, Soja argued that "Whereas

Watts marked the first major rebellion against the late modernism of postwar America, the civil disturbances of 1992 may represent the first explosion of resistance to neoconservative American postmodernism and post-Fordism" (459).

Entering the 1990s, with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War, some critics observed that the new decade heralded the onset of something new beyond the culture of postmodernism. However, others believed that the nineties showed a sort of passing stage between the symbolic turning points of 1989 and 2001. Drawing on Phillip Wegner's understanding of the "long nineties" (24), McHale has suggested that this decade did not "mark the end of postmodernism. What it ushered in was an in-between phase of culture – an interregnum" (2015, 125) until the 9/11 incident in 2001. At the same time, he observes that "Impatience with postmodernism, and eagerness to get 'beyond' it somehow, is pervasive in the early nineties" (126) by those such as Jonathan Franzen and David Foster Wallace. Such an attitude can be similarly seen in Soja's description of the 1992 Los Angeles insurrection which for the first time exploded in resistance against "neoconservative American postmodernism" (1996b, 459). From then onward, Soja used the term *postmodern* increasingly less in his writings. He noted that the last time he defended "critical postmodernism and the notion of postmodern urbanism" (2014, 167) was sometime in 1993 insofar as he was convinced that the 1992 Justice Riots showed something different about the nature of the postmodern urban condition.

But however one interprets the matter, postmodernism was the buzz word of the 1990s. McHale mentions that in the nineties, "Postmodern modes of expression seemed particularly well adapted to capture the decade's volatility and multidirectionality" (2015, 126). Likewise, there were many new definitions of postmodern urbanism that were all motivated by, and tried to explain, the change in the urban condition of the contemporary world in the last decade of the 20th century. As far as *Vineland* is concerned, one of the most suitable models to describe the emergence of this new urban form is perhaps Michael Dear and Steven Flusty's 1998 "postmodern urbanism."[8] Rooted in studies on

[8] There have been other insightful definitions of postmodern urbanism which can help shed light on certain aspects of Pynchon's urban geographical imagination in his novels. Nan Ellin's 1996 book of that moniker, for instance, is a valuable source that captures the urban spirit of the 1990s and explains the postmodern urban condition from a different perspective.

Southern California, postmodern urbanism argued for the existence of a distinctively different school, namely the Los Angeles School of Urbanism as opposed to the Chicago School, characterized by a modernist vision of the industrial metropolis. One of the most well-known of the Chicago School models was Ernest Burgess' concentric zone model famously proposed in the 1925 *The City*. Based on the assumption of a single-centered metropolis, Burgess suggested that the city would tend to shape a series of annular rings around the Central Business District (CBD) at its core. Put otherwise, the fundamental concept of the concentric ring structure was the city as an organic expansion around a principal core. In contrast to Chicago School models of urban form that did not contain extensive suburbs, the LA School does take into consideration restructuring processes and suburbanization. Contrary to the Chicago School model, what lies at the heart of Dear and Flusty's postmodern urbanism is "a postmodern urban process in which the urban periphery organizes the center within the context of a globalizing capitalism" (1998, 65). The scholars posit that in the postmodern urban condition "urbanization is occurring on a quasi-random field of opportunities" (66) where "cities no longer develop as a concentrated loci of population and economic activity, but as fragmented parcels within Citistāt, the collective world city" (65). They observe that in Citistāt the periphery is "omnipresent" (63) and "the hinterland organizes the center" (50) insomuch as the "resultant urbanism is distinguished by a centerless urban form." As a result, Chicago-style city form and urban development can no longer satisfy the organizational exigencies of the postmodern metropolis, as instantiated in Los Angeles.

Vineland extensively deals with Northern California suburbia and its rural hinterland. In fact, the novel is mostly set in and around fictional Vineland County in the redwoods of Northern California with a few flashbacks to the cityspace of Los Angeles. As Sasha Gates, Zoyd's ex-mother-in-law in the novel, tells him, Vineland is a place with "plenty of redwoods left to get lost in, ghost towns old and new blocked up behind slides that are generations old and no Corps of Engineers'll ever clear" (263). Nevertheless, the narrator relates that someday Vineland would be a "megalopolis" (273), which reminds us of the land developers' recent activities in the aera who are turning this rural part of Northern California into a real estate suburban arrangement. Indeed, the most salient characteristic of Dear and Flusty's postmodern urbanism is how the urbanization of suburbia leads to a dramatic change where the sub-

urbs become so important that they arrange the city core. Taking into consideration *Vineland*'s treatment of Northern California suburbs and its process of urbanization, I believe postmodern urbanism is a suitable model that can explain, at least to a certain extent, Pynchon's representation of space in the novel. As in postmodern urbanism the periphery plays a significant role and organizes the center, in *Vineland* it is in the suburbs and the natural areas of Vineland County that the novel's main plot takes place. The emphasis on the periphery in Dear and Flusty's model further calls to mind the fact that from *Lot 49* to *Vineland* there is a change in the setting from the urban Southland of California to the hinterland of Vineland County in the North.[9]

Apropos the urbanization of suburbia, as a significant element both in Dear and Flusty's postmodern urbanism and Soja's postmetropolitan transition, there are at least two noteworthy issues in the novel that underscore a somewhat different nature of urbanization in *Vineland* than that represented in *Lot 49*. Pynchon's narrator recounts that when entrepreneurs from different parts of America discovered the Vineland shoreline and its potential for construction business, they created work but "too much of it nonunion and bought shamefully cheap" (*VL* 275). The condition of workers and the treatment of corporations are of prime importance in California's land development history. In 1988, when writing *City of Quartz*, Davis observed that "less than one-third of private employers in California as a whole […] pay the full cost of their workers' health insurance premiums" (xiii). Paradoxically, the only forces that remain influential in local politics are "homeowners associations" (xv). In such a condition, "suburban coalitions still wrangle with developers over the scale and pace of land conversion" (xv). Pynchon deftly uses the word *nonunion* to refer to Reagan's America and the fading trend of union jobs in view of his economic policies. In *Vineland*, there seems to be no possibility of a decent job for those like Zoyd "surviving in one of the world's worst antiunion environments" (*VL* 275). As a former hippie, seeking to get together his life, Zoyd ekes

[9] One might go as far as saying that the structure of the production of Pynchon's fiction itself shows some degree of similarity with the LA School model of urban form and the continuous interaction between the center and the periphery. Dear and Flusty observe that one important characteristic of the LA School is "a global-local connection" (50). If we consider Pynchon's smaller novels situated in California in relation to his bigger, historical novels, we might say that they demonstrate a connection between the local and the global.

out a living on government mental disability checks for diving through a window — an annual performance as proof of his mental condition.

In his second California book, Pynchon projects the real nature of urban restructuring and the urbanization of California suburbs onto the palimpsest of political struggle for economic power. In this respect, a significant, though marginal, reference in the novel is Joe Hill, a Swedish-American labor activist and a member of the IWW (Industrial Workers of the World) or the "Wobblies" (67), as the narrator puts it in the novel. Through this figure Pynchon touches upon the issue of nonunion jobs, or better yet the "dream of One Big Union" for the workers, and their working conditions in the making of California's geographical history. For instance, the narrator recounts that Eula Becker, Sasha's mother, met her husband Jess Traverse, a union organizer, at the IWW hall in Vineland and she fell in love with him immediately. But what she loved about him above all was "his dangerous indenture to an idea" or "what Joe Hill was calling 'the commonwealth of toil that is to be'" (67).

At some point in the novel, driving in Vineland, Zoyd and his friend Mucho Maas reminisce about the bygone days in the sixties. Disappointed by the militarization of the land and state apparatus' strict control, they listen "to the sermon, one they knew and felt their hearts comforted by, though outside spread […] the heartless power of the scabland garrison state the green free America of their childhoods even then was turning into" (271). In Reagan's America, Zoyd and Mucho cannot have a proper job unless they did something like Frenesi and Flash, who are informers for the government in the novel's present. But even Frenesi is not "exempt" (80) from "the Reaganomic ax blades" and feels that she and her husband "might easily be abandoned," as they are "destined losers whose only redemption would have to come through their usefulness to the State law-enforcement apparatus, which was calling itself 'America'" (305). In fact, the new economic policies shrank the good union days in America's past and the labor struggle lost most of its power during the 1980s.[10]

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[10] Pynchon's attention to the condition of workers and the issue of union jobs goes well beyond *Vineland*. As an example, in *Against the Day* during a job interview with the "personnel director at White City Investigations," a detective agency in the novel, the character Lew Basnight is told that the job is not about "safecrackers, embezzlers, murderers, […] it's all about the labor unions, or as we like to call them, anarchistic scum'" (43).

Another important issue as for how the spatial change in the California landscape relates to the narrative structure is the way "the Tube" affects the lives of people in the novel. Although TV is an important issue in *Lot 49* right from the outset, in *Vineland* its relation to real estate and construction companies accentuates its importance in terms of the spatial analysis here. The Tubal outfits are expanding their control over the suburban California landscape to achieve economic power and political leverage. This seems to be a suggestion of how the Tube is taking command of peoples' attitudes in a novel where various characters are depicted to be addicted to TV: Zoyd has to do his stunt work through the window on television for an annual paycheck. Frenesi enjoys "masturbating" (73) to the Tube, "to the perennial motorcycle-cop favorite 'CHiPs.'" Hector Zuñiga, a DEA agent, is a Tube addict who's trying to create a movie project about the sixties events, with Frenesi as its director.

Isaiah Two Four tells Zoyd that "Minute the Tube got hold of you folks that was it, that whole alternative America, […] sold it all to your real enemies" (322). Isaiah refers to the power of television to manipulate people for political ends, as it was with the sixties revolution of Zoyd and Frenesi's generation. It is peculiarly paradoxical, and a parody, that the government pursues its war on drugs by incarcerating young people while, indeed, the most dangerous drug of all is the Tube itself.[11] Joseph Slade has pointed out that "the real narcotic in *Vineland* is television" (1994, 71). As the Japanese "karmic adjuster" (*VL* 165) in the novel Takeshi Fumimota mentions, "an enhancing factor" (190) even for a Thanatoid, in his early denial of death, is television that provides the soothing effects of drugs for "the soul newly in transition." Emphasizing the effects of mediated information, Slade shows how television as "an instrument for change becomes an instrument of the status quo" (70). Indeed, the spatial critical analysis here, in relation to the theme of the Tube and mediated information, endeavors to suggest an important point in *Vineland*: land development and urbanization policies by real estate developers and televi-

[11] The novel offers many examples that remind us of Reagan's war on drugs. Hector Zuñiga, a DEA agent, coins the title "Drugs — Sacrament of the Sixties, Evil of the Eighties" (293) for his film project whose "ultimate message will be that the real threat to America, then and now, is from th' illegal abuse of narcotics?" (46-47). Moreover, the narrator relates that the Nixonian-Reaganite symbol of repression, Brock Vond saw "his future in the war against drugs" (113).

sion companies in Vinland County go hand in hand with the political and capitalist economic mechanisms of power and control, trying to maintain the status quo.

4. From *Vineland's* College of the Surf and Trasero County to California's San Diego and Orange Counties: A Geocritical Analysis

Vineland's chapter ten ends with an episode in which 24fps members are trapped in the fictive College of the Surf during a countercultural confrontation with state forces in the 1960s. 24fps is a militant film collective that documents the oppressive actions of government agents against the hippie radicals. The narrator relates that in the wake of the events at the College, 24fps

> found themselves all the way up Shit's Creek, with all lines of withdrawal from the campus denied them. By the time of the last offer by bullhorn of safe passage, every road, watercourse, storm drain, and bike path was interdicted. All phones were cut off, and the news media, compliant as always, at a harmless, unbridgeable distance. On that last night, 24fps had exclusive coverage of the story, if anybody survived to bring it out. (178)

Young and radical, 24fps are "infuriatingly careless" (178) and not afraid of learning "with their bodies the language of batons." When the College is besieged by federal forces under Brock's direction, they are present for shooting the events taking place there. One of the shocking incidents is the death of Weed Atman, a mathematics professor who becomes the leader of the protests. College of the Surf is located in Pynchon's fictional Trasero County, whose shape is described through a cartographic representation at the beginning of the novel's chapter eleven:

> THE shape of the brief but legendary Trasero County coast … repeated on its own scale the greater curve between San Diego and Terminal Island, including a military reservation which, like Camp Pendleton in the world at large, extended from the ocean up into a desert hinterland. At one edge of the base, pressed between the fenceline and the sea, shimmered the pale archways and columns, the madrone and wind-shaped cypresses of the clifftop campus of College of the Surf. (178-179)

There is a sharp ideological contrast between this huge conservative military base and the countercultural ideals of the College radicals.

The mention of Camp Pendleton, one of the largest U.S. Marine Corps bases constructed in 1942, and San Diego County is a reminder of aerospace and military establishments built or activated in the 1960s in the arms race with the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Such policies in Southern California led to the militarization of the land, affecting the lives of the American people. Both Trasero County and College of the Surf are fictional places in the novel. However, the narrator recounts that the College is "bracketed by the two ultraconservative counties of Orange and San Diego, having like a border town grown into an extreme combination of both" (179). Trasero County is described as a sort of borderline between San Diego and Orange Counties where we learn about the affluent Republicans with "solid Southern California money, oil, construction, pictures" (179). The College, a conservative Republican school, is situated at the edge of a cliff between the Ocean and a military base.

From a geocritical standpoint, the College does not represent any actual place insofar as there are no colleges near this border. The Pynchon Wiki website suggests that it might refer to Whittier College far northeast, and away from the coast, which is Richard Nixon's alma mater. This claim seems possible because the narrator, describing Trasero County, recounts that those wealthy Southern California tycoons "flew in and out of private airfields" who "would soon be dropping in on Dick Nixon, just over the county line in San Clemente" (179). We are told that "the new Nixon Monument" was built "a hundred-foot colossus in black and white marble at the edge of the cliff, gazing not out to sea but inland, towering above the campus architecture, and above the highest treetops, dark-and pale, a quizzical look on its face" (180). The rich Southern California entrepreneurs and guardians of the College saw Nixon as the ideal president to expand their power throughout the country. As such, they might have built his statue, overlooking the College campus and towering over the highest treetops.

All these hints at the militarization of Southern California landscape during the 1960s in the novel, together with the rise of the New Right ideology supported by wealthy Republican moguls, emphasize Nixon's repressive treatment of the youth counterculture. A seminal point in such a depiction is how space is represented in the text to underscore the link between those conservative policies and their promotion in suburban areas. Deborah Cowen has observed that exurban and "rural areas have become the heartland of militarism and

'authentic' patriotism" (1) in Western nations, appealing to conservative fractions of their populations. Applying the Southern Strategy in 1968, then candidate Nixon developed such methods that successfully contributed to the political realignment of conservative voters in the South to gain their support. During the sixties, in places like San Diego and Orange Counties, a host of military headquarters in suburban Southern California were built while the urbanization of suburbia continued to profit real estate entrepreneurs, as suggested in *Vineland*.

4.1. Implications of the Geocritical Analogy: The Space of Politics in *Vineland*

We're on into a new world now, it's the Nixon Years,
then it'll be the Reagan Years —

Thomas Pynchon, *Vineland*

As regards the conservative Republicans who endowed the College, Pynchon's narrator relates that "Ostensibly College of the Surf was to have been their own private polytechnic" (*VL* 179) for educating professional people at their disposal "in law enforcement, business administration, the brand-new field of Computer Science." In fact, Nixon himself was supported by the California business conservatives early in his political career in winning against the five-term Democratic Congressman Jerry Voorhis in 1946 and, more importantly, the Democratic candidate Helen Douglas in the race for the United States Senate in 1949. In *Vineland*, the wealthy guardians of the College accept only protégés compliant with their rules, "enforcing a haircut and dress code that Nixon himself confessed to finding a little stodgy" (179). Nevertheless, "Against the somber military blankness" at the back of the College, we observe a completely different atmosphere:

> here was a lively beachhead of drugs, sex, and rock and roll, the strains of subversive music day and night, accompanied by tambourines and harmonicas, reaching like fog through the fence, up the dry gulches and past the sentinel antennas, the white dishes and masts, the steel equipment sheds, finding the ears of sentries attentuated but ominous, like hostile-native sounds in a movie about white men fighting savage tribes. (179)

In depicting the story of the College of the Surf, Pynchon touches upon prominent issues in America's history and politics during the 1960s. We can notice traces of the generational gap between the sixties youth and their parents, the development of the counterculture, and the repression against the youth movements. We are told that the Southern California moguls supported the college financially and admitted "only students likely to be docile" (179), who would later become successors to their agenda and promote their economic and political plans. However, it is in this conservative atmosphere of social behavior and cultural docility that "the same dread disease infecting campuses across the land" (179) reaches the campus of the College. Although an infectious disease for the patrons of the College, it offers a new opportunity to the submissive students who now enjoy "a lively beachhead of drugs, sex, and rock and roll" (179). The new trend, initiated by the consumption of a strong type of marijuana, goes viral on the campuses of American universities including the College of the Surf. This could be read as part of the generational conflict between the value system of these hippie college students and that of their financial supporters. For the countercultural youth, smoking marijuana and taking LSD was a way to open up some space of action to set themselves free from the conditioning received by their families and the conformist U.S. society of the 1950s.

As the new trend of opposition becomes more significant in the College, the authorities intervene with violence during a campus protest. "It was a moment of light, in which the true nature of police was being revealed to" (181) everyone. Initially, the movement "flourished, as week after week amazingly went by, a small crescent-shaped region of good spirits in that darkening era, […] still innocent of how it could ever be stopped" (182). However, "it was still too uncomfortably close to San Clemente," where Nixon lived, "and other sensitive locales" (182). In the following days, it becomes clear that the construction of the College has been merely motivated by real estate business: "It came to light that College of the Surf was no institution of learning at all but had been an elaborate land developers' deal from the beginning, only disguised as a gift to the people" (182). As the narrator relates, there has even been a precise program to develop the college for construction profiteering: "Five years' depreciation and then the plan was to start putting in cliffside vacation units" (182-83). As a result, on behalf of the people, the students decide to take back the College and, "knowing the state was in on the scheme at all levels" (183), they go on to "become a

nation of their own" independent of California. Consequently, College of the Surf becomes a free nation, celebrating its new space of political freedom by the name "The People's Republic of Rock and Roll" (183).

Startled at the sight of three policemen, "falling upon one unarmed student" and "beating him with their riot sticks," Weed Atman wonders why "They're breaking people's heads" (181). This violent interaction brings to mind a similar scene in Powers' *The Overstory* where the character Patricia Westerford, an environmental activist and guru, wonders how in America people might get "beaten and abused. People getting their eyes swabbed with pepper" (295) by police, as they protest for protecting trees: "Pepper spray. With cotton swabs. It looked like something out of . . . not this country" (294). To instantiate such a feeling in *Vineland*, Pynchon provides us with an intriguing episode on the Vietnam War. A graduate student in the Southeast Asian Studies Department, Rex Snuvvle is "being indoctrinated into the government's version of the war in Vietnam" (*VL* 181). However, he had been "as unable to avoid the truth as […] to speak it" (181). Having reached a new understanding of the war, he envisions himself in a dialogue with Weed "in which together they might explore American realities in the light of this low-hanging Eastern lamp" (182). Although Weed, the leader of the PR^3 nation, "turned out to be all but silent" (182), he gets murdered in a plan by Brock where Rex and Frenesi are used as tools to that end. Here, we are reminded of John F. Kennedy's assassination early in his Presidency that planted further distrust in the hearts of American people regarding the politics of their nation. In fact, Pynchon calls "murder as an instrument of American politics" (*VL* 34). In *Great Jones Street*, DeLillo uses the spatial metaphor of the underground to convey the connivance of the governmental apparatuses with private corporations taking hold of the public system and preempting the citizens' space of urban local power. Emphasizing the untruthfulness of the official system in cahoots with corporate economy, a character in DeLillo's novel tells the protagonist Bucky Wunderlick that

> The true underground is where power flows. That's the best secret of our time. […] The presidents and prime ministers are the ones who make the underground deals and speak the true underground idiom. The corporations. The military. The banks. This is the underground network. This is where it happens. Power flows under the surface, far beneath the level you and I live on. This is where the laws are broken. (231)

Elsewhere in *Vineland*, we learn that "Since the end of the war in Vietnam, the Thanatoid population had been growing steeply" (276), which suggests that many people experienced the somber feeling of war and many others died in it. For instance, Ortho Bob Dulang is a Vietnam veteran who is a Thanatoid. He remarks that "'Thanatoid' means 'like death, only different'" (149). As he explains to Takeshi,

> In traditional karmic adjustment, […] Death was the driving pulse — everything had moved as slowly as the cycles of birth and death, but this proved to be too slow for enough people to begin, eventually, to provide a market niche. There arose a system of deferment, of borrowing against karmic futures. Death, in Modern Karmic Adjustment, got removed from the process. (152-53)

Indeed, these individuals feel dislocated within the socio-political space of U.S. society and have trouble reconnecting with it. As the narrator in *Inherent Vice* describes the life of Vietnam veterans after their return to the U.S., they simply wanted an "unhassled civilian afterlife" (86). Just like the Thanatoids who have an in-between status and look for some karmic adjustment to come back to this world, these citizens feel alienated and left behind by their politicians within American society as a space fraught with political and cultural suspicion. Indeed, with Weed Atman's murder in the novel, PR[3] begins to fall apart.

The day after PR[3]'s declaration of independence, 24fps comes in to report the recent issues. They notice subversive energy everywhere on the campus as the new anti-establishment movement is pushing to gain some space of liberty. "Through the crude old color and distorted sound" of the film shot by Frenesi back in the 1960s, in the novel's present Prairie "could feel the liberation in the place that night, the faith that anything was possible" (*VL* 183). However, "No hour day or night was exempt from helicopter visits, though this was still back in the infancy of overhead surveillance" (183). Such an attempt to surveil the individuals' socio-political freedom through the imposition of repression on space and policing their movements can be described in terms of militarizing urban space which Mike Davis referred to as "the destruction of accessible public space" (2006, 226).[12] *Vineland*'s narrator

[12] Most recently, Mike Davis and Jon Wiener have addressed, amongst other topics, the spatial policing of socio-political and economic boundaries of life in Los Angeles throughout the "Long Sixties" in *Set the Night on Fire: L.A. in the Sixties*.

tells us that at this stage of events "Some wanted to declare war on the Nixon Regime, others to approach it […] on the topic of revenue sharing" (*VL* 183). Brock explains to Frenesi that he "was about to have authorized a plan to destabilize and subvert PR[3] with funding from one of the DOJ discretionary lines. 'It's a laboratory setup,' Brock argued, 'a Marxist ministate, product of mass uprising, we don't want it there'" (185-186). He then organizes an attack on PR[3] with "shots of helicopters descending" (216) and "a ratlike swarm of approaching troops in camouflage." The following morning, "there were scores of injuries, hundreds of arrests, […] a handful of persons unaccounted for" (216). Interestingly, "In those days it was still unthinkable that any North American agency would kill its own civilians and then lie about it" (216).

Later in the novel, referring to the clash between federal forces and members of PR[3], at a news conference, Brock calls it "humorously as 'rapture'" (216). When the media ask him where "the missing students might have gotten to," he answers "underground, of course. That's our assumption" (216). At this point, "Somebody from the radical press" asks, "You mean they're on the run? […] How come none are listed as federal fugitives?" (216). The narrator relates that "The reporter was led away by a brace of plainclothes heavies as Brock Vond genially repeated […] 'Underground, hm? Rapture below. […]'" (216). Along with other cues in the novel, this scene suggests Nixon's own resentment toward the media and his struggle in dealing with them.

Then, we learn that before Brock's conference had begun a "small convoy of field-gray trucks, locked shut, unmarked […] had left out the back way without even pausing for the security at the checkpoint" (216). According to the reports, some people had "seen Frenesi taken off in the convoy" (217). Passing through "a complex array of ramps, transition lanes, and suspiciously tidy country roads, the trucks eventually pulled up onto the little-known and only confidentially traveled FEER, or Federal Emergency Evacuation Route" (216-17). The convoy's destination is a "secluded valley that had been the site of an old Air Force fog-dispersal experiment and later, […] in the quotidian horrors of Vietnam, intended as a holding area able to house up to half a million urban evacuees in the event of, well, say, some urban evacuation" (217). This is a reference to Eisenhower's Interstate Highway System, designed to facilitate the evacuation of large cities in case of a soviet attack during the Cold War. However, the ever-increasing expansion

of the California highway network and its changing landscape served, in large part, the political agenda of the New Right with Orange County as the "center and symbol of American conservatism in the 1960s" (McGirr 17). The conservative John Birch Society was a major influence in real estate business whose ideology thrived in the suburbs, in places such as Orange County, leading to the restructuring of urban form, i.e., exopolis. As Soja observed, "The tightly manufactured landscape of flexible economic specialization backed by hyperconservative local politics—the John Birch Society began in overwhelmingly Republican Orange County—is the bedrock of exopolis, not only in Orange County but also around many other large American cities" (2014, 91).

Returning to the convoy in the novel that had taken Frenesi away, we learn that the members of 24fps believe that "Frenesi could not have gone willingly" (218) with the convoy and she had been kidnapped by Brock. This made them feel "their nightmares about the Nixon regime coming true" (218). As they intrude into the secret FEER freeway to save Frenesi, they run across unexpected information about Virgil ('Sparky') Ploce, an "American Martyr" who died "in the Crusade Against Communism" (219), as the narrator comedically puts it.[13] It is noticeable that they find the information about Ploce with his image at the base of a pole on a secret federal highway. The 24fps members discover many more of these images "looking directly at the viewer with a strangely personal expression" (219). They realize that "each of these folks' images had been given eyes designed to follow whoever was driving past, so the Nomad's progress was observed" (219). *Vineland*'s narrator recounts that FEER, "a dim tunnel that went for hundreds of miles" (217) "beneath camouflage netting," was "conceived in the early sixties as a disposable freeway that would only be used, to full capacity, once." Here, the suggestion is that the construction of highways, such as FEER, pursued socio-political goals, besides presumably providing a refuge in the event of a Soviet attack. The representation of the network of highways, in the California novels, finds its parallel in the postwar policies of suburban urbanization that led to the forma-

[13] From the narration, we learn that Ploce won "the bearded dictator's" trust by pretending to be "an ultrazealous Cuban Communist" (219). His plan was to offer Fidel Castro "a giant Cuban cigar that actually contained an ingenious bomb of 'Sparky's' own design" (219). However, the security guards "apprehended and executed Lt. Col. Ploce on the spot" (219). This scene seems to refer to the felonies of the American forces in Cuba to create a casus belli in order to invade Castro's country.

tion of a new urban form in the years to come. In *Vineland* the mysterious highway is used for Brock's personal purposes, much reflective of Nixon's repressive policies in handling the countercultural radicals. Later in the novel, DL tells Prairie that "Nixon had machinery for mass detention all in place and set to go. Reagan's got it for when he invades Nicaragua" (230). Heading for the road to escape from Brock, Ditzah wonders why he would come after them: "Is he trying to roll back time?" (230). She then guesses that

> it's the whole Reagan program, isn't it — dismantle the New Deal, reverse the effects of World War II, restore fascism at home and around the world, flee into the past, can't you feel it, all the dangerous childish stupidity — 'I don't like the way it came out, I want it to be my way.' If the President can act like that, why not Brock? (230)

Reagan's policies are shown to be retrograde and repressive. An illustration of such oppressive policies is the Comprehensive Crime Control Act of 1984: "Under terms of a new Comprehensive Forfeiture Act that Reagan was about to sign into law any minute now, the government had filed an action in civil court against Zoyd's house and land" (307). This overreaching Act was put into practice under Reagan's administration, as part of the war on drugs. One of its important provisions was asset forfeiture, meaning to seize any property that was involved in criminal activity. Indeed, Brock sets Zoyd up and charges him with hiding marijuana in his house in order to confiscate it, albeit his real motive is to use Zoyd and Prairie to find Frenesi: "And you might as well forget about goín home, chump, 'cause you got no more home, paperwork's already in the mill to confiscate it under civil RICO, […] they found marijuana? in yer house!" (46), the narc Hector lets Zoyd know. From then onward, Brock's marshals keep watching Zoyd's house after his troops have been "terrorizing the neighborhood for weeks, running up and down the dirt lanes in formation chanting 'War-on-drugs! War-on-drugs!' strip-searching folks in public, […] pouring herbicide down wells that couldn't remotely be used to irrigate dope crops" (308). This makes Zoyd frightened because his house could be seized and become government property. The destruction of the individuals' private spaces in society by government overreach is depicted through Zoyd' affection for his house and the fear of losing it. Ever since his arrival in Vineland with little Prairie, he had worked hard to create the house from nothing and over the years he had come

to believe that "it was like a living thing he loved, whose safety he feared for" (308).

As mentioned above, the Eisenhower Interstate Highway System speeded up urban restructuring in the suburbs after 1956 "with its tendencies to accelerate exurban development and erode the physical and social fabric of cities" (Millard 73). This urban spatial development, based on calculated federal policy decisions, included as one of its fundamental constituents "single- family construction in suburbs, with a well- documented bias against rental properties, multiunit residences, and minorities" (Millard 73). Such desires of economic gain together with motives of social control led to the expansion of the American city inside-out. At the same time, these policy choices were politically fraught in dealing with certain groups of the population. In *Vineland*, for example, the ex-hippie radical Zoyd has moved to the last bastion of the American 60s counterculture, the suburban city of Vineland, as a result of federal oppression. Nevertheless, even in this peripheral Northern California town, his new life in the novel's present with his young daughter Prairie is not safe from Brock's harassment — a depiction that heralds the highway acts as a catalyst for social control and surveillance. Indeed, under the new law Zoyd is afraid of losing his house: he begins to "have terrifying dreams in which he would […] find the place in flames, too late to save, the smell of more than wood destroyed and sent forever to ash" (308). Elmhurst, Zoyd's lawyer who specializes "in abuses of power" (310), says, "The law's brand-new, the intentions behind it are as old as power." He is referring to the "civil RICO weapon" (309), signed into law by Nixon in 1970, figuring that it "would be the prosecutorial wave of the future" under Reagan. According to this Reaganite law, Zoyd is considered guilty unless proven innocent. When he asks his lawyer, "What about 'innocent till proven guilty'?" (310), he answers, "That was another planet, think they used to call it America, […] You were automatically guilty the minute they found that marijuana growing on your land." This is a reflection on the changing structure of the political system in American society, instantiated through the issue of housing policy in Pynchon's imaginary Vineland.

Although it is impossible to align Pynchon with any specific political philosophy or ideology, it has been suggested that his "political sympathies are leftist and pro-labor" (Hume 2011, 167).[14] In a letter

[14] For instance, writing a blurb for Kirkpatrick Sale's *SDS: Ten Years Toward a Revolution,*

from New York to his friends the Shetzlines in the winter of 1974, the year that he won the National Book Award for *Gravity's Rainbow*, he mentioned that "At the Village Gate, there was to be an 'Impeachment Rally' against Nixon" (Kachka). Pynchon asked, "Why didn't they have one in '68?" It has also been argued that "Pynchon's novels and other short stories revolve in planetary orbits around the sunlike moral intensity of the 1960s" (Cowart 2011, 85). From a political standpoint, *Lot 49* represents the zeitgeist of the 1960s and the countercultural energies before they were subsumed by the dominant order of control. It instantiates the desire for prying open some space of action and resistance against the hard and fast official narrative. The ending of the novel leaves open the possibility of redemption for a better America. In *Vineland*, Pynchon as a middle-aged author looks back nostalgically at the decade that shaped his younger life and the fate of a generation that believed in the possibility of transcending the established boundaries of state power, as an attempt to live in an alternative space of social and cultural liberty. Such a nostalgic reading of Pynchon's novel reminds one of an interesting scene in DeLillo's *Mao II* — a novel which came out almost a year after *Vineland*'s publication. DeLillo's reclusive protagonist believes that the literary artist in the late twentieth century is becoming obsolete as his "books lose the power to shape and influence" (41). As a consequence, the novelist is no longer able to "alter the inner life of the culture" (41). Cowart has observed that for Pynchon the sixties is "a crossroads of American history" (2011, 134) where "a vestigial innocence vies again with every dark propensity in the human heart." If the ending of *Lot 49* leaves this issue pending, in *Vineland* "the struggle between American innocence and the temptation to 'go over' or 'sell out' […] survives largely as a memory made bitter by the political tenor of the Reagan era" (135).

5. Fictional/Mythical Spaces of Thanatoids and *Woge*

In chapter four of *Vineland*, Pynchon introduces the characters Vato and Blood who work in a Vineland auto-shop, V & B Tow, where they "tow away vehicles associated with Thanatoids" (162). In the

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Pynchon described Sale's 1973 study as "the first great history of the American Prerevolution […] a source of clarity, energy and sanity for anyone trying to survive the Nixonian reaction" (rpt. Mead 44).

last part of the novel, we see these characters again where they take Brock into the ancient underworld of the Yurok — the aboriginal inhabitants of Northern California. In the ninth chapter, Vato and Blood receive an emergency tow call from Shade Creek, where the mysterious Thanatoids live. Takeshi explains to DL that the Thanatoids are "victims […] of karmic imbalances […] anything that frustrated their daily expeditions on into the interior of Death, with Shade Creek a psychic jumping-off town — behind it, unrolling, regions unmapped, dwelt in by these transient souls in constant turnover, not living but persisting" (151). The Thanatoids live in this mysterious California town near Vineland "while waiting for the data necessary to pursue their needs and aims among the still-living" (149). On their way to help a Thanatoid vehicle on the top of a tree, Vato and Blood come across River Drive. Once past Vineland, the river takes back its older shape and becomes "what for the Yuroks it had always been, a river of ghosts" (163). Here, we learn that everything once had a name — the mountains, the trees, and everything else "each with its own spirit" (163). The Yurok people called these existences "*woge*, creatures like humans but smaller, who had been living here when the first humans came" (163). With the arrival of humans in their habitat, they started to withdraw:

> Some went away physically, forever, eastward, over the mountains, or nestled all together in giant redwood boats, singing unison chants of dispossession and exile, fading as they were taken further out to sea, […] lost. Other *woge* who found it impossible to leave withdrew instead into the features of the landscape, remaining conscious, remembering better times, capable of sorrow […], as the generations of Yuroks sat on them, fished from them, […] as they learned to love and grow deeper into the nuances of wind and light as well as […] the massive winter storms that roared in […] from the Gulf of Alaska. (163)

The narrator relates that "For the Yuroks, who had always held this river exceptional, to follow it up from the ocean was also to journey through the realm behind the immediate" (163), that is the realm of the *woge*. This realm holds a liminal position between life and afterlife — a limbo whose inhabitants, like the Thanatoids, persist in their existence albeit forced to stand back. For the Thanatoids, Vineland County is a space where, as the narrator puts it, the boundaries of "the two worlds" (191) are drawn "closer, nearly together, out of register

only by the thinnest of shadows," where there is the "suspicion of another order of things." As they remain conscious, however, the *woge* are extremely nostalgic of their original homeland, taken over by the humans. Vato and Blood are told that "this coast, this watershed, was sacred and magical" (163) and, reminiscing about better times, its banished inhabitants would one day return.

The desire for a better life is mirrored in the sixties revolution of Zoyd's generation in the hope of an alternative America. Nonetheless, the hippie radicals of the 1960s hold a similar position to the *woge* insofar as both are exiled and displaced. Zoyd, Van Meter, Mucho, and other revolutionaries find themselves in a space of political and cultural inability due to the oppressive dynamics of the state in the 1980s America. Like the *woge*, who learned to grow over time and adapt to the features of the surrounding landscape, they are nostalgic about the past. One can surmise that such a representation might have something to do with Pynchon's own experience of the decade and the fact that with Nixon in office the countercultural possibilities began to fade. Under "Raygun" (270), as Zoyd pronounces it, the lives of 1960s radical youth, in the novel's present, have almost become a bardo, so much so that "some of whom would discover that they were already Thanatoids without knowing it" (315).

From a geocritical standpoint, as in *Lot 49*, the possibility of an alternative world seems to be intimated in this suburban California landscape. In Brian Jarvis' words, "Pynchon's fictions gravitate towards […] the spaces occupied by the underclass and the disinherited and towards the omniscience of forms of waste" (1998, 53). As I argued, in Pynchon's first California novel, by withdrawing from the life of the American society and operating from a peripheral position, the text suggests an alternative way of life for the members of the WASTE system. Albeit precarious, this sort of geographical resistance is a stepping stone for the "disinherited" (*CL* 103), also in *Vineland*, to mobilize an alternative reality through which to resist Brock's oppression. Pynchon's imaginary cartography provides the repressed sixties anarchists with a chance of resistance from a marginal position that, however, does not readily lend itself to the state's hegemonic narrative of control. As Samuel Thomas has argued, Pynchon's creation of these fragmented and local enclaves, escaping from state oppression, can be described as a politics of "fugitive space" (128). The followers of the Tristero, the *woge*, the Thanatoids, and this group of hippies are left to isolation

and, "in their exile" (*CL* 100), they try to resist the repressive hegemony of the status quo. On that score, Weed Atman explains to Prairie that in his "after-death state" (*VL* 315) he is looking for "a new body to be born into" through which "his dispossessed soul might reenter the world." In resisting descent "into the earth, toward Tsorrek, the world of the dead" (163), he travels through the California landscape to find a "karmic adjuster working out of Shade Creek, who actually gets results" (165).

When Vato and Blood pass Vineland and reach the California suburban town of Shade Creek, they realize that its insomniac population are evanescent souls called Thanatoids. This is also where the dispossessed *woge* reside in the changing features of the landscape. As Vato and Blood, who are "city guys" (163), drive from Vineland outside to Shade Creek, there is a geographical center-periphery contrast. Pynchon uses this spatial aspect of the narrative to underscore the marginal position of the *woge*, forced by the humans to leave their land. Such a representation of these mythical creatures and their attempt to use the natural environment of California to survive might be read as the suggestion of a different reality upheld from a peripheral position. If so, the description of the *woge*, as the original inhabitants of this part of California in exile, indicates a certain spatial dynamic that might be read in relation to Dear and Flusty's postmodern urbanism. If the *woge* were able to exert any power, from their marginal position, to take back their lost habitat, it could mean that there might still be some hope for the realization of countercultural ideals. Therefore, this fictitious depiction heralds the concepts of postmodern urbanism and the postmetropolitan transition where the suburbs become so important that they might take over the traditional role of the city center. Put otherwise, Pynchon's representation of the mythological creatures, the ex-hippies, and their spatial movements indicates some change in the urban condition of the contemporary metropolis, as elaborated in section three.

The power contrast between the center and the periphery, intimated by the Vineland landscape, instantiates in turn the political and cultural conflict between the sixties revolutionary youth and their repressive government during that decade. Through this imaginary mapping, Pynchon shows the problem of Zoyd's generation as well as their, "skimpiest" (151) hope of, resistance that one might consider an alternative possibility in the wake of Reagan's repression, represented through Brock's surveillance and militarization of the land.

5.1. Looking for an Alternative World through Thirdspace

If in *Lot 49* the withdrawal of the WASTE members could be considered as an alternative reality, in *Vineland* there is enough reason to hesitate about such a possibility. In Pynchon's second California book, the subversive energies suggested in *Lot 49* are curtailed. Nevertheless, there are some clues in the novel that do not leave out the possibility of some kind of redemption altogether. The creation of imaginary Vineland mobilizes a counter-hegemonic mapping that, albeit frail, gives the peripheral characters the chance of an alternative mode of being in the midst of state repression. When Vato and Blood learn about the history of the *woge*, the "Hippies they talked to said it could be reincarnation" (163). The *woge* left their world to the humans and went on to live beneath the ocean as "porpoises" (163) and one day they "would come back, teach us how to live the right way, save us" (164). Here, there is the suggestion of reincarnation and the possibility of salvation for humans. It is as though Pynchon implied that if there could be a redemptive solution in the lives of the disinherited *woge*, an alternative reality for the sixties radicals might be possible, through the creation of a fictional California landscape.

Looking back at the worlds of such mythical creatures as the Thanatoids and the *woge*, one of their important characteristics is that they hold a liminal position. As an inhabitant of everyday world and that of the Thanatoids, Weed is the character that opens up a window into an alternative possibility in the novel. Before his murder, at the end of his workdays, he "would go back down the chipped and crumbling steps, back across a borderline, invisible but felt at its crossing, between worlds" (199). As a Thanatoid, he is "reduced to hanging around monitoring the situation" (315) hoping to find a way back to the world. In order to explain "third space," Bertrand Westphal uses the concept of "the entre-deux (in-between)" (69). "The in-between" (69) explores a space that is neither the first space nor the second "and also perhaps already, both one and the other at the same time" (Serres 24). Westphal observes that "The in-between is a deterritorialization in action, but one that loiters, awaiting the moment of its reterritorialization" (69). Drawing on Michel Serres' metaphor, he explains that "The in-between shelters the possible, 'the ghost of a third man,'" who "lives at the intersection of points of view, in a 'median space'" (69). Insofar as Weed is a Thanatoid and a ghostly existence, unable to dis-

tinguish "between the weirdness of life and the weirdness of death" (*VL* 190), Westphal's argument seems suitable to explain this character's situation in the novel. His explanation further throws light on the *woge's* position inasmuch as they are expelled from their world and are waiting for the right moment to return. Their withdrawal from life in America and their attempt to arrange a new way of being necessitates "an-Other" (Soja 1996a, 10) alternative in the lives of these dispossessed characters.

Chapter six of the novel starts with a description of Frenesi's life with her current husband Flash and their son Justin in their apartment. In a reflection on her life in the sixties, the narrator recounts that "for Frenesi the past was on her case forever, the zombie at her back, the enemy no one wanted to see" (*VL* 64). As a Faulkner character says, "[t]he past is never dead. It's not even past" (1951, 73). In effect, it is exactly the past that has made Frenesi's present "a world of simplicity" (*VL* 64). In *Vineland*, Pynchon delineates how the burgeoning possibilities for "diversity" (*CL* 114), for the "revolutionary anarchists" (*VL* 64) in America, have been turned into "certainty" under Reagan. There is only "a world based on the one and zero" (64), a "minimal" world with "The patterns of lives and deaths." Once again, we are back to the extremely ordered world of "ones and zeroes" (*CL* 114) that we find in almost all of Pynchon's novels. In *Against the Day*, Pynchon seems to emphasize the need for conceiving of a third alternative in understanding the world by depicting a binary conflict between the subversive energies of anarchy and irrationality on the one hand, and the totalizing forces of control and capitalism on the other. In the "clash between forces of totalization and counterforces championing openness" (Elias 130), a third possibility is required and Pynchon's novel showers us with alternative realities. In *Vineland*, however, the clash is between the memory of the sixties counterculture and the oppressive order of control in eighties America. In his fiction, Pynchon suggests that any hegemonic metanarrative, such as colonialism in *Mason & Dixon*, capitalism in *Against the Day*, or repressive state ideology in *Vineland*, leaves out other possible ways of organizing the world. By opposing to them alternative realities, Pynchon draws attention to other possibilities, different than the officially recognized narratives, that can counter the hegemony of these calcified systems of power.

In purporting a new consciousness, Thirdspace proposes the possibility of an ontological plurality, in the sense of the coexistence of new

choices and "worlds" (McHale 1987, 41). The world of the *woge* might well become a Thirdspace insofar as it represents a "space of resistance" (Westphal 85) and withstands an imposed condition by struggling to establish a new way of living. Another significant factor in their act of resistance is its application from a marginal position. Weed and the sixties hippies, who have somehow become Thanatoids, hold a peripheral position in the text and are compelled to live in a suburban area in Northern California. It is precisely in "the frontiers of suburban development" (McClintock and Miller 2014b, 4) that the marginalized communities of society struggle for "independence" from the dominating order of power in the U.S. Their withdrawal to the periphery, where they try to resist the oppression of the state under Reagan, can be considered an alternative reality that is "transgressive" (Westphal 37) and challenges totalization.

In an article, entitled "Still Crazy After All These Years," Salman Rushdie has observed that in *Vineland* there is some "hint of redemption" because "community" might be a "counterweight to power." Soja's spatial thirding-as-Othering proposes a "radically open perspective" (1996a, 5) that embraces different choices in interpreting the world and challenging its fixed socio-political ruling mechanisms. In this critical category, the keyword is *Othering* which is meant to include infinite alternatives with the same degree of importance. In Pynchon's novel, such values as community suggest a collective consciousness that provides the dispossessed with "an-Other" reality. This new space helps them survive in a world that is strongly ordered by a repressive system of policing.

6. *Vineland*'s Ending: A Mixed View on Alternative Realities

Over the course of the years, in the critical debate about *Vineland* there have been two dominant views: a) *Vineland* is the expression of a nostalgic reflection on a bygone decade and its possibilities in the wake of Reagan's repressive Presidency and b) alongside a nostalgic tone, the novel offers meaningful hints regarding the possibility of a redemptive solution.

Cowart has suggested that *Vineland* "retains a myth that its author celebrates rather than deconstructs. […] he refuses to surrender the myth of American promise" (1994, 9). If that is the case, perhaps one can read the Traverse-Becker family reunion at the end of the novel

as a positive sign. After all, Brock Vond, who "embodies totalitarian stereotypes that gain luster from the Orwellian 1984 setting" (Hume 2011, 169), is taken to "Tsorrek, the land of death" (*VL* 328) by Vato and Blood. However, things are most often not as cogent as they seem in Pynchon's fiction. Addressing the California novels together, Thomas Schaub maintains that while "*Lot 49* is a novel about the possibility of revolution" (2012, 31), in *Vineland* "Pynchon is less interested in the possibilities for alternative communities" (34). Rushdie wrote that in *Vineland* "there's something new to report, some faint possibility of redemption, some fleeting hints of happiness and grace." Concerning the Nixon-Reagan era, he maintains that although these Republican presidents preached the values of "family" and "community," they "stole" and used them "as weapons of control" against America. It is in this context of political spin doctoring that *Vineland* "seeks to recapture" those values "by recalling the beauty of Frenesi Gates before she turned" (Rushdie). That the themes of community and connection are important in Pynchon's fiction can be further confirmed by the fact that later in *Against the Day* he expounds on such issues where the novel's ending offers a series of family reunions. John Miller has observed that "the many reunions woven into the California chapters do create a sense of at least temporary resolution" (2014, 196).

Concerning the family reunion at the end of *Vineland*, Hanjo Berressem observes that with that ending scene it seems that "Pynchon puts his hope in the next generation" (2014, 42). One can read the valorization of the family reunification and the renewal of the triangular mother-daughter relationship as a possible redemption. Nonetheless, Prairie's final thought about the FBI agent Brock complicates any redemptive conclusion. Hanging in the air above Prairie in a helicopter, he comes to grab her, saying that his real father is not Zoyd. For a moment Prairie feels paralyzed but soon after she comes to her senses and shouts at him, "Get the fuck out of here!" (*VL* 325). She yells in his face that "you can't be my father" (325). In the span of a few pages, however, she seems to become indifferent to Brock's actions. Indeed, she wishes that he would take her away: "You can come back […] It's OK, rilly. Come on, come in. I don't care. Take me anyplace you want" (332). Margaret Lynd believes that the emphasis on the female characters, even as protagonists, cannot be considered as a matriarchal redemptive solution in the narrative. She observes that Prairie, just like her mother, turns into a symbol of the

temptation to be seduced by power. In effect, her final call to Brock might be a signal of seduction to be coopted by the corrupt system of power in Reagan era, as it was the case with Frenesi's betrayal of the 1960s revolution. This makes it difficult to decide properly whether the ending family reunion is a real redemption or a parodic one. For Lynd, the family gathering, together with the fact that Prairie and her dog are safe, is good enough to suggest that "none of Pynchon's novels foreground the possibility of redemption as clearly as does *Vineland*" (31).

Although Prairie's "summoning" (*VL* 332) of Brock to take her with him casts doubt on the final family gathering, I believe that a critical spatial analysis of the novel can throw light on the possibility of an alternative reality and some measure of redemption in the novel as a whole. Hector tells Zoyd that none of the sixties people was saved: "One OD'd on the line at Tommy's waitín for a burger, one got into some words in a parkin lot with the wrong gentleman, […] more 'n half of 'em currently on the run, and you so far around the bend […], that's what became of your happy household" (27). Having been deprived of their freedom by Brock's system of policing, these sixties youth have had a hard time coming to terms with the status quo. In a mocking tone, Hector tells Zoyd, "Still simmerín away with those same old feelings, I see — figured you'd be mellower by now, maybe some reconciliation with reality" (26).

Nevertheless, it does not seem that Pynchon simply ceases to yearn for the old good days. As already discussed, the retreat of this group of hippie radicals into a suburban Northern California town, seen as an act of resistance through a geocritical analysis of a communal space, keeps the flame of hope alive in their lives. However transient and fragile, *Vineland* suggests the possibility of an alternative reality, "a commitment to an alternative, communitarian idea of America" (Patell 172), that refuses to be subsumed by the overreaching order of power in America.

III. "The Leading Edge of this Postpostmodern Art": *Inherent Vice*'s Urban and Social Landscape of California

1. Toward *Inherent Vice*: Pynchon's Growing Engagement with Spatiality

Right from the outset, the reader of *Inherent Vice* is engaged with the beach as a spatial trope that is crucial throughout the novel, especially with regard to the fate of the 1960s counterculture. The book's protagonist, Larry "Doc" Sportello, is a dope-smoking hippie private investigator who lives in fictional Gordita Beach, Los Angeles. The opening scene depicts a visit from Doc's ex-girlfriend Shasta, who has become the mistress of an influential real estate tycoon named Mickey Wolfmann. According to Shasta, Mickey's wife is planning to lock him up in a mental health institution in the aftermath of his decision to give away his assets. Through Mickey, the reader comes across the spatial theme of the desert insofar as he has developed a real estate project called Arrepentimiento in the desert outside of Las Vegas. As we learn from a conversation in the novel, Mickey "had this dream about putting up a whole city from scratch someday, out in the desert" (240). At one point, he decides to dedicate his wealth to building free houses for people in need to atone for his past actions in the business as a ruthless real estate developer. Boris, one of Mickey's bodyguards, tells Doc that he happened to hear a conversation between him and Shasta in which "What Mickey said was, 'I wish I could undo what I did, I know I can't, but I bet I can make the money start to flow a different direction'" (150).[1] As Doc's aunt Reet tells him, Mickey's last project

[1] Here, we are reminded of the anarchist preacher the Reverend Moss Gatlin, in *Against the Day*, who mentions that "when you reach a point in your life when you

before repentance was an "assault on the environment—some chipboard horror known as Channel View Estates?[*sic*]" (11). In order to create Channel Estates development program a whole African American neighborhood has been destroyed and, as a result, many people have lost their houses and become displaced. Experiencing a sort of ethical conversion, therefore, Mickey chooses to reverse his course of action for atonement. Unhappy with this unusual decision, however, federal agents try to impede him from giving away his money. As Doc begins to look into Mickey's case, the real estate entrepreneur is shadily kidnapped.

The novel sets in motion a quest in which Doc becomes involved with the grid of Mickey's business interests and its connections with criminal and police sources. In the course of his investigations about Mickey, the protagonist runs into Coy Harlingen, a saxophone player who is believed to have died of a heroin overdose. Coy tells Doc about a mysterious schooner, the Golden Fang, an old ship apparently involved in trafficking suspicious goods into the Pacific port as well as a conspiracy. Albeit in the background, the Pacific Ocean too is an important theme that puts us in touch with the issue of spatiality. From Coy, Doc learns that Mickey might be possibly connected to the Golden Fang heroin cartel since he was seen as a passenger aboard the schooner. Through a file provided by his old PI-partner, Doc gets to read "a brief history of the schooner *Preserved*" (95) which reveals its connections to the CIA and its anti-communist operations around the world. In Las Vegas, Doc suspects that he has seen Mickey, together with federal agents, and later hears of his plan to tackle a housing project in the desert. Upon visiting the site, however, the protagonist learns that housing development will not continue. Before he can conclude the case, Mickey is retrieved by shadowy forces and his mind is reprogrammed to the capitalist mode. Eventually, the idea of Arrepentimiento as free housing for people remains nothing more than "the myth of American promise" (Cowart 2011, 118). Later, pursuing the Golden Fang with his lawyer, Doc watches the schooner being abandoned as it is faced with a huge surf wave. At the end of the novel, Doc's girlfriend comes finally back to him and the book ends as he is driving along the San Diego freeway, waiting for the Pacific fog to clear.

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understand who is fucking who [...] that's when you're obliged to choose how much you'll go along with" (87).

As we can see, places like the beach, the desert, and the Ocean are strongly present in the text. If in *Vineland* there are hints that Pynchon's depiction of the California cityspace, its natural and built environments, and more generally his spatial imagination are evolving in new ways, this becomes further evident in *Inherent Vice*. To spell out my argument, I will bring to the fore some of the new urban spatial issues that are important in understanding the novel, not least in the context of the 2008 economic recession and the new socio-political conditions in the twenty-first century. To place the discussion of these urban geographical processes in a wider perspective, I will further illustrate how *Inherent Vice* negotiates certain strategies to address the influence of these urban phenomena on U.S. society in the new millennium. Pynchon's representation of space in the novel is also dealt with in relation to the 1960s countercultural protests, heralding certain social and political concerns in our own present day. Before delving into the issue of alternative realities at the end of this chapter, I will additionally consider the depiction of mythical spaces and their implications in the narrative as well as the larger context of American society.

2. "Postmetropolitan Transition" and "Regional Urbanization" in *Inherent Vice*: The Question of Postpostmodern Urbanism

As I already suggested, *Inherent Vice* indicates the latest development of the postmetropolitan transition in California's urban geographical history in the aftermath of the 2008 economic crash. In this respect, I believe that Pynchon's third California novel shows the emergence of a new urbanism which supersedes the notions of postmodern urbanism. My provisional name for this last development is *postpostmodern urbanism* and it is intended to emphasize the changing structure of the twenty-first century metropolis and its dynamics of cityspace. What is being argued here is the idea that from *Lot 49* to *Vineland* and finally throughout *Inherent Vice*, Pynchon's fiction offers significant insights regarding different stages in the formation of certain urban geographical phenomena such as the postmetropolitan transition. In other words, the representations of cityspace in the novels bespeak the development of the postmetropolitan transition which approximately coincide with three significant moments in American history (especially of the West Coast), namely the Watts riots of 1965, the 1992 Los An-

geles Justice Riots, and the 2008 economic recession. In this regard, the third of Pynchon's California books marks not only a change in Pynchon's conceptualization of city structure but it also indicates the importance of social and economic injustice in the contemporary metropolis as a result of urban restructuring. While these are salient moments in many different respects in U.S. society, my argument here focuses on these historical junctures from an urban spatial perspective. Seen in this light, these seminal points in time coincide respectively, but not exclusively, with certain urban phenomena in the contemporary metropolis generated by restructuring processes, i.e., crisis-generated restructuring and the urbanization of suburbia, restructuring-generated crises in the postmetropolis, and more recently the socio-economic problems associated with urban restructuring of the twenty-first century city region.

In chapter two I, partially, used Dear and Flusty's postmodern urbanism to explain the transition in the shape of the city as represented in *Vineland*. Nonetheless, in more recent years, scholars have left behind the notions of postmodern urbanism that were very popular in the 1990s. For instance, in her 1996 *Postmodern Urbanism* Nan Ellin discussed the underlying themes of postmodern urbanism by engaging with the changing social and physical landscapes of the late twentieth-century city. In doing so, she examined "the ways in which architects and urban planners have been responding to these transformations since the 1960s" (14). Proposing the notion of "Integral Urbanism" (xxv), as a possible solution to the unsolved problems of modern and postmodern urbanisms, however, she published a book of the same title in 2006 in which she explained that an awareness has been recently taking shape in urban planning "aiming to heal the wounds inflicted upon the landscape by the Modern and Postmodern eras" (1).[2] But even before 2006, in her 1999 foreword to the revised edition of *Postmodern Urbanism*, she was ready to embrace something more comprehensive than postmodern urbanism: "Although postmodern

[2] In *Integral Urbanism*, Ellin observes that recent approaches to urban design and planning share a tendency to move away from "the Modernist attempt to dismantle boundaries or Postmodernist fortification" (2). More recently, in her 2012 *Good Urbanism*, she suggests that "Modern urbanism attempted to eliminate the border, boundary, or edge, and postmodernism tended to fortify them" (59). She goes on to argue that "good urbanism neither eliminates nor fortifies borders, boundaries, and edges. Rather, it engages and enhances them to reintegrate […] places, people, and activities without obliterating difference—in fact, celebrating it" (59-60).

urbanism offered certain correctives in this regard, it failed to satisfy these persistent longings sufficiently" (1). In fact, the foreword is subtitled "Beyond Postmodern Urbanism" — a title that underscores the new urge in the twenty-first century to transcend nearly everything that was tagged postmodern.

This tendency to get beyond the label *postmodern* in urban studies became progressively stronger through the new millennium. Even Dear and Flusty, who fervently argued for their 1998 model of postmodern urbanism and the LA School of urbanism, in an article published a year later suggested that "In no way was our model meant as definitive" (1999, 412). In 2002, they continued to argue for an LA School focusing on "the conditions that promote or inhibit the creation of such a school" (5). Nevertheless, here too, they observed that while a convincing case for the existence of the LA school and postmodern urbanism can be made, they are "in no way conclusive" (5). Consequently, several scholars who were initially associated with the LA school are no longer adherent to the name itself than to certain urban trends taking place in and around Los Angeles. As an example, in 2014, Soja used the term "Los Angeles Research Cluster (LARC)" (135) to refer to the growing body of research on the Los Angeles urban region.[3]

There are many other influential scholars in urban and regional studies who have argued for a more thorough model than the Los Angeles, New York, or Chicago schools of urbanism.[4] Nonetheless, what they all seem to have in common is a movement away from the notions of postmodern urbanism as there has been a strong desire to surpass the adjective *postmodern*. While this does not mean that the older urban spatial knowledge is to be completely dismissed, as the socio-political conditions in the metropolis change, so does the urban condition and, thus, new explanations are required.[5] Put otherwise, albeit certain urban concepts might not have the same value as before, they are still important because they shed light on the present condition as we move

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[3] Soja suggested that "if there indeed was an LA School, the six discourses identified would represent something like its specialized component departments" (2014, 140-41).

[4] See Halle and Beveridge.

[5] In the 1999 foreword to *Postmodern Urbanism*, Ellin mentions that she keeps the book as it is insofar it reflects the spirit and urban condition of that decade: "I have otherwise retained the original text, allowing it to remain a document of its particular time and place, and resisting the temptation to […] adjust or buttress my arguments" (1).

from the past toward the future. This urge to leave behind anything that was marked postmodern in the new century is also relevant in the literary sphere. Among others, McHale has suggested that if on September 11, 2001 postmodernism did not end, "its end was certainly in progress on or about that date" (2015, 175) and "the sense of a cultural threshold of some kind having been crossed on 9/11 is strong" (174). Assuming that postmodernism did end on or about September 11, he goes on to suggest that the cultural phase in the process of succeeding postmodernism might be coined as "*post-postmodernism*" (176).[6] However, McHale makes it clear that post-postmodernism, like many other proposed names, is not "definitive or complete" (176). As mentioned in the introduction, McHale suggested that "Pynchon's novels bookend postmodernism and keep pace with all of its successively unfolding phases" (178). Whether that is the case, it is worth analyzing McHale's suggestion with regard to Pynchon's third California novel through urban spatial lenses.

With this brief explanation on the status of postmodern urbanism as a critical concept in the new century, it is essential to examine the conceptualization of space in *Inherent Vice* as the novel indicates a new and polarized metropolitan era of socio-economic and political crises in the contemporary city. Leaving behind the themes of postmodern urbanism, while benefiting from their insights, I use the term *postpostmodern urbanism* to explain the evolving representation of urban space as we move from *Vineland* to *Inherent Vice*. As I briefly explained, this tentative name is meant to reflect the changing nature of city structure in the twenty-first century and draws upon recent theories of urban and regional planning, such as those by Soja, Brenner, and Schmid, as its underpinning source, to explain the latest changes taking place in the contemporary metropolis. Important in presenting my argument are the depictions of certain places in the novel, such as a demolished former black neighborhood, the desert, and the beach, that seem to be in tune with, and shed light on, the newest shift in Soja's treatment of the postmetropolitan transition, namely the emergence of the globalized city region in the new millennium. In this respect, *Inherent Vice* represents these places as liminal spaces where the hope of change in

[6] Some important names, among others, that have been proposed to convey the idea of the succeeding cultural phase after, or as a reaction to, postmodernism include the New Sincerity and the post-ironic.

the social conditions of U.S. society is situated. The novel's engagement with a liminal cityspace beyond the urban land, as the last bastion of possibility, shows the blurring of boundaries between traditionally understood divisions in the modern industrial city. In fact, the postmetropolitan transition heralds the formation of the polycentric city region as well as one of its important characteristics — growing continuously larger by moving beyond its conventionally understood borders. Most recently, Soja talked about "*regional urbanization*" (2014, 9), and the formation of "a *new regionalism*" (142), in order to explain the latest nuance in his definition of the postmetropolitan transition: "The modern metropolis, with its clear division between urban and suburban worlds, was experiencing a deconstruction […] and a reconstitution […] as a polycentric regional network of agglomerations that some began to call a city region" (2014, 197). While in 2000, he used the term *postmetropolis* to describe the end state of the postmetropolitan transition, in 2014 Soja spoke of regional urbanization leading to the formation of the city region.[7] He observed that in such a globalizing paradigm, urban industrial capitalism will cover "every square inch of the earth's surface, in the Amazon rainforest, Siberian tundra, deserts, icecaps, and even oceans, kindling a new notion of planetary urbanism that is likely to receive major attention in the next few decades" (214). Building upon these insights, Brenner and Schmid have proposed their own concept of "planetary urbanization" (160), which not only posits that in the present urban condition of the world "the category of the 'city' has […] become obsolete" (162) but also emphasizes that "even spaces that lie well beyond the traditional city cores and suburban peripheries—from transoceanic shipping lanes, transcontinental highway […] to [...] 'nature' parks, offshore financial centers, agro-industrial catchment zones […]—have become integral parts of the worldwide urban fabric."

To briefly reiterate the crux of my contention, the depictions of different places in the third California novel, like the desert and the beach, as in-between spaces adumbrate the postmetropolitan transition. First,

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[7] Soja explained that "The metropolitan to regional shift does not negate the concepts of urban restructuring, postmodern urbanization, and the postmetropolitan transition; rather it amplifies them to another level of significance" (2014, 195). This understanding of regional urbanization has some similarity with Jeffrey Nealon's definition of post-postmodernism that does not solely break with or reverse direction from postmodernism, but rather it is "an intensification and mutation within postmodernism" (ix).

because such spatial representations indicate the blurring of the vexed, traditional distinctions between urban, suburban, and nonurban ways of life as they are blended in unconventional ways in the contemporary city. Second, and more importantly, the descriptions of these spaces, and the urban-suburban fusion, hint at the socio-economic vulnerability in the twenty-first century metropolis as an outcome of the postmetropolitan transition. In the rest of this section, I expound on these two points in order to analyze the multiscalar interpretation of the postmetropolitan transition in connection with urban spatial representations in Pynchon's novel. Nevertheless, given the significance of the natural environment in *Inherent Vice*, in indicating the latest phase of the postmetropolitan transition and regional urbanization as well as a possible concept of postpostmodern urbanism, it is essential that we first understand how the depiction of the natural places might offer some insight concerning the more recent stage of Pynchon's writing.

2.1. From "Extended Urbanization" to Pynchon's Environment: Beyond Postmodernism

"Planetary urbanization" (Brenner and Schmid 160) challenges what we traditionally conceived as the city in urban studies— a category which has become "thoroughly problematic as an analytical tool" (Brenner 188) in the new millennium. A significant corollary of this situation is that today "the urban represents an increasingly worldwide condition in which all […] infrastructural geographies and socioenvironmental landscapes are enmeshed" (189). As such, the geographical areas beyond central city cores and peripheral suburban spaces, including "erstwhile 'natural' spaces such as the world's oceans, deserts, jungles, mountain ranges, tundra and atmosphere" (189), have been increasingly interconnected with a global urban network. Inspired by Roberto-Luis Monte-Mór and Edward Soja, within the bigger framework of planetary urbanization, Brenner's concept of "extended urbanization" (201) addresses not only the "landscapes of extended urbanization" (203), such as the "mutating realm of drosscapes, terrains vagues, in-between cities (*Zwischenstädte*), metapolis territories, horizontal urbanization, holey planes, desakota regions," but more importantly "broader operational landscapes – including infrastructures for resource extraction, logistics and communication, energy and food production, water provision and management, waste disposal and en-

vironmental planning" (201). Therefore, within the vision of a reconceptualization of urban studies in the twenty-first century "environmental organization" (Brenner 188) has become fundamental.

Given the significance of environmental planning in tackling the challenges to the field of urban studies in recent years, in relation to a geourban analysis of Pynchon's fiction one can think of a salient issue in our world today that, nevertheless, has been always important to Pynchon's mind: the representation of the natural environment. For instance, in *Lot 49* the Pacific Ocean is depicted as an existence that offers some transitory relief to the marginalized. Before leaving Kinneret, Oedipa had always believed that the sea could be a source of redemption for Southern California. Later on, she thinks about the "unvoiced idea that no matter what you did to its edges," the unimaginable Ocean, "the true Pacific stayed inviolate and integrated or assumed the ugliness […] into some more general truth" (34).

Moving on to the later stage of Pynchon' work, in *Bleeding Edge* we encounter an interesting scene that foreshadows a significant environmental problem. When the character Sid Kelleher, March's ex-husband, takes the protagonist Maxine and her friend March on his boat for a short ride, he is approached by some patrol boats and is forced to race down the Hudson River. He pilots the craft away eluding the patrols by turning toward the landfills of Staten Island. As they reach the Bayonne Bridge, Maxine, who has been smelling garbage for a while, notices "neglected little creeks, […] smells of methane, death and decay" and most important of all the heaps of landfill bigger than she could ever imagine "reaching close to 200 feet overhead […] higher than a typical residential building on the Yupper West Side" (139).

The depiction of garbage and toxic waste in Pynchon's novel reminds the environmentally minded reader of Robert Sullivan's description of New York and New Jersey as "leftover" (96) cities in *The Meadowlands*. Sullivan shares his experience of visiting the New Jersey trash hills outside Manhattan in a kind of travelogue, in a Thoreauvian fashion, where he observed "the edge of a garbage hill, a forty-foot drumlin of compacted trash that owed its topography to the waste of the city of Newark." (96). Defining this landscape of environmental catastrophe as "an espresso of refuse" (96), he goes on to mention that the rain from the night before had created a stream that would join the toxic streams as it found its way into the groundwater of the Meadowlands: "in this moment, here at its birth, at a stream's source in the

modern meadows, this little seep was pure pollution, a pristine stew of oil and grease, of cyanide and arsenic, of cadmium, chromium, copper, lead, nickel, silver, mercury, and zinc" (97).

The representation of similar images in *Bleeding Edge* indicates the worsening environmental disaster in New York as Maxine, March, and Sid take the boat down the Hudson River. Indeed, the narrator describes what the characters observe during their ride as a "national bad habit," that is "inability to deal with refuse" (138). In the same scene, another element that attracts Maxine's attention, which seems to be a reincarnation of the same environmental concern in *Inherent Vice*, is oil-storage tanks and their never-ending traffic. Besides the images of toxic waste next to the river, the narrator introduces another of those national bad habits — "Addiction to oil gradually converging with" (138) toxic garbage in destroying the environment. In fact, it is no accident that this is called a "national bad habit" (138) insofar as the problem of ecological havoc caused by the excessive use of oil ranges from the West Coast in *Inherent Vice* to the East Coast in *Bleeding Edge*.

With this in mind, it is important to highlight that the theme of nature in Pynchon's work has been analyzed by a host of scholars. One can think of works like Thomas Schaub's relevant essay "The Environmental Pynchon" in the context of *Gravity's Rainbow*, or Christopher Coffman's multiple essays and book chapters such as "Ecology and the Environment," as instances of environmental criticism concerning Pynchon's fiction; in a similar vein, one can also consider Hanjo Berressem's article "Life on the Beach," that deals with the natural tropes in Pynchon's California novels, or still other critical essays that use the natural features in Pynchon's books to support their own arguments of concern.[8] However, while these works are valuable in their analyses of nature in Pynchon's oeuvre, it seems that critics and scholars have not yet addressed this seminal issue in a well-organized, systematic fashion to investigate the ways in which the depictions of various natural elements in Pynchon's novels might represent and reflect upon the current environmental challenges in the U.S., and in the world by extension. This implies that the critical approach of such works is either that of providing a general overview of natural themes in Pyn-

[8] One might think of several articles by Kathryn Hume where natural tropes are employed in the service of the issues of spirituality or the exploration of alternative realities. See Hume 2011, 2013, and 2019.

chon's fiction or a more detailed analysis of environmental concerns in a specific book.

In this respect, nevertheless, Tore Rye Andersen's essay "Back to Gondwanaland" is a promising work that usefully analyzes *Gravity's Rainbow*, as well as McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*, to show that anthropocenic and planetary concerns have been present in literary fiction way before twenty-first century criticism coined such terms as the Anthropocene and planetarity. Concentrating on these two writers, his goal is to "show that their thoughts on humanity and the planet […] prefigure the theories and the recent literary works that critics have centered their discussions of the Anthropocene on." (5). Likewise, Pieter Vermeulen's book chapter "Pynchon's Posthuman Temporalities" is a thought-provoking work which offers a reading of *Against the Day* as a work of Anthropocene fiction, concentrating on "human life's entanglement with planetary forces" (71).

Bearing in mind Andersen's and Vermeulen's observations about Pynchon's thoughts on the planet and humanity, I would like to return to my premise at the beginning of this section: the depiction of the natural environment in Pynchon's fiction speaks to the bigger framework of space in his work and underscores its importance both in his oeuvre and in our world. Undoubtedly, the question of ecocritical awareness — in tune with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's idea that human beings and the planet are connected with each other in complex ways — is an important theme within such discussions as the Anthropocene, "the environmental humanities," and "planetary humanities."[9] Nonetheless, I am going to analyze certain scenes from *Inherent Vice* that not only evince the urgency of environmental planning and organization in our world today but more specifically engage with the issue of "sustainability."[10]

The reason for this particular choice is that, in my view, sustainability is one of the most important issues, within the bigger picture of the Anthropocene, that usefully interacts with urban matters. For instance, Nan Ellin has proposed the concept of "good urbanism" (2012, 1) which, among other things, "integrates nature into the built environment" (61). Arguing that urban designers and planners now virtually agree on what constitutes good urbanism, she lays out six

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[9] See the last chapter of Spivak, 2003.

[10] On "environmental humanities," see Hubbell and Ryan 2021, and Emmett and Nye 2017. On "planetary humanities," see Elias and Moraru 2015.

practical features as its constituting elements. One of the main themes in her proposal is the notion of sustainability and how to create sustainable cities, considering that we have become "the only species to build habitats that are not sustainable" (2012, 1). With the onset of industrialization, the logic of urbanization began to shift and we started to engage in "unsustainable human activities, such as overcultivation, overgrazing, deforestation, and poor irrigation practices" (2012, 61). As such, she observes that we ought to "construct places that support humanity more optimally, places that sustain us rather than strain us" (2012, 1). Good urbanism suggests that one way to make our habitats more sustainable is by integrating nature into our built environments and creating a sustainable relationship with nature that "may involve bringing nature back through 'reforestation' or 'reclamation,' after a place has been 'fragmented' or 'desertified'" (2012, 61).

Although sustainability is a contested term with a spectrum of definitions and applications in the field of ecocriticism, it shares one main theme with the concepts emerging from environmental humanities, that is, the present and the future status of the planet and the human role in dealing with it.[11] In this respect, Pynchon's fiction is the right terrain to delve into in order to explore such concerns about humanity and the planet. Given the vast preview of sustainability, in relation to the Anthropocene and ecocriticism, I avail myself of a number of specific themes related to sustainability as I engage in analyses of certain sections of *Inherent Vice* that shed light on the urgency of tackling environmental problems.

Among the most important narrative strands in *Inherent Vice* are those of Mickey Wolfmann's construction projects Channel View Estates and Arrepentimiento, both of which bring to the fore issues of environmental concern. In a conversation between Doc and the residential owner Crocker Fenway, the latter describes Channel View Estates as the "promise of urban blight" (279), against which he has been fighting. He goes on to tell Doc that "Some of us moved heaven and earth, mostly earth" (279) to prevent Mickey from bringing disaster to the urban environment of the "the sunny Southland" and its residents. Although Doc believes that it is "Bullshit" (279) and Crocker is only concerned about his property values, the residential owner's self-description raises

[11] For a comprehensive view on the sustainability debate in literature, see Johns-Putra et al. 2017.

an important question that indicates the environmental damage caused by the irresponsible despoliation of Southern California's urban texture: "People with a decent respect for preserving the environment against high-density tenement scum without the first idea of how to clean up after themselves" (279). When we take into consideration Crocker's next comment, Pynchon's novel seems to caution against anthropocentrism and bring forth the importance of a sustainable perspective as real estate developers have been always concerned with their own benefits, with no regard for other-than-human beings, to the detriment of the California landscape: "It's about being in place. We— […] we're in place. We've been in place forever. Look around. Real estate, water rights, oil, cheap labor—all of that's ours, it's always been ours" (279).

As we know, Mickey is behind the destruction of an African American neighborhood for his construction program Channel View Estates. In an oft quoted passage, aunt Reet calls Mickey's project "his latest assault on the environment" (11). Indeed, the unscrupulous real estate developer's construction plan reminds the character Spike of "jungle clearings he had known" (87) in Stateside environmental abuse. Nevertheless, the environmental issue that Doc's aunt brings up has not been given due attention. In fact, it is no accident that she should put forth this ecological question considering that she lives in a "suburban part of town with houses, yards, and trees, because of which it had become known as the Tree Section" (10). There is no doubt that the protagonist's aunt is merely concerned about the promotion of her real estate agency. Nevertheless, the narrator tells us that "Whenever Doc needed to know anything touching on the world of property" (10), aunt Reet was a reliable source to refer to. Indeed, she possesses a "bordering-on-the-supernatural sense of the land" (10) and knows about "any lot in the L.A. Basin, all the way back to the Spanish land grants—water rights, encumbrances, mortgage histories."

Insofar as Channel View Estates causes human, and environmental, disaster, out of his sense of repentance Mickey starts the philanthropic project Arrepentimiento. Although creating a city for the needy at the hands of a ruthless entrepreneur sounds benevolent, construction in the desert might play havoc with the natural environment. Here, one is reminded of the construction of rivers in the deserts of Southern California, touted as the triumph of master engineers like William Mulholland. Encouraged by economic and political interests, such engineering initiatives led to the creation of a complex system of water provision

that facilitated widespread urban growth in Los Angeles. Nevertheless, as early as 1935, the politician and real estate developer Boyle Workman warned against the threats of such unrestrained construction plans for humans as well as non-humans: "Every tree, every lawn, every blade of grass in this section as it exists today, is a forced growth, made possible by man's ingenuity in bringing water to what otherwise would be a treeless waste" (31). Although Workman did not have such ideas as the Anthropocene when writing his book, the building of rivers in the desert touches upon the issue of human-centeredness and its consequent threats to more-than-human life on Earth — a concern that calls to mind the creation of Arrepentimiento in *Inherent Vice*. Even though the failure of Mickey's construction program in the desert is usually attributed to his kidnapping by shadowy forces and the retrieval of his mind to the capitalist mode, a different way of reading this episode is that it might indicate the fragility and dangers of imposing a man-made landscape on the natural environment. On their visit to the site of Arrepentimiento, what Doc and his friend Tito observe is a far cry from the realization of Mickey's dream as free lodging for the poor, so much so that they "wouldn't be able to agree on what they'd been looking at" (200):

> here a scatter of concrete structures, there a distant smokestack or two among the scrawls of chaparral. […] There were several what Riggs Warbling had called zomes, linked by covered walkways. Not perfect hemispheres but pointed at the top. […] The terrain between the complex and themselves was also strewn with giant almost-spherical pink rocks, though they could also have been man-made. (200)

The depiction of this abandoned construction project in the desert points to a salient concern in the sustainability discourse, namely the sustainability of whom or what? Human life or other-than-human world? For several decades sustainability has been a concept in search of a clear meaning and a host of scholars have been trying to identify its necessary constituents and propound a road map of how it may be achieved.[12] Whether we are concerned about the sustainability of the environment or human beings, the Arrepentimiento story line in Pynchon's novel is wholly relevant. As we know, at some point construction stops and Mickey's dream of making free accommodation for the poor comes to a halt altogether.

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[12] See Johns-Putra et al. 2017.

More importantly, this alternative understanding further heralds the issue of the urbanization of suburbia in Southern California. Mickey's housing project and his dream of erecting a whole city in the desert are a reminder of what the landscape architect Garrett Eckbo and his partners warned against in their 1965 Urban Metropolitan Open Space Study, that, in part, investigated the dreadful course of urban overspill into such natural areas as the Colorado River and Mojave deserts. Eckbo and his colleagues argued that "The entire desert seems to be subdivided and covered with a gridiron of graded streets; such development destroys the desert as landscape and as open space" (45).

These representations of the built and natural environments in Pynchon's work evince a dire need for some solution to the environmental problems of our world today. In the era of the Anthropocene, such analyses show the importance of non-human environments to Pynchon's mind and the urgency of sustainable modes of human dwelling. A significant implication of the urgency of this environmental discussion, concerning Pynchon's literary aesthetics, is the notion that the later phase of his fiction goes beyond the blurry confines of literary postmodernism, and such (postmodern) characteristics as irony and playfulness, insofar as the delineation of the ecological havoc being wreaked upon the planet in his work shows the necessity of immediate, concrete solutions.

Although Pynchon's work (especially the initial phase) has been strongly associated with literary postmodernism, it is important to recognize that his twenty-first century fiction might show something beyond the unstable boundaries of that category. Indeed, in *Against the Day* something different was already taking place and his work seemed to portray new nuances probably in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, even though there is no explicit reference to that incident in the whole book. Nevertheless, as Simonetti has argued, "9/11 resonates like an afterimage" (2011, 35) throughout the novel. Whatever the case may be, it has been argued that *Against the Day* "marks the stage when postmodernism clearly did not suffice to frame its aesthetics" (Pöhlmann 2019, 23). If *Against the Day* suggests a tendency in the direction of something beyond or different than postmodernism opaquely, *Inherent Vice* makes this position clearer, especially with that possibility of "something else […] to be there" (369) on the book's last page. Finally, *Bleeding Edge* is the novel which arguably might indicate that Pynchon's later work is not solely postmodernist, but something else too. As we learn from the narration, a film professor at NYU happened to buy a cassette

from the character Reg Despard, introduced to us as "a movie pirate" (14) duping cassettes and selling them for a dollar on the street. In a satirical scene, the narrator relates that the professor wondered if Reg "knew how far ahead of the leading edge of this post-postmodern art form he was working" (14). At the same time, it is crucial to understand that such an argument does not mean that Pynchon's later fiction no longer contains postmodernist characteristics, even though the question of how to think about such categories is in and of itself problematic.

Whether one interprets this new tendency in Pynchon's later work in relation to several putative or self-labelled new movements, such as the post-ironic, post-postmodernism, and New Sincerity, or simply speaking of Pynchon being "Pynchon, standing astride the past fifty years of U.S. fiction" (Huehls 863), his oeuvre has been constantly growing in new ways while revisiting or maintaining some of its older features. Indeed, near the end of the abovementioned scene from *Inherent Vice*, where Pynchon's novel bespeaks the problems with the anthropocentric underpinnings of Southern California's real estate urban projects, one can observe this dual tendency — the residue of postmodernism's corpse on one side and the blooming of post-postmodernism on the other — as Crocker tells Doc, "Oh. You people do irony, I wasn't aware" (279). Nevertheless, Doc makes it clear that by that point in the novel his idea is "More like practicality" (279) rather than anything ironic. In the wake of the Anthropocene and peak oil, and the importance of a sustainable vision of the future, I believe that the latest stage of Pynchon's work, which more clearly portrays the problem of anthropogenic planetary damage, exceeds the framework of postmodernism as it indicates the urgency of swift, practical measures to address the perils of environmental loss and ruin.

2.2. Urban Restructuring in *Inherent Vice*: The Emergence of the City Region

Society has been completely urbanized.

Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*

At the heart of my argument here is a straightforward question: the depiction of urban spaces in the novel points to the latest phase of Soja's understanding of the postmetropolitan transition, that is a shift from a

metropolitan to a regional model of urbanization and the formation of the city region. An important factor that stands to reason is that there is an epochal overlapping between the onset of the 2008 economic recession and the time when, presumably, Pynchon was writing the novel. In this respect, the recent emphasis in urban and regional studies on the blending of urban-suburban spaces becomes further relevant to the novel insofar as when Soja speaks of the regional shift, most often, the word shift is preceded by the adjective epochal. Soja started to talk about regional urbanization only in the early years of the 2010s, though he had already theorized that notion in different ways without using the term regionalism. As he explained in 2014, "Only in the past few years, however, did it become clear to me how best to define the emerging new urban form" (197). The timeline when Soja wrote about the new regionalism approximately coincides with that of the publication of Pynchon's novel, which helps better understand my discourse. What is new in *Inherent Vice*, with respect to *Vineland*, is that the instantiation of liminal urban spaces in the novel heralds not only the postmetropolitan transition, as a process that shows a shift from the modern to the postmodern metropolis, but it adds a new nuance to it: places like Mickey Wolfmann's real estate development Channel View Estates, his desert construction project Arrepentimiento, and the beach are represented as fragmented, fluid, decentered spaces that are (re)written and (re)arranged in complex ways. These spatial representations highlight the regional, or planetary, aspect of the postmetropolitan transition as they depict the fusion of urban and suburban organizations of cityspace in Pynchon's book.

In the first chapter of the novel, Tariq Khalil, a former black convict, explains to Doc how his neighborhood has vanished after his release from prison: "My old street gang. Artesia Crips. When I got out of Chino I went looking for some of them and found it ain't just them gone, but the turf itself" (17). What he finds in its place is a sign with Mickey Wolfmann's name on it as the site's builder. When Doc asks Tariq to show him this place on the map of the region, the area he "pointed to looked to be a fairly straight shot from here eastward down Artesia Boulevard, and Doc realized […] that it had to be the site of Channel View Estates" (17).

Mickey's real estate development project is being built where previously an African American neighborhood was situated, which had itself seized a Japanese American area after WWII. Artesia is a city

in southeast Los Angeles County where former First Lady Pat Nixon grew up as a child. This promises a potentially interesting connection between the location of Mickey's construction project in this California suburban area and Pat Nixon's childhood hometown. Nixon was one of the New Right presidents who enormously contributed to the urbanization of suburbia in California. As he mentioned in a July 1990 interview with the magazine *Orange Coast*, his birthplace Yorba Linda in Orange County was "an agricultural region and something of a playland" when he was a child. "It is now the engine of progress in America, an area where entrepreneurs are gathering to drive the American dream forward," said Nixon. The small city of Artesia was no exception and, like many other cities in the region, after the postwar economic boom it underwent a development process.

As Doc drives from Artesia to Channel View Estates, he notices "black pedestrians, bewildered as Tariq must have been, maybe also looking for the old neighborhood, […] now taken away into commotion and ruin" (19). Mickey's real estate development program has ruined the lives of people like Tariq and, like Pierce Inverarity in *Lot 49*, he is despoiling the California landscape at will. Such episodes in the novel hint at urban redevelopment projects in the postwar era that allowed for the seizure of Tariq's neighborhood. As he tells Doc, Channel Estates is "More white man's revenge. Freeway up by the airport wasn't enough" (19). Tariq's observation refers to urban redevelopment policies that destroyed ethnic and minority neighborhoods to construct new highways connecting the inner city to the suburbs. Furthermore, the narrator describes Channel View Estates as a "A Michael Wolfmann Concept" (19), reminding us of Inverarity's San Narciso as "a grouping of concepts" (*CL* 13). On that score, the conceptual characteristic of San Narciso and Channel Estates has significant implications such as the imposition of human will on the landscape for capitalist interests. These issues underscore suburban construction and urbanization policies in California in the sixties and afterward, through privatization regulations under Reagan as governor and later on when he was elected president.[13] As the narrator relates, Channel Estates "stretched into the haze and the soft smell of the fog component of

[13] As an example of privatization efforts under Reagan, the narrator of *Inherent Vice* tells us that "Owing to Governor Reagan's shutdown of most of the state mental facilities, the private sector had been trying in its way to pick up some of the slack, soon in fact becoming a standard California child-rearing resource" (172).

smog, and of desert beneath the pavement—model units nearer the road, finished homes farther in, and just visible beyond them the skeletons of new construction, expanding into the unincorporated wastes" (*IV* 20). Such an expanding pattern of urban construction in the novel, penetrating the natural features of the landscape, indicates the concept of "planetary urbanization" (Brenner and Schmid 162) that argues for the urbanization of spaces beyond the traditional urban-suburban spaces "from transoceanic shipping lanes, transcontinental highway and railway networks, and worldwide communications infrastructures to alpine and coastal tourist enclaves."

California's history of geographical development is one of writing and rewriting of the land, of repeated deconstruction and reconstruction, of a geographical palimpsest repurposed and rebuilt, for real estate and land development benefits. As the Geographer Homer Aschmann observed in 1959, "This is a landscape of desire.… More than in almost any other major population concentration, people came to [Southern California] to consume the environment rather than to produce from it" (qtd. in Davis 1998, 12). Pynchon addresses this issue seriously in all the three California books and deals with its possible effects on U.S. society. However, the destruction of Tariq's neighborhood in *Inherent Vice* is one of the latest examples in his fiction concerning the issue of erasing the previous settlements and substituting them with new constructions. In this respect, the erasure of Tariq's neighborhood reinforces the notion of liminal urban spaces in the novel, punctuating the instability of the built environment in Southern California. Embedded in this understanding is the notion of the postmetropolitan transition that argues for the emergence of a multinucleated, post-Fordist city region in which centrality is everywhere, though to varying degrees. As already suggested, urban restructuring has been the driving force behind these geographical developments in the Los Angeles urban region. The idea of repeated reshaping and rebuilding of the landscape is motivated by the capitalist system, as David Harvey, among others, has argued. In his view, capitalism creates temporary stable geographies for producing commodities and after some time it destroys the older geographies in order to make a more profitable system of production.[14] In other words, though paradoxical, this contradiction between a fixed and a flexible production of cityspace is intrinsic to the

[14] See Harvey 1989.

nature of capitalism, indicated in Pynchon's novel as Tariq relates the history of his disappearing neighborhood.

The unstable feature of the built geography in the Los Angeles urban region is a reminder of what the protagonist of *Inherent Vice* had learned from his college professors: "the map is not the territory" (157). This spatial observation is reminiscent of an uncanny scene in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* where the main character of the novel, the man, remembers nostalgically when "He'd pored over maps as a child, keeping one finger on the town where he lived. Just as he would look up his family in the phone directory. […] everything in its place" (110). Nevertheless, given that the man and his son have become wandering itinerants across the U.S. in the aftermath of an unknown apocalypse, it is no longer possible to identify any place on the map as it once was in the pre-apocalypse world. When the son asks his father, "Where are we?" (55), the man simply answers, "I dont know." The possibility of identifying real places on the map has given place to an ethos of uncertainty where the characters' sense of place, as well as identity, has been thrown into sharp disarray. In fact, they are trapped in a world with "Everything uncoupled from its shoring. Unsupported in the ashen air. Sustained by a breath, trembling and brief" (6).

This unmappability of urban geographical places in the postmodern condition is resonant with the idea that "the word is not the thing" (*IV* 157), in Pynchon's novel. In this regard, it is interesting to notice how McCarthy makes a minimalistic use of language in his novel, as a narrative technique, to emphasize the idea that, in un uncertain world, words are inadequate to convey any meaning. Indeed, the generational gap between the father and the son is shown in part through the impossibility of communication via language. At some point in the narrative, the man wonders "that to the boy he was himself an alien. A being from a planet that no longer existed. The tales of which were suspect" (90). Later in the book, one of the boy's comments confirms the man's suspicion: "You have stories inside that I dont know about" (164). Eventually, the man stops relating to the boy the stories of the past insofar as he comes to understand that they have no meaning to his son: "He could not construct for the child's pleasure the world he'd lost without constructing the loss as well and he thought perhaps the child had known this better than he. […] Some part of him always wished it to be over" (90). As such, McCarthy's concise and precise use of words, other than stylistic rea-

sons, points to the postmodern, unnerving reality of not being able to know what indeed words mean.

In relation to the urbanization of Southern California suburbia, Mickey's other real estate project Arrepentimiento in *Inherent Vice* is as well a concept of his devising, similar to San Narciso. Arrepentimiento, the never built city in the desert, is another example of suburbanization in California and, as Mike Davis argued in 1998, "Suburbanization is like another one of Southern California's natural disasters" (90). He observed that "After the Santa Clara River Valley dies, there is only desert to feed the developers' insatiable hunger" (91). However, contrary to San Narciso, Arrepentimiento was meant to provide free housing for the dispossessed — an idea that is not accommodating to the profiteering logic of capitalism. In fact, when Mickey starts this utopian project, he is mysteriously kidnapped.

From an urban geographical point of view, there is another difference between Mickey Wolfmann's desert development program and Pierce Inverarity's construction projects in *Lot 49*: Mickey's idea is to build housing in the desert that encompasses the space beyond suburbia. One possible explanation might be the fact that in *Inherent Vice* Pynchon wrote about the sixties from the perspective of the 2000s and, thus, the representation of space in the novel is influenced by the more recent urban spatial trends in the contemporary metropolis. Whether that is the case, the novel's engagement with suburban construction and urbanization processes is also evident from its video trailer that foreshadows the beach as a comfortable site of development for real estate moguls. In an unprecedented action, in 2009, Pynchon narrated an advertisement video for *Inherent Vice* where he tells us that here there used to be Gordita Beach, California, but "Later on all this is gonna be high rise, high rent, high intensity."[15] In such a short video trailer less than three minutes, one of the most important issues is the change of the California landscape where Gordita Beach is going to be turned into a real estate development hub. This description reminds the reader of Charles Bukowski when he expressed his opinion apropos the ceaseless urbanization and construction business in Los Angeles in 1967: "THERE IS ANOTHER HIGH-RISE APT. GOING UP DIRECT-

[15] Pynchon's only public appearances before this were in two episodes of *The Simpsons* in 2004 in which he lent his voice to a funny version of himself with a brown paper bag over his head.

LY ACROSS THE STREET. I am now completely surrounded" (qtd. in Kipen 65). Indicating his disappointment about the destruction of the natural environment in Southern California, Bukowski mentions that he used to pass by the only remaining green hills where he could momentarily get away from the ugly reality of Los Angeles: "those hills ride inside me as I drive past, and looking at them, it's like vomiting up a whole sick metropolis and I feel better" (65).

Vineland already hinted at a change in Pynchon's depiction of city structure where nature becomes part of resistance for the counterculture. While in *Lot 49* the plot unfolds for the most part in the cityscapes of Los Angeles and San Francisco as well as the invented town of San Narciso, *Vineland*'s story line is mainly set beyond the urban landscape of Los Angeles in a suburban part of Northern California in fictional Vineland County, where the counterculture has taken refuge after its demise. Nevertheless, *Lot 49* and *Vineland* both instantiated the urbanization of suburbia, though in different ways and to different degrees. *Inherent Vice* provides a new insight in interpreting urban restructuring and urbanization processes in the twenty-first century metropolis that seems to interact with Soja's latest shift in understanding the postmetropolitan transition. In *Inherent Vice*, the beach and the desert are shown to be the places where construction is concentrated and the natural territory beyond suburbia, besides the area around Los Angeles, is where real estate businessmen like Mickey are interested in investing. The conceptualization of space in the text shows Pynchon's growing awareness of the changing natural landscape in California where the beach, as the last frontier in the general imagination of the American nation, indicates a new crisis as a result of the ongoing development of the California suburbia. In other words, in the aftermath of urban restructuring, the natural, once peripheral places like the beach and the desert have become so central that a new spatial interpretation is needed to describe this urban change. For instance, in *Lot 49* we learn that the road is "a vein nourishing the mainliner L.A., keeping it happy, coherent, protected from pain" (14). In *Inherent Vice*, however, it always takes us to the suburban area and the beach, as shown on the last page of the novel. To use Soja's words, "Although the centrality of downtown Los Angeles has been recognizable for more than two hundred years, the surrounding urban region grew as […] a patchwork quilt of lowdensity suburban communities stretching over an extraordinarily irregular terrain of mountains, valleys, beaches, and deserts" (1996b, 433-34).

While in *Vineland* we can observe this irregular stretching of the habitable land to the mountains and redwoods of Northern California in Vineland County, in *Inherent Vice* the beach and the desert are the places where the process of urban restructuring takes place. This kind of urbanization signals the postmetropolitan transition as the city turns inside-out in an irregular pattern. Like *Vineland*, *Inherent Vice* heralds the formation of the exopolis, the restructuring of urban form, in California. Nevertheless, its rendition of the postmetropolitan transition indicates the regional aspect of urbanization processes insofar as urban restructuring projects in the novel have left no space unurbanized, so much so that even the beach and the desert are used for urban development programs. As such, Pynchon's third California novel bespeaks the notion of regional urbanization in the twenty-first century, decentralized city region, and in my view the concept of the new regionalism, that argues for "the urbanization of the entire world, or what some call planetary urbanism" (2014, 180).[16]

Within the scope of planetary urbanization, Brenner's notion of "extended urbanization" (201) indicates what Lefebvre put forth more than five decades ago, i.e., the groundbreaking idea of the complete urbanization of society as indicated in the epithet to this section. More significantly, and with regard to Pynchon's novel, "extended urbanization" (201) shifts the focus to "the production and perpetual reorganization of broader operational landscapes" (201). In other words, the (re)appropriation of the landscape and the (re)construction pattern in *Inherent Vice*, shown through the natural elements like the ocean, the beach, and the desert, herald a new era of urbanization in which liminal landscapes, in-between geographical areas, the hinterland, fallow lands, quiet zones, or however one might call them, are increasingly fundamental to the urban process under capitalism. As Brenner points out, recently the landscapes of extended urbanization have acquired "an unprecedented significance for designers concerned to address diverse social, architectural, infrastructural and material conditions that lie far beyond the confines of traditionally defined cities" (203), and Pynchon's third California book hints at the formation of such urban trends.

Soja argued that all previously nonurbanized areas of the earth are becoming increasingly urbanized "as urban industrial capitalism influences to some degree every square inch of the earth's surface"

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[16] See Brenner 2014.

(2014, 181). As far as Southern California is concerned, Mike Davis has addressed the disastrous impacts of urbanization and construction processes there: the unrelenting consumption of the land has led to the urbanization of every part of the natural landscape with the desert being its final target.[17] As Doc's aunt Reet, a real estate broker in the novel "with her phenomenal lot- by- lot grasp of land use from the desert to the sea" (*IV* 10), tells us, the history of Los Angeles is a long, sad history of land use: "Mexican families bounced out of Chavez Ravine to build Dodger Stadium, American Indians swept out of Bunker Hill for the Music Center, Tariq's neighborhood bulldozed aside for Channel View Estates" (17).[18] *Inherent Vice*'s depiction of the beach and the desert as liminal places, as construction sites for land developers as well as last bastions of hope for the dispossessed in the book, represents the latest change in the urbanization of California suburbs and the postmetropolitan transition. With this in mind, in section three, I will return to the representation of the beach in the novel to analyze the impacts of these remarkable urban developments from a historical and political standpoint.

2.3. The Urbanization of Injustice in *Inherent Vice*

If Pynchon's third California book throws light on the most recent development concerning the postmetropolitan transition in Southern California, heralding the formation of the city region, it also intimates the socio-economic repercussions of these urban spatial processes for society. One of the most important consequences of urban restructuring is a widening of the wealth gap in U.S. society and, while inequality is no novelty in the industrial capitalist city, in the few past decades it has increased more than ever before. Soja observed that in the last thirty years or so "one of the outstanding features of the postmetropolitan transition and the formation of a New Economy has been an extraordinary concentration of wealth in the upper one percent of the

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[17] See Davis 1998.

[18] A long-lasting concern in Pynchon's work is the dispossession of indigenous peoples' lands. Aunt Reet's observation recalls the colonial period in America when Mexicans and Indians were deprived of their native territories. Elsewhere in *Mason & Dixon*, Pynchon has addressed the issues of Indian massacres and African slavery. As Dixon mentions to a revolutionary-minded American, what matters is "not how British treat Americans, […] 'tis how both of You treat the African Slaves, and the Indians Native here" (*MD* 568).

population and an accompanying reduction in the income share of the bottom 50 percent" (2014, 160). A significant factor in this observation is the idea of urban spatial causality as the generating engine of socio-economic injustice. On that score, *Inherent Vice* gives a glimpse of the way in which urban geographical organization can lead to social and racial injustice by narrating how Tariq's neighborhood has vanished through an unstable process of repeated rebuilding and reconstruction of the land.

Pynchon's essay on the Watts riots of 1965 suggests that some urban planning policies were made in such a way to segregate the black deliberately by making it difficult for them to buy houses in certain real estate developments. As McClintock and Miller observe, "Reactionary politics flourished in the suburbs, particularly in the ex-urban areas like Orange County, where the John Birch Society was a particularly strong influence in local politics" (2019, 42). In effect, the urbanization of suburbia in Southern California was in large part motivated by radical rightwing politics, supported by the John Birch Society, promoting limited government and privatization policies. Of course, politics had a hand in reshaping the landscape and real estate development was a key to realizing the reactionary political agenda that aimed at the creation of a homogenous space of closely defined order in society.[19] One way to achieve this goal was urban development policies and processes such as gentrification and redlining. As Tariq tells Doc in the novel, Mickey's Channel Estates is a revenge for the Watts riots: "Some of us say 'insurrection.' The Man, he just waits for his moment" (19).

However, what is equally, if not more, important is that Pynchon's novel seems to be pointing to the notion that in the aftermath of the 2008 economic crisis we are facing a new period of social and racial injustice coming out of the urban conditions of the postmetropolis. In this respect, if *Vineland* allows for the possibility of a temporary refuge for the ex-hippies in the fictional town of Vineland, the depiction of places like Tariq's neighborhood, the desert, and the beach in *Inherent Vice*, as in-between spaces, seems to highlight the uncertainty and fragility of the new socio-economic conditions in the contemporary city. Writing about the sixties through the lens of the 2000s, Pynchon contemplates recent problems in the present socio-political landscape and

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[19] One can think of this sort of spatial organization in terms of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "sedentary space" (474).

Inherent Vice indicates such concerns. As Graham Benton has noted, "those who (like Pynchon) have long advanced a grave concern for the loss of autonomy wrought by an increasingly powerful ideological state apparatus find themselves pinned by rhetoric and subsequent legislation […] that further erode civil liberties" (41). The idea of political polarization in society can be explained through a spatial perspective. Soja argued that as a result of the postmetropolitan transition in the contemporary metropolis, there has been a surge in "*socioeconomic inequalities and ideological and political polarization*" (2014, 158). That is, urban restructuring, motivated by the exigencies of the capitalist economic system, in the aftermath of the 2008 crash, has accentuated injustice and polarization in society. In fact, the novel's episode of Tariq's neighborhood points to such issues as social, racial, and economic inequalities as a consequence of the postmetropolitan transition.

Nevertheless, as Harvey has argued, if the financial crash of 2008 is "basically a crisis of urbanization then the solution should be urbanization of a different sort and this is where the struggle for the right to the city becomes crucial because we have the opportunity to do something different" (2009). One can think of the 1996 lawsuit against the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) by the Bus Riders Union (BRU), resulting in an unprecedented reversal of billions of dollars from a program that asymmetrically favored the rich to one that was more beneficial to the urban poor, who depended on public transit for their basic needs.[20] Just like the consent decree in favor of the BRU that made it impossible for the MTA to pursue an extensive fixed-rail program, Mickey's desert construction project Arrepentimiento in *Inherent Vice* is somehow similar to the BRU decree that gave priority to the needs of the minority working poor. However, Mickey's mind is eventually reprogrammed to its initial capitalist mode and his utopian construction program for the poor remains only a dream. In this regard, it is noteworthy that the BRU had a great deal of success in its beginning phase in the court regarding the problem of racial and spatial injustice. Nonetheless, like Mickey's philanthropic project in Pynchon's novel, a program that is against the capitalist workings of urban governance and planning in the U.S., the radical potential of the BRU decision was later curbed, and reversed, as the Bush administration penetrated the Supreme Court. Considering the bigger picture,

[20] See Soja 2010, vii-xviii.

such examples of urban spatial analysis in (relation to) Pynchon's book underscore the importance of socio-economic and racial justice in Pynchon's fiction.

3. "Under the Paving Stones, the Beach!": Historical/Political Space

> *Space is not a "reflection of society," it is society […]*
> *from time to time, social movements will arise to challenge the meaning*
> *of spatial structure and therefore attempt new functions.*
>
> Manuel Castells, *The City and the Grassroots*

In "Going to the beach with Thomas Pynchon," Jeff Simon calls *Inherent Vice* "an authentic Thomas Pynchon beach novel." Indeed, the novel begins and ends with Pynchon's fictional Gordita Beach in Los Angeles — a Southern California surfer town and the base of operations for *Inherent Vice*'s protagonist. As it is widely agreed, Gordita Beach seems to refer to Manhattan Beach, in the South Bay area of Los Angeles County, where Pynchon once lived. John Krafft has observed that Pynchon lived "in Manhattan Beach, near Los Angeles, from roughly the mid-1960s to at least the early 1970s" (11) and "then mostly in various places around California through the 1980s" (10). On the final page of the novel, Doc is on the Santa Monica freeway that later intersects with the San Diego, moving toward south. The Pynchon Wiki website suggests that the sequence of the freeways and street names points to Manhattan Beach. However, Gordita Beach first appeared in *Vineland* as the place where Zoyd Wheeler and her daughter live: "Zoyd was living down south then, sharing a house in Gordita Beach with elements of a surf band he'd been playing keyboard in since junior high, the Corvairs" (22). But Pynchon's affection for Gordita Beach goes even further back to the 1960s. According to Garrison Frost, "it is entirely possible that Pynchon was living in or around Manhattan Beach while he was writing *The Crying of Lot 49*." He explains that

> Although most of the book takes place in Northern California, at the very beginning Oedipa journeys down south to the town of San Narciso […]. The obvious play on the word 'narc' immediately brings to mind Hall's characterization of the Manhattan Beach's anti-drug police state.

Taking these hints into consideration, from his early career to the later phase, in the trilogy we observe a continuity in Pynchon's depiction of Gordita Beach and, viewed more widely, Southern California. In this respect, at issue are at least two main points. First, the significance of Gordita Beach in its involvement with social and political events against the backdrop of history and, second, how such observations interact with the development of the narrative. As with imaginary San Narciso in *Lot 49* and fictional Trasero County in *Vineland*, some of the more important issues that pop up are the questions of the natural and built geographies of California, the development of suburbia for political purposes of social control, the emergence and fading of the counterculture, and the clash between the forces of resistance and the agents of oppression.

As I mentioned before, the beach in *Inherent Vice* is a place that can be best described in terms of liminality. For instance, the narrator recounts that in the evenings it hosts the stewardesses who seek fun where "flatland guys" (*IV* 8) go "for a night of hustling stewardesses." The fact that the stewardesses occasionally stop by the beach for diversion and then leave the place reinforces the idea of its temporariness as a passage point just like the airport. Curiously, Doc's office in Gordita Beach is located near the airport. Moreover, Pynchon's promo video mentions that the stewardesses "live in Gordita cause it's close to the airport" and they "tend to hang out between flights and the bars up and down the street." The liminal quality of the beach makes it a place that can offer some possibility of redemption while, at the same time, being a dangerous place. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*, Berressem has used the metaphor of "the body without organs" (30) to refer to the beach as a place "that is not organized by powers of command and control and, as such, a true plane of immanence" (Berressem 2014, 54). In this regard, the beach represents a space that is characterized by "a state of transgressivity" (Westphal 41) based on "the crossing of a boundary beyond which stretches a marginal space of freedom" (47). In *Inherent Vice*, there are cops who hunt for hippies on the beach but at the same time the hippies, like Doc, could be private eyes. The beach represents the political space of conflict, the dialectics of socio-political power and control against the youth counterculture. At the same time, it is depicted as a place that is not completely curtailed by the agents of repression. On that score, Doc likes to conceive of the painting of the beach in his house

as an alternative "window to look out of when he couldn't deal with looking out of the traditional glass-type one in the other room" (*IV* 10). Nevertheless, he is aware that this picture "showed a Southern California beach that never was—palms, bikini babes, surfboards, the works" (10). Situated on the final far western edge of the European civilization, the California beach has been the best last resort for the world civilization which Pynchon attends to and, simultaneously, undercuts in the California trilogy. McClintock and Miller argue that "in all three novels, it is particularly the frontiers of suburban development that represent the site of struggles to assert control and independence, to write and rewrite both history and the future" (2014b, 4). The beach as a hinterland is one of those significant places of struggle for the counterculture to perhaps shape the direction of history against the invasive political and capitalist apparatuses of control.

One can think of the anti-establishment movement of the youth as a form of "transgression" insofar as "it flees from the heart of the system, from the space of reference" (Westphal 47). In the clash between the peripheral and central powers, the beach provides the hippies with some centrifugal power that resists the "striation" (Deleuze and Guattari 479) of their space of resistance by political forces. A "transgressive" (Westphal 37) space of liminality, the beach acts as a possible alternative "territory of germination" (Zaccaria 18), allowing some measure of freedom for the hippie movement. The slogan that Pynchon uses as the epigraph of the novel creates a direct connection between the beach and the counterculture: "under the paving stones, the beach!" It connects Los Angeles to Paris in May 1968, where the student rebellion took place, and invokes a politically revolutionary spirit. In fact, it portrays the beach as a space that resists and often escapes political control.[21]

Inherent Vice's narrator recounts that Mickey "was known to be a generous Reagan contributor" (95) and it "came as no big surprise"

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[21] The idea of the beach as a dynamic space, allowing the possibility of resistance against the political apparatus, can be read in relation to Lefebvre's examination of the heterogeneous quality of space in *The Production of Space*. He argues that "space 'is' whole and broken, global and fragmented, at one and the same time" (356). In such a composite space, there is a part that often escapes political control and might be described as the space of resistance. Six years before Lefebvre's book was published, the May 1968 protesters on the streets of Paris chanted "under the paving stones, the beach." Therefore, it is no accident that Lefebvre's idea of spatial heterogeneity, as opposed to the notion of spatial uniformity, has such a political undertone.

that he "might be active in some anti-Communist crusade." When Doc is spotted for the third time, this time at Kismet Lounge and Casino in Las Vegas, by special agents Flatweed and Borderline, the former tells him that

> It's you hippies. You're making everybody crazy. We'd always assumed that Michael's conscience would never be a problem. […] Suddenly he decides to […] give away millions to an assortment of degenerates—Negroes, longhairs, drifters. Do you know what he said? […] 'I feel as if I've awakened from a dream of a crime for which I can never atone […]. I can't believe I spent my whole life making people pay for shelter, when it ought to've been free.' (244)

This passage underscores the conflict between the government and corporate economy, in pursuit of their capitalist interests, and the hippie ideals highlighted through the characterization of the real estate tycoon's moral conundrum and his free housing project Arrepentimiento. Of special note here is the idea of "a 'consequential' spatial perspective" (2014, 13): the spatial organization of society, or the city, can be a causal and explanatory force able to influence social processes, rather than a byproduct of them.

The novel further emphasizes the political strife between the U.S. government and the countercultural movements by satirizing the notion of American democracy. In a salient scene, Tariq reveals to the protagonist of *Inherent Vice* the details of his pact with Glen Charlock, a murdered bodyguard of Mickey Wolfmann's. The two men together with Clancy, Glen's sister and Tariq's lover, go to a pizza place named Plastic Nickel where the walls are "decorated with silvery plastic reproductions of the heads side of a U.S. five-cent coin" (293). As it becomes clear, every now and then Thomas Jefferson, portrayed on one of the coins on the walls, "turned from left profile to full face […] and spoke to selected dopers, usually quoting from the Declaration of Independence or the Bill of Rights" (294). The narrator relates that "Tonight he waited till Clancy and Tariq had both headed back to the toilets, turned quickly to Doc" (294). In an acid trip between Jefferson and Doc, there is a reflection on the notion of American freedom and democracy. In a satirical conversation, he tells Doc that "the tree of Liberty must be refreshed […] with the blood of patriots and tyrants" (294). Doc wonders, "what about when the patriots and tyrants turn out to be the same people?" just "like, we've got this president now,"

to which Jefferson replies, "As long as they bleed," it "is the thing" (294). Here, we observe a parody of the idea of liberty as the foundation of American democracy, especially in the context of the 1960s cultural protests and the consequent backlash on the part of Nixon's administration.

That the novel indicates the countercultural protesters' attempt to achieve a space of action, in the wake of the overreaching official order, is nothing new in *Inherent Vice* insofar as in *Vineland*, and partially in *Gravity's Rainbow*, Pynchon had already engaged with it. However, from the viewpoint of the 2000s, *Inherent Vice* goes back to the late 1960s and recounts the history of that decade as a technique to contemplate the present political atmosphere. Although the text delves into America's postwar past, and deals with the conflict between reactionary forces and redemptive energies in the American sixties, the political environment described in the book seems to have parallels with the American politics of the new millennium. David Cowart has argued that in *Inherent Vice* "the political climate evoked seems frequently to mirror the appalling polarization obtaining in the first decade of the twenty-first century" (2011, 128). On that score, one might think of how such unfortunate events as the Watergate scandal initiated a trend of party polarization and a consequent loss of faith in the office of the President.

In one episode of the novel, when Doc is handcuffed by Puck Beaverton, a bodyguard for Mickey, he is told a story about one of Adrian Prussia's clients "from the LAPD Vice Squad who […] happened to mention a certain pornographer and pimp at the fringes of the movie business […] whom the Department seemed uncommonly eager to be done with" (*IV* 321). A loan shark in cahoots with LAPD, Adrian is asked by a certain client to get rid of this pimp. As we discover, the pornographer has kept "detailed files on a sex ring based in Sacramento, and was threatening now to blow the whistle" (321). Since "even the minor allegations in his story […] would be enough to bring down the administration of Governor Reagan," LAPD decides that Adrian should kill the pimp, helping out Reagan as "the future of America" (321). The pornographer is then kidnapped and taken to Adrian. Puck recounts that the pimp's corpse was thrown in a cement-mixer at the place of a freeway under construction that made Adrian wonder "how many of the columns he saw might have stiffs inside them" (323). In fact, a friend of his at the construction site uses the victims' corpses as material for columns that resemble "a vertical tomb" (323).

This passage reminds the reader of a similar scene in *Lot 49* where we learn about the bones of the American soldiers from WWII, drowned at the bottom of "Lago di Pietà" in Italy. The bones were brought to San Narciso and sold to Inverarity for the decoration of his lake as well as producing filters with bone charcoal for a cigarette company. As an important spatial theme to Pynchon's mind, in *Inherent Vice* too the narrator addresses the human cost of highway construction. Indeed, both books depict the displacement and exploitation of the dead people. If in *Lot 49* the dead are dislocated, to build the East San Narciso Freeway, and the American soldiers' bones are used to make cigarette filters, *Inherent Vice* contemplates the consumption of the dead as victims of a criminal Los Angeles Police Department. As in *Lot 49* where the dead are plowed for freeway construction, in *Inherent Vice* the corpses of those whom the authorities wanted "to wipe from the Earth" (260) are used as highway construction material. In effect, in both novels the building of the freeway, promoted by a shady economic and political system, obliterates the dead by trying to erase them from history for criminal purposes. Indeed, it is as though the cost of constructing the freeway, under Reagan's policies, were the citizens' lives. To Adrian, mixing the victims' bodies with concrete is creating "new meaning" (260) in the community and strengthening its "pillars." The idea of people as the pillars of community points to the reality that they are used as instruments, like small pieces of concrete, in the gargantuan machine of American capitalism that runs on their lives.

4. From the Beach to the Ocean: Fictional/Mythical Space

Pynchon's third California book starts as the protagonist races up and down the freeways in Gordita Beach and it ends with a landscape of the Ocean and Doc driving on the freeway in the Pacific fog. As the narrative unfolds, we become aware of the increasing presence of the Pacific Ocean, the ultimate harbor of hope and the American dream that the West promised. In this respect, the depiction of the Ocean can be related to the story of Lemurians in the novel. According to the original myth of Lemuria, it is a lost island located in the Pacific or Indian Ocean although the plate tectonics theory argued that the original landmass, containing India and Madagascar, broke apart but did not sink beneath sea level. It is also worth noting that Lemuria is believed to share some characteristics with another drowned mythological

landmass mentioned in Pynchon's novel, i.e. Atlantis. Going back to Plato's early account of that fictional island, Atlantis was believed to have been sunk at the bottom of the Ocean in ancient times. However, as the theory of continental drift gained popularity in the 1960s, it became clear that the existence of the lost continent of Atlantis in the geologically recent past was not possible.

In *Inherent Vice*, Lemuria is a recurring image whose whereabouts cannot be pinned down, except at the bottom of the Pacific Ocean. The drowned continent, believed to reemerge someday, provides the author with the possibility to portray a mythical space, entailing an ongoing struggle between the subsuming forces of control and the surviving energies of anarchy. The depiction of the Ocean, in relation to the sunken continent of Lemuria, opens a new window into Pynchon's spatial imaginary, namely the space of mythological places in the text. Writing about the late sixties in 2009, Pynchon's delineation of supernatural places in *Inherent Vice* has a nostalgic tone where the Pacific beach is the last possible place to offer any redemption. On that score, the image of Lemuria in the book resonates with the Ocean as the last frontier of American dream that might hopefully offer "something else" (369), as the novel comes to an end.

The lost continent of Lemuria interacts with a number of important issues in the text. The narrator relates that Lemuria is sunk to the bottom of the Pacific Ocean and its lost survivors have harbored in the Southern California coast as their only refuge.[22] They consider themselves to reside in exile and feel nostalgic about their original homeland. This, of course, reminds us of the fate of the counterculture that was subdued by government control and, in the wake of Nixon's Presidency, had no other shelter but the beach. The waning of the countercultural energies and the fate of the survived Lemurians in the book are contemplated in several ways. As part of the system of control, Pynchon's text suggests that television and the media in general manipulate the general sensation about social and cultural issues. As the narrator recounts:

> People in this town saw only what they'd all agreed to see, they believed what was on the tube or in the morning papers […], and it was all their dream about being wised up, about the truth setting them free.

[22] See Pynchon 2009, 108.

> What good was Lemuria to them? Especially when it turned out to be a place they'd been exiled from too long ago to remember. (315)

The theme of TV as a means of shaping public opinion has always been an issue of concern to Pynchon. However, the more important point here is that like drowned Lemuria that is of no importance to the American nation, even if it returned "surfacing this way in the lost heart of L.A." (315), the countercultural movements are on the path to oblivion.

In another scene, when Doc's friend and former employee, Sortilège, introduces him to her spiritual teacher, the guru Vehi Fairfield, he takes Doc on two acid trips. During the second one, Doc finds himself "in the vividly lit ruin of an ancient city that was, and also wasn't, everyday Greater L.A." (109). It is noticeable that the ancient city is (not) similar to L.A. Indeed, "Everybody living at the beach, for example, Doc and all his neighbors, were and were not refugees from the disaster which had submerged Lemuria […], they had settled on the coast of California" (109). Suddenly, Doc has some vision in which he sees connections between sunken Lemuria and the colonization of lands by the U.S. in the war in Indochina. The narrator relates that the U.S. was "repeating a karmic loop as old as the geography of those oceans, with Nixon a descendant of Atlantis just as Ho Chi Minh was of Lemuria" (109). The connotation of Ho Chi Minh as a descendant of Lemuria is a direct connection between the ruin of the ancient continent and the fate of its survived inhabitants on the coast of California. In his acid trip, when the Lemurian spirit guide Kamukea takes Doc above the Pacific, he tells the protagonist that he must find his way back on his own: "Doc was left at his negligible altitude to find his way out of a vortex of corroded history, to evade somehow a future that seemed dark" (110). Here, the mention of Nixon underscores his policies of war in Vietnam and the declining future of the nation in the eyes of the novel's protagonist.

Along the same lines, there is another episode in the book that signals the significance of Lemuria in its interaction with the narrative. When Doc receives a postcard, apparently from Shasta, he looks at the picture on the front that is "a photo taken underwater of the ruins of some ancient city" (167). This sounds familiar to Doc and makes him look for "a photo credit, a copyright date, a place of origin" (167) to realize where or what this city could be. After smoking a joint, he de-

duces that this must be "a message from someplace besides a Pacific island whose name he couldn't pronounce" (167). Given that different episodes in the novel mention Lemuria, these clues could hint that the place on Shasta's postcard might be the sunken continent in the Pacific Ocean. Whether the city is Lemuria or not, Doc decides to go back to an address that he was given by a Ouija-board belonging to Sortilège. One day at Sortilège's, she had told Doc and Shasta about her Ouija board and Doc had wondered if it could tell where to get some dope. The narrator recounts that the board gave them an address but Doc and Shasta found no dope at all: "After hours of detouring […], Doc and Shasta finally located the mystically revealed dope dealer's address, which turned out to be an empty lot with a gigantic excavation in it" (165). Looking at the photo on Shasta's postcard, Doc returns to the same address, this time with his friend Denis, to find that "The hole in the ground was gone, and in its place rose a strangely futuristic building" (167). It appears that this building is the headquarters of the Golden Fang.

Bringing together these two last episodes has an important implication. On the one hand, the narrator tells us about Doc's memory with Shasta in the past when they had gone to the address given by the Ouija board and, on the other, we learn about Doc's noticing the ruins of the ancient city on Shasta's postcard at present, which leads him to discovering the future-like Golden Fang building. Thus, the suggestion might be that there is a connection between drowned Lemuria and the construction of the Golden Fang headquarters. The history of the Lemurians, who find themselves in exile, has some similarities with the fate of the 1960s counterculture. Metaphorically speaking, the above episodes together suggest that the Golden Fang is building its shadowy business, of money laundering as well as importing and exporting heroin into and out of the U.S. through the Pacific, on the ruins of Lemuria. The shady organization is developing its capitalist interests on the basis of usurping the energies of the American nation at present and of those who originally lived in America. In achieving that goal, it is perhaps assisted by the government and LAPD as suggested through the U.S. currency with Nixon's face on it in the novel. The Golden Fang and its illegal business of trading in heroin, while exploiting the resources of the nation, reminds the reader of a similar scene in another 2009 novel by Richard Powers. Russell Stone, the protagonist of Powers' *Generosity: An Enhancement* and a Chicagoan

writing instructor in the novel, falls asleep on his sofa-pillow bed and dreams of "a Pynchon novel, with an international cartel trading in the arcane incunabula hidden in people's cells" (169). One might think of this in terms of the business of using people's bodies as construction material in Pynchon's novel.

In *Against the Day*, Pynchon portrays a similar picture through the idea of construction and the ruins. Somewhere in the middle of Pynchon's longest novel we learn about the fictional town of Wall o' Death "built around the remains of a carnival, one of many inspired by the old Chicago Fair" (476). Since the White City, at the heart of the Chicago World's Fair, was meant to set a historically new urban model for future cities, Mogultay has argued, Wall o' Death "is built on the ruins of the city of tomorrow" (1). Likewise, in *Inherent Vice* there is the Golden Fang building that has established its capitalist foundation on the premise of exploiting the past and present resources of the land, such as the ruins of ancient Lemuria, to create its future.

With that in mind, it is useful to reiterate that an analysis of the Pacific Ocean in the novel, in connection with lost Lemuria, sheds light on an important aspect of Pynchon's spatial imagination — the representation of mythological spaces. In this regard, a seminal issue in the narrative is the fate of the counterculture: like sunken Lemuria whose inhabitants live in exile, in the hope that one day it may resurface from the Ocean, the depiction of the counterculture has a nostalgic tone. Although *Vineland* too depicts the disillusionment of the hippie movement and its withdrawal to a peripheral part of Northern California, *Inherent Vice* shows a somewhat different image. While fictional spaces in *Vineland*, such as those of the Thanatoids or the w*oge*, are in-between spaces potentially capable of revealing positive energies, the decline of the sixties counterculture shows the demise of the possibilities left hanging at the end of *Lot 49*. As regards this issue, the realm of the Thanatoids in *Vineland* is linked to the faith of the counterculture through the murder of Weed Atman. In *Inherent Vice*, however, there seems to be a hopeful nuance: the novel's representation of the Pacific beach plays an important role in accentuating the myth of California as the last bastion of hope for the nation. As Sortilège mentions in the novel, although the oil industry is ruining the natural landscape, there will be some hope for Californians. She believes that at last the Earth is going "to start rejecting agents of disease like the oil industry. And hopefully before we end up like Atlantis and Lemu-

ria" (87). In his third California novel, though nostalgically, Pynchon seems to keep the promise of America alive while, at the same time, denouncing its mistakes.

On that score, one can see a similar dynamic in a number of William Vollmann's books, even though his style is "a bit darker than Pynchon's" (qtd. in Tennis 11) as he mentioned in a 1992 interview. Vollmann agreed that there are similarities between their works: "I guess I can see the comparison because Pynchon writes long books, the syntax is often involved" (11). Nevertheless, he didn't shy away from claiming the upper hand: "I think my sentences are better, and I think that my characters are better" (11). Published in the same year as *Inherent Vice*, for instance, *Imperial* offers a complex description of the Salton Sea. Chapter three of Vollmann's nonfiction book delineates the beaches of the Salton Sea as a popular vacation destination that is however "comprised of barnacles, fish bones, fish scales, fish-corpses and bird-corpses whose symphonic accompaniment consisted of an almost unbearable ammoniac stench like rancid urine magnified" (109). Vollmann recounts that the shocking reality of these Southern California beaches is motivated by economic reasons, with no concern for environmental issues. As we learn from a pamphlet by the Coachella Valley Historical Society in Vollmann's book, "the Salton Sea was *one of the best and liveliest fishing areas on the West Coast. Stories of a polluted Salton Sea are greatly exaggerated…. The real problem is too much salt*" (110). Albeit sometimes nauseating, visitors still enjoy the greater beauty of the Salton Sea insofar its "purity is particularly undeniable as expressed in the shimmer on the Salton Sea, which is sometimes dark blue, sometimes infinitely white" (109). While, for the most part, *Imperial* highlights the troubles of the immigrant laborers from Mexico to Imperial County, it throws light on the environmental problems of the region, as does Pynchon's novel. In an essay on the issues of "environmental crisis" and "the anxiety of living in an uncertain world" (Dehdarirad 63) due to (im)migration, concerning Vollmann's book and McCarthy's *The Road*, I have argued that "in *Imperial* the representation of the environmental problems goes hand in hand with the sufferings of the immigrants" (77). Although it is impossible to draw any unique conclusions from such a maximalist book, there are some warnings regarding the demise of the natural environment whose existence, if not looked after, might become a myth like that of Lemuria.

5. The Hope of Redemption in *Inherent Vice*

If *Lot 49* shows the countercultural energies that Oedipa feels for a revelation to come and *Vineland* demonstrates their diminishing trend, *Inherent Vice* is much nostalgic about those possibilities. As Doc and his friend Denis take a ride in a car, on their way to the Golden Fang headquarters, they go past Wallach's Music City "where each of a long row of audition booths inside had its own lighted window" (143). At each window, they see "a hippie freak or small party of hippie freaks, each listening on headphones to a different rock 'n' roll album" (143), which is not what Doc and Denis are used to as a rock concert. Rather, their idea is more of a peaceful, communal experience with "outdoor concerts where thousands of people congregated to listen to music for free, and where it all got sort of blended together into a single public self, because everybody was having the same experience" (143). The hippie dream of an alternative America seems to have failed and taken a different direction in *Inherent Vice*.[23]

However, an important question is whether the novel offers any redemption in shaping America's future. Pynchon's third California book was released a couple of months into Obama's Presidency and, as Simonetti has observed, an analysis of the text in relation to "Obama's politics of 'collective redemption' may help situate Pynchon's writing in the contemporary context of post-9/11 fiction, emphasizing the ethical aspects of his writing" (2012, 288). It has been argued that the later phase of Pynchon's career has been marked with a sort of sentimentality that makes it plausible to think of the idea of redemption in his work in terms of communal values. Drawing on Nadine Attewell's discussion of the opposition between "postmodern irony and postmodern nostalgia" (22), Freer has suggested that "from *Vineland* onwards, the basic tenor of the writing is sentimental" (2014, 144). The idea is that in Pynchon's later novels the isolated characters of his early works become part of more communal forms of society whence they might exercise resistance to power. In the end, *Inherent Vice*'s doomed detective may "still be saved if he understands that his quest leads to […]

[23] At some point, the narrator relates that "Doc, on the natch" (*IV* 254) wonders how the decade of the psychedelic sixties is coming to an end. To render the idea of a fading counterculture, Pynchon's narrator uses the metaphor of "a certain hand" (255) that "might reach terribly out of darkness and reclaim the time, easy as taking a joint from a doper and stubbing it out for good."

something that has more to do with moral commitment and social responsibility than with an unreachable […] truth" (Simonetti 2012, 296).

While these critics suggest some form of redemptive possibility in Pynchon's novel, beyond postmodernism's original subversive appeal, there is also a counter argument to it. Hume has suggested that in *Inherent Vice* Pynchon "is exploring a worst-case scenario" where "No other level of reality offers us any escape or compensation or alternative or hope" (2013, 2). Still other scholars believe that the novel does not completely leave out the possibility of redemption, nor does it demonstrate any alternative realities. McClintock and Miller argue that "Doc wins a partial victory, […] but conceding the larger cultural victory to the powers-that-be" (2019, 40). The idea of a partial redemption in the end, while yielding to the larger framework of power, can be described as a "hopeful hopelessness" (929), to use Martin Paul Eve's words. Nevertheless, even if it were the case, not attaining any revelation at the end of the quest does not necessarily mean that there are no alternative ways of understanding the novel's world. Molly Hite has observed that "failure to attain revelation is a hallmark of Pynchon's questing heroes" (22). If the writer expresses his disappointment with the way that things have developed in America, there are also hints to be hopeful and challenge the status quo.

In offering such redemptive energies, California plays a significant role. In *Inherent Vice*, and the trilogy in general, the West Coast is shown as a place that promises the American dream and at the same time it might merely depict a mirage. This quality of ephemerality underscores the idea of liminality in *Inherent Vice* delivered through the natural geography and the built environment of California. Such a description goes together with the depiction of the fog on the last page of the novel where there is the suggestion of an alternative reality to the rigidly structured system of control in the era of Nixonite repression. Emanating from the Ocean, the fog intimates a new way of experiencing the built California landscape, perhaps as a sort of counter-map. As Doc drives on the freeway, he might experience some collective consciousness with others on the road inspired by the natural geography of the land. Though transitory, there are promising moments in the California books that seem to produce "something else" (369) — something for which Oedipa waited long ago. Some scholars have argued that *Inherent Vice*'s final scene indicates the possibility of redemption and a hint of hope for the country's future, albeit nostalgic about the 1960s. Scott Macleod holds that "Pynchon is gently suggesting a ca-

thartic resolution to the volatility and fragmentation that existed in California" (131) in the sixties. As Doc's lawyer, observing the "de-zombified" (*IV* 341) Golden Fang off the coast of California, tells him in a dream, "May we trust that this blessed ship is bound for some better shore, some undrowned Lemuria, risen and redeemed, where the American fate, mercifully, failed to transpire" (341).

5.1. Reading *Inherent Vice*'s California for Alternative Realities: Space on a Theoretical Level

The protagonist of Pynchon's first California novel has to wait for some illumination concerning "the Tristero 'forgeries'" (*CL* 110). Fast-forward to *Inherent Vice*, driving along the San Diego Freeway, Doc is waiting "For the fog to burn away, and for something else this time, somehow, to be there instead" (369). Undoubtedly, "something else" (369) may have different interpretations. However, as far as my analysis is concerned, the important part is the word *else* as I believe that it is the suggestion of "an-Other" reality in Pynchon's text. This alternative possibility can be explained in terms of Soja's spatial "thirding-as-Othering." For him, and much so for Lefebvre, the principal takeaway from Thirdspace is the idea of *thirding* — "adding a third element to break up binary oppositions" (Westphal 71). This different perception of life for Doc reinforces the idea of liminality suggested by Pynchon's narrator in "something else" (369). "Radically open to additional othernesses" (Soja 1996a, 61), Thirdspace proposes "an antidote against any efforts to build up grand narratives, permanent constructions" (Westphal 71). In this regard, the California landscape in the novel provides the chance of a new, but temporary, awareness in the life of its protagonist. When Doc and his friend Tito go over the Cajon Pass, after a night of insomnia, the protagonist feels like "he'd just been dreaming about climbing a more-than-geographical ridgeline, up out of some worked-out and picked-over territory, and descending into new terrain along some great definitive slope" (*IV* 205). Doc's vision of a transcendent, yet unreachable, reality intimated by the geography of the land is reminiscent of "something else" (369) — a perspective that does not offer any tangible alternatives but highlights the ephemeral characteristic of the landscape's fog at the end of the book.

Another case in point is Pynchon's depiction of the submerged continents of Lemuria and Atlantis in the novel: these lost civilizations that

might, or might not, have existed are sunk to the bottom of the Oceans and are believed to reemerge to the surface one day. Nevertheless, as in Oedipa's fleeting moment of "mysterious consensus" (*CL* 82) in the dance with the "deaf-mute delegates," it is this transitory quality that leaves open the possibility of a third alternative beyond the purview of the socio-economic systems of control. As Stephen Hock has argued "Rather than mapping out a specific location, these moments in Pynchon's California novels […] remind us of that other America of the figurative 'Vineland the Good' still waiting to be discovered" (219). Indeed, the California freeway of *Inherent Vice*'s final page offers a possibility of redemption, "a momentary stay against confusion" to use Robert Frost's famous words, that Doc perceives in terms of a communal experience with other people driving on the freeway in the Pacific fog.

On that score, there is another episode in the book that yokes together the California landscape with the issue of technology. Bringing these two subjects together offers interesting insights in terms of the possibility of an alternative reality. In a conversation, Sparky, an acquaintance of Doc's, explains to him how ARPAnet is going to change the world as the network grows exponentially. Later in the novel, Doc faces a heavy fog where he can barely make out the freeway in front of him. The narrator reminds us that "maybe he'd have to just keep driving, down past Long Beach, down through Orange County, and San Diego, and across a border where nobody could tell anymore in the fog who was Mexican, who was Anglo, who was anybody" (369). These two, very close, scenes in the narrative show a sharp contrast between Sparky's clear vision of the future, in which ARPAnet would determine everything, and Doc's foggy vision of the highway. It is as though it were deliberate on the part of the author to undercut, or at least resist, the hegemonic outlook of this technological system that would command the world — an important topic to the writer's mind which he would go on to address substantially in his next novel. Bearing in mind the bigger picture, Doc's misty view seems to emphasize the importance of resistance to the hegemony of the systems of control, such as the Internet, whose greed of surveillance is insatiable. The possibility of some degree of freedom in the freeway foggy vision, "a temporary commune to help each other home through the fog" (368) as the narrator puts it, reinforces the idea of a transient position that grants a momentary relief to *Inherent Vice*'s protagonist and the readers to be hopeful about the future.

As we know, Thirdspace is a "floating concept" (Westphal 72) with an epistemology that is "constantly evolving, unfixed, never presentable in permanent constructions" (71-72). One way to describe it is a "movement" (72) or "crossing in defiance of established norms." The evolving characteristic of Thirdspace emphasizes transient but fruitful social constructions. Therefore, it underscores the unmappable quality of "something else" (369) in *Inherent Vice* that promises a new, though frail, possibility to hang on to. In the shady world of the Golden Fang and its malign activities, the landscape might offer a temporary alternative reality like that "little parenthesis of light" (254) in "the psychedelic sixties" before it "might close after all, and all be lost, taken back into darkness." As Berressem has suggested, in the ending paragraph of the novel, it is as though "For the shortest of moments, the beach has prevailed against the urban and suburban machinations of the Golden Fang" (2014, 59). Whether that is the case, Pynchon's depiction of California shows a sort of anxiety that "things had better work here, because here, beneath that immense bleached sky, is where we run out of continent" (Didion 172).

Interestingly, in 2018, Sophie Didier observed that we can still today draw upon the ideas propounded in Soja's work concerning issues like "the Los Angeles homelessness crisis" (10), central to the present local political debate, as well as the urban condition of ethnic and minority populations in the U.S.[24] This, of course, reminds us of the demolition of Tariq's home and neighborhood in *Inherent Vice* and the instability of the natural and built environments in Southern California as a result of continuous human intervention for real estate profit. Given that Soja's Thirdspace is an evolving concept, in the context of social and urban spatial instability and inequality, in the novel, we might say that Thirdspace emphasizes the call of *Inherent Vice*'s narrator to the protagonist to wait for "something else" (369), which might be considered as an invitation to some sincere solution "this time, somehow, to be there."

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[24] Although Soja reconnoitered a host of insightful research avenues in his critical urban theory, not all of them were followed by him in his lifetime. Nevertheless, we find the traces of those untrodden paths in the works of his former disciples at U.C.L.A. Among others, we can think of the themes of urban social movements (Walter J. Nicholls and Justus Uitermark 2017), the spatial dimension of injustice (Mustafa Dikeç 2017), as well as the application of major theories to different contexts as regards their production of urban space (Garth A. Myers 2017, and Juan Miguel Kanai 2020).

From West to East in Pynchonopolis

Throughout this work, I have endeavored to analyze Pynchon's representation of space in the California novels through geourban lenses. In light of the insights based on Pynchon's fiction and recent theories in urban and regional studies, I proposed to provisionally use the term *postpostmodern urbanism* to refer to the latest phase of urban restructuring processes in the twenty-first century city, namely the formation of the globalized, post-Fordist "city region" (Soja 2014, 197) as a result of "*regional urbanization*" (9). Such an analysis of Pynchon's work from a specifically urban spatial point of view aims to achieve two main objectives. On the one hand, I believe it has been useful to emphasize the role of his fiction in helping better understand, or at the very least represent, certain aspects of urban geographical issues in today's metropolis, which have consequential effects on the daily lives of its citizens. In this respect, I have addressed the way Pynchon tackles, ahead of his time, social and cultural consequences of urban restructuring in the contemporary city such as the urbanization of injustice, the implementation of spatial dynamics for purposes of gentrification, and the enforcement of urban geographical planning for capitalist economic exploitation.

More generally, and more cautiously, such a critical geourban examination of Pynchon's work is further aimed at throwing light, and offering potential insights, on what might happen concerning the future of urbanism, not least after the postmetropolitan transition toward "*a new regionalism*" (Soja 2014, 142) and the creation of the "regional city" (11). In fact, the arguments proposed in this book bespeak that investigating Pynchon's urban spatial imaginary may potentially reveal interesting insights for urbanists in understanding urban geo-

graphical phenomena in the twenty-first century metropolis, or at least viewing them from an original point of view.[1] I have sought to make this clear especially, but not exclusively, by analyzing three significant periods of urban restructuring, contemporaneous with three controversial historical junctures, in relation to Pynchon's California trilogy. The representation of cityspace in the novels anticipates and somehow comments on some of the most seminal urban geographical processes that have been taking shape, roughly from the 1960s-1970s onward, in the contemporary metropolis. In this regard, I considered the rendition of California space, especially in chapter three, in connection with Brenner and Schmid's concept of "planetary urbanization" (160), which has benefited from, and bears affinity to, Soja's notion of "a *new regionalism*" (2014, 142).

I have also referred to the notion of "extended urbanization" (Brenner 201) that addresses not only urban issues related to cities and city regions, as in Soja's theorization of "*regional urbanization*" (2014, 9), but also larger operational landscapes that have to do with environmental organization and planning in the twenty-first century. Bearing this in mind, I contended that the critical framework of Brenner's "extended urbanization" (201) sheds light on the environmental dimension of Pynchon's spatial imaginary in his fiction. Following the rise of the Anthropocene and peak oil, and the importance of a sustainable future for humans, the planet, and nonhuman others, I forayed into Pynchon's representation of space from an ecological point of view to show his long-lasting concern with issues related to humanity from a planetary vision. From *V.*'s delineation of the city as "only the desert in disguise," a desert that "creeps in on a man's land" (*V.* 36), or the description of a contaminated Walden Pond as a "public beach now where slobs from Boston [...] sit [...] belching, [...] checking […] their evil-smelling kids who urinate in the water" (161) to the the depiction of a New York garbage dump as "toxicity central" (*BE* 139) in *Bleeding Edge*, where there are surprisingly "100 acres of untouched marshland, directly underneath the North Atlantic flyway" for migratory birds

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[1] On the relationship between the literary text and urbanism, recently there has been a Palgrave Macmillan series entitled *Literary Urban Studies* with a thematic focus on literary representations of urban conditions. Of special note is that on the description page of the series' books one notices that the emphasis is on "the 'citiness' of its study object—the elements that are specific to the city and the urban condition—and an awareness of what this brings to the source material."

to sleep in safety, preoccupations about the environment and more-than-human life on Earth have always been a crucial part of Pynchon's conceptualization of a planetary, more-than-human space in his work.

With that in mind, I went on to argue that a significant implication of today's urgent environmental situation in relation to Pynchon's oeuvre is the idea of moving beyond the characteristics that are usually associated with postmodernism, such as irony and playfulness, toward more practical, sincere solutions and different literary techniques. For instance, one might think of the theme of paranoia in Pynchon's early work that helped him develop sprawling quests for his protagonists as well as the readers. Nevertheless, although paranoia is abundantly present also in his later fiction, it carries less weight, than it did in the initial phase, insofar as a reconfigured version of it exists in the shadow of such issues as moral agency in the aftermath of 9/11 and the "need to be responsible" (*BE* 233) in "The millennium, the end days." Thus, while it is inevitable to acknowledge the idea that Pynchon's fiction has played a fundamental role to define or understand literary postmodernism, we also have to come to terms with the impossibility of compartmentalizing his fiction within the blurry boundaries of such critical categories as modernism, postmodernism, and what has been called post-postmodernism. As regards this issue, the description of anthropogenic and planetary issues in his work, especially in the new millennium, indicates that Pynchon's twenty-first century fiction has gone beyond the critical framework of postmodernism insomuch as it is no longer possible to interpret his work merely through postmodern lenses. As such, Pynchon's later fiction is simultaneously postmodernist and "non-postmodernist" (Pöhlmann 18) — an idea that, more broadly, challenges the usefulness of literary categorization.

Returning to the bigger framework of spatial analyses in the California novels, I have argued that *Inherent Vice*'s rendition of cityspace seems to underline the vulnerability of the socio-economic conditions in the contemporary city, possibly, as a result of the 2008 economic meltdown. On a related note, I have further interpreted the novel's peculiar representation of non-urban spaces, like the fluid, decentered spaces of the desert and the beach, as a significant complement (and consequence) of urban restructuring in the twenty-first century metropolis, which further highlights the onset of a new period and form of social and economic injustice in the globalized city region. In fact, this is a preoccupation that is later resurrected in *Bleeding Edge* through

the depiction of the Lincoln Center, "for which an entire neighborhood was destroyed and 7,000 boricua families uprooted" (*BE* 51).

As the 2008 crash marked a moment of crisis in urban restructuring processes, the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic heralds a significant turning point in urban and economic restructuring, which will likely set in motion new changes in the development of cities. As we know historically, epidemics have always influenced the function and use of urban space.[2] For instance, in a study on "the ways COVID-19 transformed our relationship to urban space" (189), Low has suggested that the lessons that we learned through the pandemic translate to a different "design and planning of public space" (188) to "restore health to the overcrowded and dense cities of the industrial age." Worsening the situation in the U.S. have been a period of social unrest calling for racial justice and an unprecedented moment of political turbulence, evincing the emergence of a new metropolitan era of crises. Thus, there is little doubt that this new period of social injustice and political division, together with the impacts of the 2020 pandemic, will add a new twist to the way that cities and regions develop. Once again, Pynchon has anticipated times. His fiction abounds with insightful representations of such salient issues as "relentless suburbanizing" (*BE* 157) and "symptoms of gentrification" (124) in the contemporary city, and which place better than California (novels) to investigate them.

Indeed, California holds a special place in Pynchon's fiction not only because its delineation in the trilogy is conducive to understanding recent urban spatial phenomena but insofar as each and every Pynchon book addresses some fictional, historical, socio-political, or geographical aspect of that setting. In *Inherent Vice*, a girl named Lark tells Doc about her boyfriend who thinks that "when Americans move any distance, they stick to lines of latitude" (238). She mentions that "it was like fate for me, I was always supposed to head due west" (238). This passage shows the significance of the West Coast in the

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[2] One can think of Daniel Defoe's description of London and its transformation in the aftermath of the 1664-1665 London plague: "It was a most surprising thing to see those streets which were usually so thronged now grown desolate, and so few people seen in them, that if I had been a stranger […], I might sometimes have gone the length of a whole street (I mean of the by-streets), and seen nobody to direct me except the watchmen set at the doors of such house as were shut up" (13). Defoe's experience reminds us of the changes that we observed in the organization of social and personal spaces during the COVID pandemic and the significant role that it played in the design and planning of urban space.

cultural imaginary of Americans as a place that symbolizes hope and redemption, or "fate" (238) to use Lark's words in the novel. Nevertheless, apart from the California trilogy, where the reader is directly engaged with the West Coast, almost all of Pynchon's novels instantiate, though to varying degrees, this tendency to move toward west in the end. The final segment of *Gravity's Rainbow* shows a rocket positioned right above the fictional Orpheus theater in L.A. Furthermore, the significance of California is emphasized by the presence of the Los Angeles movie theatre manager the Nixon-like Richard M. Zhlubb. *Against the Day*, too, engages with California as a setting through a series of family reunions in Southern California in the 1920s. Indeed, concerning these two encyclopedic novels, Miller has suggested that they show "California turns" (2014, 181). Besides these works, Pynchon's other historical novel *Mason & Dixon* shows the drawing of the line, dividing Pennsylvania from Maryland, where there is a constant movement toward west. One might also claim that although *Bleeding Edge* is set in New York City, it includes significant references to the California space. As McClintock and Miller have observed, "*Bleeding Edge* would qualify as the most typically 'Californian' of Pynchon's works to date" (2014b, 14). Similarly, in *V.* the space of California is directly referred to only in chapter four, where *The Search for Bridey Murphy* is mentioned — a novel which, according to the ironical narrator, dealt with issues that today we associate with "the city of Los Angeles" (42).

These observations on the literary, urbanistic, geographical, and mythical space of California in Pynchon's fiction serve to emphasize that it plays a crucial role in his spatial imagination. Not only does it interact with significant matters in the novels' plots, be it capitalism and its mechanisms of economic hegemony, political systems of control and surveillance, or overreaching apparatuses aiming at limiting social and cultural liberty, but most importantly it reflects (on) the American imagination and mythology. As Theodore Roosevelt famously said, California is "west of the West" and his description was to the point in terms of culture, mores, social vision, and lifestyle. After all, California is an endless reservoir of fictions, where one can find almost everything: "Heaven, hell. Ugly, beautiful. Apocalypse, paradise" (Rodriguez 2009). Indeed, it is no overstatement to say that all Pynchon books are California, or West Coast, novels as they delineate a kaleidoscopic image of (and from) "faraway California."

Is there something beyond California? As for further possible avenues of research, we can go back to Pynchon's debut novel where the shape of the letter V might show two different paths of development in his career.[3] *V.* is a novel that develops a sort of interwoven double structure where there are two story lines: the contemporary frame, the novel's present between the years 1955 and 1956, and the historical sections from 1898 to 1943 with no chronological order. If we take this two-way structure as a blueprint for Pynchon's fiction at large, we might as well think of it in terms of the production of cityspace. On the one hand, there is the space of California, while on the other the New York, East-coast dimension of Pynchon's spatial representation still remains to be deeply investigated. Profane's aimless yo-yoing on the New York shuttle and the Staten Island Ferry gives a glimpse of *V.* as "an urban novel" (Seed 1988, 74) depicting, in large part, the space of New York. In this respect, one can consider the street as a symbol that embodies "urban anomie" (Seed 1988, 74) throughout the text. Set almost entirely in New York City, *Bleeding Edge* demonstrates Pynchon's urban perspective regarding that cityspace more clearly. Christopher Leise has observed that "*Bleeding Edge*'s urban spaces resonate with the suburbia without" (37). Indeed, due to "high-rise construction" (*BE* 219), Maxine "can't remember the last time she's been on" a cross street where her friend lives. Elsewhere she runs into "the dark focus of Big Apple waste disposal" (139) where she notices an untouched bird sanctuary. However, this bird reserve is the ill-fated target of New York "real-estate imperatives" (139), just as DeepArcher's "inviolability" won't last long due to the descent of corporate Web crawlers who will "corrupt another patch of sanctuary." In effect, *Bleeding Edge* shows the symbiosis of the cyberworld of the Deep Web and the real world, where, in Manuel Castells' words, the "space of flows" increasingly takes over the "space of places."[4] On that score, we might think of the New York City of Pynchon's novel as a place that represents "a world in which control of knowledge and information decide who holds power" (Low 2005, 14).[5] Even though Maxine's father believes that Internet technology is no more than "a total Web of surveillance" (*BE* 344), the recon-

[3] See Simonetti 2015a.

[4] See Castells 1989, 1996,1997, and 1998.

[5] One might analyze this uncanny feeling in *Bleeding Edge* in relation to a recent study by Setha M. Low, on the relationship between urban space and flows of information and communication norms, where she observes that nowadays "programming

structed version of New York from old graphics files, the virtual city of Zigotisopolis, or one might say Pynchonopolis, seems to suggest a correlation between the possibilities of place at large and human eudaimonia, even in a post-9/11 world. Indeed, for Maxine, Zigotisopolis becomes "a sacred city all in pixels waiting to be reassembled, as if […] the towers rise out of black ruin, […] no matter how finely vaporized, become whole again" (364).

public space through […] signs with integrated mobile technologies, social media, and internet websites is pervasive and potentially harmful" (2023, 254-55).

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