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# STORIES OF LAND AND SPIRIT: REIMAGINING THOMAS PYNCHON'S CALIFORNIA TRILOGY

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PH.D THESIS

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## CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ...6

ABBREVIATIONS ...8

INTRODUCTION ...10

Part One: Setting

Parameters

Departures ...13

Continuities ...24

Locations ...28

Trilogy ...32

Part Two: Pynchon in California ...35

Part Three: Case Studies...43

Esalen ...45

Luna ...52

Forest Lawn/Larkspur Miwok Burial Ground ...59

Part Four: California Scholarship ...66

Part Five: Pynchon Scholarship ...73

CHAPTER ONE: *THE CRYING OF LOT 49* "Crying for a Dream" ...81

Orientation

Spiritual and Critical Bases ...84

Rethinking American Indian History ...97

Then

Now ...104

Playing Indian/Being American Indian ...109

Spiritual Activism ...122

Ways of Seeing ...134

Vision Quest ...152

Revelation ...171

CHAPTER TWO: *VINELAND* "All of life could be said to be a way of seeing the trees" ...191

Survey

Government and Military Installations ...197

Another History of Vineland- Part One ...209

Another History of Vineland- Part Two ...220

Dislocated Spiritualities ...229

The Life and Lifework of the Redwoods ...235

Visions of Vineland ...246

What We Think We Know

What the Case May Be ...256

Conscious Landscapes ...264

Remembering

Memory ...278

CHAPTER THREE: *INHERENT VICE* "The geography is as much spiritual as physical" ...286

Blueprint

Urban Ideals and Realized Spaces ...288

Community Histories: Chavez Ravine ...304

(Un)Safe Spaces ...322

Community Histories: Bunker Hill ...331

Community Histories: Channel View Estates ...349

Refuge ...362

Residues ...373

CONCLUSION “No matter how the official narrative turns out...  
these are the places we should be looking...” ...385

APPENDIX

BIBLIOGRAPHY ...395

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## ABBREVIATIONS

References to Pynchon's works will be abbreviated to the following within the text:

*V.: V.*

*The Crying of Lot 49: L49*

*Gravity's Rainbow: GR*

*Slow Learner: SL*

*Vineland: VL*

*Mason & Dixon: M&D*

*Against the Day: AtD*

*Inherent Vice: IV*

*Bleeding Edge: BE*

"There is science, logic, reason; there is thought verified by experience. And then there is California."

-Edward Abbey

## INTRODUCTION

### Part One: Setting

#### Parameters

Within the global and pan-historical scope of Pynchon's work, the possibility of a California trilogy suggests a different way of configuring the novels in relational terms. Until recently, following the publication of *Pynchon's California* (2014), Pynchon criticism, as we shall see, has traditionally understood this body of work as being divisible in a fairly simplistic and, as this thesis aims to demonstrate, unfair ways, that is in terms of major works and lesser works.<sup>1</sup> That the novels of the suggested California trilogy, *The Crying of Lot 49*, *Vineland* and *Inherent Vice* are largely considered to be amongst the less well-received can be seen to set the notion of a trilogy itself up for a fall, implying perhaps that this is simply a more generous way of classifying less well-regarded works.<sup>2</sup> The response to this relies on an understanding of a more nuanced and complex affinity between these texts. While the grouping of three novels sharing the same setting (and critical reception) may seem inevitable (and convenient), the relationship between these texts is based on more pervasive concerns than straightforward geography might imply. Indeed, the implications of the specific geography of California will also be confronted in light of this grouping. A driving impetus of ensuing discussion will therefore be to present and clarify the more profound relationship between these novels, in the hope of

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<sup>1</sup> Scott McClintock and John Miller, eds., *Pynchon's California* (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Initial reviews of *Lot 49* were very mixed. While the novel won the Richard and Hilda Rosenthal Award of the National Institute of Arts and Letters when it was published, many reviews in 1966 reacted unfavourably to its lack of "depth and characterization". For an overview of the reception of *Lot 49* see Sara Constantakis, ed., *A Study Guide for Thomas Pynchon's 'The Crying of Lot 49'* (Michigan: Gale, Cengage Learning, 2011), p. 28.

bolstering the validity and necessity of establishing a distinct trilogy within and against Pynchon's body of work.

To begin, it is perhaps logical and practical to establish the boundaries of the California trilogy, with the most apparent being geographical setting. Though this might seem as easy as identifying 'California', a brief exercise in situating all of Pynchon's works geographically will allow for both easy detection of the texts of the trilogy and should serve to introduce the relational aspect of this textual configuration.

From his first outing in *V.*, Pynchon geo-historically travels over the course of a around a century, from New York to Egypt, Florence, South-West Africa and Malta, before settling in a roughly contemporary San Narciso, California for *The Crying of Lot 49*. From here he departs for early-to-mid-twentieth century Western Europe and beyond for *Gravity's Rainbow*, before returning to a slightly belated California in *Vineland*. Following this return, Pynchon surveys the North-South Eastern U.S., with forays in Cape Colony, Saint Helena and the north of England for *Mason & Dixon*, before journeying to "Colorado, turn-of-the-century New York, London, Gottingen, Venice, Vienna, the Balkans, Central Asia, Siberia at the time of the mysterious Tunguska Event, Mexico during the Revolution, post-war Paris, silent-era Hollywood, and one or two places not strictly speaking on the map at all" for *Against the Day*.<sup>3</sup> He then returns once again to historical California for *Inherent Vice*, and finally (to-date) departs biographically-homeward to twenty-first century New York for *Bleeding Edge*.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas Pynchon, *Against the Day* (London: Vintage, 2007), back cover blurb.

<sup>4</sup> Between the publication of *Gravity's Rainbow* and *Vineland*, a collection of Pynchon's short stories, which had previously been printed separately between 1959 and 1964, was published in 1984 under the title *Slow Learner*. 'Under the Rose', which appears in the collection, can be seen as an early version of chapter three of *V.*, 'Low-lands' features Pig Bodine, who will recur Pynchon's other works, and another of the short stories is entitled 'Entropy', one of Pynchon's most discussed concerns. Though the reception of this collection has undoubtedly been influenced by Pynchon's own critique in the 'Introduction' to the

Of course, the geographical scope of Pynchon's settings should not be underplayed in the context of his global and historical concerns. Recent criticism, including Sascha Pöhlmann's monograph *Pynchon's Postnational Imagination* (2010), actually works towards establishing the "postnational" quality of Pynchon's worldview through "dismantling the hegemony of nation-ness as a metanarrative".<sup>5</sup> However, operating within more recognisable geography, what is apparent from tracing these seemingly scattered pit stops, is a tendency to return at specific points during the composition of his body of work to California. While this return has been regarded critically, especially in consideration of *Lot 49* and *Vineland*, as a practical hiatus from the magnitude of the larger novels, or quite simply "a breather between biggies", this assessment seems to oversimplify the dynamic between the California novels and the biggies.<sup>6</sup>

Mapping Pynchon's work in this way inevitably also seems to necessitate establishing the historical location of each text. As a result, the trilogy is not simply set in California, but rather at different historical (and imaginative) points in California history. Again, the emphasis on California should not detract from Pynchon's global, historical view, but rather focus attention on these general concerns in a specific setting. This dynamic between the global and the local, or the general and specific, is also key to suggesting Pynchon's geographical and historical method both within texts and in the relationship between the trilogy and his other works.

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collection, these stories demonstrate from the outset Pynchon's broad range of settings, both historically and geographically.

<sup>5</sup> Sascha Pöhlmann, *Pynchon's Postnational Imagination* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2010), p. 14.

<sup>6</sup> John Leonard, 'Vineland', *The Nation*, 250/8 (26 February 1990), p. 281.

## Departures

Before situating each novel of the trilogy specifically, and suggesting other commonalities that lend themselves to a grouping of these three novels in particular, it is useful to view this proposed trilogy against Pynchon's other works, in order to chart both points of comparison and differentiation. To this end, it is hoped that the basis for setting these novels apart in this thesis will begin to become clear, and furthermore, why focusing on California as a common setting may prove useful for understanding the specific geographical, historical, cultural and spiritual concerns of these texts.

That the California trilogy can be characterised as the shortest of Pynchon's novels seems to have been a clear marker in the reception of each of these novels. In a 1966 review of *The Crying of Lot 49* by Jonathan Rosenbaum, in which the novel's lack of "breadth" is directly linked to it being "only a fraction as long"<sup>7</sup> as the preceding *V.*, we see the emergence of a tendency to link physical size with geographical, historical and conceptual scale.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, in a similar comparison made in *The New York Times* review of the same year, *Lot 49* is commented on for being "of much shorter length and narrower

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<sup>7</sup> Jonathan Rosenbaum, 'A book review by Jon Rosenbaum (*The Crying of Lot 49*)', (24 May 1996), last accessed 26 September 2015, <[www.jonathanrosenbaum.net](http://www.jonathanrosenbaum.net)>.

<sup>8</sup> Though early reviews refer to *The Crying of Lot 49* as a novel, in later criticism *Lot 49* is sometimes referred to as a 'novella' based on its length (less than 200 pages). Though the use of this term points more towards a literal-minded notion of scale as opposed to literary achievement, it is curious that criticism which uses 'novella' tends to simultaneously evoke the vastness of the later published *Gravity's Rainbow*. That the word novella has greater implications than simply being a marker of page numbers, and can also be seen as a commentary on structure and scale, complicates this comparison between texts. As the *Oxford Reference* definition highlights, a novella is considered to be "intermediate in length and complexity between a short story and a novel", and most interestingly "lacks the subplots, the multiple points of view, and the generic adaptability that are common in the novel" whilst being "most often concerned with personal and emotional development rather than with the larger social sphere". See 'Novella', Def. 1 (2008), last accessed 10 October 2015 <<http://www.oxfordreference.com>>. While this kind of characterization may be benign it does in some ways comment on the enduring literary value of *Lot 49* and limit recognition of its conceptual scale, especially in comparison to the larger novels. Pynchon himself can perhaps be afforded the last word in the novel/novella debate, describing *Lot 49* as a "substantial" story, or "a short story, but with gland trouble" in a letter to his then agent Candida Donadio. See Pynchon, qtd. in Mel Gussow, 'Pynchon's Letters Nudge his Mask', *The New York Times* (4 March 1998), last accessed 11 October 2015, <<http://www.nytimes.com/1998/03/04/books/pynchon-s-letters-nudge-his-mask.html?pagewanted=all>>.

focus” than its predecessor.<sup>9</sup> In this comparison the comment on length is extended to include geographical and historical scale, since this novel is only located “between Berkeley and Los Angeles”, and not the entire continents of Europe and Africa, as was the case in the preceding *V.*<sup>10</sup> The historical scale of *Lot 49* is also considered limited, specifically to the “career of one person, Oedipa Maas”, and is therefore deemed unable to address a broader historical range like say “the 1890s to 1939”, as *V.* does.<sup>11</sup> Although this is not outlined as a direct criticism, this comparison does suggest a limitation to the scope of *Lot 49*, especially in relation to the dynamic between the specific and larger historical contexts.

While *The Crying of Lot 49* is in many ways filtered through the immediate narrative perspective of its central character, Oedipa Maas, in a period somewhere between memories of Berkeley in the mid-1950s and the present of the novel around in 1964, the historical scale of the novel can be said to encompass a much greater timescale. This can be said to include the history of the Tristero postal system, which begins in 1577 but continues to operate in the present day of the text. Similarly, the narrative time frame of the play-within-the-novel, *The Courier’s Tragedy*, which encompasses the Jacobean period, further extends the novel’s historical time scale. In addition to this directly-outlined metahistorical range, the implied scale of religious histories in the text, which will be a concern in chapter one, can be seen to extend the historical timescale of the novel back to American Indian pre-contact histories, broadening its range from just less than four centuries to millennia.

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<sup>9</sup> Richard Poirier, ‘Embattled Underground’, review of *The Crying of Lot 49*, *The New York Times* (1 May 1966), last accessed 24 September 2015, <<https://www.nytimes.com/books/97/05/18/reviews/pynchon-lot49.html>>.

<sup>10</sup> Poirier.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

Even within Oedipa's narrative framework, a 'psychic' timescale of Oedipa's thoughts and memories can be drawn, which also broadens the scope of the relative, limited span within the novel's historical range. Throughout her physical and psychological explorations in the novel, Oedipa can be said to psychically experience a greater timescale than that of her immediate physical present. Upon seeing a reproduction of a Remedios Varo painting at the outset of the novel, for example, Oedipa recalls seeing an original painting of a triptych by Varo entitled *Bordando el Manto Terrestre* ('Embroidering the Earth's Mantle'). Oedipa's experience of this work, coupled with this being linked to her then-boyfriend Pierce, creates a sense of personal and more general realization. In looking at the painting that depicts:

"a number of frail girls with heart-shaped faces, huge eyes, spun-gold hair, prisoners in the top room of a circular tower, embroidering a kind of tapestry which spilled out the slit windows and into a void (L49, p.13),"

she realizes that in going to Mexico with Pierce, she too has been "seeking hopelessly to fill the void" that she feels.<sup>12</sup> However, much like the painting, which depicts a scene of women weaving, but alludes to a greater world beyond them in the form of the tapestry they are creating, Oedipa's realization also encompasses thoughts on the very idea of 'creating' a world. That Oedipa's created realm of escape "was only by accident known as Mexico" (L49, p. 13), has greater implications for how this moment can be understood. Her sense of realization, caused "because of a painting" (L49, p. 13), can therefore be seen to relate not only to the range of Oedipa's own personal history and her sense of how it has been shaped, but also comments on a more general sense of how geographical space is conceived and understood.

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<sup>12</sup> Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49* (London: Vintage, 2000), p. 13.

The notion of historical and psychic timescales can also be explored in both *Vineland* and *Inherent Vice*, which will be addressed in turn. However, at this juncture, it is important to note the precedent that has been set for using a model in which size and scope, which should be understood in a more literalist way, are compacted to create parallels and distinctions between these different groupings of texts.

Relevant debates on the encyclopedic novel and the postmodern epic invariably lend themselves to discussions of a book's length. Catherine Morley, for example, argues that there is a tendency in contemporary American fiction "toward the tome, or protracted narrative", and aligns novels of this size with "[the] alternative, more established and consequential term" 'prose epic' or 'epic novel'.<sup>13</sup> Though her *The Quest for Epic in Contemporary American Fiction* focuses on the works of John Updike, Philip Roth and Don DeLillo, she references Pynchon as a postmodernist in whose work the "encyclopedic elements of epic are certainly present".<sup>14</sup> Similarly, in trying to define encyclopedic narrative, Edward Mendelson, a key critical player in this thesis, opts for several, well-known substantial texts including Dante's *Commedia*, Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, Melville's *Moby-Dick*, Joyce's *Ulysses*, and Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*. While Mendelson tends towards overlapping the encyclopedic narrative with the epic, arguing that "for the most part, encyclopedic authors set out to imitate epics", he also perhaps inadvertently suggests that epics are of a certain size.<sup>15</sup> Encyclopedic authors, like Shakespeare or Pushkin, he argues, produce a "cluster of relatively small masterpieces", rather than "a single dominating masterwork" or "single gigantic narrative".<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Catherine Morley, *The Quest for Epic in Contemporary American Fiction: John Updike, Philip Roth and Don DeLillo* (New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 155.

<sup>15</sup> Edward Mendelson, "The Encyclopedic Narrative, from Dante to Pynchon", *Modern Language Notes*, 91 (1976), p. 1268.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1268.

Following its publication in 1990, *Vineland* was also reviewed in relation to the size of Pynchon's previous works, which by this time also included *Gravity's Rainbow* published in 1973. The sense of anticipation over the 17 years between these two novels perhaps in some ways accounts for the level of criticism in the reception of *Vineland*. In the many years before its release, Pynchon's next novel was speculated as possibly being a novel "about Lewis and Clark? Mason and Dixon? A Japanese science-fiction novel?" or "the Russian revolution", each of which (with the possible exception of the sci-fi novel), would have fulfilled the apparent desired criteria for a Pynchon novel of large historical scale and significance.<sup>17</sup>

When *Vineland* finally emerged, reviewers, disappointed or confused by Pynchon's return to California, but with "the usual entropy, paranoia and Manicheism" to be expected in all of Pynchon's works, resorted to commentaries on the size and scale of the novel, especially following "the mammoth" *Gravity's Rainbow*.<sup>18</sup> *Time Magazine* observed that "there seems to have been a little downscaling going on" in *Vineland*, and was also seemingly disgruntled by "the attempts of some aging hippies to steer clear of narcs" as a subject matter.<sup>19</sup> This view was shared by Jonathan Rosenbaum, who elaborated on this downsizing by correlating reduced size and timescale with a diminished historical scope. This however, can be redressed through re-examining what can be considered *Vineland's* total timescale.

Although *Vineland* is focused to a localized setting, and can "be slotted into a narrower time frame", which even at surface level is admittedly still "most of this [the

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<sup>17</sup> Salman Rushdie, 'Still Crazy After All These years', review of *Gravity's Rainbow*, *The New York Times*, (14 January 1990), last accessed 2 October 2015, <<https://www.nytimes.com/books/97/05/18/reviews/pynchon-vineland.html>>.

<sup>18</sup> Leonard, p. 281.

<sup>19</sup> Paul Gray, 'The Spores of Paranoia', review of *Vineland*, *Time*, (15 January 1990), p. 69-70.

twentieth] century”, in comparison to the historical range of the preceding *V.* and *Gravity’s Rainbow* it was still regarded as addressing a historical period that is “relatively speaking, only the day before yesterday”.<sup>20</sup> This perceived timeframe references the 1984 setting of the novel (only six years earlier than its publication), which does account for some of the contextually-more-immediate political and social concerns of the novel. However, as with *Lot 49*, a closer examination of the historical range, which encompasses more than the direct action of the narrative of the novel, necessitates a rethinking of its historical scale.

The scope of the action of *Vineland* can be viewed as taking place between the 1960s flashbacks and the novel’s present in 1984. However, given a pattern of alternating between different narrative times, established since Pynchon’s debut novel, a closer examination of *Vineland* uncovers narratives that predate the twentieth-century scale imagined by Rosenbaum, and broaden the timescale of the novel to include both the history of the American Indian Yurok tribe of the Vineland area, and their origin stories, which will be explored in chapter two. The title of the novel itself similarly draws on an alternative history of California, in the form of the Norse Vinland, the area consistent with present day California, encountered by explorer Leif Erikson approximately 500 years before Columbus’ arrival in the Americas. This added layer, together with the Yurok histories, reconfigures the possible timescale of the novel and, furthermore, has necessary implications for its political, cultural, spiritual and even genealogical scope. As R. K. Patell suggests in his analysis of the Vinland/Vineland duality of the novel, the added history “suggests the possibility of an alternate, non-Columbian, non-Puritan genealogy

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<sup>20</sup> Rosenbaum, ‘Pynchon’s Prayer’, p. 29.



The family narrative, established through the memories of these family members, allows for psychic navigation between historical periods throughout the twentieth century; from Jess and Eula's first encounter in the 1920s, to the family reunion in the present of the novel. This navigation between memory and the present time also extends the timeframe of the novel to include events of global historical significance, including both World Wars I and II, and more specific events in the history of the Labour Movement, such as the growth of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), the Pinkerton infiltrations, and the General Strike of '34, as well as Sasha Traverse's personal stories of "the strike at the Stockton cannery, strikes over Ventura sugar beets, Venice lettuce, San Joaquin cotton ... of the anti-conscription movement in Berkeley...", which are based on more localized historical events.<sup>23</sup> That these events are also *remembered* testifies to the importance of specific forms of memory and storytelling in Pynchon's historical ranges, which will be explored in greater depth in chapter two.

Using this genealogical narrative allows Pynchon to broaden the historical scope of the immediate timeframe of *Vineland's* approximately 20 years, whilst establishing important historical foundations in this area of California, which have implications for the changing political landscape of the novel's present. Thus, when Rosenbaum remarked

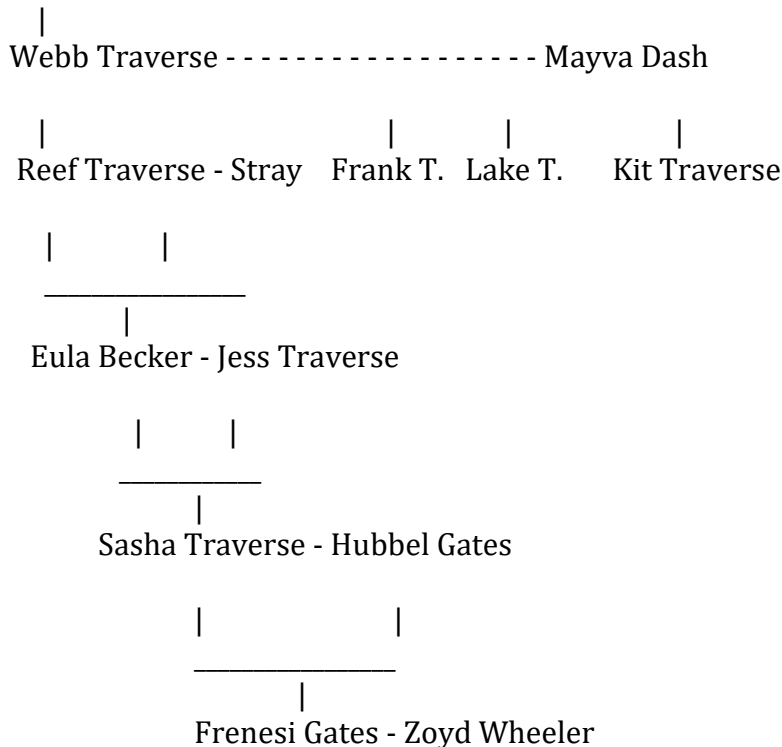
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<sup>23</sup> Thomas Pynchon, *Vineland* (New York: Penguin, 1997), p. 77.

that *Vineland* was “the first Pynchon novel in which families matter a lot”,<sup>24</sup> he could not have anticipated the emerging importance of genealogical lines in successive novels.

Though some reviewers and critics are keen to separate *Vineland* from Pynchon’s ‘biggies’, the genealogical thread of the Traverse-Becker family is continued in Pynchon’s 2006 novel *Against the Day*. The historical range of this subsequent novel pre-dates the events of *Vineland*, but overlaps the historical timeframe of its precursor through the character of Jess, who is born on page 245 of *Against the Day*’s mighty 1220 pages, but only appears in the last ten years or so of the novel’s historical range. This subsequent novel, as a sort of a genealogical prequel, allows for greater elaboration of the Traverse-Becker family tree, as outlined below<sup>25</sup>:

Cooley Traverse - ?



<sup>24</sup> Rosenbaum’s uses the prominence of families in *Vineland* as an example of a less-than-weighty subject matter and thus questions whether “the Old Hipster’s mind” might be “getting soft”. See ‘Pynchon’s Prayer’, p. 29.

<sup>25</sup> Depiction of Traverse Family Tree according to information given in *Against The Day*, ‘Traverse family Tree’.

Prairie Wheeler

The Traverse family history forms one of the central narrative threads of *Against the Day*, but more significantly, given this relational focus, helps to establish an important thread between the emerging California novels and Pynchon's other works. Though this connection is acknowledged as a feature of the novel, it seems to have been underplayed in the contemporary reception of *Against the Day*, and is simply characterized by Michiko Kakutani of *The New York Times* as "a vague search for progenitors" in *Vineland*, which by *Against the Day* becomes "a full-blown preoccupation with familial duty".<sup>26</sup>

Efforts to establish continuity between Pynchon's works amongst more favourable reviewers become especially apparent after the emergence of *Vineland*. Salman Rushdie, for example, notes the recurrence of the letter V throughout Pynchon's work, from the title and structure of *V.*, to "the flight path of a V-2 rocket" in *Gravity's Rainbow*, through to *Vineland's* titular use of the letter.<sup>27</sup> Paul Gray, reviewing the novel for *Time Magazine*, also recognized details in *Vineland* that "establish the absolutely typical Pynchon plot", specifically, "an evil, well-organized and immensely powerful enemy [who] sows "the merciless spores of paranoia" among a shaggy, lost group of drifting souls, who find the real world threatening under the best of circumstances".<sup>28</sup> Indeed, in reviewing *Bleeding Edge* twenty three years and four Pynchon novels later, Jonathan Lethem celebrates Pynchon as "wildly consistent", arguing that themes that have been present throughout his work are indicated by the neon signposts of novels

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<sup>26</sup> Michiko Kakutani, 'A Pynchonesque Turn by Pynchon', review of *Against the Day*, *The New York Times* (20 November 2006), last accessed 2 October 2015, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2006/11/20/books/20kaku.html>>.

<sup>27</sup> Rushdie.

<sup>28</sup> Gray, p. 69-70.

such as *Inherent Vice*.<sup>29</sup> Frank McConnell even goes as far as to read *Vineland* as a variation on the “One Big Story [that Pynchon has] to tell”, which he “keeps repeating, fine-tuning, and (lucky for us) rediscovering”, with *Vineland* being no exception to this process.<sup>30</sup>

McConnell’s detection of Pynchon’s ‘One Big Story’ is potentially intended to unify or elevate novels such as *Vineland* in the face of prevalent criticism. While this process of reworking is apparent throughout Pynchon’s canon, it is arguably more intimately woven between the novels of the trilogy, given the dynamic between local and global, and the historical interplay throughout the California novels.

Samuel Thomas’ original reorganization of Pynchon’s work “in order of the historical periods that each novel purports to represent” is especially useful for these purposes.<sup>31</sup> According to this organizing method, *Vineland* (“the 1980s, the social, political and economic aftermath of the 60s revolution”) immediately follows *Lot 49* (“the 1960s, modern America, resistance culture and the new work world”). Had the novel been published at the time of Thomas’ writing, *Inherent Vice* would have been placed in-between the two.<sup>32</sup>

For Thomas’ purposes, and to an extent for the concerns of this argument, re-ordering Pynchon’s novels in historical sequence allows for an examination of political and social developments across established time periods. However, more pertinently in this particular regard, Thomas’ method arranges the California novels together in

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<sup>29</sup> Jonathan Lethem, ‘Pynchonopolis’, review of *Bleeding Edge*, *The New York Times* (12 September 2013), last accessed 10 October 2015, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/15/books/review/bleeding-edge-by-thomas-pynchon.html>>.

<sup>30</sup> Frank McConnell, ‘Fabulous, Fabulous California’, review of *Vineland*, *The Los Angeles Times* (31 December 1989), last accessed 12 October 2015, <[http://vineland.pynchonwiki.com/wiki/index.php?title=LA\\_Times\\_Review\\_-\\_Frank\\_McConnell](http://vineland.pynchonwiki.com/wiki/index.php?title=LA_Times_Review_-_Frank_McConnell)>.

<sup>31</sup> Samuel Thomas, *Pynchon and the Political* (New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 15.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas, p. 16.

sequential historical order, reinforcing their close historical relationship, but also highlighting that for the entire duration of the 1960s and 1980s, or the broad (post)countercultural era, Pynchon remains in California.

### **Continuities**

Over the course of his novels, Pynchon creates a universe where specific references, places and characters appear and reappear, most notably perhaps in the aforementioned example of the Traverse family, which forms a central part of the narratives of two novels. Though this pattern can be established across Pynchon's works, as in the recurrence of Pig Bodine, and in other examples, such as the reappearance of Takeshi Fumimoto in *Vineland* after featuring as a kamikaze pilot in *Gravity's Rainbow*, or the development of the Yoyodyne company between *V.* and *The Crying of Lot 49*, this pattern of re-emerging characters and places is perhaps most apparent between the California novels.

The publication of *Inherent Vice* in 2009 affirmed this genealogical connection between texts. As the third novel set in the California counterculture, it naturally spurred a grouping of the California novels together under this geographical and historical banner. Set specifically in 1970, *Inherent Vice* occurs after the events of *The Crying of Lot 49*, and falls in-between the flashback episodes and the present-day narrative of *Vineland*. As a result of being written after *Vineland* but prefiguring its events, *Inherent Vice* is able to account for some of the action of the latterly-set novel, and suggest some causal factors that have resulted in the events of *Vineland*.

Also, as in both preceding California novels, *Inherent Vice's* timescale can be extended to include its psychic timescale, which extends the narrative's present back to earlier in the twentieth century, in order to remember lost neighbourhoods like Chavez Ravine and Bunker Hill. This psychic timescale extends even further still, to include California's imagined past, encompassing the histories of Atlantis and Lemuria, which will be addressed in chapter three.

In setting these novels in a timeframe of about 40 years (accounting for the immediate action of the narratives), and in geographically-related and proximate areas of California, Pynchon's genealogical connections between texts also become easier and more frequent. These connections however are not simply exercises in transplanting characters between texts simply because they might happen to be around at about the same time, and in about the same place. Rather, these interconnections reflect the developments, both historical and geographical, over the course of these three novels, particularly given Pynchon's well-worked tension between the 1960s countercultural era, and the 1980s era of reproach and complicity "in all it had despised and struggled against".<sup>33</sup>

In the character of Wendell "Mucho" Maas, for example, whose origins in *Lot 49* reflect a nascent use of hallucinogenics and an emerging career as a DJ, both California's relationship with drugs and the music industry can be charted. Mucho, Oedipa's husband in *Lot 49*, resurfaces in *Vineland*, as her now-ex-husband, and now former car-salesman, turned "music business biggie" (*VL*, p. 307). In flashbacks that show his 1967 incarnation, 'Count Drugula', he is acquainted with Zoyd, claims to have "almost signed Wild Man

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<sup>33</sup> David Cowart, *Thomas Pynchon and the Dark Passages of History* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), p. 88.

Fischer and Tiny Tim”, and was the first to audition, but importantly not call back, the “fledgling musician Charles Manson” (VL, p. 309). Mucho, in the novel’s present however, is sober and drug-free, albeit after sustained cocaine use.

The trajectory of Mucho’s drug habits over the course of *Lot 49* and *Vineland* can be seen as one context in which Pynchon’s rendering of the political landscape of California becomes apparent. The progression from hallucinogenics in *Lot 49*, taken in the belief of their revelatory potential and ability to heighten consciousness, through to “truly dangerous substances” that result in Mucho’s restorative nasal surgery, and even to his most recent sobriety, explained by Zoyd as being the result of “the fuckin’ government” (VL, p. 311), charts the co-option of formerly countercultural experience.<sup>34</sup> Though the War on Drugs targets “carefree dopers” (VL, p. 222), Mucho warns that “they”- the “evil, well-organized and immensely powerful enemy”,<sup>35</sup> taking the form of successive repressive governments in *Vineland*, are “gonna be coming after everything... beer, cigarettes, sugar, salt, fat, you name it, anything that could remotely please any of your senses” (VL, p. 313). *Vineland* also directly references government complicity in “how cheap coke has been since ‘81” (VL, p. 353), a systemic involvement in drug experimentation that is alluded to in the psychotropic experiments of *Lot 49*’s Dr. Hilarius.

As the drug narrative trajectory highlights developments between 1960s and 1980s California, so too does Mucho’s involvement in the alternative music scene of California during this period. One of the musicians cited, Wild Man Fischer, was a street musician who suffered from mental illness. He was discovered in Los Angeles by Frank

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<sup>34</sup> Cowart, p. 99.

<sup>35</sup> Gray, p. 69-70.

Zappa, and later become known in some circles as “the grandfather of Outsider music”, attracting “a cult following”.<sup>36</sup> In later life his mental health deteriorated and he spent his last years in an assisted-living mental institution. Similarly, Tiny Tim, encountered by Mucho from obscurity, “playing dive bars and lesbian cabarets on the Greenwich Village scene”, landed a recording contract with the same label as Frank Sinatra.<sup>37</sup> His success eventually waned, his wife who he had married on television to an audience of fifty million left him and he spent the last years of his life trying to revive his career. The juxtaposition of these eccentric-turned-semi-successful-but-ultimately-tragic musicians, with Charles Manson, whose earlier career followed a similar progression, but whose cult status stretched beyond musical devotion, similarly highlights a moment contributing to the end of innocent hippie movements and countercultural lifestyles.<sup>38</sup>

The emergence of *Inherent Vice*, set in an era almost forty years earlier (just a few years after the events of *Lot 49* and occurring in the middle of the action of *Vineland*), and in the same state as both previous novels, suggests a reading of these texts as a sustained meditation on the California countercultural era and its reverberations. Though *Inherent Vice* was received in a similar way to *Vineland*, and was even branded “Pynchon Lite” by Michiko Kakutani, it was immediately linked to both *Vineland* and *Lot 49* as another “ode to the countercultural era”. Kakutani develops this insight by suggesting that *Inherent Vice* is a “workmanlike improvisation on *Vineland*”, which was itself “a user-friendly

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<sup>36</sup> Margalite Fox, ‘Wild Man Fischer, Outsider Musician, Dies at 66’, *The New York Times* (17 June 2011), last accessed 16 October 2015, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/18/arts/music/wild-man-fischer-outsider-musician-dies-at-66.html>>.

<sup>37</sup> Synoptic blurb for Justin Martell with Alanna Wray McDonald, *Eternal Troubadour: The Improbable Life of Tiny Tim* (London: Jawbone Press, 2016).

<sup>38</sup> Both Wild Man Fischer and Tiny Tim are also both mentioned in *Inherent Vice*, while Pynchon’s fictitious band, The Paranoids appears in both *The Crying of Lot 49* and *Vineland*.

companion to *The Crying of Lot 49*".<sup>39</sup> This observation of reflection, repetition and development becomes especially apparent following the publication of *Inherent Vice*, when not only departures between the California novels and the 'biggies' are critiqued, but commonalities between the California texts are reinforced.

In his review of the third novel of the trilogy, Rosenbaum notes some important connections between this text and its California counterculturally-oriented predecessors, which are significantly linked in the first instance based on their geographical and historical focus. *Inherent Vice* is viewed as a "kind of southerly remake of *Vineland*",<sup>40</sup> which is, nevertheless, an important observation of the geographical northerly shift that Pynchon makes between *Inherent Vice* and *Lot 49*, and *Vineland*. This comparative analysis also initiates attempts to firmly situate each novel specifically within the shared California setting, an enterprise that, having established the position of the California novels in relation to Pynchon's other works and each other, can presently be developed.

## Locations

*The Crying of Lot 49*, set between the fictional Kinneret-Among-the-Pines and San Narciso, itself a fictionalized version of Los Angeles, traces a movement from the tangible suburban setting, "somewhere down the San Francisco Peninsula",<sup>41</sup> to an urban space which is "less an identifiable city than a grouping of concepts" (L49, p. 14). This geographical shift is essential not only to Oedipa's practical investigation into the will of

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<sup>39</sup> Michiko Kakutani, 'Another Doorway to the Paranoid Pynchon Dimension', *The New York Times* (3 August 2009), last accessed 16 October 2015, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/04/books/04kaku.html>>.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Scott McClintock and John Miller, 'Introduction', in Scott McClintock and John Miller, eds., *Pynchon's California* (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 2014) p. 6.

her former lover, the plot-driven impetus for her departure from Kinneret, but also for instigating a mental shift that forces her to discover a version of America that was imperceptible to her before. Though some critics are keen to demarcate between the “moronic, TV-driven, suburban life of Kinneret-Among-The-Pines” and the mysterious and revelatory San Narciso, this dichotomy is not so apparent in Pynchon’s portrayal<sup>42</sup>. After all, Kinneret, apart from being a place where Tupperware parties are held, is also somewhere that “creates space for the LSD experiments of Dr. Hilarius”.<sup>43</sup> The image of hallucinogenics being prescribed to “a large sample of suburban housewives” (L49, p. 10) suggests the permeation of contextual experiments with mind-altering drugs, usually associated with countercultural figures like Ken Kesey and Timothy Leary, into the space of everyday U.S. citizens. However, Kinneret is a not place which is intolerant of these experiments, and in fact conducts these practices at “the community hospital” (L49, p.10). Similarly, Berkeley, a space associated with radical student activism, is home to Free Speech Movements and Vietnam Day Committees, but also harbours Young Americans for Freedom campaigns, a more ideologically conservative activist group.

Though the novel does use geographical shifts and boundaries, in part to induce altered perceptions, Pynchon’s spaces, even in his first California novel, reflect the nuances of the counterculture era, which are developed further in *Vineland* and *Inherent Vice*. Thus, while *The Crying of Lot 49* suggests one depiction of life in California during the mid-sixties, in situating the novel alongside and against both *Vineland* and *Inherent*

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<sup>42</sup> Margaret Lynd, ‘Situated Fictions: Reading the California Novels against Thomas Pynchon’s Narrative World’, in Scott McClintock and John Miller, eds., *Pynchon’s California* (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 2014), p. 25.

<sup>43</sup> McClintock and Miller, ‘Introduction’, p. 6.

*Vice*, a much fuller image of Pynchon's portrayal of this era in California history can be achieved.

Geographical spaces in *Vineland* are similarly indicative. Located between the metropolitan areas around Los Angeles in the south, and the fictional Vineland County in the north of the state, the novel uses the migration between these two California locales to reflect social and political changes in the novel. The recurrence of Gordita Beach, Pynchon's literary Manhattan Beach, in both *Vineland* and *Inherent Vice*, is suggestive of this shift. Home to protagonist and private investigator, Doc Sportello in *Inherent Vice* in 1970, it is also the temporary home of Zoyd in flashbacks set in the 1960s. Zoyd's movement from the Southland to Vineland, located somewhere around Humboldt, Del Norte and Mendocino counties, reflects the "hippie migration" of the early 1970s that charted the "partial relocation of the subculture from San Francisco and environs to California's north coast".<sup>44</sup> During this period, many of those belonging to the California counterculture, "who congregated in urban areas", became disillusioned with "conflicts with legal authorities and city life", and fled north to put into practice ideas about "a new way of living" communally and being "closer to nature".<sup>45</sup> These imperatives are explored in greater depth in chapter one, however, it is also important to note these reasons, given Pynchon's fluctuation between the rural north and metropolitan south of the State throughout both the timeframe and composition of the novels.

While this historical touchstone is useful in tracing the migrations of the counterculture in California, Pynchon's movement from California's metropolitan area to

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<sup>44</sup> Martin W. Lewis, 'The Hippie Migration to Mendocino and the Establishment of a Cannabis-Based Economy', *GeoCurrents* (2 March 2012), last accessed 17 October 2015, <<http://www.geocurrents.info/place/north-america/norther-california/the-hippie-migration-to-medocino-and-the-establishment-of-a-cannabis-based-economy>>.

<sup>45</sup> Sherry L. Smith, *Hippies, Indians, and the Fight for Red Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 113.

the area around these counties in the north, particularly Mendocino, with which Vineland is most closely associated in scholarship and geographical history, is also a specific movement to Vineland, which despite its resemblance to lived places, remains fictional. In maintaining this fictional layer, Pynchon is able to use Vineland as a more subjunctive space, where the hippie migration is not bound to the same lived history as Mendocino county. In 1984, on the eve of Reagan's re-election, and while the war on drugs has already been launched and military-government interventions are already being enacted, in Vineland, the interior of the county, thick with native redwood trees, "hasn't even been surveyed" (VL, p. 305). As with the extended timescale of the novel, the geography of Vineland itself also allows for an imagined alternate history.

Between the publication of *Vineland* in 1990 and the emergence of *Inherent Vice* in 2009, Pynchon returns to Gordita Beach, which features much more prominently in this novel as the central location of the home of Doc. Pynchon's return to the Southland for *Inherent Vice* is mirrored in the character Scott Oof, who is introduced in *Vineland* as the "Corvairs lead guitarist and vocalist" (VL, p. 23). Scott reappears in his earlier days in *Inherent Vice* as Doc's cousin, and is already "playing with a local group known as the Corvairs", having decided to "join the northward migration of those years to Humboldt, Vineland, and Del Norte".<sup>46</sup> The migration of the Corvairs anticipates Scott's departure to Vineland, which has already been realized in the earlier novel. However, his appearance in *Inherent Vice* forces the narrative between the two novels to linger on the moment of the decision between staying in Gordita Beach and joining the northward, 'back-to-the-land' migration. Once again, the subjunctive quality of this time and place is apparent,

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<sup>46</sup> Thomas Pynchon, *Inherent Vice* (London: Vintage, 2010), p. 43.

which perhaps accounts somewhat for Pynchon's pattern of a return-to and re-examination of California at this point in history.

### Trilogy

More recent criticism following the publication of *Inherent Vice* has attempted to synthesize Pynchon's depiction of California's countercultural era across all three novels. While *Vineland* generated some critical interest in comparisons with *Lot 49*, specifically and "most obviously" centred on "the California setting", this sense of return was not fully realized until *Inherent Vice*, when the habit of revisiting California in the 1960s ("the ground Pynchon seems to think he did not cover adequately in *Lot 49*") could be established as a pattern.<sup>47</sup>

In *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Pynchon* (2011), the California novels are thoughtfully grouped together in a chapter entitled, 'The Crying of Lot 49 and other California novels'.<sup>48</sup> Though this categorization seemingly summarizes Thomas H. Schaub's critical assessment on the relative place of *Vineland* and *Inherent Vice*, as Scott McClintock and John Miller also note, it does also concurrently perpetuate the idea of a trilogy within Pynchon's work and in Pynchon criticism.<sup>49</sup> Schaub's overview focuses on the "return again and again to the same place and time".<sup>50</sup> This place he defines as "specifically in Southern California", with the proviso that the "*generative action*" of

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Thomas Hill Schaub, 'The Crying of Lot 49 and other California novels', in Inger H. Dalsgaard, Luc Herman and Brian McHale, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Pynchon* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 30-43.

<sup>49</sup> While *Gravity's Rainbow*, *Mason & Dixon* and *Against the Day* are each afforded a chapter in this volume (this companion being published in 2011 before *Bleeding Edge* (2013), *V.* suffers a similar relegation to *Vineland* and *Inherent Vice*, being coupled with *Slow Learner* in the first chapter which is titled 'Early Pynchon'.

<sup>50</sup> Schaub, p. 30.

*Vineland* and *Inherent Vice* takes place in or near Gordita Beach. The time setting is explained as “more or less from 1964-1971”, but specifically on that “watershed moment” in the mid to late 1960s in which the U.S. is portrayed as “a system from which there is no escape”.<sup>51</sup> Schaub’s assessment, with a focus on a slightly extended timescale from the radical 1960s to the 1980s era of co-option, culminates with the definition of countercultural California as “a once wondrous place[s] receding into the past”.<sup>52</sup>

For David Cowart in *Thomas Pynchon and the Dark Passages of History* (2011), a section of which features as a chapter in *The Vineland Papers* (1994), the California texts are again addressed as a grouping. Moreover, in Cowart’s examination, the shared California setting is a subheading to the foregrounded commonality of the temporal setting of the Sixties as “the decade that redefined American political idealism”.<sup>53</sup> For Cowart, that which connects these novels, conceptually, politically and geographically, is Pynchon’s developing assessment and vision of the era, in which “enormous numbers of American citizens resist[ed] the logical-yet-monstrous coercion of Cold-War rationality as embodied in the military-industrial complex, the Vietnam War, the policy of mutual assured destruction”.<sup>54</sup>

In a method similar to that proposed by Samuel Thomas, Cowart analyses each novel in chronological order, with *Lot 49* prefaced as Pynchon’s “best sixties novel”, and with a focus on different political aspects of the decade addressed in each novel.<sup>55</sup> Cowart charts the emerging awareness of social inequality in *Lot 49*, to the rooted and local political paranoia of *Vineland*, through to Pynchon’s address of “the antipathy of left and

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., pp. 30, 31, 40.

<sup>52</sup> Schaub, p. 41.

<sup>53</sup> Cowart, p. 84.

<sup>54</sup> Cowart., p. 85.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 88.

right” in *Inherent Vice*.<sup>56</sup> In using this approach, Cowart is able to cover substantial historical ground, albeit deeply rooted in the Sixties, whilst honing in on recurring preoccupations in Pynchon’s work as a whole, such as entropy, Puritanism, the quest motif and humorous songs, all of which are also examined and re-examined in the California novels. Towards the end of his analysis he also addresses the common setting of California, the Golden State that “occupies a special place in the imagination of the author”, and provides an overview and summary of the place of California in U.S. culture and consciousness.<sup>57</sup> In focusing on both the temporal and geographical space of the novels, Cowart is able to view the novels in geographically and historically situated terms, and contends that Pynchon creates an enlarged vision of “the already supersized myth of California in the sixties”.<sup>58</sup>

Perhaps most significantly for the objectives of this thesis, in grouping these novels together, Schaub and Cowart suggest a continuation between these texts, and demonstrate a “critical intuition” that the novels, if read as a trilogy, might be “related in interesting ways”.<sup>59</sup> This opportunity has since been explored in McClintock and Miller’s collection *Pynchon’s California*, which will emerge as a significant critical touchstone for this thesis in due course. However, whilst criticism has identified California as a significant location in Pynchon’s work as a whole, this thesis instead aims at a sustained focus on the California novels apart from, and exclusive of, lengthy comparative engagement with Pynchon’s other works. And while the temporal nexus of the twenty years that covers the immediate present of the California novels is significant to this analysis, in proposing to expand the temporal focus of these novels to their full potential

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> McClintock and Miller, ‘Introduction’, p. 7.

historical range, it is hoped that some of the more contemporary concerns of the novel will achieve greater clarity.

## **Part Two: Pynchon in California**

Even the most cursory knowledge of the sparse details available of Pynchon's biography includes mention of Pynchon having lived for a period of time in California. Biographical notes on Pynchon usually include much of the same information, and are weighted with greater detail of earlier life, which has seemingly proved much more easily verifiable in terms of early years, schooling and brief careers with the U.S. Navy and the Boeing Airplane Co. in Seattle, than on his life after formal education or employment. After 1962, when Pynchon leaves his job at Boeing, "his last known salaried employment", and moves to Mexico, biographical detail becomes shaped by the chronology of his work and that which can be gleaned from personal letters to friends and occasional articles, forewords and essays.<sup>60</sup> However, a general consensus amongst scholars and journalists alike, including John M. Krafft, Pynchon's most highly regarded unofficial biographer, who provides a summary of Pynchon's biography in *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Pynchon*, is that by 1966 Pynchon was "mostly living in California".<sup>61</sup>

Given the centrality of Pynchon's relationship to California in this thesis, for the most practical purposes, the biographical note in this instance will concentrate on the

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<sup>60</sup> John M. Krafft, 'Chronology on Pynchon's life and works', in Inger H. Dalsgaard, Luc Herman and Brian McHale, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Pynchon* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. x.

<sup>61</sup> Krafft's compilation of "all the available material" relating to Pynchon's biography provides a detailed overview of Pynchon's life from birth records until his most recent known appearance in the form of a voiceover for the trailer of the 2009 novel *Inherent Vice*. Krafft's sources include other investigative pieces and articles and personal correspondence of Pynchon's to Faith and Kirkpatrick Sale and David Shetzline and Mary Beal. Krafft, 'Chronology', p. xi.

period between the mid-sixties and late eighties (or between Houston and New York), when Pynchon is said to have lived in various locations across California. However, in an attempt to avoid a perfunctory exercise in relating Pynchon to California, it is hoped that Pynchon's California biography can also illuminate some of the more Californian aspects of this trilogy.

David Cowart seemingly performs a similar objective, sans the California element, in targeting biographical details of *Lot 49*'s Oedipa Maas that correlate to events in Pynchon's own history.<sup>62</sup> He notes, for example, that in 1964, Oedipa and Pynchon are of a similar age (28/27), have both been students at Cornell University, have travelled to the West Coast, and have both spent some time between Mexico and California. In less direct terms, Cowart also notes that Oedipa "comes to view herself as an "alien", unable blithely to embrace the prerequisites of her race and class",<sup>63</sup> an experience Pynchon similarly indicates in his 1966 article 'A Journey Into the Mind of Watts'. As a result, Cowart suggests, and as Mendelson has also implied, *Lot 49* can be viewed as a "spiritual autobiography" in the vein of St Augustine's *Confessions* and Wordsworth's *The Prelude*.<sup>64</sup> Cowart's use of spiritual autobiography is related to Pynchon's (via Oedipa) search for "a new species of revelation" that restores some of the mystery in a previously "agnostic positivistic cul-de-sac of contemporary rationalism".<sup>65</sup> However, to extend this somewhat, it can be argued that this quest for revelation is directly and uniquely tied to geographic location, and that it is not simply an easy coincidence that Pynchon uses his

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<sup>62</sup> Cowart, *Dark Passages*, p.10. Georgiana M. M. Colvile also attempts to trace Pynchon in *Lot 49*, noting the same geographical affinities as Cowart but also suggesting that Pynchon shares characteristics with several of the novel's characters. See *Beyond and Beneath the Mantle: On Thomas Pynchon's 'The Crying of Lot 49'* (Amsterdam:Rodopi, 1988), p. 21.

<sup>63</sup> Cowart, p. 10.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

biographical footprint for Oedipa's own steps towards this revelation. Instead, that Pynchon lives in California for the duration of his writing of *Lot 49*, *Gravity's Rainbow* and *Vineland*, at least suggests that this location proved fruitful in terms of his literary output.<sup>66</sup>

Garrison Frost's article 'Thomas Pynchon and the South Bay' (2003) also focuses almost exclusively on Pynchon's time in California, and in particular, at Manhattan Beach.<sup>67</sup> Though the article includes anecdotes and incidental details that are doubtless interesting to Pynchon enthusiasts, he also usefully relates Pynchon's apparent experiences of the South Bay at this time to the aforementioned works he is producing, with particular emphasis on geographical affinities. One particular description of San Narciso in *Lot 49*, for example, "sounds very much like the Manhattan Beach of the late 60s and early 70s", while the novel's aerospace company, Yoyodyne, "bears a striking similarity to TRW, the South Bay's aerospace monolith".<sup>68</sup> Frost also notes the presence of the Santa Monica Freeway in *Gravity's Rainbow*, a novel otherwise concerned with the "author's stylized interpretation of the anarchy of post-war Europe",<sup>69</sup> suggesting that the geography of California permeates Pynchon's landscape even when not obviously or directly related. *Vineland*, on the other hand, directly references towns local to the South Bay area, as in "Torrance, Hawthorne, and greater Walteria".<sup>70</sup> Finally, Frost

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<sup>66</sup> John M. Krafft notes that sources indicate that though *Vineland* was also published after this period living in California, Pynchon was also doing research for *Mason & Dixon* during the late 1970s while in California. Krafft, 'Chronology', p. xi. This is also supported by Boris Kachka in his article 'On the Thomas Pynchon Trail: From the Long Island of His Boyhood to the 'Yupper West Side' of His New Novel', *Vulture* (25 August 2013), last accessed 18 October 2015, <<http://www.vulture.com/2013/08/thomas-pynchon-bleeding-edge.html>>.

<sup>67</sup> Garrison Frost, 'Thomas Pynchon and the South Bay', *The Aesthetic* (2003), last accessed 18 October 2015, <[http://against-the-day.pynchonwiki.com/wiki/index.php?title=South\\_Bay\\_Pynchon&oldid=11949](http://against-the-day.pynchonwiki.com/wiki/index.php?title=South_Bay_Pynchon&oldid=11949)>.

<sup>68</sup> Frost.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

acknowledges that perhaps Pynchon's most overt fictionalisation of the South Bay area, Gordita Beach of *Inherent Vice*, reads like Pynchon's one-time Manhattan Beach home:

"But having been put up back during an era of overdesign, it proved to be sturdier than it looked, with its old stucco eaten at to reveal generations of paint jobs in different beach-town pastels, corroded by salt and petrochemical fogs that flowed in the summers onshore up the sand slopes, on up past Sepulveda..".<sup>71</sup>

Aside from geographical configurations, Frost argues that the South Bay area provided Pynchon with some of the thematic and character-based infrastructure of the novels. South Beach resident Jim Hall, who "knew Pynchon during these years", claims "a conversation he recalled having with Pynchon about the police using computer surveillance to track drug dealers" appeared in *Vineland* twenty years later, and "horoscopes Pynchon did of Hall and others turned up on behalf of characters in *Gravity's Rainbow*".<sup>72</sup> Ford also insists that Pynchon's reported paranoia during this time "wasn't exceptional given the era", and that this state of mind, which would come to be a marker of *Lot 49*, was common of many of the residents of this area.<sup>73</sup>

Pynchon does not restrict his borrowing from familiar locations to California. Boris Kachka, for example, suggests that during his time in Mexico, between around 1962 and 1964, Pynchon's reading of "Latin American writers like Jorge Luis Borges" were "a big influence on" *Lot 49*.<sup>74</sup> Similarly, his having lived in New York since around 1989 has seemingly influenced the setting of his latest novel *Bleeding Edge*. If not an exclusive biographically-disposed environment then, California might be the most well-trodden in terms of reoccurrence in Pynchon's fiction, which may be accounted for in part given his

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Frost.

<sup>74</sup> Kachka.

semi-permanent residence in California during an apparently crucial period of his literary output.<sup>75</sup>

Pynchon's literary geographical movements from San Narciso, as a potential configuration of Los Angeles, to Vineland County around Humboldt, Del Norte and Mendocino counties in the northern part of the State, is somewhat mirrored in his own relocations. If sources are correct in suggesting that by 1975 Pynchon was living in Big Sur and in Aptos during the 1980s, then this would be consistent with the time that he is composing, or at least contemplating *Vineland*.<sup>76</sup> In a 1974 letter to his friends David Shetzline and his wife Mary, Pynchon is also staying in the basement apartment of friends Kirkpatrick and Faith Sale in Greenwich Village, New York.<sup>77</sup> John Krafft, via the biography of Donald Barthelme, validates this as an arrangement Pynchon had with the Sales when they were away.<sup>78</sup> Pynchon does however confirm having been in Humboldt County in 1971, where he lost a "lump of hash", which not only verifies his location, but also more interestingly, speaks to his lifestyle at this time.<sup>79</sup>

As he becomes more disillusioned with the New York literary and political scene, Pynchon also gestures towards wanting to "head west" in these letters, remembering, "last fall I rode around on the 'Hound for a while. Would've dropped by [their place in

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<sup>75</sup> In addition to the California trilogy as the focus novels of this study, Pynchon also published 'A Journey into the Mind of Watts' in *New York Times Magazine* in 1966. His familiarity with the landscape of Watts, both geographically and culturally is reflected in this article and suggests direct contact with this location at this point in history.

<sup>76</sup> Evidence of his being resident in California at this time come from an ex-landlady who reports that Pynchon moved from Manhattan Beach to Big Sur in 1975, and driver's licence records which give his address as Aptos, California during the 1980s, though Krafft speculates that this might be more of a practical address as he is also rumoured to have been living in Trinidad and Solquel, California or even have returned to Mexico. Krafft, p. xi.

<sup>77</sup> Kachka.

<sup>78</sup> John M. Krafft, 'Biographical Note', in Inger H. Dalsgaard, Luc Herman and Brian McHale, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Pynchon* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 9-16.

<sup>79</sup> Thomas Pynchon, letter to David Shetzline and Mary Beal (21 January 1974), last accessed 9 August 2016, archived online by Ken Lopez Bookseller <[lopezbooks.com/item/911118/](http://lopezbooks.com/item/911118/)>.

northern California] except by the time I got in your neighborhood I was bummed out". He also speculates that he might "go across the sea" or "maybe we will head west, and then again maybe not".<sup>80</sup> He does, however, find his way back to California, after which he will eventually write *Vineland*. This perhaps does suggest that even in periods of apparent personal listlessness, the intrigue of the California scene, indicated by allusions to hash and stories of bad LSD, is enough of a draw and worth revisiting at this time in his life and in his career, especially having not long published *Gravity's Rainbow*.

Pynchon's movements therefore do not quite reflect the previously discussed "hippie migration" of the early 1970s, since he does not seemingly travel as far north. However, another source alleging that he spent a year amongst the redwood trees in Trinidad, Northern California, not only extends the parameters of where he might have lived during this time, but also perhaps more significantly, of what might have been his most immediate concerns between *Gravity's Rainbow* and *Vineland*.<sup>81</sup>

While previously discussed critics have somewhat dismissed *Vineland* as being a reflection of a practical "breather between biggies", and on a more general level in 1974, Pynchon himself questions that his indecision "does sound like 'aimless drifting' doesn't it?",<sup>82</sup> the seventeen years before the novel is published in 1990 seems to provide essential material for *Vineland*, and later *Inherent Vice*.<sup>83</sup> Aside from Pynchon trackers' delights at having traced Pynchon to specific historical locations, as in the Jambalaya

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<sup>80</sup> Pynchon, letter to Shetzline and Beal.

<sup>81</sup> Given that Trinidad is in Humboldt County with a close proximity to both Patrick's Point on this Pacific shoreline of California and the neighbouring Del Norte County, all of which are all referenced in *Vineland*, the addition of Trinidad as an area known to Pynchon might be further pinpoint the supposed location of Vineland County.

<sup>82</sup> Pynchon, letter to Shetzline and Beal.

<sup>83</sup> There is also scope to trace material relating to *Mason & Dixon* during this period since critics have suggested that Pynchon was also working on the 1997 novel at this time, however, for the purposes of this study, focus will remain on the California novels.

Restaurant in Arcata, California (which coincidentally sounds like the Humbolaya Restaurant of *Vineland*), or to the Sweeney family home in Manhattan Beach, where he is invited to eat casserole (the recipe apparently also features in *Vineland*), the intensity of Pynchon's California experience is perhaps reflected in this reported redwood cabin inhabitation in the late 1970s.

According to some journalistic reports, Pynchon "spent more than a year in a neat but tiny redwood cabin in Trinidad, California".<sup>84</sup> This alleged experience is perhaps reflected in certain passages of *Vineland* in particular, which meditate on the feeling of being immersed in the redwood forests of northern California. Pynchon repeatedly comments on the "smell of redwood trees" (*VL*, pp. 315, 374), muses on experiencing the atmosphere of the "long redwood mountainslopes" (*VL*, p. 220), or having "plenty of redwoods left to get lost in" (*VL*, p. 305). There is also perhaps even an allusion to the reported cabin in which he lived between 1976 and 1977, in a scene set "deep in the Vineland redwoods in a cabin by a stream" (*VL*, p. 48).

Although Pynchon is also said to have travelled beyond California in the twenty years or so that he has been placed as living there, for example in a reported research trip to Oxford, England in 1978 relating to *Mason & Dixon*, his time in California certainly affords him the opportunity to use this location as a setting in which his wider concerns can be reflected, revisited and developed.<sup>85</sup> The period following *Gravity's Rainbow*, in which Pynchon has been characterized as being in a state of "wilderness",<sup>86</sup> might actually have been crucial in allowing him to produce such a particular and sustained study on

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<sup>84</sup> Kachka.

<sup>85</sup> The website, *The Thomas Trail: every contact leaves traces*, provides an archive of alleged Pynchon sightings or connections to various locations around the world.

<<http://nadarballoon.wordpress.com/2015/03/18/oxford-1978-thomas-pynchon-was-a-very-good-tiddlywinks-player>>.

<sup>86</sup> Kachka.

California life at this moment in history, whilst also allowing for reflection on how this immediate experience relates to both a wider U.S. and global context.

Pynchon's familiarity and knowledge of the landscape of California is also later reflected in the trailer for *Inherent Vice*, released in 2009.<sup>87</sup> On this occasion, Pynchon lends his voice to Doc Sportello, who narrates the trailer, and directs the viewer or intended reader to the fictional Gordita Beach in 1970, where the novel is largely set. For an author who has intentionally avoided public appearances for the entirety of his career, it is telling that Pynchon voices a character such as Doc, who is similarly at ease in this setting, both geographically and historically. The critical suggestion that Gordita Beach is modelled on Manhattan Beach is reinforced by the directions that Pynchon (as Doc) gives for its location. He indicates, "if you're driving south from L.A. International, it should take no longer than a hit or two of your favourite brand of cigarette before you're right here in Gordita Beach, California".<sup>88</sup> Given that Manhattan Beach is roughly a twelve minute drive from LAX, suggestions that the two might be one and the same are reasonable.

If *Lot 49* can be characterized in part as spiritual autobiography, then *Inherent Vice* can perhaps be read as a sort of subjunctive autobiography. The geographical and historical setting that Pynchon has direct experience of is framed in such a way that it can be read as both the epicentre of the potential of countercultural promise, but is also somewhere that is visibly becoming co-opted by the values it opposes. The trailer is also structured in this way, with Doc (Pynchon) predicting that Gordita Beach will one day

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<sup>87</sup> Narration for *Inherent Vice* book promo video, Penguin Books USA (4 August 2009), last accessed 7 August 2016, <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RjWKPdDk0\\_U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RjWKPdDk0_U)>

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

become “high- rise, high-rent, high-intensity”,<sup>89</sup> but returning to 1970, the year when all this might have been different.<sup>90</sup>

Though Pynchon had apparently been living in New York for nearly twenty years by the time *Inherent Vice* is published in 2009,<sup>91</sup> his return to the Southern California coast is indicative of the previously suggested importance of this setting in revisiting and interrogating his recurring major concerns. The tendency to wander back to California at what has become a crucial moment in Pynchon’s relationship with both California, the countercultural movement and beyond, also perhaps becomes more enforced by his personal distance from this landscape at the time of writing *Inherent Vice*. Far from nostalgia, Pynchon’s geographical and literary wanderings to New York, *Mason & Dixon* and *Against the Day*, followed by his return to California, reflect both how far his concerns reach, but also how these concerns are still crystallized in an area of California where he spent some formative years.

### **Part Three: Case Studies**

As a geographical setting, Pynchon’s California proves to be a centre of complex cultural and spiritual encounters. The range and diversity of histories that this landscape is able to tell, which the California trilogy draws upon, is far too broad to fully analyse in detail, and a broad overview of the space of California cannot sufficiently articulate the particularity and distinctiveness of this region.

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<sup>89</sup> *IV* promo.

<sup>90</sup> The claim to the autobiographical persuasion of *Inherent Vice* is supported by Kachka who argues that “all of [Pynchon’s] books are in some way autobiographical”, and specifically suggests that “*Inherent Vice*, for instance, starring a perma-stoned “gum-sandal” detective, owed a lot to the characters Pynchon knew in Manhattan Beach”. Kachka.

<sup>91</sup> Krafft, p. xi.

In response to this, and in an attempt to engage productively with the more suggestive aspects of Californian geographical, cultural and spiritual histories, it is useful to employ an approach that utilizes both the specificity and representative quality of this space as part of the methodology of this thesis. The method is therefore drawn from, and inspired by the details in the texts that create the literary manifestation of Pynchon's California. Aspects from Pynchon's depictions of California that are particularly illustrative of this space will be selected and rigorously re-examined in order to exhume some of California's numerous histories, particularly those that have become lost to dominant historical narratives.

In this thesis, the lost histories will predominantly be those of American Indians, whose presence in the trilogy, as in California, is suggested, but has not as yet been fully brought to life. Pynchon's reference to the *woge*, for example, is a textual detail that directly evokes the American Indian Yurok tribe, but also can be used to elicit a broader and more suggestive history of repression and displacement. In this way the method re-examines the textual minutiae in order to re-tell the lost stories of California. This approach will necessitate some contextual fortification as part of its process, which will allow the texts of the trilogy to be resituated within these newfound narratives, creating added layers of depth to the cultural and spiritual histories of Pynchon's California.

As a practical illustration, this section of the introduction will demonstrate this methodology in a concentrated way through selecting specific Californian state landmarks, drawn from textual references, whose histories and cultural resonances in California consciousness express something of Pynchon's recurring concerns. For each novel of the trilogy a relevant landmark will be used to introduce some features of this geographical space, and to show how this specific geography both informs and bears

witness to the narratives of California. In using this introductory strategy, it is hoped that this thesis' reading of California as a resonant space becomes apparent, but also that the methodology of selecting and re-examining textual detail in order to situate the trilogy becomes clearer.

### **Esalen**

The first chapter of this thesis will naturally focus on the first novel of the California trilogy, *The Crying of Lot 49*. Specifically, this chapter will examine some of the implications of the countercultural appropriation of American Indian culture using a textually and contextually inspired reading of Oedipa Maas' quest to discover meaning of the will of Pierce, her former lover. As a demonstration of this methodology, the history of the Esalen Institute, a landmark which shares characteristics with those of Pierce's estate, will be used as a geographical locus of these ideas. Formerly a bastion of alternative spiritualities, inspired by and developed from American Indian and Eastern belief systems, Esalen has become a prototypical centre of the New Age appropriation, and like the Fangoso Lagoons of Pierce's estate, an embodiment of the commercialization of these same beliefs. As such, Esalen is an ideal landmark for introducing this methodology.

Esalen is founded on the once land of the American Indian Esselen tribe, who inhabited this thickly wooded and mountainous area of the south-central coast of California. The Esselen are "among the least-known groups in California", and have been speculated as becoming one of the first of California's native peoples to become "culturally extinct", following the conversion practices of the Mission Era of the late

1700s.<sup>92</sup> Although some anthropologists posit that certain evidence suggests that some Esselen found refuge from the missions in the rugged geography of the area, ensuring that some traditions have survived, the encounter with the physical, cultural and religious forces of the missions caused an estimated 90% decline in the Esselen population after 1795.<sup>93</sup>

The original inhabitants of the area where Esalen now stands have been memorialized in the naming of the institute, which boasts that its Meditation centre sits “where the Esselen are believed to have had their sweat lodge”.<sup>94</sup> The institute also, acknowledges that as the “supplanter”, it has “often borrowed from American Indian traditions” elements such as the talking stick, the sweat lodge, the fire circle, the drum, and the rattle. Moreover, it claims that these cultural acquisitions are appreciated and revered in the same spirit as that of the Esselen predecessors, and form a part of the search for meaningful rituals and a sense of connection with the earth.<sup>95</sup>

The aspirations of the contemporary Esalen Institute echo the sort of jargon associated with the New Age movement, with notions such as “meaningful ritual” and “sense of connection with the earth” becoming meaningless gestures and sterile philosophies, reflecting only the decline into banality that Esalen and the broader countercultural quest for alternative spiritualities have experienced.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Thomas Roy Hester, ‘Esselen’, in Robert F. Heizer, ed., *Handbook of North American Indians Volume 8: California*, (1978), p. 496.

<sup>93</sup> Gary S. Breschini and Trudy Haversat, ‘A Brief Overview of the Esselen Indians of Monterey County’, *Monterey County Historical Society* (2004), last accessed 14 October 2015, <<http://www.mchsmuseum.com/esselen.html>>.

<sup>94</sup> *Esalen*, official website, last accessed 11 November 2015, <[www.esalen.org/page/esselen/indians](http://www.esalen.org/page/esselen/indians)>.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

Upon its founding as an institute, or 'gymnasium for the mind', Esalen was designed to be a scholarly place, where thinkers and writers could gather to form and nurture radical psychological and spiritual therapies and practices. Its founders, Michael Murphy, "a sporty but monkish sort" whose family had previously bought the land in 1910, and Richard Price, "a more bohemian character"<sup>97</sup>, set to create Esalen as "their ideal human dwelling", following their own respective intellectual encounters with Eastern religion and psychological therapies.<sup>98</sup>

The institute, founded in the 1960s, was therefore established using facets from spiritualities and psychological practices that included Yogic and Vedic philosophy, Zen Buddhism and Taoism, but importantly fused these ideas with "Western individualism, democracy, science, openness and optimism".<sup>99</sup> This combination, Murphy and Price believed, would inhibit any tendencies towards conservatism and orthodoxy, and especially the 'totalitarianism' that Price had personally encountered in his experience of contemporary physiological therapy. Its defining philosophy was principally inspired by Aldous Huxley's ideas of "human potentialities", which came to define the ethos and objectives of Esalen.<sup>100</sup>

It is this combination of assembled alternative spiritualities, curiosity of psychological therapies, intellectual creativity and an American Indian geographical and cultural heritage that makes Esalen both a cradle and outpost of the California

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<sup>97</sup> Erik Davis, *The Visionary State: A Journey Through California's Spiritual Landscape* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2006), p. 164.

<sup>98</sup> Staff Writer, 'Where "California" Bubbled Up', *The Economist* (19 December 2007), last accessed 15 November 2015, <<http://www.economist.com/node/10278745>>.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

counterculture, but also a monument to some of the concerns of *The Crying of Lot 49* addressed in the first chapter.

The contemporary 'montage approach' to the spiritual and philosophical framework of the institute is reflected in Pynchon's equivocal allusions to diverse influential modes of thinking with specific, contextual relevance. This can be seen to stem from one particular moment in the text, that of Oedipa's "religious instant" (L49, p. 15), with its insistence on being both specifically sacred, but nondenominational, that has led to the considerable critical attention given to the nature of this numinous moment. These readings, from Edward Mendelson's understanding of Pynchon's use of the word "hierophany" (L49, p. 20), the act of manifestation of the sacred, in the context of the work of Mircea Eliade, to the parallel between Pynchon's "instant" and Rudolph Otto's *The Idea of the Holy*, reflect the multiple informing religious and philosophical considerations of the text.

This moment in the text is expanded upon and explored by Pynchon through additional added allusions to religious and spiritual touchstones. These range from allusions to the Book of the Dead (significant both ancient Egyptian religious belief and ritual, and also a prominent text of Nyingma or Tibetan Buddhism), speculation on generalised 'Indian' rituals, and discussion of the Paraclete during the performance of *The Courier's Tragedy* in the text. The effect is therefore of a composite "instant" that pertains to all, but also none, of Pynchon's potential allusions, or to what Carlos Castaneda (whose writings will be discussed in the first chapter) understood as the 'nagual', the "nonordinary world" that "remains hidden for the immense majority of us".<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Carlos Castaneda, *The Second Ring of Power* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1991), p. 277.

In the realm of psychology, Esalen also vowed to experiment with unorthodox therapies, influenced by thinkers such as Abraham Maslow who attempted to extend the idea of the human potential movement with notions of “self-actualization”.<sup>102</sup> In contrast to contemporary psychology, which focused on pathology, Maslow’s theory of self-actualization focused instead on “peak experiences”, or “those godlike flashes of joy, insight, and self-empowerment”.<sup>103</sup> In addition to this, Esalen also adopted Fritz Perls’ particular understanding of Gestalt therapy. Unlike previous theories of this therapy which “focused on a patient’s past and his *unconscious* perception of it”, Perls’ appropriately rebranded Gestalt, “Jewish Buddhism” or “Zen Judaism”, and focused on “the here and now and the person’s *conscious* perception of it”.<sup>104</sup>

Though the connection between Gestalt therapy and *Lot 49* has long been noted through the name Metzger, a lawyer assigned to help Oedipa execute Pierce’s will, who shares his name with the German psychologist and main proponent of Gestalt psychology, Wolfgang Metzger, the principles of these therapies can also be found in the more secular readings of Oedipa’s instant. These readings similarly focus on the more ambiguous language of “revelation” (*L49*, p. 15), but also on the critical language of discovery. In one particular example, Pynchon’s depiction of Oedipa’s revelation can be interpreted using both the numinous and psychological frameworks discussed above:

As things developed, she was to have all manner of revelations. Hardly about Pierce Inverarity, or herself; but about what remained yet had somehow, before this, stayed away (*L49*, p.12).

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<sup>102</sup> E. Davis, p. 164.

<sup>103</sup> E. Davis, p. 164.

<sup>104</sup> Staff Writer, ‘Where “California” Bubbled Up’.

This rendering resonates with Casteneda's notion of the 'nagual', but also seems to summarize the significance of the immediacy of the moment that is crucial in Perls' reformulation of Gestalt therapy.

Using this same methodology of drawing wider potential contexts from textual detail, Pynchon's more prominent references to psychological therapies using LSD, mescaline and psilocybin can similarly be understood. It has been noted that Mucho's description of the effects of LSD on sensory perception in *Lot 49* bears a strong resemblance to Huxley's writing on "the mystical dimensions of psychedelics".<sup>105</sup> Given the centrality of Huxley's philosophies in Esalen's own philosophical foundation, this is a curious potential allusion. However, there are also darker parallels between the use and implications of hallucinogenic therapies in *Lot 49* and their prescription at Esalen. In the novel, it is revealed in the novel that Dr. Hilarius, (the main proponent of drug therapies), inflicted "experimentally-induced insanity" on Jewish prisoners at Buchenwald (*L49*, p.95). His later therapies can therefore be considered in the context of these earlier, more obviously disturbing practices, and as such are a progression of these types of experiments. Similarly at Esalen, courses on "drug-induced mysticism"<sup>106</sup> designed in accordance with the aforementioned emphasis on altered perceptions, also took a darker turn and resulted in unintentional casualties, including several suicides that involved drug misuse.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Jeffrey J. Kripal, *Esalen: America and the Religion of No Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p.86.

<sup>106</sup> Walter Truett Anderson, *The Upstart Spring: Esalen and the Human Potential Movement: The First 20 Years* (Lincoln: iUniverse, 2004), p. 72.

<sup>107</sup> The institutionalization of psychoactive drug experimentation also has a historical grounding in California. Psychiatrists and psychologists such as Oscar Janiger, Betty Eisner, and Sidney Cohen engaged in research to record the effects of LSD on a cross section of the public, in order to evaluate its potential as a treatment for other dependencies such as alcoholism, or conversely to warn against the dangers of the hallucinogen. In addition, it was the compound created by Alexander Shulgin, an employee of Dow Chemical who consulted with the Drug Enforcement Agency and a member of the Bohemian Club (which will feature in later discussions), who gave the world MDMA. However, more disturbingly perhaps were the activities

As in Pynchon's universe, where characters resurface and reappear across texts, past teachers of the Esalen Institute, will also feature throughout this thesis. Figures such as Carlos Castaneda, Ken Kesey, Buckminster Fuller, and even Erik Davis whose work on the cultural history of California is an important source of this study, were all former teachers at the Esalen Institute, and will also be cited as significant figures in this study of Pynchon's California. However, as is becoming increasingly more apparent in the Californian tendency towards both the light and shade, there were also less desirable guests at Esalen, most notably Charles Manson, who is said to have performed an "impromptu concert" at the Institute three days before the Tate murders.<sup>108</sup>

By 1970, an important milestone in the California trilogy, the trends that Esalen had initiated had become "mainstream and banal", with similar centres being developed all along the West Coast based on the same New Age philosophies.<sup>109</sup> After the death of Richard Price in 1985, the institute also appointed "a series of more business-minded managers", and by the 1990s Esalen resembled more of a mainstream spa "where ageing hippies got pampered".<sup>110</sup> The foundational ideas of the human potential movement have also since been reduced to a list of yin-and-yang-inspired key phrases on the Institute's website:

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of Project MKUltra, or the CIA mind control programs that ran from the early 1950s to 1973. Amongst the operations of the illegal program of experiments intended to elucidate the possible uses of drugs in interrogation and torture scenarios, was Operation Midnight Climax. This operation, undertaken in Marin County and San Francisco, as well as in New York, was designed to study the effect of LSD on consenting subjects in brothels. This curiously Pynchonian sounding operation also recalls the words of the *Golden Fang Procedures Handbook of Inherent Vice*, which advise that "Dealing with the Hippie is generally straightforward. His childlike nature will usually respond positively to drugs, sex, and/or rock and roll, although in which order these are to be deployed must depend on conditions specific to the moment" (IV, p. 170).

<sup>108</sup> Anderson, p. 239.

<sup>109</sup> Staff Writer, 'Where "California" Bubbled Up'.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

intellectual and experiential; mind and body; science and mysticism; immanence and transcendence; East and West; meditation and action; youthful idealism and time-tested wisdom.<sup>111</sup>

Esalen now also hosts workshops on topics such as ‘Sacred Commerce: Business as a Path of Awakening’, has become a registered trademark, and is even tax-deductible. In 1990, graffiti reading “jive shit for rich white folk”<sup>112</sup> that was sprayed on Esalen’s welcome sign, perhaps most bluntly highlighted Esalen’s transformation from a place of spiritual, communal living and learning, to a centre where these ideas and beliefs that can be bought and sold. This descent into the commercialization and commodification of spiritual and philosophical ideas will continue to be explored in the first chapter’s discussion of the spiritual upheavals of the 1960s, through a reading of *The Crying of Lot 49* that is focused on these concerns. For now, the use of Esalen as a California landmark that is suggestive of particular culture contexts significant to *Lot 49* should begin to demonstrate the methodology of this approach.<sup>113</sup>

## Luna

Chapter two, which focuses on *Vineland*, the second novel of Pynchon’s California trilogy, is heavily occupied by discussions of Pynchon’s departure to redwood county in the north of the state. The redwood trees, as well as being an identifying geographical marker of Northern California, also inform the historical, cultural and spiritual landscape of the novel. Although the chapter on *Vineland* will address Pynchon’s narrative of

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<sup>111</sup> *Esalen*.

<sup>112</sup> Staff Writer, ‘Where “California” Bubbled Up’.

<sup>113</sup> The evocation of Esalen also inspires discussions in chapter three of the Chryskylodon Institute of *Inherent Vice*, which bears some resemblance to an Esalen-type institute, especially in its later years.

Vineland through readings of the redwood trees, it is also useful in situating the novel within a historical narrative, with the redwood trees at its centre.

As a continuation of this demonstration of the methodology of this thesis, the history of a particular redwood tree, Luna, whose story shares a similar trajectory to the redwoods of *Vineland*, will be used to enhance the emerging contexts for the trilogy whilst also introducing the ecological dimension of the second chapter.

Amongst California's 38,000 acres of old growth redwood trees, is Luna, a thousand-year-old coast redwood tree which grows "on a ridge overlooking the central Humboldt County hamlet of Stafford" above the Eel River.<sup>114</sup> Though not the only redwood tree to be distinguished, and individually-named in recent Californian history, Luna's narrative provides some important historical and cultural touchstones for Pynchon's depiction of California, in the context of both *Vineland* and the trilogy as a whole.<sup>115</sup> Prior to twentieth century interest in the redwoods of this area along the Eel River, trees like Luna formed part of the habitat and infrastructure of the Native Athapascan peoples. Their bark was used to make the slab house of the Sinkyone people, whilst their root fibres were used in basket making of both the Sinkyone and Wailaki peoples.<sup>116</sup> Since the action of *Vineland* takes place around the fictional Vineland, Pynchon engages specifically with the history of the Yurok people, a more northerly neighbouring tribe of the Eel River Athapascan people, who are, geographically, more closely related to the locale of the novel. Though it is important to relate this American Indian history given

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<sup>114</sup> Nicholas Wilson, 'Julia Butterfly's "Luna" Redwood Slashed', *The Albion Monitor* (29 November 2000), last accessed 20 January 2016, <<http://www.albionmonitor.com/0011a/luna.html>>.

<sup>115</sup> Even among coast redwood trees alone, there are several trees that have been named individually for being notably large or tall, including Lost Monarch, Hyperion and Illuvatar. Only a few have been distinguished for reasons outside of size or height. Luna is a prominent example, with another, the Chandelier Tree in Leggett, California, being singled out for having a hole cut out of base big enough to allow a car to pass through.

<sup>116</sup> See Heizer, ed., for details of redwood use in West Coast American Indian tribes.

the concerns of this thesis, there are also examples of more contemporary interests in the redwoods of the Eel River area that relate equally relevant facets of Californian cultural history.

The first is Luna's assumption into the property of the Pacific Lumber Company, a major logging interest in Northern California. The history of the Pacific Lumber Company itself, before its involvement with Luna, can in itself be viewed as a blueprint for Pynchon's depiction of the logging industry in Vineland, which will demand further textual examination in its respective chapter. However, as an historical anchor and point of contact, the Pacific Lumber Company serves as an example of a family-operated business that "treated workers pretty well", and though not innocent of felling ancient, old growth trees, operated according to a policy that "today would be described as sustainable forestry".<sup>117</sup> It is also an example of a business of this kind that was later acquired by an outside corporation, to the devastation of both workers and the environment.

In this instance, it was Charles Hurwitz and Maxxam Corporation, based in Houston, Texas, who "aggressively" acquired the Pacific Lumber Company in 1986 and thereby became the owners of 210,000 acres of forests in Humboldt County. Having acquired ownership, the Maxxam Corporation approached the ownership and management of these forests with an "outrageous campaign of clear-cutting" old growth forest in order to clear debt incurred as a result of financing the takeover.<sup>118</sup> This campaign caused devastating consequences for the redwood forests, the salmon

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<sup>117</sup> David Cobb, 'Maxxam's sordid history with Pacific Lumber', *Times Standard* (6 December 2008), last accessed 20 January 2016, <<http://www.times-standard.com/article/ZZ/20080612/NEWS/806129580>>.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

populations, and even provoked “a series of landslides that caused homes to fall into the river”.<sup>119</sup> Aside from the environmental impact, Maxxam also “plundered workers’ pension funds”, completely shattering the community ethos of the original family enterprise.<sup>120</sup>

Hurwitz and Maxxam were, however not unopposed in these actions, as environmental activists, spearheaded by Earth First!, an environmental advocacy group formed in 1979 in the Southwestern U.S. as a “response to an increasingly corporate, compromising and ineffective environmental community”, took action.<sup>121</sup> Maxxam proved a textbook adversary to the group, who protested plans to clear more old-growth forests by occupying ‘Luna’, a tree named to coincide with the rising moon at the time of the protest. Julia Butterfly Hill, one of these activists, occupied Luna for 738 days until an agreement was made to save Luna and protect a 12,000 meter buffer zone around the tree.

The second half of Luna’s history can be seen to follow in a tradition described as “tree sitting”, employed by Californian environmental activists beginning with Johnny Muir’s Sierra Club.<sup>122</sup> The tradition, which aided in the efforts of the Sierra Club to establish a Redwood State Park in the 1960s, was maintained by ensuing activists, such as Nate Madsen, David Chain and the protestors at Fern Gully in Northern California, who occupied a ‘tree village’ for over twenty years as part of the ongoing war between the lumber company and environmental activists. According to Erik Davis, the West Coast has “long been a hotbed for both the theory and practice of environmentalism”, and tree-

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> *Earth First! Media from the Frontlines of Ecological Resistance*, last accessed 20 January 2016, <<http://earthfirstjournal.org/about>>.

<sup>122</sup> E. Davis, p. 251.

sitting can be viewed as a geographically-appropriate manifestation of such environmental protests, given the abundance of redwood trees.<sup>123</sup> The tradition of environmentalism in California can be seen as a parallel of the counterculture movement, which similarly embraced a back-to-the-land relationship with the environment, tintured with emerging spiritual beliefs centred on a “quest to leave religion behind and discover spirit in the world at hand”.<sup>124</sup>

This aspect of countercultural spirituality is explored in greater depth in chapter one, however the activism behind the efforts to save Luna was also guided by a spiritual relationship between protestors and the trees. The aforementioned Julia Butterfly Hill, was especially influenced by the presence of the redwood trees of Humboldt County. On entering a largely undeveloped grove of redwoods she wrote, “when I entered the majestic cathedral of the redwood forest for the first time, my spirit knew it had found what it was searching for”.<sup>125</sup> Her relationship with Luna follows a pattern that can be seen to characterise the progression of California countercultural eco-spirituality. Beginning with a reverence for nature, and developing into a reciprocal dialogue with the tree, Hill’s relationship with Luna culminated in efforts to heal and restore the tree that included seeking advice from a Cherokee bear-medicine worker’s knowledge of “native lore about the healing properties of clay”.<sup>126</sup> The trajectory of Hill’s relationship with Luna reflects the contextual progression from the desire for a more nature-based spiritual belief system, to the appropriation of traditional cultural and spiritual beliefs in order to qualify and satisfy this desire.

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Erik Davis and Jonathan Taylor, ‘Golden States of Mind: A Geography of Californian Consciousness’, in Stanley D. Brunn, ed., *The Changing World Religion Map: Sacred Places, Identities, Practices and Politics*, 3/6 (Dordrecht: Springer, 2015), p. 1389.

<sup>125</sup> Davis, p. 253.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., p. 253.

Another, more troubling trajectory of this kind of alternative spirituality, representing the darker side of California's spiritual atmosphere that resulted in new religious movements (NRMs) such as Heaven's Gate and dangerous cults as in the Manson Family, can also be traced to some extent in the history of California's redwoods. Though largely the domain of conspiracy theorists and niche journalistic interest, the Bohemian Club, which "secretly meet[s] for seventeen days each July in a remote "sacred grove" of ancient redwood trees in the deep forests surrounding San Francisco",<sup>127</sup> has been subject to the kind of scrutiny reserved for NRMs and cults. While some argue that the Bohemian Club's secretive tendencies are to maintain its status as "one of the world's most exclusive clubs",<sup>128</sup> the Club has also been reported as a place to escape the "uncivilized interests, of common men"<sup>129</sup> and engage in "occult rituals", and perform ceremonies that involve "sacrificing a mock human being to an owl God".<sup>130</sup> While the Club has been infiltrated on numerous occasions, spurring more reports of cult-like activities, what is most notable in the context of this discussion, is that it is situated in Bohemian Grove, a redwood forest 70 miles north of San Francisco, comprising "four and a quarter square miles of rugged, majestic terrain that members consider sacred".<sup>131</sup>

One of the most notable infiltrations by Philip Weiss, resulted in an article 'Masters of the Universe Go to Camp: Inside the Bohemian Grove' (1989), which describes a

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<sup>127</sup> Mike Hansen, *Bohemian Grove: Cult of Conspiracy* (Lincoln: iUniverse, 2004), back cover blurb.

<sup>128</sup> Collen Kane, '8 of the World's Most Exclusive Clubs - Can You Join?', *Fortune* (30 January 2015), last accessed 4 June 2016, <<http://fortune.com/2015/01/30/6-of-the-worlds-most-exclusive-clubs-can-you-join/>>.

<sup>129</sup> Elizabeth Flock, 'Bohemian Grove: Where the Rich and Powerful go to Misbehave', *Washington Post* (15 June 2011), last accessed 9 January 2016, <[https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/blogpost/post/bohemian-grove-where-the-rich-and-powerful-go-to-misbehave/2011/06/15/AGPV1sVH\\_blog.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/blogpost/post/bohemian-grove-where-the-rich-and-powerful-go-to-misbehave/2011/06/15/AGPV1sVH_blog.html)>.

<sup>130</sup> Hansen, p. 40.

<sup>131</sup> Philip Weiss, 'Masters of the Universe Go to Camp: Inside the Bohemian Grove', *Spy Magazine* (November, 1989), last accessed 20 January 2016, <[http://whorulesamerica.net/power/bohemian\\_grove\\_spy.html](http://whorulesamerica.net/power/bohemian_grove_spy.html)>.

gathering of some of the United States' most powerful men consecrating a religion founded on "right-wing, laissez-faire and quintessentially western [beliefs], with some Druid tree worship thrown in for fun".<sup>132</sup> Though the general scene depicted at the gathering is one of entitled inhibition, the redwoods are shown to provide a "haven for Republican presidents" and "Reaganites", while their "towering shafts" inspire members, or else provide somewhere for them to "relieve" themselves on.<sup>133</sup> This kind of interaction with the redwoods provides a significant contrast to California's countercultural engagement, and instead taps into the more conservative elements in the history of the state, especially in relation to the Reagan's governorship from 1967 to 1975 at the crest of the countercultural era.

Most recently, Luna has inspired a shrine which holds "an informal collection of power objects", such as "a dream catcher, a cross [and] a Cretan snake goddess"<sup>134</sup> that relate to varying and diverse spiritual sources, but find some common ground in Luna. This redwood then becomes symbolic under many different banners, for diverse and often conflicting reasons, but which are nonetheless Californian. The significance and prominence of the redwoods in *Vineland* can therefore, in some ways, be understood in the particular historical context evoked by the narrative of Luna. This method is also hopefully increasingly demonstrative not only of the how California landmarks can be used to examine wider historical and cultural contexts, but also of how the specific geography of California itself is crucial to understanding these wider contexts.

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> E. Davis, p. 253.

## Forest Lawn/Larkspur Miwok Burial Ground

The histories of the lost communities of California haunt the narrative of *Inherent Vice*. References to historical examples such as Chavez Ravine and Bunker Hill are reinforced by Pynchon's own example of a lost neighbourhood, and its proposed replacement, the Channel View Estates housing development. Specific cases of land being used for commercial, rather than community purposes, are explored in greater depth in chapter three, filtered through Pynchon's fictionalised Los Angeles. However, as in the example of Luna, it is possible to enhance understandings of Californian attitudes towards land use and management using further historical contexts. As the final demonstration of this methodology, the histories of two related landmarks will be used to emphasize how the haunted quality of the landscape of *Inherent Vice* functions in wider cultural and philosophical concerns of sacred or valuable landscapes.

Forest Lawn in Glendale, Los Angeles is "certainly the most famous cemetery in California".<sup>135</sup> Though originally founded in 1906 by a group of Californian businessmen, it was "Christian cowboy and failed mining engineer" Hubert Eaton, who assumed control in 1917, and masterminded the concept behind the cemetery that has led to its iconic status.<sup>136</sup> Inspired by a vision, Eaton is said to have composed 'The Builder's Creed', wherein the philosophy of this visionary cemetery is inscribed. The Creed resolves that Forest Lawn will be established "unlike other cemeteries", which have heretofore been built on misguided principals that "depict an end, not a beginning", and are therefore nothing more than "unsightly stone yards full of inartistic symbols and depressing

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<sup>135</sup> E. Davis, p. 143.

<sup>136</sup> E. Davis, p. 143.

customs”.<sup>137</sup> Instead, Eaton vowed that Forest Lawn would be a place “filled with towering trees, sweeping lawns, splashing fountains, singing birds, beautiful statuary, cheerful flowers, noble memorial architecture with interiors full of light and color, and redolent of the world’s best history and romances”.<sup>138</sup> His emphasis was to be on the life of soul and not the death of the body. Since Forest Lawn was also intended as a commercial venture, Eaton was also careful to outline his economic philosophy, decreeing that Forest Lawn “shall be protected by an immense endowment fund” that would never be depleted since it was established solely as a maintenance fund.<sup>139</sup>

It is this combination of spiritual and commercial enterprise that characterises Forest Lawn as so curiously Californian. As the history of Esalen relates, the spiritual compulsion behind the venture became entangled with commercial impulses, and Eaton was no novice in trading in spiritual matters. Before becoming involved with the regeneration of Forest Lawn, Eaton “revolutionized the [cemetery] industry” by selling plots and funerary services to customers who were still alive, but who felt the need to be involved in arrangements following their death.<sup>140</sup> Erik Davis compares Eaton’s endeavour to that of the “Southland’s real estate boosters”, who were not just trading in real estate, or in Eaton’s case, selling plots of land, but were selling an idea or a “dream”.<sup>141</sup> The comparison between Eaton and the real estate boom of the 1880s is significant in understanding the historical context of Pynchon’s depiction of Los Angeles in the latter part of the twentieth century. As with this earlier boom, real estate investors, commercial industry, and civic leaders were again keen to promote Los Angeles as a city ripe for

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<sup>137</sup> Hubert L. Eaton, ‘The Builder’s Creed’, engraving at Forest Lawn Memorial Park, Glendale, California. Reproduced online here: <[http://www.huberteaton.com/html/\\_the\\_builder\\_s\\_creed\\_html](http://www.huberteaton.com/html/_the_builder_s_creed_html)>.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> E. Davis, p. 144.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

development. At the time of the staging of *Inherent Vice* in 1970, the reality of these developments is being experienced by the residents and former residents of these areas targeted by commercial interests.

In the case of Forest Lawn, Eaton capitalised specifically on trying to “satisfy the “memorial impulse””,<sup>142</sup> which became crystallized in his conception of the ‘memorial park’, which emphasised the eternal nature of the soul, in contrast to any suggestion of the finality of death. This impulse was to be reinforced through the invocation of a substantial preceding history that would convey the necessary expansiveness and continuation of time. Eaton manifested this vast history in the form of architecture and sculptures that reproduced classic European buildings and monuments. Of course, the ongoing nature of this memorial impulse also allowed Eaton to achieve longevity of the commercial viability of Forest Lawn.<sup>143</sup> This fruitful combination of spiritual stewardship and salesman impulse is discussed by Eaton in his book *How to Use the Memorial Impulse to Increase your Sales*, (1954) and it is this combination that, according to David Charles Sloane, makes Forest Lawn so symbolic of Los Angeles in the early twentieth century. He argues that in its use of classical European architecture and art, built in a context of “gladsome religion”, and made successful by “aggressive advertising”, Forest Lawn answered the needs of a public situated between the emerging consumer culture and “the older, staid Victorian culture”, allowing Eaton to “sell eternity to generations of residents of Los Angeles”.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Today, a complete funeral package at Forest Lawn, costs between \$8,000 and close to \$14,000, with prime location family mausoleums costing up to \$825,000. It also features in *Forbes* magazine’s list of ‘America’s Most Expensive Cemeteries’. Tom Van Riper, ‘America’s Most Expensive Cemeteries’, *Forbes* (26 October 2007), last accessed 21 January 2016, <[http://www.forbes.com/2007/10/26/celebrity-wealth-funerals-biz-cx-tvr\\_1026cemeteries.html](http://www.forbes.com/2007/10/26/celebrity-wealth-funerals-biz-cx-tvr_1026cemeteries.html)>.

<sup>144</sup> David Charles Sloane, ‘Selling Eternity in 1920s Los Angeles’, in Tom Sitton and William Deverell, eds., *Metropolis in the Making: Los Angeles in the 1920s* (California: University of California Press, 2001), p. 358.

Now a chain of six cemeteries across Los Angeles and the Coachella Valley, Forest Lawn continues to embody the same spirit of cross-cultural design, and displays monuments inspired by some of California's more recent cultural influencers. 'Our Lady of Guadalupe Terrace', for example testifies to California's Hispanic heritage. Meanwhile, 'The Garden of Contemplation', a Japanese-inspired concept but designed using replica French architecture, and capped with a rendition of Monet's 'Child in the Artist's Garden', reflects European culture as an ongoing touchstone, but also borrows from California's trans-Pacific influences. Finally, a seventeen foot high bronze statue of Thomas Jefferson, embodies the necessarily U.S. foundation of the cemetery. According to Erik Davis, this pastiche style is also redolent of "the Californian specter of the theme park", which has exaggerated and distorted the principles of Eaton's original memorial garden, and now includes less culturally-substantial monuments, such as "cavorting cherubs, a Cinderella castle, and bas-reliefs of little bears".<sup>145</sup> In addition, the informing Christian beliefs that inspired the founding of Forest Lawn, have been annexed by more esoteric thought, as the cemetery also boasts "stones supposedly blessed by fairies".<sup>146</sup>

The spectacle of Forest Lawn has perhaps now equalled in importance with its intended purpose, since it has also become an attraction as a resting place for innumerable Hollywood stars and celebrities. Forest Lawn's history since its establishment, through to more recent developments, and the ensuing discrepancy between its intentions and outcomes, is reflected across Californian history. Specific instances of this trend, such as the history of Californian land use, are depicted by Pynchon in *Inherent Vice*, and will be discussed at length in chapter three. However, this chasm between intention and manifestation that California culture creates can also be

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<sup>145</sup> E. Davis, p. 143.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

seen in the spiritual explorations of the counterculture, which is a concern that will be elaborated on in first chapter.

As a brief addendum to this illustration of Forest Lawn, it is important for this discussion to include a brief history of another Californian burial ground that illustrates a kind of counter-history to the story of the memorial park, and indeed the history of real estate in California.

The town of Larkspur is located in Marin County in the North San Francisco Bay Area of the State, and is summarily characterized by the official Marin County travel resource as a “typical turn-of-the-century town”.<sup>147</sup> This resource is also keen to communicate some of Larkspur’s history, describing the “Early Queen Anne Victorian false-front store facades, a Mission revival-style church and City Hall” that reflect Larkspur’s past.<sup>148</sup> However, until very recently Larkspur was also the location of a 4,500 year old American Indian burial ground. According to local archaeologists, the burial ground was “a very important place during prehistory”, and was reported to be “one of the most well-preserved burial grounds to have been discovered in California over the past 100 years”.<sup>149</sup> However, against the advice and plight of consulting archaeologists interested in the archaeological wealth of the burial ground, it was nevertheless destroyed by a real estate developer, Larkspur Land 8, to make way for a series of “multimillion-dollar homes”.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> *Marin: Just a little out there*, last accessed 22 January 2016, <<http://www.visitmarin.org/places/larkspur>.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> Mbiyimoh Ghogomu, ‘Developers Dig Up 4,500-Year-Old Indian Burial Ground to Make Way for Mansions’, *The Higher Learning* (May 31, 2015), last accessed 25 January 2016, <<http://thehigherlearning.com/2015/05/31/developers-dig-up-4500-year-old-indian-burial-ground-to-make-way-for-mansions/>>.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

In accordance with the burial tradition of the Coast Miwok, the original inhabitants of this area, the dead would be buried “where they lived, within their territory”.<sup>151</sup> Unlike the display at Forest Lawn, there would be no “formal ceremonies or tombstones” in Miwok burials, and artifacts and animal remains were buried alike on the same site.<sup>152</sup> Chairman of the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria (FIGR), Greg Sarris spearheaded tribal opposition to the development, and also to suggestions of relocating the remains and artifacts of the burial ground, stating that “no one has the right to dig up the skeletal remains of the Indian ancestors for examination”. He also speculated that these actions would not even be considered in the context of Jewish or Christian graveyards.<sup>153</sup> Despite these objections, the remains were removed and reburied at an undisclosed location, and then “graded” over (a word that will come to have significant implications for Pynchon) in the development of this thesis.<sup>154</sup>

In the reporting of this destruction of the burial ground, two important divergent cultural reflections on these actions emerge. The first relates to the concern of the developers, not for repercussions of the development on the ancestors of those buried at the ground, but for their intended customers, who like the subject of the movie *Poltergeist*, might be unnerved by living “on top of a burial ground”.<sup>155</sup> Though this vague supernatural reference is obviously based on the outmoded horror story trope of the haunted Indian burial ground, the more specific idea of haunting in karmic terms, plays an important role in Pynchon’s depiction of land use and development in California.

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<sup>151</sup> Colletta, screen name of volunteer contributor at the *Find A Grave* project (24 May 2013), last accessed 3 February 2016, <<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=cr&CRid=2452013%3Cbr%3E>>

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Alana Marie Burke, ‘California Indian Burial Ground Paved Over for Bay Area Housing’, *Guardian Liberty Voice* (27 April 2014), last accessed 3 February 2106, <<http://guardianlv.com/2014/04/california-indian-burial-ground-paved-over-for-bay-area-housing/>>.

<sup>154</sup> Ghogomu.

<sup>155</sup> Ghogomu.

Secondly, it is also curious in the reporting of these events, it is not the cultural loss and disregard for the sacredness of the burial ground that is mourned, but loss, in archaeological terms, that is in not being able to examine and study the site. Significantly, the decision to rebury (but importantly, not remove in the first instance) was made by the FIGR. Speaking of this decision, a spokesman stated that it is “the philosophy of the tribe to protect their ‘cultural resources’ and to ‘leave them as is.’”<sup>156</sup> He also countered the notion that the artifacts are public property, stating that this was a “colonial view”.<sup>157</sup> The lament that “not a single artifact was saved” in the reporting of these actions, further highlights the lack of cultural sensitivity in the question of how the remains should be treated.<sup>158</sup> By extension, the lack of regard for the significance of a particular site to a particular cultural group, and the measure of worth versus the value of an area of land, can be seen throughout California’s history of land use and development, as discussions of *Inherent Vice* in time will aim to demonstrate.

For now, it is hoped that in re-discovering the histories of Esalen, Luna, Forest Lawn and the Larkspur Miwok burial ground, some of the historical, cultural and spiritual contexts of the California trilogy and Pynchon’s wider historical, political and cultural concerns become apparent. While the generative detail in ensuing chapters will not be limited to Californian *landmarks*, the use of geographical markers at this introductory stage is intended to emphasize the centrality of the geography of California itself in these discussions. Finally, in demonstrating how textual detail can be used to extrapolate these stories, it is hoped that the use and value of this methodology is clear.

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<sup>156</sup> Burke.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ghogomu.

## Part Four: California Scholarship

Scholarship on California and Pynchon finds an important intersection in the 2014 collection of essays, *Pynchon's California*, edited and introduced by Scott McClintock and John Miller, who also each contribute an essay to the collection. The importance of this collection as a valuable touchstone and reinforcement of one of the focal concerns of this thesis, namely the relationship between Pynchon's work and California, cannot be understated.

In addition to its claim of being "the first book to examine Thomas Pynchon's use of California as a setting to his novels", <sup>159</sup> the collection is also crucial in the formulation of the very idea of the California novels as a particular grouping of novels within Pynchon's work. The decision to exclude, or at least minimise concentrated engagement with Pynchon's more critically regarded novels, in order to focus on the California commonality of *The Crying of Lot 49*, *Vineland* and *Inherent Vice*, gives substantial support to the same decision taken by this thesis to afford sustained engagement with these often marginalized works.

In consideration of the impact of *Pynchon's California* as a precedent for this thesis, and in reflecting on how this critical space can be navigated following this publication, it is useful to consider three key aspects of this collection. Firstly, the particular aspects of Pynchon's specifically California concerns or interests that have been included, the methodology in tackling the expansive subject of Pynchon's California, and finally the headway it has made in terms of Pynchon scholarship on the subject of California.

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<sup>159</sup> Press release for *Pynchon's California*, last accessed 21 January 2015, <<http://www.uiowapress.org/books/2014-fall/pynchon%E2%80%99s-california.htm>>.

The scope of the collection can manageably be viewed in terms of its historical focus. The introduction practically outlines the period between the 1960s and the 1980s as the temporal range of the trilogy. This is useful for some of the more contextually concerned essays of the collection that situate the novels both geographically and historically within this period, as well as establishing the immediate temporal locus of the trilogy. This identification is not only significant in consideration of the historically situated action of the novels, it is also consistent with roughly the same period that characterises the countercultural era in California. This overview therefore provides both a historical focus for the collection, but also a specific cultural nexus for some of Pynchon's Californian concerns.

While this timeframe is also critical in managing some of the discussions of this thesis, broader concerns will not be limited to the range of this time period. As previously outlined, this thesis seeks to broaden the historical range of a study of Pynchon's California, which the novels themselves suggest, in order to substantiate claims of the representative quality of both California at this point in (cultural) history and the trilogy itself. The expansion of the timeframe proposed by this thesis can hopefully also contribute to considerations of the California trilogy as a mirror of Pynchon's wider concerns, which may in time suggest a re-evaluation of the status of the California novels within Pynchon's work.

Some of the commonalities, aside from the shared California setting, that this collection addresses are those same features that have, in previous criticism, been cited as indicators of the lower status of these novels. Chiefly, the novels are shorter in length, and each follow a linear plot resembling to a greater or lesser degree a detective story, featuring a single protagonist. While this summation may recall the previously discussed

critical cries of “Pynchon Lite”, and seems to concur with critical denouncements that *Vineland* and *Inherent Vice* in particular, are predicated on a thin storyline involving “the attempts of some aging hippies to steer clear of narcs” featuring “flimsily delineated” characters, these shared quality are reassessed in this collection. Where these features have previously been viewed as weaknesses, this collection suggests that when examined in the context of a trilogy, where they have been repeated and re-evaluated, they instead become markers of Pynchon’s specific engagement with California, and therefore are indicative of a specific Pynchonian method in this context. In managing distinguishing features of the California novels in the context of a trilogy, the collection is able to suggest that Pynchon’s engagement with California engenders particular concerns, but also necessitates its own method in order to generate insightful analysis.

The compilation of this collection can be seen through three important frameworks, which are outlined in McClintock and Miller’s introduction: the historical, the geographical and the cultural. The historical, they argue, seeks a subjunctive approach to California history, and challenges preconceived notions of the use of California as a setting that “has tended to invoke familiar postmodern dialectics of surface and emptiness, promise and despair that echo the noir critique”.<sup>160</sup> Meanwhile, the geographical framework, with an overlapping subjunctive preoccupation, focuses on Pynchon’s attention to the use of California as a ‘space’. Finally, is the cultural framework, which is split between conflicting perceptions of the state as being simultaneously “the apotheosis of the suburban version of the American dream”, and “the crucible of the counterculture”.<sup>161</sup> Each of the frameworks are crucial points of contact with the concerns of this thesis, however, more specific areas such as the geography of San

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<sup>160</sup> McClintock and Miller, p.2.

<sup>161</sup> McClintock and Miller., p. 5.

Narciso, “the dispossession of the Yurok tribes by the first Europeans”,<sup>162</sup> and the symbolism of the Pacific shore of *Inherent Vice*, that are perhaps only referenced or alluded to in McClintock and Miller’s collection, will receive sustained engagement in this thesis. In addition, this study of Pynchon’s California will suggest a further framework, the spiritual, which also allows for engagement with these aforementioned specifics, but with different emphases and considerations.

The selection of essays in this collection range from highlighting a particular topic or emphasis in Pynchon’s engagement with California, such as Stephen Hock’s ‘Maybe He’d Have to Just Keep Driving’,<sup>163</sup> to addressing some of the meta-issues raised in the introduction, as in Margaret Lynd’s ‘Situating Fictions: Reading the California Novels against Thomas Pynchon’s Narrative World’. This diversity of approaches allows for a twofold discussion to emerge over the course of the collection. It recognizes the specifics of Pynchon’s treatment and use of California are examined, whilst continually evaluating and reflecting on the very idea of a California novel/trilogy. In many of these essays, from Lynd’s assessment of the ability of the ‘situated’ novel to “focus, clarify, expand upon, [and] refine” the concerns of Pynchon’s larger-scaled novels,<sup>164</sup> to McClintock’s investigation of the broader historical contexts and roots of the Californian noir tradition, there is a tension between the insistence on “the local, regionally specific and situated” in the California trilogy,<sup>165</sup> and Pynchon’s national and global conceptual concerns. This interplay between the specific and suggestive ability of the specific, will become a more pronounced dynamic in the approach of this thesis.

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>163</sup> Stephen Hock, ‘Maybe He’d Have to Just Keep Driving’, in Scott McClintock and John Miller, eds., *Pynchon’s California* (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 2014).

<sup>164</sup> Lynd, p. 16.

<sup>165</sup> McClintock and Miller, p. 9.

The self-reflective quality of this collection is perhaps understandable given that a major intention of this compilation, as outlined by McClintock and Miller, is to redirect attention to other aspects of the California novels that “may have been neglected due to the dominant emphasis on postmodernity”.<sup>166</sup> This need to shift attention away from discussions of Pynchon’s postmodernity is a similar preoccupation of this thesis, however this awareness of the need for a different critical lens also involves suggesting other literary points of contact for Pynchon outside of the usual postmodernist suspects.

Aside from the nudge towards re-evaluating Pynchon’s work in light of the formulation of a dedicated exploration of the California novel, this collection is also invaluable in terms of its insights into some of the more specific factors at play in Pynchon’s depiction of California. In her comparative analysis of the California novels with Pynchon’s “longer novels”, Lynd argues that the vision of preterition that Pynchon establishes in the former novels, “serves as a kind of footnote to the more robust and multifaceted expressions of Pynchon’s insistence on a preterite vision of truth(s)” achieved in the latter texts.<sup>167</sup> This discussion naturally leads to a commentary on issues of historical scale, which leads Lynd to conclude that by way of the localised quality, “we do not see [in the California novels], for example, the terrible consequences of colonialism...or the perverse underpinnings of environmental disaster”.<sup>168</sup> Though Lynd’s observations of the dynamic between the local and the global implies an important interplay between the trilogy and Pynchon’s other texts, it perhaps fails to recognize the trilogy’s independent, and sometimes divergent, engagement with global issues. The notion of preterition in particular, will be reassessed in this thesis as a global concern that

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>167</sup> Lynd, p. 18.

<sup>168</sup> Lynd., p.19.

attracts a more specific understanding in the context of the trilogy. Re-evaluating what have previously been held in criticism as the domains of the larger, longer, more historically and geographically far-reaching novels, will hopefully develop previously-held understandings of these concerns in Pynchon's work, whilst elevating the critical importance of the California texts.

Though united by the overarching emphases of the introduction, the collection, by its very nature, dictates a composite approach to the topic of Pynchon's California. This approach is successful in providing a range of responses to the objectives and criterion of this composition, and allows for recurring ideas or interests to be traced and developed throughout the collection. It is certainly effective in identifying a broader understanding of the notion of Pynchon's California across a range of critical explorations, however what it achieves in its discursive insight into the complex and varied implications of assessing Pynchon's California as a material and representative setting, and as an explicit grouping within Pynchon's work, it perhaps lacks in not being able to provide a sustained engagement. However, the significance and success of this compilation approach lies in its achievement as a collection of essays under the banner of the California trilogy, which must instigate further critical work on the importance of California in Pynchon's work.

At this point in introductions, a brief note should be given to another informing text of this study, namely Erik Davis' *The Visionary State: A Journey Through California's Spiritual Landscape* (2006). This narrative explores what Davis calls 'California consciousness', and provides a comprehensive insight into California's distinctive and distinguished spiritual history, or more specifically perhaps, near-history. By his own admission, Davis' chronicle has not spent "as much time as [he] would have liked on the Native American and Mexican roots of California", and has also bypassed the more

“mainline faiths”, focusing instead on more esoteric spiritual histories.<sup>169</sup> While the notion of re-investigating lesser-known spiritualities is a common concern of both Davis’ guide and this thesis, the emphasis here will be on those ‘roots’ where Davis has spent less time.

Despite its more curtailed historical range, Davis’ survey provides insight into a rich spiritual context for the California trilogy, especially in terms of the more fringe spiritual scene. Indeed, some of the more curious detail provided by Davis is used to signpost the more obscure beliefs occurring within or alongside the larger spiritual context.

Together with the photographic accompaniments provided by Michael Rauner, Davis offers both a useful chronology and spatial configuration of California’s pluralistic spiritual scene, which proves to be a useful guide for coordinating this thesis. Similarly, Davis’ approach of highlighting specific religious or spiritually-inflected landmarks promotes the specificity of this region, whilst allowing for navigation between different religious and spiritual systems. Though *The Visionary State* is structured in terms of different ‘factions’ of beliefs in Californian history, it often uses a particular landmark or site as a means to introduce information, a method that is somewhat echoed in the approach of this thesis.

The focus of *The Visionary State* on the relationship between spirituality and geography is a similar concern of this thesis. As a spiritual guidebook to California, it can therefore be seen as an important antecedent of this study in terms of its geospiritual emphasis. Moreover, in addition to these framing concerns, Davis’ exploration also

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<sup>169</sup> E. Davis, p. 9.

provides invaluable source material for this thesis, as in the previous example of Luna, and therefore aids in establishing a contextual base for this study of Pynchon engagement with California.

### **Part Five: Pynchon Scholarship**

As a continuation of the contextualising approach to the California novels, it is useful to address important examples in Pynchon scholarship which attempt to situate Pynchon's work in various ways. Perhaps one of the most prominent political, historical and cultural contexts in which the California trilogy can be read is the counterculture of the sixties, which has previously been identified as one setting of these novels. In her important book-length study of Pynchon's engagement with this era, *Thomas Pynchon and American Counterculture* (2014), Joanna Freer "offers an elucidation of certain elements of Pynchon's political philosophy".<sup>170</sup> An undertaking inspired by Samuel Thomas' "developed and notable" critical dialogue with Pynchon's politics, Freer distils the scope of her selected political landscape, and frames her commentary specifically within the era of the sixties counterculture.<sup>171</sup>

From the outset, Freer is careful to define her use and understanding of 'the counterculture' in terms that are most conducive to reading Pynchon's work. Though Freer is aware of a tendency in cultural commentary to bisect "traditional political activism of the era" and "its cultural manifestations", in the form of the Beats, hippies and psychedelic movement, she instead chooses to define the counterculture for her purposes

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<sup>170</sup> Joanna Freer, *Thomas Pynchon and American Counterculture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 2.

<sup>171</sup> Freer., p. 2.

as “the entire oppositional sixties”, with the Beats posited as a kind of “proto-countercultural” group.<sup>172</sup> In formulating this definition, Freer touches on some of the complications that the term counterculture often provokes, namely the separation of the personal and the political. She uses an explanation provided by Alexander Bloom of the counterculture as “the interconnection of the political, the cultural and the social” in support for her own decision to include traditional political activism in her definition of the counterculture.<sup>173</sup> Freer’s reasoning that this era signified a moment when “the personal became political”, will become crucial to how the counterculture is examined in this study, especially in the context of spirituality.<sup>174</sup>

Aside from locating Pynchon’s texts historically, Freer’s method of using ‘intertexts’ in her analysis allows for important relationships to develop between Pynchon’s novels and other literary movements or specific texts. *The Crying of Lot 49* and *V.*, for example, are read against the “core countercultural values” of “surprise, joy, freedom, and spiritual meaningfulness” that are also found in the character trajectory of *On the Road*, whilst *Gravity’s Rainbow* is read in the light of “Pynchon’s perspectives on Black Panther Party political theory”, with writings and speeches of the organization used as informing texts.<sup>175</sup> As a result, Freer situates Pynchon’s work within a holistic view of the counterculture, the values, literary output and associated movements and ideologies of which, reverberate throughout the more expansive historical range of Pynchon’s work. The countercultural era is therefore not a closed historical period, but a lens through which Pynchon can reflect on prior historical events. While it should be noted that Freer’s analysis is not limited to the California novels, nor does its designs necessitate an

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid., p. 12-13.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Freer, pp. 9, 11.

acknowledgement of this grouping, its method of projecting an historical period i.e. a particular grouping of events, onto other historical periods that Pynchon delineates, is another way of viewing the operations of this thesis. The California novels can similarly be viewed as a grouping of texts with primary concerns and contexts, but also as a fresh lens through which to view Pynchon's other works. This does not undermine Pynchon's engagement with the immediate concerns of the trilogy, nor does it devalue the original insights of these texts, but rather it suggests a more useful relational reading of Pynchon's oeuvre outside of the tired epic/local dichotomy.

The identification of the counterculture as a significant context of Pynchon's work is in itself important for the parameters of this study. While the diegetic time of the California novels is typically said to span this era, the range of contexts in this analysis will not be limited to this timeframe. In her approach, Freer similarly notes the importance of beginning her analysis in "the pre-countercultural 1950s", so that the "originating source" of Pynchon's politics can be uncovered and explored.<sup>176</sup> This idea of precursors also operates in Pynchon's understanding of the counterculture era, with a similar distortion or reconfiguration of linear time when making these kinds of connections. Freer acknowledges this distortion especially given the retrospective projection of Black Panther Party politics onto a "fictional history of a black revolutionary organization [the Schwarzkommando] in Second World War Germany".<sup>177</sup> This historical looping allows Pynchon to comment on both the "potential weaknesses of the BPP and other oppositional groups of the 1960s", but also allows for reflection on "the particular exigencies of the Second World War Europe they inhabit, larger global themes and issues such as the legitimacy of leadership in religious and political contexts, and the

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<sup>176</sup> Freer, p. 9.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

contemporary socio-political landscape of late 1960s and early 1970s America in which Pynchon was writing [*Gravity's Rainbow*]"<sup>178</sup> This method will be similarly employed in this project, with textual detail being used to identify and analyse both immediate contemporary concerns, and informing or analogous historical reference points.

That this era has strong associations with California and the West Coast of the U.S. also strengthens an argument for historically situating a study based on novels sharing a common California setting in this period. Thus in this project, the counterculture operates more situationally perhaps than as a transportable set of values. The composition of a trilogy notionally set in the twenty years that covers both the crest and decline of the counterculture era, allows Pynchon to examine this period at specific historical junctures. However, what is particular to Pynchon's process of examination and re-examination is the consistent return to California to measure the condition of the counterculture. While this historical and geographical setting is also suggestive and representative, and can function in the multi-referential way that Freer's study champions, what emerges perhaps is not so much a view of the counterculture era, but of the Californian manifestation of the counterculture.

This distinction is not a semantic indulgence, but is important in the attempts of this thesis to demonstrate how the encounter between the counterculture and California contributes to Pynchon's nuanced and complex relationship with this period. The separation between preserving the values of the counterculture and the co-option of these values by the state is rarely clear cut in Pynchon's delineation of the counterculture in California. This is headed by the symbolic People's Republic of Rock and Roll of *Vineland*. Founded as a reaction to the discovery that its predecessor, The College of the

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid., pp. 11, 106.

Surf, “a lively beachhead of drugs, sex and rock and roll” (*VL*, p. 69), had always been in the hands of the state at all levels, the Republic also finds itself infiltrated and constantly under surveillance, not least by “a hundred-foot colossus in black and white marble...towering above the campus architecture” (*VL*, p. 205), a monument of Richard Nixon, “an obvious symbol of repression to come”.<sup>179</sup>

A useful touchstone in undertaking this attempt to present the simultaneous freedom and repression that characterises Pynchon’s depiction and understanding of California in this era is Mike Davis’ *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (2006). Though this study is not directly engaged specifically with either the historical period or even cultural framework of the counterculture, its expository approach to a ‘shadow’ social history of Los Angeles is a useful template for a similar undertaking with a view to the social history of Pynchon’s California.

Focused specifically in Los Angeles, rather than California as a whole, *City of Quartz* presents the dichotomous city, which is “the terrain and subject of fierce ideological struggle”.<sup>180</sup> What is curious about this presentation is its vantage point, Davis’ interest lies not so much in what Los Angeles has produced in terms of original cultural output, but rather the “history of culture produced about Los Angeles”.<sup>181</sup> In other words, the way in which Los Angeles itself has become mediated in culture and in social imagination. Though Davis’ study is grounded in producing a social history of the city, his channel is formed of the “literateurs, filmmakers, musicians and artists”, who have constructed and reconstructed L.A. by way of their “spectacle”.<sup>182</sup> This method

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<sup>179</sup> Cowart. p. 119.

<sup>180</sup> Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (London: Verso, 2006), p. 20.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

reinforces Davis' vision of Los Angeles as the culturally-constructed city. The significance of the fabrication of a place by creatives, and not through mechanical, practical or structuring processes, is not at odds with Pynchon's thesis on how the concept history as whole could be alternatively configured. In his novel that is so concerned with foundational processes, *Mason & Dixon*, Pynchon proposes that History should not be "left within the reach of anyone in Power", but rather should be tended by "fabulists and counterfeiterers, Ballad-Mongers and Cranks of ev'ry Radius".<sup>183</sup> Though more playful in his suggestion, Pynchon's idea of alternatives in the historical process, or in this context and more situationally speaking, city building, certainly finds common ground with Davis' inclination.

The suggestion of alternative social histories proves very useful in approaching the California novels. As is also the case in Davis' study, Pynchon incorporates and tends towards lesser-emphasised histories, such as the labour movements outlined in *Vineland* or lost communities of *Inherent Vice*. Some of the most prominent histories in these novels are familiar and critically well-surveyed. It cannot be surprising that Ronald Reagan, twice governor of California, should feature so heavily in novels set in California both during his terms as governor and on the eve of his re-election as president, however that Reagan should feature so heavily in a novel so concerned with the fate of the counterculture is more interesting. This is where Davis' shadow history approach proves most useful. In this sense, shadow should not simply be considered as a dark, conspiratorial underbelly, but rather as a (darker) projection or product of that which the light has been shining on. In Davis' case, United States Air Force Plant 42, located just outside of downtown Los Angeles cannot be seen as being apart from the 10,000 public

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<sup>183</sup> Thomas Pynchon, *Mason & Dixon* (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1997), p. 350.

housing units that could have been built instead of the Stealth Bombers it houses. In the same way, Pynchon's depiction of the counterculture era cannot be viewed as separate from the Reagan administration. What is perhaps slightly divergent in Pynchon's portrayal is that the countercultural era plays the role of both light and shade. It is a suggested era of possibility, but it is also explored for its "complicity in all it had despised and struggled against".<sup>184</sup> Similarly, from the vantage point of the eighties, it can also be seen as an era of subjunctive possibility, or of "the faith that anything was possible" (*VL*, p. 210). As in Davis' treatise that the best way to view Los Angeles is "from the ruins of its alternative future", perhaps an important way to view Pynchon's depiction of countercultural California, is from its outcomes.<sup>185</sup>

Another potential overlap between Davis' survey of Los Angeles and this study of Pynchon's California, lies in the preface to the book. In a method similar to that proposed by this thesis, Davis relates the history of Llano del Rio, a small desert community just outside of metropolitan Los Angeles, in order to illustrate and situate larger, more pervasive trends in Los Angeles' history. Davis' relates that since its foundation in 1914 by eight members of the Young People's Socialist League, Llano and its surrounding area has been transformed into "the Pentagon's playground" for military exercises, and has become the "last frontier" for Southern Californian land development.<sup>186</sup> The use of a specific geographical example to extract a larger social and historical totality is effective in Davis' introduction, and this template of a situational example of historical, political and cultural phenomena will be extended in this thesis, as the introductions to the contexts of Esalen, Luna and Forest Lawn/the Larkspur Miwok burial ground have

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<sup>184</sup> Cowart. p. 88.

<sup>185</sup> M. Davis, p. 3.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

previously outlined. Similarly, Davis' sentiment that in Los Angeles, "developers don't grow homes in the desert...they just clear, grade and pave" will reverberate through this study's discussions of California land use.<sup>187</sup> Finally, his evocation of real estate developers Kaufman and Broad, who reappear in Pynchon's own 'desert community', will come to reinforce the notion that California, like L.A., is a place that both 'brings it all together' and is "the nightmare at the terminus of American history".<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

## CHAPTER ONE: *THE CRYING OF LOT 49*

### “Crying for a Dream”

#### Orientation

A persistent identifier of *The Crying of Lot 49* is that it is a novel concerned with patterns, structures and ordering systems. For Oedipa, one of the most significant concerns underpinning her quest to discover the meaning behind Pierce Inverarity’s will and the reality of the Tristero is whether a “pattern was beginning to emerge”, (*L49*, p. 61) or whether she is simply “project(ing) a world” onto the material world that she encounters. (*L49*, p. 56) Though this precarious attempt to find intrinsic meaning, beyond that which has been imposed, can be understood as symptomatic of the paranoiac, one of Pynchon’s most significant and recurring personalities, the quest for meaning can also be understood in the context of the unsettled psychology and cultural politics of the period in which *Lot 49* was written.

The centrality of the quest for meaning in the novel is supported by other readings of *Lot 49*, such as its being understood as a California detective story, or more specifically as adhering to “the conventions of the L.A. private-eye-sub-genre”<sup>189</sup> given Oedipa’s supposed role as private eye and the use of a distinctive California setting in which the plot can unfold.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> McHale compares the conventions of *Lot 49* to those practiced by writers such as Erle Stanley Gardner, Raymond Chandler and Ross MacDonal, who are responsible for infamous detectives such as Perry Mason, Philip Marlowe and Lew Archer. Brian McHale, *Postmodernist fiction* (London, Routledge, 1989), p. 22. For one discussion of *Lot 49* as a California detective story see Tony Tanner, *Thomas Pynchon* (London: Methuen, 1982), p. 56.

<sup>190</sup> In a 1965 letter to his agent, Candida Donadio, Pynchon characterizes *Lot 49*, which he was working on at the time as a “potboiler”, catering to popular taste and referring, if only perhaps in jest, to Pynchon’s fondness for pulp fiction. See Pynchon qtd. in Gussow.

While locating the features of *Lot 49* that resemble the California detective genre is certainly useful in rooting the quest narrative in a specific geographically-located genre, which serves to reinvigorate both the influence of the private eye story on Pynchon and a sense of the novel's 'Californianness', Suradech Chotiudompant reworks this definition by suggesting that *Lot 49* is more of a parody of the detective genre, where the "disentanglement of the mystery" is undercut by a lack of an ultimate solution.<sup>191</sup> It is Chotiudompant's emphasis on the lack of solution, though necessarily his suggestion that this is due to parodic reasons, that is perhaps more useful in understanding some of the framing concerns of this approach.<sup>192</sup>

While Pynchon's presentation of the mechanics of discovery will also be explored later in this argument, at this juncture, it is the notion that in Pynchon's reworking of the genre there are "no longer causal chains that incorporate ultimate meaning", that is a more useful starting point.<sup>193</sup> This suggestion not only broadens the scope of the detective novel but furthermore proposes that it has the capacity to uncover a truth that is not limited to the scope of the mystery at hand. Though straightforward lines of causality may have been erased, Oedipa's quest narrative nevertheless provides a structure in which meaning can be sought, even if that meaning is also less straightforward and easily understood. Chotiudompant's reading is therefore sympathetic to the notion that in Pynchon's revision of the detective story, the quest itself becomes less direct, however, this

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<sup>191</sup> Suradech Chotiudompant, 'From Dupin to Oedipa: Thomas Pynchon's Parodic Take on Detective Fiction', in Yajai Chuwicha, ed., *Manusya: Journal of Humanities*, 8/1 (2005), p. 68.

<sup>192</sup> Although Pynchon dabbles with some of the conventions of the California detective story outlined here, his commitment to this genre is more fully realized later in *Inherent Vice*, which can be seen as a much more sustained study and example of this type of fiction.

<sup>193</sup> Chotiudompant, p. 81.

thesis will also contend that the detective story still allows for the possibility for meaning to be found.<sup>194</sup> Thus, the California detective story, in which Oedipa Maas attempts to uncover the truth of a mysterious postal system, can also be viewed as an investigation into the very structures and systems of California itself by way of Oedipa's inquiry into its "outward patterns". (*L49*, p. 15)

With a strong contextual emphasis, specifically the historical tension of the Cold War and the rise of techno-political anxiety, this reading begins with Edward Mendelson's claim that *The Crying of Lot 49* is shaped by religious histories, before extending this notion to suggest that *Lot 49* is also a quest for spiritual enlightenment.<sup>195</sup> An important departure from Mendelson's approach to the text is that attention here will not be drawn necessarily to "a history that extends hundreds of years across the religious crises of Reformation and Counter-Reformation in Europe and the Americas",<sup>196</sup> but instead will hone in on less-discussed alternative spiritualities, with a view to introducing the American Indian Vision Quest as another possible relevant framework within which the novel can be understood. The immediate geo-political context of California, suggested by Pynchon's textual particularity, creates a specific focal point and also allows for the wider moment in American Cold War history to be re-framed.

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<sup>194</sup>Chotiudompant, p. 81.

<sup>195</sup> Edward Mendelson, 'Pynchon's Way: A Note on Amy Hungerford's *Postmodern Belief*', The University of Chicago (June 2010), last accessed 2 February 2106, <<https://divinity.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/imce/pdfs/webforum/062010/Mendelson%20Hungerford.pdf>>.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

## Spiritual and Critical Bases

At the height of the Cold War, and with the enduring legacies of the Second Red Scare and McCarthyism, the social adherence to traditional domestic religion seemed a patriotic duty against the imminent threat of Godless communism. Nevertheless, recent scholarship by Diane Kirby claims that the relationship between religion and the Cold War has not been properly scrutinized as part of the historiography of the period.<sup>197</sup> Kirby responds to this lack of scholarship with an argument that the Cold War was in fact “one of history’s great religious wars”, since religious arguments were employed as political tactics and “Christianity was appropriated by Western propagandists and policy-makers for their anti-communist arsenal”.<sup>198</sup>

Kirby’s contention that the U.S. administration viewed the conflict as a “particular sort of Christian enterprise” is legitimized, given that 96% of Americans in 1957 attested to belonging to specific church affiliations, which would make a political appeal to Christian values worthwhile.<sup>199</sup> The emphasis on Christianity, especially from the post-war Truman administration, also highlighted the “common cultural traits and values that united Europe and the U.S”.<sup>200</sup> Though this attempt to emphasise commonalities between the U.S. and Europe seems inevitable and logical following a renewed Allied relationship, these “common cultural traits and values” were also a useful reminder of the atheism of

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<sup>197</sup> Diane Kirby, *Religion and the Cold War* (New York: Palgrave, 2003), p. 2.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., p. 3. For all statistical sources see Ross Gregory, ‘Chapter 8 Religion’, in Richard Balkin, ed., *Cold War America 1946 to 1990. Almanacs of American Life* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2002), p. 223.

<sup>200</sup> Kirby, p. 78.

communism for “left-leaning Europeans [who] viewed American capitalism with suspicion”. Any potential atheistic side effect could therefore be countered through reinstating the shared Christian cultural heritage between Europe and the U.S.<sup>201</sup>

This cultural relationship between Europe and the U.S. can also be felt in the events that shape *The Crying of Lot 49*. European cultural insertions, such as the fictitious Jacobean play *The Courier’s Tragedy*, the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century European origins of the Tristero, and the echoes of Beatlemania in the form of one of the novel’s bands The Paranoids, function as direct cultural links. More profoundly, it is also the suggestive and representative quality of *Lot 49*, with its expansive allusions (the law firm of “Warpe, Wistfull, Kubitschek and McMingus”) (*L49*, p. 5) and compacted references (“kirsch”) (*L49*, p. 5) that allow for these Euro-U.S. commonalities to be affirmed. While *Lot 49* (and the California trilogy as a whole) is specific to its own immediate concerns and contexts, i.e. the state of affairs in the U.S. in the mid-1960, it can be understood in line with Charles Hollander’s macropolitical reading that it is also a meditation on “how mid-Sixties America resembled Nazi Germany, the Dutch republic and the Roman empire at their worst”.<sup>202</sup> In a similar method to that proposed by this thesis, Hollander uses textual detail to stake his claims. As an example, an allusion to the Russian ships “Bogatir” and “Gaida-mak” (*L49*, p. 32) in Pynchon’s delineation of the history of the fictional Peter Pinguid Society, founded to commemorate the Confederate

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<sup>201</sup> Kirby, p. 78.

<sup>202</sup> Charles Hollander, ‘Pynchon, JFK and the CIA: Magic Eye Views of *The Crying of Lot 49*’, *Pynchon Notes*, 40-41 (1997), pp. 100-1.

man-of-war, can be read as a reference to “Russo-American relations during the American Civil War”<sup>203</sup> that Hollander uses as a comparative history for the novel.

While this idea of the dynamic between the specificity and the broader representative quality of *Lot 49* is also an important factor in maintaining a sustained engagement with the California trilogy, given the more immediate concerns with a contextual quest for meaning, this representative quality can be understood more pointedly. The method of targeting potentially suggestive detail is also crucial to introducing and elaborating a social and cultural context for the text; namely how heretofore peripheral religious and spiritual ideas began to resonate with certain groups in U.S. society.

Internally, American society had begun questioning the validity of religion in general in society, headlined by the infamous 1966 *Time* magazine issue, which asked “Is God Dead?” The accompanying article sought to explore the relevance of God in a growing secular society, and explored both philosophy and individual approaches to faith as solutions to the lack of interest in a traditional notion of religion.<sup>204</sup> Aside from the provocative headline, the article attests that there remained a curiosity amongst American people about God, but that the contextual framework provoked and necessitated a different, more applicable answer to the American public’s spiritual needs.

Given this development, when “well-known President and unintentional Luddite”<sup>205</sup> Eisenhower spoke in 1954 of America’s “spiritual weapons” as the country’s most powerful resources, he could not have envisaged that the “religious

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<sup>203</sup> Hollander, p. 100.

<sup>204</sup> John T. Elson, ‘Toward a Hidden God’, *Time Magazine*, 87/14 (April 8, 1966), pp. 82-7.

<sup>205</sup> Thomas Pynchon, ‘Is It O.K. To Be A Luddite?’, *New York Times* (28 October, 1984), last accessed 2 February 2016, < <https://www.nytimes.com/books/97/05/18/reviews/pynchon-luddite.html>>.

faith of America's heritage" could actually extend back much further than its Christian history.<sup>206</sup> Indeed, as Pynchon himself comments in his introduction to *Slow Learner*, Eisenhower (or "Ike" as he is referred to here and in *Gravity's Rainbow*) seemed content with "a lot of aimlessness", and so as he left office in 1961, when a resurgence of inquiry into alternative faiths was only just beginning, his departure also marked an end to the 1950s, the decade that "people growing up during them [had been convinced] would last forever".<sup>207</sup> Pynchon, however, does credit Eisenhower with the prophecy that there would be a "permanent power establishment"<sup>208</sup> of the 'Military-Industrial Complex', an idea which will also be explored later as an outstanding feature of the parallel secular landscape of Pynchon's California. For now, it is this spiritual inquiry as a profound marker of the ensuing countercultural era that this approach suggests has implications for Oedipa's quest in *The Crying of Lot 49*.<sup>209</sup>

The combination of both spiritual renewals and social upheavals of this period provides a unique context for *The Crying of Lot 49*, and will be developed using other historicist readings of this 1960s text. However, in order to expand upon this kind of existing criticism on *The Crying of Lot 49*, it is important to analyse and rethink the specific spiritual-political context in light of these distinguishing spiritual and social changes.

The 1960s saw a growing minority of Americans reject the beliefs and

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<sup>206</sup> Jeremy T. Gunn, *Spiritual Weapons: The Cold War and the Forging of an American National Religion* (London: Praeger, 2009), p. 2.

<sup>207</sup> Thomas Pynchon, *Slow Learner* (London: Vintage, 2000), p. 14.

<sup>208</sup> Pynchon, 'Luddite'.

<sup>209</sup> Pynchon engages with a fictionalised President "Ike" Eisenhower later in *Gravity's Rainbow*. Here he is a General who "insisted on" something "real", and is also responsible for the Psychological Warfare Department, who report directly to him. Thomas Pynchon, *Gravity's Rainbow* (London: Vintage, 2000), p. 87.

institutions of Western religion altogether. By 1970, a year previously cited as being crucial in the California trilogy, statistics provided by the *Cold War America* (2014) volume of *Almanacs of American Life*, a series that claims to provide an “unprecedented amount” of facts, statistics and tables for the delineated period, attests that only 40% of people actually attended church, and 75% of people polled believed that religion was losing its influence.<sup>210</sup> Though proponents of the Cold War maintained a Christian-fronted crusade, Americans on the home front were doubting the spiritual integrity of this belief system, and though willing to back the cause on patriotic grounds, were seemingly spiritually unsatisfied by the offerings of Christianity.

Though mainstream religion was losing its foothold, the quest for meaning and a sense of spirituality that defined and protected the needs of the individual against the psychological uncertainty of the Cold War and the social uncertainty of the 1960s as a whole became an increasing concern, and manifested itself in one sense in the rise of the exploration of alternative spiritualities. As Steven M. Tipton explains, many Americans, youths in particular, joined alternative religious movements as a response to the “discontinuous cultural change” i.e. the conflicts between mainstream culture and counterculture during the 1960s, and to help make moral sense of their lives during this period of political uncertainty.<sup>211</sup> Society was now searching for “honest” and “compassionate” meaning against a culture perceived as being addicted to making money and war.<sup>212</sup>

Mendelson cites *The Crying of Lot 49* as being exemplary of this idea.

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<sup>210</sup> Gregory, pp. 222, 230.

<sup>211</sup> Steven M. Tipton, *Getting Saved from the Sixties: Moral Meaning in Conversion and Cultural Change* (California: University of California Press, 1982), p. xv.

<sup>212</sup> Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 256.

Though his analysis of *Lot 49* does not fully situate the text contextually, his summary that Oedipa's quest is about "the possibility of religious meaning, and the effect of that possibility on both private and public action",<sup>213</sup> is indicative of a shift in the perception of the purpose and necessity of religious matters. This shift can be elaborated to suggest that though traditional religions no longer provided a valid framework for daily life, some sense of spirituality was still a necessity in attempting to address any notion of meaning in life. Mendelson's understanding of Pynchon's engagement with spirituality as a way to connect events for "a reason that mattered to the world", is therefore attuned to the paradigm shift in spirituality during this period.<sup>214</sup>

Plainly speaking then, this shift is a process of turning away from definitive rubrics that dictate lifestyle, and towards more esoteric methods for gaining insight into the potential meanings of life itself. Traditions of dogmatic belief and rote ritual were cast aside for experimental spiritual practices. Those experimenting with alternative faiths are well-documented, from Ginsberg and Kerouac's attraction to Asian mysticism, to Aldous Huxley's studies of experiential religion outlined in the Introduction, to The Beatles' dabbling with Hinduism and Eastern philosophy. Indeed, as previously stated, early Beatlemania, before the Yogi years, provides part of the cultural backdrop to *The Crying of Lot 49*. In his 1966 novel *Been Down So Long It Looks Like Up To Me*, Pynchon's friend Richard Fariña summarises the potential methods that can be used to achieve what he calls a state of 'Exemption' from the demands of life- "Eastern religion, road epiphanies,

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<sup>213</sup> Mendelson, 'Pynchon's Way'.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

mescaline, love”,<sup>215</sup> which also usefully provides a neat summary of the types of alternative practices that characterised the spirituality of the 1960s’ counterculture.<sup>216</sup>

Most who sought alternative faiths turned to varying forms of Buddhism and Hinduism, finding greater affinity with Asian spirituality (a trans-Pacific dynamic that is important in the trilogy), than familiar, domestic religions, as Lew Welch explains in his poem ‘Geography’:

“The Far East is west of us,  
nearer by far,  
than the Near East,  
and mysteriouiser”.<sup>217</sup>

Pynchon is also mindful of this inquiry and remembers that at this time “the wisdom of the East came back into fashion” (*SL*, p. 9). In this recollection, Pynchon draws a distinction between the Beat interest in Eastern religion and the “hippie resurgence” (*SL*, p. 9) that came along ten years later. The distinction is that “it was the same, only different” (*SL*, p. 9). Pynchon suggests that this crucial difference can be accounted for in the fact that this experience is “secondhand” (*SL*, p. 9), and that is can only be somewhat salvaged by a sense of nostalgia and vindication. That Pynchon suggests that the time when the hippie revival “came back into fashion” (*SL*, p.9) is a second-hand experience of cultural phenomena that has been packed in a palatable way for consumers is important considering some of textual detail that has contributed to this particular reading of *Lot 49* using a Vision Quest

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<sup>215</sup> Richard Fariña, *Been Down So Long It Looks Like Up To Me* (New York: Penguin Books, 1996), p. viii.

<sup>216</sup> As well as writing the introduction to the 1983 publication of Fariña’s novel, Pynchon was also a friend and best man at his wedding, and dedicated *Gravity’s Rainbow* to him. Fariña’s status as a prominent figure of the counterculture also further reinforces Pynchon’s association with the movement.

<sup>217</sup> Lew Welch, *Ring of Bone: Collected Poems* (San Francisco: City Lights Publishers, 2012), p. 126.

framework.

It is not surprising then that scholarship has already explored this contemporary influence on Pynchon's work. Though he is not often categorised alongside writers such as Ginsberg, Huxley, Thompson and Kerouac, who are recognized as having influenced countercultural thinking, or at least, as Joanne Freer argues, for helping to shape a proto-countercultural landscape, the acknowledgement that he is a writer of the 1960s does help draw him into these concerns.<sup>218</sup> Robert E. Kohn, for example, explores the Buddhist themes of *Lot 49* by insightfully linking specific allusions in the text to references in Buddhist philosophy. As well as providing a suitable alternative framework in which to view the novel, this interpretation is particularly constructive in establishing a spiritual context for the novel. And while Kohn's focus is on Buddhism above any other faith, his introduction of an alternative spiritual framework in which the novel can be read, further supports the intentions of this study to present the Vision Quest as another potential framework.<sup>219</sup>

Kohn is not alone in his evaluation of Pynchon's work as being redolent of a particular context. Scholarship by David Witzling acknowledges specific social conditions in which Pynchon's 1960s work was written, and provides an important social context for Pynchon's concerns. Focusing specifically on contextual issues of race, Witzling explores the emerging "distinct voice and

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<sup>218</sup> David Cowart notes John Krafft's observation in 1984, that Pynchon's work has been neglected by the "cultural historians of the 1960s". Cowart suggests that this has been somewhat rectified in recent years by scholarship that has ostensibly, but not necessarily directly, begun to make connections between Pynchon's work and the cultural context of the 1960s. Although Cowart details some examples, he does not seem to be convinced that this aspect of Pynchon's work has been excavated in depth. Cowart, p. 210.

<sup>219</sup> See Robert E. Kohn, 'Seven Buddhist Themes in Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*', *Religion and Literature*, 35/1 (2003), pp. 73-96.

concerns” of African-Americans in the 1960s in Pynchon’s writing, and uses this framework in order to articulate what he describes as “Pynchon’s critique of whiteness”.<sup>220</sup> Significantly, he also argues that in this historical period marked by the civil rights movement, it is “hardly surprising” that Pynchon’s work during this time deals more prominently with race, and attempts to establish a direct relationship between historical context and literary output.<sup>221</sup> In fact, Witzling even proposes that Pynchon’s writing is in fact “symptomatic” of an American culture in which “black subjectivity”, spurred on by the rise of Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X as media icons, was being re-evaluated.<sup>222</sup>

This critique casts Pynchon in the role of interrogator, or more pointedly, interrogator of his own responsibility and outlook as a white American “liberal” in the new found acknowledgement of the “black voices around him”.<sup>223</sup> In this sense Pynchon is found to be sympathetic. However, while his 1966 essay ‘A Journey Into the Mind of Watts’ directly addresses the issues of race in the Watts district of Los Angeles, his own experience and expression of these events are still distinct from the kinds of experiences he is exploring. For Witzling, with all the “coolness” that distinguishes the “narrative tone often associated with postmodernism” (in contrast to the “hot affects associated with identity politics”), Pynchon’s writing cannot escape being linked to a critique of Pynchon’s own racial and social identity.<sup>224</sup> While sympathetic, and with efforts to decentre authority, his fiction lends itself to being the writing of the specific kind of “white liberal”

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<sup>220</sup> David Witzling, *Everybody’s America: Thomas Pynchon, Race, and the Cultures of Postmodernism* (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 116.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>224</sup> Witzling, p. 12.

who is forced to interrogate his own position.<sup>225</sup>

Pynchon long-held characterisation as a postmodernist writer and categorized alongside writers such as Vonnegut and DeLillo is complicated by the fact that his concerns and deep-rooted interest in matters of spirituality, community and collective histories and narratives can be seen to affiliate him with lesser-associated writers such as Toni Morrison, Louise Erdrich and Gerald Vizenor.<sup>226</sup>

Certain critics have however broken ground in rethinking this classification. Cyrus R. K. Patell's study *Negative Liberties: Morrison, Pynchon and the Problem of Liberal Ideology* (2001), for example, even in its title, finds cause to associate Pynchon with Morrison. Patell is sensitive to the longstanding tendency "in the current critical climate" to separate Pynchon and Morrison on the grounds of "difference in personal genealogies and their approaches to intellectual life".<sup>227</sup> However, what Patell finds are a series of "formal affinities", in which both writers produce experimental and self-consciously difficult prose.<sup>228</sup> In addition to aesthetic similarities, Patell also challenges preconceived notions of the political aspects of Morrison and Pynchon's postmodernity, arguing that while Morrison is generally regarded as an author whose work "arises out of historical conditions of social marginality", Pynchon's work has not yet been satisfactorily recognised in

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<sup>225</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>226</sup> The chapter description for Brian McHale's 'Pynchon's Postmodernism' provided by the *Cambridge Companion to Thomas Pynchon* is unequivocal about Pynchon's status as a postmodernist writer. Short of claiming him as the definitive postmodernist writer, it claims "so ubiquitous is Pynchon in the discourses about postmodernism that we might go so far as to say, not that postmodern theory depends on Pynchon's fiction for exemplification, but that, without Pynchon's fiction, there might never have been such a pressing need to develop a theory of literary postmodernism in the first place". Inger H. Dalsgaard, Luc Herman and Brian McHale, eds., *The Cambridge Companion*, p. 97.

<sup>227</sup> Patell, p. xvi.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

this way.<sup>229</sup> He then uses this connective postmodern aesthetic and emerging sense of comparable political outlook to explore both authors' treatment of individualism and communalism, specifically with a view to challenge the "the official narrative", and to reinsert the stories of the "disenfranchised, marginalized and brutalized".<sup>230</sup> This aim at reinserting the stories of the disenfranchised is a similar impetus to the approach of this thesis. In suggesting a rethinking of the disenfranchised, or in Pynchonian terms, the preterite themselves, it is possible to uncover these 'stories', or potential contexts for the novel. As this discussion develops to the point at which the Vision Quest can be introduced, the counterculture's relationship with of one group of candidates for Pynchon's preterite, American Indians, will be both reinserted into the Cold War narrative and contribute to the emerging alternative context for *Lot 49*.

Patell's exploration of the political implications of these subjects is also a concern of this analysis, in this first instance in consideration of the reconfiguration of the established religious narrative of the U.S. in the 1960s, but also in following chapters in relation to Pynchon's engagement with marginalised and disappearing communities. Patell's ready perception that there is a shared platform from which Pynchon and Morrison can voice their concerns, despite difference in social identity and their typically considered "radically different subject positions", therefore proves a useful pathway for this thesis.<sup>231</sup>

This commonality is more extensively suggested and explored by John McClure, who from the outset of his *Partial Faiths* (2007), reorganises writers from many traditionally-configured "domains", the postmodern, the African-

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<sup>229</sup> Ibid., p. xvii.

<sup>230</sup> Patell., p. xviii.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid., p. xvi.

American, the postcolonial and the Native American, under the newly-configured banner of the “postsecular”.<sup>232</sup> His treatise on the postsecular and reasons for grouping these writers together is based on specific shared features of their respective writings. Namely, that they are secular projects with religious inflections, which have been rearticulated since their religiosity has been tintured by “secular, progressive values and projects”.<sup>233</sup> His readiness to consider Pynchon alongside Erdrich, Momaday and Silko in terms of their spiritual engagement is a refreshing and thoughtful breakaway from easy and traditional categorical assumptions, and can be used to challenge the assumption of Pynchon’s ‘postmodernity’ against Morrison and Erdrich’s writing of social-marginality. McClure’s emphasis on the spiritual is negotiated through ‘social’ preoccupations that Pynchon is explained to have addressed through secular and spiritual means.

McClure also argues that Pynchon’s responses to environmental crises, his regard for collective narratives, his democratising of traditions, and his pluralism, are derived from multiple discourses, both secular and religious. This ‘borrowing’ from multiple and divergent sources can be contextualised specifically within the larger cultural moment that critical commentators have argued Pynchon is acutely attuned to. For McClure, with the help of McHale’s thought, this ‘moment’-stemming from a crisis of faith in rationality and an unprecedented “intermixing of diverse communities”- can give recourse to a serious challenge to secular constructions of reality in a “profoundly pluralistic universe”.<sup>234</sup> To McClure, it is

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<sup>232</sup> John A. McClure, *Partial Faiths: Postsecular Fiction in the Age of Pynchon and Morrison* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007), p. 30.

<sup>233</sup> McClure, *Partial Faiths*, p. 3.

<sup>234</sup> McClure, *Partial Faiths*, p. 28.

especially important that this is not confined to the literary text.

McClure's challenge gives theoretical weight to David Cowart's portrayal of 1960s America as a period of awakening to massive social issues and problems of inequality and racial injustice. Cowart uses the same realisation, that America discovered that not all its citizens were "white and prosperous", to explain the motivation for the character of Oedipa Maas uncovering a "diseased social present".<sup>235</sup> Cowart further acknowledges the enormous pressure of the Military-Industrial Complex, the Vietnam War, and a more general state of "racism, economic marginalization and general neurasthenia", as specific examples of the contextual ills being uncovered by Oedipa,<sup>236</sup> and in doing so, reveals the social scene which Pynchon has chosen to portray.

Cowart's exhumation of this particular social context, with the aid of McClure's proposition that this context allowed a co-mingling of discourses in a tangible way, together with Witzling's decision to focus this theoretical attention on a particular influential social group, provide useful indicators and models for re-examining the emergence of other social groups, namely, for the emphasis of this study, American Indians, whose existence and subjectivity was also beginning to be recognised during this period.<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> Cowart, pp. 90-1.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>237</sup> In the ongoing debate between the use of the term Native America versus American Indian, or even lesser-used terms such as Amerindian, there is no wholly satisfactory or conclusive agreement as to the most culturally sensitive, nay, least problematic, designation, especially for the purposes of a collective term that refers more broadly to the people indigenous to what is now the U.S. While the Bureau of Labor Statistics and Census surveys have shown that 49.76 percent of 'American Indians' preferred this term, and 37.35 percent preferred 'Native American', the two are often used interchangeably with little difference in scale in terms of encountering opposition and offence. See Clyde Tucker, Brian Kojetin and Roderick Harrison, 'A Statistical Analysis of the CPS Supplement on Race and Ethnic Origin', *Bureau of Labor Statistics* (1996), last accessed 21 March 2015, <<http://www.census.gov/prod/2/gen/96arc/ivatuck.pdf>>. Although it is generally agreed that this kind of broad referencing is in itself problematic, it is often unavoidable in this argument, when it is used as a result of engagement with historical material where this collectivisation has occurred, and therefore this dialogue cannot be more specific. It is also used to reflect historical

## Rethinking American Indian History

### Then

The 1960s were “healthy and significant”<sup>238</sup> in facing, perhaps for the first time on any real scale, the question about what had happened to American Indians in American history. Of course, the Civil Rights Movement in America was in its stride in the 1960s with a distinctive narrative of anti-segregation, resistance, protest and equality. These ideals that fuelled the fight for change for African-Americans were equally as applicable to American Indian peoples, though their Civil Rights Movement is not nearly as well recognised. As existing Pynchon criticism suggests, the acknowledgement of the emerging African-American voice in the literary world began receiving critical attention.<sup>239</sup> Both Witzling and Cowart’s analyses respond to these newfound voices and subjectivities, and are important developments based on very significant contextual factors, however what this scholarship has perhaps overlooked is the emerging American Indian voice as also being a candidate for one of Pynchon’s preterite.

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approaches when sensitivity and acknowledgement of distinct tribal groups was not a consideration. The use of this umbrella term therefore reflects this attitude. Where possible, individual tribal endonyms are used, however, where this is not possible, exonyms are used instead. For the purposes of this study, the umbrella term used will be consistent with the terminology of the source material, however, when the designation is my own usage, American Indian will be used. Although census data also marginally shows preference for American Indian, this term is used with an anecdote of Slavoj Žižek’s in mind. When discussing this same issue with so-called Native American, Sula Montana, who hated the term, she explained, “You call me Indian, at least my name is a monument to White man’s stupidity”. See ‘Žižek on Racism’, youtube video of lecture (12 February 2011), last accessed 16 August 2016, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p4YJAs6Cv9I>>. The ‘American’ prefix is a practical necessity to distinguish between discussion of American Indian and the Indian subcontinent.

<sup>238</sup> Noam Chomsky, ‘1492: The First Invasion of Globalization’, *Latin America: From Colonization to Globalization* (Melbourne: Ocean Press, 1999), p. 11.

<sup>239</sup> Witzling notes how representations of race can be charted through Pynchon’s early fiction, especially in his “representation of jazz culture” influenced by Norman Mailer’s essay “The White Negro”, and Kerouac’s *On the Road*. Witzling, pp. 7, 30, 33.

One reason why this emergent group has perhaps been overlooked, both historically and in terms of accompanying literary criticism, is the challenging and ambiguous demands of the American Indian Civil Rights Movement in comparison to the African-American Civil Rights Movement. General mutual concerns and demands, such as freedom from discrimination, the right to free speech, and equal protection under the law, become complicated when being applied to a group that was also fighting for sovereignty. It is this demand for sovereignty that is perhaps the biggest departure from the concerns of the African-American Civil Rights Movement. Given American Indians' unique position, in contrast to other minority groups, as being indigenous to American soil and therefore existing and self-determining before any kind of American government, it is difficult to satisfy American Indian demands with straightforward inclusionary policies.<sup>240</sup> Whereas the call from a separatist wing of the Black Civil Movements for a separate Black homeland was a radical and revolutionary assertion, sovereignty in American Indian culture was a central concern and a tradition that needed to be upheld.

The relationship between American Indian people and the established

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<sup>240</sup> The notion of a pre-American space is especially relevant in consideration of *Mason & Dixon*, a novel concerned with foundations and origins. The text is similarly often preoccupied with the forces of "philosophical rationalism, spiritual yearning, and economic rapacity", which compete for prominence in the emerging landscape of America. Cowart, *Dark Passages*, p. 138. The presence of American Indians is therefore a reminder of pre-American possibilities and, in more specifically Pynchonian terms, of the subjunctive quality of the pre-American space. Subjunctive spaces are especially significant in consideration of the geographies of all three novels of the California trilogy. The subjunctivity of *Vineland* can be measured in terms of both its countercultural history and the continued Yurok presence in the landscape, and while *Inherent Vice* also re-examines the potentials of the counterculture, it also introduces ideas of subjunctive homelands with extended discussions of Atlantis and Lemuria, and utopian communities such as Arrepentimiento. *Lot 49's* treatment of the subjunctive space is perhaps the most spiritually inflected, meditating on the significance below the surface, which is not measured in the same historical or mytho-historical layers as *Vineland* and *Inherent Vice*. The subjunctive space here, strongly associated with the geography of San Narciso, is also fluid with ideas of America, which will come into play in later discussions. However, as in *Mason & Dixon*, the interplay between the spiritual and scientific opens up the subjunctive space further, with the nuclear aspect of the city, which will be elaborated on later contributing to further, less optimistic, potentials.

system is perhaps therefore more ambiguous in this sense than the relationship between African-Americans and the same system. Du Bois' articulation of "double consciousness"<sup>241</sup> is a useful tool in explaining the difference between African-American and American Indian self-identification. "Double consciousness", according to Du Bois, attests to a reconciliation of received heritage and learned or enforced identity. In relation to the African-American experience of "double consciousness", this means identifying as both a "Negro and an American"; being conscious of an African heritage whilst being an active member of American society.<sup>242</sup> For American Indians, the struggle for self-government differentiates this identification slightly, for although there are significant historical inclusionary treaties, including one signed July 8, 1917 that stated, "Upwards of 300 Cherokees (Heads of families) in the honest simplicity of their souls, made an election to become American citizens", the principles for these treaties came from practical concerns such as land ownership and questions of nationhood.<sup>243</sup> In this example, 640 acres of land was received by the Cherokee, but only by agreeing to become citizens. The acceptance of citizenship is therefore perhaps bound to a more practical motive for gaining land ownership, and much less to do with self-identification as an American citizen. Similarly, the offering of citizenship had more to do with separating 'acculturated' American Indians from 'unacculturated' American Indians, with a broader view of denationalising tribes altogether, than receiving American Indian people as willing American citizens.

Although critics, such as Thomas Moore, have discussed how many critical

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<sup>241</sup> W. E. B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Dover Publications), p. 2.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>243</sup> William G. McLoughlin, 'Experiment in Cherokee Citizenship, 1817-1829', *American Quarterly*, 33/1 (1981), p. 3.

commentators have cited Pynchon's ancestor William Pynchon may have been a potential source for the *Gravity's Rainbow* character William Slothrop, his influence can be seen also given his treatment of American Indians during the settlement of New England.<sup>244</sup> William Pynchon (1590-1662) was involved in a long dispute with rival Captain John Mason over differing attitudes towards the treatment of American Indians. And while William Pynchon's nature was said to be conciliatory, trading for corn and beaver furs, being on good terms with the Mohawks, Mason's approach was "aggressive and brutal".<sup>245</sup> The ancestral influence that has been recognised in shaping William Slothrop can be similarly used in exploring Pynchon's personal stake in detailing colonial practices, which is useful in terms of both uncovering and explaining source material, but also aids in the reconfiguration of the politics of Pynchon's postmodernity according to Patell's definition. Although Pynchon is of course not writing from the perspective of the "socially marginalized", this ancestral link with issues of colonialism, implicates Pynchon more pointedly than simply through being a "white liberal".<sup>246</sup>

With a tenuous and tense history of inclusionary politics in the context of a struggle for sovereignty, a much less publicised Civil Rights Movement, and less direct textual engagement from Pynchon, it is perhaps understandable that contextual approaches might not immediately recognise American Indians as obvious subjects for Pynchon's preterite. However, as is being established, in the case of American Indians the preterite/elect dynamic is not just a metaphor, but has true historical substance. Through reinserting these overlooked histories into

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<sup>244</sup> For a survey of those drawing this kind of connection see Thomas Moore, *The Style of Connectedness: Gravity's Rainbow and Thomas Pynchon* (Missouri: University of Missouri, 1987), p. 135.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> Witzling, pp. 21, 45.

the framing context of *Lot 49* it is possible to re-evaluate the material historical potential of the designation preterite. If American Indians have not as yet been recognized as being amongst “the left out, the passed over in every form of election (spiritual, economic, racial, cultural)”<sup>247</sup> in terms of their status as preterite, then a rethinking of the historical ‘passing over’ of American Indians would certainly strive to redress this assumption. A re-evaluation of the historical foundation for preterition therefore serves to reinforce the potential for the historical application of the designation preterite, and brings the contextual relevance of American Indian histories to the foreground. Pynchon’s suggestion of a rethinking of ‘Columbus Announcing His Discovery’ (*L49*, p. 120) through his illustrative presentation of this event as a stamp in the novel is therefore, historically and textually, a useful place to start.

Although Columbus never set foot on what has become U.S. soil, his arrival in the Americas is used (however anomalously) as an historical landmark in U.S. history. Whether in the observance of Columbus Day as a national holiday, or the use of ‘pre-Columbian’ to demarcate between the indigenous histories of the Americas and European arrivals, the symbolic quality of Columbus is historically evident, and is deployed in a similar way in *Lot 49*. Chomsky observes this historical marker in a similar way, arguing that after October 12, 1492 “[commonly accepted as the date of Columbus’s arrival in the Americas]”, almost 100 million human beings disappeared in 150 years.<sup>248</sup> Though historians continue to debate the statistic, a “working rule of thumb” is that American Indian

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<sup>247</sup> Cowart, *Dark Passages*, p. 84.

<sup>248</sup> Chomsky, p.10.

populations have seen a decrease of around 95% since European arrival.<sup>249</sup> Though critics and historians continue to re-evaluate and debate the cause of this mass loss of life, as well as the aftermath of first contact encounters, what is surely uncontested are the brutal and sustained policies of conquest, elimination, displacement and assimilation of American Indian people under the celebrated term of 'discovery'.<sup>250</sup>

With the arrival of Europeans in America, the Columbus-oriented history as the official founding narrative begins, but also serves to redact the stories of the millions of people who already inhabited the pre-Columbian country. The implications of Columbus' arrival, or perhaps more specifically, his announcement of this, is clearly troubling and problematic to Pynchon. This is most overtly and pithily articulated in his redesign of the 15c stamp of *Lot 49*, which now depicts "the faces of three courtiers, receiving the news [whose faces] had been subtly altered to express uncontrollable fright". (*L49*, p. 120) The subject of the stamp and the cause of such a scene is "Columbus announcing his discovery". (*L49*, p. 120) The stamp, part of "1893 Columbian Exposition Issue", (*L49*, p. 120) has presumably been issued to coincide with the World's Columbian Exposition of the same year in commemoration of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Columbus' arrival in the Americas. The symbolic quality of Columbus is therefore reinforced by this commemoration, but is also inverted by Pynchon who understands the

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<sup>249</sup> David E. Stannard, *American Holocaust: The Conquest of the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. x.

<sup>250</sup> While Pynchon's engagement with displacement will become a key focus in chapter three, debates over genocide and displacement are also obliquely referenced beyond the California trilogy. One such pointedly relevant example occurs in *Gravity's Rainbow*, in which the Argentinian anarchist, Squalidozzi makes reference to the U.S. history of American Indian extermination, with the statement, "We tried to exterminate our Indians, like you", emphasizing the deliberate quality of this action (*GR*, p. 314).

significance of this landmark event in a different way. The reception of Columbus with “uncontrollable fright” (*L49*, p. 120) focuses attention on the more damaging implications of his arrival and suggests a different reading of his arrival. In the context of an alternative postal system, the stamp serves to pronounce an alternative evaluation of that which Columbus has come to symbolise, and can therefore in itself be read as an alternative historical text. For reasons that will become clearer as the discussion develops, it is also important to note that the stamp is a pictorial depiction of an alternative representation of this history, a detail that is tied to proposed Vision Quest framework.

Jerry D. Stubben also challenges the perceptions of a pre-Columbian reading of American history, arguing that broadly speaking, American Indian society had long since established many of the structures and mechanisms associated with European arrival.<sup>251</sup> He states that “American Indian political activism, dissent and protest are thousands of years old and were fully developed by the time the first Europeans arrived in America”<sup>252</sup>, and describes a very progressive social tradition of debate and consensus in political tribal life, focusing on unanimity in decision making as essential to the process. He argues that this political framework of open and free discourse, without fear of retaliation, has influenced both modern day American democracy, and movements such as women’s suffrage and the Civil Rights Movement. Stubben’s characterisation of American Indian political activism before and after European contact is one of collaboration. He emphasises key events where Native and Non-Native people

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<sup>251</sup> Jerry D. Stubben, *Native Americans and Political Participation: A Reference Handbook* (Santa Barbara: ABC Clio, 2006).

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

joined forces in efforts to foster change and influence the democratic process. Despite this, in a chapter of the history of the Tristero detailed in *Lot 49*, the messengers of the Tristero are only “*disguised* as Indians”, mimicking their dialects, instead of working with them to create more successful outcomes .

However, in beginning to represent American Indian tribes as political entities, American Indian people become recognized in the political realm. Though this is important in characterizing acts of American Indian activism, ranging from direct conflicts such as the Great Pueblo Revolt or Wounded Knee, to less familiar forms of resistance such as Neolin or the Ghost Dance movement, it is also key in understanding the importance of symbolic action in *Lot 49*. These acts of resistance are significant precursors to groups such as the Society of American Indians (SAI), the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), which inform the contemporary political climate of alternatives methods of operating. This specific alternative political context is especially relevant to the suggested Vision Quest framework for *Lot 49*, and necessitates some further expository work in order to become clearer.

### **Now**

Though the 1960s and 1970s was not the beginning of American Indian activism, either independent and collaborative, it was during this period that public consciousness was raised in issues and concerns of American Indian people. It is also in the founding of groups such as the SAI, BIA and NCAI that American Indian people were more generally perceived to have become politically realized, since they were operating within a known political framework. Active membership in formal groups and participation in recognized forms of protest,

such as marches and sit-ins, redefined American Indians as political freedom fighters, whereas less-familiar methods of protests, such as Ghost Dances, which will be discussed at greater length later in the chapter, had characterized those same people as villains in Western narratives.

This supposed political “awakening” changed the perception that ‘Native’ people belonged only to the realm of nature, which had been fostered even in legal classifications.<sup>253</sup> The political ‘awakening’ of American Indian people was similarly fulfilled in keystone events of this period, such as the Occupation of Alcatraz, The Trail of Broken Treatise March and the Occupation of Wounded Knee, which changed the public’s perception of how American Indians related to politics, and demanded that they should be included in more mainstream political discourse.

A key focalization of this apparent shift in perception was in the countercultural attitude towards Native peoples in a general sense, and a re-emergence in interest in Native cultures. Geographically, this focalization can be located in specific parts of the U.S., particularly the West Coast and especially in California’s Bay Area. The disaffected youth of America’s Cold War, which constituted elements of the counterculture according to Freer’s previously outlined definition of the “oppositional sixties”,<sup>254</sup> found in American Indian culture an “important American-based, alternative way of living”<sup>255</sup>, which they

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<sup>253</sup> An example of this is that indigenous Australian peoples had until 1967 been managed by the same departments as “fauna” since they were “not counted” as part of the human population. Ron Sutton, ‘Myths Persist About the 1967 Referendum’, *SBS* (11 March, 2014), last accessed 18 September 2015, <<http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2014/03/10/myths-persist-about-1967-referendum>>.

<sup>254</sup> Freer, p. 8.

<sup>255</sup> Sherry L. Smith, *Hippies, Indians, and the Fight for Red Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 43.

could come to believe in.<sup>256</sup> That American Indians were also considered politically charged was another important aspect of their appeal and added to the countercultural value that the figure of the American Indian seemed to possess. Given this climate of seeking alternatives in California, it is possible to situate and re-frame Oedipa's quest in the same way. Though at the outset she is instructed with settling Pierce's will, this initial task becomes complicated once she is exposed to aspects of society that has previously been unknown to her. The sense of the unknown and the alternative is apparent through her quest narrative, especially given the mystery of the Tristero, which soon preoccupies her voyage through San Narciso and San Francisco. The proposal of the Vision Quest as another framework through which Oedipa's narrative can be understood as supported by this heightened social and political context of seeing alternatives to traditional or familiar systems.

However, the counterculture's relationship with the figure of the American Indian is by no means straightforward or unproblematic. In channelling a less altruistic interest in Native spiritualities, the American Indian as a meaningful political figure becomes somewhat clouded by nebulous conceptions of Native religions.<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> It is important to note that the term 'American Indian culture' is used as an umbrella term, as in the aforementioned use of 'American Indian' to encompass the hundreds of varying, divergent and independent American Indian tribal cultures. This broad term is appropriate in this instance to highlight the lack of specificity and sensitivity towards particular tribal practices and customs when such cultural appropriation occurs. The term is also used in the discussion of critical material, where the material itself has employed this term and is therefore faithful to the tone and attitude of the material being used. Where there are instances where individual tribes are specified, the appropriate names are used accordingly, however, critical material and social testimony alike generally use 'Native American culture' or 'American Indian' as an arch-term to encompass all American Indian tribal groups.

<sup>257</sup> Pynchon's early short story, 'Mortality and Mercy in Vienna', includes an Ojibwa character, Irving Loon, who provides cultural material for "conversation at parties" for the other non-Native characters. His mere silent presence causes the other characters to speculate on whether he is suffering from "nostalgia for the wilderness" or some "divine melancholia". They discuss, in anthropological terms, how Ojibwa men must "experience a vision" which will cause them to

This retrospective interest in Native religions, linked to Pynchon's aforementioned perception of Eastern religions coming back into fashion, was fuelled by an outpouring of literature (some dating back as far as the 1940s, including many of Frank Waters' Pueblo Indian chronicles), that was re-read and re-examined as possible sources of spiritual guidance.<sup>258</sup> An important text of this period, *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge* (1968) by Carlos Castaneda,<sup>259</sup> published as a work of anthropology, relates the experiences of Castaneda during his time under a self-proclaimed Yaqui sorcerer- don Juan Matus- between 1960-65.<sup>260</sup> The foreword to the text establishes from the outset a conflict between so called Yaqui ways of seeing, and Euclidean or Aristotelian models of reasoning, with the effect of creating two distinct worlds "that exist in tension with each other". This tension will also come to be experienced by Oedipa as she becomes more attracted to the potential of the elusive, symbolic Tristero, but cannot defer from the comfort of the tangible or the familiar. Furthermore,

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acquire a "supernatural companion". It is significant that at this early stage of his writing career, Pynchon's treatment of American Indian culture is focused on external perceptions and understandings, either in academic terms or with a contextual inclination towards notions of "altered perception" in mind. The idea of visions will also form a more significant aspect of analysis of *The Crying of Lot 49* later in this chapter. Thomas "Tom" Pynchon, 'Mortality and Mercy in Vienna', *San Narciso Community College* (1997), last accessed 11 April 2015, <<http://www.pynchon.pomona.edu/uncollected/vienna.html>>.

<sup>258</sup> Philip Jenkins, *Dream Catchers: How Mainstream America Discovered Native Spirituality*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 139.

<sup>259</sup> Carlos Castaneda, *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge* (California: University of California Press, 1968).

<sup>260</sup> The Yaqui are the native inhabitants of what is now the northern Mexican state of Sonora. Following many years of conflict between the Yaqui and the Mexican government over land rights, resulting in the Yaqui Wars of the late 1800s and the deportation thousands of Yaquis to areas in the south of the country, many fled to the U.S., settling in "the urban areas around the cities of Tucson and Phoenix" in Arizona. See James B. Minahan, *Ethnic Groups of the Americas: An Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara: ABC Clio) p. 385. Although don Juan considered himself a Yaqui from Sonora, Castaneda argues that due to his extensive travelling he was unsure whether to place don Juan's knowledge "totally in the culture of the Sonoran Indians", (Castaneda, p. 5) and decides that specific cultural location is not strictly important. Though California is of course historically intertwined with Mexico in more modern times, and Pynchon himself is said to have been living in Mexico before *Lot 49* is published, the lack of cultural specificity on Castaneda's part is indicative of the generalizing approach of these kinds of enquiries in Native cultures and religions.

having established this dichotomy, Castaneda outlines an “alien world”, in which perceptions and modes of seeing are fundamentally different to what “we” as non-Yaquis understand. Thus, the experiences of this “alien world” presented in Castaneda’s account are consistently at odds with what we understand of “our own world”. If then the reader is approaching the text as someone unsatisfied with the “limitation [of] our culture and our own language”, in the way that Oedipa begins to see the limitations of that which she has become accustomed to, then this, the Yaqui, or indeed any other alternative way, becomes viable.<sup>261</sup>

Pynchon’s interest in the figure of the shaman, invoked by Castaneda, is similarly well documented. From the Kirghiz episodes of *Gravity’s Rainbow* to Kit and Prance of *Against the Day*’s quest for Magyakan, a shaman of the Shanyagir clan of the Tungus tribe of Siberia, Pynchon not only evokes the figure of the shaman, but discusses the role or notion of the shaman in both religious and political discourse. The particular ‘political’ role of the shaman will be invoked in later discussions of countercultural alternatives to conventional methods of resistance, however, it is important to establish both a contextual and Pynchonian interest in this figure in terms of a cultural and symbolic role.

The perpetuation of Castaneda’s account, along with its forbearers such as *The Hopi Way* (1944) by Laura Thompson and Alice Joseph, and John Collier’s *Indians of North America* (1947), reflects the onset of a revitalized engagement with American Indian spirituality as a refuge from the perceived potential disasters of Western modernity. As an indicator of the importance of *The Hopi Way* in particular, Philip Jenkins cites a review that claims that Thompson and Joseph’s

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<sup>261</sup> Castaneda, p. vii.

account demonstrates that the Hopi way of life is more peaceful and spiritually fulfilling than the “unworkable materialism” of ‘Western civilization’.<sup>262</sup> Pynchon similarly comments on a perceived friction between faith and the Age of Reason, acknowledging “some profound unwillingness to give up elements of faith, however “irrational”, to an emerging technopolitical order that might or might not know what it was doing”.<sup>263</sup> Both statements reflect, though Pynchon’s commentary crystalizes, an outbreak of anti-modern anxiety resulting from dissatisfaction with staid religious frameworks, fear of advancing technology and the incumbent threat of nuclear disaster. The appeal of this alternative framework, as a response to techno-political and cultural anxiety, is an important basis for this thesis’ proposed context for *Lot 49*. The suggestion of introducing the framework of a Vision Quest for the novel cannot be understood outside of this particular socio-political context, and in order for this context to be fully elucidated it is important to re-evaluate the 1960s relationship between the nuclear/techno-political landscape and American Indian spirituality.

### **Playing Indian/Being American Indian**

One aspect of the appeal of American Indian spirituality as a viable alternative model is the perception that it is founded on an engagement with Nature, and is therefore in direct ideological contrast with a Cold War mentality in which populations have “watched nuclear weapons multiply out of control”.<sup>264</sup> The threat of technological global destruction by hydrogen bombs that “might

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<sup>262</sup>Jenkins, p. 139.

<sup>263</sup> Pynchon, ‘Luddite’, pp. 40-41.

<sup>264</sup> Pynchon, Luddite, p. 41.

alter the genetics of *all* life on this planet”, though unwittingly, highlights the interconnectedness of all aspects of life, since destruction was no longer confined to local and specific war arenas, but played out on a global scale.<sup>265</sup> This notion of interconnectedness, contextually perceived as another central tenet of American Indian belief, also importantly relates to the sense of connectedness that Mendelson finds in Pynchon’s understanding of spirituality in *The Crying of Lot 49*, which is defined by concerns of this period.<sup>266</sup>

In his provocative paper ‘The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis’, which questions Christianity’s part in facilitating ecological damage, Lynn White argues that a culture’s ecological standpoint is dictated by its spirituality, so that its ecological education is learned through its spiritual framework.<sup>267</sup> He argues that the ecological disasters being highlighted at the time of writing the paper in the early 1970s are born of a long Christian history that established a “dualism of man and nature”.<sup>268</sup> Furthermore, White argues that the science and technology that exacerbate these ecological ills are “tinctured with orthodox Christian arrogance towards nature”.<sup>269</sup> As a useful parallel to White’s thesis, Vine Deloria Jr. speculates that “today we rely entirely too much upon the artificial universe that we have created, the world of machines and electricity”, and reinforces a tendency in American Indian thought away from technology and towards a nature-based alternative.<sup>270</sup> In *God is Red: A Native View of Religion*, Deloria Jr.

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<sup>265</sup> Lynn White, ‘The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis’, University of Vermont (3 November 2003), last accessed 3 June 2014, <<http://www.uvm.edu/~ENV-NGO-PA395/articles/Lynn-White.pdf>>.

<sup>266</sup> Mendelson, ‘Pynchon’s Way’.

<sup>267</sup> White.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid.

<sup>270</sup> Vine Deloria Jr, *For This Land: Writings on Religion in America* (New York: Routledge. 1999), p. 257.

offers a first-hand treatise on this much-speculated upon subject. Importantly, he relates the specifically environmental dimension of American Indian spiritual practices, affirming that they are “derived primarily from the environment around us”,<sup>271</sup> whilst reiterating that traditional religions, namely Hebrew, Islamic and Christian traditions, have perpetuated the view that “the planet...is not our natural home and is, in fact, ours for total exploitation”.<sup>272</sup>

The growing dissatisfaction with Western religions, and Christianity in particular, contrasted by a rise in engagement with American Indian spirituality, can conversely also be viewed as a tendency towards a more ‘holistic’ alternative.<sup>273</sup> Pynchon’s statement that there is a reluctance to relinquish faith for another uncertain set of beliefs i.e. the technopolitical order, can be modified in accordance with White’s theory that instead of relinquishing faith, we need to “find a new religion, or rethink our old one”.<sup>274</sup> It is perhaps on this kind of epistemological precipice that we find Oedipa in *Lot 49*. Unable to fully relinquish belief in that which she has come to know as a suburban housewife, it is also apparent that she is unable to ignore or “forget” the “other revelations” that she begins to experience once she ventures out of her guarded social and cultural space (L49, p. 61).

More consciously, Ram Dass, a prominent spiritual leader in the 1960s who worked to integrate Eastern spiritual philosophy into Western thought, confirms that members of the 1960s counterculture did in fact begin to investigate

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<sup>271</sup> Vine Deloria Jr, *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion* (Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing, 2003), p. 149.

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 304.

<sup>273</sup> Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 251-2.

<sup>274</sup> White.

American Indian spirituality as a viable alternative to both White's notion of old religion, and Pynchon's technopolitical order. Dass describes the attraction of the counterculture to an image of a peaceful, community-based people with a devotion to the Earth and all things natural, together with an accompanying depiction of visiting some Hopi Indian elders where this perception is confirmed, "I went as a representative of the hippy community of San Francisco to meet the Hopi Indian elders to arrange a Hopi-Hippie-Be-In in Grand Canyon. We wanted to honour their tradition and affirm our common respect for the land. As you can guess, it was during the Sixties".<sup>275</sup> The notion that American Indian spirituality is founded on a sense of profound connectedness is reiterated in the image of the elders as "look[ing] like roots in the earth. There was something so absolutely connected about the whole quality of their presence".<sup>276</sup> The term 'connectedness' is somewhat of a woolly notion in this context, used broadly and without cultural specificity, however it is perhaps appropriate given the kind of jargon used to convey this sort of dubiously learned understanding of American Indian spirituality. In a Pynchonian context, the notion of connectedness even outside of the notorious paranoid framework, can be viewed, according to Thomas Moore, as an assertion against "the habitual reification of either/or contraries".<sup>277</sup> It is Pynchon's effort, Moore argues, to "penetrate all interfaces that seem separate" and not necessarily seek connections, but rather highlight the connectedness that has heretofore been obscured by the impulse to separate.<sup>278</sup> For Oedipa, the idea of making connections between the things that are revealed to her about Pierce's

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<sup>275</sup> Ram Dass and Paul Gorman, *How Can I Help? : Stories and Reflections on Service* (New York: Knopf, 1986), p. 7.

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>277</sup> Moore, p. 3.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*

will and the Tristero are crucial. She in fact explains to her husband, Mucho, “I want to see if there’s a connection. I’m curious” (Lot 49, p. 52).

Thus, the obvious imagery of man and nature coming together in Ram Dass’ vision, in contrast to “anthropocentric” Christianity, reiterates some of the holistic appeal of American Indian spirituality in both this cultural context, and also with Pynchon’s perspective in mind.<sup>279</sup> Incidentally, Pynchon comments briefly but directly on this perceived sense of interconnection in American Indian culture in an episode of *Mason & Dixon*, where it is said that “inside any one Tribe of Indians, they’re all related...Kill you one Delaware, you affront the family at large” (*M&D*, p. 343).

This was also the period that spurred the founding of the Esalen Institute, alluded to later in *Vineland*, and the re-publication of John Neihardt’s *Black Elk Speaks* (1968), which have both become focal points for interest in, and replication of American Indian culture and spirituality. *Black Elk Speaks* has become a touchstone for the spiritual neophytes, particularly those who wanted a more ‘authentic’ version of American Indian spirituality, and sought a genuine Native narrative.<sup>280</sup>

The popularity of these writings, despite problematic sources, inevitably raises the question of authenticity in relation to sources of acquired American Indian knowledge, and specifically, the treatment of the figure of the American Indian as a countercultural symbol, as opposed to a spiritual individual. In exploring these questions, and more pointedly, the ways in which white

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<sup>279</sup> White.

<sup>280</sup> As with Castaneda’s account, *Black Elk Speaks* has also come under scrutiny from academics since its publication for questions and problems of authenticity and authorship, though Neihardt has always maintained that he was simply a practical conduit for Black Elk’s testimony. John Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), p. 291.

Americans have been 'playing Indian' historically, Philip J. Deloria relates how he understands the way 'authenticity' is used in this context. Deloria's definition is founded on the assumption that it is the spiritual upheaval of modernity that has instigated the quest for an "authentic social identity", and that appropriating American Indian spirituality is one method of realising this authentic self.<sup>281</sup> These questions of authenticity are apparent in Pynchon's depiction of the artificiality of Fangoso Lagoons, one of Pierce's commercial investments. The composition of this development typifies a cherry-picking approach to cultural accoutrements, the artefacts it includes are all imported from disparate geographical origins with a view to demonstrating some kind of cultural kudos, but are in fact presented as being displayed together rather crudely and unsympathetically.

Contextually speaking, Deloria's assumption tallies with aforementioned commentators' suggestions that the social condition of Cold War America sparked a search for meaning outside of the traditional religious paradigm, though Deloria expands upon this by offering a more specific outcome and target for this dissatisfaction. It is also important to note that Deloria's understanding of the authentic is centred on an assumption by non-Native people that there is an authentic version of 'Indianness', or American Indian spirituality to aspire to. As a result, the 'authentic' Indian is a creation of the aspirational Indian-player, and is shaped by certain requirements or standards of 'Indianness'.<sup>282</sup>

This archetype explains the output of authors such as Ram Dass, Carlos

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<sup>281</sup> Philip Joseph Deloria, *Playing Indian* (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 101.

<sup>282</sup> The model American Indian is namely one who has a received heritage which has been validated by history, would ideally be of 'Indian blood' and thus genetically authentic; would be living in a fitting geographical residence that conformed to the imagined ideal of the Indian (i.e. not on a reservation), and would possess a cultural attitude that conformed to the perceived traditional American Indian lifestyle. Deloria., p. 147-8.

Castaneda and John Neihardt, who are keen to initiate contact with *bona fide* American Indians who are living 'traditional' lifestyles, but not as anxious to relate the story of American Indian war veterans living on reservations. Deloria's model of the idealized Indian according to non-Indian standards can therefore be seen as a highly mythologized version of a historical assumption of 'Indianness', and is not always relatable to the contextual social figure of the American Indian. This model is particularly useful as a template for the type of Indian ideal that is subject to and desirable for appropriation, given the disjunction between this assumed way of life and the unappealing complexities of modernity. In adopting this model, appropriators are able to establish a vast and necessary dichotomy between the tipi-dwelling American Indian with a commitment to Nature, community and spiritual enlightenment, and the social reality of an emerging consumer culture, increasing doubts about established religious certainties and the experience of the Vietnam and Cold Wars, facing many U.S. citizens.

Aside from the obvious cultural stereotype that this kind of appropriation creates (which is problematic in itself), another problem with this kind of appropriation is the reality of imposing an imagined 'authentic' version on a particular group of people that is at odds with their social reality.

In their treatise on *The Ethics of Cultural Appropriation* (2012), Conrad G. Brunk and James O. Young discuss the implications of the appropriation of religion for the targeted culture and on the people it affects. Though they argue that sincere adoption of religion can be viewed as a "profound honoring of the culture", in that it suggests an affirmation of validity, and therefore respect, what they question are the methods of appropriation and the implications of this on something as

sensitive as religious practice.<sup>283</sup> The main aspects of this concern are for Brunk and Young, inauthentic, commercialised or distorted representations of Native religions by non-Native people, which becomes more problematic given the kind of pre-existing relationships that occur between the adopting and adopted cultures.<sup>284</sup> The argument is that in most post-colonial societies, as in the societal dynamic of American Indians in post-Colombian U.S., there is not a relationship between free and equal parties, which creates a pressure on the colonized culture to succumb to that of the imposed dominant culture. In this context, to then appropriate the religion of a colonized culture is to cause further harm, since the already diminished culture is distorted to its Native practitioners by the way outsiders view it. The main issue of contention is therefore not the adoption of a religious *belief*, but the appropriation of religious *practice*, and furthermore, to represent this practice as being *authentic* when practiced in the mode of a religion that has been adopted in a less-than-sensitive or unperceptive way.

Pynchon's awareness of the ethics of cultural appropriation is perhaps most blatantly manifest in his depiction of the Chryskyldon Institute of *Inherent Vice*. Featuring as a kind of latter-day Esalen type institute where visitors seek "silence and harmony with the Earth" (*IV*, p. 111), Chryskyldon is both a contextual response to the quest for alternative spiritual guidance (or as Pynchon puts it "the unprecedented stressfulness of life in the sixties and seventies") (*IV*, p. 111), and is the product of the related appropriation of these practices. Accordingly, while the name of the Institute purportedly comes from "an ancient Indian word meaning "serenity" (*IV*, p. 111), the Institute itself does not involve

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<sup>283</sup> James O. Young and Conrad G. Brunk, *The Ethics of Cultural Appropriation* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2012), p. 101.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.

any American Indians either in its establishment or in its operation, but rather functionally uses the contextual cachet of the Indian to add cultural value.

However, pre-dating this vision of the outpost of cultural and spiritual sensitivity is Pynchon's depiction in *Lot 49* of how American Indian identities have been adopted to suit particular contextual needs. A textual example specifically illustrates how playing Indian can be advantageous in particular contexts. In this instance, Mr Thoth, a resident of the Inverarity-owned Vesperhaven House, who Oedipa meets by complete chance, relates a dream about his grandfather, a rider for the Pony Express and "an Indian killer". (*L49*, p. 63) In an incident which Oedipa connects to a massacre at Wells, Fargo in which "men battled gallantly with a band of masked marauders in mysterious "black uniforms"", (*L49*, p. 63) the uniforms are revealed to be made of feathers, donned by the attackers in order to disguise and conceal themselves. Mr Thoth calls these "false Indians", (*L49*, p. 64) since in trying to disguise themselves they used a supposed Indian tradition of wearing feathers, but are of course not Indians. The designation 'false' is both immediate given the non-Native identity of the attackers, but also resonates in this context on a cultural level, given the practice of playing Indian that Philip J. Deloria et al. describe. Instead of wearing white feathers, as is traditional, the attackers wear black feathers, dyed using charred bones in order to become camouflaged with the darkness of night, and prove to be false. They are shown to be ignorant of the nuance and details of cultural practices i.e. Indians do not wear black feathers since they never attack at night, and therefore can only be 'false Indians'. However, in this example, it is not the assumed identity per se that proves problematic, but rather the lack of cultural sensitivity in this adoption that proves fatal.

The argument that it is the practice of these beliefs, i.e. how these ideas have been absorbed and are then reproduced by the adopting party, that is problematic and damaging, can be seen in Mr Thoth's narrative, and in Pynchon's wider vision of the commercial angle of cultural appropriation, manifest in the Chryskylodon Institute. These objections have been recorded historically in texts such as the 'Declaration of War Against Exploiters of Lakota Spirituality' (1993).<sup>285</sup> The 'Declaration' highlights specific ills and offenses caused by Non-Native practices of American Indian spirituality, and furthermore argues that in reinforcing "vulgar, sensationalist and grossly distorted representations of [Native] spirituality", politically and socially realised American Indians are reduced to subjects for Indian hobbyists.<sup>286</sup>

Frank Waters' 1963 *Book of the Hopi*, an "immensely influential" text for the discovery of Native faiths by non-Native people during this period of spiritual revitalization, illustrates how this chasm is created.<sup>287</sup> Waters' characterisation of the Hopi as "keeping at bay the technological civilization swirling about them", epitomises the convenient perception that American Indians during this period lived outside the technological age.<sup>288</sup> The possibility of being able to exist outside of the systemic nuclear fear that characterizes the Cold War period perpetuates

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<sup>285</sup> This document is an important landmark in the ongoing objective of American Indians to "regain control over their cultural and intellectual property". Though the issues involving land rights and control of natural resources also remains an immediate concern, less attention and consideration has been afforded to the control of "sacred objects...artefacts...artistic achievements, and the remains of...ancestors", the latter of which is an underlying concern in Pynchon's work, as previously outlined, and as will be further extrapolated in chapter three. For the purposes of this study, it is imperative to recognize that these questions of cultural and religious appropriation and violation have and continue to be raised from within American Indian communities, in this case from the Lakota, and are not simply a theoretical or academic concern, which is a further burden on American Indian cultural politics. See 'Declaration of War Against Exploiters of Lakota Spirituality', *American Indian Cultural Support* (10 June 1993), last accessed 6 June 2015, <<http://www.aics.org/war.html>>.

<sup>286</sup> 'Declaration'.

<sup>287</sup> Jenkins, p. 18.

<sup>288</sup> Frank Waters, *Book of the Hopi* (New York: Penguin, 1977), p. x.

the appeal of an American Indian way of life.

Waters' interpretation of Hopi mythology however, reveals that these supposed signs and prophecies are not undisturbed by increasing technological advances. Contextually-telling references to "atomic bombs and radioactivity" directly invoke Cold War imagery, and are repeated across other instances of prophecy, including those of Hopi activists Andrew Hermequaftewa and Thomas Banyacya, whose accounts warn that the "gourd full of ashes, so small, [is] going to be so hot, so powerful, that if he (sic) allows that to fall on the Earth someplace, it will just burn everything to ashes".<sup>289</sup> These visions of nuclear Armageddon are surprisingly similar to Oedipa's vision of how San Narciso might be destroyed by a hydrogen bomb, which will be discussed at greater length in due course. For now, however, it is important to acknowledge in building towards the introduction of the Vision Quest reading, that the contemporary search for viable alternatives becomes complicated and distorted by the nuclear factor.

Philip Jenkins observes that "mainstream observers produce accounts of native societies that all too clearly reflect their own backgrounds, their own interests and obsessions". This tendency to manipulate raw cultural material for a particular purpose is also part of Oedipa's process in attempting to discern the meaning in Pierce's will and the reality of the Tristero. The tension between recognising patterns and being lead by potentially false 'connections' is an aspect of nuclear anxiety, but also, as will become apparent, is something that must be navigated as part of the Vision Quest.

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<sup>289</sup> Quoted from Thomas Banyacya's speech at the Indigenous Uranium Forum held during the First Global Radiation Victims Conference, New York City on 28 September, 1987. See Kerry Richardson, 'Remembering Thomas Banyacya', *Sonic* (February 1999), last accessed 21 June 2015, <<http://www.sonic.net/~kerry/banyacya/thomas.html>>.

It is precisely this narrative of Armageddon, perpetuated by those such as Waters, that appeals during a period when the end of history is perceived as a real possibility.<sup>290</sup> However, the role of mythology, which for this purpose can be characterized as that which has been extracted from original belief and communicated as a coherent narrative, is further complicated by the way in which it is viewed and assimilated by cultural outsiders, as in the example of Waters. The attribution of mythological status to these prophecies in this instance can be seen as a way of displacing their content. Through this process, the visions become contained within a framework (mythology) which is not associated with having any real credence or factual basis, and therefore neutralizes the threat itself. As such, these prophecies do not fulfil Hermequaftewa and Banyacya's warnings, but instead reinforce and perpetuate the mystical status of the American Indian prophet. By extension, although there is naturally an awareness and understanding in American Indian societies of the nuclear threat, the non-Native relegation of these narratives to the realm of mythology maintains the status of American Indians as outside of society, and therefore still a viable 'alternative'.

In contrast to the belief that somehow American Indians lived outside the threat of nuclear disaster, as with the fallacy that they were not actively political, some American Indian writers, such as Leslie Marmon Silko, stress that American Indians were also not outside the fact of the Cold War experience. In her collection of essays, *Yellow Women and a Beauty of the Spirit* (1996), she discusses the history of uranium mining, a devastating aspect of the Cold War for many

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<sup>290</sup> Jenkins, p.6.

American Indian communities, in the Jackpile Mine, near her hometown, Laguna.

Silko remembers the “powerful psychological impact” that this had on her people, and how it spurred a “large body of stories...around the subject of what happens to people who disturb or destroy the earth”.<sup>291</sup> Silko also testifies that it was no coincidence that it was when the mining began that “the apocalyptic warning stories were being told”.<sup>292</sup> This account is important in challenging the conception of mythology, in that in these examples, American Indian stories function as testimony, and are the product of lived experience that has been translated through a specific cultural understanding. Similarly, as opposed to the contention of those such as Waters, American Indians were not outside of the nuclear experience, but rather were direct witnesses to its tangible effects and outcomes.

Silko reinforces how American Indian cultures were similarly affected by the nuclear threat, describing how these prophecies were generated as the product of accumulated collective knowledge. The resulting mythologies were therefore not derived from mystical or preternatural sources, but were created in tandem with lived experience. Waters’ preference for prophecy may create a desired and perhaps necessary mystical status for American Indians, however it ignores and undermines the real, lived experiences and problems of modern American Indian peoples at this time.

Silko is certainly not the first American Indian to testify to the utilization of traditional practices or methods of interpretation such as visions and prophecies

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<sup>291</sup> Leslie Marmon Silko, ‘Interior and Exterior Landscapes: The Pueblo Migration Stories’, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit: Essays on Native American Life Today*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), p. 44.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

at times of heightened threat or social dislocation. This adds credence to the suggestion of the Vision Quest framework for Oedipa's quest. However, it is perhaps during this period when the public, especially the counterculture, began reimagining and rethinking their own political practices, that long-standing American Indian approaches to political issues began to become recognized as legitimate political actions.

### **Spiritual Activism**

As previously discussed, the notion that American Indians had a sort of political awakening during the 1960s and 1970s, can be answered with a long history of uprising, activism and conflict. Amongst the more widely recognized and acknowledged forms of protest are practices such as The Ghost Dance Movement and the prophecies of Ganioda'yo (Handsome Lake), Wabokieshiek (The Winnebago Prophet) and Tenskwatawa (The Shawnee Prophet).<sup>293</sup> These methods are less easily identifiable as acts of political activism by recognized standards, but necessitate attention as such, especially in a context of spiritual and religious appropriation, and with the impending introduction of the Vision Quest in mind. What characterises these movements in particular, and makes them important in this context, is a common attempt by a group to re-shape or re-

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<sup>293</sup> The Ghost Dance Movement and the above prophets advocated religious revival as a means of cultural revitalization. Though these prophecies and practices were enacted as a means of preserving cultural identity and ensuring the longevity of particular cultural practices, they also contribute to a new understanding of socio-politics for tribal groups that have been affected and influenced by external cultural and religious forces. That a reinvigorated and reinforced religious system can be seen to withstand corrupting and damaging external influences, proves to be an act of resistance that will become crucial to the formation of a contextual political consciousness for American Indians.

configure a spiritual belief system as a means of resistance or self-preservation against an external cultural threat.

The most common term for actions fitting this description is a religious revival, though this is generally reserved for specific periods in Christian and Islamic history. Though recent scholarship has begun work on the role of religious revivalism in the (African-American) Civil Rights Movement, the religious revivalism of tribal or native people is often still treated in anthropological terms under the designation 'revitalization movement'.<sup>294</sup> Anthony F.C. Wallace's ground-breaking definition of revitalization movements is founded in part on his research into the religious revitalization movement of Ganioda'yo, and emphasises that such actions are deliberate, organised and conscious.<sup>295</sup>

Though there appears to be little dispute over the form that revitalization movements take, or the methods employed by leaders of revitalization movements, the motivation for a revitalization movement is also still treated in anthropological terms.<sup>296</sup> This distinction therefore seems to separate The Ghost Dance from, for example, the Revivalism of the black church before and during the Civil Rights Movement. While The Ghost Dance Movement is classified as an effort to construct a more fulfilling culture following a period of cultural stress imposed by outsiders, the Revivalism of the black church during this period is considered a bold spiritual statement with political effect.

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<sup>294</sup> Anthony F. C. Wallace, 'Revitalization Movements', *American Anthropologist*, 58/2 (1956), pp. 264-81.

<sup>295</sup> As Wallace explains, the revitalization movement is intentional and is a testament to a social imperative for change. This also broadens the scope of the revitalization movement from being an anthropological phenomenon to potentially being a political statement, if considered according to a different framework. Wallace., p. 265.

<sup>296</sup> A common feature of revitalization movements are the elimination of alien persons, customs, values, and/or material from the particular culture and the restructuring of a culture with emphasis on the institution of customs, values, and even aspects of nature which are thought to have been in the culture of previous generations, but are not now present. *Ibid.*, p 267.

In order to consider The Ghost Dance movement, or the actions of Ganioda'yo, Wabokieshiek and Tenskwatawa as being more akin to political or social protests than anthropological changes, the perception of these movements within their specific contexts needs to be re-evaluated. What is true of all of these movements is that they occur during periods of massive social and cultural upheaval. And though they occur as a result of a conflict or threat to cultural and spiritual stability, they are not simply a reaction but a counter-action: deliberate, organised and conscious. That these movements employ spirituality as the predominant base from which to draw this counter-action is perhaps what makes them less traditionally recognisable as being political in nature.

In each of these cases a spiritual leader, or prophet, through numerous visions, encourages his people to change their spiritual practices in ways that will be beneficial both to their spiritual health and social situation. These visions often include Vision Quests, which are induced to seek answers from a primary spiritual base about matters including social and cultural change. The application of the Vision Quest framework to Oedipa's quest is appropriate therefore given that she has been tasked with managing and discovering the meaning behind Pierce's will, without yet knowing the potentially far-reaching implications these discoveries may have. Similarly, that it has been argued that Oedipa's quest can be characterised in religious or spiritual terms reinforces the Vision Quest reading.

In all of the aforementioned examples social change is realised through spiritual revival, which produces "religiously charged struggle[s]".<sup>297</sup> The prophecies usually carry a message of the need for change in order to ensure that

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<sup>297</sup> Tracy Neal Leavellen 'American Indians', in Philip Goff, ed., *The Blackwell Companion to Religion in America* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell), p. 404.

traditional tribal practices continue, even if they are reformulated to incorporate outside (usually Christian) ideas. Tenskwatawa, for example, though prophesying a need to reject non-Native practices such as the consumption of alcohol, incorporated a version of the Catholic rosary into his religious practice.

The success of these prophecies, though not always measured in calculable terms, such as success in battle, seems to be accounted for in an outcome of a reinvigorated sense of identity, produced through a revitalization of a spiritual foundation. This idea of what is now called reconversion is used in modern practices, where American Indians who are seeking to overcome social issues, such as substance abuse, re-connect with an ancestral spirituality as a “source of dignity and pride”.<sup>298</sup>

The idea that a renewed sense of identity and dignity can be achieved through a spiritual revival, and that this revival is also positive action against damaging social conditions, is clearly nothing new in American Indian cultures. However, for non-Native people in the tumultuous social-scape of 1960s America, the turn to the religious or spiritual as a means to enact social change or rediscover a sense of self in a society that had declared an end to meaning, seemed a new, exciting and viable alternative. Oedipa, as is being demonstrated, is not outside of this context, and in fact, her departure from that which she has previously known into unchartered cultural (and spiritual) terrain is contextually consistent.

The American Indian as a countercultural alternative figure is thus given another dimension. Not only does the American Indian, viewed in a state of authenticity (as previously outlined), embody all the desired characteristics

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<sup>298</sup> Abbott Sekaquaptewa, ‘The Hopi Nation’, in Edna Glenn, John R. Wunder, Willard Hughes Rollings, and C. L. Martin, eds., *Hopi Nation: Essays on Indigenous Art, Culture, History, and Law* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska-Lincoln Libraries, 2008), p. 29.

through living a deeply spiritual, communal life in harmony with Nature, but is now also suggestive of an alternative method by which to achieve this desired state. In this sense, the American Indian, at least symbolically, becomes an embodiment of rootedness, whilst also fulfilling a countercultural quest for cultural, spiritual and political alternatives.

The dialogue between Sean McCann, Michael Szalay and John McClure, initiated by McClure in response to McCann and Szalay's article 'Do You Believe in Magic? Literary Thinking After the New Left' (2009), addresses the role of "magical thinking" in the formulation of viable political movements.<sup>299</sup> The back and forth response reflects the paradigm shift in methods of resistance during the 1960s, in both political and literary terms.<sup>300</sup> McCann and Szalay's criticism of countercultural methods of resistance focuses its energy on the "symbolic" protests that emerged during this period. The shift from direct action i.e. protests, marches, sit-ins etc., to the symbolic action that they describe seems centred around a faith in the esoteric, over the tried-and-tested. Invoking Norman Mailer, they assert that the new generation "believed in LSD, in witches, in tribal knowledge, in orgy and revolution", a variance on Richard Fariña's earlier synergy of "Eastern religion, road epiphanies, mescaline, love".<sup>301</sup> The two combined provide a rounded view of the direction that the search for meaning was taking during this period, whilst exemplifying the broad range of sources from which alternatives were being sought.

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<sup>299</sup> Sean McCann and Michael Szalay, 'Do You Believe in Magic? Literary Thinking after the New Left', *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, 18/2 (2005), pp. 435-468.

<sup>300</sup> John A. McClure responds to the original McCann and Szalay article in, "Do They Believe in Magic? Politics and Postmodern Literature", *boundary 2*, 36/2 (2009), which received a return response entitled "Eerie Serentiy': A Response to John McClure' in the same issue of the journal.

<sup>301</sup> McCann and Szalay, 'Believe in Magic?', p. 438.

In his response, McClure acknowledges and supports a revival in political struggle, suggesting a refashioning of the Self as a foundation for further action. Though he does not directly suggest a turn towards the religious, as this might cause a “crisis in subject formation and solidarity”, he does argue that available modes of struggle (comprising what McCann and Szalay consider direct action) are in crisis, and that “religiously inflected modes of social thought and action” have a legitimate role in shaping political formulations.<sup>302</sup>

The invocation of spiritual exercises here is designed to insinuate the possibility of change, or “small miracles”,<sup>303</sup> that in turn have implications for postmodernism’s challenge to other ideas, such as master narratives, progress and the attainment of reason. The suggestion here is that it is the dislocation from the past and a complete “reshaping [of] the lifeworld and [people’s] consciousness”<sup>304</sup> that is needed, not tokenistic changes to the prevailing political sphere. Curiously, McCann and Szalay’s understanding of this idea is embodied in the figure of the shaman as the “culture hero par excellence”, a figure who is able to see an alternative reality beyond the immediacy of everyday life.<sup>305</sup>

As previously mentioned, Pynchon similarly invests in the potential of the role of the shaman. *Against the Day* specifically approaches the notion of the shaman not only as a cultural figure, but also as a political player. He uses a conversation between Kit and Prance as a way to explore and question how the shaman, or at least what the shaman is representative of, may have influenced the course of U.S. history from First Contact to the Civil War. While Kit tries to explain

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<sup>302</sup> McClure, p. 130.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid..

<sup>304</sup> Ibid., p. 131.

<sup>305</sup> McCann and Szalay, ‘Believe in Magic?’, p. 438.

historical examples such as conversion practices and brutality against “the Cherokee...the Apache, the massacre of the Sioux Ghost Dancers at Wounded Knee, every native Red Indian you’ve found” (*AtD*, p. 872), or the extermination of African shamanism through slavery and similar conversion practices that eventually led to the Civil War in terms of expansionist politics, “economics”, or just plain “politics”, Prance views the shaman as playing a central role in all these events (*AtD*, p. 873).

Less explicitly, but more relevantly perhaps, the California trilogy features a variety of figures that can be conceived of as being quasi-shamanic. *Inherent Vice’s* Sortilège, a former colleague of Doc Sportello whose name alludes to the practice of foretelling the future using objects chosen at random, is suggestive of a contextual, non-Native incarnation and understanding of shamanic properties. She draws upon divergent sources and employs multiple methods for configuring her understanding of the world, from astrology to telling the time from a broken clock. Moreover, Sortilège’s visions, conjured in conjunction with her teacher Vehi Fairfield, are both quasi-prophetic and contextually redolent, having been tintured by New Age complications such as out of body experiences, and at least partially induced by a lot of acid. Her teacher Vehi is even remarked as being “the closest thing to a real oracle we’re ever gonna see in this neck of the woods” (*IV*, p. 102).

Similarly, *Vineland’s* Sister Rochelle, a “Senior Attentive” at the “Sisterhood of Kunoichi Attentives” (*VL*, p.108), a retreat for female ninjas, uses esoteric methods for organizing and understanding the world. In one of her more ethereal moves she is said to have memorized “all the shadows [in a room] and how they changed, the cover, the exact spaces between things” (*VL*, p. 111). As a kind of

shapeshifter (a characteristic synonymous with shamanism in certain modern-day practices) she “had come to know the room so completely that she could impersonate it, in its full transparency and emptiness” (*VL*, p. 111). Additionally, her feminist analogue to the story of the Garden of Eden functions to subvert the traditional Biblical narrative wherein Eve, the woman, is guilty of bringing sin into the world. In Sister Rochelle’s version however, “Paradise was female” (*VL*, p. 166), being originally occupied only by Eve and her sister Lilith, with Adam as a later insertion who ultimately suppressed Lilith and displaced her from the received modern narrative. By invoking this “another kind of bedtime story” (*VL*, p. 166), Sister Rochelle rewrites one of the most prominent master narratives, and specifically for an impressionable audience. Prophecy in this example does therefore not function as speaking of what will be, but rather in retelling what is said to have been, in the hopes of recalibrating future understandings.

Though these figures are of course not shamanic in any specific culturally-inscribed understanding of the term, their function in this context can be seen to parallel some of the roles ascribed to the figure of the shaman. With the intention of introducing the Vision Quest as a possible framework in which *Lot 49* can be understood, it is also important to trace related ideas throughout the California trilogy.

Given the reimagining that the figure of the American Indian has undergone, in both the political realm and in social imagination, it is unsurprising that the shaman now seems to epitomise the possibility of alternative methods of action. It seems, to McCann and Szalay, that it is not what the shaman reveals, but simply that he is looked upon for answers in the first place that is most indicative aspect of this shift towards the symbolic. In order to demonstrate this idea,

Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* is invoked, with its central character Oedipa used to illustrate that the familiar realm of party political activism at Berkeley, or the various movements of diverse subcultures, are less important than "the fact that [meaning] could be expressed in an unrecognisable mode different than the familiar".<sup>306</sup> Though this "mode" is never disclosed, by either set of critics, or as McCann and Szalay suggest, by Pynchon himself, the nature of the "unknowable force of mystery", certainly allows for speculation and suggestion as to specific incorporations of this "mystery".<sup>307</sup>

McCann and Szalay's impatience at the ambiguous quality of 'mystery' is perhaps part of the appeal for the generation of young Americans exploring the possibility of alternative ways of seeing at the current moment in political and social history. Less understood spiritualities remained suitably ambiguous, and as such could be conferred with individual interests and persuasions. As outlined in the introduction, the use of Aldous Huxley's writings on personal and spiritual philosophy came to typify this particularly Californian view, foundational to the ethos of institutions like Esalen, that "knowledge of ultimate reality could come only through spiritual practise, rather than dogmatic belief or rote ritual".<sup>308</sup> The lack of specificity or direct process or method to these spiritual practices seemed apparent even to Huxley himself, who during a lecture called "Human Potentialities" at the University of California, San Francisco Medical Centre in 1960, "called on his audience to develop methods and means to actualize" these hidden human potentialities.<sup>309</sup> However, it is this same lack of specificity that also

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<sup>306</sup> McCann and Szalay, 'Believe in Magic?', p. 443.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid., p. 447.

<sup>308</sup> Russ Kick, *Everything You Know About God Is Wrong: The Disinformation Guide to Religion* (New York: The Disinformation Company, 2007), p. 300.

<sup>309</sup> Kripal, p. 85.

complicates the relationship between the counterculture and American Indians in matters of political activism.

Although American Indians had become “worthy of emulation and political support” in material concerns such as land and fishing rights, which is apparent from the non-Native support of the occupation of Alcatraz between 1969 and 1971, the symbolic value of the American Indian was still a significant aspect of this political appeal.<sup>310</sup> Sherry L. Smith in fact argues that the tangible political support that American Indian people received during the 1960s and 1970s was in large part due to the fact that non-Native people had been “culturally primed” to hear about Indian issues.<sup>311</sup> Recalling the wealth of literature written on American Indian lifestyles and spirituality during this period, Smith’s claim seems understandable; American Indians had become adopted by the counterculture through a reductive, but accessible, portrayal that allowed for easier identification. Though questions and concerns of the legitimacy and ethics of the appropriation of American Indian practices remain important background concerns in this debate, it is also the motivation for this extended appropriation into matters of politics that is significant.

Testimony from various American Indian-sympathisers, such as writer Stewart Brand, relates a relationship with American Indians that offered the counterculture a “way more interesting reality”.<sup>312</sup> In his encounters with American Indian peoples in Oregon, and in his reading of Kesey’s *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* (1962), Brand found dilemmas that reflected his own complicated relationship with the Army. In this example, the need for

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<sup>310</sup> Sherry L. Smith, p. 45.

<sup>311</sup> Ibid.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid., p. 46.

identification is once again crucial, and this kind of particularly personal empathy fuelled a broader association between American Indians and the counterculture. Though his presence was met with mixed-receptions, Brand partook in the common signifiers of the American Indian lifestyle in the 1960s, attending peyote meetings and discussing the spirituality of the land, and along with his fellow non-Indian enquirers, felt he had discovered a “genuine homegrown “counterculture”, with a mythic frame and depth that people were looking for”.<sup>313</sup> Later, he branded American Indians, “the Voice of the Continent”- a voice that pre-dated civilization and had important truths of which to speak.<sup>314</sup> It is the specifically domestic quality of this alternative “counterculture” that is key to addressing ideas of identity in this refashioning of the Self, and becomes especially useful in approaching Pynchon’s illustration of the U.S. in *The Crying of Lot 49*.

Brand and others, such as aural historian Jack Loeffler, claimed they were trying to view America “straight like an Indian”, and furthermore “see what it is we can do” in issues such as environmental protection.<sup>315</sup> Their claim was founded on the understanding that American Indians came from within the land, that is crucially from within America, and that it was only through understanding and accepting an idea of re-internalizing the land that salvation for America would come. Brand’s ensuing announcement that “America Needs Indians”, emerges from this foundational idea that American Indians are “The Voice of the Continent”, which suggests that it is their perspective and outlook that is key to a re-identification with both the land, and notably the U.S..<sup>316</sup> The emphasis on the

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<sup>313</sup> Sherry L. Smith, p. 48.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>315</sup> Smith., p 50.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

'homegrown' quality of American Indian culture also seems important to Brand and Loeffler's thesis, as it is something that is properly American, but needs rediscovery, and therefore perhaps satisfies questions of authenticity and relevance.

Of course there are both semantic problems and issues of sovereignty that follow this outlook, since by definition 'American' Indians are 'pre-national,' and have existed on 'American' soil before the founding of the present-day U.S. However, it is the emphasis on the pre-existing quality of American Indians that seems critical in this reasoning. The fact that American Indian cultures existed before the fact of modern U.S., and therefore act as a sort of mirror to modern U.S. culture, also seems less important than the reverence afforded to American Indian culture for sharing a geographical history, and thus providing a shared land heritage from which both American Indians and non-Indian Americans can benefit.

The idea then that America "needs Indians" in order to find itself, crystalizes the search for meaning through alternative methods, whilst also attaching and rooting this search to something more established. Through using the most 'native' of American perspectives as a method of fulfilling this search, it becomes more than an individual or personal endeavour, but rather an enquiry into what it means to be an individual within a specific location, which is in itself suggestive of a particular collective identity. The quest for this idea of meaning itself has important implications for Pynchon's engagement with the geography of California, and specifically, in the context of *Lot 49*, the mysterious geography of San Narciso. Pynchon's indication that revelation is that which "trembled just past the threshold of understanding" (*L49*, p. 15) can therefore perhaps be understood

through exploring the ways in which that threshold can be bridged.

### **Ways of Seeing**

It is at this moment of alternative ways of seeing or counter-spirituality, that Pynchon places Oedipa Mass in 1960s San Narciso, California, on her quest to settle the will of her late former lover, Pierce Inverarity. From the outset of the novel, Pynchon bestows Oedipa with more than just an honorary task, her role as executrix is not just a required legal position of tying up the loose ends of Pierce's life; she been given what appears from Pynchon's diction, a more pervasive and overwhelming task, that is of "sorting *it* all out" (*L49*, p. 5, italics mine).<sup>317</sup> Given Pynchon's prominent semantic ambiguity, which becomes more pronounced as the novel develops, it is not too great a leap to suggest that this phrase will come to have greater connotations as the depth and scale of Oedipa's task becomes more apparent.

Prior characterisations of *Lot 49* as a California detective story are suitably justified by Oedipa's endeavour in the immediate matter of executing Pierce's will, and provide an appropriate plot structure. However it quickly becomes more expansive given the 'quest' narrative which implies mysteries beyond the immediacy of Oedipa's initial problem. Indeed, Oedipa's role in this quest to settle Pierce's will is established in a codicil to the will. Though this validates and confirms her role through legal formality, it serves as a kind of measured

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<sup>317</sup> The idea of 'sorting' also occurs during Stanley Koteks explanation of Maxwell's Demon to Oedipa. When Koteks implies that the theoretical Demon "only sat and sorted" and so "wouldn't have put any real work into the system", Oedipa questions, "sorting isn't work?" using the pertinent example of sorting mail to reinforce her argument. The idea of sorting therefore carries important postal, thermodynamic and cosmic implications. (*L49*, p. 59)

disruption to the composition of the will, and by extension to the detective/quest narrative. This addition or amendment suggests that Oedipa is supposed to be involved in this action, but perhaps wasn't always meant to be and heightens the sense that this quest will prove to be less than straightforward. Oedipa herself wonders what happened a year ago that made Pierce include her as executrix, suggesting that involving her was a deliberate decision of his. This personalizes the quest for Oedipa, it has been chosen her for, not just by Pierce himself, but, from her own recollection, by a whole range and variety of voices, "Slavic...comic Negro...Pachuco...Gestapo...and Lamont Cranston" (*L49*, p. 6). In his last conversation with Oedipa, Pierce speaks a myriad of voices from different times, places and even levels of reality, reinforcing the idea that is it not just literally Pierce's estate that she is to uncover, but that this is perhaps representative of something more far-reaching.

The notion that the effort to settle Pierce's will is in some way Oedipa's personal quest has been previously offered by critics such as J. Kerry Grant. In his *A Companion to The Crying of Lot 49* (1994), Grant characterizes Oedipa's actions as "a search for a source of energy that will revitalize her life and the lives of those who live in mainstream America".<sup>318</sup> This notion of revitalization recalls earlier discussions of revitalization movements in American Indian cultures. Though these established and specific movements are of course distinct from the sort of revitalization that Grant infers, the notion of revitalization in its broadest sense is one way of understanding the shifts in cultural and spiritual patterns at this point in U.S. history.

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<sup>318</sup> J. Kerry Grant, *A Companion to the Crying of Lot 49* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008), p. xiii.

Grant's characterization is based on a categorisation of Oedipa in cultural terms, she represents a mainstream culture that Pynchon suggests has stagnated. In consideration of Grant's proposal and the cultural context of the novel, *Lot 49* can be read as an indictment of the complacency of mainstream culture. And it is this stagnation then that has perhaps forced the contextual enquiry into alternative, sub or counterculture, as previously outlined. Although this reading is a useful indicator, it works very much on a literal cultural level, which while important in itself, also allows the possibility for extended work. Grant's catalytic observation that Oedipa must "go beyond the established boundaries of her world if she is to discover a genuinely new energy source",<sup>319</sup> further extends the parameters for change, and is therefore useful in establishing both a cultural and even more significantly so perhaps, spiritual framework for the novel. Oedipa's 'boundaries' in this sense therefore refer to important demarcations in establishing her 'place' within U.S. society.

In examining terms such as 'mainstream America', and making judgements about Oedipa's 'world', is it logical to attempt to learn which details Pynchon directs us towards that suggest these kinds of classifications. Oedipa of Kinneret-Among-The Pines is presented as a Californian housewife, leading a lifestyle of Tupperware parties, ricotta, Muzak, making lasagne and reading book reviews in *Scientific American*.<sup>320</sup> By her own admission, her routine consists of days which are "more or less identical" (*L49*, p. 6), a fact that is disclosed without commentary

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<sup>319</sup> Grant, p. xiii.

<sup>320</sup> Incidentally, *Scientific American* has also had involvement in the Cold War experience, having been ordered to cease publication of a controversial April 1950 issue containing an article that revealed classified information about the hydrogen bomb. The magazine also represents a rise in a certain stratification of the public's (of which Oedipa is apparently a part) engagement with scientific issues in the period following the Second World War.

or judgement, and there is no insinuation that this consistency is problematic. However, it is perhaps the very lack of comment itself that indicates complacency. Recalling Grant's interpretation of the kind of quest Oedipa is about to undertake, details such as her attitude towards her own lifestyle and her outlook are crucial if she is representative of a mainstream that is to have some sort of awakening.<sup>321</sup> The very arrival of the will itself is an unusual insertion into Oedipa's routine and makes her feel "exposed, finessed, put down" (*L49*, p. 7), since she is presented with a situation of which she has no experience or knowledge. Using Grant's contention as a platform, together with the potential of Pynchon's "it" that Oedipa has been tasked to sort out, Oedipa is embarking into both unfamiliar legal territory, and into previously unknown cultural and spiritual terrain.

While Oedipa is somewhat burdened by her social standing as the suburban Californian housewife with a generally quite rigid physical routine, she is presented as being psychologically agile. Her habitual routine is presented as an itemized list of the events and actions that shape her day. However, her thoughts are not limited to this structure and are not restricted by this routine. The narrative of Oedipa's thoughts upon reading Pierce's will at the outset of the novel does not follow in this listing pattern e.g. "gathering of her marjoram...reading of book reviews" (*L49*, p. 6), but instead is formed of a series of images and sounds associated with Pierce e.g. "a sunrise over the library", or "a dry, disconsolate tune from the fourth movement of the Bartók Concerto for Orchestra" (*L49*, p. 5). Her conception of her relationship with Pierce is therefore less literal and perhaps

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<sup>321</sup> Given Cowart's description of *Lot 49* as an "oblique spiritual autobiography", this idea of an awakening can also be seen to reflect somewhat on Pynchon's own social and cultural development. Cowart, p. 112. In this context, this is especially significant given the attempt to recalibrate how Pynchon can be considered in terms of both postmodernist writing, and in relation to what are considered more historical and social writers, such as Toni Morrison.

more symbolic. Here, McHale draws a connection between Oedipa's sunrise, which nobody had actually seen, and Bishop Berkeley's "classic epistemological conundrum of the tree that falls in the forest with no one to hear it", suggesting that Oedipa's relationship with Pierce can be considered in less than direct terms and can also perhaps be subject to epistemological scrutiny.<sup>322</sup> Given that Bartók was exiled in the U.S. having left his native Hungary following the ascension of Nazism, Oedipa's understanding of the Concerto as a "disconsolate tune" is perhaps an indicator of her own impending sense of exile from all that she has known and is familiar with.

From this introduction, we see that Oedipa therefore does not think in terms of the same literal lists that structure her routine, but rather in associative images and sounds that are perhaps symbolic of her relationship with Pierce. It is also important to recall here that Oedipa refuses to participate in her psychotherapist, Dr. Hilarius' LSD-25, mescaline, psilocybin, and related drug experiments since she claims to already experience "hallucinations" without the aid of drugs, a detail which will come to have further contextual implications (*L49*, p. 10). As in her receipt of Pierce's will, her conversation with Hilarius also invokes revealing and potentially symbolic images. Engaging with the potential symbolic quality of these images is crucial in establishing a basis for the Vision Quest reading of the novel since one of the fundamental concerns and motivations of such quests is the ability to interpret visual images. These initial symbolic perceptions can therefore be used to induce the sense of the vision quest in the most basic terms.

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<sup>322</sup> McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, p. 22.

With this mind, the vision of Uncle Sam's pointing finger that she is described as imagining as a result of the pressure she feels to participate in the experiment can be understood in somewhat straightforward terms. However, the fact that she views this all-American icon as being associated with clinical drug-pushing and as being rather unhealthy looking, also indicates that she is aware of the sort of systemic drug experimentation that is a recurring concern of Pynchon's throughout the trilogy.

Curiously, Dr. Hilarius is running these experiments on "suburban housewives" (*L49*, p. 10), a group largely unassociated with drug experimentation. Though this may suggest that this unassuming group is also becoming exposed to experimentation outside assumed boundaries of experience, a by-product perhaps of Grant's aforementioned sense of revitalization, it is also an indicator of the encroachment of this kind of systemic experimentation on the domestic sphere. This association is particularly relevant to Oedipa as she steps outside of her own physical, cultural and spiritual boundaries, however it is also representative of wider phenomena in the reconfiguration of social boundaries.

Leaving Kinneret and entering the new cultural space of San Narciso proves to be an important geographical impetus that causes Oedipa to think more frequently in images and sounds, further preparing the ground for this Vision Quest reading, and eventually leads to her obsession with perhaps the most explicit symbol of the novel, the muted post horn. However, even before her first encounter with the post horn, Pynchon reveals that Oedipa was "to have all manner of revelations" (*L49*, p. 12), that she would not have been able to make any sense of until this point, since her vision has heretofore been "just perceptibly out of focus" (*L49*, p. 12). Seemingly then, Oedipa's way of seeing needs adjustment

in order for her revelation to become clear, and the quest to uncover Pierce's will, which entails exploring San Narciso, seem to be the means through which she can make this adjustment. Moreover, if, as John Berger explains, "the way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe", then Oedipa's cultural lens at the outset of the novel, before her knowledge of the will or San Narciso, is apparently not focused in such a way that would allow her to see outside of her familiar geographical and cultural boundaries, or to understand the revelation that can now potentially experience.<sup>323</sup> This emphasis on vision and ways of seeing will also become important in introducing the Vision Quest, which as its name suggests centres on understanding and assimilating visions.

Once Oedipa's routine has been disrupted by the events of the will and her memories of Pierce, she begins to remember past feelings that were also inspired by varying catalysts. One such instance is her response to a Remedios Varo painting at the outset of the novel, in which the tears she cried as a reaction to the painting allowed her to see the "world refracted through those tears" (*L49*, p. 13), and as such gave her a specific lens through which to see the world at that moment. The emphasis here is on the lens that is created by the immediacy and particularity of that moment, and by extension, what can be seen through that lens. Oedipa sees herself as a "captive maiden" (*L49*, p. 13) in a tower created only by an anonymous and malignant magic, and the only (teary) lens through which she can examine and understand it is "gut fear and female cunning" (*L49*, p. 13). Pynchon suggests that she must develop a new way of seeing, without falling back on "superstition" or the trappings of her current life in order to understand this magic that is

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<sup>323</sup> John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin, 2008), p. 8.

keeping her captive. In order to move “towards anything new”, it is significant that Oedipa must adjust her way of seeing, but also physically leave Kinneret and all its cultural connotations, and head to San Narciso where she will begin to uncover Pierce’s will (*L49*, p. 14).

San Narciso itself is a place made of patterns, which Oedipa views not as a city, but rather as a “group of concepts” (*L49*, p. 14), formed of areas created for various administrative purposes, and set out like a circuit board. The districts are all arbitrary creations, “census tracts, special purpose bond-issue districts and shopping nuclei” (*L49*, p.14), designed in order to measure and keep records. However, Oedipa finds in this “ordered swirl of houses and streets” (*L49*, p.14) a surprising clarity; she looks beyond the demarcations set for bureaucratic purposes and instead finds the notorious hieroglyphic pattern of “concealed meaning, of an intent to communicate”, which has garnered considerable critical attention (*L49*, p. 15). Oedipa’s perception of San Narciso upon her arrival seems to suggest two distinct layers to the city; there is the printed board circuit of deliberately formed districts, and the concealed meaning below. Oedipa is able to process the outer layer, the imposed order of houses and commercial areas that she can see, but at this moment has not “tried to find out” (*L49*, p. 15) what it is that the concealed meaning is trying to communicate. Though she is beginning to view the city less like a manifestation of population characteristics, economic status and living conditions, and more as a symbolic order whose hidden meaning is less clear, she cannot at this juncture in her odyssey of San Narciso understand the message that is being communicated to her.

Pynchon’s depiction of San Narciso at this stage is crucial to understanding the kinds of boundaries that Oedipa is crossing. Though it is a fictional city, we are

told that it is situated in Southern California and thus we can create a rough blueprint of the city based on details that Pynchon offers, both fictional and historical, and given a wider knowledge of the Southern California landscape. Californian cultural historian, Erik Davis, characterizes the landscape of California much in the same way as its spiritual scene. He outlines “an overlapping set of diverse ecosystems, hanging, and sometimes quaking, on the literal edge of the West”.<sup>324</sup> As a terminal for incoming ideas from both the West, the Pacific East and from bordering Mexico, California becomes a fertile ground for the evolution and formulation of new ideas and belief systems, as outlined in the introduction. The landscape is cited by commentators such as Davis as a crucial shaping element to the spiritual life of California, a detail which is more significant given that the West Coast and the Bay Area were centres of the growing interest in countercultural belief, and especially in the interest in American Indian cultures. For a population that is evidently receptive and responsive to new and challenging ideas, the landscape, as Davis and Pynchon suggest, also seems to play a formational role in this attitude.

Though Oedipa’s journey to San Narciso can be viewed as an internal journey through California, Pynchon also stresses the geographical gulf between Oedipa’s suburban Kinneret and the new and unfamiliar landscape of San Narciso. While Oedipa’s reaction to San Narciso can in many ways be explained in terms of contextual factors, which will receive further attention in later discussions, some parallels can be drawn, in terms of reactions to the landscape in particular, between Oedipa’s experience and those of pioneering Americas arriving in

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<sup>324</sup> E. Davis, p. 9.

California for the first time in the early 1800s. The most orthodox of Anglo-Saxon Protestants found in the California landscape a reflection of their faith. They found in the desert and Sierra places for meditation, majesty in “scattered oaks” and “magnificent valleys”<sup>325</sup>, and sites of healing and natural remedy in Geysers and hot springs. Far from the idea of creating a new-New England, California proved to be its own spiritual base, with even the most conservative churchmen finding mystical experiences away from the church, and instead within the tabernacle of nature. Oscar Penn Fitzgerald’s reflection, “there are Blue Lakes. A solemnity and awe steal over you. Speech seems almost profane”,<sup>326</sup> seems more attributable to Emersonian or even American Indian thought, than to a Methodist clergyman.<sup>327</sup> Similarly, his poem ‘St. Helen’s at Sunrise’ also seems more congruous with Vine Deloria Jr.’s explanation of a “revelatory place”-somewhere which induces profound understanding of the holy- than simply a scene for uncomplicated reflection.<sup>328</sup> He is not simply in awe of the majesty of the mountain, but rather his soul becomes transformed by this place as an experience of “rapture”.<sup>329</sup> While Methodist belief directs that the Holy Scriptures contain all things necessary for salvation, this principle is complicated by Fitzgerald’s vision of the mountain and his ensuing metaphor of the Sun of Jesus. In this instance then, the confrontation with the vision of the mountain provides a more intense religious or spiritual

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<sup>325</sup> Sandra Sizer Frankiel, *California’s Spiritual Frontiers: Religious alternatives in Anglo-Protestantism 1850-1910* (California: University of California Press, 1988), p. 15.

<sup>326</sup> O. P. Fitzgerald, *California Sketches New and Old* (Nashville: Publishing House of the M.E. Church, 1895), p. 103.

<sup>327</sup> Many modern guides to spiritual renewal and spiritual self-help adopt both American Indian and American Transcendental language motifs in their reimagining of spirituality. Carl V. Gaile Jr.’s *Vision Quest: A Visual Journey Through North Carolina’s Lower Roanoke River Basin* (North Carolina: Red Maple Press, 1999), for example, takes its title from a broad tradition of American Indian Vision Quest, whilst the epigraph of the book is a quotation from Thoreau. This is indicative of the cross-cultural on of spirituality, especially with regards to nature-based spiritualities.

<sup>328</sup> Vine Deloria Jr, *For This Land*, p. 252.

<sup>329</sup> Frankiel, p. 16.

experience than “portions of the word of God”.<sup>330</sup>

Though Oedipa’s personal, social and historical circumstances are clearly distinct from those of the Methodist clergyman, the effect of place on her “odd religious instant” (*L49*, p. 15) is very similar. The crucial point of comparison, besides the obvious stimulus for these experiences, is the fact that they are understood as religious in nature. Oedipa has therefore not only journeyed geographically, but has been spiritually moved by her physical relocation.

Pynchon clarifies and reinforces this with extensive use of religious imagery- “the message”, “the faithful”, and “the holy man” (*L49*, p. 15). Even as Oedipa’s thoughts drift from her own “moment” to consider how her husband might quantify his own experiences, the religious imagery prevails. Curiously, Oedipa’s religious trappings are consistent with an assumed religious background, the chalice in particular being reminiscent of the drinking vessel used at the Last Supper. While Oedipa’s increasingly vision-based mode of understanding or reflection becomes more apparent, she cannot understand the “words... being spoken” to her since they seem to be spoken “on some other frequency” (*L49*, p. 15). Oedipa’s inability to tune to this frequency, in the way that she has previously been unable to focus on what it is she is seeing, results in her giving up on this moment which she mentally reconciles as yet another image, this time of “a cloud” eclipsing the sun or “smog thickened” (*L49*, p. 15).

To extend the Biblical allusions somewhat, it is interesting that in Biblical tradition clouds are indicative of moments when the divine appears but cannot be known beyond it simply being divine. In the story of Moses and the Tent of Meeting

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<sup>330</sup> Fitzgerald, p. 111.

in particular, Moses cannot enter the tent filled by God's presence because there is a cloud obscuring the entrance. Similarly, Oedipa cannot see beyond her metaphorical clouds to the potential meaning behind them, another appropriate image given her assumed cultural and religious heritage. At this juncture then, though Oedipa is increasingly exercising her visual capabilities, her touchstones remain familiar. However, as she moves further into the landscape of San Narciso, and her mode of understanding becomes more complicated, these points of reference too become more obscure.

By way of comparison, Oedipa's reaction to moments of stress, in particular her response to receiving notice of her role in executing Pierce's will, is telling. Oedipa responds in three different ways; first she looks to "the TV tube", next she "spoke the name of God", and then she tries to feel "as drunk as possible" (*L49*, p. 5). From this reaction, it is possible to deduce some of Oedipa's instinctive methods of approaching the exploration of meaning in the world around her, in this example, the meaning behind her involvement in the execution of Pierce's will.

The turn to the television, though not as centrally important to Oedipa, will feature later on, significantly in *Vineland*, whose Tube-watching inhabitants are informed both culturally and spiritually by watching TV. For Oedipa however, it is a visual mediator for processing the world, another lens like her tears through which she can view a particular moment. In this case, the contextual significance of the Tube bears down on Oedipa and becomes a key medium through which she can process her surroundings. Later, it is through TV commercials that Oedipa is exposed to many of Pierce's business dealings. Metzger, the co-executor of the will, uses these commercials to explain to Oedipa the nature of Pierce's many and diverse investments since they are an easy and culturally-familiar way of

translating and processing unfamiliar information.

Oedipa's second action, speaking the name of God, is also indicative, not simply because of the particular phrasing that Pynchon has given this action. Oedipa does not say 'God' as a curse (as critics have previously tried to dismiss this comment), the phrasing is curiously too specific for this, but rather she speaks the name of God. That she invokes God's name in this apparently reverential way is indicative of the search for the possibility of religious meaning that Mendelson finds in Oedipa's quest. The word 'God' is uttered throughout the text, especially at moments of some kind of significance. At this early stage however, 'God' can be understood as another familiar trapping or touchstone at a moment of uncertainty. 'God' here is vague and non-denominational, but the assertion alone, however unfocused, seems appropriate given Oedipa's spiritual commitment, even at the early stage of her quest "to bring [Pierce's] estate into pulsing stelliferous Meaning" (*L49*, p. 56).

As a last recourse, Oedipa tries to feel drunk, that is, to lose clarity or self-awareness perhaps. As the turn to TV, and to God have not proven sufficient, Oedipa uses another routine method for escaping clarity and lucidity. It is also telling that Oedipa opts for alcohol as the intoxicant of choice, rather than something more potent (especially given a contextual base of hallucinogenic experimentation and her own direct exposure to this kind of experimentation), in order lose herself. This may be understandable as at this stage she has not yet ventured out of Kinneret, and as such has not breached any kind of boundaries.

As well as establishing an important point of comparison (and departure) for Oedipa's developing mode of understanding, this moment at the outset of the novel also echoes a pattern in U.S. culture at this point in time. There has been an

initial look to what is familiar, consumer culture and mass media (the TV tube); a familiar religious framework within which meaning can be found ('God'); and the possibilities of intoxicating or mind-altering substances that offer alternative ways of seeing (the alcohol). But, as Oedipa and a growing portion of the U.S. population discover, "this did not work" (*L49*, p. 5). Accordingly, as historical commentators have suggested was the course of action for those searching for alternative methods to find "honest" and "compassionate" meaning, Oedipa too continues her quest in increasingly esoteric ways.

This culmination of a social context which has incited change, and the shift in geographical landscape that has propelled this change, naturally provokes the call for a new mode of understanding, or specifically to Oedipa, a new type of vision. The quality of this vision, which will enable Oedipa to see "just past the threshold of understanding" (*L49*, p. 15), can also be suggested using informing contextual factors, and may offer an articulation of the kind of visionary experience Oedipa may be experiencing as she travels through San Narciso, namely that of the Vision Quest experience. However, before this is introduced it is important to explore the other traditions of visionary experiences that Pynchon suggests are relevant and significant to Oedipa's quest.

Oedipa's engagement with visions and images finds roots in various traditions of visionary experiences, a catalogue of which is provided by Pynchon. These are "the saint", "the clairvoyant", "the true paranoid" and "the dreamer"-those who seek knowledge through unconventional methods (*L49*, p. 89). This catalogue introduces a range of different and varying sources who undertake esoteric methods in order to make sense of the world.

Although the saint provides an important religious signifier, the visions of

saints are also denotations of divine information that has been conferred to humanity using the saint as a mediator. Artists' depictions of the visions of saints are usually very symbolic in their representation. Garofalo's *The Vision of Saint Augustine* (c. 1520), for example, depicts Saint Augustine pondering how to explain the nature of the Trinity.<sup>331</sup> This is shown to be impossible, and is therefore reflected through using a symbolic representation of a child attempting to empty the sea into a hole dug in the sand. The apophatic nature of Saint Augustine's question can only be rendered in a symbolic analogy since the unknowable nature of the answer to the question is beyond human understanding. Thus, it is the saint, or the visionary here, that mediates the image for 'mortal' understanding.

The clairvoyant represents a deviation from orthodox religious belief, one who ventures into practices that are explained in some scripture as being "abominable practices".<sup>332</sup> What is most noteworthy here is that the clairvoyant also seeks to understand beyond human capabilities, and instead of looking to the divine, employs extra-sensory perception as his method. Incidentally, both during and after the Cold War, the U.S. and Soviet governments attempted to harness the supposed power of clairvoyance as a method for gathering military intelligence. The Stargate Project in the U.S. aimed to make clairvoyance more scientific and structured, and used the term "remote viewing" to describe this sort of activity.<sup>333</sup>

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<sup>331</sup> Garofalo, *The Vision of Saint Augustine* (London: The National Gallery, c. 1520).

<sup>332</sup> See, for example, 'Deuteronomy' 18, 9-12, *King James Bible*, last accessed 16 August 2016, <[www.biblestudytools.com](http://www.biblestudytools.com)>.

<sup>333</sup> As a prelude to the Stargate project, MKUltra (a U.S. government division of the CIA devoted to human research operations experimenting with the behavioural engineering of humans) experimented in hallucinogenic and enetheogenic agents for mind-control experiments. As has been outlined in the introduction, the use of mind-altering substances was therefore not restricted to philosophical inquiry, but was also used on a systematic level as a tool for governing. *Lot 49* evokes a further dimension to the use of unorthodox methods for gathering intelligence via a scene

It seems that experimentation in alternative means of seeing during this period was not confined to the private inquiries of citizens, but was also implemented at government level. Still, it is in the art of visions that the clairvoyant is master, and it is for this skill that Pynchon perhaps includes him in the catalogue of visionaries.

The true paranoid is a return to a particularly Pynchonian conception, with huge contextual implications. While the main characteristic of paranoia is considered to be delusional beliefs, it also covers experiences of hallucination, especially when these are centred on the paranoiac. Though Pynchon's writing on paranoia should and has been afforded a far more exhaustive exegesis in scholarship, in this example the paranoiac will be read against and in tandem with the catalogue of visionaries, which perhaps suggests a shift in emphasis. In this context, it is the paranoiac's tendency or ability to find meaning in patterns or symbols that seem to have no intrinsic coherent meaning that is highlighted. Margaret K. Reid in fact suggests that Oedipa "chooses" paranoia as an alternative to emptiness, and concludes that paranoia is Oedipa's method of ordering the world.<sup>334</sup> As the recurring epithet states, while paranoia is comforting, "religious" even, anti-paranoia is the state in which "nothing is connected to anything", and is

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between a mother and son regarding dolphins. The son references slipping into "aquariums [to] open negotiations with the dolphins", and vows not to use the official postal system as "the government will open" these communications, and "the dolphins will be mad". (L49, p. 89) This is a possible allusion to the experiments of neuroscientist John C. Lilly, who in 1958 began attempts to discover if dolphins could communicate with humans. What began as scientific inquiry, descended into a series of experiments licensed by the American government that eventually involved injecting dolphins with LSD to heighten their potential to be able to communicate. Christopher Riley, 'The Dolphin Who Loved Me: The NASA-Funded Project That Went Wrong', *The Guardian* (8 June 2014), last accessed (3 March 2016), <<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/jun/08/the-dolphin-who-loved-me>>. Once again, this is suggestive of an intersection between inquiry into the use of mind and behaviour – altering drugs and governmental operations, which in a Pynchonian manifestation has resulted in the dolphins communicating via WASTE. Though the dolphins are now operating beyond governmental parameters, that these experiments have been licensed in the first instance by the government is further testament to levels of complicity in these sorts of activities.

<sup>334</sup> Margaret K. Reid, *Cultural Secrets as Narrative Form: Storytelling in Nineteenth-Century America* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2014), p. 189.

a condition “that not many of us can bear for long” (*GR*, p. 515). Given an increasing emphasis on connectedness, both textually and contextually, paranoia is offered as a method for achieving this state. Reid also works within a similar framework to that which is offered here, in that she acknowledges “greater depths of experience” that are not accessible through simple methods of understanding, however her analysis is confined to the adoption of paranoia.<sup>335</sup>

The dreamer is arguably the vaguest subject here, and implies both a person who dreams and a person who thinks in unrealistic terms. The first connotation is perhaps that which Pynchon is alluding to by way of a description of someone “whose puns probe ancient and foetid shafts and tunnels of truth” (*L49*, p. 89). This summary of the dreamer is suggestive of a process whereby truth is retrieved from the innermost, most primal, perhaps most unappealing, tunnels of consciousness, and is then formulated in cryptic and quizzical ways. Dreams are by definition image-based, and rely on a person’s inner understanding of the world to project representative images. Pynchon relates that the methods of these subjects also all have a special relevance to the word, or rather what the word is “protect[ing] us from” (*L49*, p. 89). The word then is the buffer between the subject and truth, and the role of the dreamer is to produce the act of metaphor, since metaphor is “a thrust at truth” (*L49*, p. 89). The preference for the image or vision over the word is apparent here, as in the aforementioned moment when Oedipa sees clouds but cannot understand speaking voices. It is also in this visual direction of seeking and understanding visions that Oedipa must continue her quest.

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<sup>335</sup> Ibid.

Though Oedipa “did not know where she was” (*L49*, p. 89) in relation to these above examples, her quest can now begin to find correlation with the Vision Quest, a specific type of vision-based-quest which is both spiritually and socially contextually relevant, and considers the religious/spiritual framework of the novel. As previously outlined, the growing interest in American Indian culture amongst certain demographics of the United States population became an important informing spiritual source, and this combination of both the spiritual appeal and political status of the American Indian can now be refined into one particular embodiment of American Indian culture which is representative of the desirable aspects of this broad culture.

The appeal of American Indian spirituality in this context seems to be premised on an effort or need to depart from familiar spiritual frameworks that have been found lacking, or seem to have become irrelevant, in order to find meaning in a context of social, political and spiritual upheaval. That American Indian spirituality also employs alternative practices is attractive to an audience experimenting with the idea of alternative ways of seeing and mind-altering substances. Furthermore, that this adoption of American Indian spirituality might also have political implications, given the implementation of alternative methods of resistance, is yet another asset that makes American Indian cultures and spiritualities viable alternatives. Finally, it is in the refinement of these ideals that the Vision Quest can now be introduced as a direct and potent embodiment of these desirable functions of a broad understanding of American Indian spirituality.

## Vision Quest

As with the term 'American Indian culture', the use of the term 'Vision Quest' necessitates some clarification. For these purposes it is used as an umbrella term to characterise numerous and varying traditions of vision quests across different American Indian tribes. As with any cultural practice, the specifics of the Vision Quest differ from tribe to tribe and have both similar and contrasting elements that contribute to the Vision Quest experience. The term Vision Quest itself also varies from group to group, with many tribes having their own respective language and terms for the specific aspects of this rite. However, a broad and general purpose of the Vision Quest is to experience a certain type of dream or vision that will bring new meaning for the benefit of the whole community.<sup>336</sup> Other traditions among the Plains people define the Vision Quest as a means of "seeking the way in the road of life, or trying to find the answer to a personal problem".<sup>337</sup> The Quest, in this context, is a personal and internal endeavour that is used for problem solving. A consensus amongst traditions instead suggests that the Vision Quests are used more epistemologically as a means to seek knowledge and enlightenment regardless of what the application of this might be. While some general characteristics may apply, given Pynchon's fidelity to specificity of place, it seems appropriate to use the specifics of the Yurok Vision Quest in particular, when possible. The Yurok are native to this region of

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<sup>336</sup> For an overview of Vision Quest rites, see Lee Irwin, 'Vision Quest Rites', in Suzanne J. Crawford and Dennis F. Kelley, eds., *American Indian Religious Traditions: An Encyclopedia, Vol. 1* (California: ABC Clio, 2005), p. 1127. However, many other definitions, including those of Kroeber (1976) and Vecsey (1991), are consistent in most aspects, but focus on idiosyncratic detail rather than outlining a general process. The use of Crawford and Kelley is therefore more useful in this instance.

<sup>337</sup> Lame Deer, 'The Vision Quest', in Louise Carus Mahdi, Nancy Geyer Christopher and Michael Meade, eds., *Crossroads: The Quest for Contemporary Rites of Passage* (Chicago: Carus Publishing Company, 1998), p. 365.

California, and are directly referenced by Pynchon in *Vineland*. The inherent relationship between place and the particulars of the quest also renders the Yurok practice of the Vision Quest ‘Californian’.

The quality of Oedipa’s quest can therefore be viewed in terms of having another possible dimension. If, as Mendelson has suggested, Oedipa’s quest is about “the possibility of religious meaning, and the effect of that possibility on both private and public action”, then the Vision Quest provides a viable framework for such a quest. Crucially, this framework which is supported by a substantial cultural context and buried references to American Indians in the text, also offers a new way of reading *Lot 49*.<sup>338</sup>

The internal and external implications of Oedipa’s quest are also addressed using the framework and principles of the Vision quest, since both the individual and the wider society can benefit from the knowledge obtained through the Quest. Since Vision Quests are also intrinsically tied to places of spiritual significance, this framework also allows for added possibilities when exploring the mysterious geography of San Narciso.

Significant in this context is a Sioux account of the Vision Quest in which a young man is told to “cry”, to humble himself and ask for holiness; he is told he must “cry for power”. The young man in this account is portrayed as being too proud to receive the wisdom of the “Great Spirit” and is thus required to humble himself in order to be receptive to knowledge. He is told he must “cry for a dream”.<sup>339</sup> In the Lakota Sioux tradition, the term for Vision Quest- Hembleciya- translates to “crying for a dream”.<sup>340</sup> Of course, the significance of the title, *The*

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<sup>338</sup> Mendelson, ‘Pynchon’s Way’.

<sup>339</sup> Irwin, p. 1127.

<sup>340</sup> Ibid.

*Crying of Lot 49* has been extensively worked and reworked by numerous critics. These interpretations range from analyses of auction house details, suggestions that it is an allusion to the line, “the cries of the auctioneer within. Four and nine”, in *Ulysses*, is a reference to Pynchon’s own family legal dealings, or refers to various Christian, Buddhist and Occult allusions. Most relevant perhaps given the Cold War context is to Dan Grausam’s reworking of Dugdale’s proposal that the titular ‘49’ references the 49 continental states of the U.S.. Grausam argues that this collectivized emphasis of the U.S., with *Lot 49* in mind, highlights how San Narciso is both unique and simultaneously, ordinary, in the event of total war in a Cold War context. The ‘49’ then represents potential collective annihilation and stresses the common, and by extension, national “vulnerability of a Cold War population”.<sup>341</sup> The possible readings of ‘Crying’ and ‘49’ can thus be imbued with both religious and secular significance, which is satisfying to both the greater dual emphasis of the novel itself and the socio-political context of nuclear anxiety and American Indian spirituality. That Oedipa is potentially also ‘crying for a dream’ also contributes to this dialogue, but also more directly to the possible Vision Quest framework that is being introduced.

Steven Foster and Meredith Little’s *Book of Vision Quest* (1987) is a written account of testimonies of Vision Quest experiences from mostly non-Native people. Given Oedipa’s cultural heritage, a received understanding such as this is perhaps more appropriate and useful for these purposes. The book is seemingly marketed as a sort of self-help guide to “personal transformation”, while the authors run The School of Lost Borders, “a ceremonial and training facility” that

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<sup>341</sup> Daniel Grausam, *On Endings: American Postmodern Fiction and the Cold War*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2004), p. 55.

guides individuals through “wilderness rites of passage, such as the vision quest”.<sup>342</sup> Though the book never claims to be anything other than personal testimony, praise from American Indian readers and American Indian publications are included to seemingly endorse the book’s accounts. The tone and language of these accounts is very much akin to that of Castaneda’s *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge*, with the same mystical vibe being employed to recreate the other-worldly, enigmatic atmosphere that these experiences induce. Although the authors appear sincere in their endeavour, the testimony reads as a somewhat stereotypical account, in the vein of the New-Age-inflected-self-help guide, of one man’s journey to find himself in the wilderness, with the Vision Quest used as an exemplary pinnacle of this sort of achievement

The motif of being called into the desert is very pervasive in Foster’s account; he draws on personal familial ties to the desert as well as a greater Biblical awareness of prophets being ushered into the desert at times of spiritual need. Foster creates a sense of rootedness in the desert, and it becomes his personal spiritual-scape. Furthermore, his affinity to the desert is characterised as an “instinctive faith”, which reinforces the obliquely spiritual dimension to his quest, whilst tying this calling to both a geographical and spiritual ancestry.<sup>343</sup> Incidentally, Foster also emphasises how words fail to describe his experiences in the desert, so that he can only describe them as “visionary”,<sup>344</sup> which recalls Pynchon’s own catalogue of those who seek knowledge through unconventional methods, the saint, the clairvoyant, the true paranoid and the dreamer, those who

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<sup>342</sup> Steven Foster with Meredith Little, *Book of Vision Quest* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), p. 231.

<sup>343</sup> Foster with Little, p. 4.

<sup>344</sup> Ibid.

do not deal in words, but rather relate knowledge through visions.

It is important for both the discussion of this account, and with Oedipa's experience in mind, that Foster insists he has never had a vision in the same way that "Black Elk or Jacob or St. John" have had, and never attempts to align his experience of visions directly with the visions of American Indian people (or prophets, or saints).<sup>345</sup> It is initially the marketing of the book, by way of its title and packaging that attempts to align these experiences directly to American Indian traditions of the Vision Quest.<sup>346</sup> Though the marketing of the account is telling of the commercialization of alternative spirituality, the distortion of American Indian traditions is more profoundly ingrained in the text itself, for example, as in when Foster details how in pursuing a vision, he sought "places in the earth that were haunted by the ghosts of American Indian souls".<sup>347</sup>

Having dismissed the use of LSD as a method of inducing visions following bad experiences, he instead turns to the "Great Mother" in the vein of personal-transformation-in-the-wilderness-terminology to help induce his visions.<sup>348</sup> Recalling the notion that a successful Vision Quest relies heavily on being rooted in spiritually sacred locations, the fact that this has been understood as an area haunted by dead American Indians is a testament to how problematic translating notions of the sacred between cultures can be, and confirms ethical objections to the practice of sacred spiritual rites outside of a meaningful spiritual framework.

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<sup>345</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>346</sup> The book itself is a Sun Bear book and belongs to a series of other Sun Bear publications, which include titles such as *The Medicine Wheel: Earth Astrology* (1980) and *Walk in Balance: The Path to Healthy, Happy, Harmonious Living* (1992). The books are marketed as mediated American Indian self-help guides, with semi-spiritual inflections. On Amazon.com, for example, they are displayed alongside books on dream interpretation and animal spirit guides. The front cover also displays a sort of amalgam of totem-pole images designed to more fully situate the book in a broad American Indian culture.

<sup>347</sup> Foster with Little, p. 7.

<sup>348</sup> Foster with Little, p. 4.

Foster's account, although problematic in its appropriation of the term Vision Quest simply to denote vision-like experiences, is nevertheless useful in configuring the status of Oedipa's quest. Like Foster, Oedipa is of course not American Indian, and therefore cannot by all ethical considerations be considered to be experiencing a Vision Quest in the same way that as an American Indian might. However, what Foster's account reinforces, together with the social, political and spiritual context of the novel, and the tradition of visions that Pynchon alludes to, is a broader, more culturally and ethically appropriate notion of a visionary experience that can be imbued with specific cultural connotations. The accessible nature of Foster's depiction, which is grounded in both the language of empathetic personal emotion and a broad Judeo-Christian background, and the viable marketing factors of Foster's book, provides a useful model of a Western understanding of the Vision Quest tradition.

In his more astute renderings of Vision Quests, Foster is sensitive to the importance of geographical location in order to successfully experience a vision. This is a crucial aspect of the Vision Quest across many traditions, especially for Californian tribes, where the particular site for the Quest itself is significant. According to Andrew Gulliford, most Vision Quest sites have panoramic views, which are "among the most common forms of sacred geography in North America".<sup>349</sup> Most traditional sites for Vision Quests are places of spectacular natural beauty; in California, noted sites for Vision Quests include Mount Diablo in the San Francisco Bay Area, the volcanic Mount Shasta, Medicine Lake and Patrick's Point. These sites are burial places or sweat bath sites, gathering areas,

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<sup>349</sup> Andrew Gulliford, 'Sacred Sites and Sacred Mountains', in Suzanne J. Crawford and Dennis F. Kelley, eds., *American Indian Religious Traditions: An Encyclopedia, Vol. 1* (California: ABC Clío, 2005), p. 949.

or places of origin in tradition stories.<sup>350</sup> As the above examples suggests, Vision Quest sites are not chosen simply for their aesthetic appeal, rather they are locations of deep cultural importance that have been witness to significant events in tribal history, or are the focus of foundational American Indian accounts. In the Brule Sioux legend of Stone Boy, for example, natural objects such as rocks, water and fire become sacred through their instruction of Iyan Hokshi (Stone Boy) on how to build a hut, which he will use for “purification, for life, for *wichosani*, for health”.<sup>351</sup> This hut denotes the cultural and spiritual development of the Brule Sioux as the hut becomes a sweat lodge for purification, and marks the first sacred ceremony or prayer of the Sioux culture. This sacred place holds an ‘innate sacredness’, which is interpreted by chosen individuals through a spiritual dialogue. It is the lens through which visions are clarified, and lends “significance and intelligibility to the signs and symbols of the visions”.<sup>352</sup> However, it becomes a doubly spiritual place since it will also produce future spiritual nurture and wisdom. Thus a sacred configuration of the land is formed that will “always retain something of the intensity of that experience”.<sup>353</sup>

Typically, San Narciso is considered in a way that seems to be at odds with it being able to be considered as a spiritual or sacred place in the way described above. For Thomas Heise it is “a jumble of industrial manufacturing, weapons plants for the new post-Fordist economy, and postwar planned residential

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<sup>350</sup> Mount Shasta features as an important landmark in *Inherent Vice*, with focus given to both American Indian stories and Non-Native lore, including the legend of Lemuria. Mount Shasta is also a focus in numerous occult religions including, “I AM” Activity, The Summit Lighthouse, Church Universal and Triumphant and Kryon. Discussion of Pynchon’s diverse readings of Mount Shasta will feature more prominently in subsequent chapters.

<sup>351</sup> Henry Crow Dog, ‘Stone Boy’, in Richard Erdoes and Alfonso Ortiz, eds., *American Indian Myths and Legends* (New York: Random House), p. 19.

<sup>352</sup> Deward E. Walker Jr., ‘Protection of American Indian Sacred Geography’, in Christopher Vecsey, ed., *Handbook of American Indian Religious Freedom* (New York: Crossroad Press, 1991), p. 111.

<sup>353</sup> Vine Deloria Jr., *For This Land*, p. 244.

communities”, a “nodal point” of no intrinsic distinction, but instead a functional place of manufacturing and the exchange of goods.<sup>354</sup> This soulless quality is extended in Peter L. Cooper’s analysis, with the city’s formlessness being emphasized over its functionality. Cooper argues that not only is San Narciso no longer an “identifiable city”, but furthermore “entropy actually constitutes the city’s form- or formlessness”, given its continuity with the rest of America.<sup>355</sup> Although San Narciso can be understood according to these perceptions of the lack of innate quality, singularity or differentiation in a specific anti-cultural techno-industrial context, viewed in the context of Oedipa’s quest to settle Pierce’s estate, the city functions as a place of significance because of its revelatory potential. For Oedipa, it is not landmarks noted for natural beauty that will function as the sacred places of her visions, but rather the landmarks of Pierce’s estate which can be considered to correlate to the types of places that induce and produce these types of revelatory visions.

However, given the historical context of the novel and the nuclear-industrial co-ordinates of the city, Oedipa’s San Narciso is also layered with geopolitical, as well as geospiritual significance, which also necessitates attention. With Oedipa’s social and cultural identity, and the layered quality of San Narciso in mind, it is important to draw on secular, as well as spiritual frameworks, in an attempt to understand the potential dual qualities of Oedipa’s quest. Jameson’s analysis of cognitive mapping, drawn from both Kevin Lynch’s work on the subject and Althusser’s analysis of the function of ideology, is suggestive of one way in

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<sup>354</sup> Thomas Heise, *Urban Underworlds: A Geography Of Twentieth-Century American Literature And Culture* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2011), p. 199.

<sup>355</sup> Peter L. Cooper, *Signs and Symptoms: Thomas Pynchon and the Contemporary World* (California: University of California Press, 1993), p. 56.

which place functions in Oedipa's processing of San Narciso. Lynch's understanding of cognitive mapping as the way in which a city-dweller reconciles the immediate experiential sense of place with the vaster imaginative sense of the city, and Althusser's formulation of ideology as "the Imaginary representation of the subject's relationship to his or her Real conditions of existence", are reconstructed to include the dimension of social structure.<sup>356</sup> Thus place becomes both spatially difficult and politically charged. Jameson explains this idea through the example of London, suggesting that the truth of the limited daily experience of London is not restricted to the confines of the city's immediate boundaries, but rather is found in India, or Jamaica or Hong Kong, since London is so bound up with the whole colonial system of the British Empire. London is therefore not limited to geographical or even temporal boundaries; it is multi-historical and multi-national. Jameson argues that these co-ordinates are "no longer accessible to immediate lived experience and are often not even conceptualizable for most people".<sup>357</sup> Oedipa's navigation through the physical space of San Narciso can be realised in a similar way as she not only situates herself within the "vaster and properly unrepresentable totality which is the structure of society's structures as a whole", but also within a historical totality that continues to influence the contextual social structures of the city.<sup>358</sup> While this model is useful to understanding the directly geopolitical aspects of San Narciso, such as the nuclear aspect, a slight departure is required given the specific spiritual and geographical

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<sup>356</sup> Frederic Jameson, 'Cognitive Mapping', in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, eds., *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), p. 353.

<sup>357</sup> Jameson., p. 349.

<sup>358</sup> Michael Rothberg, 'Construction Work: Theor, Migration, and Labor in the Age of Globalization', in Caren Irr and Ian Buchanan, eds., *On Jameson: From Postmodernism to Globalization* (Albany: State University of New York, 2006), p. 119.

aspects of the historical totality.

Using a differing model provided by Leslie Marmon Silko based on her own understanding of the relationship between the spiritual and physical that emphasises the spiritual over the materially historical, San Narciso can be seen to embody a “unique relationship between the ritual-mythic world and the actual, everyday world”.<sup>359</sup> As in Silko’s depiction of her hometown, Laguna, a site of uranium mining but also an Emergence place from which her culture originated, San Narciso becomes a place of contextual political significance, but with a much older, spiritual history. This descriptor therefore operates on the same multi-layered and multi-dimensional principles as Jameson’s model, but preferences spiritual histories.

In the context of *Lot 49*, areas that have retained a spiritual residue have also acquired new strata of significance through being developed as part of Pierce’s estate. The Fangoso Lagoons, for example, a new housing development composed of artificial lakes and imported cultural artefacts, is one such place that provokes in Oedipa a feeling of “hierophany” (*L49*, p. 20) or sacred revelation. Specifically, it is the map of the development on television that provokes this reaction, and it initiates a chain of thought in Oedipa that stretches over cultures and centuries, from present-day San Narciso back to the Book of the Dead.

Unlike the “revelatory” places of authentic Vision Quests, which are experienced first-hand and in situ, Oedipa experiences her “hierophany” through the mediated image of a map of the place.<sup>360</sup> That this mediated vision is able to

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<sup>359</sup> Silko, p. 36.

<sup>360</sup> This is also relevant given that much that is understood about American Indian vision quests has been relayed through outside experiences, and has therefore been mediated through a Western observer’s understanding. The definition of “revelatory” places used here is in line with the definition as given in Vine Deloria Jr., *For This Land*, p. 251.

provoke a profound reaction is also testament to the mediated quality of contextual spiritual experiences, which recalls Oedipa's initial turn to the television as a source of explanation or understanding. In this later instance, the TV mediates the spiritual input and presents it in a way in which Oedipa is able to gain insight from it.

The composition of Fangoso Lagoons itself further elucidates the type of revelatory place being presented here. The housing development is composed of several bodies of water including an artificial lake, at the bottom of which lay "restored galleons, imported from the Bahamas, Atlantean fragments of columns and friezes from the Canaries; real human skeletons from Italy [and] giant clamshells from Indonesia" (*L49*, p. 20). This composition is not a naturally wondrous place, but is nonetheless aesthetically pleasing, even if it has been artificially designed in this way. Pynchon's emphasis is placed on how the development functions as "entertainment" (*L49*, p. 20), and not on whether or not these cross-cultural artefacts are presented sympathetically. The vitality of the development for Oedipa is not derived from it being an authentic place for revelation, as in the Vision Quest experience, but rather from it being sensually stimulating, and from its sense of connectedness and disconnect. Incidentally, the word 'Fangoso' is Spanish for muddy, which heightens this perspective.

This is a crucial reminder that though there are many parallels that can be drawn between the American Indian Vision Quests and Oedipa's quest through San Narciso, the latter is never defined as a Vision Quest in the American Indian sense. Nonetheless, Oedipa's experience can be aligned with a contextual interest in visionary experiences that are partially drawn from American Indian spirituality. Though the spaces that she engages with are not as obviously

elemental as places such as Mount Shasta may be, it is the composite nature of the political, cultural and spiritual space of San Narciso that renders the city, at this specific period in time, an authentic space for spiritual engagement.

Oedipa's quest through San Narciso is acutely contextual, which is evident in Pynchon's cultural references, from *Bonanza* to Oedipa's bubble glasses. Accordingly, the structure of her quest is shaped by contextual influences and the formula of her quest deviates from an assumed quest experience, such as those previously detailed in Forster's accounts. Unlike the assumption that spiritual engagement requires a quiet, meditative place, as in the poetry of those arriving at the Western frontier of California, or in New Age questers' depictions of journeying into the desert, or even in American Indian narratives of a solitary retreat into nature, Oedipa's quest is not dependant on tranquil natural beauty. For Oedipa it is the "freeway madness" (*L49*, p. 75) that allows her the freedom to think. As with other Pynchon characters, such as *Vineland's* central character, Zoyd Wheeler, it is the "exhaust, sweat, glare and ill-humour of a summer evening on an American freeway" (*L49*, p. 74) that facilitates a state of mind that can begin to search for what had "stayed inviolate and integrated" (*L49*, p. 37). Pynchon himself sets up this contrast by pitting the freeway against the "contemplative contours of residential streets like rakings in the sand of a Japanese garden" (*L49*, p. 75). For Oedipa, the road is a more culturally appropriate passage to a visionary experience than a nature-based trail into the wilderness. The road also functions as an important contextual anchor and can be used to further align Pynchon with writers such as Kerouac, Steinbeck, Wolfe, Thompson and Pirsig, who have all depicted the American road as a transcendental path to liberation, (self)

discovery, or philosophical and spiritual awakening.<sup>361</sup> Kerouac's *Road*, like Oedipa's freeway, is both physical and spiritual, in that it physically takes the characters away from "the spiritual poverty of traditional American life" and towards an undiscovered America full of potential spiritual wealth. And, as in some manifestations of sacred places of Vision Quest experiences, the freeway similarly facilitates the visionary experience and lends "significance and intelligibility to the signs and symbols of the visions".<sup>362</sup> Later in the novel, Oedipa decides to drive blind on the freeway "to see what would happen" (L49, p. 122). While critics have interpreted this as a crucial Oedipal connection, Oedipa's decision seems based on a willingness to relinquish her own agency to the force of the freeway.<sup>363</sup> The existential quality of this act however, is met with a more spiritual insertion in the form of angels, who it is suggested have watched over her to prevent any danger while she relinquishes control. This angelic intervention is further testament to the familiar traditional religious framework within which Oedipa continues to attempt to understand her experiences.

In contrast, the final passages of *Inherent Vice* present a less familiar framework in which this sort of intervention can be understood. As Doc Sportello becomes blinded by a mysterious fog on the freeway he finds himself steered by a convoy of cars in the same situation. The convoy of cars functions "like a caravan

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<sup>361</sup> The above examples, and many other cultural evocations of road trips, or the American road, are predominantly male. Aside from literary examples, popular culture road narratives, such as *Easy Rider* (1969), John Denver's 'Take Me Home, Country Roads' (1971) and Springsteen's 'Born to Run' (1975) are also very male-dominant. Pynchon's depiction of Oedipa, a female character, being able to understand the road in this way therefore seems relatively innovative at the point in time. Although more recent criticism by the likes of Ronald Primeau (1996), Deborah Clarke (2007), Jessica Enevold (2004) and Deborah Paes de Barros (2004) has attempted to understand the female relationship to American road narratives, the literature under scrutiny is written in the 1980s and therefore post-dates Pynchon's depiction of Oedipa's road trip.

<sup>362</sup> Walker Jr., p. 111.

<sup>363</sup> So pervasive and recurring is this analysis that J. Kerry Grant claims that the "association of Oedipa with the Sophoclean Oedipus is almost a leitmotif of critical writing on the novel". 2

in a desert of perception” creating a communal sense of safety and guidance (*IV*, p. 368). While Doc finds both protection and an implied sense of communion with his fellow blinded drivers, which speaks to Pynchon’s rendering of the social landscape of *Inherent Vice* as an arena in which spiritual guidance can be sought, Oedipa’s solitary quest is punctuated by a more direct and familiar spiritual intervention.

A foundational aspect of the Vision Quest is therefore the site in which it takes place. For Oedipa, this can be understood broadly as San Narciso. However, the specific landmarks of the city which comprise Pierce’s estate, as in the previous example of Fangoso Lagoons, can also be understood using the same framework of a Vision Quest. Hogan’s Seraglio, for example, a Turkish bath in downtown San Narciso, is important for its similarity to a sweat lodge, which is used for ceremonial and purification purposes. Sweat lodges are also used in preparations for some variations of the Vision Quest as a means of eliciting visions.<sup>364</sup> The Turkish bath, specifically, also places an important focus on water, unlike Roman baths or saunas, the bather in a Turkish bath receives a full body wash as well as being exposed to warm and hot air. This ritualistic use of water is mirrored in the California landscape, which is marked with vents, geysers, and bubbling vats of mud, as well as significant numbers of hot springs. As Erik Davis suggests, these springs, “which bring ancient water bubbling up from cavities miles below the surface”,<sup>365</sup> have influenced California’s healing culture. The hot

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<sup>364</sup> Yurok sweat lodges were traditionally built from redwood trees, which were also used to build hut and canoes. The redwood tree is also important to the infrastructure of Pynchon’s California trilogy. Aside from playing a crucial aspect of *Vineland*, they figure in *Lot 49* as the material of the floorboard in “perhaps the oldest building in San Narciso”. (*L49*, p. 126) The oldest building in San Narciso is thus made from arguably one of the oldest building materials of the state, and creates another cultural thread between the California of the Yuroks and modern day San Narciso.

<sup>365</sup> E. Davis, p. 163.

springs, formerly used as sites of natural healing by American Indians, have been reimagined through different cultural approaches and are now manifested as modern day spa towns like Saratoga Springs and Calistoga, or countercultural spiritual retreats like the Zen monastery of Tassajara. Other notable California hot springs sites have even produced their own New Age movements, such as Ishava's Heart Consciousness, born of the Harbin Hot Springs. Given the contextual propensity to appropriate sacred sites for such different cultural and spiritual uses, it is possible to see how Hogan's Seraglio can be viewed as the outcome of such a process. It is a formulation of the East meets West Coast mentality, whilst also showcasing the complicated relationship between American Indian tradition and modern U.S. innovation. In this sense, Hogan's Seraglio is characteristically Californian, and, as is being developed, San Narcisan.

Another of Pierce's investments, a 51% share of the bone charcoal filter process, has perhaps a slightly more complicated relationship to the sacred geography of San Narciso's landscape. Pynchon creates a complex and mystified history of the charcoal used in this filter process, which is said to have been made from bones found at the bottom of Lago di Pietà, an Italian lake where a little-known battle between American and German forces occurred during the Second World War. The bones are therefore those of American soldiers who died during battle and whose bodies were put into the lake by German soldiers. The bones, latterly acquired by Tony Jaguar, an associate of Pierce, were used in three different capacities, which each speak to a different aspect of attitudes towards burial and commemoration; in Fangoso Lagoons to decorate the bottom of the lake, as part of a fertilizer enterprise, and to produce charcoal for the filter process for Beaconsfield Cigarettes. However, Pynchon's focus seems to be on the myth of

Lago di Pietà, and the broader concern of destroying old cemeteries. Metzger explains to Oedipa that the East San Narciso Freeway itself has been built on old cemetery ground that had to “be ripped up”.<sup>366</sup> If the lake at Lago di Pietà can therefore be considered a mythical burial site given that it holds the remains of soldiers fallen in battle, then this has important implications for the understanding of sacred geography within a Californian and U.S. context. Pynchon’s depiction of the American attitude towards how the dead should be commemorated is twofold; firstly there is the allusion to historical cemeteries being destroyed for new infrastructural developments, provoked by the story of Lago di Pietà, and secondly, there is the evocation of the Forest Lawn cemetery corporation as an indicator of the “American cult of dead” (*L49*, p. 42), which is also cited as one of the reasons for harvesting the bones from the lake.

The act of destroying historical cemeteries has obvious significance in an American Indian context, especially when considering the numerous American Indian burial sites that have been destroyed and redeveloped for commercial or industrial uses. In California alone, as has previously been discussed, the examples are numerous and extensive, and include high-profile cases such as the founding of what is now Santa Clara University, which was built on a confirmed American Indian burial ground, and Glen Cove or Sogorea Te, a collective burial site for many American Indian tribes since at least 1,500 BCE, which was redeveloped into a public park. Another infamous commercial nationwide developer is Wal-Mart, which is responsible for building stores and parking on sites across the state and

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<sup>366</sup> Incidentally, the bodies of Pynchon’s ancestors Mary (daughter of William Pynchon) and her husband Elizur Holyoke were exhumed and reburied in a different location after the original graveyard had become overcrowded. See the entry at *Find A Grave* project, last accessed 3 February 2016, <<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=cr&CRid=2351895>>.

country despite extensive opposition and highly publicised campaigns against such developments. Though a degree of protection has been afforded to American Indian remains, with it now being a felony to obtain or possess “Native American artifacts or human remains which are taken from grave or cairn”,<sup>367</sup> the land itself is not subject to the same level of protection. And while the California Public Resources Code Section 5097.9-5097.991, subsections 5097.9 and 5097.94 (g) is very clear that “no public agency, and no private party using or occupying public property [can] cause severe or irreparable damage to any Native American sanctified cemetery, place or worship, religious or ceremonial site, or sacred shrine located on public property”, this becomes null and void if “public interest and necessity so require”.<sup>368</sup> As a consequence, the protection of these sacred sites is only relative to the level of public interest and the demand for alternative use of the land. It stands to reason therefore that if the construction of a Wal-Mart, or in Pynchon’s example, a freeway, is deemed to be more in the public interest than the burial ground, it has no legal protection and does not have to be preserved.

The contrasting attitude towards sacred burial sites lies in Pynchon’s evocation of Forest Lawn, which is a testament to what he calls “the American cult of the dead”.<sup>369</sup> Since Forest Lawn has already been discussed at length in the introduction in terms of its memorialisation quality, it is perhaps more useful in this particular discussion to focus on how Forest Lawn contributes to the spiritual

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<sup>367</sup>Native American Graves Protection: A Resource Guide For Coroners, Native American Most Likely Descendants, Tribal Governments, Tribal Organizations, Archaeologists, Law Enforcement Officials, City and County Planners, Property Owners, and Developers’, *California Public Resources Code*, Chapter 1492 (1982), last accessed 5 June 2015, <[https://scahome.org/about\\_sca/NAPC\\_Sourcebook/485\\_pdfsam\\_Sourcebook%20SCA%2010.2005%20fifth%20edition.pdf](https://scahome.org/about_sca/NAPC_Sourcebook/485_pdfsam_Sourcebook%20SCA%2010.2005%20fifth%20edition.pdf)>.

<sup>368</sup> *California Public Resources Code*.

<sup>369</sup> Incidentally, the Glendale site at Forest Lawn features a replica of Michelangelo’s Pietà, which creates another connection between the bones of the GIs at Lago di Pietà and the spiritual landscape of San Narciso.

and political context out of which Fangoso Lagoons has been created.

The re-appropriation of the soldiers' bones by Pierce's estate is said to have followed a thought process influenced by both the commercial and political viability of exhibiting the bones, that American tourists "would pay good dollars for almost anything" (*L49*, p. 42), especially given the prior success of Forest Lawn, and that Senator McCarthy might "somehow refocus attention on the fallen of WWII, especially ones whose corpses had never been found" (*L49*, p. 42). The first aspect, the commercial possibilities of being able to showcase these bones, is clearly assumed given the example of Forest Lawn as a precursor to the idea of the commercial potential of the dead, however, the influence of Senator McCarthy is perhaps more complex. That the success of Fangoso Lagoons is in part dependent on endorsement from McCarthy is a further tribute to the pervasiveness of his influence at this point during the Cold War. This element of Pierce's development therefore acquires an added meaning, not only does it suggest the commercialization and perhaps even fetishization of death, as in the discussion of Forest Lawn, but also speaks to the substantial and almost dutiful adherence to McCarthyism, even beyond the immediate concerns of the Cold War. In its ideas of sacredness and death, Fangoso Lagoons can be seen to chart a spiritual decline. From the initial and incidental destruction of an old cemetery to make way for a freeway, to the re-purposing of human remains as part of a theme-park-esque attraction, the contextual attitudes towards death and commemoration is apparent. However, once again, these acts do not occur in isolation, and Pynchon is clear in suggesting a cultural and political framework for these acts, namely the commercialization of the spiritual, typified by Forest Lawn, but engendered by a more general cultural attitude towards death, and a politics of suggestion and

compliance spearheaded by McCarthyism.

It is also noteworthy that the charcoal from the human remains of the GIs, who by way of their service and manner in which they died could have presumed to have been afforded some kind of sanctity, are used in the production of cigarettes, associated with diseases causing death. Although many American Indians also use tobacco, and the smoke in particular as part of rituals to “cure illness, to purify, and as a form of prayer”<sup>370</sup>, and view tobacco as a plant with sacred qualities, there is no evidence that the ceremonial use of tobacco leads to habituation in the same way. As a result, even those campaigning to bring an end to smoking, draw a distinction between “ceremonial tobacco use and commercial products that contribute to death and disease”.<sup>371</sup> The commercial type of cigarette being produced by Beaconsfield Cigarettes is therefore completely devoid of any spiritual recompense: it both desecrates human remains in its production and fuels the production of a knowingly death-driven type of cigarette, which is in fact acknowledged in the name of the company that produces the filters, Osteolysis Inc., meaning a pathological destruction or disappearance of bone tissue. This conscious drive towards self-destruction is perhaps a further outcome of the Cold War mentality, which has already been shown to have inaugurated apocalyptic narratives, and perhaps suggests another level of interpretation to the moment when Oedipa decides to drive blind on the freeway. Given that Oedipa’s quest is presented as neither wholly spiritual nor secular, the suggested Vision Quest framework can then be compounded by a psychological framework which

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<sup>370</sup> ‘Special Populations: Native Americans’, *Partnership For A Tobacco-Free Maine*, (2016), last accessed 21 February 2016,

<[www.tobaccofreemaine.org/channels/special\\_populations/native\\_americans.php](http://www.tobaccofreemaine.org/channels/special_populations/native_americans.php)>.

<sup>371</sup> *Partnership For A Tobacco-Free Maine*.

recognizes Oedipa's quest as being driven also by factors that can be explained in psychoanalytical terms. As Calum Lister Matheson explains in his analysis of the nuclear imagination and the death drive, "a fundamental process of the death drive [is] the ceaseless quest for discontinuous subjects, once aware of their separation from the world, to regain something lost", which in the example of Oedipa might account for the nature of her quest through San Narciso once she becomes removed from Kinneret.<sup>372</sup> Moreover, Matheson's contention that subjects also "cathect to symbols, investing their attention and care in them" is especially appropriate to the symbolic nature of Oedipa's quest.<sup>373</sup> Though this does not of course completely account for the quality of Oedipa's quest, in the same way that the Vision Quest framework is not presented as conclusive, it is similarly suggestive of a context, in this instance the ongoing Cold War, as a determining factor in understanding how Oedipa's quest might be understood.

## **Revelation**

With this in mind, it is perhaps useful to devote some attention to the unapologetically profane, Galatronics Division of Yoyodyne Inc. Since San Narciso is a city layered with levels of history and strata of cultural influences, it is important to acknowledge the technological-industrial circuit of the city in order

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<sup>372</sup> Calum Lister Matheson, 'Desired Ground Zeroes: Nuclear Imagination and the Death Drive' (unpublished PhD., University of North Carolina, 2015), p. 55.

<sup>373</sup> Matheson.

to understand the complex dynamic between the spiritual and secular landscapes of the San Narciso that are crucial to Oedipa's particular quest.<sup>374</sup>

At the height of the Cold War, 15 of the 25 largest aerospace companies in the United States were based in Southern California, the impact of which is evident in the city's infrastructure, from the presence of Yoyodyne, "the giant of the aerospace industry", to the "decentred" circuit board layout of the city (*L49*, p. 15). Pynchon himself is keenly aware of the "extraordinary extensiveness of rocket and missile development in Southern California"<sup>375</sup>, which is referenced in his 1966 essay 'A Journey Into The Mind of Watts'. In this essay Pynchon characterizes the industry as a form of "systematized folly" which has the "economy of the area...depending on it".<sup>376</sup> Technological explorations of this period were "underpinned by the military activities of the federal government"<sup>377</sup>, meaning that the economic stability of the region was dependent on the country's continued military involvement in the Cold and Korean Wars. The culmination of the Second World War had created a deep economic depression in Southern California, which had in this period become heavily reliant on the defence industry and would require the outbreak of future conflicts to break this period of depression. The 1964 historical setting of *Lot 49* is therefore crucially important to this reading of the novel, since it marks a point in the history of Southern California when the economy had become so entrenched in aerospace-electronics

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<sup>374</sup> Yoyodyne find an historical counterpart in Los Angeles' Rocketdyne, that was similarly one of the "giants of the aerospace industry".

<sup>375</sup> Allen John Scott, *Technopolis: High-technology industry and regional development in Southern California* (California: University of California Press, 1993), p. 62.

<sup>376</sup> Thomas Pynchon, 'A Journey Into the Mind of Watts', *The New York Times* (12 June 1966), last accessed 4 September 2015, <<http://www.nytimes.com/books/97/05/18/reviews/pynchon-watts.html>>.

<sup>377</sup> Scott, p. 65.

industry that it accounted for between 70-80% of all contracts awarded in this industry between 1950 and 1980. As Peter J. Westwick suggests, “Southern California as we know it would not exist without aerospace, and, if one is looking for the societal impact of space exploration, one need look no further than the transformation of Southern California in the twentieth century from sunbelt orange groves to high-tech metropolis”.<sup>378</sup>

The impact of the industry on both the economy and, as Daniel Grausam suggests, on the landscape of San Narciso, cannot be overstated. Grausam’s reading of San Narciso as a ‘nuclear city’ is therefore useful in understanding some of the specific co-ordinates of this area, in particular the recurring image of the circuit board layout, which he argues may well be the “secret of San Narciso”.<sup>379</sup> Grausam’s analysis of the layout of San Narciso uncovers a decentred, post-industrial city that is a direct material product of the Cold War. The “census tracts, special purpose bond-issue districts, shopping nuclei” (*L49*, p. 14) and even the freeway, are all significant to a historical understanding of this cityscape. However, it is in reading San Narciso as a nuclear city that Grausam understands the quality of San Narciso’s revelation. By invoking a passage in which Oedipa describes a particularly disorientating moment whilst navigating her way around the city, Grausam reminds us of the contextually real possibility of the total destruction of the city by hydrogen bomb.<sup>380</sup> The language used to describe how Oedipa has lost the city- “the loss pure, instant, spherical, the sound of a stainless orchestral chime” (*L49*, p. 123) - and how she imagines San Narciso being

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<sup>378</sup> Peter J. Westwick, ‘Introduction’, in Peter J Westwick, ed., *Blue Sky Metropolis: The Aerospace Century in Southern* (California: University of California Press, 2012), p. 11.

<sup>379</sup> Grausam, p. 52.

<sup>380</sup> Grausam, pp. 42-59

“assumed back in the American continuity of crust and mantle” (*L49*, p. 123), are indicative of the way in which a hydrogen bomb might destroy the city. This is so heavily influenced by the Cold War configuration of the city, and a contextual psychology, that her language and imagery is shaped by this context. If Oedipa’s quest is to uncover the “revelation” (*L49*, p. 129) of San Narciso, then this nuclear aspect of its geography has to be fully acknowledged and included.

Though this may be a more distinctly secular aspect of Oedipa’s quest through San Narciso, the language and imagery invoked here recalls the imagery of the aforementioned Hopi prophecy of nuclear disaster. Both sets of imagery are comparably oblique but similarly reference aspects of the destruction of a city that are indicative of it being nuclear in nature. Grausam’s analysis of the “instant, spherical”<sup>381</sup> nature of the loss relates to the formation of a mushroom cloud, in the same way that the Hopi prophecy, “that living things will die from heat”,<sup>382</sup> is also founded on knowledge of nuclear outcomes. Though the Hopi vision is derived from prophecy, while Grausam’s understanding of San Narciso as a nuclear city may be derived from an interpretation of the physical construct of the city and the historical presence of the aerospace industry, it is the confluence of both spiritual and secular methods and understandings that is key to this thesis’ reading of San Narciso.

This combination provides useful co-ordinates, not only in imagining the physical presence of the Cold War threat on the cityscape, but also in measuring the psychological impact of the nuclear presence on how citizens imagine the city. The importance of the Cold War as a psychological framework in which Oedipa

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<sup>381</sup> Grausam., p. 53.

<sup>382</sup> Richardson.

understands her environment is alluded to clearly as Pynchon details the direct effect of the decisions of Secretaries James and Foster and Senator Joseph McCarthy, key figures in creating the pathology of the Cold War, on a young Oedipa. It is said that, “among them they had managed to turn the young Oedipa into a rare creature indeed, unfit perhaps for marches and sit ins, but just a whiz at pursuing strange words in Jacobean texts”, which is especially useful in this context given that the ability to be able to ‘read’ or interpret signs and symbols in the landscape is crucial to being able to undertake a Vision Quest (*L49*, p.72). It is the influence of the Cold War embodied in these figures, and especially in the aforementioned pervasiveness of McCarthyism, and again in the immediate presence in the physical and cultural space of San Narciso, together with the spiritually-charged elements of Pierce’s estate, that have a direct impact on the nature of Oedipa’s quest through the city.

Recalling McCann and Szalay’s evocation of the paradigm shift in methods of resistance during the 1960s, from direct recognizable activism to symbolic action, Oedipa can be viewed as a student of this shift. Pynchon explicitly states that she is not a student of the “Latin American universities” she imagines, a political activist or adversary, the “sort that bring governments down”, (to the contrary, she somewhat embarrassed, identifies as a Young Republican), but rather operates in a less direct, complex way, which is again useful in introducing the framework of the Vision Quest (*L49*, p. 71). Her reaction to her political and geographical context, heightened by her entering the ‘sacred’ space of San Narciso, is to attempt to find meaning. Like many of her contemporaries who can be considered like those experimenting with alternative spiritualities and American

Indian-inspired beliefs, this is not approached using directly political means, but in esoteric, spiritual methods beyond her immediate understanding.

Once again, this unconventional method of a quest for meaning finds a parallel with the traditional quests of American Indian cultures. As a consequence, Yoyodyne becomes as important a psychologically-charged place in Oedipa's quest as the Six Rivers National Forest is a spiritually-charged place in Vision Quest traditions. In both cases, a sacred configuration of the land has been formed that will "always retain something of the intensity of that experience";<sup>383</sup> however, it will also produce future spiritual nurture and wisdom.

If San Narciso can be established as one of the sacred places of Oedipa's quest, the duration of the quest itself actually begins with her entering what is described in the light of her time in San Narciso, as the "infected city" of San Francisco (*L49*, p. 80). Though many critics have speculated on this choice of adjective, from an allusion to Thebes, to the city's infestation by post horn, to its being another potential allusion to the nuclear presence in the city, it is also possible to construe this as the city being "infected" with meaning, especially given the prelude to this stage of the quest in San Narciso. This description in fact follows a scene in which Oedipa tries to gauge "the spectrum of feeling out there" (*L49*, p. 80) and has found herself in a place in which she is allowing herself to experience new feelings and alternative possibilities. The term 'infected' is suitable since it suggests an outside influence, especially one that is unfamiliar, which can be seen to have 'infected' her former self.

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<sup>383</sup> Vine Deloria Jr, *For This Land*, p. 244.

Oedipa's night-time journey through San Francisco provides the most hallucinatory aspects of her quest, which correlate to the stage of the Vision Quest experience when visions begin to appear. However, in this framework, the preparation for this stage occurs in San Narciso before she enters San Francisco. In the most geographically-relevant Yurok tradition of Vision Quests, it is, unusually, the women who undertake the Quests. An important catalyst of the Quest is the "pain" that is placed inside the woman's body to initiate the vision. This occurs during a dream where a shaman or a dead person will put the "pain" into the body, thereby making her a shaman also.<sup>384</sup> In Oedipa's case she is "interpenetrated by the dead man's estate", and for her it is the legacy left to her by Pierce which is the "pain" that instigates her quest (*L49*, p. 75). The language of penetration is obviously sexual, but also suggests that this legacy is being forced onto Oedipa, and is something she will have to manage on a literal legal level, on an emotional level (given her romantic history with Pierce), and now on a spiritual level, following the "religious instant" she experiences upon entering San Narciso (*L49*, p. 15).

Another important catalyst of the Vision Quest experience is the consumption of hallucinogenic drugs that aid in inducing visions. Having met Metzger, Oedipa's guide both legally and figuratively given this suggested framework, she shares a bottle of Beaujolais, tequila and bourbon with him. According to J. Kerry Grant, this consumption of alcohol is a very obvious and direct, and is the reason as to why things "grew less and less clear" for Oedipa at this stage of the novel (*L49*, p. 27). In the context of a Vision Quest however, it is

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<sup>384</sup> Alfred L. Kroeber, *Handbook of the Indians of California* (New York: Dover Publications, 1976). p. 63.

not just the initial consequence of losing clarity that is significant, but rather the loss of self-awareness, especially in social terms, which allows the mind to become more receptive to visions. Pynchon also imagines the odour of chlorine bleach to take on a meditative quality, rising “heavenward, like incense” to further induce this hallucinatory state (*L49*, p. 84).

Having established the preparatory site of Oedipa’s quest, the rich and layered history of that landscape, and having also outlined some of Oedipa’s preparations for her quest through San Francisco, it follows that the purpose of the quest itself and its subsequent meaning be delineated. Like those who undertake Vision Quests to gain an insight into themselves and the world around them, Oedipa seeks to understand the meaning behind her involvement in executing Pierce’s will. As this reading is attempting to establish, this endeavour is not characterized by Pynchon as a simple legal problem, but rather as an attempt at revelation.

The language of revelation is abundant in *The Crying of Lot 49*, from the revelation “that trembled just past the threshold of understanding” (*L49*, p. 15) and the “promise of hierophany” (*L49*, p. 20), to the explicit disclosure that Oedipa “was to have all manner of revelations” (*L49*, p. 12). This semantic aspect of Oedipa’s quest has received significant critical attention from both Tony Tanner and Edward Mendelson, the latter of whom goes so far as to argue that “religious meaning is itself the central issue of the plot”.<sup>385</sup> However, Mendelson’s case for the religious centre of *Lot 49* is based on an explication of Oedipa’s relationship to the Tristero more than any specific suggested religious or spiritual underpinning

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<sup>385</sup> Edward Mendelson, ‘The Sacred, the Profane, and *The Crying of Lot 49*’, in Edward Mendelson, ed., *Pynchon: A Collection of Critical Essays*, (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1978), p. 120.

to the city or the novel. Simply put, the Tristero, a guerrilla postal service that began in sixteenth-century as a result of a dispute between two opposing potential heirs to the postal service, is now an underground “network by which X number of Americans are truly communicating” (L49, p. 117). Mendelson argues that the emphasis on “truly communicating” suggests that they reserve “their lies, recitations of routine, arid betrayals of spiritual poverty” (L49, p. 118), for the official government postal service. The content of the communication and the illogical and temporally impossible method of delivery is also, for Mendelson, an indication that the Tristero “carries with it a sense of sacred connection and relation to the world”.<sup>386</sup> Thus, Mendelson’s sustained petition for the connectedness of Pynchon’s spirituality can be seen as embodied in the Tristero itself, since it “manifests a way of comprehending the world”.<sup>387</sup> To take this argument a step further, it is Oedipa’s *relationship* to the Tristero that perhaps helps to clarify Mendelson’s sacred rendering of the Tristero, and posits the kind of revelation that Oedipa is to experience.

In Mendelson’s reading there are two incarnations of the Tristero; the secular, which has historical origins and practical reasons for its foundation, and the sacred, which explains the way in which it operates and the nature of the communication it allows. It is this second incarnation that is naturally the most useful in understanding Oedipa’s revelation, since it is the ambivalence of the Tristero’s operations and the types of messages communicated through the system that are suggestive of a spiritual dimension to this postal service. If, as Mendelson suggests and Pynchon confirms, spirituality operates as a way to

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<sup>386</sup> Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>387</sup> Mendelson., p. 119.

connect events for “a reason that mattered to the world”, then the Tristero is the epitome of this interconnection, a quality which has been shown to be valued in this context of rethinking spirituality, especially given the influence of American Indian belief. As the antithesis of the official governmental postal service, the Tristero communicates truth, the extraordinary, and spiritual wealth. That it is also able to achieve this through illogical or unconventional methods further evokes the contextual exploration of unconventional spiritual practices in the context of a re-rendering of spirituality at this juncture in U.S. culture.

Mendelson’s representation of the almost mystical quality to the method of delivery of the Tristero is, in his reading, indicative of its spiritual quality. However, on a much more practical level, some of the delivery methods used by the Tristero are in fact explained to Oedipa. It is said that while the Pony Express is “defying deserts, savages and sidewinders” (*L49*, p. 120), the Tristero is instead “giving its employees crash courses in Siouan and Athapascan dialects”, (*L49*, p. 120) and disguising their messengers “as Indians” (*L49*, p. 120). The idea of disguised Indians delivering surreptitious mail can be described by what Oliver Harris calls “the dialectic of materiality and spectrality in the letter exchange”.<sup>388</sup> Though the mail is being materially delivered, its method of delivery in being both secretive and obfuscatory reinforces the spectrality of the exchange. Though this particular method is not exactly what Mendelson seems to be referring to when he references the sacred connections that the Tristero creates, it is nevertheless presented as an alternative method for delivering these communications. Furthermore, given the significance of the ‘Indian’ in the context of the American

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<sup>388</sup> Oliver Harris, ‘Out of Epistolary Practice: Email from Emerson, Post-cards to Pynchon’, *American Literary History*, 13/1, (2011), p. 161.

Civil War in this chapter of the history of the Tristero, and in the context of the setting of the novel, this method is afforded another layer of possible meaning. In playing Indian during the Civil War, the messengers are able to more successfully deliver post “every time”, using “silence, impersonation, opposition masquerading as allegiance” (*L49*, p. 120). However, in the context of the novel, the idea of playing Indian, as previously discussed, involves seeking alternative ways of exploring and finding meaning. Given this interpretation, the perceived figure of the Indian has been, and continues to be critical to the sort of communication that the Tristero delivers. However, if the Tristero is sacred by way of its methods of delivery and the sorts of communication it delivers, then its relationship to Oedipa is also crucial to understanding the revelation she is to have.

Relatively speaking, Oedipa only really encounters the Tristero through the recurring symbol of the post horn, which she finds manifest throughout San Francisco. The translation of her understanding from word-based narratives into visions or symbols is perhaps another trajectory of the novel that can be somewhat explained in contextual terms. As previously outlined, having entered the new cultural space of San Narciso in the preparatory stages of her quest, Oedipa begins to configure her understanding in images and symbols which coincide with both a contextual rethinking of modes of understanding and the suggested framework of the Vision Quest.

At a climactic moment of her night-time journey through San Narciso, she questions the significance of the recurrence of the post horn throughout the city. At this moment, Oedipa’s relationship to the symbol of the post horn is both dizzying and terrifying, she becomes acutely aware of the need to remember its various incarnations, but also begins to view this compulsion towards the symbol

as akin to a death-wish. The death-wish she describes can again be understood in Matheson's terms as the awareness of a separation and an attempt to regain something lost. In this case, Oedipa realizes that she is experiencing a separation from "the direct, epileptic Word" (*L49*, p. 81), and that the "gemlike "clues"" (*L49*, p. 81) in the form of the post horn, perhaps function as compensation for having lost this relationship. Accordingly, Pynchon's catalogue of those seeking knowledge through vision-based methods, the form of the Vision Quest itself, and the contextual attraction to esoteric means of making sense of the world, can be inversely understood not as attempts at connections, but rather as the outcome of having become separated from the word. The appeal of the symbol of the post horn can therefore also be measured in terms of the contextual decline in interest in Abrahamic religions, and the ensuing adoption of vision-based practices such as Vision Quest type experiences.

That "much of [Oedipa's] revelation was to come through the stamp collection" (*L49*, p. 29) is also indicative of a further departure from words for eliciting meaning to an increasing attraction towards potential symbols. A context to this loss of faith in the word and that which it is seen to represent has been shown in changing attitudes towards personal and public expression. From the decline of interest in scripture-based religions during the Cold War, to calls from cultural critics, writers and artists to explore symbolic methods of political expression, which is typified by the historical political and spiritual practices of American Indians, the emphasis on the potentials and possibilities of the symbolic is apparent.

The stamps themselves are also symbolic of a certain kind of communication; they are able to both facilitate the process, and can, by way of

specific designs, as in the 1947 Postage Stamp Centenary Issue which shows “the head of a Pony Express rider...set at a disturbing angle unknown to the living” (L49, p. 120), promote and proliferate certain ideas.

However, Oedipa’s attraction and devotion to the word is not entirely lost upon her arrival in San Narciso, owing perhaps to her entrenchment in an assumed social identity and the chasm between this and the ideas coming from the counterculture. As she oscillates between that which is familiar and the unknown symbol of the post horn, a mindset which can be said to typify the unsettled psychology of this era, she becomes drawn by the particulars of the text of *The Courier’s Tragedy*. Though the play is spoken in “Transplanted Middle Western Stage British” (L49, p. 43), even these historically and geographically estranged words are more familiar and easily understood to Oedipa than the “symbols she’d never seen before” (L49, p. 34), and the “hieroglyphic” (L49, p. 15) sense of concealed meaning that she faces in the post horn. Not surprisingly, it is not even the play in its entirety that Oedipa is concerned with, but rather the specific words themselves that are spoken. Oedipa, as the antithesis to the revolutions of symbolic action and visionary experience, clings to these words and their exegesis rather than confront the “hieratic geometry” (L49, p. 37) all around her. Even after Randolph Driblette, the director of *The Courier’s Tragedy*, maintains that “it was written to entertain people. Like horror movies. It isn’t literature, it doesn’t mean anything”, she insists on seeing a material “script” (L49, p. 52). Furthermore, Driblette’s reaction to her fixation on the semantics of the play, “you guys, you’re like Puritans are about the Bible. So hung up with words, words” (L49, p. 53), can be read in this context of alternative spiritualities and

visionary experiences, as a promotion of new ways of seeing and understanding, over the received methods represented by the Bible.

The sense of “concealed meaning” in *Lot 49* (*L49*, p. 15), which can be retrieved through a re-connection to that which has been lost, is incidentally a crucial aspect of the Vision Quest. Oedipa’s revelation, characterized as being concerned with “what remained yet had somehow, before this stayed away”, (*L49*, p. 12) has been explained in Pynchon criticism in Freudian terms, as being concerned with a revelation of all that has been repressed by the American consciousness, typified in Oedipa. However, what Oedipa is said to have discovered is “hardly about Pierce Inverarity, or herself” (*L49*, p. 12), which somewhat compromises this psychoanalytical reading- and seems instead to be related to something more foundational, on a more universal level (*L49*, p. 12).

Instead, this revelation is intrinsically linked to both the geography of San Narciso and “what [Pierce] had left behind”, which allows for the legacy to be read in terms of the same continuity that characterizes San Narciso. If San Narciso represents “true continuity” (*L49*, p. 123), and as such is fluid with the rest of the country, and Pierce’s estate comprises a large portion of the make-up of San Narciso, Oedipa concludes that his legacy is by extension, “America” (*L49*, p. 123). And, if the purpose of Oedipa’s quest is to understand the sense of concealed meaning, this is important to understanding the nature of what is being uncovered to her.

The essential aspect of the Vision Quest, to create a deep communication with fundamental forces and spiritual energies, can therefore be understood, thinking closely in the specific example of Oedipa, as relating to foundations. If these foundations that she has discovered are said to directly relate to “America”

itself, then it is also important to recognize what of “America” she is exposed to by Pynchon during her period of revelation. This is especially significant given the changing social scapes of the U.S., as previously highlighted by Cowart’s summary that America discovered that not all its citizens were “white and prosperous”, and in the attempt to reconsider Pynchon’s position as a “white liberal” postmodernist and/or socially-concerned/”postsecular” writer.

Aside from the many manifestations of the post horn, Oedipa encounters various, isolated individuals on her night-time quest through San Francisco that reflect the socially-marginalised communities, the representation of which affiliates Pynchon with writers such as Morrison and Silko. Each of these individuals carries an incarnation of the post horn and signifies different revelations for Oedipa. Though the list of individuals she encounters is extensive, and includes “an exhausted busful of Negroes”, the “Alameda County Death Cult” and “another voyeur who hung outside one of the city’s still-lighted windows, searching for who knew what specific image” (*L49*, p. 84), who each offer an insight into both the social fabric of San Francisco and into that which the Tristero offers to these particular groups of people, there are two encounters in particular that specifically relate to the sense of continuity which is vital to both Oedipa’s revelation and a sense of interconnection that becomes recurrent and prevalent throughout the California trilogy.

In Golden Gate Park, Oedipa encounters a circle of children “who told her they were dreaming the gathering” (*L49*, p. 81). The symbolism of a circle of children who have sufficiently created their “own unpenetrated sense of community” (*L49*, p. 82) that acts as an “imaginary fire” in terms of the warmth, comfort, protection and security it offers, is an actualized display of this

continuity. In this instance the symbolism of circle is manifested in material benefits, and moreover demonstrates a potential successful outcome of McClure's magical thinking. "The gathering" itself is also suitably ambiguous, suggestive of an all-inclusive sense of communion which is reinforced by its being the definite article, but remaining subject to interpretation. That the children are also said to have been "*dreaming* the gathering" also heightens the contextual bent to this image since dreaming, as previously discussed, is a vision-based mode of understanding and one which is directly referenced by Pynchon.

Following her encounter with the circle of children, Oedipa is reunited with Jesús Arrabal, in whom she "found a piece of her past" (L49, p. 82). That Oedipa finds Arrabal, an anarchist, at this point in her quest, with all the implications of his first name, and associates him with her past, confirms the religious and political route not taken by Oedipa, or indeed increasing numbers of the U.S. given the aforementioned statistics on the belief in the importance of religion.

Arrabal's conception of a miracle, which will inform a reading of the role of the redwood trees in chapter two, in this context can also serve to reinforce a sense of continuity, given that a miracle is "another world's intrusion into this one" (L49, p. 83). This sense of initial disruption is mirrored in Oedipa's prior entry into the unfamiliar cultural space of San Narciso. If, in this context, Oedipa (acting as the intrusion) breaks into "this world" (San Narciso), this would, according to Arrabal, allow "revolutions to break out spontaneous and leaderless" (L49, p. 83), assuming the overwhelming sense of consensus (or continuity) it would create. Recalling McClure's use of "small miracles" as a gesture towards religiously-inflected modes of refashioning the Self in an effort towards broader social revival, Arrabal's argument can be aligned with contextual intellectual and social debate.

This also allows for Oedipa's quest as whole to be understood in a context, both academically and culturally in the case of received American Indian beliefs, where ideas around interconnection are valued, highlighted and foregrounded.

However, while the circle of children in Golden Gate Park and Arrabal testify to Oedipa's emerging understanding of continuity and interconnection, the social scape that Oedipa encounters, made up of the aforementioned catalogue of isolated individuals, is suggestive of a contrasting reality to that which the children dream of, or about which Arrabal theorizes. As well as the "busful of Negroes", the "Alameda County Death Cult" and "another voyeur", Oedipa also encounters the following: a "dreamy cloud of delinquents" (*L49*, p. 83), a "Mexican girl" on a bus (*L49*, p. 84), "a facially-deformed welder, who cherished his ugliness", "a child roaming the night who missed death before birth as certain outcasts do the dear lulling blankness of the community", "a Negro woman with an intricately-marbled scar along the baby-fat of one cheek who kept going through rituals of miscarriage each for a different reason" and "an aging night-watchman, nibbling at a bar of Ivory Soap, who had trained his virtuoso stomach to accept also lotions, air-fresheners, fabrics, tobaccos and waxes in a hopeless attempt to assimilate it all, all the promise, productivity, betrayal, ulcers, before it was too late" (*L49*, p. 85). It is these people who Pynchon cites as being the beneficiaries of the Tristero, and who have accordingly, as a "calculated withdrawal, from the life of the Republic", chosen "not to communicate by U.S. Mail" (*L49*, p. 86).

Pynchon characterizes this withdrawal as a reaction to being collectively "denied...out of hate, indifference to the power of their vote, loopholes, simple ignorance", a course of actions reminiscent of the previously outlined historical

and contextual treatment of American Indians (*L49*, p. 86). Given the suggested framework of the Vision Quest for Oedipa's voyage through San Narcisco and San Francisco, the contextual social and political situation, and the emphasis on the countercultural appropriation of their culture and spirituality, American Indians too might well be included in the list of Pynchon's disenfranchised, and moreover as beneficiaries of the Tristero, especially given how American Indian influence has practically facilitated and symbolically shaped its methods of delivery.

This overview of those who have turned away from the official system of communication and towards the symbolic alternative of the Tristero can similarly be read in the same contextual terms as the circle of children or Jesús Arrabal. These are perhaps the most obviously disenfranchised, by way of their obvious lack of conformity to the U.S. standard that Oedipa represents at the outset of the novel. However, the disillusionment with current systems, be they postal, or more socially far-reaching, can also be seen in the attitude and actions of the counterculture and its peripheries at this point in social, political and cultural U.S. history, reinforcing a contextual reading of the novel.

If it is the reality of the disenfranchised, or in more Pynchonian terms, the preterite of Lot 49, that is revealed to be the legacy of Pierce's will which Oedipa has uncovered during her quest through San Narciso, then *The Crying of Lot 49* never explicitly tells. As in the ritual of the Vision Quest, telling the vision will exhaust or give away power, thus voiding the experience.

## CHAPTER TWO: *VINELAND*

**“All of life could be said to be a way of seeing the trees”**

### **Survey**

The geography of *Vineland* is perhaps most usefully explored through the redwood trees that feature prominently in both the setting of the novel and its narrative, and provide a useful focus for some of Pynchon’s geocultural and geospiritual concerns. Owing to both their longevity and how they function in both the physical and psychological landscapes of *Vineland*, the redwoods are a particularly valuable coordinate for a historically and culturally preoccupied reading of the novel.

However, the centrality of the redwoods can only be recognized in the context of the wider historical totality of the novel, and in order for this to be achieved it is equally important to outline the contemporary historical setting of the novel. Pynchon’s depiction of Reagan-era Northern California therefore opens the discussion, and provides an initial contemporary political and geographical landscape. This allows for a layered understanding of the landscape of *Vineland*, with the redwoods- as the oldest features of the landscape- providing a touchstone for the emerging architecture of Reaganism. To continue the secular-spiritual dualism of the previous chapter, this aspect of the discussion provides the Cold War vantage point against which the counter-narrative of the redwoods can be established.

Having surveyed the “Reagan-ridden” contemporary geography of *Vineland*, an area that has already been addressed in criticism, including the chapter in *Thomas Pynchon and the Dark Passages of History* on the California

novels, which will inform this section of the discussion, the narrative of the redwoods can then be brought to the foreground.<sup>389</sup> This narrative is comprised of numerous threads of alternative histories, including the American Indian Yurok history of the region, as well as ecological and spiritual histories. This composite counter-narrative introduces the notion of changing relationships with the landscape, and it is the redwoods again, in the way that they are understood and incorporated into the varying cultural systems of Vineland, that become demonstrative of the cultural and spiritual climate of the region.

With these intentions in mind, the physical geography of Vineland should be ascertained. Unlike *Lot 49* and *Inherent Vice*, *Vineland* is not set in a fictionalised or elaborated greater Los Angeles, but rather emerges from the titular and fictitious Vineland, a region some 500 miles north of L.A. that is abundant in California redwood trees. In the course of the narrative, Pynchon provides a detailed and topographical description of Vineland which has been used in analysis of the novel to speculate on the exact location of the county. According to some investigative research, together with directional hints from Pynchon, the county lays “somewhere around Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park”, but topographically resembles the Arcata area.<sup>390</sup> Using a satellite view of the city of Arcata, this research speculates on its comparability to Vineland, owing to descriptions provided by Pynchon that specifically detail the Art Deco bridges of the area- a feature that elicits further analysis in later discussions. However, it could also be argued that owing to a grape-growing reference and the ‘vin’

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<sup>389</sup> Cowart, p. 203.

<sup>390</sup> Summary of Pynchon’s directions provided in ‘Chapter 14’, *Pynchon Wiki: Vineland*, last accessed 5 June 2016, <[http://vineland.pynchonwiki.com/wiki/index.php?title=Chapter\\_14&oldid=349](http://vineland.pynchonwiki.com/wiki/index.php?title=Chapter_14&oldid=349)>.

component of its name, Vineland might well be located in the more southerly, wine-producing, Mendocino County.<sup>391</sup>

While specifics will be addressed in greater detail later in the discussion, what is significant at this stage is that in *Vineland* Pynchon chooses a different location to that of the other California novels, and that this move might be suggestive of shifting emphases and concerns in this novel.

The totality of the geographical area of Vineland is not presented until near the end of the novel when Pynchon provides an extensive geographical and historical overview of this space. In this presentation, Vineland is first explored and explained in terms of its infrastructure, which is viewed by the protagonist, Zoyd, as he approaches by car, and then through the descriptive panorama itself that pans in from the sea and the mysterious Seventh River. Notable features in Vineland's infrastructure include, "A Harbor of Refuge", "concrete Art Deco bridges", "a tall power plant stack", "Vineland International airport", "the Corps of Engineers Marina" and "the federal building" (*VL*, p. 316). Though this particular

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<sup>391</sup> Pynchon's connection to Mendocino County is perhaps most colourfully and memorably expressed in the strange case of the Wanda Tinasky letters, which appeared in the area around the same time (1983-88) that Pynchon is reported to have been "researching and writing a novel set in Northern California". Beginning in 1983, a series of letters were received by both the *Anderson Valley Advertiser* and the *Mendocino Commentary* signed by a person calling themselves Wanda Tinasky. The letters, authored in the "inimitable style" of Pynchon and communicating the same "political sentiments", expressed a "deep concern with governmental repression, abuses of power, gentrification/yuppification, drug hysteria, rapacious capitalism, and a bitter sense of betrayal of what America could and should be". That these themes and ideas were to later form the political landscape of *Vineland* created speculation that Pynchon himself might well be the author of the Tinasky letters. A sustained engagement with the Tinasky letters, *The Letters of Wanda Tinasky*, calling itself a "useful companion to *Vineland*", analyses both specific and general points of comparison between the letters and the novel, but also more usefully perhaps provides "further context, local colour, and background material" for *Vineland*. If not to argue a case for Pynchon's authorship (which his wife/agent denies, and of which he has been characteristically silent), then the Tinasky letters serve to enhance the alleged broad location of the novel, given the comparable descriptions of Mendocino and Humboldt county that appear in both the letters and the novel. Metatextually, the Tinasky letters also contribute to social landscape of *Vineland*, commenting on its citizenry and on public opinion in 1984, the present day setting of the novel. Stephen Moore, 'Foreword', in T. R. Factor, ed., *The Letters of Wanda Tinasky* (Portland: Vers Libre Press, 1996), pp. ix-xi.

overview does not specifically address the redwood trees, their predominance which is established throughout the narrative through both their infrastructural presence and their permeation of the cultural and spiritual landscape of the novel, will be addressed in later analysis.

Meanwhile, these features in particular can be used to establish the infrastructure of Reaganism, which characterises the first area of discussion. Examining the historical narrative of these selected landmarks that form the aforementioned overview of Vineland allows for an understanding of how the contemporary geographical narrative of the region is shaped. That the individual narratives of each of these landmarks relate a history of settlement and development in the Northern Californian area, also allows this reading to chart both the historical settlements of the American Indian Yurok people as the native inhabitants of the area, and more recent patterns of inhabitation and development. As an example of a notable feature in Vineland's infrastructure, the historical narrative of the Harbor of Refuge can be used to introduce this approach.

Pynchon's Harbor of Refuge is modelled on a namesake harbour and lighthouse in Delaware designed in 1828 to create a safe shipping harbour in an otherwise rough coastal area.<sup>392</sup> Pynchon's transplantation of this idea to California is understandable given its prominent fishing history, from American Indian fishing practises to more recent commercial ventures, which are all encapsulated in the motif of the "salmon boats" (VL, p. 317). In their earliest use,

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<sup>392</sup> Incidentally, Delaware is also part of the *Mason & Dixon* story and the Harbour of Refuge lighthouses are obliquely referenced by way of their proximity to Cape Henlopen, which features in the text. Details provided in 'Chapter 26: 257-265', *Pynchon Wiki: Mason & Dixon*, last accessed 4 May 2015, <[http://masondixon.pynchonwiki.com/wiki/index.php?title=Chapter\\_26:\\_257-265](http://masondixon.pynchonwiki.com/wiki/index.php?title=Chapter_26:_257-265)>.

ethnologist and photographer, Edward S. Curtis observed the importance of salmon boats in sustaining the supply of salmon, a staple food source in the fishing villages of the native Yurok and Tolowa people. He noted that both tribes formed amiable relationships through trading redwood fishing canoes, and that the Klamath River Yurok in particular depended “very largely” on salmon and lampreys to substantiate a diet of “acorns and small seeds”.<sup>393</sup> The image presented in Curtis’ work, through a largely observational anthropological perspective, is of habitat and inhabitant, which therefore naturally focuses on the immediate practical relationship between the Yurok and Tolowa and their environment. Though this is useful in tracing the changing ecological interactions between the inhabitants of the Vineland area and their environment, it is largely anthropological and not particularly culturally sensitive to the nuances in this relationship.

More useful in this regard perhaps, is *Redwood: A Guide to Redwood National and State Parks, California* (1998). While the guide also affirms the status of salmon as a vital food source from “time immemorial”, it also details that the harvesting of salmon by the Yurok and Tolowa people followed “elaborate cultural patterns” that dictated and regulated the quantity of salmon that could be caught in order to ensure supplies for future generations.<sup>394</sup> This added culturally-sensitive reasoning further informs understanding of the fishing practises of the Yurok and Tolowa, and suggests a more conscious approach to salmon fishing than is indicated by Curtis. However, this mindful approach, which could be

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<sup>393</sup> Edward S. Curtis, *The North American Indian*, 13/2 (Massachusetts: The Plimpton Press, 1924), p. 37.

<sup>394</sup> Division of Publications National Park Service, *Redwood: A Guide to Redwood National and State Parks, California* (National Park Service, 1998) p. 77.

considered as conservational in contemporary terms, is contrasted by the more industrial and commercial fishing ventures, which are also referenced in the handbook and in Pynchon's inference of the twofold image of the "salmon boats" (VL, p. 317).

As a later incarnation, Pynchon's depiction of modern fishing boats is consistent with those that began shipping commercially "in the early 1800s at the Klamath River Mouth", and soon began to alter and dictate new shipping patterns.<sup>395</sup> Consequently, as the historical account details, the new commercial nature of fishing meant "markets farther and farther away determined how many salmon were caught" which inevitably overpowered the "ecological restraint" of the native populations.<sup>396</sup> Thus, Pynchon's salmon boats become loaded with a dual ecological history that narrates the changing interaction between the inhabitant and the environment. From their earliest use in this area as vessels providing immediate and direct sustenance to local inhabitants, to their contemporary purpose of generating revenue through mass export, the salmon boats chart the changing ecological relationship between inhabitant and habitant from a local, specific interaction, to a more global, use-based approach, providing a blueprint for discussions of other landmarks in Vineland's geography.

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<sup>395</sup> Long-term resident of the Klamath Mountains and author of *Stone Junction* (1990), for which Pynchon wrote an introduction, Jim Dodge is a curious figure in relation to the landscape of this area. A resident of Klamath and a writer and academic working in the Department of English at Humboldt State University, Dodge is also an advocate of bioregionalist philosophy which focuses on natural systems to distinguish naturally-defined areas. This philosophy is also dependent on balance, recognising that a 'natural system'-Dodge's term for a bioregion- is "a community of interdependent life" that provides nourishment for both body and spirit. In the context of *Vineland*, this view can be seen to coincide with both ecological theory and American Indian belief, both of which attempt to understand Vineland as a particular physical and cultural environment. Jim Dodge, 'Living By Life: Some Bioregional Theory and Practice', in Vincent B. Canizaro, ed., *Architectural Regionalism: Collected Writings on Place, Identity, Modernity and Tradition* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2007), p. 341.

<sup>396</sup> National Park Service, p. 77.

## **Government and Military Installations**

Further indication of this expansion in ecological relationships from the local to the global is suggested in the presence of “Vineland International” (*VL*, p. 317) airport, another component of this layer of the infrastructure of Vineland.

Given that the nearest existing international airport to Vineland’s presumed location is some 300 miles away in either Sacramento or Los Angeles, Pynchon’s inclusion of a such an airport in Vineland itself is noteworthy. The presence of an international airport suggests that Vineland is connected and receptive to outside influxes, and allows for the county to be considered as a literal terminal for incoming ideas. This reading is also consistent with the previous chapter’s presentation of California as a fertile landscape for the development and nourishment of new, incoming ideas from both the West and the East. However, it should be noted that one of the most prominent international excursions and cultural departures in the novel- Zoyd’s trips to Hawaii- actually takes place from LAX in Los Angeles, not from Vineland International.

The most prominent use of Vineland International in the novel is in fact by federal investigator and former lover of Zoyd’s ex-wife and Prairie’s mother Frenesi, Brock Vond, who transforms the airport “into a staging area, with military vehicles everywhere” (*VL*, p. 355). It is the function of this feature that initiates discussion of the contemporary political climate of Vineland, one of the most significant narratives of the novel that should be addressed from the outset, but also in the context of this study, one of the biggest contributors to the changing geopolitical landscape of the region.

The deviation in the function of the airport, and its distancing from Zoyd's Hawaiian escapades, suggests the presence of a more sinister layer being created in the topography of Vineland. Using a similar method to Dan Grausam's contextual reading of San Narciso as a nuclear city, cited in the previous chapter, it is possible to suggest a similarly contextual reading of Vineland as a "prefascist" landscape (*VL*, p. 371). With the aid of the temporal narrative structure of the novel, which allows for reflection on the twenty or so years that cover the immediate present of the novel during the course of the narrative, Vineland can be read as a county that geographically expresses the changing political landscape from the late 1960s to the mid-1980s, culminating in its 1984 present manifestation.

With this in mind, it should be noted that the overview of the landscape of Vineland under discussion is detailed in a section of the novel that takes place sometime in the early 1970s.<sup>397</sup> This is significant as the city has already, at this historical point, acquired a federal building amongst its infrastructure. The building, described as "jaggedly faceted, obsidian black", stands apart from all other buildings and is contained in its own "vast parking lot" which is fenced with "concertina wire" (*VL*, p. 317). Though the aesthetic of the building seems imposing in itself, and the isolation of the building anticipates the following chapter's discussion of the "postmodern" building that does not interact with its surroundings, what is more sinister in this building in particular is its inception. Guitarist of Zoyd's surf band, the Corvairs and Prairie's godfather, Van Meter, recalls during a conversation about the changing landscape of the area, how it "just

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<sup>397</sup> This can be assumed since Zoyd's daughter Prairie is a teenager in the novel's flickering present of 1984, and in this scene is a baby.

landed one night” and was by morning “sitting there” (*VL*, p. 317). Thus the building has not developed organically amongst the infrastructure of Vineland but has instead been artificially placed in this imposing fashion. This manifestation of federal power in Vineland, together with Vond’s transformation of the airport, testifies to an emerging architecture of governmental power in Vineland, both literally and in public consciousness. Though the appearance of the federal building is evidence of the physical development of the landscape, it is also crucially suggestive of the attitude of the residents of Vineland towards this sort of development. The sudden, overnight appearance of the building and its immediate assimilation into local consciousness, though the physical landscape has not so readily incorporated it, suggests if not complicity in the emergence of these power structures, then at least an acceptance of their presence.<sup>398</sup>

The appearance of the federal building is therefore suggestive of the pattern that David Cowart recognises as “a generation of hippies, activists, and would be revolutionaries” who would come to reproach themselves for “complicity in all that it had despised and struggled against”.<sup>399</sup> Though the inhabitants of Vineland in the 1970s are not actively complicit, their permissive attitude towards the changing physical landscape, especially given the implications for emerging power structures, is indicative of the impending shift, spearheaded by the Reagan governorship of California, in the political landscape.

This shift is perhaps also visible in other infrastructural features, such as in the temporal and physical juxtaposition of this federal building with another

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<sup>398</sup> A precursor to this sort of receptiveness, this time specific to the landscape itself, can be found in *Lot 49*. In this scenario, it is said that the land had been “conditioned” to accept somewhere like San Narciso “amongst its most tender flesh”, and in the same way that the residents of Vineland assimilate the federal building, “without a reflex or cry” (*L49*, p. 125).

<sup>399</sup> Cowart, p. 88.

“former public, perhaps federal” building that has become “gutted”, “stained and ruinous” (VL, p. 227). The architecture of this older structure, which consists of classical columns that contrast with the modern “jaggedly faceted” (VL, p. 317) appearance of the new building, is also “streetward” (VL, p. 227) facing, unlike the new, more isolated structure, implying easier assimilation and interaction with both the surrounding landscape and its intended audience. It is however noteworthy that the older building has become “airbrushed black with fine grime” (VL, p. 227), resulting in it becoming comparable, in the blackness of its appearance, to the new federal building. More importantly, that this transformation is as a result of specific “airbrush[ing]” (VL, p. 227) is indicative of a degree of agency in this alteration. That the building has become blackened as a result of its interaction with its surroundings, is both a manifestation of the “*prefascist*” (italics mine) quality of the political landscape, and of the public complicity in the shift in the political landscape that Cowart perceives at this historical juncture.

The federal building is not the only indicator of a more visible governmental presence in the landscape of Vineland. The aforementioned Vineland International airport, and its air traffic, is most apparent during the episodes of the novel where militarised federal activities encroach on the activities of the county, insofar as Brock Vond occupies the airport with a “whole fuckin army unit” (VL, p. 349). While in true Pynchonian style the explanation for this covert occupation is appropriately sinister and simply outlined as Brock “waitin for something” (VL, p. 349), further allusions in the novel suggest that Brock is in fact enforcing Campaign Against Marijuana Planting (CAMP) activities, as well as

conducting Readiness Exercises 1984 (REX-84) exercises in the Vineland area, and is using the airport as a base for these activities.

The “aggressive military-assisted” CAMP created in 1983 under the Reagan administration to “eradicate the large scale illegal marijuana cultivations from public and private lands”<sup>400</sup>, did historically make use of airspace to enforce its activities. In Northern California it is reported that “military helicopters [would] swoop low on hillsides...particularly at harvest time” to conduct similar raids.<sup>401</sup> According to one critic of CAMP, Rudolph Joseph Gerber, this campaign reflected the “growing militarization of American law enforcement agencies regarding marijuana”.<sup>402</sup> Indeed the cover photograph, ‘Crescent Camp Number One’, of the 1990 U.S. hardcover edition of the novel taken by American photographer Darius Kinsey, shows a burning forest that is “suggestive of the government’s attempt to stamp out marijuana use”.<sup>403</sup> Once again, it is the landscape that is affected and shaped by political activity, a pattern which will become more apparent in this discussion of Pynchon’s depiction of the geopolitical landscape of Vineland.

However, while Pynchon is clear that participation in CAMP comes from an increasing military presence in Vineland in the form of “retired military pilots”, “off-duty deputies and troopers” and government advisors disguised as “civvies”, he also directly implicates the public, or a “vigilante squadron of student anti-drug activists” in these activities (*VL*, p. 221). Student activist involvement in a

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<sup>400</sup> ‘Campaign Against Marijuana Planting (CAMP)’, *State of California Department of Justice Office of the Attorney General*, last accessed 5 June 2015, <<https://oag.ca.gov/bi/camp>>.

<sup>401</sup> Rudolph Joseph Gerber, *Legalizing Marijuana: Drug Policy Reform and Prohibition Politics*, (Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 2004), p. 74.

<sup>402</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>403</sup> Dan Geddes, ‘Pynchon’s Vineland: The War on Drugs and the Coming Police-State’, *The Satirist* (January 2005), last accessed 4 July 2015, <<http://www.thesatirist.com/books/Vineland.html>>.

campaign that is, in Pynchon's representation, led by a "former Nazi Luftwaffe officer", serves to fulfil Cowart's prophecy (*VL*, p. 221).

In its original state, before the corrupting historical moment depicted in *Vineland*, student activism can be seen in Pynchon's earlier portrayal in the Berkeley episode of *Lot 49*. The students of Pynchon's Berkeley in the early 1960s are not collaborating in Nazi-headed activities, but are instead engaged in the more nuanced Free Speech Movements (FSM's), Young Americans for Freedom campaigns (YAF's), and Vietnam Day Committees (VDC's). However, even at this stage historically and politically, these student groups are not entirely counter-culturally oriented. The YAF's are actually a politically conservative organization, suggesting a Reaganite element, or "prefascist" quality in student activism that can be seen as a forerunner to the kind of student involvement presented in *Vineland*. Nonetheless, Pynchon's commentary on this deterioration in activism, from "the sort that bring[s] governments down" (*L49*, p. 71) to proto-fascistic military-government campaigns against civilians, is clear, especially in a context in which a one character, Karl Bopp, a former Luftwaffe officer, can be considered a useful American citizen. In reality, one of the focal points of Reagan's governorship of California from 1967-75 was to "clean up the mess at Berkeley"- a reference to the more left-wing climate of student activism of *Lot 49*.<sup>404</sup> His tactics in this endeavour also became militarized, from initial strategies of "verbal abuse" and cutting budgets, to sending in the National Guard to control a rally-turned-riot.<sup>405</sup>

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<sup>404</sup> Paul S. Boyer, Clifford E. Clark Jr., Karen Halttunen, Joseph F. Kett, Neal Salisbury, Harvard Sitkoff and Nancy Woloch, *The Enduring Vision: A History of the American People Since 1865, Volume 2* (Massachusetts: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2014), p. 891.

<sup>405</sup> Jeffery Kahn, 'Ronald Reagan Launched Political Career Using the Berkeley Campus as a Target', *UC Berkley News* (8 June 2004), last accessed 4 July 2015, <[http://www.berkeley.edu/news/media/releases/2004/06/08\\_reagan.shtml](http://www.berkeley.edu/news/media/releases/2004/06/08_reagan.shtml)>.

*UC Berkley News* describes how the situation was even used to recruit new guardsmen, a report that is entirely consistent with both Pynchon's depiction and Cowart's analysis.<sup>406</sup>

Similarly, REX-84, a 'national readiness exercise', was historically designed to detain a large number of American citizens in scenarios of civil unrest or states of national emergency. In principle, the exercise would involve military bases being used as detention camps, and the "use of the military to control civil disturbances, major demonstrations, and strikes".<sup>407</sup> However REX-84 was also ascribed to potential scenarios involving an influx of refugees from Central American, following the Iran-Contra Affair in 1985-7. Given that Pynchon associates Berkeley with "those Far Eastern or Latin American universities you read about" (*L49*, p. 71), it is curious that REX-84 can be used for civil disturbances consistent with Berkeley/Latin American style political demonstrations and political unrest, especially the kind implicating Central American countries.

Pynchon's characterization of the "useful American citizen" (*VL*, p. 221) is therefore more encompassing; it is not only directly condemnatory of CAMP and exercises like REX-84 as demonstrations of a shift in political strategy, but is also condemnatory of a citizenship whose political persuasion have similarly shifted between the early 1960s and the staging of *Vineland* in 1984.

Once again, this is mirrored in the landscape. The "pale blue unmarked little planes" (*VL*, p. 221) that conduct CAMP can be viewed as a transformation of the "squadron of blue jays" encountered in the first chapter of the novel (*VL*, p. 3). Though the birds were already described in military terms, they were at the outset

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<sup>406</sup> Kahn.

<sup>407</sup> Bob Aldridge, *America in Peril* (California: Hope Publishing House, 2008), p. 295.

still only birds. As the military-government presence in the landscape increases, “the pale blue” presence is now manifested as actual military aircrafts. This pattern is continued across Vineland county, where vistas of “hillside levels, alleyways, corners, and rooftops” arranged to create “a kasbah topography that was easy to get lost in quickly” (*VL*, p. 25), come into contact with a “network of military installations that included nuclear weapons depots and waste dumps, mothball fleets, submarine bases, ordnance factories, and airfields” (*VL*, p. 25). This is especially significant given that the first scene outlined here occurs in 1967, when although Reagan had just been appointed governor of California, his influence had evidently not yet saturated the landscape. However, by the staging of the second scene in the early 1970s there is a pervasive military-governmental presence in Vineland’s infrastructure, typified by the “Corps of Engineers marina”- built by the U.S. Army to both “maintain America’s infrastructure and provide military facilities”- which is now a part of the panorama of the county.<sup>408</sup>

This militarization has already, at this historical stage, encroached on the Sacramento Delta country commune, described as a refuge from the government and therefore a natural adversary of these new power structures, which now finds itself situated “in the heart” of the above militarized scene (*VL*, p. 306). However, as well as natural enemies of these developments, one of California’s culturally and historically significant natural landmarks has also been compromised. It is observed at this point in the text that “at least one aircraft carrier [is] sighted on station just off Patrick’s Point” (*VL*, p. 222). In contemporary California, Patrick’s Point has become a state park, located in the redwood country of Northern

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<sup>408</sup> ‘About Us’, *US Army Corps of Engineers*, last accessed 3 July 2015, <<http://www.usace.army.mil/About.aspx>>.

California, which is also incidentally in keeping with Vineland's alleged location. Historically, however, it is a "centre for myths" for the American Indian Yurok people of this area,<sup>409</sup> and figures as the last resting place of immortals, the residual beings of the Yurok. As a sacred place in Yurok culture it functions as a physical and spiritual reminder of the continuing Yurok presence in the landscape of Vineland, despite military and governmental encroachments, and is a presence that will emerge in greater detail as the remaining features of the landscape are discussed.<sup>410</sup>

Vineland's infrastructure, as viewed by the approaching Zoyd, is also comprised of "concrete Art Deco bridges", "Quonset sheds", "postwar prefab[s]" and "wood Victorian houses" (*VL*, p. 317). These features that seemingly pre-date the aforementioned military-government installations belong to a period before the "Reagan program" (*VL*, p.265) and testify to another, older layer of the geohistorical landscape of Vineland.

Pynchon explicitly cites the bridge as having been built "by the WPA during the Great Depression" (*VL*, p. 316), which locates these structures historically sometime between 1933 and 1938. The Works Progress (later Projects) Administration (WPA) initiative of the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration demonstrated "direct, interventionist solutions" to social problems and unemployment resulting from the Great Depression, and provided work for some 13 million people, over "just about every county" in the U.S. over the course of its

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<sup>409</sup> T.T. Waterman, 'Yurok Geography', notes for, in Alfred L. Kroeber, ed., *American Archaeology and Ethnology Vol. 16* (California: University of California Press, 1919), pp. 246.

<sup>410</sup> In Yurok tradition, Patrick's Point is also the emergence place of the "porpoise people" or the *woge*, whose presence in both the landscape and narrative of Vineland will be outlined in later discussions. Ojibwa (contributor), 'Blackfoot Sacred Places', *Native American Netroots* (March 11 2015), last accessed 11 January 2016), <<http://nativeamericannetroots.net/diary/tag/Sacred%20Places>>.

duration.<sup>411</sup> Pynchon's characterisation of these buildings as having been developed through "New Deal earnestness" (*VL*, p. 317) is particularly telling of his portrayal of the FDR administration, in comparison to the aforementioned depiction of Reagan's governance and presidency. Unlike the increasingly fortified structures of the "prefascist" present landscape of the novel, the New Deal layer of Vineland's topography was instead built during a climate of alleviating hardship caused by poverty of unemployment, and was consequently manifested as schools, hospitals and libraries. The WPA was in fact established for the construction of public buildings, and was also the first time that the federal government "became a major benefactor of the arts".<sup>412</sup>

In *Vineland*, these buildings are largely not visible in the landscape, except for in the aforementioned bridges and "some old WPA murals about Justice and Progress" (*VL*, p. 200). Though many of the historical remains of WPA projects still exist throughout California and the U.S., as detailed by The Living New Deal project, which works to document and maintain the physical legacy of the WPA, Pynchon does not maintain a strong presence of WPA-built structures in his vision of *Vineland*. Perhaps one of the reasons behind the lack of inclusion of WPA-built features in the landscape is the successive developments in land management that followed these projects, together with the predominance of the "Reagan program" that Pynchon emphasizes.

In the period between the introduction of WPA and the setting of *Vineland*, numerous wars, including World War II, Korea and Vietnam, directed funds and

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<sup>411</sup> Steven Dike-Wilhelm, 'Works Progression Administration', in Eric Arnesen, ed., *Encyclopedia of U.S. Labor and Working-class History, Volume 1 A-F* (New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 1540.

<sup>412</sup> Dike-Wilhelm., p. 1540.

employment elsewhere, which naturally incurred an end to WPA projects. However in peacetime, Robert D. Leighninger Jr., editor of the *Journal of Architectural Education*, suggests ideological reasons why initiatives like the WPA have not continued or been replicated. In his comprehensive survey of the legacy of the New Deal on public space, Leighninger suggests that building emphases have shifted to other concerns. He cites “convention centres, domed stadiums, and shopping malls” as the contemporary types of public spaces built in the post war period, and argues that these buildings are designed less for community functions than they are for consumer activities.<sup>413</sup> The community-based ethos behind the construction and use of the WPAs is not found in these new building developments according to Leighninger, as public space has become recalibrated to perform a different role in public consciousness.<sup>414</sup> Furthermore, Leighninger argues that contemporary social models encourage more insular, home-based activities, and that the “decay of public transportation and the fear of crime in public spaces” have also contributed to the decay of public spaces like those created by the WPA.<sup>415</sup>

This assessment can certainly be applied to the policies of the Reagan administration, during which Vineland is historically situated. The aforementioned “Reagan program”, so called by a resident of Vineland, is outlined as having been designed to “dismantle the New Deal, reverse the effects of World

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<sup>413</sup> Robert D. Leighninger Jr., ‘Cultural Infrastructure: The Legacy of New Deal Public Space’, *Journal of Architectural Education* (1984-), 49/4 (1996), p. 232.

<sup>414</sup> Even the structure of employment dictated created more opportunities for inclusion of workers. The WPA was a “model agency” in the hiring of African-American workers, who found “steady, albeit low-paid” employment in the WPA, when they would have otherwise been denied work under local governments. Women, however, did not benefit so well as gender restrictions curtailed employment opportunities to “sewing projects”. Dike-Wilhelm, p. 1540.

<sup>415</sup> Leighninger, p. 234.

War II [and] restore fascism at home and around the world". Indeed, by the end of Reagan's presidency, "federal assistance to local governments was cut by 60 percent", resulting in the closure of urban schools, libraries, municipal hospitals and clinics.<sup>416</sup> The only "urban" program that survived funding cuts was "federal aid for highways", which in fact only benefitted the suburbs and not the city centres themselves.<sup>417</sup> Perhaps then the absence of WPA buildings in Pynchon's depiction of Vineland is reasonable, especially given the added presence of the aforementioned military-governmental landmarks in this landscape. Furthermore, the prevailing WPA mural "about Justice and Progress" has "darkened with the years since the New Deal", serving as another physical reminder in the landscape of how such ideals have become tainted by successive history (*VL*, p. 200). Like the columns of the old public/federal building, the mural too reflects and embodies the changing social and political landscape of the novel.

The only other WPA remnants that have survived in Pynchon's landscape are the bridges, and at least one of those is in "ruins" (*VL*, p. 187). Historically, a WPA bridge called Elk Creek Bridge was built over the Klamath River that features in Pynchon's rendering of Vineland, however since the bridge was replaced in 1953 by the structure that currently stands, it is no longer the original model of WPA craftsmanship and ethos that was once present. The ruined bridge of Pynchon's description is actually located near the novel's fictitious Seventh River, which is said to have always been held "exceptional" (*VL*, p. 186) by the resident Yurok, and it was the Seventh River "cresting" (*VL*, p. 187) that in fact caused the damage to the original WPA structure. In its current state of being rebuilt, the

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<sup>416</sup> Peter Dreier, 'Reagan's Legacy: Homelessness in America', *The National Housing Institute*, 135 (2004), last accessed 7 July 2015, <<http://nhi.org/online/issues/135/reagan.html>>.

<sup>417</sup> *Ibid.*

bridge seems to have also taken on some of the mystery of the aforementioned Seventh River, apparently having at least one lane always “mysteriously open”, and “entire segments vanish[ ] overnight” (*VL*, p. 187). Having been comparably rebuilt, the historical bridge also seems to share in the elusiveness of Pynchon’s fictional version; records are unclear as to “whether the bridges were each built in exactly the same spot, or just somewhere nearly along the same section of the river”.<sup>418</sup>

However, it is the proximity of Pynchon’s WPA to the Seventh River that perhaps accounts for its mysterious quality. Though it is still designated an “old WPA bridge” (*VL*, p. 187), it seems to have also been assumed into the narrative of the Seventh River that is closely linked to Yurok history which forms one of the threads of the alternative histories of Vineland. In a sort of reversal of the tarnishing process experienced by the old public/federal building, the bridge becomes renewed through its association with the Seventh River as it is understood in Yurok terms, and comes to relay a dual narrative of both “ruined” WPA enterprise in the region and a more permanent and longstanding Yurok history.

### **Another History of Vineland: Part One**

Beyond the infrastructural additions to the panorama of Vineland lies the “primary sea coast”, which Pynchon observes as being “still not much different to what early visitors in Spanish and Russian ships had seen” (*VL*, p. 317). The primacy of this landscape, behind the impositions of various political installations,

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<sup>418</sup> ‘Elk Creek Bridge Happy Camp Ca.’, *The Living New Deal*, last accessed 11 November 2015, <<https://livingnewdeal.org/projects/elk-creek-bridge-happy-camp-ca/>>.

is crucial to understanding both the duality of the landscape of Vineland itself and the spiritual aspect of the secular-spiritual dualism that helps shape this discussion as a whole.

Pynchon's depiction of this older landscape is noticeably recognisable as the landscapes of various 'contact testimonies,' to which Pynchon's "Spanish and Russian ships" refer. Indeed the Spanish explorer, Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra, observed in 1775 the same natural features of "plains, rocks, bays, headlands, breakers and trees",<sup>419</sup> as those described in the contemporary landscape of "forest[s]", "riverbank[s]", and "bay[s]" (VL, p. 317). The features of Bodega y Quadra's scene, including a "land locked harbour" and sightings of Yurok "canoes" and "timber trees"<sup>420</sup>, are also mirrored in the earlier journal entries of Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo that similarly describe "thick and tall trees", a "bay which the land forms" and "many very good canoes each of which held twelve or thirteen Indians".<sup>421</sup> These details are replicated and repeated in the observations of other explorers of the area, from the Vinland sagas of 970-1030 that similarly feature the same "salmon in the river or the lake" that were "bigger salmon than they had ever seen",<sup>422</sup> to Edward S. Curtis' early 20<sup>th</sup> century expedition that encountered the same "redwood canoes...of the Yurok type".<sup>423</sup> This consistency in both the natural features of the landscape and the Yurok presence within it is consistent

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<sup>419</sup> Francisco Antoni Mourelle de la Rúa, *Journal of a Voyage in 1775 to Explore the Coast of America, Northward of California, by the Second Pilot of the Fleet Don Francisco Antonio Mourelle, in the King's Schooner, Called The Sonora, and Commanded by Don Juan Francisco de la Bodega* (London: 'Unknown', c. 1780), p. 480.

<sup>420</sup> Ibid., p. 482.

<sup>421</sup> 'Relation of the Voyage of Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, 1542-1543', in Herbert Eugene Bolton, ed., *Spanish Exploration in the Southwest, 1542-1706* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916), pp. 20, 22, 25.

<sup>422</sup> Unknown, *Voyages to Vinland* Trans. A. M Reeves, (North Carolina: Hayes Barton Press, 2006), p. 8.

<sup>423</sup> Curtis, p. 228.

with Pynchon depiction of the unchanged quality of this particular layer of Vineland's geography. While this is a constant against which the changing infrastructural developments can be measured, it more usefully promotes the notion of a dual landscape. The particular notion of duality, especially given the Yurok layer of Vineland's geography, is more nuanced than simply being a measure of how the landscape has been configured, and instead becomes suggestive of how it can be understood in different cultural and spiritual terms.

As previously outlined, it is a reading of the redwood trees of Pynchon's landscape that offers a material method for tracing and recognising different cultural and spiritual relationships with the landscape within the novel. This emphasis on the redwoods is bolstered by Pynchon's aforementioned departure from the metropolitan area of fictional and historical Los Angeles to Vineland in the northern part of California. With this emphasis in mind, Pynchon's geographical shift can be understood specifically as a departure to redwood country, the redwoods being a prominent and consistent feature of the suggested location of the novel, and as noted in the biographical aspect of the introduction, a feature of the landscape that Pynchon himself is said to have direct sustained experience of.

The permanence of the redwoods in the landscape also supports the notion that the natural elements of Vineland's geography form a constant in the landscape. The redwood trees of Northern California are "among the largest living trees" and indeed, "largest living organisms ever to inhabit the earth" with antecedents dating back 100 million years.<sup>424</sup> By this measure alone, the

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<sup>424</sup> Reed F. Noss, 'More Than Big Trees', in Reed F. Noss, ed., *The Redwood Forest: History, Ecology, and Conservation of the Coast Redwoods* (California: Island Press, 2000), p. 1.

redwoods are ideal candidates as representations of permanence and endurance. Pynchon's "stands of redwoods with their perfect trunks and cloudy foliage" (*VL*, p. 317) were also, perhaps inevitably, captured by Bodega y Quadra, who noticed "larger timber trees than we had ever before seen".<sup>425</sup> Their physical presence and longevity notwithstanding, Pynchon's representation of the presence of the redwood trees speaks more to the cultural and spiritual configurations of Vineland.

Given this thesis' ongoing emphasis on the alternative histories of American Indians in the California trilogy, the particular geographical location of the novel, and substantial direct references in the text, the cultural and spiritual configurations of Vineland in these ensuing discussions of the pre-Reagan timeframe of the novel, will largely be filtered through the particular Yurok perspective of, and engagement with the redwood trees.

Throughout Yurok culture, the redwoods have featured prominently in both physical and spiritual architecture. From the redwood plank houses to the hollowed out trunks of trees that form redwood canoes, the material culture of the Yurok is dependent on the use of redwoods. While this may be born of practical and convenient imperative, the use of redwoods in this manner is very carefully considered. The construction of the Yurok sweathouses, for instance, also relies on the use of redwoods, however, this is not undertaken lightly, and instead involves a ritual that addresses the fallen tree. The redwood is afforded an explanation as to its use, "I will cut you because we are going to have you for holding up the sky", and its felled body is treated in the manner of a "funerary

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<sup>425</sup> Mourelle, p. 492.

corpse”.<sup>426</sup> Since the redwoods are considered animistically as “individuals, and are like humans in that respect”, the sacrifice of the tree is therefore both acknowledged and appreciated through these cultural rites.<sup>427</sup> In this sense, Yurok architecture is deeply spiritual since the “spirit of the tree remains”, even in its new incarnation as a human-build construct.<sup>428</sup>

The spirituality of the redwoods is appropriately acknowledged in Pynchon’s *Vineland* by those “early visitors” to Vineland, who sensed “some invisible boundary” (*VL*, p. 317) when approaching the land. Of course, the notion of an invisible boundary also has implications for geocultural readings of the landscape of Vineland given its varied and diverse patterns of inhabitation, however, focusing on the Yurok context and Pynchon’s specific association of the redwoods with Yurok culture, this boundary can more pointedly be understood as an intersection between the physical and the spiritual, which is embodied in the redwood trees themselves. The aforementioned description of Pynchon’s “stands of redwood with their perfect trunks and cloudy foliage” should therefore be afforded inclusion in its entirety, as the trees are not only physically impressive and imposing, but are additionally said to be “too high, too red to be literal trees” (*VL*, p. 317). Though this detail might reference the animistic quality of the redwoods in Yurok culture, Pynchon suggests that ‘the Indians’ might know the intention of the trees, but do not share this knowledge. The suggestion of an understanding between the redwoods and the Yurok that cannot, or will not be communicated, nonetheless demonstrates a communion between the two that is

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<sup>426</sup> Peter Nabokov and Robert Easton, *Native American Architecture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 292.

<sup>427</sup> National Park Service, p. 72.

<sup>428</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

not known to visitors or other inhabitants of Vineland, and implies a primary ecological relationship between the Yurok and their environment that has not since been replicated.

Following first contact with the redwoods, Pynchon describes later encounters, when photographers “at about the turn of the century” photographed villagers “posed in native gear” (VL, p. 317).<sup>429</sup> This scene references historical projects undertaken by ethnologists and photographers like Edward S. Curtis, who were funded to produce photographs of American Indians. The suggestion of “posed” photographs refers to Curtis’ practise of both “documentation and idealized reconstruction”, where American Indian subjects were modelled wearing “the obsolete dress of their forefathers” to produce somewhat contextually inaccurate portraits.<sup>430</sup> This practise can be seen as prototypical of later twentieth century performances of American Indian cultural practises, as discussed in the previous chapter, with the image created by Curtis of that same ‘authentic’ Indian, conforming to the imagined ideal of Indian-ness. This sense of staging is also imposed on the surrounding scenery and background landscape,

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<sup>429</sup> At the outset of the novel Zoyd and bar owner Buster discuss another type of filming that has recently taken place in Vineland, that of George Lucas’ *Return of the Jedi* (1983). Pynchon’s inclusion of this detail contributes another layer to the history of the area, not just a layer of fantasy or mediated contemporary politics, given that it is the story of a Rebel Alliance or resistance movement who take on an evil imperialistic dictatorship, but also in terms of the consciousness of the inhabitants of Vineland. As in previous discussions of the effect of the presence of the new federal building on the residents of the county, the filming has also lead to a “change of consciousness”, linked to the gentrification of certain parts of the area. Buster claims that the use of the landscape in the film industry “changed life there forever”, reinforcing the shift narrative of the novel and hinting at the theme of urban (re)development that will feature prominently in chapter three. Moreover, during this conversation Pynchon emphasizes that “the only thing...that hadn’t been replaced” was the original bar made from “one giant redwood log” (VL, p. 7). Even in the face of both cultural and implied political developments, the redwoods continue to maintain a presence and function in the infrastructure of Vineland, and as later discussions suggest, bear witness to historical processes.

<sup>430</sup> Pamela Michaelis, ‘The Shadow Catcher, Edward Sheriff Curtis: A Pioneer of Visual Anthropology Through Sensitive Portraits of Native Americans Early Last Century’, *The Collector’s Guide* (2014), last accessed 3 July 2016, <<http://www.collectorsguide.com/fa/fa047.shtml>>.

which creates a photographic composition of “silvery blurred vistas, black tips of seamount emerging from gray sea fringed in brute-innocent white breakings”, and “basalt cliffs like castle ruins” (*VL*, p. 317). The photographic recording of this portrait of the knowing Indian in a natural landscape scene is crucial to further understanding the tension between past and present landscapes. The impulse to photograph, especially given the performative elements of this example, suggests a documenting process, which in turn highlights the transient and fluctuating nature of the subjects. In this case, the American Indian subject is already beyond the visual and culturally-imposed optimum, needing to be adjusted and decorated to suit an imagined ideal. The scenery itself is also transformed by the black and white rendering of the photograph, which Charles A. Riley suggests “freezes time photographically and simultaneously allows for rapid interplay between two ages”.<sup>431</sup> Riley’s analysis focuses on changes between colour and light to highlight differences between past and present images of Vineland, from the “chromatic fullness” of the contemporary scene to the “black and white” hues of the Curtis-era photograph.<sup>432</sup> The colourful vibrancy of the contemporary scene testifies to the primacy of the natural landscape that has not been mediated through photography, whilst the black and white rendering fixes the older scene in a time now passed.

This interplay is similarly understood by Pynchon, who furthermore views the “light of Vineland” (*VL*, p. 317) as another constant element between the two temporal scenes. While Riley briefly hints at a tension between “physical fact and

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<sup>431</sup> Charles A. Riley II, *Color Codes: Modern Theories of Color in Philosophy, Painting and Architecture, Literature, Music, and Psychology* (New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1995), p. 266.

<sup>432</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 266

metaphysical belief”, Pynchon suggests that the endurance of the light is perhaps more purposeful.<sup>433</sup> Though it may fall with “rainy indifference” on its subjects, there is also an indication that it has a more active purpose in its role of calling “to attend to territories of the spirit” (*VL*, p. 317). Riley understands this as a metaphysical belief but does not explore this in any greater detail, however, the notion of “territories of the spirit” does have greater implications for understanding the role of the other living element of the scene, “the massed and breathing redwoods” (*VL*, p. 317). Unlike the other features of this photographic scene, the redwoods are not visually stylized but rather are depicted in terms of their vitality, they are “alive forever” (*VL*, p. 317). More persistently than the light perhaps, the redwoods are a constant that do not recognise temporal fluxes, but are simply present “forever”. In this sense, Pynchon achieves what Riley calls “the challenge [of making] the photograph represent more than it is, chromatically as well as ‘spiritually’”, as the redwoods, as well as the light of Vineland, become a significant and useful interconnection between past and present incarnations of the county.<sup>434</sup>

Pynchon’s earlier suggestion that the redwoods are “too high, too red to be literal trees”, similarly reinforces their spiritual quality. The enhancement here is not due to the visual vibrancy of the trees alone, but is also a testament to that vague metaphysical quality that Riley perceives even in his visually-oriented reading. This spiritual quality provokes questions of subjectivity and agency in Pynchon’s depiction of the redwoods, which are once again most usefully addressed for these purposes through readings of the primary Yurok perspective

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<sup>433</sup> Riley, p. 266.

<sup>434</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 266.

in *Vineland*, together with some supporting eco-critical perspectives on animism. The physical and spiritual presence of the trees in both the landscape and narrative of the novel also provides another historical and cultural/spiritual framework, in addition to the immediate socio-political timeframe of the text in which *Vineland* can be read. Given their constancy, from Pynchon's earliest vision of the "primary sea coast" (*VL*, p. 317) to their continuing prominence in the contemporary landscape, the redwoods are also able to highlight cultural and social changes in *Vineland*, especially when examining changing attitudes and practices towards the trees themselves.

With this in mind, the primary channel for exploring questions of the subjectivity and agency of the redwood trees is Pynchon's representation of the Yurok perspective. This perspective is introduced through a few scenes where Yurok belief is recalled, either as the preceding example to provide an historical or cultural base or point of contrast, or as in future examples to provide a context or framework for some of Pynchon's more esoteric and countercultural explorations of the landscape. A particularly demonstrative passage is the *woge* episode of the novel, which features amongst the narrative of Vietnam veterans and tow-truck operators, Eusebio Gómez's (Vato) and Cleveland Bonnifoy's (Blood), as they enter the ghostly Thanatoid area of *Vineland*. This episode, in which Pynchon relates the local mythology of the *woge*, small native humanlike creatures, draws upon Yurok traditional stories and animistic-based thought to explicate broader issues of environmental subjectivity and agency.

According to Chickasaw poet, novelist, essayist and scholar, Linda Hogan, animism, a signifier of these ideas, is "not a term traditional indigenous people would use" either to characterise human relationships with the natural world, or

to quantify complex knowledge systems of the world.<sup>435</sup> In contrast she prefers the use of the term 'tradition', which, broadly speaking, performs the aforementioned functions, but within an appropriate cultural context. She similarly confronts the term 'folklore' in the examination of animistic beliefs and instead posits that these types of stories be considered as forms of received or observed knowledge and wisdom. These distinctions are not just semantic exercises, but instead are an attempt to recalibrate cultural considerations, especially from a non-native perspective, on questions of relationships between human and non-human subjects.<sup>436</sup>

Equally important to these definitions are distinctions between types of animism, from a catch-all definition meaning "the attribution of agency and spirit to the non-human",<sup>437</sup> to more detailed and culturally-adjusted understandings.<sup>438</sup> Another important distinction for the purposes of this enquiry is between metaphysical and naturalist animism. According to Graham Harvey, metaphysical animism often involves otherworldly elements, usually in the form of encounters

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<sup>435</sup> Linda Hogan, 'We Call It Tradition', in Graham Harvey, ed., *The Handbook of Contemporary Animism* (New York: Routledge, 2014), p. 18.

<sup>436</sup> In consideration of Hogan's objection, this discussion will also refrain from the use of terms such as folklore or myth in reference to American Indian belief. Instead, any American Indian beliefs or traditions referenced will be discussed as alternative belief systems, in the same vein as those referenced in the first chapter. The use of the designations such as myth or folklore will be restricted to any discussion of scholarly material which uses or engages with these terms.

<sup>437</sup> Timothy Clark, *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 50.

<sup>438</sup> While use of terms like myth or folklore can be reconsidered to produce a more culturally sensitive reading, the use of animism is perhaps more complex. While Hogan objects to this term, this opposition seems to be based on the fact that no indigenous person would use such a term. Given the non-native authorial gloss of this discussion, the term animism is suggested in an academic sense to cover a broad range of largely non-native understandings of this idea, and is not intended as a substitute for that which Hogan understands as tradition. The scope of this thesis cannot practically undertake the task of providing a detailed inventory of all the different and varying forms of animism. For further information see the comprehensive study and analysis provided in Graham Harvey, 'Introduction', in Graham Harvey, ed., *The Handbook of Contemporary Animism* (New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 1-14.

with spirits of trees, rivers or ancestors, and satisfies long-held assumptions, such as those of anthropologist Edward Tylor, that involve souls and spiritual beings pervading “inanimate bodies”.<sup>439</sup> In contrast, a naturalist animism involves reimagining and redirecting humans in a larger “multi-species community”.<sup>440</sup> This animism, Harvey contends, is more “relational, embodied [and] ecoactivist”.<sup>441</sup> Appropriately, Linda Hogan attempts to address this dichotomy through suggesting fluidity between the human “soul” and the surrounding environment. Hogan argues that native people, unlike philosophers and religious thinkers, have not tried to define, or more importantly, locate the soul, but rather suggest that the soul extends to “the territory around us” and that the “human map...extends beyond longitudes and latitudes of skin”.<sup>442</sup>

Thus the environment is occupied by the human, as the human is occupied by the environment. This relationship can be seen in Pynchon’s illustration of the Yurok story of the *woge* which can now be considered as being informed by an understanding of animism that falls somewhere between Harvey’s two distinctions of the metaphysical and naturalist. However, given the way that the threads of *Vineland*’s alternative histories weave, the outcomes in the novel are further complicated by associated relational factors. The *woge* narrative is not simply an expression of a complex interpretation of ecological relationships, but is also, by way of belonging to Yurok tradition, a narrative characterised by community histories and collective memory.

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<sup>439</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>440</sup> Harvey, p. 2.

<sup>441</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>442</sup> Hogan, p. 25.

## Another History of Vineland: Part Two

The *woge* are Yurok spirits who are said to have inhabited the land before human settlement, and according to traditional belief “made things ready”<sup>443</sup> for human occupation. In accordance with the Yurok rendering of this belief, Pynchon’s *woge* are “creatures like humans but smaller” (*VL*, p. 186), and are similarly cited as the original inhabitants of the land. Naturally, this presence of spirits pertains to the more metaphysical definition, however, as shall be explored, the *woge* are far more complex signifiers than simply spirits who occupy the land. Pynchon’s account of the *woge* is framed as a withdrawal narrative that occurs as a result of human arrival to the land. His depiction of the nature of this withdrawal is particularly revealing since it occurs on several different levels, each of which has implications for both the relationship between human and non-human subjects, and Pynchon’s wider and persistent concerns, across the California trilogy, of homeland and contextual cultural identity.

Firstly in this withdrawal narrative, are those *woge* who physically withdraw “forever, eastward over the mountains, or nestled all together in giant redwood boats” (*VL*, p. 186). This image of these literal beings physically leaving their homeland due to new inhabitation or redevelopment of the land will receive greater clarification in the following chapter, though it is significant to note that this imagery related to withdrawal is initiated by Pynchon in *Vineland* before it becomes a more explicit concern later in *Inherent Vice*. However, the temporal signifier- ‘forever’- again speaks to the permanence and constancy of the primary

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<sup>443</sup> ‘Preamble’, *Constitution of The Yurok Tribe* (22 October 1993), last accessed 5 September 2015, <<http://www.yuroktribe.org/government/councilsupport/documents/Constitution.pdf>>.

presences in the landscape. Like the redwoods of Pynchon's "primary sea coast", the *woge* are forever, even if their exact location changes.

The portrayal of the spatial aspect of the move is clear here since Pynchon highlights the geography of withdrawal in terms of appropriate natural landmarks and directional indicators. The specificity of "eastward" recalls the conflation of contemporary New Age perception of Native spirituality and Eastern beliefs, and in this sense seems an appropriate directional retreat for the *woge*. Conversely, this eastward movement can also be seen as antithetical to the westward drive towards the U.S. frontier. The *woge* not only retreat from new inhabitants, they also move in reverse of their migration, towards the point of departure. There is a sense here of stripping back or reverting to some earlier location, be it physically or spiritually. That the *woge* also withdraw "over the mountains" consents to this reading, as they move towards a location of primary significance.

This location itself is afforded greater insight given the apparent geographical location of Vineland. According to Pynchon's directions, critical analysis, and Vineland's apparent proximity to a Yurok reservation, the withdrawal eastward could therefore indicate a movement towards Mount Shasta, which is located to the east of the alleged location of Vineland. Given the allusion to Mount Shasta in the naming of Doc Sportello's ex-wife, Shasta Fay Hepworth in both *Inherent Vice*, and as a sacred place in numerous American Indian cultures, including Yurok, it is worth citing as a possible and appropriate candidate for the mountain to which the *woge* withdraw.

Perhaps, the most vivid and evocative image of this particular level of *woge* withdrawal is that of those who are "nestled all together in giant redwood boats, singing unison chants of dispossession and exile" (*VL*, p. 186). As previously

witnessed in the historical salmon boats, the use of redwood to make boats and canoes is instinctive in Yurok culture, since the redwood “is at the heart of [their] existence and life”.<sup>444</sup> In respect of animistic belief, this is not simply a relationship between maker and material, but rather is an understanding between one living entity and another. In order further to exemplify this relationship in contexts that are culturally different but geographically similar, it is useful to compare the Yurok story of Pulekukwerek with Pynchon’s depiction of Sasha’s father Jess Traverse’s (of the aforementioned Traverse-Becker family) accident involving the redwoods of Vineland.

According to this narrative involving Pulekukwerek, a recurring figure in Yurok tradition, the redwoods are the best source for making boats and as such should be used for this purpose. However, the technique and method for splitting the wood needs to be properly understood in order for the user to avoid being killed in the process. As is practised in the aforementioned felling rite of the redwood trees, this story of Pulekukwerek is commensurate with the idea of a correct and an incorrect approach towards this act. To demonstrate this, the narrative provides a description of a man who deliberately splits the redwood logs in such a way that causes people to be killed. Pulekukwerek, having exacted retribution on this man by killing him in the same fashion, discovers a solution, in the form of a wedge that prevents the logs from snapping closed and killing the feller. He declares “this is how it will be. They shall use redwood for canoes, but they will not be killed in splitting it”.<sup>445</sup> As a figure in Yurok tradition who restores

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<sup>444</sup> National Park Service, p. 72.

<sup>445</sup> Informant C, ‘Stone of Weitspus’, in Alfred L. Kroeber, ed., *Yurok Myths* (California: University of California Press, 1978), p. 211.

order and is able to manipulate natural elements through understanding their innate properties and characteristics, Pulekukwerek is exemplary of an appropriate and respectful approach to the felling of the redwood trees, which protects both the feller and prevents the tree itself from becoming complicit in an act of killing. Thus the redwood is used constructively and respectfully, as is dictated by the emerging image of Yurok relationship to the trees.

Pynchon, however, provides a slightly divergent narrative, in telling how Jess Traverse, a logger local to the Vineland area, is injured whilst working in the redwood forests. The description of events follows a pattern that is similar to the narrative of Pulekukwerek in as much as there is also a villain, in this case “one Crocker “Bud” Scantling” (*VL*, p. 75), who deliberately cuts the wood incorrectly in an attempt to kill Jess. In this redwood-cutting narrative, the perpetrator (Bud) cuts the tree in such a way that the “wedge” (perhaps the same as that devised by Pulekukwerek) will fall loose and the tree will fall “across [Jess’] legs, crushing them, driving half of him into the earth” (*VL*, p. 75). Though both villains understand a correct and incorrect approach towards cutting the redwoods, in Pynchon’s narrative the restorative force is not the incarnate and metaphysical force of Pulekukwerek, but rather a more ambiguous force that operates in a less direct but similarly effective way.

Unlike the fable quality of the story of Pulekukwerek, the specific social context of the narrative of Jess’ accident is important in understanding Pynchon’s construction and depiction of the outcome. Jess is a unionizing worker who tries to organise the loggers of Vineland, but is opposed in his endeavours by the same Bud Scantling who works for the Employers’ Association. The motif of a communal

workforce, typified in Jess, is opposed by a body that seeks to divide this approach of unity and togetherness, which is typified in Bud. As a result of his organised accident, Jess receives compensation from the Association, which proves to be insufficient as any sort of restorative act, since Jess remains both crippled and financially vulnerable.

The Pulekukwerek-like force in this narrative does not emerge immediately, as Pynchon's depiction of restoration operates on two different but connected levels. Several years after Jess' arranged accident, the perpetrator, Bud Scantling, is killed after having "driven his week-old BMW into an oncoming chip truck" (VL, p. 369). The truck contains chips which are the residue of the wood of the logging industry that Bud himself utilises in causing Jess' accident. This creates a kind of symmetry in the cause and effect pattern of redwood-related accidents, with both men having been injured or killed by the effects of felling the trees, and Bud's later accident also appropriately caused by the chips- a later part of the logging process. In retelling this outcome, Jess quotes Ralph Waldo Emerson via his reading of *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), by William James, in order to explain his understanding of the course of events. Jess understands, as Emerson explains, that "secret retributions are always restoring the level, when disturbed, of the divine justice", and those "tyrants and proprietors and monopolists" who attempt to alter or interfere in this justice will be, as Bud discovers, "pulverized by the recoil" (VL, p. 369). This direct form of justice is satisfying to Jess, who in his reading of Emerson has understood a sort of natural balance in this sort of reciprocal outcome. This is maintained in Pynchon's notion of karmic balance, which will recur in later discussions. It is significant that Jess'

understanding of Emerson is filtered through his reading of William James' psychological and philosophical work, as this adds a further scientific rendering to Emerson's already philosophical, rather than naturalistic approach, and by extension frames Jess' narrative as reasoned and logical. Though this is satisfying to Jess, who views the literal physicality of Bud's death in the image of Emerson/James' words, Pynchon affords this direct and reciprocal justice another further dimension.

In the years following his accident, Pynchon reinforces Jess' and his now wife, Eula's, continuing presence in Vineland. He characterizes this presence as the couple being "here to remind everybody" of "that one tree, and who did it, and why" (*VL*, p. 76).<sup>446</sup> As a representative of the union, Jess' continued presence of course suggests a "living memorial to the labour movement",<sup>447</sup> which is important given Pynchon's model of preterite justice and the ongoing historical layering of Vineland. It furthermore contributes to the sense of social justice enacted through Bud's demise, and is another factor in Jess' satisfaction towards the outcome of events. However, Jess' presence is also relational to "that one tree", which is specifically highlighted as a participant in this narrative. In an ongoing Yurok context, the tree's subjectivity is already validated and as such the tree can

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<sup>446</sup> As outlined in the introduction, the Traverse family tree is crucial to both Pynchon's fictional universe and to reinforcing some of the cohesion of the California trilogy. Though the association might be a bit literal, it is a tree once again that provides an important model. In thinking about the way in which the redwoods provide a constant in the landscape of Vineland, there is also a case to be made for the centrality of the formation of the tree in configuring the Traverse family, which also proves to be a stabilising force in the trilogy. Aside from this direct connection, trees provide a visual model for considering ancestry, and specifically in the case of *Vineland*, for tracing ancestral lines, or roots that contribute to a sense of how community is both formed and changes. With this in mind, it is appropriate that the motif of the tree, which is suggestive of natural progress or change is countered by the more recent rootless military governmental developments in the landscape of Vineland.

<sup>447</sup> James Berger, 'Cultural Trauma and the 'Timeless Burst': Pynchon's Revisions of Nostalgia in *Vineland*', *Postmodern Culture* 5/3 (1995), last accessed 4 May 2015, <<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/27520>>.

no longer be viewed as inactive or as an inanimate feature of the landscape. If the presence of Jess and his family provokes memories of Bud's actions and the reasons behind them, then a naturalistic, Emersonian action and reaction equilibrium is satisfied. However, the presence of the tree itself creates an added complication, which is important in understanding Pynchon's layered approach to operational justice, especially in this particular ecological context.

Syntactically, Pynchon prefaces the memory of Bud's actions with the tree itself. This tree is specifically highlighted for its role in Jess' accident, an event which might have been equally successful in conveying the necessary conflict between Jess and Bud without particular reference to the tree itself. However, the tree is singled out in these events both as an individual, in the Yurok sense, and as a participant in an animistic sense. Given Pynchon's wider notion of karmic justice, which in this instance departs from the naturalism of Emerson, the tree's participation can be understood in the more metaphysically animistic rendering of its subjectivity. In this context of Yurok belief and perspectives of animism, the tree becomes more than passive, instead demonstrating a kind of agency in events. If the literary thread of the redwood tree is followed to its conclusion in Jess' narrative, it becomes the chips of the truck that kill Bud, and as such is also a participant in Bud's death. Though the tree may not have had much agency in its use by Bud during the accident, as is also the case in the story of Pulekukwerek, it re-emerges later in the restorative event and directly contributes to this outcome.

Justice or karmic retribution therefore occurs on a social level through reasoned balance in events, and on a more metaphysical level through the Yurok and Pynchonian rendering of the tree. Jess' sense of justice is satisfied on a

physical and societal level, whilst the misuse of the redwood tree by Bud is countered by its participation in his death. This narrative differs slightly to Pulekukwerek's direct use of the tree to avenge a killer, in that the agency of the tree itself is considered. Pynchon reconfigures the metaphysical animism that might characterise the otherworldly involvement of Pulekukwerek in the Yurok narrative as a more nuanced animism that recognises the subjectivity of the tree within a relational context in Jess' narrative. In this sense, the redwoods also contribute to the community memory of Vineland in a foreground capacity, as well as to the physical architecture of the area, which will continue to be an important concern, especially with growing questions of environmental subjectivity from both American Indian and also more contemporary eco-critical perceptions.

This exploration of environmental subjectivity can once again be understood through readings of the *woge* passages of *Vineland* since the *woge* occupy both a physical and spiritual place within the construction of the county. The withdrawal narrative of the *woge* again proves useful in this analysis since it measures the geographical implications of this movement, whilst at the same time addressing the related cultural and spiritual upheavals. Amongst the most vivid and evocative images of the first *woge* withdrawal is that of those previously discussed *woge*, who are "nestled all together in giant redwood boats, singing unison chants of dispossession and exile". By now including this description in its entirety, it is possible to focus on the later image, or perhaps more explicitly, the sound of the *woge* and the "chants of dispossession and exile themselves".

The inclusion of sound in the *woge* withdrawal narrative broadens the possible implications of the use of this material in further discussions of the

historical and spiritual layering of Vineland, which has now become both visual and audial. In exploring the context and implications of the image and sound of the *woge* singing as they row away from their homeland, it is once again possible, as in the example of the appearance of the “obsidian black” (VL, p. 317) federal building, to evoke a darker layer in Californian history and in the landscape of Vineland.

In a 1969 letter of response to T. F. Hirsch explaining his use of the South-West African material in *V*, Pynchon draws a direct connection between “the number done on the Herero head by the Germans” to “the same number done on the American Indian head by our own colonists”, through to “what is now being done on the Buddhist head in Vietnam by the Christian minority in Saigon”.<sup>448</sup> In creating these connections, Pynchon invites the suggestion of powerful parallels between various historical instances and forms of historical enslavement, displacement and exile. The multi-geographical and varying historical contexts of these instances are unified in their demonstration of the same repeated practises of cultural and spiritual imperialism on a colonised group. This instinct to connect similar patterns of cultural imperialism beyond geographical and historical boundaries provides a useful and appropriate method for suggesting further points of comparison across differing geographical and historical events. In the informing context of the *woge* material, it is the singing of “unison chants of dispossession and exile” that provides this point of commonality, and allows for discussion of events that have instigated this practise.

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<sup>448</sup> Thomas Pynchon letter to T. F. Hirsch (8 January 1969), reproduced in David Seed, *The Fictional Labyrinths of Thomas Pynchon* (London: MacMillan Press, 1988), p. 241.

In textual terms, the idea of unison chants can be linked to Jess' aforementioned connection to the loggers union and the wider labour movement in the county. In this more contemporary context then, unison chants are evocative of a history of union solidarity in Vineland. That this mode of commonality extends back to how the *woge* are organized creates an added lineage to Pynchon's preterite, suggesting that the loggers of Vineland, who can conceivably be characterized as such, can be traced to the *woge*, who are perhaps "ultra-preterite".<sup>449</sup>

### **Dislocated Spiritualities**

Before any other potential connections can be elaborated upon, it is useful first to reconsider how preterition also functions more broadly both in this discussion and in the California trilogy. Cowart's definition of Pynchon's preterite- "the left out, passed over in every form of election (spiritual, economic, racial, cultural)"- employed in the previous chapter as a way of rethinking the status of American Indians, is once again relevant in this analysis of *Vineland*. Understood in this way, preterition can be considered the shared condition of the many displaced and repressed peoples in Pynchon's work. As chapter one suggests, American Indians both historically and in contemporary terms can be viewed according to this understanding of preterition. Similarly, the *woge*, as a sort of magnified embodiment of this condition, can also be considered preterite given

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<sup>449</sup> This designation is coined in 'Chapter 9', *Pynchon Wiki: Vineland*, last accessed 5 June 2016, <[http://www.vineland.pynchonwiki.com/wiki/index.php?title=Chapter\\_9&oldid=242](http://www.vineland.pynchonwiki.com/wiki/index.php?title=Chapter_9&oldid=242)>.

their status in “every form of election” but also in consideration of their experience of displacement.

At this juncture, with the possible introduction of another narrative of displacement and in anticipation of the following chapter’s emphasis on displaced Mexican-American, African-American and American Indian communities in *Inherent Vice*, the idea of preterition seems connected to Pynchon’s method of historical cross referencing as outlined in the Hirsch letter. The process that connects these different and yet related peoples epitomizes Pynchon’s insistence on the specific, but willingness to suggest commonalities. The *woge* invite this sort of suggestion; as natural preterite candidates they are also a culturally-specific example of displaced people, depicted by way of sensitive engagement with traditional stories and beliefs. Their history, as presented in *Vineland* is based on historical renderings of Yurok testimony and stories, presented almost as paraphrase and therefore faithful to these received ideas. However, Pynchon’s particular rendering also allows for the *woge* narrative to become suggestive of other testimonies of displacement and exile. This serves not to undermine any particular experience, but instead, as this discussion hopes to propose, to highlight patterns in the historical process and broaden the potential of the designation of preterite.

To return then to the unifying *woge* “unison chants of dispossession and exile”, and with Pynchon’s inclination to highlight patterns in imperialistic events in mind, perhaps an obvious and familiar example of another instance where these union chants can be recognized is in the late 1700s practise of singing “songs of

sad lamentations”<sup>450</sup> among African slaves aboard ships travelling between Africa and the Americas.

Unlike the dances that many slaves were forced to perform for the alleged purpose of “physical exercise”, and to combat “the widespread danger of depression”, the practise of singing is recognised as a vocalised expression of the “fears of being beat, of [the] want of victuals...and of the never returning to their own country”.<sup>451</sup> Some basic translations of these songs also explicitly highlight them as “complaints for having been taken away from friends and relations”.<sup>452</sup> The *woge* connection is apparent here in both cause and expression, with both groups experiencing similar forms of forced dislocation, and vocalising distress and anger through similar collective expressions.

Unlike later and popularized instances of African spirituals often expressing suppressed religious and spiritual feelings, these slave ship songs range from being “devoid of all softness and harmony, and loudly chanted in harsh monotony” to being sung “very sweetly, and in a plaintive tone”.<sup>453</sup> In this sense, these slave ship songs can perhaps be seen as early manifestations of field hollers or field calls expressed by slaves working in cotton and rice fields, suggesting another historical parallel. Although these later field songs, characterised by a call-and-response model, are more structured in composition and performance, the purpose and cause for singing is explicitly similar, especially in those examples from African-born slaves, where the emphasis was placed on remembering and

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<sup>450</sup> Dena J. Epstein, *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals: Black Folk Music to the Civil War* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003), p.9.

<sup>451</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8, 9.

<sup>452</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>453</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10, 11.

mourning their homeland.<sup>454</sup> This is of course also related to the cause of the *woge* singing, given the shared motif of exile and dispossession. It is important to emphasize not only the similarity in impetus and characteristics of the slave and *woge* songs, but also, more pointedly, the shared feelings of the loss of relationship with their respective homeland. Indeed, this consistent pattern of struggle and loss is also shared by another historical group impacted by a U.S. context of slavery, which further informs the reading of the *woge* songs as contributing to the historical layering of California.

Using an African-American model of experience is also not unfamiliar to the methods of this discussion. Recalling Witzling's analysis of the Pynchon's attention to the emerging African-American voice as one foundation for exploring the place of American Indian concerns in his work, this parallel can also be used once again to explore potential parallels between historical instances of slavery in both African-American and American Indian history with the *woge* as an epitome of this common experience.

Though the history of African-American slavery in California is complicated by its transition from Spanish, to Mexican rule, and finally by its admission into the Union as a free state, California is not exempt from participation in slavery, "black slavery existed in California despite its statutory

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<sup>454</sup> Incidentally, recent research has begun to uncover the influence of American Indian music on the call-and-response structure of field hollers and work songs. Although this is not a common feature of broader American Indian music, it is "quite common" in the Eastern Woodlands, particularly in Stomp Dance or "Gadasjot" tradition, where one singer initiates a "call" and the other answers in a "vocable pattern". The purpose of the Stomp Dance, however, is more spiritual and recreational than political in origin. David P. McAllester, 'North America/Native America', in Jeff Todd Titon, ed., *Worlds of Music: An Introduction to the Music of the World's Peoples* (California: Cengage Learning, 2009), p. 41.

prohibition by California's state constitution"<sup>455</sup>. The state's admission into the Union as a technically free state was in fact undermined by constitutional clauses that only allowed suffrage for "every white male citizen of the United States, and every white male citizen of Mexico, who shall have elected to become a citizen of the United States", and a proviso that allowed "Indians or the descendants of Indians" to possibly be granted suffrage following a two-thirds concurrent vote by the Legislature.<sup>456</sup> Though it was eventually met with opposition in the Senate and rejected by only a single vote, the state assembly also "passed a bill barring the migration of free blacks into California". The status of California as a free state is therefore compromised by actions and behaviours that attempt to enforce segregation and undermine the civil rights of all of its citizens. Though the songs of the *woge* are of course vocalizations of a specific experience of loss and exile, the unified quality of these expressions in the context of Pynchon's method of evaluating the historical process, is evocative of wider instances of such displacement and as such allows for other darker chapters in Californian history to be reconsidered and acknowledged.

However, a somewhat overlooked group who were also subjected to slavery throughout Californian history from first contact was the American Indian population indigenous to the region. The practices commensurate with slavery experienced by American Indians, in the form of suffering involuntary servitude, dissolution of language, culture and religion, and dislocation from homeland, were indeed similar to those experienced by African-American slaves. However, a

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<sup>455</sup> Randall M. Miller and John David Smith, eds., *Dictionary of Afro-American Slavery* (Connecticut: Praeger Publishing, 1997), p. 800.

<sup>456</sup> Robert F. Heizer and Alan J Almquist, *The Other Californians: Prejudice and Discrimination under Spain, Mexico, and the United States to 1920* (California: University of California Press, 1971), p. 60.

report by Anti-Slavery International in collaboration with the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA), argues that though “indigenous people suffer slavery in the same way as other people, because of their particular relationship to the state, slavery affects them differently”<sup>457</sup>. The report argues that in the case of indigenous people, such as American Indians, slavery “attacks their whole collective identity and threatens their survival as peoples”<sup>458</sup>. The particularities of slavery in an indigenous context differ as the “interconnections between different aspects of indigenous peoples’ lives means that slavery has an impact on an entire people’s culture and social structure”<sup>459</sup>. The example given in this report is of territorial rights that are intricately linked with cultural and spiritual practices that then become threatened when this physical dislocation occurs. As discussed in the previous chapter, the notion of the importance of interconnectivity in broad American Indian culture is once again significant for a contextual understanding of the expressions of the *woge*.

The parallel with the *woge* is explicit here in that the withdrawal from their homeland directly causes the distress that is expressed in the “unison chants of dispossession and exile”. As in Pynchon’s explanation of the connection between the Herero, the American Indian and the Buddhist, which is established through the common consequence of “the imposition of a culture valuing analysis and differentiation on a culture that valued unity and integration”, rather than through the act of colonization itself, it is not the acts of slavery themselves that are

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<sup>457</sup> Anti-Slavery International in collaboration with the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, ‘Enslaved Peoples in the 1990s: Indigenous Peoples, Debt Bondage and Human Rights’ (1996), p. 25, last accessed 10 August, 2016, <[http://www.iwgia.org/iwgia\\_files\\_publications\\_files/0142\\_ENSLAVED\\_PEOPLES\\_IN\\_THE\\_90.pdf](http://www.iwgia.org/iwgia_files_publications_files/0142_ENSLAVED_PEOPLES_IN_THE_90.pdf)>.

<sup>458</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>459</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

emphasized, but rather their consequences and repercussions in the form of displacement, exile, cultural fragmentation and in Pynchonian terms, preterition.

Although the informing historical and cultural contexts are clearly different, the outcomes, typified by these vocalisations, seem prevalent across numerous peoples. This is perhaps the reason why, unlike Pynchon's wider and characteristic efforts to detail songs and lyrics specifically, the chants of the *woge* are presented without lyrics. Pynchon's instinct to connect differing historical instances of similar patterns of behaviours can therefore once again be argued in the chants of the *woge*. However, in addition to creating historical and geographical connections, the specific characteristics of the *woge* themselves enforces an ecocritical dimension to this analysis of the layered quality of the landscape of Vineland.

### **The Life and Lifework of the Redwoods**

The second wave of withdrawal of the *woge* that Pynchon outlines is their withdrawal into the land itself. Pynchon's depiction of the *woge* here is uncannily similar to the mythological account recorded by A.L. Kroeber in 1978.<sup>460</sup> This is not only important as it appears to be potential source material for the *woge* passage of *Vineland*, but also because Kroeber's account emphasises the similarities between the *woge* and the Yurok themselves. Although this is implied by Pynchon in a more sustained, subtle and literary way, the direct correlation

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<sup>460</sup> Kroeber's retelling of the history of the *woge* can be found in Kroeber, *Yurok Myths*, p. xxxii.

created between Kroeber, and even more explicitly by his editor, is important in establishing the *woge* as a literary and historical metaphor for the Yurok and, perhaps more broadly, American Indians as a whole, which will figure more prominently in later discussions.

The *woge* in this final account of withdrawal are those who found it impossible to leave and “withdrew instead into the features of the landscape” (*VL*, p. 186). These are perhaps the *woge* who can be understood both within the ongoing context of American Indian perspectives on animism, but also within a theoretical ecocritical framework that helps inform an understanding of environmental subjectivity.

In this instance of withdrawal, the *woge* become the features of the earth itself, embodying its varied and contrasting states and fluxes, whilst all the while remaining “conscious” and maintaining a living memory (*VL*, p. 186). Where Kroeber describes the *woge* as being “loath to leave their old haunts to which they were attached as much as the Yurok are to their homes”,<sup>461</sup> Pynchon’s narrative focuses on the *woge*, now withdrawn into the landscape, “remaining conscious” and “remembering better times” (*VL*, p. 186). Aside from evoking the previously discussed animistic element in American Indian culture, this depiction further develops the idea of the identification of the Yurok with the *woge* in suggesting that the landscape itself is capable of possessing memory.

The relationship between the *woge* and the redwood trees becomes evident here in that Pynchon includes another example where the landscape

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<sup>461</sup> Kroeber, *Yurok Myths*, p. xxxii.

exhibits some form of subjectivity. However, a crucial difference between the redwoods and the *woge* withdrawal into the landscape is that the redwoods perform a more functional role, with implied degrees of agency, whereas the environmentally-absorbed *woge* function as the memory of the landscape itself. Of course, both of these functions are culturally-attributed within Pynchon's understanding and presentation of Yurok culture, however, the introduction of a critical framework should help to shape a reading of the redwood trees and the second-wave *woge* which will have a greater impact on how the construction of the landscape of Vineland itself can be understood.

In ecocritical writing, the notion of animism has already received attention and consideration, especially in relation to its departure from more familiar 'rational' or "Western representations of nature",<sup>462</sup> and in an attempt to address climate change and modern environmental destruction. From an ecological perspective, animism is often regarded in romantic and idealised terms, as a sort of pre-contact paradigm of an environmental perspective. Following the idealised perspectives of indigenous cultures explored in the previous chapter, the belief that animistic cultures have "almost without exception avoided the kind of environmental destruction that makes environmental ethics an explicit social theme with us",<sup>463</sup> and instead demonstrate a connection with nature that is exemplary and to be revered, is consistent. Though this sort of commentary might reflect a change in retrospective attitudes towards non-western approaches to environmental concerns, the relevance of animism within ecocritical theory

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<sup>462</sup> Christopher Manes, 'Nature in Silence', in Max Oelschlaeger, ed., *Postmodern Environmental Ethics* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995), p. 45.

<sup>463</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

depends on addressing or readdressing a traditionally favoured dichotomy between the human and nature.

This idea of boundaries is addressed by critic Neil Evernden in his 1978 essay 'Beyond Ecology', which attempts to trace the history or cause of the separation of the human and the natural world. Evernden argues that since Cartesian thought, "not only are we not a part of an environment, we are not even part of a *body*".<sup>464</sup> This separation of the mind, or the 'self', as Evernden suggests, is a crucial obstacle to creating an ecology that "rests on its assumption of literal interrelatedness, not just interdependence".<sup>465</sup> He cites animism as some kind of lost outlook to rethinking this mindset, as through animism "we engage in the extension of the boundary of the self into the "environment"". <sup>466</sup> As such, the environment, as he defines it, becomes imbued with life, "and can quite properly [be] regard[ed] as animate".<sup>467</sup> Notably, the environment is only animate "because we are a part of it".<sup>468</sup> Though Evernden's proposal seems progressive in ecological terms, where this analysis fails in the context of this argument, is in its assumption that the environment or landscape is only animate or possesses subjectivity as a result of contact with the human.

Animism, or its equivalent, as understood from the American Indian perspective offered by Linda Hogan, does not in fact depend on relational human and non-human experiences. However, that is not to say that Evernden's ecocritical perspective is not useful in this context. His notion of belonging and

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<sup>464</sup> Neil Evernden, 'Beyond Ecology', in Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, eds., *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1996), p. 98.

<sup>465</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102.

<sup>466</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>467</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>468</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

settling is particularly significant given the *woge* narrative, and moreover, in understanding the increasingly layered landscape of Vineland.

Evernden's argument of 'territoriality' is particularly useful here in that it establishes a dichotomy of use-relationships and resident-relationships. The former is simply founded on the belief that the environment is a "set of resources",<sup>469</sup> where it is not even understood as a living or independent ecosystem, any more than a supermarket can be considered as such. The latter relationship, however, is more nuanced, since it acknowledges an active and reactive ecosystem that becomes invested with the human activity within its realm. Thus, the resident, who can be defined by this term as a result of this interaction, develops an important relationship with its territory, since that area is a testament to the events that have occurred there. The parallel with the American Indian sacred place, as discussed in the previous chapter, is curious here. Though in Evernden's argument the event itself is not as significant as it is in the establishment of a sacred place, that the location is recognised as acting as witness to the event is certainly comparable.

Thus the notion of landscape history and narrative can be introduced, though in this tentative definition this remains relational to human activity, and does not significantly venture into theories of landscape ecology. Nonetheless, landscape history and narrative can become a part of cultural history, from which it has thus far been eluded. This exclusion, recognised by ecocritical

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<sup>469</sup> Evernden, p. 99.

commentators such as William Howarth,<sup>470</sup> is also not necessarily obvious in Pynchon's narrative of the cultural and political history of Vineland, however, a re-examination of the redwood presence in the landscape and infrastructure of Vineland redresses this apparent exclusion, whilst also affirming Evernden's thoughts on the dichotomous use- and resident-relationships with the landscape.

As a logging town, Vineland's infrastructure can certainly be characterised as having been built on trees. The historical Humboldt and Eureka Counties from which Pynchon draws topographical inspiration for Vineland, similarly house redwood constructions, such as the Carson Mansion built in 1884 by lumber magnate William Carson to house "100 of his workers employed during a slump in the timber industry".<sup>471</sup> The house is characterised both by "an abundant use of redwood"<sup>472</sup> which is local to the area, and imported materials from Central America, the Philippines, East India and Mexico, which reinforce the California as having been built using both native and incoming resources and ideas.

The housing of Pynchon's Vineland, which "date[s] back to the high tide of the logging business in these parts", is constructed from redwood trees and is crafted by "legendary carpenters" (*VL*, p. 26). Not only are the houses made from redwood itself, but are also often situated "deep in the Vineland redwoods" (*VL*, p. 48) and described as being "dwarfed and overshadowed by the towering dim red trees" (*VL*, p. 9). Pynchon depicts the builders of these houses as "geniuses with wood", who know their material well and can build anything from "a bowling alley

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<sup>470</sup> See William Howarth, 'Some Principles of Ecocriticism', in Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, eds., *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1996), pp. 69-91.

<sup>471</sup> 'Carson Mansion', *Humboldt: California's Redwood Coast*, last accessed 21 July 2016, <<http://redwoods.info/showrecord.asp?id=2177>>.

<sup>472</sup> *Ibid.*

to a Carpenter Gothic outhouse” (VL, p. 26). The craftsmanship here is evident, and though the redwoods have been used as construction material, Pynchon’s depiction is not condemnatory since both that the work and activity are highly considered and regarded. As in the redwoods used in the making of Yurok canoes, the use factor per se is not condemned if the approach to this use is well-intentioned.

An important measure of these intentions in this context is the ongoing Yurok standard. The Yurok of course are not participants in the logging industry of Vineland, however their reaction to human environmental activity, at least according to mediated insight from “hippies” and “local informants” (VL, p. 187), is also not strictly condemnatory. According to this account of Yurok traditional belief the *woge* “were really the porpoises” that can be seen off the coast of Vineland, and have “left their world to the humans” (VL, p. 187). This transition of the landscape of Vineland from Yurok/*woge* care to human care is also met with a degree of caution. The *woge* do not disappear but rather “wait and see how humans did with the world”, with a reaction to “teach...how to live the right way” and “save”, rather than condemn human activity (VL, p. 187). Of course it is significant that this extension of Yurok mythology is mediated through non-Native understanding, and that this in itself might account for the lack of punishment or harsh reproach of human interaction with the landscape. However, the log-keepers themselves, who are not “known for their psychic gifts”, are nonetheless bestowed with some sense of “invisible boundary” in the landscape (VL, p. 317). Though the Yurok have previously been said to have understood the nature of this boundary but “did not share” (VL, p. 317) its implications, that the log keepers are

at least aware of these nuances or patterns in the landscape, is testament to their close physical contact with its features, especially the redwoods.

Similarly, Pynchon's depiction of the loggers of Vineland is not wholly condemnatory, as a clear distinction is made between the 'old' loggers and "those in the mills" (VL, p. 5). One of the 'old' loggers is Jess Traverse, who is never portrayed critically in his work as a logger but is instead highlighted for his union activity in this staple industry of Vineland. Though the logging industry is certainly prevalent in the narrative of *Vineland*, its presence in the landscape of Vineland is varied. An example of this is in a passage from the novel set in the early 1970s. At this point in the county's history as narrated by Pynchon, it is reported that there are "plenty of redwoods left to get lost in", and in fact that the interior of the county "hasn't even been surveyed" (VL, p. 305). This might be explained by the nature of early historical logging in Northern California, which involved hard labour and demanded a long and physical process that dictated a slow felling rate. At this pace, and according to these conditions, "the supply of trees may have seemed endless"<sup>473</sup>. In Pynchon's depiction, at this historical juncture there is even evidence of attempts at conservationist practises within the logging industry (even if as an inadvertent bi-product of the slow-paced loggers), as is evident in a ridge of "second-growth redwoods" (VL, p. 35) that can be seen in the opening chapter of the novel. Though the fact of these second growth trees is evidence in itself of the major disturbance of the logging industry, which they have also been left to re-grow to this degree also suggests a sustainable attitude towards logging at this stage of the industry. As such, the narrative of the trees contributes and

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<sup>473</sup> National Park Service, p. 77.

shapes the narrative of the logging industry as well as the ever-emerging historical landscape of Vineland itself.

However, this approach from the old tradition of loggers, or the “stiffs in the woods”, is also presented as being replaced by a new approach from those “in the mills”, as a result of “the Japanese buying up unprocessed logs as fast as the forests could be clear-cut” (VL, p. 5). This transition from manual, laboured logging to the mechanical, industrial approach of “mammoth chainsaws, bulldozers, railroads, and later, heavy trucks”<sup>474</sup> also dictates that the second growth redwoods become viewed as “as yet unlogged” industrial produce. Within the multi-layered infrastructure of Vineland so too the narrative of the logging industry becomes layered by these different methods of development and practice which shape the industrial aspect of the narrative of the county.

This transition is also marked by expansion from direct, local industry to multi-national activity, as previously witnessed in the earlier example of the use of the salmon boats, and as now denoted by the Japanese involvement in the logging industry of Vineland by 1984. This shift from local to multi-national involvement also incurs a shift in mentality in this industry and towards the landscape that supports it. The redwoods forests are now viewed as “as yet unlogged” land, which encourages unsustainable logging practices. The involvement of multi-national interests is symptomatic of an emerging approach to logging that does not value a direct relationship with the immediate

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<sup>474</sup> National Park Service, p. 77.

environment since interests are now not local and cannot be described as 'resident' according to Evernden's previously outlined terms.

Indeed, the first historic commercial use of cut redwoods was for making boxes. These were not "artisan-worked collectables" or the work of local craftsmen, but "packing boxes to be shipped to Alaska, Central America, Hawaii, Australia, Tahiti".<sup>475</sup> The use of indigenous Californian trees for use as material for exporting goods evokes another layer in Vineland's industrial and now, environmental history. The previous chapter's characterisation of California as a fertile ground for incoming cultural and spiritual ideas, which become shaped by the particularities of the landscape itself, is now contrasted by practises that almost reverse this process. The outgoing material is not cultural or spiritual but is actually formed from the foundations of the landscape itself. The redwoods- a distinctive feature particular to the Northern Californian landscape- are desecrated and exported in line with an emerging cultural attitude that is disconnected from having a relationship with the landscape.

Unlike the traditional Yurok practices of harvesting salmon according to patterns that ensure sustainability and longevity of natural resources, or even unlike the approach of the "old loggers", multi-national interests in Vineland are able to locate different produce from different regions. Consequently, they do not need to account for sustainability in the same way, even from a simple production perspective, since they are not limited to geographical boundaries. The approach of the industrial tourists therefore marks a breakdown between relationships with the environment, since it is not viewed as a place of habitat that supports a

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<sup>475</sup> National Park Service, p. 77.

lifestyle, livelihood or local culture, but rather is viewed in terms of its yield value alone.

In fact, historically, the 'colour' or economic promise of the Northern Californian region was not in the form of gold as might be expected given the familiar history of the Gold Rush, but was considered to be in the redwood resources of the area. In the years following World War II the "demand for lumber burgeoned"<sup>476</sup> as a consequence of the efforts to rebuild cities across Europe and Japan, which is alluded to in the Japanese interest in Vineland's logging industry. Together with a domestic demand for housing materials, in what John G. Mitchell describes as "an orgy of homebuilding", the increased use of redwood as building material resulted in 95% of all old-growth redwood forests being cut down by the late 1990s.<sup>477</sup> Though Vineland in 1984 still has "as yet unlogged second-growth redwoods", this historical statistic is pre-emptive of the future of the redwoods of Vineland, as their status as 'as yet unlogged' trees is more foreboding than promising.

The shift in attitude towards the logging of the redwood trees of Vineland is illustrative of an ideological shift in ecological relationships across a broad historical range and across inhabiting cultures. However, before this shift can be understood, it is important also to examine contextual theoretical arguments on notions of ecological relationships in order to situate Pynchon within this debate.

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<sup>476</sup> National Park Service, p. 77.

<sup>477</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

## Visions of Vineland

### What We Think We Know

The perception of a harmonious relationship with the environment, and a progressive attitude towards sustainability embodied in the figure of the American Indian, has long since been acknowledged as a kind of original paradigm of environmentalism. The potent image of the 'Ecological Indian' has continued to be debated and reassessed, from a countercultural reverence of a deeply spiritual communal life in harmony with Nature, to turn of the century attempts to reassess the validity of the symbolic Ecological Indian according to contemporary definitions and understandings of ecology, environmentalism and conservationism. Though the previous chapter in part addresses the emergence of the status of the American Indian as ecological in the 1960s and 1970s, the secondary reassessment of this figure has not yet been addressed.

In his controversial and widely critiqued study of this debate, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (1999), Shepard Krech III examines the criteria by which American Indians can truly be deemed ecological, environmental or conservationist, through examining the historical cultural practises of American Indians in relation to their environment.<sup>478</sup> The broader debate has also been contributed to by other historical studies of specific and particular aspects of American Indian and other Indigenous peoples' living, hunting and farming practices, as well as more flagrant attempts to completely dismantle the mystique

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<sup>478</sup> Shepard Krech III, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1999).

of the environmental Indian altogether, as in Martin Lewis' *Green Delusions* (1994).<sup>479</sup> Though Krech's study has provoked more questions than provided conclusions, as the follow-up analysis *Native Americans and their Environment: Perspectives on the Ecological Indian* (2007)<sup>480</sup> demonstrates, some consensus is achieved on the ecological attitude of a broad American Indian culture towards the landscape.<sup>481</sup> Between studies it is generally agreed<sup>482</sup> that in the broadest conceptions, American Indian "comprehension of relationships between living organisms and their organic and inorganic environments has always been ecological"<sup>483</sup>, and that though American Indian cultural conceptions of conservationism cannot be measured by contemporary definitions, there are pervasive practices that "leaves the environment and resources...in a usable state for future generations".<sup>484</sup> In his complex and comprehensive analysis Krech is also careful to measure factors as such the struggle for social and economic stability for modern American Indian peoples, especially around issues of sovereignty and land and hunting rights, and therefore produces a nuanced and balanced assessment with these factors considered. However, what is apparent, despite some deconstructions of the myth, is a prevailing idea of the ecological Indian, in the form of both realised contemporary Native environmental activists,

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<sup>479</sup> See Martin Lewis, *Green Delusions: An Environmentalist Critique of Radical Environmentalism* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1998).

<sup>480</sup> See Shepard Krech III, 'Beyond *The Ecological Indian*', in Michael E. Harkin and David Rich Lewis, eds., *Native Americans and their Environment: Perspectives on the Ecological Indian* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007).

<sup>481</sup> In the context of the Krech debate, the term ecological is used more loosely to denote both the relational focus, what is now termed ecology, and to include notions of sustainability, which has latterly been referred to as 'environmental' or 'conservationist'.

<sup>482</sup> An obvious exception here is Martin Lewis, whose argument generally underestimates the postcolonial influence on his historical study. Though Lewis acknowledges that all indigenous people in his examples are in some ways 'contacted,' he does not take this into consideration in his analysis, and furthermore does not acknowledge that perhaps colonialism in all its relevant forms i.e. cultural and ecological, is a likely factor in post-contact behaviours and practices.

<sup>483</sup> Krech, 'Beyond *The Ecological Indian*', p. 4.

<sup>484</sup> Krech, '*The Ecological Indian*', p. 26.

and in the maintenance of a symbolic ecological Indian- the “wise environmental managers”-<sup>485</sup> whose broadest cultural understanding of, and approach to the environment favours respect and preservation of the non-human world.<sup>486</sup>

The publication of *Vineland* in some ways anticipates this debate, as the Yurok perspective is foregrounded as the environmental narrative. This is typified in the traditional stories of the *woge*, which, as previously discussed, is in some variations related by hippies and local informants. The narrators are particularly significant given that the *woge* episode takes place in the 1984 present of the novel, which is partially culturally characterised by a residual hippie presence. The Yurok beliefs, filtered through the hippie voice, have also been fused with broad notions of reincarnation. Although the association with reincarnation might refer to the little-known but prevalent “rebirth and reincarnation concepts among North American native people”,<sup>487</sup> it is also likely, given the historical location of the novel, that this association is a result of the tendency of New Age beliefs to reformulate and distil non-Western spiritualities into more singular and cohesive belief systems. The terminology of this version of Yurok mythology is consistent

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<sup>485</sup> Krech, ‘The Ecological Indian’, p. 228.

<sup>486</sup> In a chapter of *This Changes Everything* (2015) devoted to the relationship between indigenous rights and environmental activism, Naomi Klein provides extensive evidence that protecting Indigenous rights “may now represent the most powerful barriers protecting all of us from a future of climate chaos”. Contemporary treaty negotiations over land rights fought for by indigenous peoples globally, Klein argues, inadvertently and fortuitously dictate that land has become protected and cannot, without breaking these laws and agreements, be subjecting to environmental destruction. Not only is this a huge advantage to the environmental cause, but it also aids in reparations between indigenous and non-Native peoples since indigenous rights become a “tremendous gift” to environmental protection. In the context of this discussion, the American Indian according to Klein’s theory is vindicated both by being an original advocate of environmental protection and one of the most powerful means of safeguarding and ensuring that protection. See chapter entitled, ‘You and What Army? Indigenous Rights and the Power of Keep our World’ in Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2015), pp. 367-88.

<sup>487</sup> Antonia Mills, ‘Introduction’, in Antonia Mills and Richard Slobodin, eds., *Amerindian Rebirth: Reincarnation Belief Among North American Indians and Inuit* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), p. 3.

with this, with words like 'sacred' and 'magical' used indiscriminately and interchangeably. In this context, the *woge*- now reincarnated as the porpoise- and in keeping with Yurok tradition of living in the ocean around Patrick's Point, are granted authoritative environmental status. It is said that the *woge* would wait and "see how humans did with the world. And if we started fucking up too bad...they would come back, teach us how to live the right way, save us" (VL, p. 187). In this version the Yurok perspective is also upheld, not only as an imagined ideal, but in this instance as the correct perspective on human relationships with the environment.

In contrast to this Indian ideal, Pynchon posits the philosophy that permits the aforementioned contemporary logging practises in Vineland. The unsustainable approach that results in the forest becoming clear-cut is consistent with a clear philosophy of mastery and ownership of the land and its resources. An attitude such as this towards land management can be seen as consistent with the same spiritual reasoning outlined in the first chapter that stems from a long-held assumption of religiously-afforded dominion over the realm of nature. The countercultural backlash to this can therefore be viewed as a curious synthesis of environmental concern following realised events such as "the burning of the Cuyhoga river in Ohio or the Santa Barbara oil spill off the coast of California", which were "broadcast on television, thereby drawing the attention of millions of Americans", and a more general opposition to "the American way of life", previously concentrated in religious/spiritual terms, but now expanded to include

“high consumption and large-scale industrial activities”, which were also strong characteristics of this way of life.<sup>488</sup>

In a similar pattern to that spiritual reawakening, certain facets of the counterculture retrospectively looked to texts dating back to the post-war period to explain the relationship between environmental damage and a perceived American way of life. The 1947 book *Communitas* by Paul and Percival Goodman for example, examined the idea of an “economy of abundance” in the context of environmental impact. The brothers claimed that the U.S. cultural climate was such that over-production and surplus, which seemed to define a high standard of living in U.S. terms, made no environmental sense.<sup>489</sup> Jean-Daniel Collomb’s paper ‘New Beginning: The Counter Culture in American Environmental History’ explores the interconnecting trajectories of the counterculture and the U.S. environmental movement. Although a significant portion of this examination focuses on the impact and perception of technology, especially nuclear technology, on environmental awareness, Collomb also considers countercultural efforts towards a back to the land approach and away from “the wastefulness and mindlessness of the consumer society”,<sup>490</sup> both of which will chime with the following chapter’s discussion of alternative and experimental living arrangements. Although these parallels are useful in establishing a fuller understanding of the impetuses of the counterculture, especially now in environmental concerns, Collomb also touches briefly on the twilight of the

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<sup>488</sup> Jean-Daniel Collomb, ‘New Beginning: The Counter Culture in American Environmental History’, paper delivered at the 22nd *Cercles* conference (2012), last accessed 5 February 2016, <<http://www.cercles.com/n22/collomb.pdf>>.

<sup>489</sup> Paul and Percival Goodman qtd. in Collomb.

<sup>490</sup> Collomb.

counterculture in relation to environmentalism and alternative living in a way that particularly resonates with a specific textual example in *Vineland*.

The aforementioned Sacramento Delta country commune can be read as one such manifestation of countercultural alternative living. Described as a “sanctuary” (*VL*, p. 65) from government, the commune is probably one of the areas most affected by the emerging government-military installations in the area. While the social effects of this have been acknowledged, it is also apparent that these installations have also had an environmental impact. Detritus includes “nuclear-weapons depots and waste dumps” and “sulphurous fogs”, amounting to an environment where “everything smelled like diesel and chemicals” (*VL*, p. 306). This pollution, together with the constant noise from military aircraft causes Zoyd and his daughter to swiftly leave the presumed shelter of the commune.

The encroachment of the governmental-military forces and the damaging health implications of the environmental pollution is consistent with Collomb’s vision of how the countercultural era of environmental activism came to an end following “Ronald Reagan’s victorious campaign of 1980”.<sup>491</sup> The emphasis on “unlimited economic development”, which marked the Reagan administration also, inevitably “did not seek to hide its hostility towards environmentalism”.<sup>492</sup> While the environmental movement certainly did not disappear with the counterculture, what Collomb argues had been lost was a particular strand of

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<sup>491</sup> Collomb.

<sup>492</sup> *Ibid.*

environmentalism characterized as an intertwining of environmental concerns and a way of reorganizing society to this end.<sup>493</sup>

The wane of countercultural environmentalism and the increase in consumer culture heralded by the Reagan era can in part account for *Vineland's* depiction of a “clear-cut” philosophy of land management. This approach can be appropriately summarised in Robert LeFevre’s 1966 *The Philosophy of Ownership*, which assesses inhabited landscape as property, and views the ownership of property as a central social necessity.<sup>494</sup> LeFevre’s philosophy in particular is useful considering how the arc of his beliefs can be seen to correlate with the political shift that Pynchon suggests in *Vineland*. Therefore, before the specifics of LeFevre’s argument are introduced, it is useful to explore why LeFevre himself can be considered in this discussion.

A brief biography of LeFevre will quickly uncover that in his youth he was “something of a cultist”, becoming a fervent follower of the I AM Movement.<sup>495</sup>

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<sup>493</sup>Incidentally, *Vineland* was published in the same year as the ‘Redwood Summer’, in which Earth First! activists organised a non-violent protest in response to the decision by Louisiana Pacific Lumber Mill’s (who have already come under scrutiny in relation to the Luna incident outlined in the Introduction) “to double the rate of logging” of old-growth redwood forests. Although this campaign was largely unsuccessful in creating a long-term impact on the logging industry, the activism of the Redwood Summer initiated more radical responses to environmental destruction than by their predecessors such as the Sierra Club. In addition to dismantling and disabling logging machinery and equipment and more routine techniques like picketing, Earth First! also took “symbolic action” against the loggers. This involved dressing “in animal costumes, using in particular the colors and patterns of the spotted owl, an endangered species that lived in the old growth forests”, “camouflag[ing] themselves with leaves and sticks” and using “special war cries, adapted from Native American war cries, to communicate with each other”. Although ultimately ineffective in material terms, this kind of action distinguished Earth First! both as a radical network of environmentalists and as particularly contextually relevant given their methods of protest. Lydia Bailey, ‘Earth First! Protests the Destruction of Redwood Forests (Redwood Summer)’, United States, 1990’, *Global Nonviolent Action Database* (2 March 2013), last accessed 5 July 2016, <<http://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/earth-first-protests-destruction-redwood-forests-redwood-summer-united-states-1990>>.

<sup>494</sup> Robert LeFevre, *The Philosophy of Ownership* (Alabama: The Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2007).

<sup>495</sup> George Thayer, *The Farther Shores of Politics: The American Political Fringe Today* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967), p. 265.

During his time with this occult religious movement LeFevre related a “number of supernatural experiences”, most notably “driving a car while asleep for over twenty miles without an accident...leaving his physical body for a trip through the air to Mt. Shasta, and seeing Jesus”.<sup>496</sup> While this experience strengthens previous discussions of the importance of Mount Shasta to I AM activity, the incident is also uncannily similar to the moment in *Lot 49* when Oedipa decides to drive blind on the freeway. Although these experiences are understood with a different framework, both are quasi-religious or spiritual in nature, with LeFevre’s in particular contributing to a large landscape of alternative religious movements that thrive in California.<sup>497</sup>

After serving in the U.S. Army during the Second World War, LeFevre continued in this same vein of spiritual and philosophical inquiry, undertaking a cross-country lecture tour “in a pilgrimage for world peace”, funded by the California-based Falcon Lair Foundation, “a non-profit group interested in religion, philosophy and government”.<sup>498</sup> Although having run (unsuccessfully) as a Republican for Congress in 1950, and worked for an anti-union organization, LeFevre, together with the same organization,<sup>499</sup> was somewhat conflictingly accused of helping to produce pro-Communist films. However, in the early 1950s LeFevre’s allegiances becomes less nuanced and he “went to work for the right wing in a big way”,<sup>500</sup> founding the Freedom School in 1956, an institute driven by

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<sup>496</sup> Thayer, p. 267.

<sup>497</sup> Although founded in Illinois, the western branch of their publishing house and the residence of co-founder Edna Ballard was moved to Santa Fe in 1942.

<sup>498</sup> Thayer, p. 268.

<sup>499</sup> Formerly owned by Rudolph Valentino, and later by Doris Duke, Falcon’s Lair was also visited by Sharon Tate, victim of the Manson family murders, which contribute to the cultural and social backdrop of *Inherent Vice*.

<sup>500</sup> Thayer, p. 268.

libertarian anti-government principles. LeFevre's complex rejection of government and advocacy of a free market economy also become compounded by a central belief in an absolute "dependen[cy] on property" and an ability "to dominate a portion of our environment",<sup>501</sup> that brings this discussion back to *The Philosophy of Ownership*.

To this end LeFevre explains,

"The advent of man does not change the character of the land, as property. But the relationship of the land to man does change when men acquire this land. I would identify this kind of property before the appearance of an owner as *unowned property*".<sup>502</sup>

This philosophy, however useful in charting a contextual attitude towards land management and social economics, is also limited in this argument and within the ongoing Yurok framework since it is relational only to humans. Unlike more environmental sensibilities this understanding does not account for any other kind of ecological relationship in the landscape that isn't concerned or motivated by a very anthropocentric notion of possession. Furthermore, LeFevre's argument that the motivation "to own, to possess, to control and master" and "to acquire and utilize" that he views as being "basic to man" are also predicated on a recognisably libertarian and capitalist notion of private ownership.<sup>503</sup> Again, while these tenets are important in the Reaganite aspect of this general discussion and merit further examination in the following chapter, it is important also to examine this philosophy in more environmental terms, which will serve to illustrate the shift in ecological relationships in Vineland.

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<sup>501</sup> Thayer, p. 271.

<sup>502</sup> LeFevre, p. 4.

<sup>503</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

For Pynchon critic Hanjo Berressem, this shift in *Vineland* is similarly largely politically weighted, the shift being from a “more communal America” to “the protofascist establishment” of the 1980s setting of the novel, witnessed in the earlier examination of the military-industrial additions to *Vineland*’s infrastructure.<sup>504</sup> Berressem’s evaluation is concentrated on the development of the real estate industry in the region, which appropriately helps to focus notions of property and ownership in a Pynchonian context. His summary of real estate as being the “mostly violent- conversion of a free, anonymous, and communal landscape into parcels of private property”<sup>505</sup> can be understood as the environmentally-driven opposition to that with LeFevre advocates in political and social terms. While the shift that Berressem condemns is the same that LeFevre champions, it is also the more pointedly ecological emphasis of Berressem’s outlook that is apparent. The instinct to own, possess, control and master, which LeFevre characterises as essentially human, is also only relevant within a certain framework, namely the later years of *Vineland*’s chronology, and does not take into account the different cultural understandings of value and worth related to notions of animism and ecology that the text suggests.

Arguably, in accordance with Berressem’s summation, though the destruction of the redwood forests coincides with a need for housing, and is thus closely linked with a boom in real estate, there is a cultural factor that is perhaps slightly overlooked here. In his overview of post-contact land negotiations, LeFevre introduces the idea of worth and value as an important element in

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<sup>504</sup> Hanjo Berressem, ‘Life on the Beach: The Natural Elements in Thomas Pynchon’s California Trilogy’, in Scott McClintock and John Miller, eds., *Pynchon’s California* (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 2014), p. 41.

<sup>505</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

attitudes and behaviours towards the environment. He argues that “Indian chiefs”, when negotiating trade with settlers, “looked upon the property they were conveying as having existence in those things they themselves valued”<sup>506</sup>. This cultural subjectivity in matters of worth and value similarly accounts for the shift in environmental attitudes in Vineland, which is acknowledged and addressed by Pynchon through his insertion and maintenance of the Yurok environmental narrative.

The enduring Yurok perspective of the “wise environmental managers” is therefore vital to understanding the nuanced layers of the landscape of Vineland, a quality that cannot be understood in wholly political or social terms, but rather has to include cultural and spiritual factors that contribute to a holistic and satisfying understanding of this space.

### **What the Case May Be**

On the spectrum between the residual Yurok perspective and the most recent philosophy of land-clearing is the attitude of the contemporary inhabitants and residents of Vineland, which includes central characters such as Zoyd and Prairie. The infrastructure of Vineland, as constructed by these characters, is similarly dominated by the redwoods, however in this manifestation they perhaps feature in a more recognisable background role. The trees in this capacity are present in the aforementioned “original bar, carved back at the turn of the century from one giant redwood log”, in “a redwood deck with a table and chairs” where

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<sup>506</sup> LeFevre, p. 46.

Prairie spends her mornings drinking tea, or as “the long redwood tables” (*VL*, p. 369) at the Traverse-Becker reunion. They provide what can be viewed as the scenery of Vineland, the “towering dim red trees” (*VL*, p. 9) that characterize and distinguish the area. While the trees might function in this way, they might also perform a more complex role, even on this more familiar social level.

The redwoods that form the bar of the Log Jam, Vineland’s loggers’ bar of the opening chapter is “about the only thing in [here] that hadn’t been replaced” (*VL*, p. 7), the redwood deck where Prairie drinks her morning tea is where she sits and fantasizes that “she was on her own, with no legal history, no politics, only an average California chick, invisible, poised at life’s city limits, for whom anything was still possible” (*VL*, p. 236), and the redwood tables at the Traverse-Becker reunion are where the family sit to eat “potato salad and bean casseroles and fried chicken” and gather to “honor the bond between Eula Becker and Jess Traverse” (*VL*, p. 369). In this form the redwoods are not just scenery but are a part of human events, and as such, become part of what can be defined as a cultural landscape. According to the model of American geographer Carl O. Sauer,<sup>507</sup> who shaped and promoted this idea, a cultural landscape (Vineland) is the result of the use of the natural landscape (the redwoods), in a particular way by a cultural group (the residents of Vineland). Though this designation is useful in understanding the contemporary social and cultural layers of Vineland, it is not conclusive of the landscape in its entirety, since it does not account for the importance of the historical process in shaping this outcome.

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<sup>507</sup> For a full explanation of Sauer’s theories of cultural landscapes, see Carl O. Sauer, ‘The Morphology of Landscape’, in Carl O. Sauer, ed., *University of California Publications in Geography*, 2/2 (1929), pp. 19-54.

The scope of the plot of the novel can be seen to date from the 1960s to the novel's present in 1984, however as the introduction claims, the narrative of Vineland stretches back to the history of the Yurok, and before that, to the pre-human narrative of the *woge*. This structure and timescale allows for the application of the theory of historical ecology, which studies "past relationships between groups of people and their environments".<sup>508</sup> Historical ecology necessitates an understanding that human culture and the environment are in dialogue, which is to say that the environment shapes human culture as human culture shapes the environment. The above illustration of the contemporary residents of Vineland is not explicitly in keeping with this theory, however, if this particular period of Vineland's history is contextualized within the broader history of Vineland, then it becomes possible to understand Vineland in terms of historical ecology. According to the tenets of this theory, it is accurate to study people and the landscape together, as a connected trend, as it "conceives of relationships between nature and culture as a dialogue".<sup>509</sup> Given Pynchon's continued allusion to the Yurok perspective, and previous discussions of environmental trends, it may not seem revelatory to understand environmental relations in this way, however, from a literary perspective, this provides a reading of the novel as material shaped by historical ecology, and Vineland itself as visual evidence of the "interpenetration of culture and the environment".<sup>510</sup> In this sense, Vineland is, as historian W.G. Hoskins commented on his own English landscape,

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<sup>508</sup> Ludomir R. Lozny, 'Place, Historical Ecology and Cultural Landscape: new directions for Applied Archaeology', in Ludomir R. Lozny, ed., *Landscapes Under Pressure: Theory and Practice of Cultural Heritage Research and Preservation* (New York: Springer, 2008), p. 15.

<sup>509</sup> William Balée, 'Introduction', in William Balée, ed., *Advances in Historical Ecology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 3.

<sup>510</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

“the richest historical record we possess”,<sup>511</sup> since it has been shaped culturally, industrially and socially through collaboration between its residents and the environment. Thus previous discussions can be broadened by this theory, the particulars of the coastal landscape dictate its fishing traditions, but this landscape is also adapted and rebuilt as a result of modern industrial fishing practices; the redwoods provide shelter, spiritual nourishment and facilitate employment, but are also affected by changing political and cultural trends in the logging industry. Even the boundaries and shape of the county itself whose primary sea coast has been retained since the arrival of “early visitors in Spanish and Russian ships” is predicted to become incorporated in a “Eureka-Crescent City-Vineland megalopolis” (*VL*, p. 317) due to the increase in commerce and business demanded by the political culture of the 1980s.

Whilst this reading is useful in framing Vineland in appropriately connected historical and ecological terms, the complexity of the depiction of the redwoods continues to be problematic to this reading alone. Though the redwoods in the above sense are part of the cultural landscape of Vineland, it is hard to ignore the contemporaneous portrayal of these trees as “breathing” and “alive forever” (*VL*, p. 317), which distinctly goes beyond their material participation. This portrayal is not confined to the Yurok episodes, or even the proliferated Yurok perspective in the hippie retelling, but also occurs in the narrative of the contemporary residents of Vineland.

In a scene in which Zoyd and Prairie travel through Vineland’s redwood forests, baby Prairie is described as directly communicating with the trees, which

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<sup>511</sup> W. G. Hosking, *The Making of the English Landscape* (London: Hodder and Stoughton), p. 14.

are also said to be communicating back. The redwoods here are depicted as a “tunnel of unbelievably tall straight trees” (*VL*, p. 315), which recalls their previous portrayal as “too high, too red to be literal trees”. Prairie’s engagement with the redwoods may be dismissed simply as childlike behaviour, or even a residual form of an animistic reflex in “modern technological society”,<sup>512</sup> as some ecocritics speculate, however, this is somewhat negated by the fact that Prairie’s engagement is not the initial contact, but rather is a response to “something she was hearing” (*VL*, p. 315). Pynchon is also careful to dismiss the idea that this behaviour is simply child’s play, as he specifically describes her voice and manner of communicating with the trees as being in “rather a matter-of-fact tone of voice for a baby” (*VL*, p. 315). Though this suggests that the dialogue is deliberate and direct, it does not account for the content of the communication, which is never fully revealed to the reader. It is, however suggested that this instance relates to an ongoing communication between Prairie and the trees.

Pynchon’s characterization of this engagement as being “a return for [Prairie] to a world behind the world she had known all along” (*VL*, p. 315), is a recurring image from discussions of the changing political landscape of *The Crying of Lot 49*, which now has implications for understanding *Vineland*. *Lot 49*’s San Narciso figures as one representation of this idea, where “behind the hieroglyphic streets there would either be a transcendent meaning, or only the earth” (*L49*, p. 125), and is revelatory of Oedipa’s attempts to understand the multi-layered quality of this city. At this juncture in the novel, Oedipa is described as either allowing for the possibility of ‘everything’- quantified as meaning- or ‘nothing’-

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<sup>512</sup> Manes, p. 45.

which is understood as being the literal world. However, the suggestion of a two world dynamic is further explored in the context of a conversation between Oedipa and anarchist, Jesus Arrabal, in which he explains his notion of a miracle in opposition to that of a miracle as outlined by revolutionary anarchist, Mikhail Bakunin. Bakunin's miracle, which Arrabal references as the 'original' miracle, takes the form of 'God'. However, this 'God' is not "the vigorous and powerful being, the brutally positive God of theology", but rather a shapeless, undefined centre which certain sections of society- "a somewhat numerous class of honest but timid souls"- cannot let go of for fear that all else will disappear along with it.<sup>513</sup> In the context of Bakunin's revolutionary anarchism, the 'miracle' is the obstacle to his idea of social progress, which would equate to "the Socialism of the proletariat".<sup>514</sup> The way this obstacle functions is particularly useful to understanding both Arrabal's idea of the miracle, but more pertinently to understanding the two world dynamic of *Lot 49* and, most relevantly, the dynamic as it figures in *Vineland*.

The obstacle-miracle, for Bakunin, results in a society in which citizens are neither committed to "neither the present nor the future".<sup>515</sup> They are instead "pale phantoms eternally suspended between heaven and earth" and occupy a kind of political wasteland between bourgeois and progressive politics.<sup>516</sup> For Arrabal, however, a miracle is "another world's intrusion into this one" (*L49*, p. 83). The intrusion of this other world would allow "revolutions to break out spontaneous and leaderless" since "the soul's talent for consensus" would allow

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<sup>513</sup> Michael Bakunin, *God and the State* (New York: Dover Publications, 1970), p. 17.

<sup>514</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>515</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>516</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

all people to work together in the same natural, automatic fashion as the body itself works(L49, p. 83). Arrabal summarizes that if this should ever occur perfectly, this would define a miracle.

Significantly, in this interpretation there is no strict dichotomy between worlds, unlike in Bakunin's model of with and without 'God', and as such the two worlds are more fluid and can interconnect in a way that creates positive outcomes. It is this fluidity that is crucial here to this reading of Prairie's notion of the "world behind the world". Prairie's perception, Pynchon explains, is of a similarly layered world, however the layers here do not occur as political or religious levels of progression or regression (as in Bakunin), or as different methods of political or spiritual enactment (as in Arrabal), but rather as ontological layers. The temporality of Prairie's "world behind a world" is key to this as it occurs "behind" and thus exists simultaneously, not in the before and after dynamic that is crucial to both Bakunin and Arrabal. This sense of continuity is particularly characteristic of the layered quality of *Vineland*, most specifically and relevantly, in relation to the role and function of the landscape. Though *Vineland* can of course be understood in different temporal layers that encompass the changing political and spiritual developments that are markedly pronounced in Pynchon's foregrounding of the time between the 1960s and 1980s episodes of *Vineland*, there is a continuity in the landscape that persists beyond these temporal boundaries.

In the depiction of Prairie's "world behind the world", it is the redwoods that are highlighted as the means that allows Prairie to perceive this other coexisting world. Though this world is not specifically defined, and exists simultaneously, in Prairie's chronology it is a 'return' to a world that she "had

known all along". Though the description is somewhat ambiguous, in the context of being physically enclosed by the trees whilst engaging in a dialogue with them, Prairie's experience can be understood as a return to an elemental world or state of being where communicating with the redwoods is instinctive or matter-of-fact.

Though this reading raises questions of the role of the apparatus of society in creating this separation between this world and the world behind, given that it is Prairie, a baby, who is receptive to this experience, and has by way of her infancy less experience of social living than the adult characters of the novel, it is the redwoods themselves that are most intriguing to understanding the quality of the landscape of Vineland itself. In this experience, the redwoods are both the means of perceiving the world behind the world, and a constant between the two. In contrast to the layers of Oedipa's San Narciso, formed of the surface level printed circuit board construct of the city and the concealed level of 'the meaning below', the stratification of Vineland is complicated by an additional factor or presence. Of course, San Narciso can be measured historically, politically and spiritually, as in the nuclear or American Indian strata for example, however since Oedipa provides the central point of navigation of the city, San Narciso is largely explored in terms of layers of meaning or understanding from an epistemological perspective, with contributing historical, political and spiritual factors, as discussed in the previous chapter. Vineland meanwhile, can also be measured historically, politically and spiritually, however it is the specific ecological emphasis that is distinctive here.

The presence and continuity of the redwoods is central to this, as the redwoods are not only a constant between historical episodes, suggesting a certain continuity of the natural landscape, but are also a measure of human

development. In examining different behaviours towards the redwood, from the considered and measured Yurok use of the redwood, to the depletion of redwood forests by contemporary loggers, and the corresponding attitudes that incur these behaviours, the redwoods allow for a reading of the ecological layers of Vineland. Though this is of course important in understanding a development between *Lot 49* and *Vineland*, and to understanding the centrality of the redwoods in Vineland, this reading still does not fully address the subjective presence of the redwood trees.

As in aforementioned discussions, the redwoods participate in the creation of human history by both shaping and being influenced by its activity. However, to return to the *woge* episode one last time, the redwoods and the landscape more generally, can be seen to function in Pynchon's Vineland as the persistence of memory itself.

## **Conscious Landscapes**

### **Remembering**

The final account of the *woge* withdrawal tells of those aforementioned *woge* who do not physically leave, but “withdrew instead into the features of the landscape”. These *woge* do not disappear, nor are they exactly subsumed, but rather become the features of the landscape itself, but most importantly remain conscious and capable of remembering. As part of this withdrawal they become the mind and, specifically, the memory of the landscape. In this capacity they can also be understood in historical ecology terms since they participate in the human activity of the subsequent generations of Yurok who “sat on them, fished from

them, rested in their shade" (*VL*, p. 186), and also develop in tandem with this activity through learning to love and recognize the nuances of natural phenomena. However, in outlining the developing *woge* relationship with these natural phenomena, Pynchon maintains that they remain separate in terms of their consciousness, and as such are not literally the landscape, but rather function as its conscious mind and memory. They therefore act as witness to the Yurok events and not as a cause or result of any Yurok activity, a departure which poses a different ecocritical problem.

The relationship between landscape and memory has been understood and evaluated in environmental, postcolonial and ecocritical discourse alike, especially within a framework where the relationship with the land is threatened by markers of colonialism such as displacement, deterritorialization and "amnesia".<sup>517</sup> In this framework the relationship with the land is understood in terms of alienation, which "becomes so fundamental...that landscape in the work stops merely being decorative or supportive and emerges as a full character".<sup>518</sup> This assessment by Martinician writer, poet and literary critic Edouard Glissant, in relation to the role and function of the landscape in postcolonial Caribbean writing, is focused on an understanding that "the individual, the community, the land are inextricable in the process of creating history", and has much in common with aforementioned notions of historical ecology. However, in his summation that the landscape is not "merely decorative or supportive", but is instead a "full

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<sup>517</sup> Elizabeth DeLoughry, Renée K. Gosson, and George B. Handley, 'Introduction', in Elizabeth DeLoughry, Renee K. Gosson, and George B. Handley, *Caribbean Literature and the Environment: Between Nature and Culture* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005), p. 14.

<sup>518</sup> Edouard Glissant qtd. in DeLoughry, Gosson, and Handley, 'Introduction', p. 4.

character”<sup>519</sup>, Glissant supports the departure that characterizes the *woge* presence in this final account of withdrawal.

As suggested in previous discussions of the nature of the *woge* “unison chants of dispossession and exile”, the *woge* withdrawal in totality can itself be understood in postcolonial terms. The *woge* are both displaced and deterritorialized by the arrival and settlement of humans, and the residual *woge* presence in the landscape is marked by a postcolonial experience of “remembering better times” (*VL*, p. 186). However, it is in the confluence of the *woge* and the landscape itself, together with the persistence of memory, that this reading of the landscape of Vineland can be more usefully understood.

Although the development and collaboration of ecocriticism and postcolonial theory has become more receptive to Glissant’s aforementioned notion that the land and its inhabitants work simultaneously in the historical process, there is much work to be done on the relationship between landscape and memory, and specifically on notions of residual or persisting memory in the landscape. This deficit in a cohesive postcolonial ecocritical theory is highlighted by Timothy Clarke in *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment*, in which he questions the very notion of “adapt[ing] ecocritical arguments to postcolonial questions”.<sup>520</sup> The problem outlined by Clarke is that postcolonial criticism is critical of the way in which “some environmental thinkers simply refer to ‘humanity’ as the antagonist of the natural world”.<sup>521</sup> This, he suggests, ignores the vast and crucial differences between cultural conceptions and concerns of the environment, a suggestion that is certainly relevant in this

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<sup>519</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>520</sup> Clarke, p. 122.

<sup>521</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

particular context. However, Clarke argues that ecocriticism has made some progress simply “by affirming a common interest [with postcolonial critics] between defending the natural world and defending the cultures of local or indigenous peoples”.<sup>522</sup> These tensions relate to and have implications for questions of ecology, environmentalism and the place of non-anthropocentric conceptions such as animism, all of which function in Pynchon’s depiction of the landscape of Vineland.

Although the question of a cohesive postcolonial ecocritical theory could certainly prove useful to a reading of Pynchon’s landscape, in this context it is perhaps the “partial construction” offered by those such as Megan Ann Casey that is most rewarding here.<sup>523</sup> What is meant by Casey is a theory that encompasses eminent scholarly work by critics and theorists like Rob Nixon, Susie O’Brien, Elizabeth DeLoughrey, George Handley, Helen Tiffin and Hans Georg-Emey, but also closely examines and uses “texts about and from” the landscape as critical and theoretical material themselves.<sup>524</sup> Consequently, as opposed to attempting to read Pynchon’s landscape according to a theory that has not fully emerged, it is perhaps through creating parallels with other literary texts that the most cogent understanding of Pynchon’s ‘remembering’ can be formed.

That is not to say that this method has not already been explored, as two textual examples from Guyanese writers, previously used by Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B. Handley in *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment* (2011), can also be re-examined to illustrate examples of

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<sup>522</sup> Ibid., p. 122.

<sup>523</sup> Megan Ann Casey, ‘Postcolonial Ecocriticism and the Cultural Politics of Nature in Belize’ (unpublished PhD., University of Minnesota, 2007), p. 15.

<sup>524</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

postcolonial landscapes where the landscape is conscious in human activity.<sup>525</sup> The first example from Wilson Harris' companion notes to his own work, *The Whole Armour* (1962) and his exploratory essay, *The Fabric of the Imagination* (1990), testifies to the impact of colonialism on the landscape and configures the landscape not as "a bystander to human experience", but rather as a participant that actively engages in the historical process.<sup>526</sup> As such, Harris contends that he depicts a landscape that is "saturated by the traumas of conquest" and cannot be separated from the narrative of colonialism in Guyana.<sup>527</sup>

While this levelling of human experience and the experience of the natural world is important in understanding some of Pynchon's concerns surrounding the participation of the natural world in the historical process, this model of postcolonial landscapes is not wholly consistent with Pynchon's own given his particular emphasis on memory. However, though there may be some differences and departures, the possibility of associating Pynchon with what are considered postcolonial writers further enforces the previous chapter's challenge of Pynchon's classification as a purely postmodernist writer.

Another Guyanese writer employed in DeLoughrey and Handley's investigation is Martin Carter, and specifically his poem *Listening to the Land* (1951).<sup>528</sup> The repetition of the lines "I bent down, listening to the land" and "all I heard was tongueless whispering"<sup>529</sup> is particularly evocative of the postcolonial

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<sup>525</sup> Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B. Handley, eds., *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>526</sup> Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B. Handley, 'Introduction', in Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B. Handley, eds., *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 3.

<sup>527</sup> Harris qtd. in DeLoughrey and Handley, 'Introduction', p. 4.

<sup>528</sup> Although this poem is paraphrased in DeLoughrey and Handley, 'Introduction', p. 4, the full text, 'Listening to the Land', can be found in Martin Carter, *Poems by Martin Carter*, (Oxford: Macmillan Caribbean, 2006), p. 8.

<sup>529</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

context and impetus of the poem, and also finds a parallel in Pynchon's depiction of the *woge* withdrawal. However, as this repetition develops into the concluding line of the poem- "all I heard was tongueless whispering/as if some buried slave wanted to speak again"<sup>530</sup>- the parallel is deepened by the complication of the role of the landscape in this postcolonial context. In this conclusion, the landscape (as a buried slave) is both a victim of the historical trauma, and in relating these traumas is also able to actively bear witness to these events. The tongueless whispering, though evocative of the suppressive quality of colonialism, also recalls colonialism's attempt at "amnesia", as outlined by DeLoughrey et al. In a Pynchonian context this fight against forgetting is similarly understood in the depiction of the ability of the *woge* to remember. This comparative example that highlights the specific remembering expression of the landscape is perhaps closer to Pynchon's notion of the relationship between landscape and memory.

In using the expository work of DeLoughrey and Handley, it is possible to place Pynchon's depiction of landscape and memory alongside the work of other writers who reconfigure the role of the landscape and the natural world into a foreground role in the historical process, even where informing contexts may differ. However, in also considering the specific cultural detail and explication that informs Pynchon's geographical and historical context, it is possible to render a reading of this withdrawal that is informed by both theory and comparative literary analysis and also by a specific historical and cultural context.

For these purposes, the *woge* episode can be recontextualized within a broad American Indian tradition of place naming, but also more pertinently within

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<sup>530</sup> Ibid., p. 8

some specific Yurok cultural variations of this custom. According to Pynchon's geography, the recurring Seventh River of Vineland, where the Yurok episodes take place, is not only held "exceptional" by the Yurok, but is also a "river of ghosts" (VL, p. 186). However, the duality of the historical landscape of Vineland is once again evident in Pynchon's depiction of the naming process of the river. The act of naming the apocryphal river occurs within two different traditions or frameworks; in the first instance it is consistent with the Yurok custom in which "everything had a name", and in the second instance the act of naming, or saying the name of the river aloud leads to both "summary octogenerihexation from the establishment" and "less formal sanctions in the parking lot" (VL, p. 186).<sup>531</sup>

In the Pacific Northwest Sahaptin Indian tradition, the areas in the landscape that are named "are places *where things happen*".<sup>532</sup> In this tradition, naming is not a process of labelling and marking all the features and areas of the landscape to classify or designate, but rather is an act that locates meaning. While the quality of the significance might range from denoting an area where it is especially worthwhile to "pick berries", to marking a place where it is possible to "encounter spirits",<sup>533</sup> the name is not simply a signifier of location or differentiation, but rather of significance itself.

However, in Pynchon's account of the Yurok naming tradition, "*everything* had a name- fishing and snaring places, acorn grounds, rocks on the river,

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<sup>531</sup> It has been suggested that the meaning of octogenerihexation, derived from octogenerian, meaning between 80 and 89 and hexation, meaning the act of placing a hex, is the act of being 86'd, which is American English slang for getting rid of something or someone. In this case, the act of naming the Seventh River aloud is cause for being 86'd from certain taverns.

<sup>532</sup> Eugene Hunn, 'Columbia Plateau Indian Place Names: What Can They Teach us?' *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 6/1 (1996), p. 18.

<sup>533</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

boulders on the banks, groves and singles trees...spring, pools, meadows, all alive, each with its own spirit" (*VL*, p. 186). While this is not consistent with historical Yurok tradition, it serves to mark the singularity of each feature of the landscape and is therefore consistent with previous animistic notions of individuality and subjectivity. This singularity, which has previously been mostly limited to redwood trees as the focal point of these ideas, is now extended to all the features of landscape which are now alive with individual spirits. Though "many of these [spirits]" (*VL*, p. 186) are the *woge* who have withdrawn into the features of the landscape, they do not account for all of these spirits, which is perhaps Pynchon's most direct engagement with a broad notion of animism.

Research studies (of Yurok traditions in particular) also affirm Pynchon's depiction of the centrality of the river, and note that "the spots which are 'named' are to be found, in the great majority of cases, along the edge of a stream", or that "independent names crowd at the edge of the water".<sup>534</sup> Curiously, in Yurok tradition the river itself often remains nameless, which is perhaps acknowledged by Pynchon in his designation of the river simply as the 'Seventh River', a name that is presumably not Yurok nomenclature.

That the river is acknowledged by both Yurok (a river of ghosts) and non-Yurok (Seventh River) designation is significant given the dual naming traditions that Pynchon outlines. The Yurok custom and the local tavern custom of 86-ing those who name river/its peripheral creatures aloud contributes to the consistent dual quality of the landscape. In the Yurok narrative, past the modern "lights of Vineland", the river is said to take "back its older form" (*VL*, p. 186), suggesting a

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<sup>534</sup> Hunn, p. 19.

much older historical layer, while '86-ing' those who speak the name of the river is evocative of a much more contemporary U.S. setting and geocultural layer. The act of naming punctuates these historical and cultural boundaries, and creates a sense of continuity between a Yurok and non-Yurok understanding of the river and the surrounding environment.

The river therefore can be viewed as a focal point for the interaction of these historical and cultural boundaries, and even allows "city guys" like current residents Vato and Blood to "journey through the realm behind the immediate" (*VL*, p. 186). Like the redwoods, the river is another constant feature that allows navigation between cultural and historical spaces. Like the redwoods also, the river similarly highlights different cultural approaches to and understandings of the landscape of Vineland. However, in this example the river also allows for a confluence of cultural attitudes and beliefs.

In an episode where Vato and Blood take an emergency call to the Thanatoid area of Vineland and follow the river "through the realm behind the immediate", the features of the landscape are described in increasingly less naturalistic terms; the fog becomes "presences", the ferns grow in a way that is "audibl[e]", and the "semivisible" birds call in "nearly human speech" (*VL*, p. 186). Though Pynchon emphasises that Vato and Blood are city guys and should probably be afraid or disorientated by these occurrences, they are instead comfortable with the experience and view it as if they are "returning from some exile of their own" (*VL*, p. 186). While the explicit notion of exile will receive greater attention in the following chapter in the context of Pynchon's conceptions of lost homelands, which will once again draw on the Yurok experience, for now

the emphasis remains on the notion of a return (from exile), developed from Prairie's experience of a return to "a world behind the world she had known all along", and which further substantiates the interaction between Vineland's historical, cultural and ontological layers. This interaction culminates in Vato and Blood's journey through this area, which is in fact characterised by Pynchon as a descent towards Tsorrek, "the world of the dead" (*VL*, p. 186). Appropriately, Tsorrek is the Yurok land of the dead, located below the earth's surface. It is the same land of death into which Brock Vond eventually crosses at the end of the novel, an event that can be understood as a culmination of many of the concerns of the novel, especially those involving ecological relationships.

Brock's crossing into this land is graduated in different layers of Yurok belief that allow the passing of a non-American Indian into a Yurok land of death to be permissible. The passing begins with a story narrated by Vato of "a man from Turip" (*VL*, p. 379) who pursued his lost love into the country of death. This story is likely partially-based on a Yurok belief, which has been transcribed by Alfred Kroeber, in which a similar pattern of following a loved one into the land of death occurs. However, in this adaptation by Pynchon, when the man finds the boat of the boatman who "ferrie[s] the dead across the last river" (*VL*, p. 379), he smashes the boat to pieces, preventing any future deaths in the world as there would be no boat to ferry anyone across to the land of the dead. As well as mediating Brock's death, the descent of a contemporary resident of Vineland into a Yurok realm highlights Pynchon's inclination to blur cultural and ontological distinctions and boundaries. Tsorrek is therefore not confined to the realm of American Indian

belief, but “is as “real” as Vineland itself”<sup>535</sup> in Pynchon’s conception of the geographical space of the novel.

The story, as a literary device in a similar convention to that of a fable, furthermore serves to warn against committing irreversible actions. Pynchon’s use of such narratives, both traditional and fictional, as in Vineland’s Sister Rochelle’s environmental allegory of Hell and Earth, often function in this way, relating contemporary ills or misdeeds within a larger narrative framework.<sup>536</sup> The man from Turip explains that once a person is on the trail leading to Tsorrek “there would be no way to return” (*VL*, p. 379), which serves as a warning in the vein as the *woge*/porpoise tale. However, while this story cautioned that the *woge*/porpoise might return to offer guidance, in Brock’s experience there is no re-education or salvation, but rather simply no return. Unlike Prairie or Vato and Blood’s sense of a return to a world behind the immediate, for Brock the return is negative and is in fact a departure. The notions of return and departure are reversed since Brock is both irredeemable in the *woge*/Yurok paradigm and cannot ‘return’ in the previous sense since he has no experience of the framework in which this return is conceived. His unfamiliarity and disorientation is clear in Pynchon’s depiction of his death, as unlike Vato and Blood who seem versed in the

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<sup>535</sup> Shawn Smith, *Pynchon and History: Metahistorical Rhetoric and Postmodern Narrative Form in the Novels of Thomas Pynchon* (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 125.

<sup>536</sup> Sister Rochelle’s allegory of Earth and Hell has been understood as a meditation on divine and human justice, given the “Unredeemed” state of the “long-forgotten metropolis of Earth”. However, the imagery corruption of the landscape in the form of “asbestos touring cars and RV’s all over the landscape, looking for cheap-labour bargains”, and the realisation of the visitors from Hell that Earth was “just like home, same traffic conditions, unpleasant food, deteriorating environment, and so forth”, also suggests an environmental bent to the allegory, especially given Pynchon’s emerging inclination towards environmental concerns (*VL*, p. 382).

particulars of the descent into Tsorrek, Brock has no prior understanding of this experience.

Brock's separation from this understanding of this layer of Vineland's cultural history can be explained through his representation in the novel. He is the same federal investigator whose actions in enforcing policies of control and surveillance contribute to the emerging "protofascist" landscape of the region that opened this discussion. In addition to implementing the aforementioned CAMP and REX-84 policies, Brock also conducts COINTELPRO investigations at the newly formed The People's Republic of Rock and Roll.<sup>537</sup> These investigations are also based on historical projects designed by the FBI from the mid-1950s to the early 1970s to ""disrupt and destabilize", "cripple", "destroy" or otherwise "neutralize" dissident individuals and political groupings in the United States".<sup>538</sup> Though this activity further reinforces the emerging contemporary political landscape of Vineland and confirms Brock's role in this, there is a specific facet of COINTELPRO that in this context can now be examined in the context of the specific nature of Brock's demise.

Though COINTELPRO operations were formally suspended in 1971, investigators claim that operations against the American Indian Movement "actually continued and even escalated" over the following years.<sup>539</sup> The

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<sup>537</sup> The Republic itself is established from the former College of the Surf, which is found to be "an elaborate land developers' deal from the beginning" and was only "disguised as a gift to the people" (VL, p. 209). Upon discovering this fact, those at the College of the Surf decide to secede from California altogether and create the new Republic. The withdrawal narrative of the novel is again continued here, in the form of a breakaway from a place or establishment that is found to be corrupt. Thus Pynchon creates waves of withdrawal and return, a pattern that is continued in the following discussion of *Inherent Vice*.

<sup>538</sup> Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *The COINTELPRO Papers: Documents from the FBI's Secret Wars Against Domestic Dissent* (Massachusetts: South End Press, 1990), p. 1.

<sup>539</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

implementation of activities that directly attempted to destroy the operations of a movement established to “regain human rights and achieve restitutions and restorations”<sup>540</sup> for American Indians, dictates that Brock cannot, in a Yurok context, be amongst those who can be saved. Instead these actions can be understood as having been countered by a death that involves descending into a specifically American Indian afterworld. In this context, Brock’s death functions as a kind of restitution, or karmic reprimand in Pynchonian terms, implemented by the persisting Yurok presence in the landscape.

Brock’s death by Yurok belief is appropriately characterised by strong landscape imagery. As well as being a culturally and politically retributive action, his death is a very physical process involving not only his bones being removed, as is customary in the Yurok tradition, but also being engulfed by the earth itself. As he descends towards Tsorrek, Brock experiences the physical world around him descending also. Pynchon describes “a wall of earth”, “tree roots twisted overhead”, the ever-darkening mud and, most prominently perhaps, “the sound of the river” (*VL*, p. 379). This physical aspect of his death allows for the land itself to contribute, as once again it is shown to be, not a backdrop for human activity, but an active participant in the historical narrative. Though the redwoods are present in the form of the tree roots, it is the river that comes into prominence here.

In this final depiction, the sound of the river is filled with the sound of voices that are not simply speaking, but are “remembering, speculating, arguing, telling tales, uttering curses, singing songs, all the things voices do” (*VL*, p. 379).

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<sup>540</sup> See ‘Pledge’ of The American Indian Movement, reproduced on *American Indian Movement Grand Governing Council*, last accessed 3 February 2016, <<http://www.aimovement.org/ggc/>>.

Such a depiction cannot be seen only in anthropomorphic terms, as in this context it serves to substantiate ongoing suggestions of the living quality of the landscape. As in the redwoods and the previously discussed other living features of the landscape in the *woge* episode, the river also exhibits functions of consciousness, being capable of expression and emotion, but also of possessing memory. In possessing memory the river is not only alive in the present of the novel, but also is able to bring the past into the present and reinforce the sense of continuity that characterizes the layered history of the region. The importance of this continuity is supported by Pynchon's depiction of the river, which like the redwoods that are 'alive forever' is also animate, as indicated by the myriad expressions it is capable of. In this depiction the river becomes a culmination of the ideas that the landscape itself is a prominent and significant participant in the holistic construction of Vineland.

As is consistent with theories of historical ecology and postcolonial ecocriticism, the river remembers but is also a reminder, both in cautionary and karmic terms, as Brock's death demonstrates, and as is apparent in its continued narrative presence. This persistence of the voices of the river further reiterates the ghostliness of the landscape initiated in the representation of the *woge* chants. Although the river is alive in terms of consciousness, it is also significant to recall that it is, for the Yurok, a 'river a ghosts'. In anticipation of discussions of haunting in the context of *Inherent Vice*, the ghosts in this discussion (as an extension of the *woge* narrative), can be seen as a postcolonial residue in the landscape. However, in the current context of *Vineland*, this ghostliness, especially given its karmic

properties, is immediate evocative of perhaps the most direct confrontation of ghostliness in the novel, the Thanatoids.

### Memory

The existence of the Thanatoid community in *Vineland* has generated extensive debate in Pynchon criticism since the novel's publication. A *Time* magazine review of the novel described the Thanatoids as "a Northern California cult enamoured of death and resentful at still being alive",<sup>541</sup> the *New York Times* review by Salman Rushdie chose the epithet "member of the undead",<sup>542</sup> while the *LA Times* review chose not to tackle the Thanatoid question at all.<sup>543</sup> *The Nation* review, however, investigated further into these oft-debated residents of *Vineland*, characterizing them as an "'unseen insomniac population", refugees from history, residues of memory and victims of "karmic imbalances".<sup>544</sup> Since their initial reception, interpretations and understandings of the Thanatoids have multiplied into more complex and diverse arguments, ranging from the nature of countercultural politics outlined by Madeline Ostrander,<sup>545</sup> to being the medium of outlining death itself, as it is understood in Brian McHale's analysis.<sup>546</sup> For the purposes of this reading however, it is the understanding that the Thanatoids are

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<sup>541</sup> Gray.

<sup>542</sup> Rushdie.

<sup>543</sup> McConnell.

<sup>544</sup> Leonard, p. 281.

<sup>545</sup> See Madeline Ostrander, 'Awakening to the Physical World: Ideological Collapse and Ecofeminist Resistance in *Vineland*', in Niran Abbas, ed., *Thomas Pynchon: Reading From the Margins*, (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2003), p. 125.

<sup>546</sup> See Brian McHale, *Constructing Postmodernism* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 140.

the manifestation of, in Pynchon's own characterization, "what was done to them" that is crucial.

Cyrus K. Patell argues that the Thanatoid presence in *Vineland* "signals the possibility of the restoration of karmic balance through retributive justice".<sup>547</sup> This confrontation of the Thanatoid presence refers to Pynchon's detailing of specific examples of injustice in the novel, such as in the case of Ortho Bob Dulang, another veteran who "had been damaged in Vietnam, in more than one way" and who resolves to restore balance using Takeshi Fumimota's- the novel's insurance and karma adjuster- restorative and retributive practice of "karmic adjustment" (*VL*, p. 174). This balance of being wronged and restored, or injured and avenged, is central to understanding the position of the Thanatoids, not only in the context of *Vineland*, but also in consideration of Pynchon's wider sense of karmic justice, which relates more generally to the political, cultural and environmental ills demonstrated throughout the California trilogy and beyond. While this analysis is useful, especially in consideration of the Yurok and *woge* narratives and the nature of Brock Vond's demise, it is the actual ghostliness of the Thanatoids themselves that perhaps necessitates further attention at this juncture.

The Thanatoids occupy a peripheral space in the geography of *Vineland*, in a village situated "at the confluence of Shade Creek and Seventh River" (*VL*, p. 172). Aside from being occupied by the Thanatoids, the village's proximity to the Seventh River- the Yurok river of ghosts- reinforces its ghostly quality and extends the notion of ghostliness beyond cultural boundaries. There is more than one cultural and ontological sense of ghostliness operation here; the ghostliness

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<sup>547</sup> Patell, p. 132.

evoked in the *woge* narrative that relates to the lack of resolution created by the fact of dispossession and exile, and the ghostliness of the Thanatoids themselves as manifestations of “imbalance and restoration” (*VL*, p. 171). Though these forms of ghostliness are distinct, there is a commonality between them that is most evident once they are situated within the particular geographical region of Vineland. That Pynchon places the residence of Thanatoids at the junction of a river of ghosts and a creek that is by its own designation a ‘shade’ (meaning “disembodied spirit [or] ghost”)<sup>548</sup> creek, is telling of the complexity of the geographical layering of Vineland. In the way that American Indians in Pynchon’s understanding of preterition can be considered ‘doubly’ passed over, the ghostliness of the Thanatoids is similarly compounded.<sup>549</sup>

Shade Creek itself, whilst being suggestively named, is also described as a “psychic jumping-off town” (*VL*, p. 173) that has, significantly, not been fully mapped or incorporated in Vineland County. Instead it is portrayed as being configured of “an austere maze...of alleyways and vacant lots” (*VL*, p. 174). This image of an incomplete or as yet fully realized map contributes to Pynchon’s recurrent engagement with the implications of a blank space on a map or an empty lot.<sup>550</sup>

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<sup>548</sup> See ‘shade’, Def. 5a, *Merriam-Webster*, last accessed 12 May 2015 <<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionar/shade>>.

<sup>549</sup> The status of the Thanatoids themselves in relation to Pynchon’s notion of preterition should perhaps also be considered. Given the accumulative suggested expansion of the qualifying conditions for being considered preterite, it is appropriate that given a similar history of dispossession, albeit in more karmic terms, that the Thanatoids be suggested as potential preterite candidates.

<sup>550</sup> Pynchon’s image of the blank space on the map encourages greater engagement in the following chapter where this idea will be examined in the context of lost, forgotten or destroyed neighbourhoods. The (empty) lot is a similarly recurring image across the California trilogy, not least of all in *Lot 49*, where it occurs in relation to the stamp collection, references to empty car lots and (prophetically perhaps, with a view to *Inherent Vice*) lots of Los Angeles being sold for next to nothing following flooding. Also notable is discussion of Oedipa’s husband Mucho’s car

This notion of mapping that reflects on the limitations of the physical act of mapping can in this context be viewed in light of an extract from *Against the Day*. In this excerpt, mathematics student Kit Traverse, incidentally the uncle of *Vineland's* own Jess Traverse, and Fleetwood Vibe of the *Against the Day* Vibe family, discuss perceptions of the New York City borough of Queens, from a physical vantage point similar to the one from which Zoyd observes Vineland in the previously discussed episode. Having described the physical make-up of this area, Fleetwood goes on to characterize the borough as being “the invisible taking on substance” (*AtD*, p. 184), which is translated in *Vineland* as that “invisible boundary” between past and present states of the region together with the intersection of the spiritual and physical. In his discussion with Kit, Fleetwood further confronts this understanding of geographical boundaries by using the analogy of a map to configure spiritual and physical space. He states that maps are like stories in that they “agree” and are “consistent among too many languages and histories” (*AtD*, p. 184) for them to be coincidental. This representation captures the sense in *Vineland* of the cultural and historical intersections in geographical space. The analogy continues in this vein, stating that the geography of such spaces (in this example, Queens) on maps are always “hidden”, and that the way into them is not obvious as they are “as much spiritual as physical” (*AtD*, p. 184). This idea is also consistent throughout the California trilogy, from Oedipa’s sense of the

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sales lot, the memory of which “had stayed so alarmingly with him for going on five years”. The emptiness of the lot in this sense seems to stem from Mucho’s sense of the endless “trade-ins” of cars that seemed to be “metal extensions of” the people (“poorer than him”) who brought them to the lot compounded by the requirements of salesmanship. However, since he creates a correlation between a person trading a car and trading a “dented, malfunction version of himself for another”, the lot was something that Mucho “believed too much in” (*L49*, p. 8, 9). The existential, even spiritual sense of trade here relates back to Thanatoids as the residue of an imbalance in karmic events and consequences.

spiritual geography of San Narciso, to the impact of the Yurok and redwood presence in *Vineland*, through to the imminently-outlined sacred locations of *Inherent Vice*.

Despite these consistencies and continuations between texts, this extract from *Against the Day* can be most usefully employed in articulating Pynchon's notion of the world behind the world and the sense of returning to this world. Fleetwood continues that should you, in both the physical and spiritual sense, happen upon such a hidden place, "your strongest certainty is not that you have discovered it but returned to it" (*AtD*, p. 184). This notion of the 'revelatory place', to use the terminology of the previously chapter, that is explored in both *Lot 49* and *Vineland* and is evidently a preoccupation of Pynchon's beyond the California trilogy, serves to summarize a space of significance beyond all cultural, historical and geographical distinctions.

It is in this understanding of space that the 'space' of the Thanatoids can now be understood, and moreover how the function of memory within this context can be explored. In concluding his analogy, Fleetwood says that once this certainty of return has been experienced, then "in a single great episode of light, you remember everything" (*AtD*, p. 184). The function of physical and spiritual geography is thus extended from being a return to a 'space' beyond all boundaries and distinctions, to allowing for the memory of 'everything' to be remembered. In this framework, the Thanatoids occupy a space that is typical of this idea, they are peripheral and dwell in a confluence of ghostly space, but are also ghosts themselves, "not living but persisting" (*VL*, p. 173) as the embodiment of embittered memory.

The initial classification of the Thanatoids by Ortho Bob, as being “like death only different” (*VL*, p. 170) is later elaborated on by Pynchon who considers “what was a Thanatoid at the end of the long dread day, but memory?” (*VL*, p. 325) This is most directly evident in the very manifestation of the Thanatoid, resulting from a past misdeed, wrongdoing or “that which was done to them”, however in this elaboration Pynchon questions that rather than being the result or by-product of the misdeed, the Thanatoids are actually the embodiment of memory itself.

In the case of perhaps the most prominent Thanatoid of the novel-Weed Atman, a mathematics professor/accidental “campus revolutionary” (*VL*, p. 189) - the narrative is filled with allusions to remembering. Having been targeted by Brock Vond through Frenesi as part of COINTELPRO activities in the College of the Surf, Weed is “gunned down in an alley” (*VL*, p. 188) by an ally and co-revolutionary. It is by way of Frenesi’s betrayal in suggesting that Weed is an FBI plant working against the activist causes of the Colleges that his death occurs, and it is made explicit that he “still feels rilly bitter” (*VL*, p. 188) about his death and Frenesi’s involvement. This sense of bitterness seems to logically account for Weed’s persistence as a Thanatoid, however it is in the continued references to memory and remembering in particular that the Thanatoid state can be more usefully understood.

Weed claims that he has attempted to “maybe forget, but never forgive” (*VL*, p. 365), and emphasizes the need for retribution and justice for his death over the memory of the actual death itself. Pynchon however, in Weed’s own narrative, foreground the state of remembering, and the persistence of memories relating to his current state. Weed describes a dream in which he is on a moving train,

witnessing his own autopsy. The autopsy, performed by two travelling companions who champion Weed's need for justice, confirms the murderous cause of his death. Upon hearing the dream, Prairie, perhaps through proxy guilt, suggests that these ambiguous companions might be female ninja Darryl Louise Chastain (DL) and Takeshi, who could, beyond the framework of the dream, perform the karmic adjustment on Weed that would redress his "unanswered blows" and "unredeemed suffering" (VL, p. 173). While Weed instead imagines the companions to be his parents "looking out for [him] on the unwavering belief in "some 'high justice'", the emphasis should perhaps instead be on Pynchon's understanding of these figures (VL, p. 365). They are described as "remembrancers" (VL, p. 173), or those who remind another of something, which once again shifts focus from the cause or perpetrator to that which remains beyond these details. It is the memory of the act that Weed has now come to represent that prevails here.

In the most literal sense, Weed is for those around him a physical memory of the events leading up to and resulting in his death. However, as well as being a manifestation of this memory, Weed also remembers, expressing that he had "too much still on [his] mind" to transition from the Thanatoid state; he is a "cell of memory" (as in the Thanatoid state), but also persists only as his memory (VL, p. 365). This intensifies the significance of memory in relation to both the Thanatoids, and more generally, with notions of an active landscape in mind, the more prevalent sense of geohistory.

The persistence of the Thanatoids as memory relates to the ongoing question of how the landscape of Vineland itself functions. If memory in this

context can be summarized as that which remains of an experience, then Vineland County can also be viewed according to this understanding. The construction of Vineland from its configuration by the earliest Yurok (or *woge*) inhabitants to the contemporary infrastructure that Pynchon presents in his overview of the region might have changed and developed according to historical, cultural, spiritual and ecological factors, but the landscape itself records these changes and developments as a physical reminder what that which the region has experienced. Vineland might have acquired “extensions and outbuildings, got wired and rewired, plumbed and replumbed” (*VL*, p. 107), but this can also be measured as the landscape being both a geographical record of the histories of the area and a manifestation of the continuity between the earliest and most recent times of its inhabitation.

As Pynchon’s presentation of the redwoods demonstrates, the landscape is crucial to shaping these histories as an active participant, but also functions as a sort of residue of these events. That its features are both imbued with *woge* spirit and “Reagan-ridden” is testament to the landscape’s role in creating a sense of continuity and in contributing to the collective memory of the area. If the Thanatoids are, in the simplest terms, memory, then the landscape too can be seen as the prevailing and persisting memory of Vineland.

## CHAPTER THREE: *INHERENT VICE*

**“The geography is as much spiritual as physical”**

### **Blueprint**

A return from redwood country finds Pynchon once again in a more metropolitan setting, namely the Southlands of California, and specifically Gordita Beach, where the narrative action of *Inherent Vice* takes place. This relocation necessitates a different geographical focus, which in turn generates a different emphasis for some of Pynchon’s recurring concerns surrounding alternative ways of living and ecological relations. The passage from *Lot 49* to *Vineland*, through to *Inherent Vice* can be understood as a progression and development of some of these recurring concerns, especially in relation to how geographical space is navigated and formulated in cultural and spiritual terms. As an extension of and independent contribution to this dialogue, *Inherent Vice* poses different questions relating to these concerns, and offers alternative geographical constructions through which they can be addressed.

One of the most important cultural and spiritual spaces of *Inherent Vice* can be found in Pynchon’s presentation of the neighbourhood. The reformulation of the idea of the neighbourhood is most pronounced in Pynchon’s Channel View Estates, a fictional real estate development which foregrounds some of the physical and ethical processes involved in the construction of a space that is both domestic and social, but also relates to the surrounding environment.

However, the specific concerns of Channel View Estate should perhaps be offered some historical and geographically-related counterpoints that help inform

a reading a Pynchon's own construction. The metropolitan area of Greater Los Angeles, together with textual indicators from Pynchon, offer a few examples of historical neighbourhood redevelopment and city planning projects that contextualize and geographically locate some of Pynchon's concerns. The 1960s redevelopment of Bunker Hill in Downtown Los Angeles and the intended redevelopment of Chavez Ravine in Sulphur Canyon, L.A. are perhaps the most prominent modules for a neighbourhood-oriented discussion and exemplify similar philosophical concerns related to ideas of community space versus civic space.

Once again, the focus group of this discussion of constructions of the neighbourhood are those who Pynchon suggests are most affected by these changes and developments, or to use the emphasis of the previous chapter, those who are displaced. Bunker Hill and Chavez Ravine are historically American Indian and Mexican-American neighbourhoods respectively, while Channel View Estates supplants an African-American neighbourhood. The added urban dislocation of these ethnic and cultural groups of peoples is perhaps another contributing factor to the condition of preterition, which can be seen to characterize these communities in a Pynchonian conception of contemporary U.S. society.

The history of these developments is prefaced by some notable contemporary theories of urban development, including historical and fictional examples directly referenced by Pynchon. Channel View Estates is, for example framed in one sense as a "Mickey Wolfmann Concept" (*IV*, p. 9), Pynchon's real estate mogul with ties to the Aryan Brotherhood, who is responsible for Channel

View Estates, which is comprised of “houses for peckerwood prices, shopping mall, some shit” (IV, p. 17), and is in this respect the notional (and aptronymical) big bad, is also conceptually responsible for a utopian community space modelled on quasi-countercultural ideas of free housing. It is therefore crucial that the theoretical aspect of the discussion is appropriately contextualized, especially given the 1970’s staging of the novel at the intersection of countercultural freedom and co-option. This theoretical aspect of the discussion is also then developed later on in material examples, such as in Pynchon’s interest in alternative living spaces and configurations, from historically informed examples to those motivated by lost world narratives.

This discussion begins then with an examination of some of the contextual theories and philosophies of urban development and social organisation that are suggestive of the conflicting and contradictory motivations of Mickey Wolfmann, with a view to introducing Pynchon’s notions and formulations of the outcomes of these ideas.

### **Urban Ideals and Realized Spaces**

In her seminal work *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961),<sup>551</sup> Jane Jacobs argues against the kind of modern urban development that rejects the interconnected quality that characterizes great cities. Jacobs’ treatise is written in opposition to “the kind of large-scale, bulldozing government intervention in city planning associated with historical city planner, Robert Moses”.<sup>552</sup> Indeed, Jacobs

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<sup>551</sup> Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1993).

<sup>552</sup> Jacobs, p. viii.

was Moses' "main counterpart" who as a civic activist "successfully challenged his projects".<sup>553</sup> His urban development philosophy receives similar reception from Pynchon who summarizes his unilateral approach as "once you get that first stake driven, nobody can stop you" (*IV*, p. 58). This direct reference to Moses, the professed 'Master Builder' instrumental in the redevelopment of New York in the mid twentieth century, initiates a discussion of the kind of voracious and obliterating urban redevelopment tactics that characterize Moses' approach. Using Jacobs' assessment here, not only of Moses, but also of urban planning and development more generally serves to continue the dialogue between these diametrically opposed positions. While Moses is forever connected with New York, not California, Pynchon's use of Moses is more is perhaps more tactical and is a direct contribution to the debate around one of the most polarizing figures in the civic history of the United States. The ongoing effect of Moses' approach continues to be debated, as Pynchon's contribution suggests, once a project like this has begun, it cannot be stopped.

This effect is both physical, as maps provided by Robert A. Caro in his biography of Moses *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (1974) illustrate, as well as social and cultural, as Caro also explains.<sup>554</sup> In his analysis of the redevelopment of this city, Caro contends that Moses failed to understand or consider the needs of a specific city neighbourhood, which led to both the "neighborhoods [being] obliterated" and the eviction of "hundreds of

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<sup>553</sup> 'Robert Moses', *The New York Preservation Archive Project*, last accessed 17 July 2016, <<http://www.nypap.org/preservation-history/robert-moses/>>.

<sup>554</sup> Robert A. Caro, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (London: The Bodley Head, 2015).

thousands [of people] from their homes”<sup>555</sup>, as well as a disruption of “that delicate balance of humanity that was a city neighbourhood ingredients”.<sup>556</sup> The inevitable ensuing destruction of the traditional character of both the physical and cultural traditional neighbourhood, following the Moses approach, will be further examined in relation to both Pynchon’s historical and fictional models of urban redevelopment.

At this stage, the ethics of urban planning perhaps warrant further attention, especially in the attempt to establish a theoretical contextual base for the concerns of *Inherent Vice*. In his introductory exploration of the politics of artifacts and their arrangement, ‘Do Artifacts Have Politics?’ (1980),<sup>557</sup> Langdon Winner analyses some examples in American infrastructure that demonstrate a deliberate social or economic motive in their design or configuration.<sup>558</sup> Winner’s explanation of the politics of artifacts is two-pronged, artifacts that are “inherently political”, and those where the “invention, design or arrangement or a specific technical device or system becomes a way of settling an issue in a particular community”.<sup>559</sup> Though the first prong, with the most prominent example being the atom bomb, may lend itself to some of the anxiety around the political management and dispersal of nuclear technology expressed in Pynchon’s ‘Is it O.K. to Be a Luddite?’, it is the second prong of Winner’s argument that is most relevant to this present analysis of Pynchon’s social landscape. Winner also uses Moses to

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<sup>555</sup> Caro, p. 7.

<sup>556</sup> *Ibid.*, 479.

<sup>557</sup> Langdon Winner, ‘Do Artifacts Have Politics?’, *Daedalus*, 109/1 (1980), pp. 121,136.

<sup>558</sup> The term artifact, according to Winner’s usage, denotes the product of some kind of deliberate technological design. Examples that Winner uses most prominently are infrastructural features, such as bridges or thoroughfares that can be arranged or designed in such a way for a particular purpose or motive, or something like the atom bomb, which he suggests is the most obvious example of an (inherently political) artifact.

<sup>559</sup> Winner, p. 123.

illustrate the ethics of city planning, and cites his New York “roads, parks, bridges, and other public works from the 1920s to the 1970s” as examples of social engineering through technological manipulation and arrangement.<sup>560</sup> He describes how the “low-hanging overpasses”<sup>561</sup> on Long Island were deliberately designed in this way so as to prevent buses being able to drive in parkways since they could not fit through the overpasses. Since buses were primarily the mode of transportation used by African-American residents and ‘poor people’, Winner argues that in manipulating the height of the overpasses, Moses deliberately restricted access to Jones Beach (a public park) to “racial minorities and low-income groups”,<sup>562</sup> thus controlling and directing the movement and mobility of certain social groups in particular area.

This kind of configuration of public space in social and racial terms is perhaps obliquely referenced in *Inherent Vice* when Doc comments on the appearance of a black man “spotted west of the Harbor Freeway” (*IV*, p. 14). Though he observes this is an occasional occurrence, it is rare for a black person to be seen “this far out of the usual range” and that usually this sort of sighting would provoke a police response (*IV*, p. 14). The idea of racially distinguished areas is perhaps not uncommon in contemporary urban spaces, however, the suggestion of perceived parameters and consequences for having been understood as breaching these implied boundaries inevitably invokes ideas of segregation. This demonstration of the political configuration of community will become further apparent in Pynchon’s analysis of the communities and civic space

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<sup>560</sup> Winner, p. 123.

<sup>561</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

<sup>562</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.

in Los Angeles, however it is important at this stage to emphasize the specific idea of purposeful arrangement in urban redevelopment.

It is possible to view Jacobs' objections as being similarly focused. Her opposition is largely to the destruction of the life-force of the city itself, which is viewed in terms of an ecosystem that supports and nurtures the connected components that contribute to physical, economic and ethically sustainable living. This "complex interdepend[ence] of components" allows for a balance in city living and promotes social and economic vitality.<sup>563</sup> Unsurprisingly, Jacobs then objects to the kind of development principle that sectionalizes the cohesive whole of the city and creates pockets of 'use' instead of allowing for an intermingling of work, leisure, industrial and nature areas. Jacobs advocated a "place-based, community-centered approach to urban planning",<sup>564</sup> in -keeping with the notion of the city as a cohesive ecosystem, which deters disparate and separate districts with singular, insular purposes. It is an arrangement philosophy that unifies instead of compartmentalizes. In a pattern similar to that opposed by Jacobs, Pynchon depicts a heightened example of the 'separation of uses' that occurs as a result of this approach to modern urban renewal. In his illustration, the process of sectioning and separating is so rigorous that even trees cannot be assimilated into areas and districts that have been designed for different purposes other than accommodating trees, and thus are instead contained within a distinct "Tree Section" (IV, p. 6) in the more suburban part of town. The distinctiveness of the trees is also perhaps more pronounced given the location of this suburban part of

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<sup>563</sup> Jacobs, p. xvii.

<sup>564</sup> 'Jane Jacobs', *Project for Public Spaces*, last accessed 5 May 2016, <<http://www.pps.org/reference/jjacobs-2/>>.

town. Described as being situated “down the boulevard on the other side of the dunes”, this suburban area, with its “houses, yards and [namesake] trees” (IV, p. 6), also seems to contrast with a more arid surrounding, connoted by the dunes. The trees then are both a marker of this section, but also more inadvertently highlight the artificiality of this arrangement.

The inspiration for Pynchon’s Tree Section can perhaps be found in the historical Tree Sections Homes of Manhattan Beach, the suggested inspiration for the novel’s Gordita Beach. This area, described as “one of the most desirable neighborhoods in Manhattan Beach to raise a family”<sup>565</sup> is appropriately both plentiful with trees and named after the street names of the area: Oak, Elm, Walnut, Maple, Pine, Laurel, Palm etc. Though this neighbourhood is important as possible source material for *Inherent Vice*, its historical redevelopment is also comparable with the pattern of urban planning outlined by Pynchon in his voiceover for the trailer for the film adaptation of *Inherent Vice*. As Pynchon explains, the Tree Section of Manhattan Beach, as with Gordita Beach, has also gone “high rise, high rent, high intensity”,<sup>566</sup> consisting of modest bungalows in the late 1940s to mid,1950s, which were then replaced with “multi story homes designed to maximize the liveable square footage permitted on the lot”.<sup>567 568</sup>

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<sup>565</sup> Janie Sue Nagy, ‘Tree Section’, *Best Manhattan Beach Homes* (2013), last accessed 4 July 2015, <<http://www.bestmanhattanbeachhomes.com/trees/htm>>.

<sup>566</sup> *Inherent Vice* book promo video.

<sup>567</sup> Nagy.

<sup>568</sup> Here the idea of the lot is developed slightly from the previous chapter’s engagement with this crucial space in Pynchon’s work. The lot in this related material is framed in a much more physical sense, however, the idea of something being ‘permitted’ on the lot contributes to the more karmic aspects of Pynchon’s notion of the physical and conceptual space. This relates not only to ideas of agency of the land itself as discussion in the previous chapter, but will also contribute to later discussions of what the land can be seen to allow or, to the contrary, forbid.

It is the 'intensity' that Jacobs also most adamantly objects to. It is not simply the principle of sectionalizing or the 'districtization' of the city that is problematic in her outlook, but rather that the material consequences of these processes destroy the viability and vitality of the city, and create an untenable living environment. Her list of examples of this kind of intensification in use-orientated areas illustrates how potential problems become exaggerated, or even that the indented use of the area in fact fails to materialize. For example, that "low-income project...become worse centres of delinquency" and "middle income housing projects [become] marvels of dullness and regimentation"<sup>569</sup> both highlight how the separation of different economic groups of people exacerbates implied problems already related to these respective groups. Meanwhile, that "cultural centres...are unable to support a good bookstore"<sup>570</sup> emphasizes that the intensity or concentration of a singular purpose in one specific area actually fails to produce that intention.

This process is amplified by Jacobs' imagery, which is focused on the diseased quality of the modernist city,<sup>571</sup> where "galloping gangrene infects" the population and creates suspicion and tension between the physically divided groups of people.<sup>572</sup> Pynchon's description of Channel View Estate is somewhat consistent with this idea of disease as he uses the designation "urban blight" (*IV*, p. 347) to characterize its condition.<sup>573</sup> Pynchon's epithets for this housing

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<sup>569</sup> Jacobs, p. 6.

<sup>570</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>571</sup> Modernist, in this context, refers to post Second World War architecture of the 1950s and 1960s.

<sup>572</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>573</sup> The characterization of a geographical space as diseased is also found in Pynchon's description of *Lot 49's* San Narciso as an "infected city". As previous discussions suggest, the implications of this are different in this earlier usage, however it is noteworthy that both texts of the trilogy are

development continue in this theme of affliction; it is also “an assault on the environment” and a “chipboard horror” (*IV*, p. 8). While the ecological dimension of this assault will be more extensively addressed in later discussions, the image of the “chipboard horror” can be examined at this stage in relation to both Jacobs’ argument and Pynchon’s understanding of the added social implications of these kinds of divided and divisive developments.

As a cheap and easy to use building material, chipboard is suggestive of a certain approach to house building and moreover an attitude towards the implied market for these houses. This is clarified as Channel View Estates is said to have been designed to provide the Mickey Wolfmann product of “houses for peckerwood prices, shopping malls, some shit” (*IV*, p. 17). These kinds of objectives typify a flagrant disregard for both the quality of the development and the intended homeowners. These are not quality homes in the tradition of the craftsmanship of the houses of Vineland, but are instead unsubstantial and impermanent structures with a limited lifespan. The transience of these developments is emphasized in the added imagery of “the skeletons of new construction” (*IV*, p. 20), which implies that they are not developing and maturing projects but rather that they are already dead.

Where Jacobs’ depicts “amputated areas”,<sup>574</sup> suggesting that these parts have been cut off from the greater body of the city, Pynchon imagines “unincorporated wastes” (*IV*, p. 20), parts that have never been included in the cohesive whole, but instead have been excluded and forgotten. In etymological

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consistent in the ideas that space can become diseased or blighted, which emphasizes the subjectivity of the environment.

<sup>574</sup> Jacobs, p. 6.

terms, being (un)incorporated originally relates to ideas of the body.<sup>575</sup> That Pynchon chooses this word evokes this thesis' broader ideas of the subjectivity of the landscape, but also suggests a correlation between the body and environmental spaces that will come to prominence as this argument develops. In this context, these "unincorporated wastes" are the product of creating self-serving districts and artificial neighbourhoods. However, the idea of exclusion can also be traced to *Lot 49's* San Narciso, which is both a blueprint of a sectionalized city in its material geography ("less an identifiable city than a grouping of concepts, census tracts, special purpose bond-issue districts, shopping nuclei" (*L49*, p. 14)) and the ephemeral city (with no "barriers" between person and the landscape (*L49*, p. 122)). Unlike the delineation of Channel View Estates, "San Narciso had no boundaries. No one yet knew how to draw them" (*L49*, p. 123). As opposed to creating "unincorporated wastes" San Narciso instead suggests "true continuity" (*L49*, p. 123). The city of *Lot 49* can therefore be "assumed back" into the rest of the land, and as the derivation of incorporation implies, can also become a part of Oedipa without recognizing any boundaries. In this sense of the dynamic of (un)incorporation, San Narciso becomes the incorporated city since this landscape has been conditioned to "accept [the city] among its most tender flesh without a reflect or a cry" (*L49*, p. 125).

In contrast, Channel View Estates is particularly isolated from the rest of the region, situated past Artesia Boulevard, beyond the urban tracts where the city gives way to "haze and the soft smell of the fog component of smog" (*IV*, p. 14), to "the desert beneath the pavement" of the novel's epigraph. However, while the

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<sup>575</sup> See 'incorporate', Def. 1, *Online Etymology Dictionary*, last accessed 8 August 2015, <<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=incorporate>>.

development is situated away from an urban setting, this area is no natural idyll. Far from being suggestive of the metaphorical “under the paving-stones, the beach” promise,<sup>576</sup> the site of Channel View Estates is “unincorporated” because it has already been wasted. Pynchon’s notion of ‘wastes’ in this context operates in the same way as John Beck’s conception of waste in *Dirty Wars: Landscape, Power and Waste in Western American Literature* (2009).<sup>577</sup> As Beck details, “waste is that which is removed and discarded in the process of making something”.<sup>578</sup> Using the work of sociologist Zygmunt Bauman to explain this, Beck proposes that waste is therefore an “indispensable ingredient in the creative process”.<sup>579</sup> Though the nature of waste can be both “divine and satanic”, his definition encompasses any and all products of the process of waste creation, including human beings.<sup>580</sup> In the most literal sense, the wastes of Channel View Estates are those portions of the landscape that have been discarded in the development process, however, in accordance with Beck’s more original definition, which includes removed inhabitants that have been “displaced in order to install the invisible machine of production”,<sup>581</sup> they have more pertinent social implications. This social aspect will become more prominent as Channel View Estates becomes contextualized alongside Bunker Hill and Chavez Ravine. But for now, the definition of waste in geographical terms as “the erased information”<sup>582</sup> from the visibly represented landscape, is useful in navigating Pynchon’s depiction of Channel View Estates.

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<sup>576</sup> Pynchon’s epigraph is a reference to the slogan cited above, which dates from the 1968 Paris student riots.

<sup>577</sup> John Beck, *Dirty Wars: Landscape, Power and Waste in Western American Literature* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009).

<sup>578</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>579</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>580</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>581</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>582</sup> Beck, p. 128.

The desert, though present in smell, has been paved over, the fog is smothered in smog, and as the use of chipboard suggests, the building materials and methods of this construction are not sympathetic with the surrounding landscape. Hardpan, a material product of the repeated ploughing of the soil, traffic and pollution, and one which prevents natural drainage and plant growth, has been used to pave over the desert. Similarly, “fill, regrading, trash of industrial ventures that either won or failed”, that includes the aforementioned smog, further contribute to the wasted condition of this site.<sup>583</sup> The ‘waste’ aspect here is Beck’s “erased information”, that which is a discarded by-product, but which remains in negation as a document of this process. As a more pointed example of this, the process of regrading which Pynchon directly references, changes the natural topography of the landscape through the raising or lowering of the levels of land. The regraded area is therefore an unnatural configuration of the landscape and also creates areas of waste beyond the immediate section of use. The development is thus not only “amputated” from the rest of the city in Jacobs’ terms, but has also created a negative space of waste, according to Beck’s understanding.

In addition to the impact on the landscape into which they have been built, the artificiality and insubstantiality of the Estates is further developed in the description of the houses themselves. They are “more or less Spanish Colonial”, and have “not-necessarily-load-bearing little balconies” (*IV*, p. 20). The implications of “Spanish Colonial” is significant in a general context of settlement and inhabitation since this style is the architectural expression of the mission

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<sup>583</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

movement in the Americas, namely the “Franciscan religious zeal and managerial ability” in the conversion of American Indians to Christianity.<sup>584</sup> As the previous chapter delineated the architecture of Reaganism, Channel View Estates can be seen to boast the building designs of colonialism in the Americas. Additionally, in its present revival expression, the term colonial is also loaded with more recent developments, which will be detailed in turn, given that the Estates are built on a former African-American neighbourhood which was bulldozed aside during its construction.

Though the red-tile roofs of this revival style are meant to suggest “higher-priced towns like San Clemente or Santa Barbara” (*IV*, p. 20), the latter of which was rebuilt after the 1925 earthquake in a homogenous Spanish Colonial Revival Style, it is clear from Pynchon’s description that it is only an illusion of quality and substance that is being created. That the Estates are also replicating the style of a town which is itself reproducing a style is also evidence of layers of artificiality and insubstantiality that characterize this development. While various histories contribute to the layered quality of Vineland, this neighbourhood is composed of faux history, based on revival, replication and transplantation, especially in conditions of conflict or disaster. The “not-necessarily-load-bearing little balconies” (*IV*, p. 20) are therefore not equipped either structurally or in terms of bearing the weight of the historical implications that their architectural style suggests. Accordingly, since it is also not the ‘Tree Section’, and is therefore unable to incorporate trees into its defined parameters, there is “so far [not] a shade tree in sight” (*IV*, p. 20). However, though there is a suggestion that this might not

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<sup>584</sup> Rexford Newcomb, *Spanish-Colonial Architecture in The United States*, (New York: Dover Publications, 1990), p. 20.

always be the case, the fact that if there were trees they would be 'shade trees', a tree grown specifically for its shade, further highlights the affectedness and utilitarian methods of the construction.

Jacobs' fears about the 'separation of uses' that characterises the construction values of the modernist city, is indeed apparent and exemplified in Channel View Estates. The impulse to divide and sectionalise is in direct conflict with her own ethos that values a cohesive, interdependent system where "new buildings have been sensitively inserted among old ones"<sup>585</sup> and neighbourhoods can sustain a diversity of uses. Channel View Estates can therefore be seen as the anti-Jacobsean ideal, where the ethics of both architectural mindfulness and sensitivity to community have been ignored in the pursuit of building cheap housing at any environmental or social cost.

The contextual imperative behind Jacobs' 1961 work is especially apparent in the idea of interconnectedness and interdependence. Her ideal city is a composite of complexity and chaos, where work, life and leisure occur together in mixed-use neighbourhoods. In this sense, Jacobs' city is built upon the same principles that guided emerging spiritual ideas during this period, especially in terms of understanding the importance of connectedness itself as being essential to a rounded and multi-faceted spiritual outlook or belief system. Jacobs' city can therefore be understood as a blueprint of this kind of interconnection.

This construct of a city is certainly contextually supported in that it rejects notions of individualism in favour of a communal operation. Where a district is

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<sup>585</sup> Jacobs, p. xiv.

created solely for industry, or solely for commerce, it fractures the community space and the interconnected and multi-functional quality of the neighbourhood. Furthermore, if, as in Jacob's view, the city is an ecosystem, then the very notion of divide is contrary and detrimental to its driving life-force. Pynchon's depiction of "commotion and ruin" (*IV*, p. 19) in the early 1970s urban redevelopment then seems to be the result of the urban planning principles that Jacobs warned against in 1961. However, rather than focusing on the effects of these urban redevelopments principles on the city as an entity in itself, Pynchon's novel places an emphasis on the human consequences and costs of the development and furthermore, elaborates and expands upon Jacobs' notion of diversity.

Jacobs' definition of diversity seems centred on the structural principles of the city. She argues that this kind of diversity is essential to a fully-functioning and sustainable neighbourhood, but also emphasises that it should be developed "organically over time".<sup>586</sup> Pynchon's understanding of diversity seems to extend to the population of the city as well as the kinds of uses of the neighbourhood, an aspect that Jacobs does not focus on, even at a time when urban Americans experienced increasing issues racial inequalities. By evoking historical examples of urban redevelopment that highlight population management or control the segregation, arrangement or removal of people, in addition to reconfiguring physical spaces, Pynchon uncovers further fundamentally destructive and disturbing outcomes of city planning.

Channel View Estates, it seems, is not an isolated, or indeed purely imagined case of a city redevelopment project causing the disruption, disaffection

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<sup>586</sup> Jacobs, p. xvi.

and dispossession of its population, but is yet another example of what Pynchon recognizes as the “long, sad history of L.A. land use” (*IV*, p. 17). The Los Angeles of *Inherent Vice* is Pynchon’s focus city, with Gordita Beach as a satellite, and much attention given to the development history of specific districts and suburbs of Greater L.A.. Pynchon chronicles this history through recalling the effect of these development projects on particular populations in the city and thus the “long, sad history of L.A. land use” reads as a list of the dispossessed of L.A., or as Pynchon observes in his essay on the L.A. neighbourhood of Watts, “the poor, the defeated, the criminal, the desperate”.<sup>587</sup> While this contributes to establishing a broader understanding of preterition, that the narrative associated with this status can also be found in Pynchon’s non-fiction writing serves to both historicize and localize instances of preterition in a California context at a specify point in history. Pynchon’s longstanding concern with Watts, or “Raceriotland”,<sup>588</sup> as a sort of crucible of inequality and segregation, especially in racial terms, seems to have been revisited in *Inherent Vice*. While this essay focuses on the black-white social and geographical divide of the city in light of the 1965 riots and the fatal police shooting of the unarmed African-American resident Leonard Deadwyler, Pynchon’s sense of those impacted by racial inequality in the city and its surrounds is developed to include other communities, as well as African-American communities. What remains a political and social concern is however focused in *Inherent Vice* on the specific arrangement of these communities in this area. The precedent for this particular emphasis and manifestation of inequality and discrimination can perhaps be traced to the language of *Watts*, with its imagery of

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<sup>587</sup> Pynchon, ‘Watts’.

<sup>588</sup> *Ibid.*

waste, abandoned lots, urban sprawl, the remnants of industry and smog that seem to remerge in the later novel. This imagery can then be understood as an intersection of Pynchon's ecological concerns, and in this context, the more pronounced concern with how the landscape is used to control and manipulate neighbourhoods.

The history of L.A. land use is therefore defined in terms of its residents and as such is characterized in terms of people. This history instead chronicles "Mexican families bounced out of Chavez Ravine to build Dodger Stadium, American Indians swept out of Bunker Hill for the Music Centre", and most recently, Pynchon's own addition, which has seen "Tariq's (Khalil, an ex-con turned black militant) neighbourhood bulldozed aside for Channel View Estates" (*IV*, p. 17). The emphasis here is on the removal of a group of people, often a minority population within the greater population of Los Angeles, for the purposes of commercial development. Once again the landscape imagery is vital in establishing the total impact of these developments. Tariq's neighbourhood, for example, formerly the home of an African-American community, is on his return described as being gone. Not only his community (in the form of his old street gang) gone, but also that even "the turf itself" has been "grind...up into li'l pieces" with "seagulls all pickin at in" (*IV*, p. 16). Though this is suggestive of a dump site in physical terms, it also speaks to the developers' attitude towards these residents.

Pynchon's summary of these historical (and fictional) instances reads as a before and after, or perhaps more appropriately, cause and effect list. His focus is on the displacement of the people of these communities and the given political or

economic reason for this displacement. This presentation does not allow for any nuance or interpretation as to the reasons behind these developments but simply sets up a dichotomy between those who were present before and that which has replaced them. The actualization of these acts of displacement as part of the urban regeneration process or housing redevelopment projects is presented by Pynchon through direct references to historical examples, the first of which can now be addressed in relation to both Channel View Estates and a broader view of land development in California.

### **Community Histories: Chavez Ravine**

On the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the construction of Dodgers Stadium in 2012, *Los Angeles Times* reporter Hector Becerra reminds readers of “bitter memories of Chavez Ravine”.<sup>589</sup> The article remembers Chavez Ravine through the recollections and memories of the Santillan family, former residents of the neighbourhood, as well as providing a brief timetable of the events that turned the community at Chavez Ravine into the home of the transplanted Los Angeles Dodgers.<sup>590</sup> Though the article provides some background to the Santillan family’s story, the history of the redevelopment of Chavez Ravine can be traced back to the 1940s in the work of modernist architect Richard Neutra.

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<sup>589</sup> Hector Becerra, ‘Decades Later, Bitter Memories of Chavez Ravine’, *Los Angeles Times* (5 April 2012), last accessed 4 January 2015, <<http://articles.latimes.com/2012/apr/05/local/la-me-adv-chavez-ravine,20120405>>.

<sup>590</sup> The Los Angeles Dodgers had been formerly known, before moving across the country in 1958, as the Brooklyn Dodgers. The team has been established in 1884 in Brooklyn, New York and as such had been recognized according to this geographic moniker.

In 1942, Neutra was commissioned to design the Channel Heights Housing Project in San Pedro Harbour in order to house thousands of shipyard workers.<sup>591</sup> The philosophy behind this project was affordable, sustainable community housing that was sympathetic to its setting, a philosophy that would be echoed later in Jacobs' 1961 treatise. Channel Heights was a successful enterprise and consisted of "[a] shopping centre, schools and community buildings", as well as "apartment buildings, each costing less than \$3000".<sup>592</sup> Moreover, as well as providing an "ideal solution to a housing emergency", the apartment units and community building were built in a "fine response" to their hilly surrounding, and used suitable building materials such as the native redwood and stucco.<sup>593</sup> The principles and design of Channel Heights was much of the reason behind appointing Neutra to work on redeveloping Chavez Ravine, since he would bring much of the "spirit of Channel Heights to the centre of Los Angeles".<sup>594</sup> Although similar in name, and perhaps not coincidentally, Channel Heights and Pynchon's Channel View clearly do not share the same building ethos.

Channel View, advertised as 'a Michael Wolfmann Concept' with Wolfmann himself as being responsible for yet another "assault on the environment", does indeed also boast low-cost housing, but without any of the sympathy to setting or community that Channel Heights strives for. Even in name, the transition from 'Heights' to 'View' suggests less ambition in the latter project. While 'Heights' connotes vertical or upwards progression, 'View' implies a more passive or

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<sup>591</sup> Thomas. S Hines, 'Housing Baseball and Creeping Socialism: The Battle of Chavez Ravine, Los Angeles, 1949,1959', *The Journal of Urban History*, 8 (1982).

<sup>592</sup> Hines, 'The Battle of Chavez Ravine', p. 126.

<sup>593</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>594</sup> *Ibid.*

complacent action that is perhaps more appropriate given that the intended audience of the development who night after night will only horizontally “gaze tubeward” (*IV*, p. 22). The gaze here, directed towards the tube, and is also inward facing, contained and very much directed within the house itself. This is perhaps another consequence of the lack of interaction with and assimilation into the outside world, and characterizes a suburbanization process that in addition to producing waste also wastes human energy and potential. With Tariq’s neighbourhood destroyed and its residents disbanded, the transplanted new homeowners of Channel View Estates seem to lack the outwards-reaching view of an established community.<sup>595</sup>

Neutra’s assessment of Chavez Ravine as a “315 acre parcel of hilly, wooded and picturesquely ‘rural’ land very near the centre of downtown Los Angeles”,<sup>596</sup> which had been targeted among eleven southern California sites to be redeveloped into public housing under Truman’s National Housing Act of 1949, was based on his own observations of both the land and its population. Though the neighbourhood had long been branded a “slum” due to “substandard buildings”, a characterisation echoed by Neutra, his assessment of the vitality of the neighbourhood was distinctly less disapproving. Neutra observed “a certain human warmth and pleasantness...a certain contact with nature in this slum which cannot be found in Harlem, New York or along South Halsted Street, Chicago”<sup>597</sup>, a depiction which is clearly sympathetic to the relationship between

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<sup>595</sup> Wolfmann’s ties to the Aryan Brotherhood also serve to undermine any possibility of an integrated community.

<sup>596</sup> Hines, ‘The Battle of Chavez Ravine’, p. 123.

<sup>597</sup> Thomas S. Hines, *Richard Neutra and the Search for Modern Architecture* (California: University of California Press, 1994), p. 226.

the landscape and its residents, and one which he attempted to sustain at least in the planning stages of his housing project.

A mostly Mexican-American neighbourhood, Chavez Ravine possessed a strong Roman Catholic spirit with “lively street life” and “the mañana ambience of a rather harmless abandon”<sup>598</sup>. The neighbouring Elysian Park, after which the redeveloped Chavez Ravine was to be renamed, was planted with eucalyptus trees, of which Neutra was particularly fond. Though the redevelopment was designed to address the larger housing crisis in L.A., Neutra suggested that the areas had until now “resisted any development, largely due to the configuration of the grounds”,<sup>599</sup> which were extremely hilly and would be costly and difficult to adjust. Neutra thus suggested “an urban housing solution to suit the location [which] must be designed to take advantage of the beautiful but very hilly terrain”.<sup>600</sup>

However, instead of incorporating the intended multi-storied apartment buildings sympathetically into the hilly surrounding, Neutra proposed a process of “grading and road building”.<sup>601</sup> The discrepancy between principle and practice is notable here; though Neutra’s intentions signal an attitude towards development that is reminiscent of the ‘sensitively inserted’ buildings of Jacobs’ vision, in practice the project becomes more akin to the scene described in the construction of Channel View Estates. That the hilly terrain is to be graded, or regraded, to in order to become more suitable for construction or transportation

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<sup>598</sup> Hines, *Richard Neutra*, p. 225.

<sup>599</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 226.

<sup>600</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 228.

<sup>601</sup> *Ibid.*

purpose demonstrates a disregard for the natural integrity of the landscape that Neutra had formerly perceived. In deviating towards this approach both Neutra's building philosophy and the integrity of the development of Elysian Park Heights disintegrate. Since in this respect Channel View seems to share more in common with Elysian Park Heights than the more closely named Channel Heights, the suggested allusion might perform a different function. In the way that Elysian Park Heights seems to share the skyward ambition of Channel Heights in name alone, instead of suggesting similarity, the association between the 'Channel' projects serves to highlight the divergence between the two developments. In this sense Channel Heights is the subjunctive Channel View, a notion that will come to be examined in ensuing discussions.

As a notable aside, the name Channel View can also be linked to Channelview, Texas, the site of an unusual murder plot in 1991 involving a would-be cheerleader's jealous mother and the mother of her daughter's rival. Although this unlikely plot reads in a similar way to the condensed plot synopsis of *Inherent Vice* provided by the 2014 trailer, "your ex old lady suddenly out of nowhere shows up with a story about her current billionaire land developer boyfriend and his wife, and her boyfriend, and a plot to kidnap that billionaire and throw him in a loony bin...",<sup>602</sup> the town itself can also be read as a manifestation of some of the concerns and consequences of bureaucratic urban development.

Channelview, Texas is not a town as such, but rather a census-designated place (CDP), meaning that it is a "concentration of population, housing and

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<sup>602</sup> Paul Thomas Anderson, *Inherent Vice* Official Trailer (2014), last accessed 5 December 2015, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wZfs22E7JmI>>.

commercial structures” grouped together under the same name for statistical purposes, but which is “not legally incorporated under the laws of the state in which they are located”.<sup>603</sup> The boundaries for CDPs can change between censuses, but with recent adjustment, the naming policy of CDPs is particularly noteworthy. The *Census Designated Place (CDP) Program for the 2010 Census, Final Criteria* states that “the CDP name should be one that is recognized and used in daily communication by the residents of the community”, and as such “there should be features in the landscape that use the name”.<sup>604</sup> Since the boundaries and delineations of the area are subject to change, the name provides some sense of stability and consistency for both the residents and for recording purposes. The name is then the defining feature, since both geographical boundaries and settlement pattern are more fluid. Channelview, Texas is named as such as it overlooks the Houston Ship Channel, a trend comparable to the literal naming of Channel View Estates which similarly has “filtered views of an all-but-neglected branch of the Dominguez Flood Control Channel” (*IV*, p. 20). Thus both locations share a comparable literal, practical and bureaucratic conception, and are also both potential sites for fostering incredible and sinister activity.

In contrast, Chavez Ravine was an area well defined by a tradition of “Hispanic richness”<sup>605</sup> which ran deeper than a superficial denomination. Neutra, however, in a steady erosion of his original redevelopment ethos, proposed building designs that included “no allusions to Spanish colonial architecture in any

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<sup>603</sup> See entry for ‘Census Designated Place (CDP)’ in Deirdre A. Gaquin and Mary Meghan Ryan, *Places, Towns and Townships* (Maryland: Bernan Press, 2013), p. 1166.

<sup>604</sup> ‘Census Designated Place’ (CDP) Program for the 2010 Census, Final Criteria’, *Federal Register* (4 June 2007), last accessed 5 July 2016, <<http://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2007/04/06/E7-6465/census-designated-place-cdp-program-for-the-2010-census-proposed-criteria>>.

<sup>605</sup> Hines, *Richard Neutra*, p. 229.

explicitly communicable ways”.<sup>606</sup> Though Channel View does offer the aforementioned “more or less Spanish Colonial” homes, the traditional cultural heritage of the location of this development was not actually Hispanic, but African-American. The Spanish Colonial markers have therefore been transplanted into the area to create appeal to the intended residents of Channel View Estates and do not in any way reference the cultural or social history of the neighbourhood.

However, Neutra’s plans never materialised as a more tangible opposition to Elysian Park Heights emerged. With McCarthyist propaganda an “ominous spectre”<sup>607</sup> during this period of the early 1950s, the redevelopment came under attack from a powerful opposition which included the Home Builders Association, the Chamber of Commerce, and, perhaps most influentially, the *Los Angeles Times* who attacked the housing program as being a manifestation of “creeping socialism”,<sup>608</sup> that was responsible for subverting American values from within. Although this opposition was strongly countered by several unions, groups and even the mayor of Los Angeles, the press force behind the campaign to denigrate the project proved too powerful in a McCarthyist climate where the brand of ‘socialism’ was too damaging for ideas of collectivism to be tolerated.

This contextual opposition to a social housing project finds a parallel in *Inherent Vice*, in a plotline surrounding Mickey Wolfmann’s unlikely desert city, Arrepentimiento. While Wolfmann is responsible for Channel View Estates and can in this regard be viewed as an easy archetypal affront to sympathetic, sustainable and socially inclusive and responsible housing, he is also the visionary

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<sup>606</sup> Ibid., p. 229.

<sup>607</sup> Ibid.

<sup>608</sup> Ibid.

behind a reparative housing development in the desert, designed as a kind of apology for Channel View. Described as Wolfmann's "longtime dream project" (IV, p. 62), Arrepentimiento, appropriately, is a Spanish word meaning 'repentance' or "sorry about that" (IV, p. 248). Conceived as a habitation out in the desert, where "anybody could go live...for free, didn't matter who you were" (IV, p. 248), it is also Wolfmann's attempt to recalibrate his developers' karma. Wolfmann himself eventually distils the destructive language of 'blight', 'assault' and 'horror' associated with Channel View into a catch-all consequence, 'crime', which satisfies concrete and karmic objections. Moreover, Wolfmann's understanding of crime extends beyond the inadequately constructed, environmentally destructive and socially damaging quality of his other development, to the very act of "making people pay for shelter, when it ought to've been free" (IV, p. 244).

This anarchic refutation of private property, reminiscent of Pierre, Joseph Proudhon's 1840 statement 'Property is Theft', finds a more contextual source in the philosophy of the California Diggers of the mid to late 1960s. Inspired by the vision of the English Diggers (1649,50), the "community anarchist" Californian response similarly opposed private property and tried to "discover alternative modes of living and working together based on personal authenticity rather than on economics".<sup>609</sup> Wolfmann's Arrepentimiento therefore seems to satisfy this

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<sup>609</sup> The California Diggers produced 'The Digger Papers' (1968), "their final collective publication" which they "gave...away as a gift to the world". The cover page of the Free edition of the Papers features a large graphic of a Hopi Running Man symbol which represents the directional spiritual and physical wanderings of the Hopi. The use of Hopi symbolism and representation by the California Diggers contributes to the wider discussion of countercultural engagement with and appropriation of American Indian beliefs and spirituality. The Papers also includes the poem 'A Curse On the Men In Washington, Pentagon' by Gary Snyder, which alludes to the Ghost Dance in the Sioux tradition in a rejection of what the "white" U.S. citizen represents. The California Diggers, 'The Digger Papers', *The Digger Archives*, last accessed 21 January 2016, <[http://www.diggers.org/digger\\_paper.htm](http://www.diggers.org/digger_paper.htm)>.

countercultural, even anarchist objective, however in the same way that Elysian Park Heights was considered too much of a socially-spirited gesture, so too Wolfmann's alternative city faces similar opposition. While McCarthyism quashed Neutra's proposition, Wolfmann faces Pynchon's unspecified powers-that-be, the "whoever" it was that "did something to [Mickey]" (*IV*, p. 248) to stop the project being realised.

Eleanor Gold argues that *Arrepentimiento* also "represents a merging of the tropes of noir and psychedelic vision" since it is associated with both justice and alternate reality.<sup>610</sup> Though this understanding of Wolfmann's vision through the prism of narratives of justice reinforces the novel's noir conventions and credentials in relation to the genre as whole, the idea of justice also evokes Pynchon's more pointed conception of karmic retribution, which can be developed from previous discussion of *Vineland*. Gold's understanding of space more broadly in *Inherent Vice* in the context of the noir genre also touches on notions of community, which are particularly apt to the preoccupations of this reading. Gold argues that in the genre and the novel "spaces are subject to corruption",<sup>611</sup> and offer numerous instances of *Inherent Vice* characters who through their dealings and association with Pynchon's current manifestation of the-powers-that-be create threatening spaces. That this occurs from inside the community, she argues, demonstrates that "communities are wholly responsible for the malevolence of a space; it has no external agency".<sup>612</sup> As useful as this might

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<sup>610</sup> Eleanor Gold, 'Beyond The Fog: Inherent Vice and Thomas Pynchon's Noir Adjustment', in Casey A. Cothran and Mercy Cannon, eds., *New Perspectives on Detective Fiction: Mystery Magnified* (New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 215.

<sup>611</sup> Gold, p. 216.

<sup>612</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 216.

be in corroborating Pynchon's suggestion of the complicity of countercultural forces in corruption, the specific communities of the novel outside of the hippie community that Gold is referencing cannot be considered in this way. If preterition stands as one measure of the status of the communities of neighbourhoods such as Chavez Ravine, Bunker Hill and Channel View then this sense of agency is lost. Similarly, while Gold's understanding of *Arrepentimiento* in a psychedelic tradition serves to emphasize the countercultural drug-inflected cultural backdrop to the novel, in this particular reading, and with a view to later analysis of Pynchon's engagement with lost world narratives, it is perhaps more useful to consider *Arrepentimiento* less as an alternate reality and more as an alternative reality.

With this in mind a potential model for *Arrepentimiento* can be found in Paolo Soleri's 1970s experimental Arizona town, Arcosanti. Imagined as "hi-tech, high-density community, gigantic, but compact and ecologically correct", Arcosanti was, according to Alessandra Ponte, designed as an answer to entropy.<sup>613</sup> Entropy, of course, is one of the concepts most closely associated with Pynchon, especially when it comes to his early critical reception, and has a similar resonance in this usage. In this context, entropy is defined as in Robert Smithson's 'Entropy and the New Monuments' (1966), to denote monuments that reflect an "inactive history, the future as the obsolete in reverse, and the universe transformed into an all-encompassing sameness".<sup>614</sup> Smithson suitably notes "slums, urban sprawl, and the infinite number of housing developments of the

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<sup>613</sup> Alessandra Ponte, 'The House of Light and Entropy: Inhabiting the American Desert', in Jan Birksted, ed., *Landscapes of Memory and Experience* (London: Spon Press, 2000), p. 156

<sup>614</sup> Smithson qtd. in Ponte, p. 151.

post-war boom” that have contributed to an entropic architecture.<sup>615</sup> As a response and solution to this, Soleri’s Arcosanti would be a “city in the image of man’, that would, under the banner of ‘Archology” (Architecture + Ecology), synthesize socially-sustainable housing with ecological concerns. If not an apology, as in Arrepentimiento, then Soleri’s vision was a possible answer to problems he perceived in modern urban planning.

Naturally, Arcosanti’s designs are sympathetic to their surroundings, using in situ materials, and maximizing the use of natural energy for lighting and heating. Some buildings are built in a dome-like fashion, which resemble the “zomes” or zonahedral domes of Wolfmann’s desert city, which, unfinished look like “an openwork soccer ball, sometimes patterns on a cactus, or seashells people bring back from Hawaii”.<sup>616</sup> Pynchon’s description of the zomes highlights both the geometry and shape of the structures, as in the soccer ball, but also, in contrast to the depiction of Channel View Estates, focuses on a resemblance to natural forms, which perhaps indicates Wolfmann’s apparent departure from the building ethos behind Channel View. However, the zomes are not fully integrated in their surroundings, since building materials still include “rusted cable”, “plastic pipe” and “Romex” (*IV*, p. 250).<sup>617</sup>

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<sup>615</sup> Robert Smithson, ‘Entropy and the New Monuments’, in Jack Flam, ed., *Robert Smithson: Collected Writings* (California: University of California Press, 1996), p. 13.

<sup>616</sup> The portmanteau ‘zome’ was first coined in 1968 by Steven Durkee (Nooruddeen Durkee) to mean the same as in Pynchon’s usage. As a building design, it was employed by Buckminster Fuller (referenced in *Inherent Vice* by Riggs as ‘Bucky Fuller’), and Steve Baer as the design for ‘Drop City’, a 1960s commune in Colorado. As an experiment in communal living, and since one of its architects is directly referenced, there may be some ideological parallels between Drop City and the rent-free Arrepentimiento.

<sup>617</sup> Romex is a brand name for a non-metallic sheathed cable.

It is perhaps the antidotal and reparative qualities of Arcosanti and Arrepentimiento that are perhaps most indicative of the community-based objectives of both projects, and the very reason perhaps why Wolfmann's non-profit housing will one day be destroyed by a coerced rocket strike. A decade or so after the termination of the Elysian Park Heights development the very model of collectivism, which contributed to its suppression would be championed by Jacobs and celebrated under the banner of 'community' in Becerra's article.

By the time Elysian Park Heights had been defeated, Chavez Ravine had already been cleared of its population and a former neighbourhood of "ramshackle homes, dusty unpaved roads, roaming goats, sheep and cattle",<sup>618</sup> became a ghost town.<sup>619</sup> However, this would not be the case for very long as by the end of 1953 deals were being made between the city of Los Angeles and Walter O'Malley, owner of the Brooklyn Dodgers, who was in search for a new home for his New York baseball team.<sup>620</sup> After very few negotiations and the 315-acre site of Chavez Ravine being exchanged for the 9-acre plot of the former stadium, the Brooklyn Dodgers found a new home in Chavez Ravine. As a consequence of this transplant the then owner of the now Los Angeles Dodgers, O'Malley was inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 2008 for his successes as owner of the club.<sup>621</sup>

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<sup>618</sup> Becerra.

<sup>619</sup> Riggs, now the caretaker-figure of the abandoned Arrepentimiento, describes himself as "the ghost of a crazy prospector at some old silver mine" (IV, p. 252). This invokes the idea of Pynchon's ghostliness as being the unresolved or unfulfilled remnant of potential prosperity, which will be addressed in due course.

<sup>620</sup> Incidentally, the L.A. Dodgers, having passed through the management of the Fox Entertainment Group in the 1990s, are now owned by Guggenheim Baseball Management, a global investment and advisory financial services firm. As such, once uprooted, a once local team becomes part of a franchise and now belongs to financial services company far removed from baseball. It is also worth noting that one of the reasons for the Dodgers' relocation was the rejection of the club's plans for expansion by one Robert Moses, the New York Master Builder.

<sup>621</sup> It is perhaps noteworthy then that Pynchon uses sport, though most often NBA playoff games, as 'real-time' signposts in the novel.

These successes are detailed as including “leading baseball’s expansion west of the Mississippi”.<sup>622</sup>

This westward move is a further testament to California being a terminal for incoming ideas and a landscape well-suited to nurturing emerging presences. However, unlike the potentially progressive spiritual developments fostered by California geography of the previous chapter, the landscape here has become ripe for exploitation as a result of disastrous urban development policies. What is perhaps more consistent in the state’s history however, is a chaotic and potentially disastrous record of settling and developing land in California, initiated in the *woge* narrative of *Vineland* and escalated in more recent times by the news of the discovery of gold.

The notion of settling is perhaps synonymous with California, especially given historical efforts to relocate to the frontier state in order to reimagine spirituality or realise fortune. Though the Gold Rush of the 1840s was not the first instance of large-scale changes to population demographics given successive efforts to colonize the region by both Mexico and the United States, it certainly instigated a rapid and dramatic shift in population demographic.<sup>623</sup> The previously established Spanish-Mexican culture of the previous seventy years soon encountered influences from the wider U.S., including Jewish, Catholic and African-American cultural influences, as well as incoming ideas from Europe and

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<sup>622</sup> Sewell Chan, ‘Executive Who Moved ‘Dem Bums’ out of Brooklyn is Hall of Famer, *New York Times* (3 December 2007), last accessed 4 June 2015, <<http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/12/03/exec-who-moved-dem-bums-out-of-brooklyn-to-join-hall-of-fame/>>.

<sup>623</sup> Incidentally, the boom year of the Gold Rush, 1849, inspired the term ‘49er’ to describe those travelling to California to seek gold. The conflation of the number 49 with the notion of discovery further enforces the expository nature of Oedipa’s quest of the previous chapter.

China, as populations migrated to the golden state. This changing character or tradition of a region serves as one historical backdrop for the novel's own reflection on changing districts and neighbourhoods.

As an emerging state, California struggled to become organised in the way that other states had developed before being admitted to statehood. Most relevantly, “laws of property and juries to settle disputes had to be created on the spot during gold rush times”.<sup>624</sup> The nature of the rush for gold created ad hoc settlements, mostly composed of miners who might settle for a year before moving on completely. As a consequence, “mining camps were flourishing towns one year and ghost towns the next”, and those who decided to settle, became involved in disputes over “former Mexican holdings and competing claims to land”. The modulation between prosperity and dereliction created unstable settlements where typically fundamental tenets such as “community, law, and tradition” had to be “created virtually from scratch”.<sup>625</sup> Although California cities such as San Francisco became “amongst the most cosmopolitan areas in the world” between around 1850 and 1870, the grab and plunder activity that depleted regions of both resources and identities continued to characterise a Californian approach to land use and development.<sup>626</sup> While less blatant and permissible by developers and civil authorities, this history sets a rough precedent for the redevelopment principles that guide the urban redevelopment of *Inherent Vice*.

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<sup>624</sup> Frankiel, p. 8,9.

<sup>625</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>626</sup> Ibid, p. 8.

In the contemporary setting of the novel, the oil industry and real estate (which operates as a comparable industry) function according to similar approaches.<sup>627</sup> The landscape of Gordita Beach functions as the residue of these uses and is reminiscent of a post-war zone in the way it has been devastated. Though it may not have been “napalmed, polluted, defoliated till the laterite beneath was sun-baked solid and useless” (*IV*, p. 104), the “fill, regrading [and] trash of industrial ventures” (*IV*, p. 20) produces a comparable effect. The war analogy, specifically Vietnam given the napalm and defoliant references are a reminder of the greater historical context of the novel and Pynchon’s inclination to suggest parallels between various historical instances of the same patterns of activity, or in this case, destruction. While Vietnam is a natural framework given the historical setting of the novel, it is also an example of a war arena which had a devastating effect in both human and environmental terms. This environmental emphasis does not undermine the immediate human loss, as Jurgen Brauer author of *War and Nature: The Environmental Consequences of War in a Globalized World* emphasizes, but instead reinforces this loss since the ongoing effects of environmental destruction continue to impact upon human life.<sup>628</sup> In the context of the current discussion however, the Vietnam analogy is also particularly useful

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<sup>627</sup> David Denby’s *New Yorker* review of the Paul Thomas Anderson film *There Will Be Blood* observes the impact of the oil industry on the Californian landscape. Denby understands the Californian oil boom of the late 19<sup>th</sup>, early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries as signalling “the vanishing American frontier”. His reflection on the social landscape of the film, comprised of “thrown, together buildings [that] look scraggly and unkempt” and “homesteaders [that] are modest, stubborn, and reticent” is reminiscent of the Gold Rush mentality, and perhaps marks the ‘settling’ condition of this region of California. Paul Thomas Anderson of course also directed the film adaptation of *Inherent Vice* in 2014. David Denby, ‘Hard Life: *There Will Be Blood*, *Juno*, *The Kite Runner*’, *The New Yorker* (17 December 2007), last accessed 7 February 2014, <<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2007/12/17/hard-life-2>>.

<sup>628</sup> Brauer’s examination provides comprehensive and detailed information of the effects of the Vietnam War on “nonhuman nature”. This analysis is categorized in terms of the immediate impact of the physical apparatus of conflict i.e. bombing, bulldozing etc. and herbicidal destruction on both the environment and its ensuing effect on human life. Jurgen Brauer, *War and Nature: The Environmental Consequences of War in a Globalized World* (Plymouth: AltaMira Press, 2011), p. 46.

in that it evokes the idea of conflict between the environment and its occupier, especially in light of the notorious use of herbicides as an agent of war. The landscape is not a host in these depictions, but rather has been invaded and plundered.

However, to return to the immediate discussion of Los Angeles and Gordita Beach in particular, the idea of occupation is twofold, firstly in the occupation of the land itself by “agents of disease like the oil industry” (*IV*, p. 105) and “assault[s] on the environment” like Channel View Estates, and secondly in terms of the occupation of communities that have managed to settle and develop in congruence with the landscape such as Chavez Ravine. Pynchon’s brief summary of the occupation of Chavez Ravine, “Mexican families bounded out of Chavez Ravine to build Dodger Stadium”, is therefore not simply a passing reference, but manages to elucidate some of the ramifications of displacing an established community, which has huge implications for urban developments like Channel View Estates. It also manages to reiterate that it is families that are being evicted, which reaffirms the personal, human consequences of this displacement, as well as suggesting the political motivations for displacing an established community in order to house a transplanted baseball team.

Using Chavez Ravine as an ongoing example, Becerra’s aforementioned retrospective article similarly tries to establish a sympathetic, human story behind the development, though the irony that it is a *Los Angeles Times* article that is running this story cannot be understated given the paper’s role in undermining, and ultimately destroying the efforts to sympathetically redevelop the neighbourhood. The article refers to the former residents of Chavez Ravine as “los

desterrados”, the uprooted, a self-appointed title that the former residents feel continues to characterise their situation as “ravine refugees”.<sup>629</sup> While Pynchon’s displaced have been “bounced”, “swept” and “bulldozed” (*IV*, p. 17) away, emphasising the heavy, industrial nature of the real estate developments, the ‘uprooted’ movement here reinforces the image of prior harmony with the hillside that Neutra witnessed in his assessment of Chavez Ravine. They almost self-identify as Pynchon’s preterite, the “disinherited or passed over”, in the greater landscaping plans of Los Angeles. The novel’s protagonist Doc observes a similar scene in a painting in his apartment which features “Mexican families who set up their weekend pitches”. These imagined nomadic families have, in Doc’s vision found “green flatland[s] where people still rode horses, between Gordita and the freeway” (*IV*, p. 6). This area between Gordita Beach and the San Diego Freeway is ‘undeveloped’ according to Pynchon, and it is fitting therefore that this is the location in which Doc locates his idyll, “the beach that never was” (*IV*, p. 6), and where he finds an appropriate area for the families to settle.

The article, however does not imagine such a solution for the families of Chavez Ravine, its technique instead is almost that of a time capsule, in that it prioritizes space for details of community, of family life and the visible “lingering” emotions of residents from both before and after their removal from their neighbourhood.<sup>630</sup> Events include parties and birthdays, a “young grandmother’s wedding”, which are used as signifiers of a life and events that characterise a community.<sup>631</sup> It is the idiosyncratic details that are noticeable here, the details

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<sup>629</sup> Becerra.

<sup>630</sup> Becerra.

<sup>631</sup> Becerra.

that have been selected to highlight the individuality and distinctiveness of this particular neighbourhood and its specific local culture.

To this effect, Becerra includes details of “an old Mexican custom” where the umbilical cord of a person is buried in the place that they were born.<sup>632</sup> This is particularly pertinent here, not just as a marker for broader cultural identification, but also because as a result of the redevelopment, Lou Santillan’s cord finds itself buried under the third base of Dodger Stadium. Though this is received with mixed emotions, both humour and sadness, the residual idea is of belonging to and being tied to a place. Lou remarks “I hate home runs, ‘cause every time they step on third base, my stomach hurts”.<sup>633</sup> This direct physical relationship between the landscape and the body is echoed in Doc’s memory of a conversation with Sortilège. He explains that “just as chakras can be identified on the human body, so does the body of Earth have these special places, concentrations of spiritual energy” (*IV*, p. 188). Though this idea has been regurgitated for cynical uses in the supposed spiritual sanctuary of the Chryskylodon Institute, in its most nascent form, it correlates to the belief in the sacred place, explored in the previous chapter. Both interpretations share the commonality of an innate sacredness, however, *Inherent Vice* produces a fusion of American Indian and Hindu and Tantric Buddhist belief that claims these sacred or spiritual areas are common to both the body and the landscape.<sup>634</sup>

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<sup>632</sup> Ibid.

<sup>633</sup> Ibid.

<sup>634</sup> The origins of Pynchon’s engagement with the relationship between landscape and the body can be traced back to *Mason & Dixon’s* Captain Zhang. Instead of chakras or spiritual concentrations, the boundaries of the landscape take their form from the Dragon within the Earth. He explains that to alter a boundary or natural feature of the landscape is to “inflict upon the Dragon’s very Flesh, a sword, slash, a long, perfect scar, impossible for any who live out here the year ‘round to see as other than hateful Assault”. (*M&D*, p. 542) There is a shared language of

The connection to place is so strong, that it can still, even in its most altered form, from a traditional neighbourhood to a baseball stadium, illicit feelings of belonging. Lou Santillan, though he has no interest in the baseball team, “can’t help but feel a connection to the stadium”.<sup>635</sup> Though there is a clearly intended pathos in including this detail in the article, it might also be suggestive of the role that the transplanted stadium now plays in its new setting. For Lou, the stadium has in some sense replaced the site of his birthplace, which held cultural and spiritual significance. Through its relocation, this significance has again been transposed onto the stadium so that it functions as a surrogate signifier.

### **(Un)Safe Spaces**

The Chryskylodon Institute of *Inherent Vice* can also be seen to function as a textual extension of this role. Given that much of the land around Gordita Beach and Los Angeles has been destroyed by “fill, regrading [and] trash of industrial ventures”, the opportunity to find a place of emotional or spiritual significance seems limited to Doc’s painting. The Chryskylodon Institute however, is offered as an answer to this, or as a place that “provides silence, harmony with the Earth, and unconditional compassion for those emotionally at risk owing to the unprecedented stressfulness of life in the sixties and seventies” (*IV*, p. 111). However, instead of being a location for healing or wellbeing, or even a sincere retreat, its effect is palliative. Its edifice is artificial both structurally and

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conflict and assault between this passage and Pynchon’s depiction of Channel Vice Estates, as highlighted in the war analogy, suggesting that the brutality inflicted on the U.S. landscape began long before urban development in Los Angeles.

<sup>635</sup> Becerra

philosophically, offering only Mission Revival architecture and an ethos with more of a view to “capital improvement” than spiritual renewal. In this sense Chryskylodon is one of the paving stones that covers the beach, with its “tiled courtyard”, “landscaping crews” and “paving crews” it can only contain, alter and “roll[ ] smooth” the same Earth it claims to offer communion with (*IV*, p. 189).

Pynchon’s depiction of Chryskylodon highlights the insubstantiality of this supposedly spiritual centre through detailing the transplanted quality of its features. From the neoclassic temples, to the Zen Garden (“transported from Kyoto, reassembled here exactly in place, each grain of white sand, each textured rock” (*IV*, p. 189)), it is an artificial environment of segmented features and ideas.<sup>636</sup> Pynchon uses the device of the “painted glass mattes” (*IV*, p. 189) from old movies to convey the illusion of Chryskylodon as an image composed of many superimposed parts.

Though this borrowing culture may appear to be characteristically Californian, Chryskylodon is not presented as the outcome of a desirable pluralism, but instead as a cynical response to a contemporary desire for alternative and diverse spiritual practises. The Institute is not a part of the nurturing Californian soil, made clear in its very construction that involves separating it from the land, and does not provide the spiritual nourishment that those westward travellers of the earlier chapter sought from their environment. Rather, it is a commercial antidote to the misuse of these initiatives. The idea of remedy is relevant to both Chryskylodon, Dodger Stadium and of course

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<sup>636</sup> The assembled quality of the Chryskylodon Institute is reminiscent of Pierce Inverarity’s Fangoso Lagoons of *The Crying of Lot 49*. This housing development is similarly composed of artificial lakes and varying and diverse imported artefacts.

Arrepentimiento, as all three function as a suggested fix to problems that they themselves have created.

Naturally, Chryskylodon is “high-rent” and seeks to cash in on its proximity to other, more established facilities like “the Inner School”, a reference perhaps to the Theosophical Institute operating on Krotona Hill, and “AMORC”, the Rosicrucian Order (*IV*, p. 186). The notion of cashing in here is especially relevant to Chryskylodon’s operating ethos. It is trading in spirituality and natural healing, with practitioners described as being like “salesmen”, and an “administrative lounge” operating behind the temple (*IV*, p. 187). Even its own designation as an Institute, suggests a far more bureaucratic endeavour, or a corrective measure, than a sanctuary. It is the profiteering hangover of the earnest spirituality-seekers of the previous chapter and in this regard is the antecedent to *Vineland’s* Sisterhood of Kunoichi Attentives.

Though there is ample criticism directed at the “heap of building and landscaping and tacky but expensive interior design” (*IV*, p. 111), which in itself is a representation of the worst of urban re-development, the representation of the spiritual re-development being offered is somewhat more sinister. Docs suggests, by way of Jason Velveeta’s idea of vertical integration and Coy’s drug rehabilitation, that the operations of Chryskylodon both aggravate the disease and then also offer the cure. In ensuring that “American life was something to be escaped from” (*IV*, p. 192), Chryskylodon’s appropriately labelled ‘customers’ will keep returning. The “unprecedented stressfulness of life in the sixties and seventies” (*IV*, p. 111), recognised by the Institute is perhaps the same concern previously expressed by cultural critics who viewed the imperative to join

alternative religious movement as resulting from the social, political and moral upheavals of this period. However, Chryskylodon, a clumsy and ambiguous term meaning either 'serenity' in "ancient Indian" or 'fang' in Greek, (*IV*, p. 111) or both, or neither, is not presented as a sanctuary or alternative, but rather as the Charles Manson of the Human Be-In.

The cultish overtones of Chryskylodon are present in the depictions of the building itself and the behaviours of its residents. The Institute is comprised of mysterious outposts such as the "strange, shadowy gazebo" and "a soundproofed space behind one-way mirrors", while its staff wear a uniform of "hooded robes" and are heard "chanting" (*IV*, p. 189-90). Most ominous and suggestive perhaps is the "Noncompliant Cases Unit" (*IV*, p. 188) whose purpose and activity is never fully explained. However, like many of Pynchon's fictional representation, Chryskylodon finds a potential model in a geographically suitable historical example.

The drug rehabilitation programme, Synanon, which latterly became the Church of Synanon, was founded as residential organisation promoting sobriety and offering help with drug and alcohol addiction. However, in later years it became "a violent, abusive and well-funded cult".<sup>637</sup> Though it is not suggested that Chryskylodon has escalated into violence, its operations in alternative therapy, and even its development in real estate terms, find a parallel with Synanon.

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<sup>637</sup> Matt Novak, 'Synanon's Sober Utopia: How a Drug Rehab Program became a Violent Cult', *Paleofuture* (15 April 2014), last accessed 8 September 2015, <<http://paleofuture.gizmodo.com/synonons-sober-utopia-how-a-drug-rehab-program-became-1562665776>>.

Both Chryskylodon and Synanon are considered high-rent real estate, with Synanon becoming the largest private property owner in Marin County having expanded in 1965, and Chryskylodon, a “high-rent laughing academy” (IV, p. 186), being architecturally developed to acquire new extensions, wings and outbuildings. This physical expansion is somewhat mirrored in the philosophical deviations of these institutions, with Synanon notoriously developing from a rehabilitation programme to a “therapeutic community”, an “alternative society” and “finally into a religion”.<sup>638</sup> These markers provided by Richard Ofshe’s sociological analysis of Synanon are useful in outlining the steps or progressions towards cult status. One marker provided in Ofshe’s analysis is the ‘absorption’ of members of the therapeutic community into staff in order to retain numbers. This practise is similarly obliquely alluded to in Pynchon’s depiction of Chryskylodon in the form of patients who are “working in lieu of paying the full fee” (IV, p. 187). Though this may seem innocent, or even charitable, given an emerging context of similar rehabilitation programmes deteriorating into cultish institutions, and the more pervasive Manson Family backdrop to the novel, it is useful to consider Chryskylodon with these contextual touchstones in mind. Another important marker that indicates shift from therapeutic community to alternative society is the admittance of non-narcotic addicts. To this end, Chryskylodon’s intended audience is intentionally vague; it is for “those emotionally at risk” (IV, p. 111) as a result of society’s stresses. Chryskylodon’s unspecified intended audience is therefore perhaps more sinister since it can both absorb those seeking therapy from addiction, such as Coy Harlingen, former saxophone player of the novel’s

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<sup>638</sup> Richard Ofshe, ‘The Social Development of the Synanon: The Managerial Strategy of Organizational Transformation’, *Sociological Analysis*, 41/2 (1980), p. 109.

band The Boards, but can also become a more vague and general respite from 'American life'. In the latter use, it is posited as an alternative society, in both Ofshe's terms, and also in that it becomes a direct answer or alternative to contemporary society.<sup>639</sup> Indeed, the success of Chryskylodon can in part be ascribed to the political climate of the novel, or more specifically "Governor Reagan's shutdown of most of the state mental facilities" (*IV*, p. 172).

However, in order for 'American life' to become a more useful indicator, it is perhaps important to re-contextualise this idea within the contemporary culture of social, spiritual and geographical displacement. In this context, American life can be considered as the aforementioned uncertain and problematic political and social landscape of the 1960s and early 1970s, but with a focus on the role of urban redevelopment as a contributing factor. Given these concerns, an active connection between the Chryskylodon Institute and redevelopment initiatives like Chavez Ravine, Bunker Hill and Channel View Estates that have come to suggest displacement, can be established. As previously discussed, displacement occurs both on the level of physical upheaval and cultural and

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<sup>639</sup> One notable visitor to Synanon was the aforementioned Buckminster Fuller, designer of Drop City (Novak). The overlap between well-intended alternative communities such as Drop City and more sinister outcomes like Synanon is highlighted given Fuller's involvement or contact with both. These two sides of the same coin argument also relates to Pynchon's depiction of alternative communities more broadly. That Wolfmann can be the mastermind behind both Channel View Estates and Arrepentimiento (and benefactor of Chryskylodon) or that Doc is an almost stereotypical hippie figure but works with/alongside the LAPD, emphasizes the unstable balance between opposition and complicity that can be seen to characterize Pynchon's political outlook more generally across the trilogy. This notion is particularly pointed in the idea of alternative living, be it in terms of lifestyle as in those American Indian sympathizers to later become some of the biggest cultural appropriation offenders or those who promote alternative living spaces as in Esalen or Chryskylodon that later become corporate institutions. However, the Manson backdrop that also influences how Chryskylodon is understood, also suggests not just the skewing of an ideal but the total endpoint of that original ideal.

spiritual disruption, and this is at its most pronounced when cultural or spiritual stability is linked to physical place.

Having no historical or cultural rooting in its environment, it is entirely appropriate that Chryskylodon is built of transplanted materials according to culturally disparate and unassociated designs. Its patients, or residents in this context, do not belong to the Institute but rather seek shelter there as refugees from contemporary society, the same society which has in fact produced Chryskylodon. This sense of the social or cultural dislocation of the residents of the Institute is also economically and perhaps racially framed, since these residents include characters like Japonica Fenway, runaway teen of a wealthy father, who has also previously been rescued by Doc “from a life of dark and unspecified hippie horror” (*IV*, p. 171). This kind of clientele, supported by “middle-aged male, though occasionally female” benefactors who view the facility as a “child-rearing service” (*IV*, p. 172), however, presumably does not include those displaced residents of destroyed African-American, Mexican-American or American Indian communities who have been more tangibly and perhaps profoundly affected by ‘American life’ of the Sixties and Seventies. In this regard, the refuge offered by Chryskylodon is more exclusive, limited to those particular types of people, experiencing a particular type of dislocation. The specific idea of refuge will come into prominence in later discussion, however the disparity between those being offered a solution (however corrupt and corrupting that might be) and those like the residents of Tariq’s neighbourhood or Chavez Ravine and Bunker Hill is obliquely alluded to in the novel.

When considering Japonica's admittance to Chryskylodon and his involvement in bringing this about, Doc imagines "an American Indian in full Indian gear" asking him what he is planning on doing to help her given that he is "responsible for [the] crazy white chick now" (IV, p. 171-2). Though this particular belief seems to find little (if any) derivation from any American Indian culture, the ascribing of this particular understanding of responsibility to American Indians is telling of the contemporary perception and proliferation of (assumed) traditional beliefs. It is also ironic in this context, and with a view to the subsequent discussion of Bunker Hill, that American Indian belief is said to state that responsibility is taken when a life (Japonica's pre-hippie life) has been saved, but does not comment on where responsibility falls when a life (the geographically situated lives of the residents of former neighbourhood) has been lost.

The contextual positioning of the Chryskylodon Institute alongside places like Chavez Ravine and Bunker Hill highlights the lasting cultural and psychological or spiritual effects of displacing a community, long after the physical neighbourhood itself has been destroyed. Though these outcomes are afforded no reparations in either historical terms or in Pynchon's presentation, the narrative construction of these events serves as a reminder of that which has been lost. The prior emphasis placed on Becerra's article in this analysis is intended to highlight the different narrative layers in the re-telling and remembering of the history of Chavez Ravine, through Pynchon particular urban redevelopment lens. Similarly, the inclusion of familial detail and community custom aligns folk history with history, which is also significant given Pynchon recurring concern with issues of collective narrative. This folk history narrative is exercised by *Inherent Vice's*

storytelling Aunt Reet, Doc's aunt, whose narrative in the novel provides a community history of Los Angeles.

Aunt Reet therefore plays an important role in the 'folk history' of *Inherent Vice*, which is particularly important given the detective noir sensibility of the novel and the neighbourhood focus of the text. In both instances, by definition, there can be no official narrative of the events. Doc's investigation into Mickey Wolfmann is enacted through whispered suggestion, hearsay and second-hand testimony, and Aunt Reet's knowledge of the neighbourhood is derived from community lore, repeated facts and remembered truths.

This is not an exercise in determining reliable or definitive history, but rather another opportunity to present how neighbourhoods are conceptualised by their inhabitants, with an emphasis on the importance and impact of collective memory on the relationship between the population and their environment and on the relation between Pynchon's conception of different kinds of lost homeland, which will emerge in due course. However, for now the role of collective memory is especially significant in the examination of another of Pynchon's cited displaced groups, the American Indians of Bunker Hill.

## Community Histories: Bunker Hill

Bunker Hill can be characterized as yet another neighbourhood “to which fate and development have not been kind”.<sup>640</sup> Pynchon’s summary of Bunker Hill’s redevelopment follows the same pattern as that of Chavez Ravine, however, on this occasion it is American Indians who are swept out of Bunker Hill for the music centre. Though Bunker Hill may appear as simply another casualty of L.A.’s post-war urban redevelopment hype, the community affected here is different. This is not just extending the list of case studies, but providing evidence of the range and diversity of these consequences on a culturally different population. Though there are some comparable outcome between all of Pynchon’s displaced peoples, the cultural particulars and specific social history of each group weigh accordingly on the way in which social upheaval affects each community. The preoccupations of the retelling of the redevelopment of Bunker Hill are perhaps weighted differently because of the longer history of displacement of these people, the documentation of this and the implications of further, lasting, cultural damage.

In different circumstances to those involving Chavez Ravine, Bunker Hill was also highlighted as a site for redevelopment in the 1950s. The narrative of the former residents of the neighbourhood is not nearly as well-known as Chavez Ravine and has received significantly less attention and scrutiny in the media, however, the uncertainty surrounding the development of Channel View Estates is comparable to the unfamiliarity of the history of Bunker Hill. Though it can be argued that common unfamiliarity with events at Bunker Hill is due to the fact that

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<sup>640</sup> Nathan Masters, ‘Rediscovering Downtown L.A.’s Lost Neighborhood of Bunker Hill’, *KCET* (11 July 2012), last accessed 7 August 2015, <<https://www.kcet.org/shows/lost-la/rediscovering-downtown-las-lost-neighborhood-of-bunker-hill>>.

this development proved less dramatic than events at Chavez Ravine, it is also likely that it is because it was American Indians who were relocated in this instance, and that this is neither uncommon or generally cause for opposition in U.S. land development history. As has been presented in the previous chapter, the removal of American Indians from alternatively-designated land is a significant feature of the settling of the U.S. The presentation provided by *Inherent Vice* does however offer a localized example of this occurrence and therefore provides the opportunity of a specific effect of displacement without losing its impact to generalization.

It is important to note that Aunt Reet's, or Pynchon's examples are taken from a time before the events of the novel, and are thus part of the contextual backstory of *Inherent Vice*, providing a well-developed precedent to the inception of Channel View Estates. Though all examples of urban developments seem to have similarly disastrous outcomes for the inhabitants of these sites, the intent and philosophy behind the projects is markedly different. In the instance of Chavez Ravine, Neutra's initial plans appear well-intentioned and designed with the prosperity of the population in mind. The initial populating of Bunker Hill by American Indians, prior to any suggestion of later re-development, was enacted by the BIA in order to initiate American Indians into urban life. Though the ethical implications of the Urban Indian Relocation Program are complicated by a long history of forced and violent relocation, the BIA "publicly portrayed relocation as a "New Deal" for American Indians".<sup>641</sup>

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<sup>641</sup> In 1951 the Commissioner of Indian Affairs planned to "recruit Native Americans to major urban areas that could afford to hire them into jobs". He believed that low income rates on reservations and the American Indian contribution to the war effort has prepared the way for

In creating linearity between Chavez Ravine, Bunker Hill and Channel View Estates, Pynchon is not only presenting an emerging pattern of “the long sad history of L.A. land use”, but is also establishing the changing urban planning ethos over the course of these three decades. By the advent of Channel View Estates in 1970, urban redevelopment is not the work of city-planners or social programmes, but is enacted by speculators and businessmen like Mickey Wolfmann for corporate interest and profit motives. The planning ethics of Channel View Estates are the stuff of Jacobs’ nightmares. In the composite history of Channel View Estates, there is no suggestion of Tariq’s neighbourhood benefitting from the development, or even suggestion of smooth, co-operative transition between neighbourhoods for the residents. They are in fact wiped away from the area completely, with “nobody and nothing” left (*IV*, p. 17). Though the outcome for all residents is displacement from their neighbourhoods, it is worth noting the nuances in the devising of these removals. With this in mind, perhaps Aunt Reet’s mournful characterisation of L.A.’s land use as being ‘long’ and ‘sad’ is both fitting of the outcome but not necessarily the cause.

In 2008 *LA Weekly* issued an article as an overdue response to the 1961 documentary *The Exiles* which chronicles the daily lives of American Indian youths living in Bunker Hill.<sup>642</sup> The article, suggestively and appropriately entitled, ‘*Exiles*

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greater integration of American Indians in urban areas and would generally contribute to a higher standard of living. Though the programme initially provided relocates with financial support and welfare assistance, for many American Indians the relocation experience “was a threatening cultural shock”. Donald Lee Fixico provides a detailed chronology and analysis of the period and its aftermath in his ethnohistorical study *The Urban Indian Experience in America*. Donald L. Fixico, *The Urban Indian Experience in America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000), pp. 9, 14.

<sup>642</sup> The 2008 rerelease of *The Exiles* was presented by Charles Burnett and Sherman Alexie for Milestone Films. The involvement of both Burnett and Alexie is significant given their relationship to many of the film’s concerns. Alexie’s personal experiences of reservation life and

on Main Street: Searching for the Ghosts of Bunker Hill's American Indian Past',<sup>643</sup> tackles the issue of the urban redevelopment of Bunker Hill at the expense of its American Indian population through providing transcripts of a conversation between journalist Matthew Fleischer and a Kumeyaay American Indian filmmaker, Cedar Sherbert. In a similar format to Becerra's article on Chavez Ravine, Fleischer interrupts the conversation with splices of facts and figures on American Indian urban population figures, and voluntary or forced migration patterns of American Indians from reservations to cities. What is notable from the article and from other transcripts of Bunker Hill history is that the relationship between the Mexican-American families and Chavez Ravine and American Indians and Bunker Hill is very different, as would be expected given the diversity between the two population groups.

As previously outlined, the American Indian occupation of Bunker Hill was in itself part of an urban development project. In 1952, the federal government, together with the BIA, implemented the Urban Indian Relocation Program, "a voluntary plan that paid rural Indians to leave the reservation and start new lives in the city".<sup>644</sup> That the project was designated a 'program' implied a planned series of future events with specifically prescribed destinations for American Indians living on reservations to relocate to. Los Angeles was a popular

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his role as an American Indian writer and activist finds an instinctive parallel with much of the film's attention to the tension between reservation life and urban integration in Bunker Hill in the 1950s, while Burnett, writer and director of the 1978 film *Killer of Sheep* provides an insight into the experience of the residents of Watts during the 1970s. The alignment of these testimonies reinforces the shared quality of these experiences and strengthens Pynchon's narrative of preterition and displacement.

<sup>643</sup> Matthew Fleischer, 'Exiles on Main Street: Searching for the Ghosts of Bunker Hill's American Indian Past', *LA Weekly* (13 August 2008), last accessed 3 June 2014, <<http://www.laweekly.com/film/exiles-on-main-street-searching-for-the-ghosts-of-bunker-hills-native-american-past-2154829>>.

<sup>644</sup> Fleischer.

destination, and Bunker Hill soon became an American Indian enclave in downtown L.A.. Fleischer interviews, amongst others, an Apache woman, Yvonne Walker who moved to Los Angeles at age 16 to work as a cleaner for “a wealthy real estate agent”, and includes details of the 1974 murder of Moses Yakanac, a 47-year-old Native Alaskan.<sup>645</sup> Details of the removal and dispossession of American Indians for the redevelopment of Bunker Hill are scant and are limited to a comment that simply states, “When Bunker Hill was bulldozed in the late ’60s to make way for skyscrapers, its Indian enclave scattered, never to reform in any concrete fashion”.<sup>646</sup> This comment is both reminiscent of Pynchon’s stark portrayal of events in Chavez Ravine and Bunker Hill, and affirms that there was no plan to re-house the American Indian population, instead forcing it to disperse to make way for business developments.

In fact, as part of the Bunker Hill Urban Renewal Project, “7,310 Bunker Hill housing units were demolished”<sup>647</sup> to be replaced by commercial developments including, Union Bank Center, Wells Fargo Center, Mellon Bank Center, 444 South Flower Street Building, Bank of America Plaza, California Plaza, and of course Pynchon’s music centre, the Performing Arts Centre of Los Angeles County which includes the Walt Disney Concert Hall. As a result, modern day Bunker Hill is the “financial and corporate heart of Downtown”, whose skyline and topography has been transformed by “high-rise office buildings, hotels, apartments, condominiums, and cultural destinations”.<sup>648</sup> The redevelopment of Bunker Hill

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<sup>645</sup> Ibid.

<sup>646</sup> Ibid.

<sup>647</sup> Jeremy Rosenberg, ‘Laws That Shaped L.A.: How Bunker Hill Lost its Victorians’, KCET (23 January 2012), last accessed 15 September 2015, <<https://www.kcet.org/departures-columns/laws-that-shaped-la-how-bunker-hill-lost-its-victorians>>.

<sup>648</sup> Bunker Hill Redevelopment Project Area, *The Community Redevelopment Agency Of The City Of Los Angeles, Ca.* (17 December 2009), last accessed 6 April 2015,

resulted in the cityscape that Jacobs railed against in 1962, though in this instance this outcome was in fact desired, planned and detailed by the Community Redevelopment Agency of the City of Los Angeles.

The notion of redeveloping Bunker Hill was another outcome of the National Housing Act of 1949. Professor of Urban Planning and Associate Dean of the School of Public Affairs at UCLA, Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris explains that although districts including Bunker Hill “were not slum areas”, and moreover “were not really dilapidated areas”, they had become *designated* as blighted areas, and therefore became highlighted for redevelopment.<sup>649</sup> Unlike the “lovely mountain park”, the “lively street life” or the eucalyptus trees that characterized the neighbourhood of Chavez Ravine,<sup>650</sup> Loukaitou-Sideris’ portrayal of the pre-development landscape of Bunker Hill is certainly not one of picturesque landscapes or one that provokes nostalgic emotions. She does, however, remember a “much more outward-oriented” neighbourhood, with different but interconnected blocks, continuous facades, and stores that were opening up onto the streets.<sup>651</sup> The Bunker Hill of this depiction is indeed more akin to Jacobs’ ideal neighbourhood than to a dilapidated or blighted area.

In contrast to this, following its redevelopment, Bunker Hill became composed of individual, iconic “post-modern” buildings that stood alone, and did not engage in “any conversation with the environment”.<sup>652</sup> The suggestion of interconnection again resonates with Jacobs’ city, but perhaps more potently

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<[http://www.crala.org/internetsite/Projects/Bunker\\_Hill/upload/BH%20Implementation%20Plan%20FY2010-2012%20FINAL.pdf](http://www.crala.org/internetsite/Projects/Bunker_Hill/upload/BH%20Implementation%20Plan%20FY2010-2012%20FINAL.pdf)>.

<sup>649</sup> Loukaitou-Sideris qtd. in Rosenberg.

<sup>650</sup> Hines, *Richard Neutra*, p. 225.

<sup>651</sup> Loukaitou-Sideris qtd. in Rosenberg.

<sup>652</sup> Loukaitou-Sideris qtd. in Rosenberg.

given the broad cultural identity of the residents of this neighbourhood, is also reminiscent of the assumed importance of interconnectivity in a generalized American Indian culture, as previously discussed. Instead of manifesting the multi-faceted neighbourhood composition it was once characterized by, Loukaitou-Sideris argues that Bunker Hill has now lost that important balance between industry, leisure and housing. Following on from this logic, such self-referential or 'post-modern' buildings, to use Jacobs' terms, do not relate to the surrounding context and thus cannot engage the population as before, or be functional for community uses. It therefore stands to reason perhaps that the dispersal of a community is the inevitable progression from isolating the features of the neighbourhood itself. In this sense fragmentation is total, operating on both a physical and community level. This atomization of the community is once again reflected in Pynchon's depiction of Tariq's neighbourhood.

It perhaps stands to reason that the dispersal of a community should be followed by the isolating of the features of the neighbourhood itself. In this sense, the fragmentation is holistic and operates on the level of both the inhabitants and the environment. This atomization of community is once again reflected in a section of the novel in which Pynchon depicts the former residents of Tariq's neighbourhood who are spotted by Doc "looking for the old neighbourhood, for rooms lived in day after day" (*IV*, p. 19). It is also notable that Doc sees them "at the edges of [his] windshield" (*IV*, p. 19) as he drives through the site, which mirrors their geographical displacement, but also more profoundly reflects the way they are viewed as being on the periphery of a social vision.

The commitment to community for the existing residents of Bunker Hill was also less than even a secondary concern for those responsible for its redevelopment, as Loukaitou-Sideris explains. “It was prime land, [and] it became extremely valuable”.<sup>653</sup> As a slight departure from the case of the intended redevelopment of Chavez Ravine, the notion of the ‘value’ of the land is an important factor here. The invocation of Bunker Hill evokes the idea of financial value being attached to land, thereby changing the concept of worth in relation to neighbourhoods and areas of public use. Not only does this instigate a movement towards the monetization of residential areas, but also on the prioritization of profit-value over community-use or cultural value. Though the land of Bunker Hill had become extremely desirable due to its location in the centre of Downtown L.A., it had historically avoided development due to its unique elevated topography which had made access and building difficult. As a consequence, Bunker Hill had not been updated until the 1880s, “when streets and a water system were installed to service the area”.<sup>654</sup> The ‘difficult’ topography of Bunker Hill continued to be a problem for development into the 1920s, and caused the area to be bypassed by potential developers who had already redeveloped the surrounding flatter areas of Downtown L.A..

The proposed solution to this undesirable landscape was a “rearrangement of the topography and a realignment of the street and circulation systems”, allowing for developers to “begin correcting the prevailing blighting conditions”.<sup>655</sup> The proposed solution was followed by \$21million worth of

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<sup>653</sup> Loukaitou-Sideris qtd. in Rosenberg.

<sup>654</sup> Bunker Hill Redevelopment Project Area.

<sup>655</sup> Bunker Hill Redevelopment Project Area.

investment in Bunker Hill in order to regrade and redesign the area, and to accommodate a new road network, utilities and pedestrian bridges. The new layout would allow greater volumes of traffic to pass through and around the area, and connect Bunker Hill more closely to the rest of Downtown and the new freeway system. Of course, by the time of the setting of *Inherent Vice* in 1970 the proximity of Gordita Beach and neighbouring districts to the freeway is vital to the validity and vitality of the neighbourhood. Doc spends considerable narrative time driving on the freeway, which in a physical sense helps facilitate the detective aspect of the novel. He is able to navigate space and different narrative blocks through passing on and off the various freeways of the area.

The freeway is also emotionally kinetic, as one character outlines “you can only cruise the boulevards of regret so far, and then you’ve got to get back up onto the freeway again” (*IV*, p. 40). Similarly, in *Lot 49*, the San Narciso freeway is understood in the imagery of circulation, not just in the direct terms of traffic, but also in the flow of human wellbeing. Oedipa imagines the road she is navigating as a hypodermic needle being inserted into “the vein of a freeway”, with the freeway then nourishing the “mainliner” city, “keeping it happy, coherent, protected from pain” (*L49*, p. 16). That the freeway provides this kind of energy speaks not only to the physical arrangement of the city, but also to how its residents’ emotional lives are related to infrastructural patterns and connections.

Given the districtization of the city by 1970, the freeway becomes the connecting force between these isolated zones. The final image of the novel finds Doc caught in fog on the Santa Monica freeway in a convoy of other cars in the same predicament. He imagines the caravan of people as a “temporary commune”

which is inching ahead, but consciously keeping within “taillight range” of each so as to help each other home through the fog (*IV*, p. 368). This sense of unity on the freeway, something that Doc says only hippies would contribute to for free, is however somewhat punctuated by the fact that these individuals occupy separate cars. Though it may be imagined as a convoy, any sense of interconnectedness and continuity can only be achieved through a freeway that attempt to connect isolated people in individual cars. Oedipa’s perception of the soothing needle of the highway is perhaps further clarified in this context.<sup>656</sup>

As a consequence of this redesign, the topography of Bunker Hill was completely changed, in a process reminiscent of Pynchon’s depiction of the construction of Channel View Estates with its “miles of fill, regrading [and] trash of industrial ventures”. The outward-oriented neighbourhood remembered by Loukaitou-Sideris, with its multi-use layout becomes sectionalised and divided up into single-purpose areas with no consideration of the resident population.

Attitudes towards the landscape itself are clearly secondary, and in keeping with the summary offered by Pynchon that “some of these developers make Godzilla look like a conservationist” (*IV*, p. 7). This development has evidently not been planned in sympathy with the landscape, using its natural and historical features as foundations, on the contrary the natural contours of the area

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<sup>656</sup> Freeways in *Inherent Vice* are also shown to facilitate in crime. When loan shark and hitman Adrian Prussia looks to dispose of a body, he turns to the freeway for a useful makeshift grave. Adrian drops the corpse inside “the forms for a concrete support column about to be poured”, which results in the body becoming encased in one of the columns that supports the freeway. This contributes a very literal layer to ideas of criminally in new infrastructural constructions and, as Adrian jokes, imposes a different meaning on the expression “pillar of the community” (*IV*, p. 323-3). If in both the context of *Inherent Vice* and *Lot 49* the freeway can be understood as a remedying, connecting force, the disclosure that this freeway is supported by the bodies of victims of organized crime calls for a rethinking of the quality of that force.

are deemed an obstacle to ‘developmental’ progress. Though California may have incorporated much from Eastern and American Indian spiritual and cultural influences, attitudes towards land-management are a clear deviation. *Mason & Dixon’s* Feng shui master, Captain Zhang provides potentially the most useful explanation of respectful land management approaches, invoking a dragon beneath the Earth’s surface in doing so. As an adversary of the Mason-Dixon Line, he sees this kind of arbitrary division of the land as a “long, perfect scar” on the landscape, insisting that natural divisions should occur according to the “contoured environment” (*M&D*, p. 542). His argument, drawn from a folkloric tale, describes the dragon within the earth that is scarred by the drawing of the line, creating “the very Shape of Contempt” (*M&D*, p. 615) on the landscape. While this ethos can be seen to inform Pynchon’s chronologically and historically later text, Zhang, as a Feng shui practitioner, also embodies a conflation of “ancient and New Age mysticism”<sup>657</sup> that is explained as being specifically Californian. Elizabeth Jane Wall Hinds highlights Zhang’s initial reaction to the Line to demonstrate this:

*“Feng Shui “honor[s] the Dragon or Shan within” the earth, while the unnatural right-angled Line “acts as a Conduit for what we call Sha, or as they say in Spanish California, Bad Energy””*.<sup>658</sup>

Channel View Estates or the references to Chavez Ravine and Bunker Hill are of course not Pynchon’s first exploration into American land management, given *Mason & Dixon* sustained and founding engagement with this concern, however

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<sup>657</sup> Elizabeth Jane Wall Hinds, ‘Introduction: The Times of *Mason & Dixon*’ in Elizabeth Jane Wall Hinds, ed., *The Multiple Worlds of Pynchon’s Mason & Dixon: Eighteenth-Century Contexts, Postmodern Observations* (New York: Camden House, 2009), p. 12.

<sup>658</sup> Pynchon, qtd. in Hinds, *ibid.*

the California focus of the trilogy certainly allows for issues initiated here to be developed and concentrated.

Curiously, this flattening approach to land management has not always been the case in Los Angeles as in the depiction of the 1920s topography of L.A., described by novelist John Fante:

“the hotel was called Alta Loma. It was built on a hillside in reverse, there on the crest of Bunker Hill, built against the decline of the hill, so that the main floor was on the level with the street but the tenth floor was down ten levels. If you had room 862, you got in the elevator and went down eight floors”.<sup>659</sup> (8)

Though Fante’s portrayal of Depression-era Bunker Hill is far from idealised, this depiction of the topography of the area and the accompanying approach to building and developing in this area, perfectly outlines a more sympathetic approach to development that would later be condemned by the city.

The contrasting plans actually proposed by the city were outlined in specific points that outright declare the intention of sectionalising and rebuilding the neighbourhood through:

“4. [The] elimination of an incompatible mixture of residential, commercial, industrial and public land uses.

7. [The] relocation of site occupants to a safer and more healthful residential environment.

9. [The] removal of unsightly conditions having a depressing effect on property values in the heart of the City”.<sup>660</sup>

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<sup>659</sup> John Fante, *Ask The Dust* (Edinburgh: Cannongate, 1999), p. 6.

<sup>660</sup> Bunker Hill Redevelopment Project Area.

These selected intentions suitably track the history of the development and redevelopment of Bunker Hill, whilst unintentionally proving to be a reminder, as with Neutra's intentions for Chavez Ravine, of the failure of such plans from their inception to their completion. Though points four and nine have been heartily fulfilled in theory, resulting in the complete overhaul of the landscape of Bunker Hill, they have also incurred the transfer of "the most valuable piece of real estate in Los Angeles" back to "the City, and especially the elite".<sup>661</sup>

As Loukaitou-Sideris summarises, and as Channel View Estates later fulfils, "that's the story of private markets and real estate markets".<sup>662</sup> However, point seven, as Pynchon documents, seems to have been overlooked, if not outright ignored.<sup>663</sup>

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<sup>661</sup> Manhattan Beach is now "an enclave for the extremely wealthy" and can be considered a playground of the rich. As one commentator on the comparable histories of Gordita and Manhattan Beach stated, "Manhattan Beach also has a shameful history of documented pro-segregationist tactics" that includes the establishment of Bruce's Beach which "catered to black Angelenos, who were excluded from the white high society beach clubs". See Molly Lambert, 'Gordita Perdita: Manhattan Beach and *Inherent Vice*', *Grantland* (18 December 2014), last accessed 2 March 2015, <<http://grantland.com/hollywood-prospectus/gordita-perdita-manhattan-beach-and-inherent-vice/>>. As is the case with Pynchon's example, the land of Bruce's Beach was later seized by the city and turned into a park. In more recent times, various news outlets have reported on a law in Manhattan Beach designed to keep out the "Riffraff". The statute states "It shall be unlawful for any person to use or occupy, permit the use or occupancy of any vehicle for human habitation, including but not limited to sleeping or eating, on any street, alley, park, beach, public parking lot or parking structure, or any public property within the City of Manhattan Beach between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.", which some argue targets the homeless. Although officials argue that this statute is no longer enforced, and "Stephanie Martin, a spokeswoman at the Manhattan Beach Police Department, denies the law is a thinly veiled method for displacing people of whom the 84.5 percent white town doesn't approve" it is cited in complaints by the locals who "enjoy a median household income of \$140,000 a year". Matt Ralston, 'Rich, White Manhattan Beach Keeps Out the Riffraff With a Weird Law Against Eating', *LA Weekly* (1 September 2015), last accessed 8 August 2016, <<http://www.laweekly.com/news/rich-white-manhattan-beach-keeps-out-the-riffraff-with-a-weird-law-against-eating-video-5981759>>.

<sup>662</sup> Loukaitou-Sideris qtd. in Rosenberg.

<sup>663</sup> Ironically, modern day Bunker Hill consists of new mixed-use commercial and residential spaces, in a return to the idea of the multi-functional neighbourhood. However, these spaces will be of little use to the former residents, who are now twice removed from the neighbourhood they once inhabited. This two-fold redevelopment has also created a district that has outpriced its former residents. According to the United States Census Bureau in 2011, American Indians and Alaskan Natives had a median income of \$35,192 (69.68% of the income of the population as a whole), last accessed 16 August 2016,

The unfulfilled point seven is also noted in the aforementioned *Exiles* article, which indeed states that no concrete plans were ever made to relocate the occupants, largely American Indians, of Bunker Hill to any other location, least of all “a safer and more healthful residential environment”. As a result, the “Indian enclave scattered” and Fleischer attempts to investigate and trace any remaining American Indian presence in Bunker Hill.<sup>664</sup> At this juncture the article skips between snapshots in the neighbourhood’s history and the landscape of contemporary Bunker Hill, creating a contrast between “fifty years ago [when] this area would have been packed with American Indians”, and “tonight, a few small dive bars, interspersed with some shuttered mom-and-pop businesses, are the only signs of life in these bleak environs”.<sup>665</sup>

Appropriately, the American Indians of Bunker Hill only exist in *Inherent Vice* in the form of Aunt Reet’s storytelling. Their relegation to memory is indicative of the overwhelming and lasting impact of urban redevelopment on the populations of L.A.. The article never attempts to glorify life in Bunker Hill for American Indians, and any nostalgia created in the article on Chavez Ravine is non-existent here. Instead the article focuses on establishing the contrast between past and present Bunker Hill through the lives of its American Indian residents through honing in on one of the dominant themes of *The Exiles*, “the existential pain, stemming from the loss of culture”.<sup>666</sup> This loss of culture is a recurring motif

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<[https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/facts\\_for\\_features\\_special\\_editions/cb12-ff22.html](https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/facts_for_features_special_editions/cb12-ff22.html)>. However, according to *Realtor.com*, the median listing price for houses in Bunker Hill is currently \$610,000. Last accessed 14 August 2016, <[http://www.realtor.com/local/Bunker-Hill\\_Los-Angeles\\_CA](http://www.realtor.com/local/Bunker-Hill_Los-Angeles_CA)>.

<sup>664</sup> Fleischer.

<sup>665</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>666</sup> Fleischer.

in both American Indian history and in Pynchon's global concerns. Inferences of nostalgia are inappropriate in this context given the pervasiveness of this phenomenon in American Indian history. Loss of culture does not occur in isolated examples, but rather has become a feature of the persisting broad American Indian culture itself which characterises the ongoing lived experiences of modern American Indians.

Indeed, Fleischer stresses that this was a fact of American Indian life and identity long before the redevelopment of Bunker Hill, stemming back to the move from reservation to city in the 1950s. In truth, this fact and the forced adaptation in American Indian life pre-dates the events of the article, back through American Indian history to the point of the first 'redevelopment' of the U.S. itself. However, the relocation to Bunker Hill and the subsequent eviction from this neighbourhood typifies the thwarted attempts of American Indians to reclaim and adapt aspects of their cultural experiences and lifestyle, as demanded by living in a new environment. Loss and dislocation is therefore not sudden, as perhaps is the case in Chavez Ravine, but is continuous and persistent. The perceived rootedness of a broad American Indian culture, highlighted in the discussions of the first chapter, is completely lost here in the Bunker Hill experience of a nomadic and spontaneous existence.

The article and *The Exiles* describes a practice called "49-ing",<sup>667</sup> which originated in Oklahoma and was a fairly recent development in the West Coast in the early 1960s. The origins of the 49 "were as a preparation for war among the plains tribes", but practised in a contemporary context 49-ing is a "way for young

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<sup>667</sup> Ibid.

people to let loose, to deal with all the stress they're facing".<sup>668</sup> The ritual, which involves gathering to dance, drum, chant and let loose "without the interference of the white world", is even credited in the article as helping to give rise to the American Indian Movement.<sup>669</sup> Furthermore, its development is cited as being important in invigorating the growing political consciousness of American Indians in the 1960s due to its Pan-Indian aesthetic and appeal. This practice, which is illustrative of a cultural experience that is unifying across tribal differentiation, is indicative of the need for a broad American Indian culture to adapt if it is to survive dislocation and upheaval, while being closely associated to a traditional practice also helps to configure American Indian identity in an urban environment.

Though the number 49 has obvious resonances in a Pynchonian context, and provides another possible interpretation for the meaning of the numerical choice in *The Crying of Lot 49*, this ritual is also important in framing Pynchon's depiction of the American Indian experience throughout the California trilogy, and in establishing similar concerns and patterns between texts.<sup>670</sup> Before the regrading, the landscaping and the influx of traffic, businesses, banks and luxury apartments, American Indians from all over Los Angeles would gather on 'Hill X', an empty lot overlooking downtown, to practice 49-ing. Shortly after the filming of *The Exiles*, Hill X was bulldozed, not as part of the Bunker Hill project, but appropriately given this Pynchonian thread, to make way for Dodger Stadium. The "long sad history of L.A. land use" seems typified in the history of this stadium,

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<sup>668</sup> Hanay Geiogamah, director of the UCLA American Indian Studies Center, qtd. in Fleischer.

<sup>669</sup> Fleischer.

<sup>670</sup> The Gold Rush of (18)49, which influenced settling patterns in California, is also responsible for the name of the American Football team, The San Francisco 49ers.

which is responsible for not only destroying Chavez Ravine and causing the displacement of its residents, but also for eliminating Hill X, a surrogate cultural space Los Angeles' American Indian residents.

Even as an “unsatisfying replacement” for reservation culture, this location was important in the attempt to adapt American Indian culture and identity to an urban location.<sup>671</sup> As perhaps a metonym for the traditional sacred place of many American Indian spiritual practices, Hill X developed a similar significance for the American Indians of Bunker Hill. Its mindless and insensitive destruction is indicative of the absolute disregard within the urban development philosophy for sacred spaces, as understood by other cultural groups. Even if it could be argued that Dodger Stadium is ritualistically important to baseball fans, thereby becoming a ‘revered’ place in some sense, the destruction of one group’s sacred and stabilizing place for the construction of the totem of another group testifies to the ideologically singular and insular principles of urban planning as feared by Jacobs, and dramatized by Pynchon.

The article characterises Bunker Hill as a “doomed space”,<sup>672</sup> and it is easy to see in human, historical and environmental contexts how this is fitting. In Pynchonian terms, the idea of the doomed space resonates throughout his work, from the culturally derelict zone of *Gravity’s Rainbow* to the ‘frontier myth’ of *Mason & Dixon*. In a Californian context, Pynchon’s doomed spaces are created as a result of karmically questionable acts, as in the example of the story of the African-American family who tried to move into an otherwise white

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<sup>671</sup> Fleischer.

<sup>672</sup> Ibid.

neighbourhood. On this occasion the citizens of the town “with helpful advice from the Ku Klux Klan” (*IV*, p. 14) burned the place to the ground. After these troubling events it is said that the site “refused to allow another house ever to be built”, as if “some ancient curse” dictated that no one would ever live there again (*IV*, p. 14). As with the doomed space of *The Exiles*, it seems that this plot of land has become burdened by an historical crime which has become a greater force than those trying to inhabit it. The properties of Pynchon’s doomed space are reminiscent of the sacred places of the previous chapter. Similarly, the place has taken on spiritual or karmic significance as a result of events or occurrences, however, in a doomed space the effect is negative and the area becomes saturated by the act of wrong-doing, sullyng it for all future uses. While a sacred place is the product of a sincere and harmonizing relationship with the environment, the doomed place occurs as a reaction to negative and destructive city planning acts or population management practices.

Historically, even developers imagined some kind of inherent vice in the landscape of Bunker Hill, with its difficult topography being problematic for development it consequently became blighted. This epitaph, as will be seen, is also applicable to Pynchon’s Channel View Estates, “a chipboard horror” whose creation inflicts the aforementioned assaults on the environment and its residents. In focusing on Pynchon’s outline of and attitude towards Channel View Estates, *Inherent Vice* could even be understood as a kind of post-colonial noir, as well as a stoner noir, that uncovers crimes perpetrated against the displaced and dispossessed populations of Los Angeles. In order to clarify this latter emphasis on notions of internal displacement and the cultural repercussions of disrupting

or destroying established neighbourhoods, it is therefore necessary to examine more closely Pynchon's illustration of the history of Channel View Estates itself, in the historical context of Chavez Ravine, Bunker Hill and the greater redevelopment of Los Angeles.

### **Community Histories: Channel View Estates**

In accordance with the geographical locations of Chavez Ravine and Bunker Hill, Pynchon situates Channel View Estates in South Los Angeles. On analyzing the co-ordinates and geographical markers provided by Doc, and casualty of Channel View Estates, Tariq, it is relatively easy, using the same method as in locating Vineland, to uncover the rough location of Channel View Estates within the already highly redeveloped cityscape of Los Angeles (see *Appendix 1*. 'Map Showing Suggested Location of Channel View Estates'). This method of locating a fictional development within historical L.A. allows Pynchon to sketch a history of the changing geographical and social landscape of the greater city, and furthermore, align Channel View Estates with these contemporary urban developments. In doing so, Pynchon is able to suggest some of the political and economic influences behind these developments, deepening enquiry into the processes that allow and facilitate the reorganisation of the social and geographical makeup of the postmodern city.

Channel View Estates is said to be located "a fairly straight shot from here eastward down Artesia Boulevard", and lies "closer to Gardena than Compton" (*IV*, p. 17). The estate also has "filtered views of an all-but-neglected branch of the

Dominguez Flood Channel” and streets that include “Kaufman and Broad” (*IV*, p. 20). Given these pointers it is possible to locate a rough estimate of Channel View Estates’ location, and thereby, situate the fictitious development within a specific contemporary L.A. social and geographical landscape. Given the proximity of the proposed site to Gardena, a city in the South Bay area of L.A., Doc concludes that despite appearances, Tariq must be Japanese. This conclusion is extracted from the fact that in 1970, 20% of the population of Gardena was Japanese, the highest percentage of any mainland U.S. city population at the time.<sup>673</sup> However, having already established several times that Tariq is “a black guy” (*IV*, p. 14), and to Doc’s mind, should be from nearer Compton, a predominantly African-American area. Doc still attempts to define Tariq according to the cultural heritage of the neighbourhood in which he lives.

This assumption is also important in the context of some advice that Doc remembers from college, that “the word is not the thing, the map is not the territory” (*IV*, p. 194). Whilst mapping in some sense is useful in establishing geographical association and affinity, it can also be reductive to understanding the complete composition of a geographical area. That Tariq’s neighbourhood has been wiped from the map as it were, its location on a map now identified as that of Channel View Estates, contributes to a larger narrative of mapping in the trilogy.

This notion of the blank spaces on the map can be understood using the framework suggested by Conrad’s use of this image in *Heart of Darkness* (1899). In this original example, the blank spaces are the as yet unexplored areas of the

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<sup>673</sup> See Brian Niiya, ed., *Japanese American History: An A-to-Z reference from 1868 to the Present* (New York: Facts On File, 1993), p. 144.

world, which in this colonial context is a comment on Colonialism's 'efforts' to fill in these spaces, in every sense of the verb. However, the blank space functions slightly more digressively in the trilogy. The previous chapter outlined the Thanatoid village, Shade Creek as not having been fully mapped or incorporated in Vineland County, which is argued as being a reflection of the intersection between the spiritual and physical qualities of the landscape and the inability of the mapping process to reconcile this. With this new focus on occupied and soon-to-become-re-occupied spaces, Shade Creek invites a new reading with more focus given to the exclusionary attitude of the non-Thanatoid residents of Vineland towards this community. The neighbourhood cannot be fully mapped in this sense because its residents cannot be fully understood by the standards that dictate this kind of spatial and cultural organization. In Conrad's use, the space is blank because the would-be occupier views it as something to be filled, however in a Pynchonian context, its blankness is also a comment on the mapper's ignorance of that which already occupies the space. In the case of Tariq's neighbourhood, it is, in line with this reasoning, a blank space on the map, however, it since it has also been overwritten on the map it also continues to exist as a "ghost town" (*IV*, p. 17).

Before notions of the ghostly can be addressed, it is important to further establish some foundational aspects of the character and construction of Channel View Estates. Doc is also surprised by Tariq's being resident "west of the Harbour Freeway", since he is aware of the aforementioned historical instance when an African-American family "had actually tried to move into [that] town" (*IV*, p. 14). Not only is Doc surprised that Tariq, as an African-American man, would want to

live in an area with such a historically hostile attitude towards black people, but also suggests that something more complicated is happening on a karmic level that would prevent him living there.

However, the social history of these neighbourhoods becomes more complicated than simply African-American areas or Japanese areas, as Tariq explains. Although “before the war, a lot of South Central was still a Japanese neighbourhood”, after this period “those people got sent to camps” (*IV*, p. 14). Tariq’s comment refers to the historical relocation of 110,000 Japanese people and people with Japanese ancestry to internment camps in the spring and summer of 1942. Executive order 9066, authorized by Franklin D. Roosevelt shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbour, was designed to exclude all people of Japanese ancestry from the entire Pacific Coast, which included all of California.<sup>674</sup>

The connecting Pacific Ocean is a significant point of reference in the California trilogy. While it may seem to be a natural boundary between the Pacific Coast of the U.S. and the Far East, for Oedipa it is “the unimaginable Pacific” that functions as both a limit and as “redemption for Southern California” (*L49*, p. 36). She sees this body of water, “the true Pacific” as remaining “inviolable and integrated” no matter what may occur at its edges (*L49*, p. 37). The redemptive quality of the Pacific is developed in *Inherent Vice* through the Lemuro-Atlantis layer of the narrative and Doc’s oceanic water imagery. In this imagined possible future, Southern California becomes overwhelmed by water sources that have heretofore been contained or channelled. In Doc’s vision the overflowing water becomes a “karmic waterscape” that assumes the land and becomes “an extension

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<sup>674</sup> Niiya, p 136.

of the Pacific" (*IV*, p. 166). The karmic quality of this event lends itself to contextually highlighted Eastern notions of karma, with the Pacific as a kind of geographical gateway to these beliefs. However, Pynchon's presentation of the role of the Pacific in this Californian synthesis of redemption and karma is perhaps more complex and will be examined more closely as the discussion progresses. For now it is significant to note the contrast between exclusionary domestic policy and Pynchon's understanding of the integrated and connecting quality of the geography and belief systems associated with those same group of people being removed from Californian soil and society.

Characterized as a military security measure, in public record, this historical relocation of hundreds of thousands of Japanese-American citizens is not just exclusionary, but is in Tariq's understanding an example of "white man's revenge" (*IV*, p. 17), which is the same impetus behind the displacement of Tariq and his community for the development of Channel View Estates. As he summarises, "we come on in to be the next Japs" (*IV*, p. 17). This perhaps gives new meaning to Doc's questioning of whether Tariq is Japanese. Though his confusion came from the limitations of the map which demarcated between different racially-characterized areas, his suggestion that Tariq must be Japanese might instead be a comment on the comparable treatment and relocation policies directed toward these different groups of people. While the map might suggest Japanese or African-American areas, it cannot articulate the complex cultural and political stratification of these areas or indeed provide an explanation as to the cause of the revenge relocation policies.

Tariq explains that the revenge, as he calls it, in the context of his neighbourhood is for the riots or “insurrection” in Watts (*IV*, p. 17). Though the history of racial segregation in Watts has been analysed in detail elsewhere by Pynchon in the aforementioned ‘A Journey into the Mind of Watts’, and is a further factual example of calculated discriminatory neighbourhood planning, for Tariq the insurrection is simply an excuse, the moment that the developers have been waiting for in order to push their plans forward. From its introduction, Channel View Estates has been presented as a construction that signifies more than it does simply in real estate terms. It instead becomes symbolic and suggestive of a political and economic determinacy to manipulate the social and cultural landscape of the city. Through charting the proposed development of Channel View Estates and detailing affinities between Pynchon’s fictions and historical redevelopment projects in Los Angeles, it is possible to uncover an alternative understanding of city planning where politically charged opportunistic moves are used in order to satisfy ends in commercial interests, and historic neighbourhoods become the unincorporated wastes of big business.

Pynchon’s Channel View Estates can in these terms be understood as the fictionalized climax of L.A.’s housing projects. The soon-to-be-former residents of Tariq’s community are characterized as the “bewildered” (*IV*, p. 19). As with the residents of Chavez Ravine, “looking around for the old neighbourhood, for rooms lived in day after day, solid as the axes of spades” (*IV*, p. 19), Pynchon contrasts the solidity and reliability of the old neighbourhood with the “OPPOS” (Overpriced piece of shit) (*IV*, p. 19) quality of the new builds, and the stability of the

longstanding houses with the “commotion and ruin” that characterises the new development.

However, where the Santillan family of Chavez Ravine is resentful, angry and nostalgic, Pynchon’s displaced people of Channel View Estates are ‘bewildered’. The sense of disconnect here is heightened by an apparent lack of understanding and confusion as to how to react, or as to their future after their displacement within their own neighbourhood. The etymology of ‘bewilder’, ‘be-’ meaning ‘*thoroughly*’, and the obsolete ‘*wilder*’ meaning to ‘*lead astray*’<sup>675</sup> also confirms that the residents have indeed been led astray during the course of the redevelopment. Targeting the use of the word ‘bewildered’ here again creates the possibility of further understanding the psychology of those, like Tariq who have lost their neighbourhoods. It is this feeling, unlike more apparent or familiar expressions such as anger or resentment, or more easily assimilable emotions like nostalgia, that broadens the implications of this localised displacement. This creates both a connection to more wide-scale instances of forced removal and displacement within Pynchon’s fiction and American history more generally and further reinforces the suggestion that *Inherent Vice* must usefully be understood as a kind of post-colonial noir.

In their study *Native American Postcolonial Psychology* (1995),<sup>676</sup> Eduardo Duran and Bonnie Duran address modern social problems such as alcoholism and suicide in American Indian communities through an American Indian perspective.

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<sup>675</sup> See ‘bewilder’, Def. 1, *Online Etymology Dictionary*, last accessed 8 August 2015, <<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=bewilder>>.

<sup>676</sup> Eduardo Duran and Bonnie Duran, *Native American Postcolonial Psychology* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995).

Duran and Duran argue that in order to understand these social and community issues it is imperative to acknowledge the phenomena of internalized trauma and oppression experienced by American Indians. Though they use American Indians as a specific case study, the raised awareness of the occurrence of psychological conditions resulting from postcolonial trauma can be applied to other population groups with comparable histories.

Duran and Duran emphasise the specific spatial element in a generalised American Indian psychology, stressing that while a Western viewpoint might highlight the time when a significant event occurred, “most Native American thinking conceptualizes history in a spatial fashion”.<sup>677</sup> Consequently, events are viewed “as a function of space or where the event actually took place”, with the community being particularly interested in the location of an event over the time-coding of that event.<sup>678</sup> Although this is presented by the study as an example of the limitations of applying a Western framework of psychology to American Indian subjects, it also has repercussions for the way place itself is latterly experienced by those who have been displaced, especially in consideration of revered or sacred places. Though Pynchon’s focus in *Channel View Estates* is an African-American community, the psychological impact is not limited by cultural or ethnic groupings. Though specific is of course crucial in Pynchon’s fiction, his readiness to connect individual example and suggest more general patterns can also be applied to the use of ‘bewildered’, which can in this sense be understood as an umbrella description for many of his displaced peoples.

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<sup>677</sup> Duran and Duran, p. 14.

<sup>678</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

The forced relocation of American Indian people after first contact with European settlers is characterized by Duran and Duran as the first “environmental shock”.<sup>679</sup> They describe the psychological impact of this event with words such as ‘trauma’, ‘grief’, ‘loss’ and ‘separation’, which are familiar and almost expected in a layman’s understanding of the vocabulary of modern Western psychology, and can be seen to function alongside Pynchon’s ‘bewildered’ as a complex psychological emotion. This is particularly important with regard to American Indian psychology since many first contact narratives ignore the psychological impact of the event and characterize the effect on American Indians in terms of quantifying statistics that measure loss in terms of bloodshed and disease, or qualify the impact of first contact on American Indians in broadly anthropological terms. Conversely, Pynchon’s depiction of the displaced community of Channel View Estates is psychologically rendered. The reaction in simplest terms is emotional and at its most developed is psychologically complex.

Given the historical distance and a more general social familiarity with psychology and psychological disorders such as PTSD, it is perhaps not surprising to a modern reader that Duran and Duran choose to use an instinctively significant event such as first contact as an example of psychological trauma experienced by American Indians. However, amongst the study’s other examples, which include significant and familiar markers in the ‘settling’ of America such as religious conversion practices and the re-education of American Indian children in white schools, he highlights the “forced relocation and termination period” of the 1950s as being especially traumatic.<sup>680</sup> This is, of course, in reference to events leading

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<sup>679</sup> Duran and Duran, p. 32.

<sup>680</sup> Duran and Durham., p. 34.

up to the American Indian occupation of Bunker Hill “when Native American people were forcibly relocated from reservations into large metropolitan areas such as San Francisco and Los Angeles”.<sup>681</sup> Whilst the BIA emphasised the socially progressive benefits of the UIRA, the psychological impact is not the greatest considered in the development of these intentions. Duran and Duran however emphasise that the psychological effects of being “dumped into cities with no support”, which manifest as “refugee syndrome as well as concentration camp syndrome”.<sup>682</sup> The symptoms and effects of refugee syndrome closely resemble PTSD and associated disorders such as anxiety and depressive disorders.<sup>683</sup> It is therefore hugely significant that the American Indian experience of displacement is acknowledged in these recognized and standardized terms.

In a statement by The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the situation of the contemporary refugee is characterised thus:

“The majority of today’s refugees have lived in exile for far too long, restricted to camps or eking out a meagre existence in urban centres throughout the developing world. Most subsist in a state of limbo, and are often dependent on others to find solutions to their plight”.<sup>684</sup>

Though this definition may seem applicable to the situation of American Indians during this “forced relocation and termination period” in San Francisco and Los Angeles, one important distinction is that American Indians have not

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<sup>681</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>682</sup> Ibid.

<sup>683</sup> Studies among Indochinese refugees have developed the association between these disorders in numerous studies during the late 1980s and early 1990s, which includes Beiser et al. 1989 and Boehnlein et al. 1985.

<sup>684</sup> Gil Loescher and James Milner, ‘Protracted Refugee Situations: The Search for Practical Solutions’, in *UNHCR- The State of the World’s Refugees* (2006), last accessed 3 March 2015, <<http://www.unhcr.org/4444afcb0.html>>.

crossed an international border during their relocation, but instead have been displaced within their own geographical space. According to definitions again provided by the UNHRC, the status of American Indians is more akin to that of an internally displaced person (IDP) in that they may have been moved for similar reason as those of refugees, but remain within the borders of their home country. Thus Pynchon's verbs when describing the forced removal of the various communities of Los Angeles generate a more political statement. To be bounced, swept or bulldozed aside is simply to be cast adrift, not consciously moved to another location. In this framework there is no relocation only removal. Significantly, American Indians and other indigenous peoples are not amongst the IDPs protected or assisted by the UNHRC, and are not widely or officially recognised as IDPs by major humanitarian bodies.<sup>685</sup>

However, amongst academic communities the status of American Indians and other indigenous peoples is more widely recognised, and Pynchon's depiction of Tariq's community is certainly comparable to the aforementioned definition. The educational resource *Human Rights in the World Community: Issues and Action*, which has already published three editions, recognises this population as "the largest (300 to 500 million) [and] most disadvantaged group whose status has not yet been fully addressed by legal standards and mechanisms pertinent to the values of basic decency and equality".<sup>686</sup> The authors also explain how this population is sometimes referred to as the "Fourth World", since it is often "forgotten or, for economic reasons, deliberately ignored".<sup>687</sup> In American Indian

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<sup>685</sup> Richard Pierre Claude and Burns H. Weston, 'Introduction to Chapter Two: Basic Decencies and Participatory Rights', in Richard Pierre Claude and Burns H. Weston, eds., *Human Rights in the World Community: Issues and Action* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), p. 70.

<sup>686</sup> Claude and Weston., p. 76.

<sup>687</sup> Ibid.

terms the extended exclusion to another 'world' obviously has more a troubling cultural significance than simply being a negligent status based on successive numbering.

Though the psychological and political status of refugees and IDPs is of course important in understanding Pynchon's depiction of the residents of Chavez Ravine, Bunker Hill and those displaced by Channel View Estates, his confrontation of displacement continues beyond these experiences, or even the American Indian experience, to potentially that of all Californians. Pynchon's imagining of displacement is not limited to communities within Los Angeles neighbourhoods, but instead extends to the state of California itself, which is itself an exile of an entirely lost world. The politics of displacement are therefore complicated by an added element of alternative histories.

The complex relationship between ideology and alternative histories is largely not applicable to Pynchon's use of these histories in this context, and this analysis is not concerned with the larger and well-documented critical debate on questions of politics, ideology and mythology. However, there is an aspect of Terry Eagleton's examination of ideology and mythology (as a less than desirable moniker for alternative history) that proves useful in understanding Pynchon's use of alternative histories in depicting the large-scale implications of displacement.<sup>688</sup> In attempting to differentiate between myth and ideology, Eagleton notes the differing historical relatability of each term. Myths, he argues "are typically pre-historical or dehistoricizing, fixing events in some eternal present or viewing them as infinitely repetitive", while ideologies are generally,

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<sup>688</sup> Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London: Verso, 1991).

“more specific, pragmatic forms of discourse” which may encompass the “metaphysical” concerns of myth and “often do dehistoricize”, but relate “more directly on questions of power”.<sup>689</sup> In applying these definitions to Pynchon’s examination of displacement, it is easy to see that the urban planning philosophy driving the redevelopment of examples like Bunker Hill and Channel View Estates are indeed related to practical ideologies of power, specifically in relation to land ownership and management, and ideas of cultural superiority. However, Pynchon’s alternative history of the lost world of California does not function as dehistoricizing, but rather as alternatively historical.

The alignment of folk history, anecdote and alternative history becomes a marker of Pynchon’s lost world narrative. Though Chavez Ravine, Bunker Hill and Channel View Estates are neighbourhoods that have been destroyed, the result of placing these narratives alongside Pynchon’s introduction of hypothetical lost worlds such as Atlantis and Lemuria, is the creation of a more general lost world narrative. This is a powerful and significant device, and this hypothetical layer creates a subjunctive effect that asks important questions about what these neighbourhoods, (especially Elysian Heights which in fact never came to be) might have been.<sup>690</sup> This is not simply an exercise in mythmaking, but rather a device used for re-examining the political and social implications of historical ideological practices in matters of place and community, and in establishing identity both locally and nationally through alternative narrative means.

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<sup>689</sup> Eagleton, p. 187.

<sup>690</sup> It is ironic that a place named after an Ancient Greek conception of an afterlife where “certain souls, chosen by the gods, enjoyed a happy afterlife” is never realised for the former residents of Chavez Ravine. In a cross-cultural sense it seems, they can be understood as preterite. For definition of Elysium see ‘Afterlife’, in David Sacks, *A Dictionary of the Ancient Greek World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 9.

## Refuge

In this conception of lost homelands, which is elaborated upon across both *Inherent Vice* and *Vineland*, Pynchon draws on familiar stories to imagine a sense of collective and even state-level exile. *Inherent Vice*'s Sortilège articulates this through evoking the story of the hypothetical lost continent of Lemuria. Although Pynchon similarly evokes Atlantis as another lost continent, it seems particularly appropriate in the context of one of the focus displaced people of the text, that it is Lemuria that receives the most focus and scrutiny. A common event in the narrative of the many myths and legends of this lost continent is the supposed lineage between the refugees of Lemuria and American Indians. These esoteric claims range from theories that American Indians are genetic descendants of Lemurians, to beliefs that suggest the Lemurians live inside Mount Shasta, the widely regarded sacred place in many American Indian cultures.<sup>691</sup> Of course, these are very much niche ideas, confined to specialist interest books and websites that serve to enhance and elaborate on the narrative of Lemuria<sup>692</sup>, however there

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<sup>691</sup> Shasta here also has the more immediate resonance as being the name of Doc's "ex old lady" (IV, p. 40).

<sup>692</sup> One particularly valuable source in this regard is 'The Lemurian Connection' newsletter and website, which strives to inform its readers on the history of the lost continent of Lemuria founded by Aurelia Louise Jones who is said to have channelled Adama, the High Priest or "spiritual leader in the sacred Lemurian city of Light called Telos [which lies] beneath Mount Shasta. The newsletter has global international publishers and organizers also hold spiritual retreats at Mount Shasta called 'Initiatic Journeys'. See 'The Lemurian Connection', specialist interest website, last accessed 21 September 2015, <<http://www.lemurianconnection.com/>>. Another important source is the Association for Research and Enlightenment (A.R.E.), founded psychic and medical clairvoyant, Edgar Cayce. The website of the A.R.E has a dedicated section on 'The Hopi Indians and the Edgar Cayce Readings', which claims that Cayce discovered a connection between the Hopi and Lemuria, based on genetic factors and similarities between the received history of Lemuria and Hopi traditional stories. While genetic substantiation may seem an obvious factor to use in a convincing argument given a Western predilection toward scientific confirmation, it is curious that Hopi traditional stories are also used to add credence to Cayce's thesis. Those who proliferate their own alternative histories are perhaps more sympathetic to the traditional stories of other cultural groups. See John Fuhler, 'The Hopi Indians and the Edgar Cayce Readings', *Association for Research*

is one aspect of these fringe beliefs that is remarked on by Pynchon that is perhaps more noteworthy and relevant to this particular discussion of displacement.

In his rendering of the final day of Lemuria, imagined by an intoxicated Doc, Pynchon describes “three Lemurian holy men”, landing on the shores of the modern day U.S., bringing with them the “sacred stone of Mu” which would be the foundation of their new life (*IV*, p. 109). Although these holy men are of course never referred to in other Lemurian narratives (Pynchon’s own contribution perhaps), there is much discussion amongst enthusiasts about the transmission of Lemurian culture and knowledge to the inhabitants of their new homeland of the U.S.. According to Edgar Cayce, cited in the appropriately titled *Lemuria and Atlantis: Studying the Past to Survive the Future* (2004), one such group trusted with safeguarding the knowledge of Lemuria, are American Indians, who have respectfully preserved this knowledge for thousands of years.<sup>693</sup> In her analysis of the hypothetical history of Lemuria and its incarnations across many cultures, sceptic Sumathi Ramaswamy considers the connection between Lemurians and American Indians, especially in “Euro-American occultism” to be the most revealing.<sup>694</sup> She argues the convenience of the connection between Lemurians and people like “Tibetans, Eskimos, Mayans, Native Americans...Indian and other ‘Orientals’”, since they are largely dismissed by metropolitan disciplines are generally regarded as “people without history”.<sup>695</sup> As a result, she argues, it is easier to fabricate or learn “through esoteric practices” the ancestry or chronicles

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*and Enlightenment*, last accessed 21 September 2015, <<http://www.edgarcayce.org/about-us/blog/blog-posts/the-hopi-indians-and-edgar-cayce>>.

<sup>693</sup> See Shirley Andrews, *Lemuria and Atlantis: Studying the Past to Survive the Future* (Minnesota: Llewellyn Publications, 2004).

<sup>694</sup> Sumathi Ramaswamy, *The Lost Land of Lemuria: Fabulous Geographies, Catastrophic Histories* (California: University of California Press, 2004), p. 165.

<sup>695</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.

of people whose history has not been documented in a way that is as easily verifiable.<sup>696</sup>

The notion of the lost world narrative also incurs an added layer in this context, of being a lost narrative in itself. The dislocation is therefore two-fold in that the loss occurs to both the world itself, but also to the narrative, which has either been forgotten or disregarded. Pynchon's reinsertion of this alternative historical layer therefore also serves as a reminder of the narratives lost to "metropolitan disciplines".<sup>697</sup> This is perhaps best communicated in Pynchon's motif of the "seen parts of a tapestry", from which all intricacies, complications and nuances have been "worked out" (*GR*, p. 422). Furthermore, this notion relates to pervasive concerns throughout his work of the "great Tangle of Lines" (*M&D*, p. 349) of history being ordered into a single chain, though here the articulation has a specific and direct focus.

For Pynchon, perhaps one of the most pertinent reasons for evoking Lemuria in this context is the possibilities of re-emergence or recovery of the lost world, and the implications of this. Sortilège reiterates that "there's always been predictions that someday Lemuria would re-emerge" (*IV*, p. 102), and that no time would be better than now, or 1970, the contemporary setting of the novel. The apt timing of this re-emergence is ascribed to Sortilège's astrological calendar, which indicates that "Neptune [is] moving at last out of the Scorpio death trip" (*IV*, p. 102). According to astrologists, the passage of Neptune through Scorpio occurred between October 1956 and November 1970, essentially spanning the length of the

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<sup>696</sup> Ibid.

<sup>697</sup> Ibid.

Sixties, and finishing in the temporal location of *Inherent Vice* from which Sortilège speaks. The energy caused by Neptune's passage through Scorpio is said to have "open[ed] you to the psychic side of life and/or escape through drugs, alcohol, sex, meditation, or spiritual practice".<sup>698</sup> This seems quite retrospectively fortuitous given the caricature of Sixties' popular and spiritual culture. However, it is noteworthy that the passage of Neptune through Scorpio also creates a period of either transformation or degeneration, dependent on a degree of individual choice, (except for those born in this period who will pay off the past "karmic debts" of their parents).<sup>699</sup>

This is of course significant given Pynchon's presentation of the Sixties as a decade "that offers that chance of redeeming that American essence".<sup>700</sup> This notion of possibility also reaffirms the subjunctive effect of Pynchon's addition of the alternative historical layer to the lost world narratives of *Inherent Vice*, which is perhaps more poetically expressed in Doc's association of a seashell necklace "maybe even brought back from a distant Pacific island" with "one of the zones in Mickey's now-abandoned project [Arrepentimiento] in the desert" (*IV*, p. 262).

However, this subjunctive potential is perhaps more likely realised at the time of the setting of *Inherent Vice*, given that that the passing of Neptune into Sagittarius signals "the potential for a deeper understanding of the meaning of life than in previous signs"<sup>701</sup>. Thus, all is not lost at the end of the Sixties, but rather

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<sup>698</sup> Carl Woebcke, 'Neptune in Scorpio', *The Astrology Reading of a Lifetime*, last accessed 4 March 2015, <<http://www.myastronomybook.com/Neptune-in-Scorpio-all-about-Scorpio-Neptune.htm>>.

<sup>699</sup> This quotation on karmic debt is not taken from Pynchon, but rather from the above astrology website that espouses a similar idea of repaying the debts of the past to Pynchon's own notion.

<sup>700</sup> Hock, p. 202.

<sup>701</sup> Woebcke.

the advent of the Seventies signals further possibility for redemption without the either/or conflict of the previous astrological and historical period. Given this uncomplicated possibility for deeper understanding, Sortilège's conclusion that 1970 is this perfect time for the re-emergence of Lemuria is wholly appropriate. Of course, Sortilège's digressions do not occur in conceptual or temporal isolation. The idea of a lost world re-emerging during a larger narrative that is focused on the loss of neighbourhoods and community spaces to urban redevelopment project is of course significant. Given this association and comparable histories of loss and destruction, the parallels between Lemuria and Pynchon's other lost worlds is strengthened. By extension therefore, it seems logical given this similarity that Chavez Ravine, Bunker Hill and Channel View Estates are subject to the same subjunctive speculation.

In Pynchon's construction, Lemuria is not simply a hypothetical lost land, but also the ghost of a lost land, and like Pynchon's other ghosts is capable of returning. It seems that in both Sortilège's and Doc's imaginings of Lemuria, the presiding understanding of the reason behind this re-emergence is for the rescue of the inhabitants. Sortilège's understanding of the Lemuria narrative is that those who fled the continent are now living in California, which according to Doc makes the state "like, a ark" (*IV*, p. 352). Though the symbol of the ark does evoke the prior catastrophe of a flood, which is similar in both accounts, it is also suggestive of the possibility of salvation and renewal. Thus, California, like Silko's Laguna, or the Emergence Place of Mount Shasta, is theoretically a space from which all life can re-emerge after disaster.

However, this possibility is quickly quashed by Sauncho, the novel's marine insurance advisor, who instead defines California the Ark as a "nice stable piece of real estate" (*IV*, p. 352), thus undermining any redemptive prospects suggested by the designation 'ark' and confirming only its redevelopment potential. In this dialogue the conflict between frameworks is apparent, with Doc imagining California within an alternative-salvation construction and Sauncho evaluating the State according to more mainstream contemporary economic standards. By extension of Sauncho's analysis, the urban development projects of California are not only responsible for displacing particular communities, but are also responsible for destroying California's potential as a refuge.

This image of California as a safe place, or the destination for exiles is revisited in Doc's imaginings, which further conflates Lemuria with Los Angeles. In these visions, Doc finds himself "in the vividly lit ruin of an ancient city" (*IV*, p. 108), which both is and isn't Greater L.A.. Accordingly, the inhabitants of the city are, and are not "refugees from the disaster which had submerged Lemuria thousands of years ago" (*IV*, p. 108), and are now exiled in California. That California both is and isn't a land composed of refugees is not a folly of subjunctive mythmaking, but rather is reflective of the sorts of events themselves that Pynchon suggests have led to this outcome.

Pynchon extends the marijuana-induced vision experienced by Doc to include the events that are imagined to have led up to the demise of Lemuria, but that also further situate this mythology alongside historical precedents. The historical marker in this myth is the war in Indochina, which "unavoidably" figures in the narrative (*IV*, p. 108). Through a subtle and complex synthesis of the

narrative of Lemuria and documented political history, Pynchon explains that the U.S., suitably caught between the two seas into which Atlantis and Lemuria disappeared, is believed to be fighting a war in Southeast Asia “out of free will” (*IV*, p.109). However, what transpires is that Nixon (imagined as a descendent of Atlantis) and Ho Chi Minh (a descendent of Lemuria) are involved in a proxy war, and that all wars in that area have been in fact “proxy wars” (*IV*, p. 109).

The real conflict, it is explained, stems from a time “before the Catholic Church, before the Buddha”, that is before some more of the assumed causes of these conflicts, to a clash between the Lemurians and “the terrible inundation which had taken their homeland” (*IV*, p. 109). The conflicts are therefore only proxy wars, and their assumed causes, only proxy causes, with the actual, predating conflict being between the land itself and its inhabitants. It is in fact a flight from natural disaster that is the first cause of dispossession and exile. However, the highlighted subsequent conflicts’ characterisation as ‘proxy wars’ does not detract from their influence or significance, since their imagined culpability has created tangible outcomes. What this does highlight is a more resounding and profound causation to those that have been highlighted by political storytelling.

Of course, as is the case in Pynchon’s synthesis of narrative layers, it is not as straightforward as to say that natural disasters are the foremost cause of the dispossession experienced by the Lemurians. Though the mythology of Lemuria suggests that a devastating flood overtook the continent causing its ultimate submergence beneath the Pacific Ocean, Pynchon’s rendering is more specific about the cause of this flood. What Pynchon suggests, through Sortilège’s teacher

Vehi Fairfield, is that both Lemuria and Atlantis sank into the sea because “Earth couldn’t accept the levels of toxicity they’d reached” (*IV*, p. 105). The illustrative prophecy of the flood of Lemuria is therefore not just an example of natural phenomena dictating the migrations of human beings, but rather is clarified by Pynchon as being the consequence of destructive human agency, with the underlying cause being the environmental destruction enacted upon the Earth.

The connection between Lemuria and Channel View Estates is further qualified in Pynchon’s clarification since the environmental impact caused by developments such as Channel View Estates has repercussions beyond its immediate geographical vicinity and local populations, and is instead part of a pattern of behaviour worthy of inclusion alongside the elevated narratives of Atlantis and Lemuria. Thus, in accordance with Eagleton’s definition, Pynchon’s alternative suggestions of the some of the effects and outcomes of environmental destruction has both the effect of “fixing events in some eternal present or viewing them as infinitely repetitive”, but without the dehistoricizing effect that Eagleton suggests. On the contrary, Pynchon’s calculated balance between recorded political historical and alternative historical insertion universalizes and elevates the impact of environmental damage whilst maintaining and reinforcing the immediacy and tangibility of its impact on a familiar setting.

Pynchon’s contemplation of the loss of homeland is thus given a deeper dimension. Whatever the social or political motivations are that contribute to homelessness, dispossession, exile and forced migration, the ultimate cause is the destruction of the homeland itself. That is not to say that these ‘proxies’ are not hugely significant, as it clear from Pynchon’s sustained examination of the

principles and motivations behind Channel View Estates, but rather that the consequences of the actions of these proxies have a more elemental impact.

It is no coincidence that throughout Doc's vision Tiny Tim is singing "The Ice Caps Are Melting" (*IV*, p. 108), which includes lyrics such as "the tide is rushing in/All the world is drowning/to wash away the sin" that resonate with both Lemurian history and the predicament the Earth is in according to Vehi and Sortilège.<sup>702</sup> The song can also be seen as more than a reiteration of these ideas, and also includes the added notion that "the map has changed/and with it, me"<sup>703</sup>. The correlation between mapping configurations and the body is strengthened and expanded here to include the entirety of a person, which changes as the map is altered. Mapping is therefore understood in many ways. Though it can be a useful measure of territory and geography, as Doc's teacher suggests, it cannot account for the complete make up of an area. However, the idea of a person being changed according to alterations is a map reinforces the land-inhabitant connection which has been established by many of Pynchon's thinkers, from *Mason & Dixon's* Captain Zhang to the residents of Chavez Ravine, Bunker Hill and Channel View Estates.

The subjunctive function of Lemuria is therefore complicated by the extinction imagery of toxicity, which recalls the contextually relevant Cold War Hopi prophecies of the first chapter. The coding of these warnings in traditional narratives elevates their status and relevance across contemporary time frames. As Eagleton suggests, mythology is concerned with the "great 'metaphysical'

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<sup>702</sup> Full lyrics can be found at *Azlyrics.com*, last accessed 16 August 2016, <<http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/tinytim/theotherside.html>>.

<sup>703</sup> *Ibid.*

questions of birth, sexuality and death, of sacred times, places and origins”<sup>704</sup>, and if this can include questions of origin it can surely extend to questions of extinction. In this sense, Pynchon’s inclusion of Lemurian history acts as a warning against the Earth reaching the same levels of toxicity, and therefore operates as another of Pynchon’s ghosts, which like the previously discussed *woge of Vineland* would offer salvation.

For these purposes, it is perhaps useful again to draw on the “river of ghosts” of the *Vineland* chapter, but in this context, now viewed as a symbol of resistance. The previously cited “unison chants of dispossession and exile” of the river *woge* are echoed in the final pages of *Vineland*, however in this closing depiction, the voices are no longer mournful or lamenting. At its zenith, the river has become a conflation of “all the things voices do”. They are not “chanting together” as before, but rather are “remembering, speculating, arguing, telling tales, uttering curses [and] singing songs”. In this depiction, the voices of the river of ghosts act as a manifestation of collectiveness and community. These acts are that which construct the culture of these beings, as it is in these expressions that their existence is known and distinguished. For every verb used in this depiction of the *woge* there is a correlating character or presence in *Inherent Vice*, Aunt Reet as storyteller, Doc as investigator, Bigfoot Bjornsen as (Doc’s) challenger, Sortilège as alternative-narrator, karmic debts and the many musicians and musical interludes. These expressions establish the communities of Gordita Beach and Greater L.A. of *Inherent Vice*, and in this sense provide a sense of resistance since the voices do not stop or ever allow “the briefest breath of silence” (*VL*, p. 379).

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<sup>704</sup> Eagleton, p. 187.

In casting the river of ghosts and the collective expression of the communities of *Inherent Vice* in a role of resistance, the role of ghosts and the nature of ghostliness is re-imagined. Ghostliness is no longer conceived of as a residual state, or a weakened force, but rather as Lemuria, is something perhaps once diminished that is returning.

The indestructibility of the river highlights this perfectly. In both the narratives of *Inherent Vice* and *Vineland*, water, as a slight departure of the Pacific Ocean narrative, appears as a strong, resolute and returning force. This is particularly apparent in another of Doc's visions where "the old namesake river" (*IV*, p. 166), which once ran through the town re-emerges from all its containers, a river now in a weakened state having been "canalised and tapped, and crippled into a public and anonymous confession of the deadly sin of greed" (*IV*, p. 166). This depiction of corruption in land and resource use is familiar throughout *Inherent Vice's* depiction of Channel View Estates, and occurs across Californian neo noir narratives, as in Polanski's *Chinatown* (1974), where water rights and ownership are at the centre of the detective mystery. The aforementioned river of Doc's imagination now fills up again to create a "karmic waterscape of the city's lots and streets" (*IV*, p. 166).

It is in the imagery of the "unrelenting return" (*IV*, p. 166) of the river that it finds a connection with Lemuria, and further establishes the conception of ghostliness as a returning force. This clarification of ghostliness as a present, but diminished, returning force, is indebted to Daniel Punday's reading of Derrida's *Specters of Marx* (1993).<sup>705</sup> Punday's distillation of this idea into "the return of the

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<sup>705</sup> Daniel Punday, 'Pynchon's Ghosts', *Contemporary Literature*, 44/2 (2003). p. 257

past as an anticipated future”,<sup>706</sup> clearly chimes with Pynchon’s visions of both Atlantis and Lemuria and the river of ghosts. However, it is important to note that while Punday’s analysis is focused in the manifestation of ghosts as the temporal interplay between past and present, with the misdeeds themselves as the slightly overlooked cause of these chasms, the focus here is also different. It is the misdeeds themselves, and their prevailing presence, whether in the form of ghost towns such as Chavez Ravine and Bunker Hill, or in the “river of ghosts” of the previous chapter and Doc’s returning river, that the emphasis is placed in this context.

### **Residues**

Until now, this analysis has been focused on these misdeeds themselves, urban redevelopment, community displacement and acts of environmental abuse, however it is also useful to further analyse the ghostly outcomes or consequences of these acts, in order to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between land use and ghostliness, which has been initiated by the discussion of Lemurian mythology.

As Punday suggests, Pynchon is not the first to cast ghosts as prophesising emissaries from another time, a warning from the past about the future, and it is from this conception that some previous concerns can be further developed. Douglass Keeseey’s essay on ‘Nature and the Supernatural: Pynchon’s Ecological Ghost Stories’ (1986),<sup>707</sup> supports a similarly foreboding approach to Pynchon’s

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<sup>706</sup> Ibid., p. 257.

<sup>707</sup> Douglass Keeseey, ‘Nature and the Supernatural: Pynchon’s Ecological Ghost Stories’, *Pynchon Notes*, 18-19 (1986).

ghosts. In this analysis, with attention given to the Frans Van dar Groov and the dodos episode of *Gravity's Rainbow*, and Benny Profane's alligator hunting episodes of *V.*, ghosts are understood as the ecological warning "that in destroying others in the physical world, one is really destroying oneself".<sup>708</sup> While there are some forays into the ideologies that create such disjunctions, Keesey's conclusion is much like his opening statement, that Pynchon's ghosts are a message of interdependence and interconnectedness, who warn that "to kill is to be killed".<sup>709</sup>

Given a previously established context of experimentation in spirituality, particularly in spiritual traditions of Eastern or American Indian origin which focus on a perceived sense of profound connectedness between all living things, this reading is resonant and appealing. Though perhaps Keesey's examples are somewhat direct, the dodos and the alligators are literally hunted, and the partygoers in 'Mortality and Mercy in Vienna' are murdered (as is also the case with *Vineland's* Weed Atman), the notion of death, or specifically murder, being the cause of the disruption to a unified living whole, is perhaps more useful in this analysis of Pynchon's notion of ghostliness.

To return one last time to Jane Jacobs' objections to modern urban development plans, it is the ideal of interdependence that is once again upheld. For Jacobs, the crime of modern urban planning is the destruction of the interconnectedness of elements that creates a vital and liveable city. Working within Keesey's framework, the disruption of the cohesive whole of the city is the death of this notion of interconnectedness. The ensuing cities are not 'killed' in

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<sup>708</sup> Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>709</sup> Ibid., p. 84.

Keeseey's sense however, but rather in their physical or symbolic destruction, they prevail as ghost towns.

Chavez Ravine, for example, has an historical existence, which according to some academic definitions qualifies its status as a ghost town, in that "the only true ghost town, is the one that is completely gone".<sup>710</sup> However it is perhaps Lambert Florin's definition of a ghost town, created in reference to Oregon ghost towns, of a town with a "shadowy semblance of its former self",<sup>711</sup> that is perhaps most satisfying in this discussion. The ghost town, by this definition, as applied to historical instances such as Chavez Ravine, is also more obviously politically charged since the shadowy semblance has been caused by human intervention. As such, the subjunctive effect is escalated by an obvious interplay between temporality. This is both reminiscent of Punday's work, and it also significant in consideration of motivating function of Lemurian history.

In Pynchonian terms, the ghost town can therefore be construed within this theoretical and historical framework as the reminder and remainder of the ills of anti-community urban redevelopment practices. Though the notion of the ghost town has been very literally dealt with in *Vineland* in the form of the Thanatoid community, this manifestation, which has been very comprehensively and extensively covered by criticism, has a different emphasis to that being described in this discussion. While the existence of the Thanatoids has karmic implications that are similar to those highlighted here, this emphasis is on misdeeds and karmic debts specifically in relation to landscape. Thus, the notion

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<sup>710</sup> Robert L. Brown, *Ghost Towns of the Colorado Rockies* (Idaho: The Caxton Printers, 2006), p. 15.

<sup>711</sup> Lambert Florin qtd. in Brown, p. 15.

of the ghost town can be clarified as a haunted landscape, which can be applied to the redeveloped neighbourhoods and communities evoked by Pynchon in his narrative of Channel View Estates.

The aforementioned correlation between Keesey's and Jacobs' work, though reductive to the concept of the ghost town as a whole, is useful in helping to situate Pynchon's presentation of landscape, and specifically, urban communities within the landscape, within existing scholarship on ghostliness. Indeed the notion of ghostliness is never far from Pynchon's discussion of urban development and real estate.

The anecdote discussed earlier about a house in Gordita Beach which was burned down when an African-American family tried to move into a white neighbourhood is an example of this interplay between (vigilante) urban planning and ghostliness. Martin Eve reads this passage as uncovering an interplay between "contemporary housing" which functions as "the representative of civilisation and enlightenment", and the beach as part of a myth surrounding subjunctive hope. In this analysis, Eve views the destruction of the house as transferring "conceptual domination" to the beach, however, more pertinently though he acknowledges the existence of karmic adjustment, this factor only "masks a history of horrific racial attacks and property seizures".<sup>712</sup>

In this analysis, the angle is slightly different to that of Eve's, for while the power-play between the natural landscape (the beach) and human constructions

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<sup>712</sup> Martin Paul Eve, *Pynchon and Philosophy, Pynchon and Philosophy: Wittgenstein, Foucault and Adorno* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), p. 153.

(houses) is important, the fact that Pynchon imagines “some ancient curse had come into effect” (*IV*, p. 14) and prevents any other house ever being built on that site is overwhelming. This does not detract from the tangible act of discrimination, but instead suggests that the consequences are more than immediate and direct and are instead considered according to some kind of universal measure. It is perhaps a variation on the haunted house motif that the house cannot even be built, and instead exists in the form of a sort of absent presence.

The motif of the haunted house is reworked by Pynchon in the form of the haunted Indian burial ground, which has also played its role in many an outdated horror story, including classic examples such as *The Amityville Horror* (1979) and *The Shining* (1980). Bigfoot recalls how “this place [Gordita Beach] has been cursed from the jump”, since it was once the land of American Indians and is built right on top of “an Indian graveyard” (*IV*, p. 355). Doc understands, from his own experience of horror movies, that the act of building upon “a sacred portal of access to the spirit world” is “the worst kind of bad karma” (*IV*, p. 355). The apparent residue and prevalence of the graveyard in the landscape leaves Bigfoot so uncomfortable that he “couldn’t wait to get away” (*IV*, p. 355). As is consistent in Pynchon’s current model, the misdeed is once again in this example, the actions of “evil” developers who “didn’t care where they built as long as the lots were level and easy to get to” (*IV*, p. 355). The pattern of development is similar to that behind Channel View Estates, where Wolfmann is decried as having no regard of the importance of features and history of the land to others and builds on any plot of land as long as it is practically convenient or can be flattened and regraded into usefulness.

In this example, the layered quality of the landscape is further explicated. Whilst the physical configurations of the land are flattened, the narratives of the landscape are overwritten in a process similar to the analogy described by Martin Eve of the paving stones and the beach. This pattern of overwriting is similarly true of Pynchon's approach to narrative in the context of neighbourhood history. For example, Bigfoot prefaces his narrative of the burial ground beneath Gordita Beach with a condensed history of the American Indians who previously inhabited the area. He summarises "Indians lived here long ago, they had a drug cult, smoked toloache which is jimsonweed, gave themselves hallucinations, deluded themselves they were visiting other realities" (IV, p. 355). Though this summary may not exude the narrative refinement of *Sortilège* or Aunt Reet, the details included serve to highlight the span and diversity of cultural activity in the area, whilst maintaining the strong presence of the features of the landscape itself.

The Indians referred to by Bigfoot are likely to be the pan-Gabrielino people who "were the source of the jimsonweed cult".<sup>713</sup> These people, the Tongva, were the Native people of what is now Southern and Eastern Los Angeles, Orange County and the islands of Santa Catalina and San Clemente. After Spanish colonization, they were re-designated as Gabrielinos, Fernandinos, and Nicoleños according to their geographical location, and in terms of the names of Spanish missions. This can be considered geographical narrative layer number two, with the original self-appointment of names and location as the first. Layer number

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<sup>713</sup> See entry for 'Gabrielino', *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (15 June 2009), last accessed 12 June 2015, <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Gabrielino>>.

three occurs as a result of the now all too familiar forced relocation of American Indians such as the Tongva by Spanish colonists. This practice resulted in

rather rapid and therefore violent social and cultural change, [with] people wrenched from their homes, traditions and family [and] subjugated to an alien culture and contradictory values.<sup>714</sup>

Though this is not an unfamiliar account by the standards of American Indian history, it is also familiar to Pynchon's depiction of the former residents of Chavez Ravine, Bunker Hill and Channel View Estates. What is persistent in this layering is the progressive dislocation from the landscape, which is of course to the detriment of the collective cultures of all these peoples.

Bigfoot's next detail provides the next geographical narrative layer, in the form of the drug cult of toloache or jimsonweed. The origins of the drug cult stem from Chingichngish belief, characterised as either a religious sect or as a cult. Alfred L. Kroeber describes this belief system as being a Native religious response to the influence of Christianity during the Mission period,<sup>715</sup> whilst others perceive it as being a response to the mass deaths associated with Missionization.<sup>716</sup> The pre-contact religious and spiritual beliefs of the Tongva people obviously form a narrative layer of their own, before the confluence with Christianity and the emergence of the drug cult, however, this history has become fragmented by the colonization process and therefore has been omitted from Bigfoot's summary. What is known, however, is that it was shamanistic in its

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<sup>714</sup> Robert Archibald, 'Indian Labor At The California Missions Slavery Or Salvation?' *The Journal of San Diego History*, 24/2 (1978), p. 179.

<sup>715</sup> Kroeber, *Handbook*, p. 636.

<sup>716</sup> Raymond C. White, 'Luiseño Social Organization', *American Archaeology and Ethnology*, 48/2 (1963), p. 12.

practices, which has continued through the drug cult stage and will become noteworthy in due course.

The toloache or jimsonweed cult, however, is referenced in Bigfoot's summary and forms an important marker in these geographical narrative layers. Its significance stems from its natural origin and the rituals of its use, which relate and reverberate throughout Pynchon's concerns with the (spiritual) relationship between inhabitant and landscape. As part of the ritual (which is condensed and somewhat undermined by Bigfoot), the ingestion of the toloache or jimsonweed plant induces visions in the consumer.<sup>717</sup> Young boys who were initiated into this cult, as a kind of rite of passage had "visions, and through this experience gained 'power' of one kind or another", be it a physical skill or desirable character trait.<sup>718</sup> The elders would then create a sand painting and would explain important moralistic lesson to the boys, after which the painting was destroyed. Significantly, the sand paintings were maps that "depicted the tribe's concept of the borders of the known universe as well as prominent geographical features and mythical animal spirits".<sup>719</sup> This ritual has a particular significance in a Pynchonian context, given the prominence of natural resources, visions and map-making. The toloache used in the ritual is from plant matter, which is native to the area in which the Tongva people live, and is thus specific to this particular landscape. The visions themselves are therefore born out of an interaction between elements of the

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<sup>717</sup> The name itself has incurred its own narrative layering in the form of the common name *Jimsonweed* and the Spanish name *toloache*. The interchangeability of these names in Bigfoot's summary highlights the diversity in cultural use and understanding of the plant.

<sup>718</sup> Robert F. Heizer and Albert B. Elsasser, *The Natural World of the California Indians* (California: University of California Press 1980), p. 48.

<sup>719</sup> Heizer and Elsasser, pp. 48-9.

landscape and the inhabitants, according to practices formed from both a relationship with, and dislocation from the land.

The visions themselves are of course reminiscent of the Vision Quest practices of the previous chapter, but also are similar in detail to Doc's hallucinations surrounding Lemuria. An important aspect of the shamanistic elements of the pre-contact use of toloache and visionary experiences is "obtaining a spirit helper".<sup>720</sup> In Doc's visions of Lemuria he encounters a spirit guide named Kamukea, who is described as "a Lemuro-Hawaiian demigod from the dawn of Pacific history" (*IV*, p. 105). That Doc's spirit guide is part Lemurian-part Hawaiian is noteworthy given his own Californian heritage. This is in accordance with Pynchon's narrative, as Lemuria sank beneath the Pacific and therefore could logically and geographically be related to Hawaii in the way it is with California. It is appropriate therefore that Doc should acquire a spirit guide who is related to his particular location, and of course acquire this through similar plant-induced visions. Aside from providing a comparable motif, this example of an interaction with both a physical landscape and a spiritual realm is important in highlighting the holistic relationship between inhabitant and place.

The map-making element of the ritual creates its own geographical narrative layer in that it serves to configure both a physical location within the world, as well as situating the individual spiritually within its borders and in relation to other beings. Though the aforementioned adage of Doc's teacher, "the

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<sup>720</sup> David S. Whitley, 'Hunter-Gatherer Religion and Ritual, in Vicki Cummings, Peter Jordan and Marek Zvelebil, *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology and Anthropology of Hunter-Gatherers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 1229.

map is not the territory” seems in contrast to this, it is clearly illustrative of specific cultural understandings of spatial and spiritual configurations.

The spiritual aspects of these histories are significant in that they punctuate the geographical narrative layers in a way that further accommodates the use of alternative histories. The relationship between inhabitant and landscape is thus given a further dimension, as the spiritual visionary elements punctuate the narrative layers in the same way that the alternative narrative of Lemuria punctuates the history of Los Angeles land use.

This interaction between spiritual and physical landscapes is perhaps best exemplified in the form of the toloache plant itself. Though it belongs to the physical landscape, it is also a means of achieving contact or union with a spiritual dimension, which in turn impacts on the users’ understanding of the land. Though this circularity is relevant to affirming a relationship between inhabitant and the land, the ritual and its implications also lends itself to ideas of memory and landscape that can be extended from discussions in the previous chapters. While the *woge of Vineland* afforded the landscape consciousness and suggested that it is capable of possessing memory, this example is something more akin to the plant memory alluded to in *The Crying of Lot 49*.

In this earlier text, dandelions are described as having been sourced from a cemetery and then used to make dandelion wine. The cemetery has subsequently been destroyed in order to build the East San Narciso Freeway, but in this conception of memory, the cemetery still persists through the dandelions. The wine maker of the novel, Genghis Cohen explains a curious connection that remains between the wine, the plucked dandelions, and the still-growing-

dandelions, that occurs in spring, when “the dandelions begin to bloom [and] the wine goes through a fermentation” (*L49*, p. 68), making the wine cloudy. The cloudiness of the wine is understood as reflecting the response of the ingredient-dandelions to the still-growing plants. This affinity between the dandelions is represented through memory, as if through a kind of empathy a thread in memory is created between the different stages of the life and (after)life of the dandelions. Oedipa however, understands this memory differently, and perhaps more relevantly in relation to the aforementioned narrative of the toloache plant referenced in *Inherent Vice*. Her understanding of the dynamic between the dandelions and the wine is more subjunctive and extends back to the cemetery from where they came. In Oedipa’s conception not only do the ingredient-dandelions still persist, but also the cemetery itself still exists as a result of its connection to the wine. From this perspective, the cemetery spiritually triumphs over the freeway which has come to stand in its physical space, and allowing the bones of the cemetery to rest in peace.

With respect to the toloache narrative, Oedipa’s understanding of spiritual memory is slightly skewed. Persistence in her example is influenced by subjunctive hope, that is that the cemetery *might* still and the dead find peace through the dandelion wine, a hope that is relevant and related to her quest narrative. However the notion of persistence in the toloache narrative of *Inherent Vice* is less optimistic and relates back to Bigfoot’s aforementioned concern that “some ancient curse [that] had come into effect”. The persistence of the burned-down house is negative, creating a trauma in the spiritual memory of the

landscape. Thus the landscape charged with subjunctive hope, but is also scarred by spiritual misdemeanours.

In both examples, and through textual development over the course of the California trilogy, what becomes apparent are the geographical narrative layers that Pynchon creates in these landscapes. These layers are created through a communion or conflict with the landscape, as in either the Jacobs' or Wolfmann approaches, and a formed or broken as a result of cultural and spiritual nourishment. That which Pynchon particularly develops in *Inherent Vice*, through his illustration of displaced communities like Chavez Ravine, Bunker Hill and Channel View Estates, are suggestions of the consequences of the disruption to the congruence in cultural and geographical relationships. As the dandelions of *Lot 49* indicate, the dead might still exist, but whether this in a bottle of wine, or as ghosts in a haunted landscape, depends of the kind of relationship that exists between the inhabitant and the environment.

## CONCLUSION

**“No matter how the official narrative turns out...  
these are the places we should be looking...”**

Configuring Pynchon’s California, and building on the sense of a California trilogy within Pynchon’s work, has necessitated establishing and erasing some boundaries and delineations for this study. Critics such as Sascha Pöhlmann have insightfully and successfully read Pynchon’s global outlook as being ‘postnational’, that is of having moved past the ideas and borders of the nation state to question the very “concept of the nation in general”.<sup>721</sup> In Pöhlmann’s reading, Pynchon’s relationship to nation-ness is defined within a larger postnational strategy; the nation itself is defined only to highlight its instability in the context of greater “postnational flows”.<sup>722</sup> To this end, he demarcates between transnational works such as *Vineland*, which are situated in one ‘national space’, but are culturally shaped by external influences, and postnational works such as *Gravity’s Rainbow*, which are situated with a “world culture”.<sup>723</sup> This thesis has however taken a step back from frontierlessness and returned to re-examine the idea of not only the national, but the regional and local, in the form of California, in the context of Pynchon’s worldview.

A concentrated approach such as this does not necessarily conflict with Pöhlmann’s reading. This thesis maintains a local-national-global dynamic, and while California is read as its own intrinsic space, it is also the confluence of many external influences from the greater U.S. and beyond, a key characteristic that has been highlighted throughout this analysis. The attention to specificity and detail that this study affords also

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<sup>721</sup> Pöhlmann, p. 10.

<sup>722</sup> Ibid.

<sup>723</sup> Ibid. p. 12.

clarifies the active role of California in Pynchon's work, a role that can only be foregrounded through focusing almost exclusively on the novels of the trilogy. In doing so the idea of the California trilogy, as initiated by previously cited critical works such as McClintock and Miller's *Pynchon's California*, is also affirmed and perpetuated.

Though California has been the geographical nexus of this study, with its own particular histories and idiosyncrasies receiving sustained engagement, it has also been suggested as a focus for some of Pynchon's wider concerns that have previously been regarded as the domain of the larger, more 'global' works.

Pynchon's notion of preterition, for example, has been re-examined within specific historical contexts, which has resulted in an overhaul and reconfiguration of this concept. In moving away from a Calvinist framework, which has previously served to conceptualise preterition as a (celebrated) inversion of the idea of the 'elect', this historically motivated approach has allowed for the concept of preterition to be understood as a classification born of systemic, rather than godly mechanisms. Being disinherited or passed over is therefore not just a theological concern, but is a political and social state of being. Though this study has concentrated on the California trilogy with regards to the re-consideration of preterition, it is a thread that can be established between both the novels of the trilogy, and between this grouping and Pynchon's other works.

The approach of this thesis has taken a cue from Pynchon's own understanding of the dynamic between the specific and the representative. The importance of this dynamic in Pynchon's rendering of historical and geographical place is acknowledged in the methodology of this thesis which focuses on textual details to elicit broader areas of concern and significance. This strategy has allowed for suggestive detail to be exhumed

and examined in such a way that the distinctiveness of Pynchon's California can become clear without cutting off either the texts, or this space, from other significant related and comparable contexts. In this sense the novels of the trilogy are distinctly California novels, but are not confined to or reduced by this definition. The relationship between text and context that forms a spine of this thesis is also usefully consolidated through this approach; Pynchon's attention to detail cannot be fully appreciated outside of the political, cultural and spiritual scapes of California, but these contexts cannot be represented without consideration to the specific.

Accordingly, chapter one exemplifies this aspect of the methodology. In this chapter, details drawn from a close reading of *Lot 49* were used to reimagine Oedipa's voyage through Southern California as a Vision Quest, in the broad American Indian tradition. Using a method demonstrated in the introductory Esalen analysis, this reading of *Lot 49* necessitated substantial contextual consolidation, but was influenced by a specific countercultural context in which U.S. citizens experiencing nuclear anxiety and dissatisfied with recognized religious frameworks, sought alternative sources for their spiritual needs, spurring a fresh enquiry into American Indian spiritualities. This approach raised questions about the spiritual and secular nature of Oedipa's quest, the influence of geographical space on this quest, and also initiated a rethinking of how Pynchon, in these regards, can be considered in relation to writers such as Silko or Morrison.

Chapter two focused on the redwood trees of *Vineland* to navigate Pynchon's movements around the state and to establish a broader timeline for Pynchon's California. Using American Indian traditional stories and beliefs gleaned from textual references to the Yurok, this chapter re-contextualized California's counterculture within a vaster

American Indian cultural and ecological context. As with the Luna preface to this method and these concerns, emphasizing the redwood detail in *Vineland* also instigated a contrasting examination of the Reagan effect on the landscape, which usefully set up broader notions of counter or alternative histories. This approach raised questions about Pynchon's ecocritical credentials, and hinted at the possibility of reading Pynchon's work through the same ecocritical lens that has been applied to the work of postcolonial writers.

The emphasis on alternative or subjunctive histories was continued in chapter three within the framework of Pynchon's lost neighbourhoods, which was extracted from references to historical and fictitious examples. This facilitated an analysis of Californian urban planning histories and 'ghost spaces', set up in the histories of Forest Lawn and the Miwok burial ground, which ultimately offered an insight into Pynchon's visions of alternative living spaces, from historically-inspired communal arrangements to theoretical lost lands. The prominence of the subjunctive aligned with the re-inserted histories that were uncovered through this methodology, and helped shape this reimagined landscape. This approach raised questions about notions of ghostliness and memory in Pynchon's work and sought to focus these ideas within a context of landscape history.

With an affectionate nod to Erik Davis' 'journey through California's spiritual landscape', this thesis has uncovered a wealth of the lesser-known or forgotten cultural and spiritual histories of the state using Pynchon's "gemlike" clues. This methodology reinvigorates the potential of close textual analysis, with details being used to open up potential informing contexts. It is a method that employs a narrative approach, using specifics in the texts to tell the geopolitical, cultural and spiritual histories of Pynchon's

California. In this sense it can be considered a kind of narrative (counter)historiographical criticism, which works well with another suggestion of this thesis, that Pynchon might be reconsidered in literary terms, with less focus on his status as postmodernist writer, and seeking instead to further establish his connection to writers of social-marginality.

However, it is also possible to imagine other subjects for this kind of approach. With a slight shift in emphasis, this methodology might be used to uncover a different set of alternative histories, focusing more solidly perhaps on Hispanic or Trans-Pacific connections in the California trilogy, over the American Indian thread that has been central to this thesis. The Hawaiian references in *Vineland* and *Inherent Vice*, for example, might be more closely read in relation to the California-Trans-Pacific connection. This project finds a critical base in Sean Carswell's wonderful examination of the prevalence and significance of ukuleles in Pynchon's work.<sup>724</sup> Carswell's method and insight similarly harnesses the specific properties and histories of the instrument, but is also keen to suggest its greater representative quality. With this in mind, Zoyd's trip to Hawaii with Kahuna Airlines, for example might initiate all sorts of discussions, from the surfing genealogy between Hawaii and the West Coast, to notions of kitsch and cultural appropriation, exoticism, music, or drugs. The countercultural textual thread of Doc's Hawaiian marijuana in *Inherent Vice*, recalls "the Hawaiian pot boom of the 1970s",<sup>725</sup> and has some potentially noteworthy implications for critical work on Pynchon and drug

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<sup>724</sup> Sean Carswell, 'Thomas Pynchon's Ukulele', *The Journal of American Culture*, 38/3 (2015), pp. 205-17.

<sup>725</sup> Phillip S. Smith, 'Review: *Orange Sunshine: The Brotherhood of Eternal Love*', *Stop The Drug War* (22 July 2010), last accessed 4 March, 2016, <<http://stopthedrugwar.org/taxonomy/term/204?page=1>>.

culture, and even broader Pynchonian concerns related to underground and alternative systems.

Leaving California behind for a moment, this methodology might be used to branch even further outwards. Pynchon's other novels might also be approached in the same way, with textual detail being used to elucidate specific contexts. Though this might necessitate different parameters to contain such a study, given the conceivable breadth of Pynchon's larger volumes, a prospective focus might even relate to, or expand upon this thesis. In such a scenario the role of the Pacific in the California trilogy as a westward border/gateway might find an equal and opposite study in Pynchon's Atlantic gaze. This might produce a potentially fruitful east/west dichotomy, with the East Coast of the U.S. used as a counterpoint to California's Golden Coast, but with all sorts of notions surrounding the East (New England) and Eastern (Far East) versus West (Coast) and Western (Europe) being reconsidered and re-evaluated. An initial textual focus for this could be Pynchon's latest novel, *Bleeding Edge* (2013)<sup>726</sup>, set in New York City and State, which would also bring any use of this methodology fully up to date.

The presence of transplanted Californians in *Bleeding Edge* would therefore provide a natural point of contact and departure. Vyrva McElmo, neighbour of protagonist Maxine Tarnow, is Pynchon's take on the idea of a typical Californian as seen through East Coast eyes. Vyrva speaks with a rising intonation, walks in a gliding manner that Maxine believes must be a "West Coast thing", and when offered herbal tea instead of coffee, questions if her West Coast demeanour is so apparent it is as if she is "wearing "California plates on [her] butt" (*BL*, p. 3). While Vyrva can be read as an example of Pynchon's more playful attitude towards Californianness, which is all orange groves,

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<sup>726</sup> Thomas Pynchon, *Bleeding Edge* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2013).

sunshine, weed and self-delusion”(BL, p. 72), the novel also offers a sense of the subjunctive California. In this latter sense, it is an imagined place of anticipated “howdy-there vibes” (BL, p. 73), but proves to be much the same as the harsh reality of New York. This depiction is consistent with the sense of the subjunctive experienced in *Inherent Vice*, it is not so much nostalgia for a lived place, but speculation about a place that might have been.

The East Coast-West Coast arc would also help address questions of Pynchon’s ambivalence towards California. While his returns, re-examinations and engagement with California are no doubt in part motivated by the subjunctive countercultural promise of this place, he is also keen to acknowledge the “special horror” that characterizes California, a place where skies of blue jays can very easily be replaced by military aircrafts (VL, p. 221).

The following excerpt from *Bleeding Edge* also suggests some interesting parallels and points of contrast for this thesis, even from this preliminary proposition. As Maxine pursues a lead from a videotape and travels towards the far end of Long Island, she reaches the easterly tip of the state, Montauk Point Lighthouse (nicknamed ‘The End’). Here she imagines the place in its past and present form, in a sequence that is reminiscent of Pynchon’s other driving-reflection narratives, such as Oedipa’s or Doc’s experiences:

“They continue out to the Montauk Point Lighthouse. Everybody is supposed to love Montauk for avoiding everything that’s wrong with the Hamptons. Maxine came out here as a kid once or twice, climbed to the top of the lighthouse, stayed at Gurney’s, ate a lot of seafood, fell asleep to the pulse of the ocean, what wasn’t to like? But now as they decelerate down the last stretch of Route 27, she can only feel the narrowing of options—it’s all converging here, all Long Island, the defence factories, the homicidal traffic, the

history of Republican sin forever unremitted, 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" (*BL*, p. 191).

What is meant by past and present has perhaps shifted from the 1960s/1980s dynamic of the California trilogy, however, this reflex of setting up the present against a former time can be similarly felt in this extract. The defence factories and suburbanizing, depicted in very much the same language as that relating to Channel View Estates, can all be contextualised within a larger historical and political narrative; the elegiac 'Republican sin' is worthy of full clarification, and there is even an invitation to tracing Nixonian influences and effects in the reference to Gurney's.

This passage highlights specific parallels with images of the Pacific in *Lot 49*, and while such an application of this methodology may be useful and fruitful as a distinct study of *Bleeding Edge* and Pynchon's engagement with the East Coast as its own political and cultural space, the gesture towards the 'Atlantic wilderness' (as in this thesis' engagement with the Pacific-gaze), offers even further scope. The aforementioned East-West dynamic could be fully explored here, with material relating to the European 'frontier' of this vantage point, such as in *Mason & Dixon*, being used to establish a Trans-Atlantic reading of Pynchon's work. This, however, is for another time, and indeed, another place.

In seeing how far we have come, it is useful to reflect finally on Pynchon's review of Oakley Hall's *Warlock*, in light of the infamous 'Crying Indian' advert of the 'Keep

America Beautiful' campaign.<sup>727</sup> In the original 1971 ad, an American Indian is shown weeping at the sight of the pollution of his homeland caused by the littering of a thoughtless society which has become detached from the natural landscape. It is the quintessence of the countercultural epoch of environmentalism, admirable in its core message of respect for Mother Earth and the possibility for change in ecological attitudes, but crude in its use and presentation of American Indian beliefs to these ends, especially given the use of an American Indian actor that never was. Pynchon's review is similarly born of this environmental narrative, but can perhaps presently find greater resonance in the context of this thesis. In 1965, at the time of writing, Pynchon finds the U.S. at a point where many of its people are able to toss a candy wrapper into the Grand Canyon, and much like those in the ad, assuredly drive away. However, the message here does not simply seem to be to clean up, or speculate on the opposing views of American Indians, but rather to reflect on the far-reaching consequences and implications of discarding that wrapper.

Syntactically, before the driver leaves the scene, a snapshot is taken of the Grand Canyon after the wrapper has been thrown. In light of the Crying Indian ad, a photograph of a discarded candy wrapper against the backdrop of such a prominent U.S. landmark might serve a similar purpose, however in the context of where we have been in this thesis, this might be read a little differently. The wrapper is from candy, a frivolous foodstuff indicating both a greater availability of luxury foods, and a surplus in U.S. lifestyles at this point in time. That Pynchon expresses that many U.S. citizens can toss their candy wrappers aside, indicates not only are many people unconcerned, if not at ease with environmental destruction, but that they have an assumed standard of living.

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<sup>727</sup> 'The Crying Indian ad', *Keep America Beautiful* (1971), last accessed 7 July 2016, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j7OHG7tHrNM>>.

These details are thus suggestive of greater contexts, social behaviours and cultural attitudes.

The photograph, like the light of Vineland, to recycle a metaphor, creates for a temporal interplay between the present, when the candy wrapper is thrown away, and the past, indicated by the ancient Canyon. The act is brought into relief by the Canyon, its effect is greater against this impressive geographical configuration (which is incidentally also an Emergence Place of the Hopi), but at the same time this natural monument is impacted by this act. The technology of the photograph frames this narrative and carries it forward, but it is the wrapper itself that allows for all of the above to be extrapolated.

As this thesis has aimed to demonstrate, Pynchon's California is a layered landscape, reflecting the past, present and the potential or subjunctive, which is fully rendered when the details are brought into focus. It is when these details are realized that their furthest-reaching implications can be understood, and we can begin to see "how far that piece of paper, still fluttering brightly behind us, has to fall".<sup>728</sup>

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<sup>728</sup> Thomas Pynchon, 'A Gift of Books', *Holiday Magazine*, 38/6 (December 1965), last accessed 3 May 2016, <<http://pynchon.pomona.edu/uncollected/gift/html>>.

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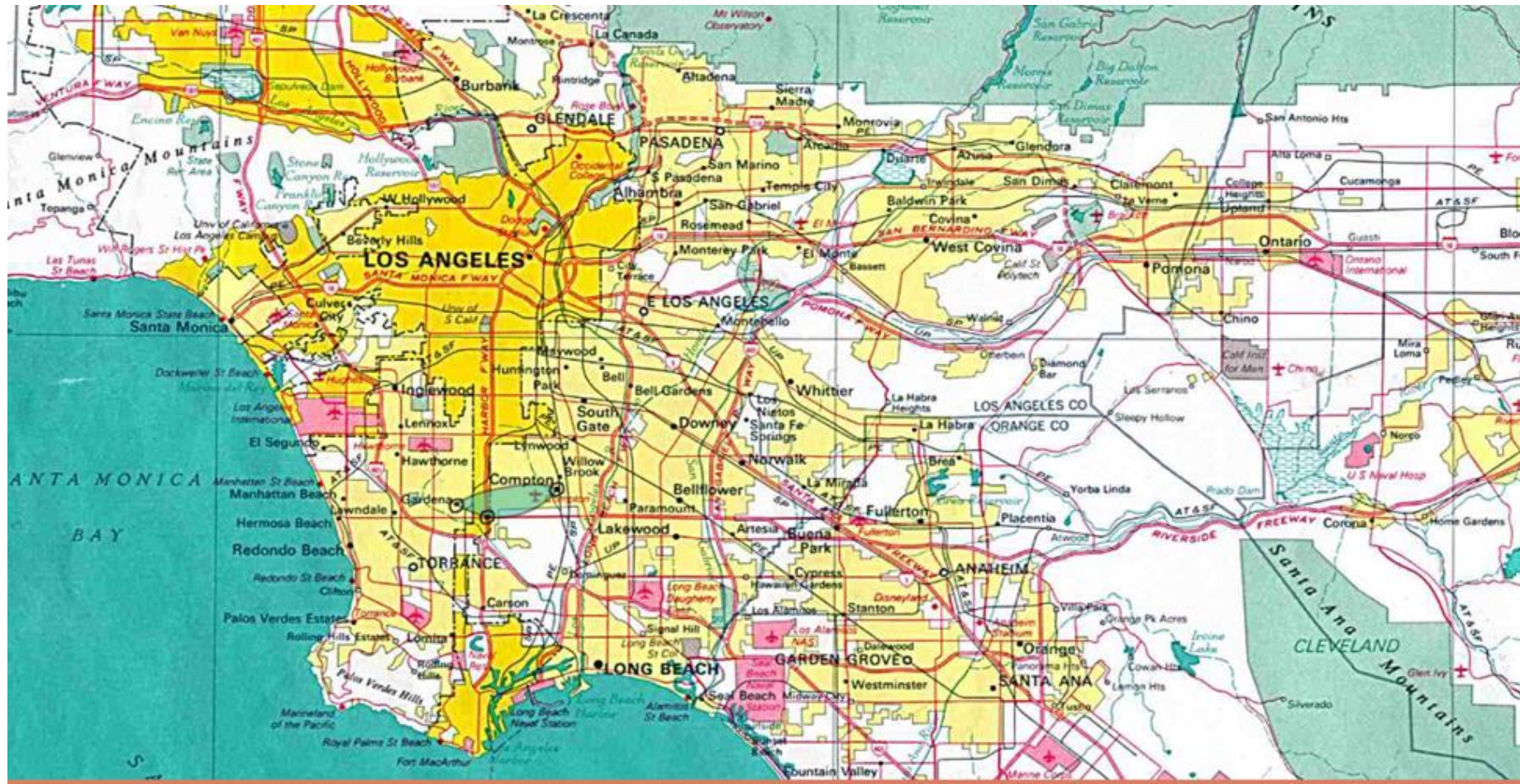
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