

Babies of Wackiness

A Readers' Guide to Thomas Pynchon's *Vineland*

by

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"For all those folks who want to read Vineland, but are uneasy about making their way in, we've put together a starter kit, a Captain Midnight Decoder Ring that will serve you as a resource, a reference, a map, and a handy-dandy Pynchon guru all in one..."

Talk to us...

INTRODUCTION

Thomas Pynchon and Us

People read Thomas Pynchon because he's fun. That's why one reads any good novelist, of course, no matter how "literary" or "difficult." Melville is fun, Dickens is fun, Joyce is surely fun.

Pynchon, who we rate as one of the greatest novelists of the 20th century, is *big* fun. For one thing, like all great novelists, he reveals fascinating, underlying truths about the culture, society, and characters in his books -- and his keen intelligence lends weight to these insights. For another, the beauty and grace of Pynchon's writing is fun -- from his gorgeous turns of phrase and extended metaphors to the artfully complicated plots he loves to weave. Also, he's incredibly, shamelessly comical -- "goofy" might be an even better word -- building in terrible/wonderful puns, silly names, and broad slapstick at every possible turn. In addition, he includes an amusing array of elements from popular culture -- comics, horror movies, rock 'n' roll, TV. Finally, Pynchon is fun because he knows so much interesting *stuff* -- scientific, literary, historical -- and puts so much of it into his books. As a result, reading his novels can be every bit as challenging (and rewarding) as solving a difficult puzzle.

There's a down-side to this, of course. Like Joyce, Pynchon can be tough to get into. His plots tend toward the labyrinthine, his best gags often turn on obscure biochemical or mathematical references, and critical concepts in one book may have their origin (and explanation) in another. Even *Vineland*, his most recent, and most accessible, novel, has confounded many literate readers.

Given all that, it's surprising, perhaps, that Pynchon's books are as popular as they are. At the same time, we know there's a huge number of people who *would* love Pynchon if not for that "tough puzzle" aspect to his books.

So, for all those folks who want to read *Vineland*, but are uneasy about making their way in, we've put together a "starter" kit, a Captain Midnight Decoder Ring that will serve you as a resource, a reference, a map, and a handy-dandy Pynchon guru all in one.

Pynchon's literary output, though of very high quality, has not been prodigious. His first novel, *V*, came out in 1963. *The Crying of Lot 49* was published in 1966, followed by *Gravity's Rainbow* in 1973, and *Vineland* in 1990. A collection of early short stories, *Slow Learner*, appeared in 1984. Over the years we've read these volumes repeatedly -- partly because rereading helped us understand them, but mainly because rereading Pynchon is more rewarding than reading most books for the first time. If we had to rate them, we would rank *V* and *Gravity's Rainbow* as his great works-to-date, with *Vineland* just a hair below. *The Crying of Lot 49*, for all its appeal, seems relatively minor.

Babies of Wackiness (our title comes from a TV show on page 159 in the hard-cover edition of *Vineland*) started as a series of trans-continental e-mail messages between two pals who love Pynchon, have read all his books many times, and were reading *Vineland* for the first time, at the same time. We wanted to share our delight in the cool parts, our amusement at the outrageous jokes, and our confusement over some of the obscure references and intricacies of the plot. As we exchanged questions and answers, we found ourselves getting

deeper into the book than we'd expected. This process turned out to be so much fun that we kept at it -- and roped in some of our other friends to help. Before we knew it we had this book.

Since we're neither lit-crits nor academics, you'll find our tone informal; after all, we never really expected our notes to be read by anyone else. But our intention is more serious than the tone suggests. We hope you'll find the material useful. And we hope you'll read *Babies of Wackiness* with the same sense of adventure, and discovery, and excitement that we felt writing it.

Who, you might ask, are we? John Diebold is a seagoing geophysicist employed by the Lamont-Doherty Geological Observatory of Columbia University. Michael Goodwin is a writer of books and magazine articles on film, food, music, computers, and traditional American culture. He was an almost-founding-editor of *Rolling Stone*, Managing Editor of *Take One*, Senior Editor of Francis Coppola's *City Magazine*, and an Associate Editor of *PC World*. He is also an occasional screenwriter and calypso record producer.

Also worth mentioning is that all three of us (Pynchon, Goodwin, Diebold) attended Cornell University. Pynchon graduated in 1959. Goodwin started in 1959, and Diebold made his appearance in 1960. A-and not only that, but Goodwin actually *met* Pynchon. Sort of. At some point (probably 1959 or '60), Goodwin found himself at a party at a beatnik fraternity called Watermargin. Pynchon (even then a well-known campus character, respected as much for his adventures with Cornell Folk Song Club president Richard Farina as for his writing abilities) was there too, standing across the room, talking with Farina. Goodwin has always regretted the shyness that kept him, a lowly freshman, from walking over and greeting the post-graduate celebrity.

We're very grateful to all the friends and associates who helped us with this book: Richard Hyatt (martial arts), Audie Bock (Japanese films), Charles Pickel (film stock, studio lights, firearms), Robert Lauriston (Sicilian slang), Bob Dickerson (sportscasters, monster flicks, Italian jokes), Judy Nihei, and especially Naomi Wise, whose close reading of the novel (and our manuscript) provided us with invaluable insights into theme, plot and character -- as well as solutions to countless textual puzzles. Additional material has been provided by a number of devoted Pynchonians who found their way to this text on the Internet and emailed us with invaluable contributions. Our thanks go out to Ben Riley, David Wisker, Anastasia Miller, David B. King, and Jennifer Grodowsky -- as well as several others whose names seem to be lost on the hard disk...

1984

In some respects, *Vineland* is Thomas Pynchon's reinvention of Orwell's *1984*: a novel about the triumph of totalitarianism. In 1949, when Orwell's novel first appeared, many Europeans and Americans considered the greatest threat to world freedom to lie in Soviet Communism. However, by the time 1984 actually rolled around, most of the details in Orwell's book had been outmoded by real events, giving the false impression that things had worked out OK after all. For instance, there was no Big Brother -- except, maybe, in the Soviet Union, where he wasn't much bother to most Americans. *Vineland* turns on the idea that while details may have changed, it's far too early to congratulate ourselves. Orwell's concerns about the erosion of individual liberty are still very pertinent, especially in America. Big Brother isn't dead, he's just hired a good public relations consultant.

Orwell's *1984* was about Communism; Pynchon's book looks at home-grown American totalitarianism: Nixon/Reaganism. *Vineland* is set in 1984 partly to make the Orwell connection, but also because that was one of the heaviest years of the CAMP anti-marijuana campaign in northern California: a small-scale version of Vietnam with helicopters and soldiers invading Humboldt and Mendocino Counties. Pynchon sees CAMP as a paradigm of how bad things have gotten, how far fascist forces have dragged us from the American ideal of personal liberty.

However, while *Vineland*'s ostensible "present" is 1984, it ranges over most of the last century, concentrating particularly on the 25 or so years between 1960 and 1984. Its main focus is on the sixties, and one of Pynchon's primary purposes seems to be to raise some important "lost" questions, questions that have neither been asked nor answered by our politicians, or our cultural leaders: What happened during the sixties, and *to* the sixties? How did we get from the sixties to the nineties? What did we learn? What did we lose?

The Sixties

It's a well-known fact that the winners get to write the history books. Over the last 25 years, the history of the sixties has been rewritten and distorted by a series of ever-more conservative politicians and TV anchormen.

(For that matter, the decade was grotesquely distorted by the media *while it was happening!*) Worst of all, as time passes and fewer people actually remember the sixties, this distorted picture becomes more and more difficult to challenge. *Vineland* is Pynchon's attempt to take back his/our history; *we* (in the person of Thomas Pynchon) must define the sixties, not the fascists represented in the person of Brock Vond, the book's sadistic villain. *Vineland* is about the power that inheres in memory.

Pynchon is not suggesting that we ought to reinstate the sixties; he is far too ambivalent about it to propose such a thing. The point is to understand its true nature, so we can use the good parts and learn from the mistakes. For all its broad comedy and free fantasy, *Vineland* is a serious attempt to reclaim this history from the Tube and its ideological sponsors: Vond, Nixon, Reagan, and the rest.

The Tube

Considering that the kids of the sixties were the first generation to grow up with TV as a ubiquitous, inescapable fact of life, its baleful influence, its push toward personal passivity, and its glorification of the authoritarian government line, are all critical elements in helping to explain the grim slide from the free sixties to the fascist eighties. Pynchon's attitude toward TV is easy to figure out: He loves it, but at the same time he distrusts it deeply. The fact that he always capitalizes it ("the Tube") shows how seriously he takes it; and his cascade of TV references, jokes, and sub-plots make it clear that he considers it a key element in his story. (A reasonably reliable source reports that Pynchon is a tube-watching insomniac.)

Dr. Deeply's "Tubal Detox" clinic, the National Endowment for Video Education and Rehabilitation (NEVER), and Hector Zuniga's misadventures there, make it unmistakably clear that Pynchon thinks America's national addiction isn't to drugs at all, it's to the Tube. And he leaves no doubt that the authoritarian messages on the Tube are "official" propaganda. As Zoyd Wheeler (one of *Vineland's* main characters) and his pal Mucho Maas agree, the prime purpose of the Tube is to "keep us distracted, it's what the Tube is for." At the end of the book, one of the younger characters makes this theme explicit when he blames TV for gutting the idealism and energy of the sixties. "Minute the Tube got hold of you folks," he says, "that was it..."

Pynchon goes to great pains in *Vineland* to show us the frightening degree to which TV addiction has penetrated the culture, and to what an extent his characters have learned to define their lives in terms of the authoritarian messages that come flickering from the screen. Cop car sirens play the theme from *Jeopardy*, characters hum the music from *The Flintstones*, rock bands play tunes like "TV Crazy." Birds fly down from the trees to perch on windowsills so they can watch. A child, protesting a slur, complains "You think I'm one of those kids on Phil Donahue..." Instead of "killing" someone, two characters agree to "cancel his series."

Underground Movie

The book's structure is cinematic, and extremely complex: its story unreels in a daunting set of jump cuts and nested flashbacks worthy of an underground movie by Stan Brakhage or Gregory Markopoulos. Typically, Pynchon begins a section of narrative with one character telling (or remembering) an incident, but before too long he's shifted point-of-view, jumped to another linked flashback (or flashforward), or rotated into pure fantasy. He seldom emerges from a flashback in the same place, at the same time, or with the same character with which he started. Nonetheless, Pynchon is such a masterful story-teller that the narrative thread is never lost; his fractured editing just adds to the fun.

The complexity of the narrative is intensified by Pynchon's frequent shifts from comedy to tragedy to fantasy and back. In addition, he intrudes frequently as a genial host-narrator with songs, silly names, and amazing puns--all of which fragment the story-telling even further. This technique *seems* Brechtian, but it's really cinematic: reminiscent of a Marx Brothers movie, or *Hellzapoppin'*, or a Richard Lester comedy. It seems primarily designed to be entertaining rather than didactic: By breaking into the narrative, Pynchon lets us "enjoy our enjoyment," makes us aware of how exciting the story has become, before we plunge back into it. It's like waking from a sweet dream for just a moment, knowing we can close our eyes and pick up where we left off.

Late in the game, we learn that we may, in fact, have been watching a movie (with a Hollywood happy ending) all along; in fact this movie may even have been directed by another of the book's main character, filmmaker Frenesi Gates. Then again, it may not have, and we may not have. Many elements in the book, like this one, are deliberately left ambiguous.

Story, Theme, Motivation: An Ambiguous Groove

Vineland consists of two stories, lightly connected, both of which come together in a bogus happy ending. The main story revolves around Frenesi Gates, a young woman from a strong leftist background who first joins, and then betrays, "the movement." While there's lots of comedy in this tale, it is primarily quite serious and grim. The secondary story involves Frenesi's pal DL Chastain and her partner Takeshi Fumimoto; this satirical sub-plot (which may take up even more pages than the "main" plot) is a wildly comic adventure with elements taken from biker flicks, samurai martial arts thrillers, film noir, beach party movies, John Le Carre spy stories, cheap monster movies, and cyberpunk science fiction novels. It's a hoot.

Pynchon uses ambiguities and uncertainties quite purposefully (and successfully) to create his effects and set his groove, but one ambiguity is troublesome. The entire novel turns on Frenesi's betrayal of her comrades, her history, and herself--but the motivation behind this central event is never spelled out convincingly. The best Pynchon can do is ascribe it to Frenesi's lust for the sadistic FBI man Brock Vond--but given Frenesi's background this motive is hard to credit (aside from her "genetic" inclination for men in uniform, inherited apparently from her mother). On page 260 [of the hard-cover edition of *Vineland*; all page references in this book refer to that hard-cover edition], Frenesi says: "You know what happens when my pussy's runnin' the show..." If this is *really* her only motivation, it seems like a shaky foundation on which to build a book.

However, if you think of Frenesi as an allegory for America this makes a bit more sense. Frenesi is born of revolution (Sasha), but a revolution that was fought against its own attraction to authority (Sasha's sexual heat for men in uniforms, represented by all the "checks and balances" that got built into the American system). In this sense, Frenesi, who was born in 1946, can be seen as a personification of postwar America -- the America that gives in and votes for Nixon and Reagan, the America that lets itself get fucked. DL provides a clear alternative: Instead of falling in love with the symbol of authority, she *becomes* it: a floozy with an Uzi.

The Thanatoids: Like Death, Only Different

Another mystery, that of the Thanatoids, is a bit easier to figure. Pynchon muddies the water by giving us overlapping, contradictory data about these ghost-like characters. Literally, the term means "like death, only different," hence living-dead, or zombies. At other times Pynchon tells us that Thanatoids watch lots of TV, and try to advance further into the condition of death. Under this definition they could be Reaganites, couch potatoes, embittered hippies, or possibly the entire population of America.

Thanatoids are also "victims of karmic imbalances -- unanswered blows, unredeemed suffering..." So does this make the Thanatoids victims of the sixties? Another version of the preterites* in *Gravity's Rainbow*? Or simply over-determined ghosts? Thanatoids are injured by "what was done to them." This might make them Vietnam vets, or a larger set of America's victims. At one point Pynchon describes them as a "lost tribe with a failed cause," which makes us think of the Herreros and the gauchos in *Gravity's Rainbow*. And as the book is drawing to a close, Pynchon says, "What was a Thanatoid, at the end of the long dread day, but memory?"

[*The term "preterite," is a Calvinist theological reference meaning "those passed over by God, or those not elected to salvation or eternal life." Thus, a preterite is anyone living life with no promise of redemption -- the true condition of everyone who faces life honestly. Pynchon's compassion for these universal losers is central to his work.

The term does not appear in *Vineland*, but the concept does -- and in any case, Pynchon uses it loosely. Since he's not really a Calvinist (nor, we suspect, a Believer in any conventional way), he often uses the concept to describe those without power. Vond, who has power, is elected. Zoyd, who doesn't really have power, is preterite -- as are the Thanatoids. DL and Takeshi, who have at least some power, are somewhere in between.

On an even simpler level, Pynchon believes in Good (Preterite) Things and Bad (Elect) Things. Good Things include musicians, Hohner F harps, ukuleles, hip forties slang, zoot suits, dope, etc. (This clearly makes Zoyd, DL, and Takeshi Good/Preterite.) Bad Things includes power, the elite, Reagan politics, etc. (Vond is clearly Bad/Elect.) What makes tragedy and suspense is that there are things (and particularly people) that are both, or in between, or of unknown quality. Frenesi has both good and bad qualities; Zuniga does too.]

We think the Thanatoids are not meant to be taken as "real" characters at all, but as a literary representation (all right, make that "symbol," goddammit) of the failed dreams of living people (or societies). Also great disappointments, missed opportunities, Unfinished Business, and/or awful unredeemed mistakes. These particular Thanatoids exist because the history of the sixties has been stolen, and falsified. Reclaiming that

history may let them rest (or even party) at last.

Happy Ending: Just Like In the Movies

It's extremely odd that Pynchon, one of the finest writers of the 20th Century, should have a problem with endings -- but that's the fact, Jack. His best ending, the stupendously cinematic blackout in *V**, is undercut by 36 pages of slow, intricate Epilogue that follow. *The Crying of Lot 49* ends with a drawn-out reverie in which Pynchon seems to have finally discerned what the book is about -- communication -- but now it's time to pay the piper, finish quickly, and abandon the infant novel crying in its basket on the publisher's doorstep. And while the ending in *Gravity's Rainbow* is structurally "correct" (the plot and all the characters atomize as the V-2 explodes at the end of its parabola), it's maddeningly unsatisfying since the book ends without a resolution.

[*"Presently, sudden and in silence, all illumination in Valletta, houselight and streetlight, was extinguished. Profane and Brenda continued to run through the abruptly absolute night, momentum alone carrying them toward the edge of Malta, and the Mediterranean beyond."]

Given this grim history of bitter ends, it should come as no surprise that there is a problem with the ending of *Vineland*. Vond is conveniently "faded out" (via a budget cut) in Chapter 15 to enable the Happy Ending. But if the novel represents the real world (as we must assume it does, or it would be no more than a pointless divertissement), what "real" event occurred in 1984 to justify Vond's withdrawal and defeat in the book? None, we think. *Did* Vond (and the threat he represents -- a repressive and totalitarian government) fade out in 1984? Hardly. The heaviest Federal/CAMP attack ever on Humboldt County marijuana growers occurred in August, 1990. Since Vond has clearly *not* faded away in real life, it's a cheat that he does so in the novel.

Pynchon's Songs

One of the most obvious (and charming) of Pynchon's stylistic trademarks is his frequent use of musical references; in fact, he seems to have a musician's viewpoint. Musicians (particularly jazz musicians), are hip, hep, preterite, and -- above all else -- cool. The jazzman on the bandstand observes the scene on the floor, but remains uninvolved, and often unobserved himself, though of course his rhythm and melodies are making the dancing happen -- a bit like Pynchon's role in his novels. But if jazzbos (and Pynchon) are preterites, they're preterites who recognize and accept their unredeemability -- which frees them to create, for only *we* are listening.

Song lyrics have appeared in Pynchon's work from the very beginning -- other people's songs at first, but, increasingly, his own too. There's a revealing observation in one of Pynchon's earliest stories:

"...[Dennis Flange] would sing Cindy the Noel Coward song, half as an attempt to recall the first few months they were together, half as a love song for the house:

'We'll be as happy and contented

As birds upon a tree,

High above the mountains and sea...

However Noel Coward songs often bear little relevance to reality--..."

--[Low-Lands, 1960]

By the time *V* appeared, Pynchon's penchant for song as a literary device was apparent; scarcely a chapter can be found without at least one set of Pynchonian lyrics, and some "real" songs appear as well. This continued with *The Crying of Lot 49*, *Gravity's Rainbow*, and *Vineland*.

Some of the early songs come with helpful hints for guessing the tunes. For instance, most of page 203 of the Ballantine paperback version of *V* is devoted to the 1956 phenom of Davy Crockett, going on to declare that "the [Davy Crockett TV/Movie theme song] invited parody." Whereupon Pynchon gives it to us with both barrels: nine verses of *The Ballad of Rooney Winsome*. Unfortunately, it has become increasingly difficult to assign tunes to Pynchon's more recent lyrics. Given all the hints that Pynchon is, in fact, a musician, it's only reasonable to assume that most of these songs are set to original melodies -- but until Little, Brown comes out with *The Authorized Thomas Pynchon Songbook*, we're on our own.

In 1970, a folk-rock band called The Insect Trust (one of whose members, Robert Palmer, would go on to fame and fortune as a music critic for *The New York Times*) issued an LP called *Hoboken Saturday Night*. It included a version of one of Pynchon's loveliest lyrics from *V*, "The Eyes of a New York Woman." An appropriately bluesy tune was provided by one Jeff Ogden -- not a member of the band. Surprisingly, Pynchon

was displeased with Insect Trust's initiative. A lawyer representing the writer contacted the band and told them Pynchon wanted the LP withdrawn. After some negotiation, the band agreed to stop performing the song live, and Pynchon withdrew his threat of legal action. As far as we know, this is the only time a Pynchon song has been performed and/or recorded.

Pynchon's songs in *Vineland* are arguably his best. If only we knew the tunes!

Songs In *Vineland*

Little Grass Skirt (63)

Wacky Coconuts (66)

Floozy With an Uzi (104)

Just Like a William Powell (162)

Kick Out the Jambs (191)

Thanatoid World (224)

Another Cheap Romance (281)

Lawrence of Arabia (309)

Daughters of the Road (331)

The Tube (336-337)

Es Posible (356)

Like a Meat Loaf (363)

Movies in *Vineland*

Film and filmmaking was a major theme in *Gravity's Rainbow* -- and clearly, Pynchon's interest in the cinema has not flagged. There are more explicit film references in *Vineland* than in any previous Pynchon novel. This tends to underscore the possibility that the novel is, in fact, itself a movie. Some of the films are imaginary "movies for TV" -- usually in the form of The Something-or-Other Story with Somebody-or-Other. Real movies are invariably followed by a bracketed date -- probably a satirical takeoff on academic film criticism.

Return of the Jedi [1983] (7)

The Clara Bow Story -- with Pia Zadora (14)

Friday the 13th [1980] (16)

Gidget [1959] (17)

The Frank Gorshin Story -- with Pat Sajak (48)

Hawaii [1966] (62)

The Hawaiians [1970] (62)

Gidget Goes Hawaiian [1961] (62)

Godzilla, King of the Monsters [1956] (65)

Mondo Cane [1963] (96)

Flight of the Phoenix [1966] (96)

2001: A Space Odyssey [1968] (178, 294)

Psycho [1960] (187)

Ghostbusters [1984] (190)

20,000 Years in Sing Sing [1933] (294)

Young Kissinger -- with Woody Allen (309)

The G. Gordon Liddy Story -- with Sean Connery (339)

The Bryant Gumbel Story -- with John Ritter (355)

The Robert Musil Story -- with Peewee Herman (370)

Magnificent Disaster -- an imaginary basketball movie for TV, with Sidney Poitier as K.C. Jones, Sean Penn as Larry Bird, Paul McCartney as Kevin McHale, Lou Gossett, Jr., as Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Michael Douglas as Pat Riley, and Jack Nicholson (notorious round ball fan) as himself. (371, 377)

Cool Names

One of the greatest pleasures in reading Pynchon is his genius for creating outrageous/clever/amusing names

for characters and places. *Vineland* finds him in impeccable form:

Zoyd Herbert Wheeler (3)
Thapsia (3)
Prairie Wheeler (3)
Cucumber Lounge, a bar (3)
Log Jam, a bar (3)
More is Less, a discount store for larger-size women (4)
Breez-Thru gas station (4)
Slide (4)
Van Meter (8)
The *Blind Side Gazette*, a newsletter devoted to bickering (9)
Ralph Wayvone (10)
Isaiah Two Four (16)
Septic Tank, a band (18)
Fascist Toejam, a band (18)
Billy Barf & the Vomitones, a band (20)
Gordita Beach, a California town (22)
Melrose Fife, a fat policeman (23)
Scott Oof (23)
Frenesi Margaret Gates (27)
Dr. Dennis Deeply (33)
N.E.V.E.R., National Endowment for Video Education and Rehabilitation (33)
Vineland Palace, a hotel (33)
Elvissa (35)
Trent (35)
Phantom Creek (35)
RC (35)
Moonpie (35)
Vineland Lobster, a euphemism for crawfish (35)
Morning, one of RC & Moonpie's kids (35)
Lost Nugget, a longhair saloon in Vineland (36)
Bud Warriors, a beer rider gang (37)
Lotus, another of RC & Moonpie's kids (40)
Steam Donkey, a Vineland bar (41)
Redwood Bayou, a restaurant (42)
Le Bucheron Affame, a restaurant (42)
Humbolaya, a California Cajun restaurant (43)
Ti Bruce, chef at Humbolaya (43)
Old Thumb peninsula (43)
Rick & Chick's Born Again, an auto conversion shop (43)
Eusebio ("Vato") Gomez (44)
Cleveland ("Blood") Bonnifoy (44)
El Mil Amores, Vato and Blood's tow truck (44)
Bodhi Dharma Pizza Temple, a restaurant (45)
Millard Hobbs (AKA The Marquis de Sod), a landscaper (46)
Blodwen Hobbs (47)
Seventh River (49)
Ernie Triggerman (51)
Baba Havabananda, night-manager of the Bodhi Dharma Pizza Temple (52)
Arctic Circle Drivein (54)
Kahuna Airlines (56)
Dark Ocean Hotel (57)

The Cosmic Pineapple, an acid-rock club in Honolulu (58)
Flash Fletcher (68)
Crocker ("Bud") Scantling, anti-unionist (75)
Eula Becker (76)
Anson Weeks (78)
Eddie Enrico & his Hong Kong Hotshots, a band (78)
Ramon Raquello, bandleader (78)
Shondra Wayvone (93)
Gelsomina Wayvone (93)
Gino Baglione and the Paisans, a band (94)
Lugares Altos, an exclusive, walled community (95)
Two-Ton Carmine Torpidini, a Mafia heavy (95)
Meathook, the Vomitones' bass player (98)
187, the Vomitones' horn player (98)
Bad, the Vomitones' synth. player (98)
Aggro World, a magazine (107)
Las Hermanas de los Pepineros, a Jesuit order (107)
Tetas y Chetas M.C., a Chicano bike gang (116)
Moody Chastain (118)
Norleen Chastain (120)
The Lucky Sea Urchin, a water-trade joint (123)
The Enraged Sparrow, a secret Ninja strategy (126)
The Hidden Foot, another secret Ninja strategy (126)
The Nosepicking of Death, yet another secret Ninja strategy (126)
Drain, Oregon, a town (132)
Lobelia, a transvestite white-slave (135)
Chipco, a shadowy world conglomerate (142)
Professor Wawazume (142)
Wawazume Life & Non-Life, an insurance company (142)
Yat Fat, a building (143)
Yak Doc, a workshop (148)
Roscoe, Brock Vond's factotum and partner (148)
Puncutron, a machine (149)
Evoex, a new tranquilizer (158)
Michiko Yomama, Takeshi's ex (159)
Babies of Wackiness, a TV series (159)
Nukey, a computer game that includes elements of sex and detonation (160)
The Ordeal of a Thousand Broadway Show Tunes, a Ninjette sanction (167)
Your Mama Eats, a restaurant (167)
Galaxy of Ribs, a dish (167)
Brisket Fantasy (ditto)
Cheapsat, an economy communications satellite (169)
Ortho Bob Dulang, a Thanatoid (170)
Zero Inn, a Thanatoid hangout (172)
Mi Vida Loca, Vato & Blood's Custom Deluxe tow truck (177)
Taco Carajo, a Mexican restaurant (182)
Gorman (The Specter) Flaff, a Vietnam War speculator (182)
Once Upon a Chitlin, an upscale soul-food restaurant (183)
Weed Atman, a math professor turned revolutionary (188)
Mrs. Lo Finto, an Italian mother (190)
Zero Profile Paint and Body, an auto alchemy shop (192)
Ditzah Pisk Feldman, a radical film editor (194)

Zipi Pisk, Ditzah's sister (196)
Mirage, an astrologer and 24 fps member (197)
Death to the Pig Nihilist Film Kollektive (197)
Krishna, a 24fps sound person (197)
Sledge Poteet, a black radical filmmaker (196)
College of the Surf (203)
Rex Snuvvle, a graduate student (207)
All Damned Heat Off Campus (ADHOC), a committee (208)
The People's Republic of Rock and Roll (PR3) (209)
Jinx, Weed's wife (211)
The Blackstream Hotel, a Thanatoid hangout (219)
Holytail, the last refuge for pot growers in northern California (220)
Willis Chunko, Vineland County sheriff (220)
Karl "Kommandant" Bopp, an ex-Nazi (221)
Piggy's Tavern and Restaurant, a grower's hangout in Holytail (221)
Dr. Larry Elasmu, a dentist (225)
Chickeeta, his assistant (225)
BAAD (Black Afro-American Division), revolutionary Brothers (230)
UHURU (Ultra High-speed Urban Reconnaissance Unit, AKA Bruno) (231)
Virgil "Sparky" Ploce, a comical anti-communist (251)
Quilbasazos, a Mexican fishing village (257)
Indolent Records (283)
Leonard, a midwife (285)
Dmitri and Ace, Hub Gates' spotlight crew (287)
Knucklehead Jack's, a biker bar down the street from a federal facility (300)
Wendell "Mucho" Maas, a record producer (307)
Trillium, Mucho's (forever eighteen) friend (308)
Count Drugula, Mucho the Munificent's former alter ego (309)
Dr. Hugo Splanchnick, a snoot croaker (310)
Intemperate Hill (318)
The Fast Lane Lounge, a Vineland bar (318)
Vegetable Road, on the way to Zoyd's place (319)
Tokkata & Fuji, a Japanese trading company (325)
Bubble Indemnity, a store in the Noir Center (326)
The Lounge Good Buy, ditto
The Mall Tease Flacon, ditto
The Lady 'n' the Lox, ditto
Dwayna (329)
Lucky (329)
Fleur (332)
Sid Liftoff, a movie producer (337)
Roy Ibble (338)
Chuck's Superslab of Love Motor Inn and Casino (343)
The Harleyite Order, transvestite, bike riding nuns (358)
Sister Vince, said order's theologian (359)
Elmhurst, Zoyd's lawyer (359)
Tex Weiner, Sasha's current romantic interest (and what size is *his* whatsis?) (361)
Holocaust Pixels, a Thanatoid band (363)

CHAPTER 1

Zoyd prepares to jump through a window, but the Log Jam bar, where he plans to do the deed, has gone upscale -- and seems to have a surprisingly large percentage of gay lumberjacks in it. Zoyd goes instead to the Cucumber Lounge, where the Media waits to record his jump through the window (which this year is a "breakaway" stunt window made of sugar). In the process we meet Ralph Wayvone Jr. and Hector Zuniga.

p. 3 "Zoyd" Rhymes with void, shares Z with Zuniga.

p. 3 "mental disability check" This instantly identifies Zoyd as a sixties character with a sixties scam. In the late sixties, Bay Area actor/writer Peter Coyote wrote and performed a then-popular song called "ATD" celebrating the coolness of getting onto ATD (Aid to the Totally Disabled) for feigned mental problems to avoid having to work at some evil-collaborative (i.e., straight) job. The trick, of course, was convincing your caseworker that you were a nut. Zoyd's annual window-dive is a comic version of a now-classic ritual-scam turned into a media circus (as are most remains of the sixties). Given the importance of the Tube in *Vineland*, it's no accident that what was originally a private act of financial desperation has become a filler on TV news (complete with a fake window). Of course, as it turns out, this particular scam is not Zoyd's idea.

p. 3 "country music was playing out of somebody's truck radio" Good Mendocino atmosphere throughout; clearly, Pynchon has been there.

p. 4 "elegant little...chain saw, about the size of a Mini-Mac" Mini-Mac = the Mac-10 machine pistol of US make. Zoyd's lady-like chainsaw goes well with his drag costume, and the effeminate clientele (drinking "kiwi mimosas.") It also makes a nice almost-rhyme with Sheriff Willis Chunko's gold-handled chainsaw on page 373.

p. 6 "orientational vibes" Great satire on gay men who like to dress like lumberjacks, possibly inspired by the Monty Python song, "I'm a Lumberjack and I'm OK."

p. 7 "Six Rivers Conference" To the south of the eerie and mysterious Seventh River? (See p. 49.)

p. 7 "nacreous pretty saw" Referring to the mother-of-pearl grips on "Cheryl's" chainsaw.

p. 7 "hotshot PI lawyers" PI = Normally short for personal injury, but here perhaps purchase of information, as noted on p. 24.

p. 7 "George Lucas and all his crew" The forest sequences of the *Star Wars* sequel were shot in the area.

p. 9 "cop vehicles...playing the 'Jeopardy' theme on their sirens." The first of many TV show / theme song references.

p. 9, 10 "unrelenting...bickering...[caused by] unquiet ghosts" A pre-hint of the Thanatoids?

p. 10 "one of those gotta-shit throbs of fear." An apt description, if you've ever felt it. Pynchon seems big on these visceral fear reactions; see also p. 45 ("intestinal pangs of fear"), p. 116 ("stone bowelflash"), p. 207 ("a throb of fear went right up his asshole"), p. 299 ("rectal spasms of fear,") and elsewhere.

p. 10 "Dream on, Zoyd." Pynchon seems to be using the authorial voice with slightly higher profile than previously, speaking directly to characters (and readers) with comments like this.

p. 10 "Wayvone" = a play on "rave on?" He's also a remittance man, someone who gets paid a small but regular amount of money to stay in some far-away place. Pynchon seems fond of the type -- there are several in *V* and *Gravity's Rainbow*, and the latter even has a remittance horse (named Snake).

p. 12 "technical virgin" Meaning Zoyd has more-or-less resisted Zuniga's attempt to "turn" him into an informer/betrayer. The sexual metaphor prefigures many references to Frenesi's pussy (which she blames for driving her far beyond this stage).

CHAPTER 2

Zoyd goes home. We meet his 14-year-old daughter Prairie. There's history/exposition on Zoyd's window stunt. We meet Prairie's boyfriend, punk rocker Isaiah Two Four. Isaiah proposes a "violence theme park." Zoyd sets up Isaiah's band, the Vomitoners, with a gig at the (presumably) Mafia wedding of Ralph Wayvone Jr.'s family.

p. 14 "Zoy-oyd..." Prairie is a *wonderfully* drawn 14-year-old teenager.

p. 14 Pia Zadora in The Clara Bow Story The first of many fictitious movies. It's easy to tell, because Pynchon always provides a bracketed date [1980] when he references a *real* movie, but not a fictitious one.

p. 14 "the Tube" Consistently capitalized throughout the book.

p. 14 "a chair-high bag of Chee-tos and a sixpack of grapefruit soda from the health-food store." This combination of junk food and health food defines the North Coast redneck hippie perfectly. But Pynchon's insistent hammering on Zoyd's junk-food habit may go a little deeper -- like autobiography, maybe?

p. 15 "almost featured on 'Good Morning America'" 15 minutes of almost fame.

p. 15 "useful distinction between...defenestrative [and transfenestrative] personality" Cool Pynchonian satire of California Psychobabble.

p. 16 "Love is strange" Refers to Mickey and Sylvia's song of the same name. Clearly a Pynchonian favorite; he used it as the lead for his *New York Times* Book Review piece on *Love In the Time of Cholera*.

p. 18 "the Uzi machine gun, 'badass of the desert.'" Pynchon seems moderately hung up on rear ends in this book (and elsewhere). The phrase "badass" recurs constantly (as it did in *Gravity's Rainbow* too, where it achieved Naval Significance as the USS John E. Badass). In addition there's Trasero County (trasero = Spanish for "rump,") Las Nalgas (Spanish for "buttocks,") and Culito Canyon (culito = Spanish for "little ass.") There's also an echo of Da Conho, the cook in *V*, whose fantasy involved shooting Muslims in Israel with a .30 caliber machine gun that went "yibble, yibble, yibble." ("Da Conho's machine gun was the only one in the world that went "yibble, yibble," Pynchon pointed out.)

CHAPTER 3

Zuniga muses on his long, strange association with Zoyd, which segues into two flashbacks (first Zuniga's and then Zoyd's) of Zoyd's bachelor days in Gordita Beach, in the Reagan-era Southern California of the sixties. We flip back to the present as Zoyd and Zuniga meet for a chat at the bowling alley. Zuniga asks Zoyd to help him find Frenesi, Zoyd's ex-wife. Flashbacks provide exposition about Frenesi, and Hector is revealed as a TV junkie.

p. 22 "Sylvester and Tweety" The famous animated cartoon characters (a cat and a canary, natch) are used to describe the comic/violent relationship between Zoyd and Zuniga. This also works as effective shorthand to encourage the reader to read the book as a cartoon. At least for now.

p. 23 Great names: the fat Melrose Fife (possibly inspired by a NYC radio jingle of the late forties and early fifties that went "Melrose five, five-three-hundred, Melrose five, five-three-hundred..."), musician Scott Oof.

p. 23 "What I'm really here about..." This is an *old* "head" joke. ["Head" = sixties slang for weed-head, or "soft" drug-user.] The cop raps at the door and says "I'm here about drugs," and the dooper says, "Thank God! We're all out!" It's right up there with the one where the cop says, "Your papers, please!" and the head whips out his Zig-Zags.

p. 24 "some grandiose pilot project bankrolled with inexhaustible taxpayer millions" Typically Pynchonian paranoid reference.

p. 25 "GS-13" Mid-level US Government job rating. Entry level is GS-4; the President is, like, GS-25.

p. 26 "hummed a tune..." Distraction drives Hector to humming "Meet the Flintstones," the second TV theme song so far.

p. 26 "defunding" The first we learn of Frenesi's demotion/demolition, her "disappearance from the computer," her figurative conversion from a one to a zero. (See note on Pynchon's central binary metaphor, p. 71-72, et al.)

p. 28 "Eastwood-style" In the style of actor Clint (*Dirty Harry*) Eastwood.

p. 28-29 "I won't aks you to grow up, but...aks yourself, OK, Who was saved? That's all, rill easy..." Great rap from Hector, demonstrating Pynchon's flawless ear for dialect and accent. "Who was saved?" ties into the preterite theme.

p. 29 "the samurai condition" The notion of a samurai "always being prepared to die" will be echoed on page 161 when Takeshi is shown to be technically dead, hence living without fear of death, hence always prepared to die. Which makes him a perfect samurai. Or Thanatoid.

p. 31 "maybe it goes beyond your ex-old lady..." Pynchon introduces the paranoid conspiracy element he (and we) love so much. Nothing is what it seems; there's always some mystery behind everything.

p. 31 "zomoskepsis" As far as we can tell, this is a made-up word. But it's well-made, and means just what it says: The study, or contemplation, of soup or meat broth. Pynchon seems to enjoy making up words. Now and then you run across another "skepsis" word. Two of our advisors spotted "omphaloskepsis" (navel-gazing) in the beginning chapters of Umberto Eco's *Foucault's Pendulum*.

p. 31 "Nothin' meaner than an old hippie that's gone sour." Pynchon himself?

p. 32 "Check's in the mayo" A brilliant throw-away Feghoot. In the fifties, a science fiction writer named Grendel Briarton wrote a series of short, funny pieces for Fantasy and Science Fiction Magazine titled, "Through Time and Space With Ferdinand Feghoot." They all worked the same way: establishing a silly and complicated story line for the sole purpose of setting up a painfully outrageous pun. Pynchon is addicted to the form; one of the best Feghoots ever written is the "Forty million Frenchmen" gag ("for DeMille young Frenchmen...") on page 559 of *Gravity's Rainbow*.

p. 33 "National Endowment for Video Education and Rehabilitation" Dr. Deeply's Tubal detox operation (NEVER) is clearly a gag on Betty Ford's "Just Say No" Drug Abuse Clinic. This is also the first statement of a central theme: America's national addiction isn't to drugs, it's to the Tube.

p. 33 "Hector...hasn't quite been himself, signed himself in with us for some therapy..." Another reference to the vicious addictiveness of TV.

CHAPTER 4

Lotsa action in this chapter. Zoyd goes off to harvest crawfish at RC and Moonpie's. Then there's a flashback to his hippie wedding with Frenesi -- followed by a flashforward to a short scene with Prairie. Zoyd delivers crawfish to Vineland restaurants with funny names. He meets his old pal Van Meter in a bar and they talk about Frenesi. Zuniga is there too; he has, it seems, escaped from Dr. Deeply's Tubal Detox clinic. In a flashsideways we meet Rick and Chick, Vato and Blood, and the Marquis de Sod.

Suddenly, maybe-the-cops (actually it's Brock Vond) seem to be after Zoyd. (Why? Pynchon never explains this very well. It may have something to do with Frenesi, Zoyd's ex-wife, and Vond's jealousy of her -- despite the fact that she's got a new husband, hasn't seen Zoyd in years, and is still in Vond's tight grasp. More likely, Vond is after Prairie; his motivation is only suggested, but it's possible that he wants to recreate his earlier sexual liaison with Frenesi. If (as Vond later claims) he is really Prairie's father, this would be incest!) In any case, men-in-uniform bust into Zoyd's car, which someone else is driving, and break into his house. Suddenly, Zoyd is on the lam. He calls Dr. Deeply to come get Zuniga, but before the Doc shows up Zuniga identifies Brock Vond as the source of Zoyd's cop problems. Zuniga says he wants Frenesi to make a movie. The Doc arrives and takes Zuniga away. Zoyd and Prairie talk in bed (in a borrowed camper) about Frenesi. Zoyd mentions "a deal." Prairie goes off with Isaiah.

p. 35 "imbrication" An overlapping, like leaves, or certain geological strata.

p. 35 "depraved yuppie food preferences" Go get 'em, TP!

p. 35 "RC and Moonpie" Names taken from Big Bill Liston's fifties hillbilly hit, "Gimme an RC Cola and a Moonpie."

p. 37 "Beer riders" A nice conceit, typically Pynchonian: kamikaze rednecks racing through the tule fog.

p. 37 "behind a 409" 409 = a big V8 motor.

p. 37 "white presences, full of blindness and sudden highway death..." Echoes the "white visitation" of *Gravity's Rainbow*, as well as Melville's whiteness of the whale. Also a pungent evocation of graveworms: There's more death in this phrase than meets the eye, foreshadowing the Thanatoids.

p. 37 "...all at once, there in the road, a critter in a movie..." A Japanese horror movie, no doubt! (See note, p. 65.)

p. 39 "Can love save anyone?" "Save" is Calvinist/Christian terminology -- another reference to the binary distinction between elect and preterite, one and zero.

p. 40 "Mr. Sulu" The navigator on *Star Trek*.

p. 41 "The Steam Donkey" A bar named after the logger's mechanical badass winch.

p. 41 "...she rilly freaked when she found out she was pregnant" As we'll see in the final chapter, Vond's last escapade is mostly an attempt to abduct Prairie. So the paranoid reader might ask: Is Frenesi merely a convenient mechanism to set up all of the important stuff in the book? Or is she simply Patty Hearst in reverse?

p. 42 "...time to go to commercials..." Zoyd remembers expecting life to be like TV -- a dangerous side-effect of TV addiction. The passage goes on to note that Zoyd was "Sent...gaga by those mythical days of high drama..."

p. 42 "Le Bucheron Affame" Probably The Starving Logger, but possibly The Starving French Goat Cheese.

p. 43 "Humbolaya Restaurant" = Humboldt County + Jambalaya (with tofu etouffe, yet!).

p. 43 "After a short recorded program of themes from famous TV shows..." The telephone "hold" circuit at NEVER plays TV themes, which is like calling Alcoholics Anonymous and getting a medley of "One Scotch, One Bourbon, One Beer" and "Hey Bartender." But of course, the "VE does stand for "Video Education"...

p. 43 "'Ti Bruce" "Ti = Creole/Cajun shorthand for petit = little, hence Ti Bruce = Little Bruce. Can chef "Ti Bruce be a gag on Bay Area chef and sausage-maker "Big Bruce" Aidells? Seems unlikely...but you never know.

p. 43 "Little Charley and the Nightcats singing 'TV Crazy'" Real band, real song.

p. 44 "script possibilities" Presumably, an off-the-cuff creation of a believable cover story concerning some vehicle's provenance.

p. 45 "another one of those intestinal pangs" of fear. See also p. 10, 116, 207, 299.

p. 45 "the slowest fast food in the region" Hilarious riff on trendy California health-food pizza.

p. 46 "The Marquis de Sod." Hazardously funny.

p. 47 "those old split 30's during the vampire shift" TV ad lingo, referring to 15-second TV spots (splitting a 30-second commercial break) often on in the wee hours. Vampire shift is a Pynchon usage, we think; more common is "graveyard shift."

p. 47 "A lawn savant..." An *amazing* goof on "La Marseilles" ("allons enfants...")

p. 48 "more liens than the tower of Pisa...more garnishes than a California burger" Bad, bad puns. Bad, bad Pynchon.

p. 48. "Pat Sajak in The Frank Gorshin Story" Gorshin was a hollow-eyed comedian and TV celeb from the late fifties, sort of a cross between Dan Duryea and Richard Widmark.

p. 50 "Brock Vond" Another badass "V." Pynchon has a long-standing history of bad guys whose names start with "V." In this case, as we will see, the V stands for Vampire as well as Villain.

p. 52 "Baba Havabananda" = have a banana. Groucho Marx meets Swami Satchidananda at R. Crumb's?

p. 55 "like a time machine departing for the future..." Fine writing.

CHAPTER 5

The Japanese amulet. Flashback to Zoyd's flight to Hawaii (on Kahuna Airlines) in pursuit of Frenesi -- who, we discover, had left Zoyd for Brock Vond. We meet Frenesi's mother Sasha, a long-time leftist. In Hawaii, Zoyd tries to win back Frenesi, but she's not interested. In a flashback, we get more exposition on Sasha. Back in Hawaii, Zoyd gets a gig playing keyboards on Kahuna Airlines flights. There's a weird "Martian" hijack. Zoyd saves a mysterious Japanese businessman, Takeshi Fumimoto, who gives him a magic "talisman" business card: the same amulet that began the chapter.

p. 56 "Kahuna Airlines" A reference to those silly AIP beach party movies in which Frankie Avalon was "The Big Kahuna."

p. 57 "Feel like Mildred Pierce's husband, Bert" Another movie reference, this time to a 1945 Joan Crawford movie, *Mildred Pierce*, based on James M. Cain's novel.

p. 58 "ankling" *Variety* show-biz usage, meaning to walk out of, or quit. It's very appropriate for Sasha with her film-biz background.

p. 59 "those eyes of blue painted blue, as the Italian oldie goes..." The oldie, which is "Volare," goes, "nel blu, nel pinto di blu," or however it's spelled in Italian.

p. 59 "on the astral night flights he would make to be near and haunt her as best he knew how..." As Zoyd describes to Prairie (p. 40). A sad, moving rendition of lost love.

p. 60 "sex fantasy...[or] ex fantasy" Always ready for a play on words, that Pynchon.

p. 60 "Book him, Danno..." Zoyd's suicide fantasy features a *Hawaii 5-0* denouement. The Tube forces us to look at the real world via its pre-packaged perceptions. (Incidentally, the *Hawaii 5-0* theme surfaces at least two other places -- including the tune played by Takeshi's electronic Giri card.)

p. 61 "zoot-suit effect" Pynchon is still hung up on these baggy zoots, which were radical black/Latino fashion statements in the early-mid forties. Read more about 'em in *Gravity's Rainbow*.

p. 61 "gig of death" Typical Pynchonian misterioso.

p. 62 "dash-one" = military slang for the user manual. A common element in Pynchon's work is his peppering of slang phrases and references stemming, presumably, from his two years in the US Navy.

p. 65 "Takeshi" Pynchon is fond of transplanting characters from one novel to another. Takeshi Fumimoto is a perfect example. He made his first appearance as a bit player in *Gravity's Rainbow*, where he was one of a pair of wacky kamikaze pilots. His first name is almost surely borrowed from Takashi Shimura, the star of *Godzilla* -- a film referenced in the very same sentence, when Zoyd plays the *Godzilla* theme music to accompany Takeshi's first appearance. (Pynchon seems to have been thinking about this beast for some time: There's a boat named Godzilla II in *The Crying of Lot 49* -- and the word is that he loves Japanese horror flicks. In fact, at one point rumor had it that he was writing a book with Mothra as a major character.)

CHAPTER 6

This chapter is very beautifully written. We finally meet Frenesi in present-tense, at home (presumably somewhere in Texas or Arizona), with her current husband Flash. There's a flashback to her leaving Vond, and some exposition on her subsequent career (and her "specialization" of betraying people she sleeps with.) In a complex triple-flashback we learn about Frenesi's early history, then her mom Sasha's Wobbly background, then her grandma Eula's involvement in even older left-wing activities. Back to Sasha in San Francisco in WW II, then back to Frenesi in Texas/Arizona in the present. Flash says people are disappearing from the computer. Frenesi tries to cash her latest government "snitch" check, and discovers that someone has stopped payment.

p. 68 "a pale humid Sun Belt city whose almost-familiar name would soon enough be denied to civilian eyes by federal marker pens" That is, censored in Frenesi's Freedom-of-Information file. This marker-pen image recurs later, too. One gets the feeling that Pynchon has, at one time or another, worked with such files -- or looked at his own.

p. 70 "once you get that specialist's code..." Frenesi has the specialist's code for sexual betrayal. Cold.

p. 71 "a zombie at her back" = Frenesi's past. Embodied, we shall see later, by the Thanatoid Weed.

p. 71 "full-auto qualified" More military usage. Technically, this means qualified in automatic-fire weaponry, but the meaning here seems more like: empowered, into her own.

p. 71-72 "When the sixties were over...a world based on the one and zero of life and death..." A moving section, extremely fine writing, and the first appearance of Pynchon's powerful binary metaphor -- which rolls on to the end of the chapter, and indeed, throughout the book. Actually, it first appeared near the end of *The Crying of Lot 49*: "For it was now like walking among matrices of a great digital computer, the zeros and ones twinned above.... Ones and Zeros. So did the couples arrange themselves...[for example,] either an accommodation reached...with the Angel of Death, or only death and the daily, tedious preparations for it. Another mode of meaning behind the obvious, or none."

p. 75 "all over the jukeboxes..." Pynchon makes a rare departure from his usual devil-may-care style to

explain one of his weird names. Frenesi's parents named her after the popular Artie Shaw swing tune.

p. 75 "Crocker 'Bud' Scantling" An appropriate name for a logging goon, since a scantling is, among other things, a small wooden beam, or a small timber. As Pynchon tells the tale, Scantling was hired by "big timber" (the Employers Association), to help eradicate the "timber beast" (the IWW). Scantling's first name may be a reference to Charles Crocker, a 19th Century California tycoon who made a fortune building the Union Pacific Railroad.

p. 75 "the Employer's Association" of the State of Washington was the anti-wobbly arm of the Lumber Trust. In April, 1918, its hired thugs raided the IWW headquarters in Centralia, Washington -- leading, inevitably, to yet another massacre in Centralia during the Armistice Day parade, November 11, 1919.

p. 75 "...a local attorney for the damned, sure no George Vanderveer..." George F. Vanderveer (either Pynchon, his editor, or his typesetter has misspelled the name) was a prominent Seattle attorney in the 'teens, popularly known as "counsel for the damned." In 1917 Vanderveer successfully defended IWW members in the legal free-for-all following a series of violent confrontations in Washington state in which Wobblies were slugged, kidnapped, shot, hanged, tarred and feathered, driven out of town -- and, when all else failed, jailed and charged with treason for endangering the war effort.

Subsequently Vanderveer became chief counsel for the IWW, and in 1918 headed the defense of 101 Wobblies against bogus charges of sabotage, and conspiracy to obstruct the war. The trial lasted five months; it was the longest criminal trial ever held in the United States to that date. Despite Vanderveer's best efforts, all 101 defendants were found guilty, and given long sentences by Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis (later the first Commissioner of Baseball). This was the beginning of the end for the IWW, although it lingered long enough to contribute to the events described in this chapter, and remained technically active well into the sixties.

p. 76 "Wobblies, sneered at by property owners..." Wobblies = members of the IWW, the International Workers of the World. And definitely preterite.

p. 76 "bindlestiff life" Hobolike. Bindle = bundle, usually a hobo's clothes and stuff, rolled up in bedroll. Hence, "Bindlestiff" = hobo, a stiff with a bindle, but sometimes a thief who will stiff you of *your* bindle.

p. 76 "One Big Union" Often confused with the IWW, this was actually an earlier labor movement that led to the formation of the IWW. First seen around the turn of the century, it was supposed to be organized along industrial, rather than trade lines. The Lumber Trust, which controlled the authorities in the area, called this movement "The Timber Beast," and did its best to eradicate it. Nonetheless, in the early 'teens it took hold among Northwest loggers, most of whom eventually joined the IWW.

p. 76 "Joe Hill" (1882 - 1915) was a Swedish emigrant who arrived in the US in 1901, and fought in the Mexican revolution before becoming an IWW organizer in California in 1912. A songwriter as well as a soldier of fortune, he is credited as the author of many labor union songs, including *Casey Jones (The Union Scab)*, *The Preacher and the Slave*, *Rebel Girl*, *Pie In the Sky When You Die*, and many others. In 1915, Hill was framed on a murder charge, and executed by firing squad, in Utah. Whether in spite of, or because of, his murder, he went on to become a legendary labor hero, inspiring countless thousands of working men and women. Hill's life fully justifies his legend.

p. 76 "piss on through" As opposed to "pass on through." Nice bit of local/period usage -- unless it's a typo.

p. 76 "the City" There's only one: San Francisco. Pynchon's flawless idiomatic usage reveals him to have spent at least some time in the Bay Area.

p. 77 "a rip-roaring union town..." Excellent details of pre-war labor history in San Francisco.

p. 77 "the General strike of '34" The surprisingly successful San Francisco General Strike of July, 1934, was initiated by Harry Bridges' Longshoremen's Union, along with a number of other unionized maritime workers. Jack London wrote about it in his story, "South O' the Slot." Although the authorities eventually succeeded in putting it down, some of the strikers' demands were actually met. As a result, "strike fever" spread throughout the US, especially in the coal mining, and textile industries, and among agricultural workers. Pynchon lists some of the west coast agricultural strikes.

p. 77 "standing midwatch guard" Midwatch is a Naval term, probably an abbreviation of "midnight watch" since the midwatch (also known as the "balls to four") is the stint between midnight and 4 AM. It's followed by the dogwatch (4 AM to 8 AM).

p. 77 "Tom Mooney" Thomas J. Mooney was a famous jailed radical, for whom thousands of picket

signs ("Free Tom Mooney") were carried by thousands of lefties during the twenties and thirties. In 1915, Mooney was the foremost labor radical in San Francisco. He was solidly against the United Railroads of San Francisco, which in turn put its money behind Charles M. Fickert, a leader of the "crush the unions" drive. On July 22, 1916, Fickert framed Mooney by staging a homicidal dynamite blast on Market Street. Ten people were killed; Mooney (and Warren K. Billings) were held in prison until 1939, when they were pardoned by California Governor Culbert L. Olson.

p. 77 "Campaign for Culber Olson in '38" Another typo/misspelling. This must be the Culbert L. Olson who eventually freed Tom Mooney.

p. 78 "Oh, the joints were jumping those nights..." Pynchon does a great job of capturing the wartime atmosphere in San Francisco, with a cute ref to Orson Welles' *War of the Worlds* radio broadcast.

p. 78 "Wild and rowdy like the Clark Gable movie." That's *San Francisco* [1936].

p. 79 "Chinese references in those days [were] code for opium products" A fascinating (and typically Pynchonian) inside "period" tip.

p. 79 "ork" Pynchon uses this obscure bit of (presumably) forties slang, meaning orchestra, at least twice in *Vineland*. We've never run across it in any of our period reading or listening. However, in *Kovacsland*, a biography of Ernie Kovacs, author Diana Rico makes reference to Kovacs' habit of "creating a special language" in a column he wrote, briefly, for a newspaper called the *Trentonian*. ["Special language" = "idiolalia." See note on p. 263. A paranoid would connect these, but we'll pass.] To illustrate her point, she notes Kovacs' habitual use of the word "orks," meaning orchestras. Now Kovacs was writing in 1946, so there are two intriguing possibilities: 1) Rico is wrong; Kovacs didn't make up the term, he picked it up from hearing it used, thereby verifying Pynchon's correct use of it. Or, 2), Kovacs *did* invent the term, and Pynchon picked it up from reading one of Kovacs' columns.

p. 79 "telegraphing the chord changes" Only musicians think about these details; another hint of Pynchon's musical predilections.

p. 79 "gave her the O-O" O-O = the once-over. But the way it looks on the page also suggests "the big eye," or in this case, two of 'em.

p. 80 "long-hull Sumner-class destroyer" More Navy stuff, unlikely to be found in newspaper archives.

p. 80, 81 "Friends of Hub's had sold out friends of Sasha's..." Extremely accurate rendition of left-wing bitterness, with nice joke ("nobody talks") to cap it.

p. 82 "You want to see a hot set?....see that? Shook all over? That's scab carpentry..." Presumably the paint on the scab construction hadn't dried yet either. This is great, authentic-sounding slang.

p. 82 "loud birds...were attracted..." Not even birds can resist TV; it charms them out of the trees.

p. 83 "Believing that the rays coming out of the TV screen would act as a broom to sweep the room clear of all spirits, Frenesi now popped the Tube on and checked the listings." So we learn two more notable Tube Facts: TV has supernatural powers; and it sweeps out good, as well as bad spirits.

p. 83 "Let the grim feminist rave..." Frenesi's fetish for men-in-uniform manifests itself in masturbatory fantasies featuring Ponch and Jon from *CHiPs*. This scene marks the return from Frenesi's flashback to her parent's history and her childhood.

p. 83 "Sasha believed her daughter had 'gotten' this uniform fetish from her...a helpless turn toward images of authority..." Authority = God = election to Calvinist salvation. Pynchon's attitude towards authority in this context is pretty well spelled out in DL's angry-ironic monologue on schoolrooms (p.128): "...better just hand [your body] over to those who are qualified, doctors, and lab technicians and by extension coaches, employers, boys with hardons, so forth..."

p. 85 "a lot of people we know -- they ain't on the computer anymore. Just -- gone." Paranoia strikes deep, except this time it isn't just paranoia. This echoes the passengers vanishing from the Kahuna Airlines plane in Chapter 5, and foreshadows the "handful of persons unaccounted for" (p. 248) after Trasero County events to be revealed presently. It seems that Vond (or certain "unrelenting forces" that may, or may not, be connected with Vond) have been "disappearing" people for some time.

p. 87 "...a kind of alien-invasion game in which Flash launched complaints of different sizes at different speeds and Frenesi tried to deflect or neutralize them..." A marital argument is described with a Space Invaders simile. Very telling, very clever.

p. 90 "Jasonic" From Jason, the main character in *Friday the 13th* [1980].

p. 90 "alphanumeric" = letters and numbers, like a typewriter keyboard.

p. 90 "It would take eight human lives and deaths just to form one character..." Computer reference: eight bits, each of which can be either a one or a zero, make one byte (or alphanumeric character).

p. 90 "We are digits in God's computer...and the only thing we're good for, to be dead or to be living, is the only thing He sees. What we cry, what we contend for, in our world of toil and blood, it all lies beneath the notice of the hacker we call God." The life-and-death-as-ones-and-zeros conceit is concluded. A beautiful, elegant, unbearable idea. The phrase "toil and blood" may be a tip of the hat to Bob Dylan (the same words occur in "Shelter From the Storm"), or it may simply be a reference to Winston Churchill's famous WW II speech.

CHAPTER 7

The Italian wedding, and an archetypal musician's nightmare about the worst possible gig -- complete with heavies who'll kill you for not playing what you don't know how to play. This is primarily broad comedy until Prairie, in front of the bathroom mirror, meets Frenesi's old pal DL. DL turns out (somewhat coincidentally) to be Takeshi's partner -- only it's not coincidental at all. In paranoia (the base state of Pynchon's fiction--as well as Dickens'), people and events are always linked. The whole world is a connected web, and the hero is the only one who doesn't know it. It's either God's work (Dickens) or that of a sinister agency (Pynchon). It's also the secret integration that makes all novels (but particularly Pynchon's) both possible and necessary.,

In any case, DL has some kind of electronic device that senses the presence of Takeshi's business card (a slightly awkward and unbelievable detail here). The chapter concludes with DL singing "Floozy With an Uzi," a perfect intro for her character, as well as a marvelous goof.

p. 92 "The Wayvone estate..." The description sets Wayvone's digs in Woodside or Atherton -- pricey suburbs down the peninsula from San Francisco.

p. 93 "Gelsomina, the baby" Also the childlike heroine of Fellini's *La Strada* [1954].

p. 94 "Testa puntita" = pointed head.

p. 95 "Lugares Altos" = high places.

p. 95 "Mr. Wayvone's compliments" Two-Ton's deadpan delivery, and instructions to the band, constitute perfect movie-Mafia schtick.

p. 97 "Italian Wedding Fake Book by Deleuze & Guattari" If this isn't real, it oughtta be.

p. 99 "Suddenly she saw another reflection, one that might've been there for a while" We'll soon learn about DL's prowess at the ninja arts, including the one of not being seen unless she wants to be.

p. 99 "...wearing a green party dress...athletic, even warriorlike..." DL is described very much like Artemis/Diana, the Greek/Roman goddess and virgin huntress -- whose color is green.

p. 100 "Darryl Louise Chastain" Even DL's last name, Chastain, is suggestive of chastity (as you'd expect in a virgin huntress), but "stained," imperfect. She's a flawed avatar, a preterite goddess.

p. 100 "Dumbo with that feather..." The reference is to Disney's animated cartoon feature, *Dumbo* [1941]. The feather was a security symbol that gave the little elephant the confidence to fly when he clutched it in his trunk. (It is rumored that *Dumbo* is one of Pynchon's favorite movies.)

p. 101 "whatever story DL told...could never be the story she knew." The first ominous hint of the events in Trasero County.

p. 101 "But DL only smiled back..." That is, DL *doesn't* tell Prairie that she's too young to be so paranoid. In other words, paranoia is the correct response.

p. 102 "Shondra and the kids look wonderful" The first (easy to miss) inkling of a connection between DL and Ralph Sr.

p. 103 "You think I'm one of those kids on Phil Donahue..." That is, *The Phil Donahue Show*. Prairie (like most of America) is quick to define herself via a TV show.

p. 105 DL's car has features "not on the standard model." More Pynchonian mysterioso. And it's a *black* Trans-Am! A *b-a-a-d* car, and the perfect ride for a would-be ninja.

p. 106 They depart "to the stately Neo-glasspack wind chorale, combustion shaped to music, varying

as she shifted gears... blending finally into the ground hum of freeway traffic far below." Go, Pynchon, go! Glasspack = hot-rod mufflers.

CHAPTER 8

DL takes Prairie to her secret retreat, the Sisterhood of Kunoichi Attentives. We get a brief history of the order. We meet head Ninjette Sister Rochelle. Prairie takes over the kitchen. Rochelle reveals that the SKA computer has a file on Frenesi. Prairie checks it out, and a long series of flashbacks begins. We learn that during the sixties Frenesi was a member of a radical Bay Area filmmaking collective called 24fps. A nested flashback focuses on DL: During the sixties DL was a tough (presumably lesbian) motorcycle babe who met Frenesi during a street riot. A sub-nested flashback reveals that before *that*, DL was an Army brat who got into martial arts, went to Japan with her dad, and met a martial arts teacher (Inoshiro Sensei) who taught her a series of secret fighting techniques called *ninjitsu* (the discipline of the ninja--plus certain forbidden extensions). The flashbacks dissolve gracefully back to the present, with Prairie and DL talking. Prairie asks DL about her partner Takeshi.

p. 107 "Sisters of Kunoichi Attentives" This is a nice satire on Esalen-type self-realization outfits. The acronym, SKA, also refers to Jamaican pre-reggae pop music from the early sixties, like Prince Buster, and the Skatallites.

p. 107 "pepinares" = cucumbers. See also the Cucumber Lounge. Why so many cucumbers?

p. 109 "Can you cook?" The Head Ninjette's first words to Prairie are not sexist, but a desperate plea made in hope of repairing the sisterhood's food karma, which is badly out of balance. Prairie actually does the job, largely via corny, middle-American preterite classics like spinach casserole and bologna glazed with grape jelly!

p. 111 "Cream of mushroom soup" = Universal Binding Ingredient. Great gag, maybe even a true insight (Campbell's cream of mushroom soup being the central, and not-so-secret, ingredient of the ubiquitous, and often despised, "family dish" tuna noodle casserole). All stated in Pynchonian mock-technoese.

p. 111 "memorizing the shadows" Nice touch. Making use of the shadows is a ninja specialty -- supposedly, simulates invisibility to the rest of the world.

p. 112 "gaga little twits...lookin' for spiritual powers on the cheap. Thinking we'll take 'em through the spiritual car wash, soap away all that road dirt ... everybody hangin' around the Orange Julius next door go 'Wow!'..." Terrific, angry description/destruction of get-wise-quick spiritual scams.

p. 113 "casseroles beginning to redline" A clever application of racing slang (redline = engine about to blow up from revving too fast) to cooking (casserole about to burn).

p. 114 "24fps" fps = frames per second. Motion picture film is projected at 24 frames per second. The radical filmmaking group seems to be based on a real "revolutionary film collective," sf newsreel -- right down to the lower case letters. It's also a subtle echo of Jean-Luc Godard's famous dictum that "Cinema is truth 24 times a second."

p. 114 "peripheral whiteness...of her mother's ghost..." Lovely writing. The ensuing discussions of computer ghostliness may or may not have a bearing on the "what is a Thanatoid" question. In addition, consider Pynchon's previous connections with whiteness (see note for page 37).

p. 115 "...a sound chip playing the hook from the Everly's..." The computer notices that Prairie is drifting, and plays the riff from "Wake Up Little Susie." Cool! Where can we buy this utility?

p. 115 Computer says, "Why good night yourself..." This sudden, right-angle turn into whimsy is a rare false note. In a way it's a relief to know that Pynchon, like Lawrence of Arabia [1962] "isn't perfect."

p. 115 "Back down in the computer library, in storage, quiescent ones and zeros scattered among millions of others, the two women...continued on their way across the low-lit campus, persisting, recoverable..." This gorgeous bit of writing provides a sensational transition between Prairie's computer research and the continuation of the flashback. It also leads into one of the flashiest sequences in the book (i.e., one with particularly flashy writing) -- and continues the binary metaphor initiated two chapters previous.

p. 115 "double-cross whites" = amphetamine tabs marked by a cross.

p. 116 "Tetas Y Chetas" = Probably something like "tits and ass" in Chicano slang.

p. 116 "ECO stock" Ektachrome Commercial, a very slow (32 ASA), very fine grain 16mm film stock that was bread and butter for educational and industrial filmmakers. Experimental filmmakers liked it too; it was easy to derange, producing weird images. No longer available.

p. 116 "...she could still begin to smell them, the aftershave, the gunmetal in the sun..." Street-scene and riot are precisely drawn. These details don't come from a Baedeker. One can't help thinking that Pynchon must have been there. This sequence is *beautifully* written, and highly sensual thanks to Pynchon's employment of a profusion of smells (including, as the capper, on p. 118, the smell of DL's "pussy excitation.")

p. 116 "the basic stone bowelflash..." Another example of the visceral fear reactions Pynchon seems big on in this work. See also pages 10, 45, 207, 299.

p. 116 "Che Zed" = DL's Czech CZ motorcycle.

p. 117 "drops of separating ketchup and fat..." Self-satire? We suspect it might be, as indicated by the concluding em-dash as Pynchon restrains himself and makes a conscious (and public) decision to end his detailed description of the flying drops and continue the narrative. ("Sorry, folks!")

p. 118 "world-class burgers, jukebox solidarity..." Cool!

p. 120 "so it couldn't've been Kansas anymore." This reference to *The Wizard of Oz* (in which Dorothy says, "I don't think this is Kansas anymore, Toto,") is especially clever given DL's not-so-distant departure from Leavenworth, Kansas. Pynchon used this currently fashionable phrase in *Gravity's Rainbow* as well.

p. 121 "...cutting Moody's orders for Japan..." This Japanese episode includes a number of gentle take-offs on William Gibson, the cyberpunk novelist who borrowed a lot of *his* schtick from Pynchon. Gibson often writes about Japanese punks and small-time underworld types.

p. 122 "spheriphagous tulips" = ball-catchers in a pachinko game. Spheriphagous = sphere-eating.

p. 122 "You eat soba?" soba = Japanese noodles. Noburu's first words to DL really mean, "Can you handle some Japanese identity?"

p. 122 "You buyin'?" DL's reply is impeccably cool.

p. 122 "Shodan potential" Shodan = a high degree, or black belt, in the martial arts.

p. 122 "Inoshiro Sensei" DL's martial arts teacher. Probably named after Inoshiro Honda, the director of *Godzilla*, *Rodan*, *Mothra*, et al.

p. 122 "assukikaa" = Jive Japlish (like Faque French) for "ass kicker."

p. 123 "like vacationing on another planet and losing her traveler's checks." This description of DL's puberty and adolescence is fine writing, and a telling insight.

p. 123 "the modernized crash course" Sensei offers DL the cyberpunk version of the full martial arts program -- the technique without the spirituality.

p. 124 "on through supertime, primetime..." In the authoritarian world ("the truancy squad was now in her face") TV shapes even the rhythms of the day.

p. 126 "kobun" = Yakuza retainer; button man; bodyguard.

p. 126 "one more view of Edo." Sounds like a line from a famous haiku, or the title of a painting. Edo is, of course, the old name for Tokyo.

p. 126 "Yamaguchi-gumi" = one of the major Yakuza families.

p. 126 "Relax! Only testing you!" Here Inoshiro Sensei becomes a cross between Toshiro Mifune and Mr. Natural.

p. 126 "giri" = obligation. Very important in Japanese (and particularly Yakuza) culture; note that Takeshi's musical cards are called "giri-chits."

p. 127 "original purity...subverted...once eternal techniques now only one-shot and disposable..." Also: "This is for all the rest of us down here with the insects, the ones who don't quite get to make warrior, who...fail to get it right...this is our equalizer, our edge...because we have ancestors and descendants too..." A moving restatement of Pynchon's concern for the preterites, as well as an excellent discourse on the difference between a samurai (the eternal purity of the warrior) and Inoshiro's version of ninjitsu (the one-shot pragmatism of the assassin, martial arts without Zen).

p. 127 "The Nosepicking of Death" Funny list of martial moves. *Gojira no Chimpira* = The Gangster of Godzilla.

p. 128 "...better just hand [your body] over to those who are qualified, doctors, and lab technicians

and by extension coaches, employers, boys with hardons, so forth..." Pynchon's attitude towards authority is pretty well spelled out in DL's feminist monologue on schoolrooms.

p. 128 "She and Prairie were out taking a break..." Fabulously smooth cross-fade out of flashbacks back to DL and Prairie talking at SKA.

CHAPTER 9

Long damn chapter! DL starts out telling Prairie how she met Takeshi, initiating a very complicated flashback. It seems that Wayvone and the Mafia try to hire her to put the deadly, delayed-action Vibrating Palm ninja move on Vond (who is threatening their drug dealing), but despite her hatred of Vond for seducing and subverting Frenesi, DL is afraid of getting involved with the Mafia. She flees to Columbus, Ohio, where she tries to hide in the Clark Kent guise of a mild-mannered file clerk. But the mafiosi find her, kidnap her, hijack her to Tokyo, and sell her into white slavery. Her buyer turns out to be Wayvone, who first fucks her and then sets her up as a whore in a whorehouse. Vond is coming to Tokyo; Wayvone will arrange for him to be sent to the whorehouse, and to be directed to DL, at which point DL will zap him with the Vibrating Palm. (To make extra sure that Vond goes for DL, she will be made over to look like Frenesi, Vond's "type.")

Meanwhile insurance adjuster Takeshi is looking into a disaster: an experimental laboratory has been demolished, apparently by being stepped on by a Godzilla-like monster. Takeshi meets his old colleague Minoru, they return together to Tokyo, and in a bar they reminisce about a mysterious adventure they shared in Tibet. Afterward, at the Tokyo Hilton, Takeshi is grabbed by Vond, who suspects a trap and needs a decoy. Vond sends Takeshi to the whorehouse with his (Vond's) ID.

In a brief flashforward, Takeshi arrives at the SKA retreat in the present -- i.e., as DL continues her account to Prairie of how she met Takeshi in the first place. Then the flashback resumes.

DL is wearing fuzzy blue contact lenses as part of her Frenesi-disguise, and hence fails to spot the substitution. She makes love to Takeshi, thinking he's Vond, and lays the Vibrating Palm on him. Then, realizing her mistake, she flees back to the SKA retreat. Takeshi (tipped to her location by a slightly-apologetic Mafia guy) follows her there in the hope she can undo the VP. To introduce himself to the Ninjettes he sings a silly song, "Just Like a William Powell." He seems at least as interested in getting back into DL's pants as getting cured. The Ninjettes put Takeshi on the Puncutron machine, which seems to effect a temporary cure, and send him back out into the world with DL as his partner for a year and a day. There's a no-sex clause. DL and Takeshi fuss and fight, but in classic screwball comedy fashion (just like William Powell) they begin to fall in love.

From a tough diner-type eating joint, Takeshi calls Tokyo to check up on the progress of the "monster-stomp" investigation. He finds out that "someone" from Japan is after him as some weird fallout of the investigation. Conveniently, he and DL meet Ortho Bob Dulang, a Thanatoid who lives in a town called Shade Creek, near Vineland. Takeshi and DL decide to hide out there for a while until the Godzilla Squad loses interest in Takeshi.

In Shade Creek Takeshi sets up in business as a karmic (as opposed to insurance) adjuster. He and DL become friends with Vato and Blood; a flashback describes the foursome's first meeting. A year passes, and DL and Takeshi agree to extend their one-year partnership. A short flashback to Blood and Vato in 'Nam, making up their own version of the Chip 'n' Dale song. Flashforward to meet Thi Anh Tran, Blood and Vato's live-in accountant. [Coincidentally or not, Thi Anh Tran's initials, TAT, happen to be the acronym for the Thematic Aperception Test, which has been used for many years as part of the basic psych evaluation battery: You make up stories about simple pictures, revealing all unknowingly.] A flashback describes how B&V met Thi Anh Tran in the first place. Flashforward to present: Blood and Vato answer an emergency tow call from Shade Creek. There's a short aside on the *Woge*, Yurok Indian creatures.

Blood and Vato find a Toyota in a treetop. The driver turns out to be Weed Atman, an old friend of DL's who (according to Blood) was "gunned down" ten years earlier at Trasero College of the Surf. He's come looking for the karmic adjuster. B&V bring him to DL and Takeshi. Vato reveals an important piece of info: apparently, Weed was "set up" by Frenesi.

Flashforward to where Prairie is listening to DL and Takeshi tell this tale. Prairie is upset that her mom

would have killed a guy. DL reminds her that Frenesi was working for Vond.

Prairie takes a break for some comedy in the kitchen with fluorescent Variety Loaf. Suddenly the SKA retreat is under attack, presumably by Vond. Takeshi, DL and Prairie make their get-away in DL's trick Trans-Am.

p. 130 "Fresson process studio photograph" Photographic printing process that uses coal to produce paper prints with a unique luminosity and grain. Fresson printing produces an image that is characteristically diffused and subtle, reminiscent of the "pointillism" of Impressionist painting. The image is extremely stable; Fresson printing is considered the most archival of any color procedure in use today.

p. 131 "If you want real ninja product..." The whole sequence about hiring an assassin is pure cyberpunk schtick.

p. 131 "The Vibrating Palm" This may be a subtle reference to the old joke-store "buzzer" or "shocker" -- and resonates nicely with the rubber scampi on the previous page.

p. 131 "YakMaf" = Yakuza/Mafia.

p. 133 "legendary in the dopers' community" Why is the gas station toilet legendary? And why would DL care anyway? All she needs to do is change into her disguise.

p. 133 "baby-blue shadows..." Nice description -- and a precursor to the color of Frenesi's eyes.

p. 134 "beige hose, white underwear..." Pynchon's description of DL's Clark Kent outfits is surprisingly accurate, especially for a male. It's like giving the O-O (see note, p. 79) to a nice Midwestern girl, circa 1960.

p. 135 "She wasn't sure right away that being sold into white slavery would turn out to be at all beneficial as a career step..." The kidnap-and-auction sequence is good, fast-moving storytelling: breathless, tense, gripping, light on flashy effects. This is also familiar cyberpunk territory, especially the interview with Wayvone.

p. 136 "older gentlemen with fingertip deficiencies..." Yakuza who have screwed up, and demonstrated their remorse by cutting off a fingertip.

p. 139 "Ufa, mi tratt' a pesci in faccia..." Literally, "Oof, you've thrown a fish in my face!" It's an ominous Sicilian warning meaning, "You've insulted me most unpleasantly, treated me in the worst possible way!"

p. 141 "I knew it!" Prairie breaking into the seamless narrative is almost a Brechtian alienation effect. By now the story is moving so strongly that we've totally forgotten the "as-told-to" frame.

p. 141 "How could [Frenesi] have ever gone near somebody like this Brock guy?" Good question. Pynchon never really answers it -- unless we accept the idea of Frenesi embodying America's fatal fascination with authority.

p. 141 "what-is-reality exercises" Reminiscent of science fiction writer Philip K. Dick.

p. 141 "Ninja Death Touch calculator" This joke strikes another false note. The entire sub-plot revolving around the Vibrating Palm is broad comedy, of course, but this smart-ass gag is severely out-of-scale.

p. 142 "might as well stay home -- watch a Run Run Shaw movie!" Hong-Kong-based Run-Run Shaw produced the popular (and violent) Bruce Lee karate flicks, also lots of action-packed swords and sorcery adventures (like the ones that clearly inspired a lot of the DL and Takeshi sub-plot).

p. 142 "yellow headlamps of the tech squads..." The scene in the Footprint is reminiscent of the monolith excavation on the moon in *2001*. Also, most of the Japanese dialogue is phrased in Pynchon's unique, sounds-just-like-a-movie style.

p. 142 "...the shadowy world conglomerate Chipco..." This imaginary entity (an echo, perhaps of the sinister YoYoDyne Corporation in *The Crying of Lot 49*) is presumably some Intel-like company whose microprocessor chips are sold world wide. No doubt the chips are designed to keep a covert watch on everything, and report back to Chipco -- similar to Byron the Bulb and his fellow gridmates in *Gravity's Rainbow*.

p. 142 "gigantic animal footprint" Godzilla's size is pretty well known, and this (as we shall see) sauroid footprint is too large to be that of the big G. However, Godzilla is a product of Japanese movie model technology of the fifties, so who knows what the eighties might bring?

p. 142 "Wawazume Life & Non-Life" Is this a joke? And what kind? Maybe they insure things other than lives. Maybe Thanatoids get "non-life" insurance. Or it could just be a satirically "tactful" Japanese way of

referring to death.

p. 143 "By the time...gods of the sky." Note that this immensely long and complicated sentence takes up more than half the page!

p. 145 "Singapore Slings" A frivolous cocktail with a pleasant flavor and a lethal punch: the signature drink of the bar at the Raffles Hotel in Singapore, a British colony taken by the Japanese in WWII. Conceivably, Minoru might have been stationed there, and picked up a liking for this tourist syrup.

p. 146 "Chuck, the world's most invisible robot" Like the fastest draw in the West. Want to see it again?

p. 146 "some planet-wide struggle had been going on for years" More Pynchonian paranoia.

p. 146 "the Himalayan caper" Story is written in mock Le Carre shorthand. Here (as elsewhere) Pynchon penetrates to the essence of a genre and gives us a few masterly strokes that evoke the same effect as an entire novel by a lesser writer.

p. 146 "pirate ships of the stratosphere" Presumably, they mount attacks like the one on the Kahuna flight.

p. 147 "We called you -- the Kid." As in, "I never did the Kenosha Kid?" (See *Gravity's Rainbow*, p. 60.)

p. 147 "disco music coming out the club doors" Cyberpunk atmosphere.

p. 148 "The Yak Doc Workshop" This may be a riff on Doc Yak, a comic book character.

p. 148 "Takeshi...saw Vond...and thought...it was himself..." Vond and Takeshi look alike. Does this, as they say, signify? Takeshi as anti-Vond? It's hard to imagine a dark Japanese and a light Caucasian looking alike, but anyway, there's one for each of the tomatoes: an adjuster (insurance or karma, ma'am?) for DL, and a badass for Frenesi.

p. 149 "gaijin" = Japanese for foreigner, stranger, outsider.

p. 149 "Found a cab" Once again Prairie startles us by breaking into the gripping flashback narrative, but this time the present-tense Takeshi breaks in with her, having just arrived at the SKA retreat. Very cinematic. Takeshi moves instantaneously from past to present, a double-exposure match-dissolve effect.

p. 149 "Moe!" The first of several references to The Three Stooges, a nothing-if-not-preterite comedy trio specializing in crude, cruel slapstick.

p. 150 "fingering its smooth rigid contours" The mock-porno is cute.

p. 151 "I couldn't see shit." DL mistakes Takeshi for Vond because of her fuzzy contact lenses. This mistaken-identity riff is worthy of Shakespeare at his most far-fetched and funny.

p. 151 "Eeoo!" Flash! Pynchon's ear fails! This just isn't as close to the Valspeak expression of disgust as we expect from our boy. The transliteration needs a little more "u" or something.

p. 153 "Fuckin' Vond. He's the Roadrunner." Yes, he is.

p. 154 "Licensed DOM's" = Doctor of Medicine?

p. 155 "Ninjette Coffee Mess" Navspeak. In the military, particularly the Navy, coffee mess is a little area where the coffee maker, cups, etc. are kept.

p. 156 "dorai kuriiningu" = "dry cleaner" More Jive Japlish.

p. 157 "Not a bar, Fumimota-san." Silly joke, nicely placed.

p. 158 "Evoex" The etymology of this new tranquilizer is clearly from the bacchanalian ejaculation (and crossword puzzle word) "evoe!"

p. 159 "Michiko Yomama" A nasty pun, based on the black insult, "Yo' mama!" Let your guard down for a second, and the guy slips in one of these every time.

p. 160 "Nukey" Orgasm and atomic detonation meet in one of Pynchon's most awful/wonderful puns (nuke = nookey).

p. 161 "technically dead" Since Takeshi lives without fear, this makes him a perfect samurai, and echoes the idea on p. 29 about how a samurai is always prepared to die.

p. 162 Song: Just Like a William Powell. Echoes "Like a Meat Loaf" (p. 363), and, of course, Dylan's "Just Like Tom Thumb's Blues."

p. 163 "Which reminds me, about your PX bill..." If you had any doubts about the samurai/ninjette subplot being for laughs, this page should convince you.

p. 164 "Puncutron" An imaginary therapeutic device whose name suggests an infernal combination of eastern medicine (acupuncture) and high-energy western technology (cyclotron). There's a bit of "punk" in there, too.

p. 164 "Detractors included...managed to keep." A silly sentence, written in painful mock-German syntax for no discernible reason.

p. 164-165 "Taiwanese Healthy Brain Aerobics" More foolishness, this time mixed with music. The selection of tapes for Puncutron listening includes *The All-Regimental Bagpipes play Prime Time Favorites* (the Tube again!), and perhaps Pynchon's best judgmental title: *The Chipmunks Sing Marvin Hamlisch*.

p. 166 "...men convinced us that we were the natural administrators of this thing 'morality'..." Sister Rochelle's feminist Eden parable suggests an interesting modern scenario: Frenesi = Eve, DL = Lilith, Vond = Serpent. This would help explain Frenesi/America's irresistible attraction for the authoritarian Vond.

p. 167 "The Ordeal of the Thousand Broadway Show Tunes" Transcendental malarkey.

p. 167 "YOUR MAMA EATS, how can we resist?" Aggro dining.

p. 169 "Cheapsat" Preterite communications personified.

p. 170 "Like Death, Only Different." While this is a nice definition of the "oid" suffix, it begs the question of exactly what Thanatoid's *are*.

p. 170 "But we watch a lot of Tube" Thanatoids watch lots of TV, trying to advance further into the condition of death. This makes them Reaganite kids? Couch potatoes? Embittered hippies? Everyone in America? Anyway, advancing further into the condition of death is only a restatement of the law of entropy, which may mean that everyone in the *universe* is a Thanatoid.

p. 171 As Takeshi reaches for pie, he's "checking the edges of the frame." Does this mean he's in a film? Or is Pynchon just grabbing a handy cinema term?

p. 171 Takeshi tries to "go the opposite way! Back to life!" This anti-entropic movement makes him a great hero, a symbol of intelligence (the only truly anti-entropic entity), the life force.

p. 172 "Shade" (as in Shade Creek) = ghost.

p. 172 "thick fluids in flexible containers" = scumbags.

p. 172 "The Woodbine Motel" Harks back, perchance, to the 1870's, the Union Pacific railroad scandal, and the Credit Mobilier. When one party was asked, under oath, where the money was, he replied that it had "gone where the woodbine twineth."

p. 172 "The Zero Inn" Very thanatoid, preterite and Zoyd-like. Also another zero.

p. 173 Thanatoids are "victims of karmic imbalances -- unanswered blows, unredeemed suffering..." So are the Thanatoids victims of the Seventies? Or another version of the preterites in *Gravity's Rainbow*? Maybe they're just over-determined ghosts of some sort. This description is similar to the kind of thing that psychics talk about when they're trying to make your poltergeists go away; it's the unresolved baggage that keeps the ghosties on the move, and out of wherever they belong. Remember, too, that Shade Creek is "a psychic jumping-off town" where the Thanatoids wait "for the data necessary to pursue their needs and aims (i.e., ghostlike revenge) among the still living..." (p. 171)

p. 173 "Although the streets were irregular and steeply pitched..." The description is an attempt to capture the effect of an Escher drawing--or perhaps the expressionist sets in *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* [1920].

p. 174 Thanatoids are injured by "what was done to them." Here they seem like left-over hippies, Vietnam vets, America's victims. Preterites who want revenge.

p. 175 "Karmic adjustment" Well, yes, it's a nice progression from insurance adjustment, but what does Takeshi actually *do*? Prairie is still wondering on page 192, and DL never lets on. In any case, it looks like these Thanatoids are dead California yuppies; a resource to be exploited by preterite tradesmen.

p. 175 "interesting work with airplanes" So, during World War II Takeshi *was* a kamikaze -- hence the same Takeshi who's in *Gravity's Rainbow*! (See Viking edition, page 690) This brings up an interesting, though peripheral issue: As a Kamikaze, Takeshi flew a Zero. A--and there's a reference on page 672 (of *GR*) to "Zeros bearing comrades away," reminding us of those human lives as binary code in God's PC. As we've noted, there are lots of other "zero" reverences (that's a pun, not a typo) in *Vineland*.

p. 176 "Domo komarimashita!" = Japanese for "Thanks a lot!" or "You're welcome."

p. 178 "Interpersonal Programming and the Problem Towee" Pynchon definitely has an attitude on this kind of California stuff. He also seems to have a grudge against Mercedes drivers.

p. 178 "Sounds like the team I bet on last week." Vato gets to make the bad pun this time. This is a great montage of the growing relationship between Vato, Blood, Takeshi, and DL.

p. 179 "Vato wanted it to be a sitcom." Another example of how deeply TV has invaded our thoughts.

p. 180 "I'm Chip! I'm Dale!" A sly comparison of chipmunks: Disney's cartoonish Chip 'n Dale Vs. Bagdasarian's sonic Alvin, Simon, and Theodore.

p. 186 "octogenarihexation" = 86'd = tossed out.

p. 186 "Yuroks" Being Indians, the Yuroks are, naturally, preterite in the Pynchon universe. The *woge* (note lower case) seem to be Yurok Lorax'; ultra-preterite.

p. 187 "Bernard Herrmann" The famous film composer, whose credits include, among many other great picture soundtracks, Hitchcock's *Psycho* [1960].

p. 187 "A Toyota in the treetops" Is this a tip of the hat to the boat in the tree in Marquez's famous novel of magic realism, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*?

p. 188 "...vanish unaccountably between Shade Creek and the V & B pound, as Thanatoid units...had been known to do..." Vanishing Thanatoid cars may push the envelope of fantasy a bit too far. And yet, and yet... They wind up in the tops of trees, you see. It's kind of like 'toon cars: 'toons can drive real cars, real people can drive 'toon cars. Plus, it sets up (much later) the disappearance of Vond's ride in Chapter 15.

p. 188 "Sate..." A totally abrupt scene-change to Takeshi's, a literary jump cut.

p. 188 "Weed Atman" Another great name. Weed = marijuana. Also perhaps, an echo of Steven Weed, abandoned boyfriend of heiress Patty Hearst, which raises a very faint reverberation of Frenesi as Patty-in-reverse. Atman = Hindu for breath, the principle of life, the World Soul.

p. 188 "Prairie was hearing this, in her turn, from DL..." Prairie breaks into the narrative, bouncing us unexpectedly back to the present. These abrupt break-ins by Prairie are fun.

p. 189 "Variety Loaves...not, as once supposed, safely dead but no, only, queerly, sleeping..." Thanatoid lunch meat!

p. 190 "Me gotta go" A line from Richard Berry's "Louie Louie."

p. 191 "FFAR" Obviously military hardware, but what does it stand for?

p. 191 "Kick Out the Jamb" If this is a reference to the MC5 tune, Pynchon (or his editor) should have known that the correct spelling is "Jams."

CHAPTER 10

Prairie, DL and Takeshi drive to LA, where (it seems) Takeshi maintains a high-tech detective office in Century City. A robot fridge offers them drinks and sings them cute songs. Prairie asks again about Frenesi, and DL takes her to see another old comrade in arms, ex-24fps film editor Ditzah Pisk Feldman. Ditzah shows reels of old footage, which cross-fade into a flashback/reminiscence of radical filmmaking days. A brief history of 24fps. We "see" footage Frenesi shot of Brock Vond -- presumably their first contact. This cross-fades to sexy dialogue from that meeting: the initial seduction. The chapter ends with a flashforward, or at least a mild foreshadowing of the future, with 24fps trapped at College of the Surf in Trasero County during some radical political confrontation, and an ominous hint of dreadful events-to-come.

p. 192 "Zero Profile Paint & Body" Another zero.

p. 192 "proprietary lacquer" makes Trans-Am invisible. A distant echo of Imipolex G in *GR*?

p. 193 "little robot fridge [named Raoul], with two round video screens...each with an image of a cartoon eye." This is *so* cute! And, significantly, this robot icebox delivers "refrigerator tunes."

p. 193 "tachyon chamber" Science fiction window dressing, presumably an imaginary subassembly of the make-believe time machine. Tachyons are whimsical sub-atomic particles; the root is from the Greek = swift.

p. 193 "exactly a tenth of a second after the warrant ran out, the 'sucker blew..." Clearly a hair-trigger critical-need-detector.

p. 194 "distant wash of freeway sound, the concrete surf" Nice writing. Is this the sound beer-riders hear? Or Chuck Berry's "highway sound" (from "Maybelline")?

p. 195 "ECO stock" See note, p. 116.

p. 196 "grown up in New York City and, except for geographically, never left it..." Ah, we know the type.

p. 197 "Xanthocroid looks" Thomas Henry Huxley (1825-1895) classified mankind into types, according to physical appearance. Xanthochroi, one of his classes, is a subdivision of the Leiotrichi, or smooth-haired type, having yellow or light-colored hair and a pale complexion. This is the prevailing type in Northern Europe. Aryan. Either Pynchon, his editor, or his typesetter has dropped the "h" in "chroi."

p. 197 "Sledge Poteet" Cool name.

p. 198 "When backs were left uncovered and chores undone..." The interpersonal dynamics of 24fps are very convincing.

p. 198 "Tsuris" = Yiddish for "trouble."

p. 198 "Tzimmes" = Yiddish for "a state of confusion." Yiddish is very rich in words for trouble and confusion.

p. 199 "shaygetz" = Yiddish for "non-Jewish man." This one happens to be Brock Vond.

p. 200 "this one [shot] of Brock ended up on a bedsheet" Specifically, this means projected on an improvised bedsheet screen, but of course it also foreshadows the smell of sexual developments before the fact.

p. 200 "...you got some real pretty takes of this creep..." DL catches on right away that Frenesi is falling for Vond.

p. 200 "The roll ended." But the flashback continues. *Very* smooth transition.

p. 201 "Then a man in a uniform, with a big pistol, would have to make you come" Sinister/sexy wordplay foreshadows the rapid development of Vond's takeover of Frenesi, and her infatuation with him. It's actually a microcosmic bondage scene, in which Frenesi, the bound partner, is freed of responsibility and guilt.

p. 201 "grid-access devices" Some resonance here to *Gravity's Rainbow*, and the tale of Byron the Bulb.

p. 202 "You don't die for no motherfuckin' shadows" Good advice.

p. 203 "CZ gas" High-powered tear gas--but note that the initials are the same as DL's Czech motorcycle.

CHAPTER 11

College of the Surf in Trasero County is located at the edge of a cliff, between the ocean and a large military base. It's a conservative Republican school with a compliant, no-nonsense student body. Weed Atman is a math professor with lots of ex-wives and girlfriends. One day, for no particular reason, someone lights a joint in Dewey Weber Plaza and all hell breaks loose. Instantaneously, CotS is radicalized, or more precisely hippie-ized, since (as was usually the case, as we recall) most of the kids just want to par-tay.

The cops move in to restore order by breaking people's heads. Weed is radicalized, and leads a group of students to safety at the apartment of a far more radical/political grad student, Rex Snuvvle. Snuvvle envisions himself counseling Weed and turning him into an exemplary revolutionary, but Weed (while a good non-violent leftie) is less interested in Marxist analysis than sex and rock 'n' roll.

Despite the cops, the uprising flourishes. CotS reconstitutes itself as the People's Republic of Rock and Roll. 24fps arrives to record the revolutionary event. Frenesi, we are told, is now shooting for (and sleeping with) Brock Vond. Shortly, she is sleeping with Weed as well. We witness the rapid progression of Frenesi's interest in Vond from relatively innocent cooperation (Vond pays the lab costs for extra dupes of her footage), to shackups in airport motels. Finally Frenesi flies to Oklahoma City for a major meeting with Vond: fucking and strategizing while a furious tornado gathers outside their hotel room. Frenesi seems to be in love with Vond, who urges her to betray Weed.

p. 204 "legendary Trasero County coast" Why legendary? This is Pynchon's second reference to an unexplained "legendary" location. Is he just hot on this location, or are we missing something? In any case, Trasero is probably San Clemente. Why else a statue of Nixon?

p. 204 "a military reservation" Probably Camp Pendleton. However, military bases are everywhere in California, and especially everywhere in this novel. Note the shadowy Base in Chapter 6. The Base itself is unknown, but its periphery is marked by sub-communities like "Gate 9."

p. 204 "College of the Surf" Probably Whittier College, Nixon's alma mater.

p. 204 "music...finding the ears of sentries...like hostile-natives sounds in a movie about white men fighting savage tribes." Great writing, and a powerful vision of a "free" campus next to a military base.

p. 204 "the brand-new field of Computer Science" Those zeros and ones again...

p. 205 "dissent from official reality...the same dread disease..." Definitely. Still.

p. 205 "Dewey Weber" David Earl "Dewey" Weber, a legendary Sixties surfer and surfboard builder, known for his trademark red trunks, his peerless style, and his capacity for alcohol. At one point in the mid-Sixties Weber was the largest surfboard manufacturer in the world.

p. 205 "California moperly statutes" Moperly = an obsolete term for loitering. Clearly an appropriate crime for California, where slow driving is close to a capital offense. Pynchon manages to work moperly into virtually every book he's ever written.

p. 206 "potent Vietnamese buds" What a shock, to find that you can't fight a war overseas without some feedback back home!

p. 206 "long crowdwaves, carrying smaller bursts of violence that exploded like seeds in a surfer's cigarette" That's a marijuana cigarette. Also a comically mixed-metaphor that combines mathematical/signal analysis and dooper imagery.

p. 206 "a domain bounded by a set of points partway to the next person of height equal to or greater than..." An extended conceit in mock geometric clothing. Like the example on p. 117, this is probably self-satire, as indicated once again by the concluding em-dash as Pynchon restrains himself. Ostensibly mathematician Weed is thinking this thought, but it's clearly Pynchon stepping in front of the curtain for a second.

p. 207 "...a throb of fear went right up his asshole..." Another visceral fear reaction. See also pages 10, 45, 116, 299.

p. 207 "I'm just tall, that's all." Borrowed from Jimmy Reed's blues, "Big Boss Man."

p. 207 "Greg Noll Lab" Greg Noll, "Da Bull," is another legendary surfer, same vintage and hangouts as Dewey Weber. See page 205.

p. 207 "Las Nalgas Beach" = Spanish for "the buttocks," or "the spankings." More badasses.

p. 207 "Rex Snuvle" Another cool name.

p. 207 "lost tribe with failed cause" Thanatoids? Hippies? Herreros and/or Gauchos in *Gravity's Rainbow*? It would be easy to come up with lots of other examples.

p. 208 "geist that could've been polter along with zeit" Clever wordplay on poltergeist and zeitgeist, but essentially meaningless -- much like the chipmunks on page 180.

p. 208 "not much by Berkeley or Columbia standards" These were the days of the Free Speech Movement, the Days of Rage, etc.

p. 208 "Rex did manage to place Weed in what looked like the emerging junta" Notice how Rex is doing the maneuvering. It would seem as if he worked for Vond even before Frenesi.

p. 209 "A sudden lust for information" Not often seen in SoCal, but it serves to reveal the usual sleazy land deals.

p. 209 "a 16mm Arri 'M' on a Tyler Mini-Mount" Arri = Arriflex, a good, light, 16mm camera. Tyler Mini-Mount = a small, shock-absorbing camera mount, spring-loaded and counterweighted to soak up the low-frequency vibration of rotating helicopter blades (and not much use for anything else). All in all, this is state of the art hardware, guerrilla-film-wise.

p. 209 "He paid no more than the lab costs" Suddenly Frenesi is shooting film for Vond. How come? This key plot event is never really explained.

p. 209 "zooming in and out every chance she got on Weed's crotch." Apparently Frenesi is hung up on Weed too.

p. 210 "'Subtle,' remarked DL." Cutback to DL and Ditzah watching footage. As before, this effect is both effective and striking.

p. 211 "She hitched a ride up to LAX with Jinx..." Is Frenesi already "the latest girlfriend?"

p. 211 "just kept on writing equations" Nice scene of the wives and girlfriends de-mystifying Weed's mathematical preoccupation.

p. 212 "gray mother storms..." Fine, scary description of the gathering storm.

p. 212 "DOJ" = Department of Justice. Or maybe Department of Jesus (see p. 213).

p. 213 "For what? The fucking? Anything else?" Maybe the old American weakness for authority.

p. 213 "I want his spirit..." Here Vond is portrayed like the Devil, or at least a vampire. (See p. 217 and

376.) Or the snake in Sister Rochelle's feminist Eden fable (see p. 166).

p. 214 "She gave him the little-girl photofloods, 4800 degrees of daylight blue" Pynchon is riffing on Frenesi's beautiful blue-on-blue eyes, her "wide invincible gaze....useful in a lot of situations, including ignorance." And sure enough, Daylight Blue Photoflood lamps do produce a color temperature of 4800 degrees Kelvin, with wavelengths short enough so you can shoot "outdoor," or daylight, film indoors.

p. 215 "a funnel cloud...swung slowly..." The storm continues. Amazing. Usually storms in fiction signify. What does this one mean? The uprising at CotS? The larger social conflict: fuzz against junk? Or Dorothy Gale's cyclone, the agent of her not being in Kansas any more?

p. 216 "She might do it--not for him, but...because it looked like Brock's stretch of the river..." Does this mean Frenesi "turns" for purely opportunistic reasons? Because she thinks Vond is gonna win? If so, she abandons her ideals amazingly easily. It might be that she feels so powerless and caught.

p. 216 "light she imagined as sun plus sky, with an 85 filter in" An extended cinematic metaphor, seemingly designed to impress us with how much Frenesi knows about film exposure. An 85 filter lets indoor film, rated at 3200 degrees Kelvin, be used outdoors (in the light of Frenesi's 4800-degree K baby blues). The metaphor's deeper function is as a fantasy about getting Brock out from under his rock.

p. 217 "daylit commodity of the sixties" daylit = Frenesi's blue orbs again.

p. 217 "to redeem even Brock" Scarcely believable.

p. 217 "what she thought were closed eyelids had been open all the time" Vampires sleep with their eyes open.

CHAPTER 12

Another long, complicated chapter. Thanatoid Weed Atman (in the present, and clearly a ghost, since his unambiguous death is described later) has an (undescribed) interview with DL and Takeshi. In a brief flashback (set, apparently, after still-to-be-told events at the CotS) Weed wanders around Southern California, becoming something of a persona-non-grata. Flashforward to a Thanatoid Roast '84 at which Weed may be Guest of Honor. There are silly Thanatoid jokes, and very...slow...music. In a brief cut-away, we're told that Zoyd is hiding out in a hard-to-find dope-growing community called Holytail. The CAMP anti-smoke assault, headed by ex Luftwaffe Kommandant Karl Bopp, is briefly noted. Paranoia grows in Vineland. Back at the Thanatoid Roast Van Meter sings "Thanatoid World."

A couple of tourists wander in by accident: a dentist (Dr. Elasmó) and his receptionist Chickeeta. Weed remembers having some contact with Elasmó during the CotS events in Trasero County. A flashback details the story: Elasmó used to run a chain of discount dental franchises. He and Weed pass each other on the Freeway one day, after which Elasmó seems to be following Weed and Frenesi, after which Elasmó sends Weed a form requiring him to come to the dental office. For some reason, Weed complies, and spends days trapped in a vaguely Kafkaesque, *Trial*-like holding pattern. Elasmó never sees him, but for some reason Weed is powerfully effected by this routine: He grows deeply confused, especially about Frenesi. Moreover, his "disciples" are driving him crazy. Everyone is confused, paranoid, coming apart.

Rex is disappointed by Weed's lack of revolutionary fervor. In a nested flashback Rex proves *his* fervor by giving his beloved Porsche to a group of black activists. A vaguely-fantastic flashforward to Rex's fantasy of a picnic-in-the-future at which Rex and Weed discuss the fact that the FBI had been setting them up, and joke agreeably about the time that Rex shot Weed. The fantasy-picnic fades back to the main Weed flashback: Behind Weed's back, Frenesi tells Rex that Weed is an FBI plant, and makes plans to film the confrontation when they accuse Weed directly. Who's remembering this part? Not Weed, the presumable owner of this flashback. Probably it's Rex. Meanwhile Frenesi keeps sleeping with Weed -- and Vond.

Vond gives Frenesi a gun, and asks her to give it to Rex. She agrees, and there's a brief flashforward to Frenesi testifying before a grand jury. Back in the main flashback, Weed confronts Frenesi -- with most of 24fps present and filming. He seems to know that she has set him up. Rex appears and shoots Weed. In the end Rex seems to understand that Frenesi is responsible for the action. 24fps moves out into the night to film the inevitable FBI victory. Vond rescues/abducts Frenesi via a mysterious network of secret highways. She ends up in a sequestered "holding area" (i.e., concentration camp) "hours to the north," apparently prepared as a refuge

in case of an atomic attack.

DL returns to Berkeley and reunites with the 24fps survivors. They drive off to rescue Frenesi. DL uses Ninjette techniques to sneak into the camp and break Frenesi out. After dropping the 24fps people in Berkeley, she and Frenesi drive to Mexico, where Frenesi confesses to DL. DL is disgusted. She drives Frenesi back across the border and drops her in Las Suegras -- where, presumably, Frenesi is about to meet Zoyd. It was (says DL, narrating the end of the flashback in present tense at Ditzah's) the last time she ever saw Frenesi. There's some astrological stuff, the main thrust of which is that bad as things are they're about to get worse. (Generally a safe prediction.) There's also an alarming message from Zipi (Ditzah's sister) that several of the old 24fps members have recently disappeared. DL searches for (and finds) a bug. Then Ditzah, Prairie, Takeshi and DL pile in the Ninjamobile and head for cover.

p. 218 "up over the passes and out long desert arterials, out past the seed and feed houses and country music bars and Mexican joints with Happy Hours featuring 99 cent margaritas out of a hose, under the smog, the dribbling rain, the toxic lens of sky..." Mr. Pynchon, meet Mr. Chandler.

p. 219 "What an evening" Thanatoid Roast '84 is the "tenth annual get-together" -- which means there have been thanatoids since '75. So what happened in 1974-1975? Patty Hearst kidnapped by SLA. Nixon is impeached over Watergate, and resigns. Motion picture ratings system created. US Bicentennial celebration. Vietnam War ends; last 1,000 Americans evacuated from South Vietnam.

p. 220 "Willis Chunko" Nice name.

p. 221 "Kommandant Karl Bopp" Ditto.

p. 221 "pacified territory" Growers discuss CAMP progress in Vietnam-like terms.

p. 222-223 "All right, you parrots, listen up!" Parrot sale and shared dreams: Magic realism, gorgeous and surreal; tropical colors and flashy imagery.

p. 223 "can't shit, can't get a hardon" The Thanatoid Roast rendered from Van Meter's POV; his paranoia is expressed in terms familiar from *GR*.

p. 225 "old-time Combo-Ork arrangements" There's that lingo again.

p. 225 "rallentando" A typically obscure Pynchon word, this musical term means exactly the same as *ritardando*: played with decreasing pace. Perfect for the Thanatoid gig.

p. 226 "Larry Elasmó" Cool name. Plasticman? But what the fuck is he doing at the Thanatoid Roast? Pynchon is pushing the outside of the coincidence envelope.

p. 226-228 Elasmó sequence. Mr. Pynchon, meet Mr. Kafka. This all seems boosted right out of *The Trial*. Here's Weed, another rebellious American child (like Frenesi), submitting to, or fascinated with, authority. "Because the Doctor says so..." turn your body over to coaches, boys with hardons. Go to the Draft Board Center and sit on the group W bench. Even rational, mathematical, radical Weed does what the dentist tells him to, even if it is manifestly senseless.

Among other questions worth asking: Who authorized Elasmó to issue these compulsory forms that require people to come to his office? And by what mysterious process does Weed's merely waiting around cause him to become confused and dispirited? Maybe the idea is simply to take Weed out of the picture at intervals, so Vond and Frenesi can talk and fuck. There's some hint (from Vond if not from Pynchon) that Weed is collaborating with Vond. If so, we'd expect at least a short scene showing that collaboration. The Elasmó sequence stands in the right position, and serves the same function -- but there's no hint whatsoever of Vond. Pretty weird.

p. 226 "Dr Elasmó's video image had swept, had pixeldanced in" Image/raster TV techotalk. Pixels = the tiny dots that make up the Tube image.

p. 227 "Dr. Larry Elasmó, or a person wearing, like a coverall and veil, his ubiquitous screen image grainy, flickering at the edges..." So not only is the real Elasmó tracking Weed, his TV image is doing it too!

p. 228 "Ilse, the hygienist..." Naturally, the dental hygienist in Larry's World of Discomfort is none other than Ilse, the high-heeled Nazi heroine of sixties S&M porno flicks, e.g., *Ilse, She-Wolf of the SS*.

p. 230 "...adjusted the pulsing vacuum to meet his own quickening rhythm..." The scene of Rex adjusting Bruno's carburetors while masturbating in the intakes clearly harks back to certain intimate moments involving Rachel and her MG's gearshift lever in *V*.

p. 230 "Trash the Xanthocroid" (See note, p. 197.)

p. 232 "...smile and relax beneath some single low oak out on an impossible hillside..." Flashsideways

(or some-even-stranger-ways) to an imaginary, 4th-dimensional picnic in which Rex, Weed, and Prairie "negotiate an agreeable version of history." This is an important little scene, since it's where the details of the murder are made explicit at last. Or are they? Note the "nearly" in "he nearly blew me away," which seems to suggest that maybe Weed is merely wounded? (It's just Pynchonian smoke; Weed really is killed.) This scene appears to be Rex's fantasy -- except how does he know about Prairie?

p. 236 "...he reached for the Tube, popped it on, fastened himself to the screen and began to feed." A great William Burroughs-style science-fictional, Tube/addictive image.

p. 236 "It's takin his soul, man" Certain primitive (and not so primitive) tribes believe that when someone takes your photograph it steals your soul. Or maybe Howie means the Tube.

p. 236 "Culito Canyon" = Spanish for "Little Ass Canyon."

p. 237 "...might make the Guinness Book someday..." The Guinness Book of Records, published regularly by the Irish brewery/distillery company, chronicles current achievements in urban sports like phone booth stuffing.

p. 238 "Famous worms of song" A play on "The worms crawl in, the worms crawl out, the worms play pinocle on your snout," sung to Mozart/Haydn/whoever's requiem. A famous childhood song, right up there with "Great green gobs of greasy grimy monkeymeat," "Hitler he had just one big ball," and the tragic ballad "Found a Peanut." This is kind of a heavy Pynchon hit on Frenesi's knowledge of Weed's impending doom.

p. 239 Note the asterisk at the top of the page. How come? Pynchon hasn't needed no steinking asterisks before! Can those worms have thrown him so far off balance that he can't carry on without typographic help?

p. 239 "ND-1 filters" ND = Neutral Density; the suffix digit tells how many f stops it reduces incoming light (or outgoing baby-blue intensity) without changing color values.

p. 239 "Nixonian reaction...continued to...compromise...what may only in some fading memories ever have been a people's miracle, an army of loving friends..." Pynchon seems bitter over the ease with which the government (and its media, and its money) destroyed the ideal/idyll.

p. 240 "'therapy sessions,' Brock called them..." Brock seems connected with Elasmu. Does this mean that Weed has really turned? Or that Weed's sessions with the tooth-yanker are just Vond's "reality adjustments," in which Weed is somehow osmosified to believe in Brock's version of reality (in which only power counts, and resistance is futile)?

p. 240 "Smith" = Smith and Wesson.

p. 241 "24-frame-per-second truth" Hi, Jean-Luc.

p. 242 "frogwork" Frogs are the knots in which ornate cords (like the ones on doormen's uniform coats) are tied. Similar to Buddhist "priest cords" sometimes used as hangings. Here, frogwork is an evocative metaphor for the intricate shadow cast by the tangle of overhead cables and trolley wires -- and a very apt one, you'll agree, if you've ever seen the rat's nest of wiring suspended above the street in San Francisco or San Diego.

p. 244 "the Arri and...a wind-up Bolex" Two small, light, quiet, highly portable 16mm movie cameras. The Arriflex' electric motor is powered by a battery pack; the Bolex is (like Pynchon says) spring-driven.

p. 245 "a battered old Auricon" Another 16mm camera, also battery (or AC) powered, with the handy capability to record live sound right on the film.

p. 246 "the shirt cloth still burning around the blackly erupted exit, pale flames guttering out..." Sounds great, but while we're no forensic experts we'd guess that burns would be characteristic of the entry hole of a gunshot wound, not the exit.

p. 247 "a Mole-Richardson Series 700 generator ... legendary Eclairs ... Miller heads, Fastaxes ... Norwood Binary light meters" All deluxe loot from the CotS Film Arts Dept. The "legendary" Eclairs (there you go again, Mr. Pynchon!) are innovative French 16mm cameras, quieter (and producing a steadier image) than the Arri, Bolex or Auricon cameras mentioned above. The Miller fluid head goes on top of a camera tripod and allows very smooth pans.

p. 247 "Blue Cheer concert" Blue Cheer was a popular "acid-rock" band of the time, named after one of underground chemist Stan Owsley's most popular (and potent) releases of LSD tablets. The tabs got *their* name because, in the charming flower-power style of the time, Owsley used to dye each new release a different color -- and the blue tinge of this batch reminded users of a well-known laundry detergent.

p. 247 "7242" 16mm Ektachrome EF reversal film, a medium fast (125 ASA) workhorse stock.

p. 248 "...a handful of persons [were] unaccounted for. In those days it was unthinkable that any North American agency would kill its own civilians and then lie about it.... Vond referred to it humorously as 'rapture.'" Rapture is a Biblical reference to the Day of Judgment, when the dead and the living will be taken to Heaven. Vond uses the term again, later, to describe winching Prairie up "into the sky" and abducting her (p. 376). Pynchon may have picked up the term from *Job*, Robert Heinlein's last great fantasy novel.

p. 248 "Fawning, gazing upward at the zipper of his fly, media toadies..." Here we see the "official" media, directed by the government, rewriting the Sixties on the spot. The only reporter to challenge Vond is dragged away.

p. 248 "field-gray trucks" *Feldgrau*, that popular old Wehrmacht color!

p. 249 "tenebrous cool light" tenebrous = dark, gloomy.

p. 249 "Federal Emergency Evacuation Route (FEER)" What a quintessentially Pynchonian idea, and what a powerful image, and what a great acronym!

p. 250 "ruins from Camelot" Little left from the Kennedy presidency.

p. 250 "the flagship of the 24fps motor pool, a '57 Chevy Nomad" Cool wheels, but not mentioned in the semi-extensive description of the 24fps vehicle collection on p. 194.

p. 251 "Virgil Ploce" Great name. And count on Pynchon to choose an anti-communist with an exploding cigar! Rumors about this supposedly-CIA-backed anti-Castro plot emerged after the Bay of Pigs invasion. It's never been established whether the gambit was actually put into practice.

p. 252 "primer cord" Pynchon makes a common error in this reference; he may only have heard it said, never seen it in writing. This stuff is actually called "Primacord" (a copyrighted name of the Ensign-Bickford company). It's useful stuff, serving not only as a primer, but as a conveniently cord-shaped explosive substance.

p. 252 "the sudden light from behind, the unbearable sight in the mirror" An atomic explosion.

p. 253 "...becoming its harsh woven shadow..." Frenesi = light; DL = shadow; together = film. Also, of course, ones and zeros.

p. 254 "Hasta la proxima, querida mia" Spanish for "Until next time, my dear." The letter "Z" is, of course, the trademark of Zorro. This steamy scene seems virtually pointless; maybe Pynchon got horny while he was writing. "Perhaps...not unscented" indeed! (See also p. 118, with the smell of DL's "pussy excitation.")

p. 255 "the subroutine Yukai na...a low-order limbic pleasure cycle that would loop over and over" Interesting use of computer programming lingo in the martial arts world.

p. 258 "A llover" What a great meal! *A llover* is Spanish for, "It's about to rain," but it also refers to the fact that it's "all over" for the outdoor desayuno. Pynchon puns again.

p. 259 "powder to the people" Ouch!

p. 259 "Feel like we were running around like little kids with toy weapons, like the camera really was some kind of gun, gave us that kind of power. Shit. How could we lose track like that, about what was real?" Frenesi has totally bought Vond's line about the powerlessness of film vs. a gun. (And that's how they got her. And us.)

p. 259 "who'd we save" Yet another preterite reference, and one that harks back to Hector's speech on p. 28.

p. 259 "Purple Owsley" Another run of Owsley's high-grade color-coded LSD.

p. 260 "You know what happens when my pussy's runnin' the show." If this is Frenesi's only motivation for the series of betrayals (including her betrayal of herself) that lie at the heart of *Vineland*, it's a thin reed on which to build a book. Unless we buy into Sister Rochelle's Eden parable in which Vond represents the snaky seductiveness of authority, and Frenesi stands for a postwar America that's eager to surrender its freedom. Indeed, Frenesi's enjoyment of bondage and discipline games, which free her of responsibility, makes a strong connection with all the S&M sequences in the book (see next note).

p. 260-261 "behind the Thorazine curtain" Pynchon on a sadism kick. He does seem to have a weakness for this stuff, as many sequences in *Gravity's Rainbow* will attest.

p. 261 "1,000-watt Mickey-Mole spot" An open face (lensless) focusing studio light from the Mole-Richardson company. It rhymes, too.

p. 263 "out in the zodiac..." Vond is a Scorpio. What else?

p. 263 "idiolalia" Pynchon loves these esoteric terms. It means a private language. Here starts the paranoia about 24fps's disappearing -- which echoes people disappearing from the computer (p. 85), and the Kahuna airplane (p. 65).

p. 265 "Why would he come after us?" Good question.

p. 265 "The whole Reagan program..." Yeah! Go, Pynchon, go!

p. 266 Vond is "after Frenesi...to use her for some task." OK, what task?

p. 266-267 "So the big bad Ninjamobile swept along on the great Ventura [Freeway]...above the heads of TV watchers, lovers under the overpasses, movies at malls letting out, bright gas-station oases in pure fluorescent spill...down the corridors of the surface streets, in nocturnal smog, the adobe air, the smell of distant fireworks, the spilled, the broken world." What a great paragraph! Yes, the cat can write -- rhyming verse and all: "flirters, deserters, wimps and pimps"

CHAPTER 13

Here, thank God, we have a short, simple chapter. Starts in 1970, just after the events at CotS; Frenesi is still in the concentration camp, called PREP (Political Reeducation Program). [Presumably this is before DL breaks her out, but one gets the impression in the previous chapter that the break-out followed quite swiftly upon the CotS events, so go figure.] Brock stops in with his sidekick Roscoe and flirts with Frenesi. Vond is into Cesare Lombroso, a turn-of-the-century phrenologist. Lombroso's notion of "misoneism," a kind of negative feedback loop by which society resists change, is introduced too. Brock taunts Frenesi sadistically, and splits.

There's a flashback about Vond: His sexuality. His attractiveness for women. His fear of sex.

When Frenesi escapes, Vond is deeply distraught. It appears he really loves her. His colleagues begin to suspect that he's falling apart, so he has to lay low and not look for Frenesi. Instead he fucks other hippie girls.

Meanwhile, Frenesi has met and married Zoyd, and gotten pregnant. We get the impression that for Frenesi, the main benefit of her relationship with Zoyd is that it offers cover; love does not seem to be a significant feature. Zoyd and the Corvairs get a record contract, but cut no record. Frenesi moves back in with Sasha to have her baby. Afterwards, Frenesi becomes deeply depressed, and even more fixated on Vond. Her father Hubbell shows up too, and in the guise of comforting her tells her (and us) his sad story: A gaffer (and progressive left-wing type), he refused to scab at the movie studio by joining IATSE, choosing instead to join the Conference of Studio Unions. Of course he loses his job. In a nested flashback we visit Hubbell and Sasha as young WWII beboppers. Flashforward to Hubbell giving in and reluctantly joining IA--and retiring as quickly as possible. Flashforward again to Frenesi and the baby Prairie. Gradually Frenesi loses her hatred of Prairie, and tries to forget both Vond and 24fps. But when Vond reappears, their steamy S&M love affair resumes.

p. 268 "...his partner Roscoe..." Roscoe = slang for pistol.

p. 269 "children longing for discipline" Vond's genius lies in seeing this desire in the kids of the Sixties. Is this Pynchon's view? It certainly seems true of Frenesi.

p. 270 "Jeez I know I'm bad but--" Reference to the Shangri-Las' old rock 'n' roll song "Leader of the Pack." The full line goes, "He's bad, but he's not evil."

p. 271 "less voluble Tonto" Brock and Roscoe as Lone Ranger and Tonto.

p. 271 "Feel like we've been in a Movie of the Week!" L-like *The Brock Vond Story*, starring Robert Redford?

p. 272 "Cesare Lombroso" Detailed exposition of the Italian criminologist's theories show Brock's (or, more precisely, Pynchon's) fascination with them. "...crude in method and long superseded, although it seemed reasonable to Brock." Or any other fascist with a bent toward genocide. Most of this stuff probably comes from the 1911 translation of Lombroso's *Criminal Man*, or the 1911 biography by H.G. Kurella.

p. 274-5 "the Madwoman in the Attic" Brock's female side. This is the name of a major concept in post-Freudian feminist psychology. (Also the title of the Gilbert/Gubar book of feminist criticism concerning 19th Century novels.) Vond's dream foreshadows other criminal/erotic dream-women (such as Frenesi) coming in "from steep overhead angles" (p. 276). They sound like harpies or vampires, coming to rape Vond. As we shall

see, Vond later approaches Prairie from the same direction.

p. 277 "like a skier on an unfamiliar black-diamond slope" The black diamond symbol marks an "expert" (i.e., very difficult) skiing slope. Hearing of Frenesi's escape from PREP, Brock freaks out, feeling himself to be in a dangerous situation beyond his abilities.

p. 278 "...hoping to find a girl to project Frenesi's ghost onto." Vond is about to repeat the mistake made by Jimmy Stewart in *Vertigo* [1958].

p. 282 "Frenesi had been making it as easy for him as she could..." She really does love Vond, it seems. Or his uniform, his sadistic charms, his authority.

p. 282 "sky-blue Rayleigh scattering" Typical Pynchon science shot. The frequency-differential scattering of light waves, as described by Lord Rayleigh (1842-1919), is indeed what makes the sky appear blue.

p. 283 "A&R" = Artists and Repertoire. In record companies, the "Head of A&R" (originally "A&R man") decides which artists to sign, and what they'll record. A powerful position.

p. 283 "Department...head!" A very old joke indeed. As noted previously, "head" is sixties dooper slang for a user of (usually soft) drugs.

p. 284 "the eye-catching production values of LSD" Nice line, but to set it up Pynchon has to run these Mellow acid-head variations. It's a pretty idealized trip. Pynchon does Dr. Tim.

p. 285 "Leonard the midwife." Leonard? And in a Nehru shirt, no less! See also *The Crying of Lot 49*, paperback edition, p. 128: "Change your name to Miles, Dean, Serge, and/or Leonard, baby..."

p. 285 The look from infant Prairie to papa Zoyd that would, more than once in years to come, "help him through those times when the Klingons are closing, and the helm won't answer, and the warp engine's out of control." Very nice use of the *Star Trek* metaphor to lock in the time frame during which Zoyd needed help, and also a powerful image to describe times of distress. See also the adventures of Cutter John, the wheelchair-bound character in the "Bloom County" comic strip, who's famed for *Star Trek* fantasies enjoyed with Opus, Bill the Cat and other animal stars of that strip.

p. 286 "...Frenesi was depressed" Frenesi's deep sadness upon having her baby is so common it even has a name: "post-partum depression."

p. 286 "Lobster Trick Movie" Well, this *might* be *Annie Hall*, but basically we're totally lost. Can it be some obscure Navy reference? A helmsman putting in his "trick" at the wheel? Or is this some kinda SoCal TV thing?

p. 287 "the sleek raptors that decorate fascist architecture" Like the eagles of the 3rd Reich, and the USA.

p. 287 "She understood, from all the silver and light she'd known and been, brought back to the world like silver recalled grain by grain from the Invisible to form images of what then went on to grow old, go away, get broken or contaminated." A remarkable extended metaphor about film (in which blacks are created by grains of silver appearing "from the Invisible" during development) as a sort of liberation from time.

p. 287 "photon projectors" = arc lights.

p. 288-290 Hubbell's tale: Sad, accurate, believable story pinned down by Pynchon's usual cascade of obscure, effective historic details and dialogue.

p. 289 "...drop a Brute 450 on you just as easy as a tree..." The Brute is a heavy carbon-arc studio light made by the Mole-Richardson company. Obviously, Hub is tired of hearing about the heroic but schlemiel-like main event in the life of Sasha's dad. (see p. 75).

p. 289 "misoneism" = hatred of what is new.

p. 290 "Happy-go-lucky kids..." A sudden explosion of bebop tunes and wartime details powers this brief but effective time-machine day-trip.

p. 290 "...Hub with a uke...[both] singing bop tunes..." In Pynchon's universe, musicians are always good guys.

p. 291 "pocket pool" = playing with your balls through a hole in your pants pocket.

p. 291 "...the Brute was first coming in. Jesus, all those amps..." So it turns out that Hub, Frenesi's father, "went over" too, and (like his daughter) for the love of a Brute. *This* Brute, however, is a big Mole-Richardson arc light, not a lawman.

p. 291 "sold off my only real fortune -- my precious anger -- for a lot of god-damn shadows." Meaning film, of course, but remember too that in the binary scheme of life light and shadows are ones and zeros.

p. 291-2 "Young Gaffer...I'd've called you my Best Girl." A play on "Best Boy," a film term referring to the gaffer's first assistant.

p. 292 "...this turn against Sasha her once-connected self would remain a puzzle she would never quite solve..." It's not that mysterious. Vond has forced a wedge (his erect penis, perhaps; see following note) between Frenesi and her mother, her leftism, her own female identity. It's a form of expulsion from Paradise, and ties in very neatly with Sister Rochelle's feminist Eden fable on p. 166.

p. 292-3 "joystick" Vond reenters Frenesi's life, and the chapter ends with a powerful (if appropriately cheerless and depressing) simile in which Vond's erect penis is the joystick of the video game in a forbidden arcade that never shuts.

CHAPTER 14

Even after he abducts Frenesi, Vond maintains an unhealthy interest in baby Prairie (who has stayed with Zoyd). A year after Frenesi leaves Zoyd, Zuniga (acting at Vond's direction) sets up Zoyd for a drug bust by planting a gigantic brick of pressed marijuana at Zoyd's pad. Sasha shows up and takes Prairie. Perhaps at Zuniga's request; if true, this is a kind gesture on Zuniga's part.

Zoyd (who really loves Prairie) is whopped into jail, where Vond taunts him cruelly. After threatening Zoyd with life in prison, Vond offers him a deal. Apparently Vond wants to make sure that Frenesi is never tempted to leave him (Vond) by her love for Prairie, so he offers Zoyd his freedom if he agrees to take the kid and disappear. Zoyd agrees, but Vond has him beaten anyway. Zoyd goes to Sasha's, and picks up Prairie. But first he tells Sasha about some other stuff Vond has insisted on: Zoyd must perform an annual act of public craziness so Vond will always know where he is. [Of course, this contradicts the idea of "disappearing"; if the act of public craziness lets Vond track Zoyd and Prairie's location, it also negates the whole point of hiding Prairie from Frenesi, who can watch TV news too. Oh well...] Sasha suggests that Zoyd "disappear" in Vineland, where she has family.

Zoyd thumbs his way north. He stops briefly at a refugee commune in the Sacramento Delta, but when that proves too noisy and uptight he heads for San Francisco. There, he looks up Wendell "Mucho" Maas, a character from *The Crying of Lot 49*. Mucho is temporarily elsewhere, but Zoyd crashes at his palatial (but drug-free) rock 'n' roll pad for a few days, meeting Mucho's blonde girlfriend Trillium and her friends. Zoyd sings Prairie a silly lullaby, entitled "Lawrence of Arabia."

There's a brief flashback to Zoyd's meeting with Mucho (then an LA record producer) in 1967. In those days, Mucho was a major "head" -- but gave up drugs after a traumatic meeting with Dr. Hugo Splanchnick, an anti-cocaine nose doctor (or "snoot croaker," as Pynchon puts it). Back in the present Mucho reappears, and reminisces with Zoyd about how Zuniga screwed up the Corvairs' shot at a recording career (a brief flashback here). The two share a sad, accurate appraisal of the scary way things are changing, and a grim (also accurate) view of the future.

Zoyd and Prairie continue on their trip north to Vineland. They run into old pal Van Meter in Eureka, and together they drive "back" (presumably south) to Vineland. There's a brief historical/geographical essay on Vineland. Zoyd discovers that he likes the region, and finds a place to live in a trailer on a piece of land off Vegetable Road. He does odd jobs, hangs out happily with the other ex- (and not-so-ex) hippies, and even makes contact with Sasha's (and Frenesi's) left-wing family members -- who take him in despite their mistrust of his non-union lifestyle. Zoyd's love for Prairie deepens. He relaxes, coming to believe he's finally free of Brock Vond.

p. 294 "But when he found out about Prairie...something else, something from his nightmares of forced procreation, must have taken over, because later, in what could only be crippled judgment, Brock was to turn and go after the baby and, noticing Zoyd in the way, arrange for his removal too." This explains Vond's attack on Zoyd in Chapter 4 -- but note how "crippled judgment" buys off Pynchon's lack of

clear motivation for this series of events.

p. 294 "...a shaggy monolithic slab..." A great joke about the huge brick of weed that Zuniga plants at Zoyd's pad. "Let me guess," says Zoyd, thinking of Arthur C. Clarke and Stanley Kubrick's monolith, "*2001: A Space Odyssey* [1968]." "Try *20,000 Years In Sing Sing* [1933]," replies Zuniga. This joke is especially funny because both titles include numbers, and because both guys include scholarly references to the years the films were made. (Pynchon, of course, has been doing this throughout, but this is the first time he does it in dialogue).

p. 297 "Following the wisdom of the time" Pynchon refers, with vague disapproval, to the touchie-feelie California notion that men should "get in touch with their feelings" and, presumably, cry their little hearts out. However, Zoyd, who has gotten used to crying, is finding out that, in fact, big boys don't cry.

p. 297 "Museum of Drug Abuse" Sure, Pynchon.

p. 298 "gnathic index" In craniology, the ratio of the distance from basion to prosthion to the distance from basion to nasion, expressed as a percent of the latter. Aren't you glad you asked?

p. 299 "who feared nothing unless it was taking apart a transmission" Vond's Scorpiopic self-destructiveness is compared to that of the "beer outlaws" of Zoyd's youth (see page 37). This observation is quite accurate: Only advanced automotive nerds can take transmissions apart (and get them back together again).

p. 298-301 "I know how to take care of Frenesi, asshole..." Vond is unbearably cruel and sadistic in this interview with Zoyd. Unlike the hero of "Leader of the Pack," the lyrics to which Pynchon uses for a joke on p. 270, Vond is both bad *and* evil. What an asshole! And he *really* hates hippies -- presumably for being childish. But who's really being childish here?

p. 299 "those rectal spasms of fear" Zoyd once again experiences this not-so-leit-but-definitely-motif in *Vineland*. (See also pages 10, 45, 116, 207.)

p. 300 "Not the Earth Brock was acquainted with" A great line!

p. 300 "...squealing, screaming guitar solos that defied any number of rules, that also lifted the blood and reassured the soul..." Could be Jimi Hendrix. Or a description of *Vineland*. But mainly it gives Zoyd an idea that the "real" world still exists, and so will he.

p. 301 "she calls up one night..." Vond seems interested in making sure that Frenesi won't be able to find Zoyd and Prairie. Of course this is contradicted by the "public act of craziness" that Vond has insisted Zoyd perform.

p. 301 "I have her power of attorney, she gave me that even before she gave me her body..." That is, Frenesi surrendered her identity to Vond first; bondage before intercourse. There's a distant echo here of Mississippi bluesman Robert Johnson's "Traveling Riverside Blues": "She got a mortgage on my body, now, and a lien on my soul."

p. 302 "the count at 5:30 AM" Body count, that is -- a basic security measure in prisons.

p. 303 "EPT" ? Help us, somebody!

p. 303 "Agustin Lara tunes" = Hispanic shitkickin' music.

p. 303 "conjunto" = Spanish for "small band," or "combo."

p. 303 "los vatos de Chiques" "Chicano dudes."

p. 307 "Prairie kept waking up every couple hours, all the way back to her old baby ways." This is true baby stuff. Is Pynchon a daddy? Consider also all the baby details, and Prairie's teenagerhood. This is hard stuff to get from a book, but with Pynchon's genius for bringing research alive you never know.

p. 307 "Mucho Maas" A pun, of course, on "mucho mas" (much more, in Spanish). Also (and also "of course") ex-husband of Oedipa Maas, and one of the main characters in *The Crying of Lot 49*, in which Mucho is a DJ disgusted by his former incarnation as a used car salesman for a group called N.A.D.A., and becomes dependent on LSD.

p. 308 "Paranoids concert at the Fillmore" *CL49* fans will recall that Mucho's ex, Oedipa, was briefly hung up on Miles, lead singer of this pre-punk group.

p. 308 "absquatulation" Absquatulate is a coined word, apparently meaning to make off, or decamp.

p. 309 "guest stash" A special supply of smoke for visitors was not uncommon in the houses of serious weedheads at this time. However, since Zoyd can't *find* the guest stash at Mucho's house he has to roll his own. Bummer!

p. 310 "unforeseen passion" A good description of Mucho's love for cocaine.

p. 310-311 "Dr. Hugo Splanchnick" The entire Splanchnick sequence is immensely funny, including Pynchon's use of "snoot croaker" to describe the doc's specialty.

p. 311 "stop-me-search-me VW bus" The epitome of Sixties California hippie culture, which (wonderful to say) continues to survive, everywhere, to this very day.

p. 311 "'Aw' said the dopers, the speech balloon emerging from their tailpipe" All of a sudden, we're in 'toontown.

p. 312 "...me entiendes como te digo?" = Spanish for "Unnerstan' what I'm sayin'?"

p. 313-314 "I guess it's over..." It seems likely that this is Pynchon delivering the "nut paragraph," as journalists call the central idea in a story. This dialogue seems heartfelt -- especially the stuff about the tube ("keep us distracted, it's what the Tube is for,") and rock 'n' roll ("just another way to claim our attention,") and "Soon they're gonna be coming after everything, not just drugs but beer, cigarettes, sugar, salt, fat, you name it, anything that could remotely please any of your senses....," and "It was the way people used to talk." Yes, it was.

p. 313 "Please go careful, Zoyd" Mucho has made much the same settlement with the establishment that Hub Gates has: joined the approved union, settled down, stopped making a fuss.

p. 314 "Enjoy it while you can, while you're light enough for that glass to hold you." Prairie on top of the Hip Trip pinball machine is a marvelous image capturing the fragility of the moment, the certainty of loss, age, death.

p. 314 "Crossing the Golden Gate Bridge represents a transition, in the metaphysics of the region" Great intro to Zoyd in Vineland.

p. 320 "spool tenders, zooglers, water bucks and bull punchers" Logging jobs.

p. 321 "Many would be the former tripping partners and old flames who came over the years to deal with each other this way across desktops or through computer terminals, as if chosen in secret and sorted into opposing teams..." Some folks get on Welfare, and others administer it. Another incarnation of the binary/preterite metaphor.

CHAPTER 15

A long, complicated, final chapter.

Morning breaks in a pasture, as everyone gets ready for the annual Traverse-Becker Family Picnic, the big get-together of Frenesi's folks (i.e., The Left). Morning cracks also in Shade Creek. Flashback to Prairie and her hard-core sexpot pal Che, prototypical teenage mall rats in Southern California. A nested flashback to the Great South Coast Plaza Eyeshadow Raid. Flashforward to the original flashback, in which the girls raid Macy's, stealing sexy lingerie (easy there, Pynchon).

We flashforward again, but not all the way--only far enough to witness Vond's raid on Ditzah's house. All the 24fps footage is burned. Back in the present Prairie, DL and Takeshi head for Shade Creek. CAMP anti-marijuana raids (courtesy of Vond and his army, now bivouacked at the Vineland airport) are coming on a daily basis.

Unlikely as it seems, Zuniga's anti-drug film is actually in production! A crew is on location in Vineland, preparing to film Frenesi's biopic as an exploitation feature. Flashback to Zuniga's Tubal Detox treatment, which seems woefully ineffective. There's a funny song about TV: "The Tube." Flashforward (or sideways) to a meeting in which Zuniga cuts the film deal with two Hollywood producers; the ways are greased by the fact that he has them at his mercy on drug charges, not to mention the fact that the film community is in terror of a threatened Drug Use Investigation reminiscent of the HUAC hearings.

Zuniga finds out that Frenesi and Flash have surfaced in Las Vegas; he flies there to meet her, in hopes of convincing her to appear in (and maybe even direct) the film. They meet at the Club La Habenera, an evocation of pre-Castro Cuba. There's a funny song ("Es Posible.") Frenesi is less than enthusiastic until Zuniga shows her a photo of Prairie; if she returns to Vineland to make the film she can see her daughter. Zuniga reveals that Vond's funding has been cut -- not that this seems to have slowed his big-budget anti-drug campaign in Vineland. Flashback to the breakup of Zuniga's marriage. Returning to Vegas, Frenesi and Zuniga dance. She agrees to fly to Vineland, bringing Flash and their son Justin. There's a slight problem at the Vegas airport when Frenesi refuses to cross a picket line, but the picketers overhear her pro-union rap as she argues with Flash, and

invite her to pass through.

Flashback to an encounter between Flash and his handler, Roy Ibble. Flash terrorizes Ibble, somehow, and Ibble shows Flash some official paper on Vond, and the "readiness" exercise now running in Vineland, REX 84. Ibble even gives Flash some money.

We return to the airplane on its way to Vineland. Flash and Frenesi land, to be met with full film crew. Zuniga installs Frenesi and Flash in a hotel. Cut to the Cucumber Lounge, where Wayvone is doing a horrible stand-up comedy routine. Billy Barf and the Vomitoners step on stage to perform "I'm a Cop." Even Zoyd is there; we learn that the feds are about to snatch his house under Reagan's Comprehensive Forfeiture Act. Worse yet, his dog Desmond is missing.

The War on Drugs is getting out of hand. Zoyd considers torching his house to keep the Feds from getting it. At the same time, he cuts a deal with Isaiah and The Harleyite Order (a bunch of bikers-turned-nuns, what else?) to score assault weapons and attack the CAMPers. This looks like Zoyd's best shot; his lawyer reminds him that under current drug laws he's guilty until proven innocent.

Zoyd runs into Zuniga, who tells him that Frenesi is in town. Shortly thereafter, Sasha herself rolls in for the Traverse-Becker get-together. Sasha runs into Frenesi. Suddenly the POV switches: The two slimeball film producers are telling Zuniga about the meeting between Frenesi and Sasha -- raising the possibility that the entire novel has been subsumed by the movie, which we have been watching, unawares, all along. This might even explain the otherwise-improbable Hollywood Happy Ending. In any case, Frenesi and Sasha make up, and dance the jitterbug together.

Meanwhile, Prairie and DL find themselves at a surprisingly lively Thanatoid dance. The Holocaust Pixels play their big hit, "Like a Meat Loaf." Weed and Prairie discuss his Thanatoid condition (which seems to be improving), and grow lovey-dovey.

Prairie heads for the Traverse-Becker get-together, where she meets Frenesi at last. Suddenly we find ourselves in full Hollywood Happy Ending Mode. The meeting between Prairie and Frenesi (which is reported only briefly) seems cordial and somewhat anti-climatic. The picnic roars on. Hubbell Gates shows up with his arc lights and fires up the sky. He and Frenesi make up too. Zoyd and Flash discover much in common (such as Frenesi), and forge the beginnings of an only-moderately-uneasy peace. Prairie and Justin become pals. Zoyd plans to go on *60 Minutes* with his story, hoping that TV exposure will work better than armed rebellion to get his house back. (Given the main theme of the novel, he's probably right.)

Prairie goes to sleep in a bag in the woods. Suddenly Vond appears, hanging in the air above her, winched down from a helicopter. Prairie insults him and recites the sacred words of exorcism ("Get the fuck out of here!") Vond withdraws, his budget line suddenly canceled.

The picnic roars on. Vato and Blood drive Vond to Hell. Takeshi and DL dance at the Thanatoid Ball; in a brief set of nested flashbacks we learn that they have agreed to cancel the dreaded no-sex clause. Several unresolved plot ends are hastily tied off by the invention of certain, um, unrelenting forces and faceless predators who, we now discover, hijacked that Kahuna airplane *and* monster-stomped the Chipco factory.

In the woods, Prairie finds herself (inexplicably) begging Vond to come back and take her away, but fortunately Vond has gone to Hell. She is visited, instead, by the missing dog Desmond, who wakes her up by licking her face.

p. 323 "branching invisible fractals of smell" The fractal is a fairly recent (and fashionable) concept/buzzword. The property that makes a thing fractal is that it looks the same at any scale -- like a coastline. For this to be true, the fractal object must be made of pieces that look like tiny versions of the whole, and these pieces must be made of similar looking, littler pieces...on to infinity. (The notion of "complications that might go on forever," p. 381, is very Pynchonesque.) Computer graphics programs based on this principle can create complexities that increase as long as you care to wait. Pynchon's use of "fractal" here draws a great word-picture of crinkly, cartoon-like aroma waves tickling noses of all sizes. He's obviously been keeping up with his reading.

p. 323 "Los Sombras" = Spanish for "the shadows."

p. 324 "Octomaniacs" = players of crazy eights.

p. 324 "...portable TV sets bootlegged onto the cable..." Even the leftist/purist Traverse/Beckers are addicted to the Tube. Maybe that's how come they let Vond and his fascists take over.

p. 325 "**Tokkata & Fuji**" = Toccata and Fugue.

p. 325 "**What was a Thanatoid, at the end of the long dread day, but memory?**" The answer at last. Sort of.

p. 325 "**Bach's 'Wachet Auf': one of the best tunes ever to come out of Europe**" It's Resurrection Day! And weirdly enough, this *does* wake up the Thanatoids. Is Pynchon a smart-ass or what?

p. 325 "**the peculiar band between 6200 and 7000 KHZ**" Why peculiar?

p. 325 "**false cities of gold**" Pynchon playfully compares these mythical malls to the seven cities of Cibola, which kept Coronado on the run so long.

p. 326 "**The Noir Center Mall**" The shops are puns on famous *film noir* titles: Bubble Indemnity = *Double Indemnity*; Lounge Good Buy = *The Long Goodbye*; Mall Tease Flacon = *The Maltese Falcon*; The Lady 'n' the Lox = *Lady In the Lake*.

p. 327 "**Che, you're rilly evil**" The relationship between Prairie and Che echoes that of Frenesi and DL.

p. 327 "**Brent Musberger**" was a TV sportscaster who got his biggest exposure when NBC covered the 1988 Olympics. NBC let him go in 1990. It made quite a media splash. He relates to the next line, and Pynchon's theme about people who are observers rather than makers of reality.

p. 328 "**Maybelline**" What's the joke here? Maybelline eye makeup? Or the chase element in Chuck Berry's song? Probably all of the above, plus a Pynchonian takeoff on Muzak (the "oboe-and-string rendition.") See also "New Age mindbarf" on p. 330.

p. 329 "**agoromania**" = shopping frenzy.

p. 329 "**Dwayna**" Another cool name.

p. 330 "**New Age mindbarf**" Right on, Pynchon!

p. 332 "**It's like they's programmed for it or somethin'**" Fleur's comment on why gentlemen prefer black and red underwear on "bad girls" is reminiscent of Pirate Prentiss' involuntary, ejaculatory response to a certain photo, delivered to him via V2, in *Gravity's Rainbow*.

p. 332 "**Night and Blood**" Echoes of Katje and Pudding in *Gravity's Rainbow* (p. 232-233): "She waits for him...white body and black uniform-of-the-night.... Lipstick...prevails like blood.... She is naked now, except for a long sable cape and black boots with court heels. Her only jewelry is a silver ring with an artificial ruby...an arrogant gout of blood..."

p. 333 "**...Juvenile Hall badasses...**" More badasses.

p. 333 "**...conical black heaps smoked, glowed, flared here and there into visible fire...**" The scene in which Vond burns the 24fps footage is quite horrible -- and extremely important. By destroying 24fps' records of the Sixties, he clears the way for his rewritten fascist version. With no evidence to prove him wrong, who would dare to argue with "official" history?

p. 334 "**a restored Vicky**" = Victorian house.

p. 334 "**not only dropping but also picking up, dribbling and scoring three-pointers...**" Total basketball metaphor for Hector's name dropping.

p. 337 **Hollywood producers "Sid Liffoff"** and "**Ernie Triggerman**" More cool names.

p. 337 "**bizcochos**" = Spanish for "biscuits, cookies."

p. 337 "**lizard-skin etui**" Etui = a four letter word made of odd letters, therefore useful to crossword constructors, and meaning "small case." Pynchon does crossword puzzles? Maybe he just loves words.

p. 338 "**arranged for Sid to work off the beef...[by making] an antidrug movie...**" This plea-bargain echoes a real deal cut by *Godfather* producer Robert Evans to avoid doing hard time on a cocaine bust. Evans made several anti-drug spots for TV, as promised, but apparently (according to subsequent courtroom testimony) he kept on using the stuff anyway.

p. 338 "**Roy Ibble**" Another cool name.

p. 339 "**sudden monster surge of toilet flushing...and...cold air**" A new Pynchonian fable: Dope paranoia results in Hollywood fog bank.

p. 340 "**Larry Talbot**" = The Wolfman in those old Hollywood monster movies.

p. 342 "**Sounds real natural to me.**" A math joke. 2.71828 is "e," the root of the series of "natural" logarithms.

p. 342 "**43'd**" = half of 86'd. (See "octogenarihexation" on p. 186.) Being 43'd is like being a little pregnant.

p. 343-344 **Song: "Es Posible."** Music-biz schtick at the end makes it even funnier. Also hilarious: the

pre-Castro Cuban theme park, Holiday For Fascists.

p. 344 "board fading" = fading slowly and smoothly, as if via a volume slider on a recording studio control board.

p. 345 "Tubal fantasies...pushing their propaganda message that cops-are-only-human...turning agents of government repression into sympathetic heroes. Nobody thought it was peculiar anymore, no more than the routine violations of constitutional rights...now absorbed into...American expectations." Good points, all, but isn't it a bit out of character for Frenesi the Betrayer, the biggest cop lover in the novel, to be fronting these thoughts for Pynchon? What's happening here, we think, is that Pynchon is starting to set up Frenesi for her rehabilitation as part of the big Happy Ending.

p. 346 "the Meese Police" = Reagan's DOJ (Department of Justice).

p. 347 "Mad Dog Vond" Echoes Bogart as Mad Dog Roy Earle" in *High Sierra*. But Vond really is crazy.

p. 347 "Since '81, kids were coming in all on their own askin about careers..." Too true, too sad, and it undercuts the Happy Ending rather seriously (at least as a pointer to the real world.)

p. 348 "in the movie of his life story" A not-quite-made-up film.

p. 349 Vond is "waitin' for somethin'." OK, but what? Reluctantly we must point out that none of Pynchon's many explanations bear close examination. (See footnote to the plot synopsis, Chapter 4.)

p. 350 "the pink slip to his heart" = title of ownership. Before the days of automobile titles, the portion of a California car registration that conveyed ownership was colored pink. Hence the brag in the Beach Boys' "Little Deuce Coupe" about "I got the pink slip, daddy!" (meaning, "I'm holding the paperwork required to stake the LDC on a streetlight drag race, so *whatchu* waitin' for, dude?")

p. 351 "Pretend there's a frame around [your parents], pretend they're a show you're watching..." Once again, TV is America's common reference point.

p. 351 "'Uh-oh,' said Frenesi." Frenesi refuses to cross the airport picket line. This is a bit on the too-little-too-late side for a professional class-traitor, but it's also quite believable.

p. 352 "the bowl haircut, etc." Another reference to The Three Stooges.

p. 352 "all 'em deeply personal li'l ones and zeros got changed to somebody else's" Roy Ibble, Flash's former handler, explains the computer file deletions, and carries on Pynchon's binary metaphor.

p. 353 "Please, no more..." Ibble crumbles in the face of Flash's anger. This is the only the first in a series of auspicious (but highly improbable) turns of the plot. The Hollywood Happy Ending is beginning.

p. 353 "REX-84" = Reagan's readiness Exercise.

p. 354 "...Midol America..." Another low Pynchon pun ("middle-America") referring to the popular brand of menstrual medicine.

p. 354 "...the destined losers whose only redemption would have to come through their usefulness to the State law-enforcement apparatus, which was calling itself 'America,' though somebody must have known better." This describes Frenesi and Flash, though it could also describe the larger preterite population of the novel. "...law enforcement apparatus...calling itself America..." underscores Pynchon's cold fury at the process via which Frenesi/America falls for the lies of the fascists.

p. 355 "Triglyph Productions" Triglyph = three (you-name-em) letters, like ABC, NBC, CBS, etc.

p. 355 "Panaflex" = an innovative 35mm studio camera, made by Panavision, Inc. It's the world standard, used for everything from wide-screen epics to deodorant commercials. It makes a nice contrast with all the "underground" Arris and Auricons.

p. 355 "The Bryant Gumbel Story" Radio/TV personality of the same generation as Brent Musberger. Gumbel began as a sportscaster, then became a *Today* host -- where he remains to this very day.

p. 356 "...one slip of the tongue..." Arguably the worst joke in any of Pynchon's novels. Gross!

p. 356 "How to get an Italian Woman Pregnant." We have found two versions of this joke:

Q: How do you get an Italian woman pregnant? A: And they say the Italians are stupid!

Q: How do you get an Italian woman pregnant? A: Fuck her.

p. 358 "Starting with a small used trailer..." This brief flashback telling the story of Zoyd's house includes a typically Pynchon-esque fable about "prehistoric" (and mythical) 5/8-inch plumbing fittings.

p. 358 "full scale kvetchathon" kvetch = Yiddish for complaint. Hence, a kvetchathon is a marathon bitch session among Van Meter's legendarily bickering family.

p. 358 "kit conversions" The parts required to convert legal, semi-automatic rifles to full (and illegal) automatic operation are often available in kit form. The kits themselves are not illegal, but they *become* illegal if installed in non-registered weapons.

p. 359 "Antinomian" = one who holds that moral law is not binding on Christians. Therefore, as mentioned below, "They believe whatever they do, it's cool with Jesus..."

p. 359 "motocross" A cycle race over rough terrain, often desert.

p. 359 "May your life be full of lawyers" Supposedly, the "heavy-dutiest" Mexican curse.

p. 360 Zoyd's lawyer's voice "suggested Saturday morning more than prime time" That is, it reminded one of a cartoon character. Lessee, would it be a Smurf or a chipmunk?

p. 360 "What about 'innocent until proven guilty'?" "That was another planet, think they used to call it America, long time ago, before the gutting of the Fourth Amendment. You were automatically guilty the minute they found that marijuana growing on your land." Pynchon is obviously deeply pissed by this shit (as well he might be); it makes a powerful point in his argument that Big Brother and the Fascists have won. "Another planet" echoes the allegorical conversation between Zoyd and Vond on p. 300.

p. 360 "Y-You mean...life isn't Vegas?" A very funny line, though (in context) rather ominous as well.

p. 361 "the Grand Canyon" A lot of detail is packed into a few sentences. Looks like Pynchon has been there, too.

p. 361 "Tex Weiner" A Jewish hot dog with a ten-gallon hat.

p. 361 "...fooled once again by the uniform..." So Frenesi comes by her weakness for sadistic uniformed cops genetically, via Sasha? Or is this something about how opposites need and create each other?

p. 361 "Weww -- it's oow rubbish i'n'i'?" = Well, it's all rubbish, isn't it? Pynchon's fabulous ear again.

p. 362 "off the scale" Techno rap, meaning too great to measure, pins the meter, etc.

p. 362 "Did they scream?" A cheap, if effective, trick: Pynchon switches POV (narrators) in mid-scene, giving the tale to producer Sid, and twists the knife by making him playfully reluctant to part with details, so Zuniga has to beg.

p. 362 "Too bad we can't use it." Christ! Have we been watching Zuniga's damn movie all this time? Directed by Frenesi???

p. 362 "Kissing a young pale melon, under a golden pregnant lallapalooza of a moon." Sasha's dream is sweet and surreal, but it seems insufficiently motivated. Would she really forgive Frenesi so easily?

p. 363 "Holocaust Pixels." Cool name for a rock band -- and another TV reference. (See note, p. 226.)

p. 363 Song: "Like a Meat Loaf." Great song! Also the Return of the Thanatoid Lunch Meat. Also an echo of Dylan's "Just Like Tom Thumb's Blues."

p. 363 The Thanatoids are "acting rowdier than DL or Takeshi had ever seen them." The only reverberation of the big flap that sent the karmic adjustment duo racing off for Shade Creek in the last episode. The Happy Ending rolls on.

p. 364 "...just a couple o' clicks..." Clicks = kilometers.

p. 364 "Bardo" = the after-death realm in the Tibetan Book of the Dead. The trick is to avoid rebirth, but most people fuck up and let themselves be trapped in a new life. Weed tells of looking for a just-fertilized egg in which to be reborn, "seeking out men and women in the act of sex...in a...smoke-tarnished district of sex shows and porno theaters." The Mitchell Brothers atmosphere is cute. In Tibet a lama keeps whispering the instructions in your dead ear so you don't make these little boo-boos ("couldn't find 'em, time ran out"). Pynchon implies that it's those with "too much still on [their minds]," i.e., unfinished business, that can't quite get permanently dead.

p. 365 "But what if I am the payback? If your account is zeroed out at last?" Weed's response to Prairie's offer is a little inconclusive, but note the zero.

p. 365-366 "Thanatoids dream, though not always when we think we do--" Weed's dream is extremely powerful and the image is quite writerly. Is the coroner he's looking for "to reveal to the world at last my murder, my murderers" really Pynchon? Are the "companions" who keep trying to find this coroner the readers of *Vineland*? Faithful hippies? Those who refuse to buy the rewritten version of the Sixties? All of the above? Prairie says it's DL & Takeshi, Weed thinks maybe it's his parents. It might even be the Pisk sisters.

p. 366 "It was all for love... It was political... A rebel cop... The orders of a repressive regime..." Pynchon seems aware that his readers (the "companions") may be confused.

p. 366 Prairie and Weed "soon to become an item" This is the *real* happy ending, suggesting that young kids may seek out the truth about the Sixties. (And not just the clothes!)

p. 366 "Prairie would show him secrets of pachinko..." But how did she learn them? From DL?

p. 367 "the Traverse-Becker wingding" Nice image, suggesting the continuity of the Left -- although making it a picnic is surely some dark irony. (At least it's not a dinner party.)

p. 367 "Octomaniacs" = again, players of crazy eights.

p. 367 "the Mother situation" Nice cinematic touch, superimposing Frenesi and the Mother of Doom (the spade queen).

p. 367 "with Sasha was a woman about forty, who had been a girl in a movie..." The reunion of Prairie and Frenesi, which has motivated Prairie, and haunted Frenesi, throughout most of the book, is tossed off distressingly quickly, but with at least this one great line.

p. 367 "Commere lemme check those dimples, yes there, they are..." Sasha's agonizing grandma act is way out of character. We hope! Still, "it's her way of trying to help" (p. 368).

p. 368 You'd think Pynchon would devote a little more ink to the reunion of Frenesi and Prairie, but in fact Frenesi seems to be in the process of fading out here (much as Vond will do in a few pages).

p. 369 "pasta dishes and grilled tofu contributed by younger elements" Hello, Becker/Traverse yuppies!

p. 369 "Secret retributions are always restoring the level..." This marvelous quote from Emerson is deeply optimistic, and goes a long way toward buying off the Happy Ending. Contrasts nicely with Lombroso's "misonicism," the negative feedback loop by which society resists change.

p. 369 "Ask Crocker 'Bud' Scantling" The Happy Ending continues, as we learn of Crocker 'Bud' Scantling's karmic payoff under the wheels of a chip truck.

p. 370 "Take care of your dead, or they'll take care of you." Confirmation of what the Thanatoids really are (see p. 325). Also a nice restatement of Santayana's famous quote about "Those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it (or retake the course)."

p. 370 "Say, Jim" The title of this made-up half-hour sitcom (a black version of *Star Trek*) is a reference both to Bones' habitual conversational opening to Captain James Kirk, and to Afro-American slang in which "Jim" is an all-purpose (and generally negative, being short for "Jim Crow") form of address. This is also another digital gag (white becoming black = zero becoming one).

p. 370 "Zoyd and Flash went off looking for beer" Flash surfaces. No point, really, except for the overall reconciliation Pynchon is forcing on the book.

p. 370 "Robert Musil" An Austrian novelist (1880-1942), whose Proustian style was marked by subtle psychological analysis. His works include *Young Torless* and *The Man Without Qualities*.

p. 371 "...talking back to the tube..." The Beckers and Traverses are politically hip, shown by their talking back, and their suspicion that the "prefascist twilight" is really just "the light...coming from millions of Tubes all showing the same bright colored shadows..." TV as the true opiate of the masses -- or, as the NY commies used to say, "de messes."

p. 372 Zoyd feels sorry for Flash, the "unfortunate sucker" who's still with Frenesi; he sees "the need behind the desperado lamps" (eyes). Nice phrase, nice rendition of the healing power of time and distance, and a sweet way to take leave of Zoyd, who seems to have found some peaceful place to rest -- at least for the moment.

p. 373 "Minute the tube got hold of you folks, that was it..." The kid (who speaks for Pynchon, of course) is right. It's funny how so few of us saw the future, fought the Tube. McLuhan was right too, but we only *thought* we knew what he was talking about.

p. 373 "gold-handled chainsaw" Sheriff Willis Chunko's celebrated anti-pot weapon takes us full circle from/to Zoyd's ladylike purse-sized model in Chapter 1.

p. 373 "monster Mopars dialed and eager" Mopar = the parts division of Chrysler Motors = (here) engines. Dialed = souped up. This is at least the second "dialed" reference in *Vineland*. It's hot-rod talk, and means more or less the same as the now old-fashioned "blue-printed." The dials refer to a machinist's dial indicators, used to bring once-stock engines into more-than-perfect condition and tune.

p. 374 "speeding after moonset" Like in *Thunder Road* [1958], the great Robert Mitchum bootlegging thriller.

p. 374 "quaquaversal beard" Quaquaversal is a geological term meaning "turned or pointing in every

direction." It's a good description for a wiry beard.

p. 374 "...go find [Vond] and cancel his series for him..." Another TV referent.

p. 374 "found it easier now to make out...her own...face" Now that Prairie has met Frenesi she can see her own face more clearly in Zoyd's. That is, she's *not* Vond's daughter. More Happy Ending.

p. 375 "...down out of [the helicopter], hooked by harness and cable to the mother ship above, came Brock Vond..." Is Vond's *deus ex machina* appearance to Prairie a dream? It could be; she was asleep. Then again, "Brock, whom his colleagues were calling 'Death From Slightly Above,' had been out [practicing]." And remember the Madwoman In the Attic (p. 274).

p. 375 "more recaps on this subject than Mark C. Bloome" Bloome was the owner of a chain of popular tire stores in southern California.

p. 375-376 "The original plan had been to go in..., come down vertical, grab her, and winch back up and out--" Why does Vond want to abduct Prairie? Lust? Pure evil? This is never adequately explained. There's a bit of chat in Chapter 14 discussing Vond's interest in Prairie, but it's not developed any further.

p. 376 "The key is rapture." Earlier Vond explained the disappearance of the CotS students the same way. (See note, p. 248.)

p. 376 "Her tits, master--" Roscoe becomes Dwight Frye, Vampire Vond's Renfield. ("Rats, master, you promised me rats...")

p. 376 Vond glows "unusually white." More evidence that he's a vampire. (A-and remember, he sleeps with his eyes open!)

p. 376 "Some white male far away must have wakened from a dream." Reagan? Meese? Nixon? The white male God of the Calvinists?

p. 376 "Brock...now being winched back up..." Film running backward through the projector. The image is great, but there's something troublesome here. If the novel represents the real world (as we must assume it does, or it would be no more than an empty divertissement), what "real" event in 1984 informs Vond's withdrawal and defeat? None, we think.

p. 377 "Asshole, they're all together, one surgical strike..." Vond is ready to wipe out everyone -- Frenesi, Flash, Zoyd, Justin, maybe even Prairie -- just as (presumably) he wiped their computer files earlier.

p. 377 "...[Vond] was gone, following his penis--" A reprise of the lyrics from "Like a Meat Loaf" (p. 363): "Well we followed our dicks just a couple o' clicks...")

p. 377 Alexi appears in the clearing, carrying "an old acoustic guitar with Cyrillic stenciling on it, as if he'd been prepared to use it as a weapon." Like Woody Guthrie's guitar, on which the folksinger wrote "This machine kills fascists."

p. 377 "The Movie at Nine" Pynchon gets into a great male-folksy description of a basketball movie -- the most developed of any of his synthetic made-for-TV flicks. An elect white team (the Celtics) Vs. a preterite black team (the Lakers). Obviously Pynchon is a Lakers fan. It's a story of great courage, and it sets up Vato and Blood for their "rescue" of the newly Thanatoidized Vond. Vond's car disappears (the way thanatoid vehicles do), and we get a Yurok tale by Vato, implying that by coming to Vineland Brock got too close to the land of the dead (Shade Creek). Maybe that's what woke the Thanatoids up? But by then, V&B Tow is conducting Vond across the River Styxx.

p. 378 "Time to lock and load, Blood." Lock and load = ArmySpeak for "saddle up." Specifically, it means lock on the safety of your firearm and load a live round into the chamber, leaving the weapon armed and ready to fire -- but safe to carry. (The standard 'Nam response was "Cocked and locked!" meaning "Ready when you are.")

p. 378-379 "It had been an unusual sort of car..." Vond's chopper turns into an (underpowered) car, which then disappears itself. Vond's power is fading out -- and he is too. Cool image, but same problem as above. *Did* Vond (that is, the totalitarian power freaks he fronts for) fade out in 1984? And if not, isn't it a cheat that he does so in the novel?

p. 380 "crankless" = without amphetamines.

p. 381 "...she and Takeshi finally renegotiated the no-sex clause..." Happy Ending continues. "Whoeee!" says DL.

p. 381 "a fractal halo of complications" Typical Pynchon light-and-color show -- and the second use of the "fractal" buzzword. (It occurs on page 323 as well.) Are neural networks next?

p. 382 "an ivory fescue" Fescue = a teacher's pointer of high quality.

p. 382-3 "When the Earth was still a paradise, long, long ago..." Sister Rochelle's allegory about Hell and Earth may explain a bit about Thanatoids, if you wish to read it that way.

p. 383 "faceless predators" This paragraph reads like Pynchon checked his outline, noticed two loose ends (the Kahuna hijack and the monster-stomped laboratory) and tied them up as quickly and crudely as possible. Sloppy work.

p. 383 "despite every Karmic Adjustment resource brought to bear so far" This provides another motivation for DL & Takeshi's "business" venture.

p. 383 "the night of no white diamonds or even chicken crank" Chicken crank = the speed Takeshi has been trying to score in the form of chicken feed. There are a number of other references to Takeshi's habitual speed use, not the least of which is his epic journey eastward to the SKA and Puncutron.

p. 383 "the foreign magician and his blond tomato assistant" Takeshi and DL, of course.

p. 384 "Russian Johnny B. Goode" No happy-ending complete without Chuck Berry! Or does he mean "Back In the USSR?"

p. 384 "You can come back...take me any place..." Prairie longs for Vond to come back and abuse her. It must be her genetic predilection for the uniform. Or, perhaps the desire to find out what was heavy enough to make her mom split. It's a bit sick, but maybe Pynchon knows his characters (and the human character) better than we do. ("Every woman adores a fascist / The boot in the face, the brute / Brute heart of a brute like you." -- "Daddy," Sylvia Plath) In any case, Pynchon "saves" it by having Desmond return. When it comes to preterite, what can out-pret a girl's dog?

Got something to say to us? Fine! We will be glad to hear from you -- and if we aren't horribly busy we might even get back to you. In any case, thanks for getting in touch!

Best,

Michael Goodwin and John Diebold

(A-and check out Diebold's Personal Page at <http://www.ldeo.columbia.edu/~johnd/>)