Introduction
(Granada Pynchon Conference Volume)

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When Maltese Pynchon fans (and others) decided to organize a conference in the early summer of 2004, they didn't have to look far for a title theme: the planet Venus was conveniently in line to edge its way across the sun on the morning of the first day. In view of the significant role Malta plays in *V.*, "The Transit of Venus" was the perfect theme. Spaniards, on the other hand, did not have it so easy when, inspired by the success in Malta, they thought of organizing the next Pynchon Conference in Granada two years later. One has to admit that Spain has not figured large in Pynchon's oeuvre. His protagonists go to Germany, Italy, France and England, but rarely to Spain. In his novel *Against the Day* some of the anarchist characters do make a brief visit to Barcelona, but nothing much happens there (and, of course, the novel had not been published yet). Almost all the Hispanic material in his novels, people and places, are Spanish American. No doubt this is due to the proximity of Mexico and Pynchon's frequent visits there, plus the strong Hispanic flavor of the west coast in lands originally part of the Spanish Empire. These in themselves explain the dearth of Peninsular Hispanic referents.

But precisely because of, and on account of, one of Pynchon's trips to Mexico, there is a strong Spanish presence in *The Crying of Lot 49*. This presence is the work of the Spanish painter in exile, Remedios Varo. The coincidence of the Spanish origin and the V in the surname (also, she was from Vascongadas) led us to the title of "V. Is for Varo Too: Hispanic Elements in the Work of Thomas Pynchon."

Pynchon has not yet exhausted the V-value. In *Against the Day*, the Vibe family are at the vortex of the novel, with their Vormance Expedition, and much action in Vienna and Venice. (Why didn't Pynchon send the anarchists further down the coast to Valencia?) In organizing the Granada Conference, the vantage point of the V was not, however, taken to extremes, nor was the Hispanic angle; it was stressed that papers could be offered on any topic related to Pynchon's work.

As often happens (and would happen again at the next Conference in Munich in June 2008), a Pynchon Conference coincides with an important football fixture. The Granada Conference was held in the same week as the opening rounds of the 2006 World Cup finals. Sessions had to be planned,

therefore, around key matches and the obligatory visit in Granada, which is to the Alhambra. This explains the fact that the reading of the twenty-odd papers, which under more normal circumstances might have been heard in two days, took place over four days.

Speakers came from far-flung places—such is the Pynchon craze: from Australia, the Pacific coast of the United States, Canada and Latvia, as well as from places closer to Spain: Italy, Germany, Ireland, France, Belgium and Poland. There were four speakers from the host country, and they did, in fact, speak mostly on issues related to Remedios Varo or other Spanish aspects of *Lot 49, Gravity's Rainbow,* and *Mason & Dixon*. Other speakers focused either on these aspects or on themes which draw Pynchon close to certain Hispano-American writers. The rest of the speakers fanned out to cover all Pynchon novels published by 2006, from those of the 1960s, *V.* and *Lot 49,* to the major work of the 1970s, *Gravity's Rainbow*, which seems to be inexhaustible, to Pynchon's two works of the last decade of the century: *Vineland* and *Mason & Dixon*. In this selected collection of the papers read in Granada, we have opted to group them in the chronological order of the novels they deal with.

Andrei Vasilenko's "Apocalyptic Quest in Thomas Pynchon's *V.* and Roberto Bolaño's *2666*" focuses upon Pynchon's seeming obsession from the beginning of his career with a possible end to the world as we know it, and a similar concern in a recent (2004), posthumous work by the writer of Chilean origin, Roberto Bolaño—a work which, at twelve hundred pages, is even longer than Pynchon's latest (*Against the Day* is a mere pamphlet at 1,085 pages). In Pynchon, the pending doom menacing the planet comes from the slow entropical forces of the physical laws that govern the cosmos, from possible human disruption of balances, and from a process of dehumanization. The quest for the mysterious female V. has as a counterpart in Bolaño's work in the quest for the reclusive German writer Benno von Archimboldi. The revelations that emerge in the course of the quest point toward some of the things that have gone wrong in the twentieth century. The narrative tells of a string of murders of women in the Mexican town of Santa Teresa, and this slaughter of the most vulnerable—female and poor—parallels the different genocides we see portrayed in Pynchon's work, whether it be the Jews and Hereros under the Nazis or the victims of Stalin. Of course, we did not know it at the time, but Pynchon had created a character in *Against the Day* who is a serial murderer of women: Frank Traverse should have shot Deuce Kindred rather than Sloat Fresno, and he would have saved many lives, but then, he did not have any choice in the matter. Vasilenko sees a coincidence in the symbols used to suggest Apocalypse, indicating that the Hispanic world shares some of the most serious concerns voiced by Pynchon.

William Day's research on entropy, focusing on the Spanish painter Remedios Varo, has a much more optimistic message. Day suggests that we

readers can counteract the negative process of entropy through appreciating the creative energy of Remedios Varo which invigorates Pynchon's second novel: "Countering Entropy in *The Crying of Lot 49* with Reader Involvement: Remedios Varo as a Role Model for Oedipa Maas." It is Day's thesis that Oedipa Maas "is nothing less than the novelistic projection of the heroines of Remedios Varo, who are in turn the artistic alter egos of the exiled Spanish painter." He points to Rifkin's interpretation of entropy, that "The Entropy Law is also a statement that all energy in an isolated system moves from an ordered to a disordered state." Oedipa's quest leads her from ignorance to a seemingly endless confusion. But Day asserts that the reader does not necessarily have to share that confusion. The attentive reader, who is prepared to look outside the text (ignoring *il n'y a pas de hors-texte*), and follow the tracks of Remedios Varo in real life, will find an explanatory pattern that Oedipa, caught up in the web of the "tapestry" being embroidered (*bordando*) , cannot appreciate. With the help of Janet Kaplan's explanations of Varo's paintings, Day elucidates the predicaments of Varo's various female figures and traces the parallels the reader can imagine in Oedipa's life and possible background (about which we are told next to nothing in the novel). At the end of the novel she may have come full circle and therefore got nowhere, but Day opposes this, saying that "the epic journey of self-awareness" is what matters here rather than the solving of the mystery of Pierce Inverarity's legacy, thus she has made a circuit but has risen to a higher level, as suggested by Varo's painting *Spiral Transit*. The journey is more important than the goal for most of Varo's figures, and Day shows how this is also true of Pynchon's heroine.

The concept of Entropy is again the object of analysis in the essay by Francisco Collado: "No either/or. The Stagnation of Forces in Pynchon's Universe: Ethical and Gender Undecidability in Two Spanish Cases." The binary opposite energy/entropy is suspect, and Collado shows Pynchon inviting his readers to look at in-betweens or liminal areas. He demonstrates the symbolic play and disruption of the categorical binaries energy/entropy and male/female in just two examples, both Spanish: Remedios Varo in *Lot 49* and the Spanish Foreign Legion in *Gravity's Rainbow.* Collado agrees with Day that "the figure of the historical personage Remedios Varo adds many nuances to Oedipa's quest for final revelatory meaning." He reminds us that she was (*la Virgen de los*) Remedios Varo and just as the Virgin Mary can provide a remedy, Remedios Varo's work rouses Oedipa from her entropic lethargy and brings about the regeneration of her life, as she becomes the Virgin of the Pietà with the old sailor. Jung's female *anima* in Oedipa struggles against the negative male energy of the *shadow*, seen in Pierce Inverarity. Like Day's assurance of the importance in *Lot 49* of "the epic journey of self-awareness," Collado speaks of Jung's "integration of the personality." In *Gravity's Rainbow,* too, we find the binaries energy/entropy, male/female, good/evil, and anima/shadow. In this novel, Collado homes in on one of their symbolic manifestations: the

reference by Brigadier Pudding to the anthem of the Spanish Foreign Legion: "El novio de la Muerte" ("The Bridegroom of Death"). Pudding mentions the hymn when recalling the battle for Badajoz in Extremadura in August 1936, upon the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. Pudding inverts the concept, calling the spy Katje his "Mistress of the Night," the female equivalent of the Lord of the Night or Bridegroom of Death, where Death is female, as it is in Spanish. Collado feels the reference to the anthem of the Legion is appropriate within the historical context portrayed in Pynchon's novel because the Spanish Legionnaires of the Civil War were the equivalent of the German SS in World War II, on account of their bravery, but also their renowned cruelty. The ambiguity of Katje, as at once the victim of men and also the terrifying incarnation of the female Death, is yet another example of Pynchon blurring the usual discrete nature of the binary elements.

Like Andrei Vasilenko, who had found in recent South American writing, specifically a novel by Roberto Bolaño, themes dear to Pynchon's heart, David Kelman finds that Argentinian Ricardo Piglia shares Pynchon's interest in secret societies and conspiracy, as well as his related story-telling practice. In "The Form of the Conspiracy: Ricardo Piglia's Reading of Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*," Kelman shows how Piglia's "paranoid" novels, *Artificial Respiration* (1980) and *The Absent City* (1992), share the North American fascination with secret societies, while his non-fictional work, in the form of essays and interviews, serves as a theorization of the political form of novels such as *Lot 49*. In his two essays, "Theses on the Short Story" and "New Theses on the Short Story," Piglia asserts the conspiratorial structure of the form of the short story or novella, with its overt story and the hidden one, antagonistic and often political: "a double story that encloses a destabilizing secret," as Kelman puts it. Applying this theory to *Lot 49*, Kelman finds that the Trystero, as secret society, "is a hidden figure that operates within Pynchon's text as a disruption." He sees parallels between the Trystero and the Nefastis Machine, a "*criminal* machine," insofar as it gets something for nothing: "Both the Nefastis Machine and the Trystero are, therefore, criminal economies that oppose an official economy." He goes on to discuss the concept of "metaphor" in the short novel and such concepts as absence, withdrawal or waiting, and counterfeiting, and their narrative development and consequences.

Conspiracies involve groups and can create like-minded communities. In her paper "Ideas of Community in *The Crying of Lot 49*" Paula Martín Salván discusses the second half of Edward Mendelson's comment: "The processes of *V.* isolate; those of *Lot 49* create community." She follows a double approach, sociological and rhetorical, to examine how communities are described in the novel, what tropes are used to refer to the relationships between members of those communities, and what roles they play in the development of the narrative. She first traces those communities Althusser called "Ideological State Apparatuses," such as family, government, or educational system. Then

she looks at their opposites: those forms of collectivity described in the novel as opposed to or alternative to officially sanctioned institutions, all those that use the services of the Trystero. Indeed, it is the muted horn symbol of the Trystero that unites these disparate communities in the development of the story, leaving Oedipa uncomfortably in the middle. Martín explains the catch-22 situation of both paranoia: inclusion/exclusion, and of the form of the parable. J. Hillis Miller's analysis of the metaphor of the line or thread as visible sign of community links is brought to bear on a discussion of the narrative development of the novel. The metaphor of the thread establishes a logic of contiguity among the varied constituents of both communities and individual representations in the plot. Martín finally postulates a new community, of which Oedipa has become a part by the end of the novel: those who apparently belong to an ISA, but also know about the Trystero. They are not in one community to the exclusion of the other, they are partly in both. Solutions are not found, but knowledge is acquired. The "epic journey to self-awareness" again.

Tracing links that form communities or at least set up communications is the object of Celia Wallhead's paper. In "Using Schema Theory to Trace the Connections between the Different Aspects of the Conflicting Roles of Oedipa Maas and the Intertext of Remedios Varo," she gives a brief overview of all the roles in which the heroine of *Lot 49* is involved, from suburban housewife to the Virgin Mary, passing through Rapunzel, Alice in Wonderland, and Marilyn Monroe. She examines the different ways in which these roles within the narrative have been described: laminations, or, according to Charles Hollander, *maaswerk*, "magic eye," enthymemes or jazz improvisations or variations on a theme. Wallhead suggests an alternative approach, that of schema theory. This linguistic method of analysis through recognizable frames enables us to see connections the reader will make in his or her mind between the disparate elements. By setting out the roles linearly, or by analyzing juxtapositions, common elements emerge which account for similarities and even opposites which cause schema "disruption" and defamiliarization. A very brief description of Guy Cook's model for analyzing schemas through a hierarchy of levels is given and then applied to a couple of examples: Oedipa Maas as Oedipus and again as the Virgin Mary. Disruptions of the familiar schemas add dimensions to character and plot. Studying Pynchon's use of familiar schemas in terms of both world knowledge and text types helps us to see more clearly how readers understand his works in all their complexity, and confirms what we intuited. Throughout the discussion of the roles of Oedipa Maas, Wallhead points out the similarities with paintings by Remedios Varo. Her findings back up those of William Day: that Varo is a far greater unifying presence in *Lot 49* than anyone not acquainted with her work would suspect.

If the papers on *Lot 49* explored community and connection, binaries and excluded middles, Steven Weisenburger's paper "In the Zone: Sovereignty

and Bare Life in *Gravity's Rainbow"* looks at excluded middles, but particularly as individuals. He begins with a question: Who or what are the political subjects of *Gravity's Rainbow*? Just as Pynchon has always discussed binaries and forms of entropy in his works, according to Weisenburger, he has always explored the relation between the individual and the state: "This is Pynchon's great subject even from his earliest stories, especially when it involves how powers transform persons into stuff, into objects." Weisenburger focuses on the passage in Part Three, "In the Zone," shortly after the opening of episode twenty-five, beginning, "The nationalities are on the move." The long, 370-word sentence which lists all the displaced people in Poland and Germany in the months following V-E Day starts with the émigré Germans, names the different groups of Germany's "enemies" but sometimes just rejects, no doubt inspired, says Weisenburger, by Hannah Arandt's *Origins of Totalitarianism*, and ends with a beaten Wehrmacht soldier. Within this frame come those dehumanized persons, the unwanted middle of human trash. Yet they are both excluded and included, for they are at once rejected and yet needed as slave labor. Weisenburger discusses Pynchon's critique of the Romantic chronotope, so clearly aligned to the concept of colonial spaces of domination, as in South West Africa, South America, and Soviet Central Asia, imported back home. Weisenburger's conclusion shows how, back in the Vietnam era, and writing about the Second World War, Pynchon was describing a political situation which has become even more prevalent and sinister today, at the start of the twenty-first century: "One reason, then, why *Gravity's Rainbow* stakes its claim to enduring significance is that Pynchon so powerfully identifies and satirizes this persistent, essential paradox of modern statecraft: politics churn out ever-greater masses of non-political subjects."

Robert Holton, in "Useless Lumpens in *Gravity's Rainbow*," also addresses "those groups who appeared to remain outside the powerfully centripetal forces of cultural hegemony." He argues that Pynchon was growing up in a postwar period that was dominated by escape narratives in both literature and film. He was interested in, possibly participated in, the desire to escape to an alternative life-style of low-life, *Lumpenproletariat*. Holton recognizes that "this centrifugal narrative dynamic structures much of Pynchon's work as well," citing particularly Oedipa Maas with the old sailor in the rooming house. But his paper is dedicated to an analysis of those scenes in *Gravity's Rainbow* that illustrate this centrifugal desire. Beginning with the Webley Silvernail soliloquy to the lab animals, the speaker bears on freedom, enclosure, and behavior modification. Pynchon draws parallels with human life: no hope and no mercy in the utilization of the powerless (and useless?) by the powerful. As Holton says, "this zone of refuse and refusal blurs the line between rejecting the system and being rejected by it." The increasingly eccentric Slothrop lets himself go, in a seeming rejection of modernity, of modern subjectivity, and even of history itself. The dominant cultures belong to history, while the

marginalized appear immune to the rise and fall of powers in history. Holton shows how, at the end of *Gravity's Rainbow*, the fledgling Counterforce, in the form of Roger Mexico, Seaman Bodine, and the albeit deceased Brigadier Pudding, offer their bodily waste products as a sign of opposition. But it is an opposition that is given no hope and in itself offers little hope, it seems, in Pynchon's mind, for the successful countering of totalitarianism, either of the right or of the left.

Christopher Leise's paper "'Presto Change—o! Tyrone Slothrop's English Again!' Puritan Conversion, Imperfect Assurance, and the Salvific Sloth in *Gravity's Rainbow*" also discusses resistance against dogmatism. Leise goes back to Thomas Pynchon's first American ancestor, William Pynchon, who published a Puritan pamphlet in the mid-seventeenth century, which was rejected by the ecclesiastical authorities. Through the figure of the lumpen Tyrone Slothrop, cast as a Puritan Pilgrim figure with similar ancestors ("Slothrop's Progress"), the capital sin of Sloth is seen to pit this suppressed strain of Puritanism against the hegemonic brand, bringing the past into the present. Slothrop exhibits the conventional initial stages of the conversion experience; however, his deviations create in the novel a modern Puritan world view opposing orthodoxy through its stress on acceptance, inclusion, and expanded tolerance. Sloth, the sin of the lukewarm Christian, condemned by Calvinist Thomas Hooker, translates, in Pynchon's present-day view as "the moral malaise of inactivity in the face of injustice and iniquity." Franz Pökler is, in Leise's opinion, the best example of this: "Pökler exemplifies the danger inherent in Hooker's kind of Puritanism: believing too strongly without questioning or deviating from the predominant moral order, he sinks into despondency because of the fatal mixture of belief and doubt." Slothrop, as Leise shows us, even in his name, is neither Elect nor Preterite, so he disrupts "the American binary image of success or failure, of good or evil, of saint or stranger." Perhaps, if the Pilgrim Fathers had taken this alternative spiritual route, America today would be a very different place from what it is. This, according to Leise, is the implicit message of *Gravity's Rainbow*.

Moving from politics to genre, Birger Vanwesenbeeck looks at the formal categorization of the novel in "*Gravity's Rainbow*: A Portrait of the Artist as Engineer." While some critics have seen the novel as falling within the tradition of Menippean satire, and others as an encyclopedic narrative—Steven Weisenburger combines the two in "an encyclopedic satire," acknowledging that the two have common elements—Vanwesenbeeck offers another reading of the novel, that of the *Künstlerroman*, as it thematizes the creative process as a central element of its plot, as in the major proponents, James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. But the creative process does not have as an end result literature or music or painting, but the rocket, a technological artifact. As Vanwesenbeeck says, Pynchon plays with the reader, alternately showing us the aesthetic qualities of the rocket's machinery parts, while never failing

to keep us attuned to the destructive nature of the "artifact." Following Joseph Tabbi, Vanwesenbeeck suggests Pynchon wants to question the concept of "technological sublime" through the paradigm art + technology = death + destruction: "Immune to both the forces of mechanical reproduction and exchangeability, the creative gesture and death thus share what Pynchon calls a 'moment of stillness.'" The creative gesture and identity formation and assertion is seen in the Hereros working on the 00001 rocket. But here Pynchon diverges from Joyce and Woolf. The Hereros represent, not the individual creator, but a group, or community, and their work is not original, but a repetition of an earlier model. Vanwesenbeeck concludes that Pynchon, as a postmodernist, not a Modernist, through *Gravity's Rainbow*, shows how an "endorsement of art as copy is less a pessimistic verdict on the impossibility of creating original art, however, than that it serves as a reminder of the distinctly communal horizon within which every artwork operates." But for artwork, Pynchon means technology and science, for, like Don DeLillo's artist-character Klara Sax in *Underworld*, he believes the contemporary world is a "postpainterly age."

The step from literature to philosophy is a short one, says Ludwig Wittgenstein; indeed, "Philosophy should only be done as poetry," quotes Sascha Pöhlmann in his comparison of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* with Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*: "Silences and Worlds: Wittgenstein and Pynchon." He argues that "they are related in their interest in the problematic relation between language and the world, in the uses of silence, in the construction of possible worlds, and in causality." Pöhlmann delves deeper than previous writers: William M. Plater, showing in *The Grim Phoenix* Pynchon's debt to the *Tractatus*, and Petra Bianchi's essay on Wittgenstein and *V.* Pöhlmann feels that, just as Wittgenstein said that human beings can think things that cannot be said—the unsayable—Pynchon's novels convey the idea that words cannot represent things fully. The desire to express through words is there, but accompanied by the realization that what cannot be represented through language must be shown, hinted at, outlined from the other side: "showing the limits of language and representation, both Wittgenstein and Pynchon force their readers to deduce that something lies beyond that limit." Roger Mexico realizes that scientific discourse is unable to address the problems really bothering them, like the chances of a bomb falling on them. The answer to this is silence: the bomb has hit you before you are aware of it. *Gravity's Rainbow* is full of silences. Pöhlmann shows that these areas where thought has gone beyond language are often typologically signified in the text, and this is done in the form of the dash or ellipses points.

Some of Pynchon's dashes and ellipses points function normally, to indicate insertion, pause, or disruption, but others suggest speculation, possibility rather than certainty, as in the line that ends the novel: "Now everybody—". Others represent the type of omission which can only signify

that the thoughts are unspeakable, whether over a single death (Slothrop) or mass death on an unknown scale (Pökler entering the Dora camp). In considering the first statement of the *Tractatus*: "The world is all that is the case" (where *case* can be interpreted in thirty different ways, some of them negative), Pöhlmann asserts that "the *Tractatus* is about the conditions of possibility, not about actual states of affairs." Similarly, he feels that "the world of *Gravity's Rainbow* is more than what is the case, it is also what is not the case, and most importantly what could be the case." Both subscribe to possibilism, and while Wittgenstein's is philosophical, Pynchon's is political. Finally, Pöhlmann shows how Slothrop's disappearance or scattering at the text's end manifests Wittgenstein's "the solipsist's ego is an entity without an identity." Both Wittgenstein and Pynchon share an awe for silence, which, again typologically, can appear in Pynchon's text as Silence with a capital S.

Terry Reilly and Steve Tomaske's paper "Medicine and the Paranormal in *Gravity's Rainbow*: Epheyre, Anaphylaxis, and That Charles Richet" comes very appropriately after Pöhlmann's consideration of Wittgenstein's connection to the novel for two reasons: because Richet, like Wittgenstein, always challenged the relation of cause and effect, and, as the authors say, "commentators on Pynchon's writing have often found themselves in uncomfortable and sometimes ridiculous positions where they are forced to argue about the importance of something although or because it is *not* explicitly in Pynchon's text [. . .] often concluding that something's present *because* it's absent," and indeed, Richet is absent from the text. In spite of this, they conclude that Richet is "perhaps one of *the* most important historical figures *not* mentioned in *Gravity's Rainbow*." The early part of the paper offers a brief biography of Richet (1850–1935), a Parisian physiologist and student of the occult and paranormal, winner of the 1913 Nobel Prize for Medicine for his discovery of anaphylaxis and anaphylactic shock. The *Institut Métapsychique International*, which he helped set up, also not mentioned, is an actual historical version of the "White Visitation" of the novel. In *Gravity's Rainbow,* Pynchon explores some of the ideas Richet wrote about in his myriad articles, and Pynchon also addresses larger questions, like those Richet contemplated, about what happens after death to people in general and to Tyrone Slothrop in particular. Pynchon twice uses the term "ectoplasm," coined by Richet to refer to the white gaseous or plasma-like substance ("white visitation") that occasionally emanated from the bodies of mediums during séances and signaled both the presence of spirits and their willingness to communicate. Reilly and Tomaske speculate the naming of the medium Carroll Eventyr as a veiled version of Charles Epheyre, a pen-name Richet used when he wrote stories. Also, the many references in the novel to latex-based or synthetic latex-based products, which are the most common and widespread cause of anaphylaxis and anaphylactic shock, point to Richet too, since he did pioneering work in this area, as his Nobel Prize testifies.

In his essay "Seeing the Wood for the Trees: Levels of Reading and Intertextual Mythmaking in Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow,*" Mark Quinn argues that certain sections of the novel represent closed systems, with implicit rules and codes that are intended by the author to limit the number of possible interpretations of his work. He also suggests that one of the key practices underlying Pynchon's poetics is the kind of literary symbiosis that Modernists such as Joyce and Eliot advocated, that key building blocks of Pynchon's text can best be described as Modernist. He is thinking particularly of the metafictional and self-reflexive nature of the novel, its concern with its own form and structure. Following Umberto Eco's detection of *doublecoding* in postmodernist texts, where the writer addresses an elite reading public on one level and a popular one on another, Quinn believes the astute reader should see in the scene of Slothrop's descent into the Toilet World a pastiche of the western, pointing specifically to Sergio Leone's 1968 *Once Upon a Time in the West*, starring Henry Fonda. "Authorial" intrusions alert us to the idea that Pynchon might be prompting and testing our interpretive abilities and at the same time attracting attention to his craft. These intrusions can easily be mistaken for free indirect style, so the reader has to be particularly alert. Also referenced in the scene is another Henry Fonda movie, that of Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, both united by the music for the song "Red River Valley." The figure of the Kenosha Kid at the beginning of the scene is traced by Quinn, through Harold Bloom's *kenosis* ("emptying out" or incarnation) in his 1974 book *Anxiety of Influence*, to the idea of Pynchon the author as god. By laying bare his mythmaking, Pynchon gives us an insight into his methods and intentions in this most complex of novels.

As we have seen, the allegedly most complex novels attracted most papers at the Conference. There was just one on *Vineland*: Jeffrey Severs's "In Fascism's Footprint: The History of 'Creeping' and *Vineland*'s Poetics of Betrayal." Severs agrees with Jerry Varsava's view that *Vineland*, although it may appear more like *Lot 49* in its smaller scope and accent on "domestic politics," in fact has deep connections to the big novels, *V.* and *Gravity's Rainbow*, in which Pynchon diagnosed American politics through analogy to international fascism. The fascist enforcers in *Gravity's Rainbow*, Tchitcherine and Blicero, are seen as werewolves, whereas Brock Vond in *Vineland*, as his name in Old English signifies, is a mere badger by comparison. Yet the novel is nonetheless about fascism: not so much what America would be like under fascism, as how it could come about, with individuals, like Frenesi Gates, "flipping" or turning through betrayal, possibly even inscribed in her genes, and usually connected to sex. (Severs asks us to see "Be–Tray" or "Be–Trayers" in the combined names of her grandparents: Becker–Traverse.) Her daughter Prairie's name is Wheeler, suggesting, according to Severs, "that American family inheritances are on a wheel of fortune, with no predictability to how each generation will turn." The adjective "creeping," in the form of a gerund, in the opening sentence of the

novel is as important as the opening and closing gerunds of *Gravity's Rainbow* and *Lot 49* respectively: *screaming, crying*. It refers not only to the tentacles of fascist power, but to the "low-to-the-ground, insect-like persistence through which *Vineland* identifies and celebrates its Counterforce." It also refers to slow time, the stubborn, slow creeping of the underdog, as opposed to the vibrant action of the "creator" of history, the totalitarian of the right or the left, with his boot crushing everything beneath it. Severs places two epigraphs at the head of his essay: one is dystopian—of the boot stamping on a human face in Orwell's *1984*—and the other is the utopian grass pushing up under the boot-soles in Whitman's "Song of Myself." He shows how Whitman is the "presiding poetic presence who shapes the particular kind of Romanticism Pynchon dissects and discredits in the text." Severs concludes, as Quinn and the others do about *Gravity's Rainbow*, that *Vineland*'s references, in this case to grass and leaves, which can be paper leaves as well, are "about texts, full of elliptical, highly literary connections to other books and, as importantly, Pynchon's own."

In *Vineland*, Pynchon suggests that the children might not be innocent, and we cannot assume that the sins of the fathers will be visited upon them, as they may have greater sins of their own. The patriarch Jesse Traverse of *Vineland* is a child in Pynchon's new novel *Against the Day* (2006), and both this novel and his previous one, *Mason & Dixon* (1997), are, in the words of Tom Schaub "the remembered futurity of a nation about to be born." Sofia Kolbuszewska reminds us that since Romanticism, the remembered futurity has been considered to be embodied in the image of the child. In her essay "Childhood as a Metaphor, Motif and Narrative Device in *Mason & Dixon*" she applies Peter Brooks' approach to narrative in *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narratives*, where the operating logic can be described as anticipation of retrospection. She asserts that in *Mason & Dixon*, the writer's narrative desire, fuelled by his efforts to explore and question contemporary nostalgic representations of the rise of America's vision of itself, is carried through the narrative process by means of the child metaphor. The narration in *Mason & Dixon* starts with the historicized child audience of Rev. Cherrycoke, the Le Spark children, and ends with the Romantic vision of the mythic redeemer children, Charles Mason's sons, "arrested in the timelessness of the American pastoral vision," as Kolbuszewska puts it. She shows how, in between, in the course of the long novel, Pynchon explores genetic conditioning—the reference to "Helixxx" —the possible potential inherent in the "genome" of the infant nation, and the parallel growth of the nation's identity and the new genre of the novel, often contributing to that identity, bearing witness to its birth. The Oedipal relation of fathers and sons gives us children as both the prodigal son and the pilgrim. Family-life and family-relations metaphors figure prominently in the cultural and political discourse in colonial and, later, Revolutionary America. Through the American Revolution, a watershed in the

nation's history, America was at once the new-born child and the young adult attaining manhood. Pynchon's parodying of eighteenth-century Gothic in the novel goes hand-in-hand with the denunciation of slavery in America's past, disrupting the national narrative of innocence, purity and equality.

This selection of the talks given at the Granada Conference shows the wide and full range of the novels and topics covered. Individually, they delve deep into the discussions about America and the world in which Pynchon asks the reader to join him. As they all confirm, Pynchon demands astute and well-read interlocutors, and they make their contribution to helping readers appreciate the width and depth of Pynchon's myriad concerns.