

# Rationalizing Community: Victims, Institutions and Analogies for America in *Mason & Dixon*

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"Why haven't we heard a Tale about America?"  
—Thomas Pynchon (*M&D* 7)

## 1: Redeeming Silences

"History is hard to know," Hunter S. Thompson laments, "because of all the hired bullshit" (67). Hired history, Thomas Pynchon laments, rationalizes grand-scale exploitation, explains away mass murder and community annihilation in chronicles sponsored by the powerful to "convince everybody, including themselves," that wholesale victimization "never happened" or "doesn't matter" or is justified (F xxi). "'History is hir'd, or coerc'd,'" argues Ethelmer LeSpark in *Mason & Dixon*, "'only in Interests that must ever prove base'" (350). Official versions rationalize the horrors of "a history which has brought so appallingly many down, without ever having spoken, or having spoken gone unheard, or having been heard, left unrecorded"; institutional chronicles do not explain enforced preterition, the sanctioned marginalization that victimizes the wordless multitudes of passed-over humanity, so Pynchon takes up the fiction-maker's "duty to redeem these silences" (HEV 49) through *Mason & Dixon's* resonating voices and analogies. By showing astronomer Charles Mason and surveyor Jeremiah Dixon calculating and cutting that ill-famed colonial interface on behalf of inaccessible European bosses, Pynchon dramatizes how, amid the world-altering idealism of the Enlightenment, imperial capitalism and colonial slavery stilled preterite voices and foreshortened the chances of equality and freedom in America.

Peter Schmidt's reading of *Mason & Dixon* points to how heterophonic narrative renders and thus redeems preterite silences by describing the institutional subjugation of common people in the name of technological progress. Multiple tales and tellers disclose the climactic dilemma of the Enlightenment: propped up by "market capitalism, colonialism, and a sense of racial and national superiority," European power-mongers measured "inferior" against "superior civilizations" to justify their consumption of nature and their enslavement of natives (3). Each of Pynchon's racist colonizers sports

an “exchange-value ego dependent on the esteem of like-minded capitalists” (Hinds 195). As cultural cross-examinations of militaristic capitalism, nomadic episodes in *Mason & Dixon* deal with the same problems of possibility that bedevil Oedipa Maas: “with the chances once so good for diversity” (CL 181), why did freedom in America vaporize? In the eighteenth century, colonial America formed “a crossroads for the energies of” Europe, but the New-World view “consecrated to multiple perspectives” (Cowart 344) seems officially blind in *Lot 49*’s darkling nation. Satirizing reason as rationalization, individualism as victimization and community as institution, Pynchon answers Oedipa’s overwhelming question by subverting Age-of-Reason dogma in *Mason & Dixon*. He deconstructs totalitarian rationalism to show scientific, economic, religious and political policies opposing human freedom and corrupting nature’s mystic powers (Ketzan), a move that nullifies the profiteering benevolence publicized by the progressive enterprises of Enlightenment.

Portraits of victims problematize the comedy in these attacks on rationalizing, institutional orthodoxy. Readers witness the decline of community and the victimization of individuals as rendered and interpreted from many points of view. Thus *Mason & Dixon* historicizes interrelated narrating perspectives that present characters’ stories of victim status and its meanings. Frank Palmeri observes that narrated “multivoicedness” instigates “the unresolved clash of multiple alternatives” in satire (SN 8). V.’s Fausto Maijstral advocates perspectival, characterized narration: successively accepting and rejecting identities lets writers demystify “the fiction of continuity, the fiction of cause and effect, the fiction of a humanized history endowed with ‘reason’” (V 306). The historicism of Wicks Cherrycoke, Pynchon’s sometime mouthpiece in *Mason & Dixon*, depends neither on “Chronology,” the legalized product of logic, nor on “Remembrance,” the unofficial process of emotion. Truth in history emanates not from time and memory but from “the arts of the quidnunc, spy, and Taproom Wit” (M&D 349)—the gossip, dissembler and comic—in a word, the novelist. Fictionists and poets—“fabulists and counterfeiters, Ballad-Mongers and Cranks of ev’ry Radius, Masters of Disguise” (350)—revise human truth with beguiling arts of sublime inclusion. Victim fictions in *Mason & Dixon* voice “alternative histories” of “places and peoples official Western history has repressed” (Keeseey 171), in unorthodox accounts of those passed over. As alternative historical fiction, *Mason & Dixon* is ambiguous and reflexive, not excavated and linear (Siegel 176), locating preterition on the political interface of America’s “centrifugal expansion and centripetal transcolonial solidarity” (Lawrence 820).

*Mason & Dixon's* relational meanings, stories and tellers expose the effects of European militarism and capitalism on North America in the 1760s, when technologues regarded "man as a clockwork automaton" (V 284). The religious, financial and military institutions that were imperialism's chief exports to the New World rationalized victimization as colonial settlement, imperialism's exculpating goal. However, the effective "mission" of empire is "to promote death" (GR 722); "'The Business of the World is Trade and Death'" (M&D 247). Hanjo Berressem points out that multifaceted tales of imperial money and murder force readers to "reassess[] . . . the Enlightenment" (CP 838), to recognize it as a rationalizing "project . . . to gain dominion and control" by making the individual truths of empirical experience answer only to official reason (SRP 1). Written about or perhaps toward preterite silence, verbalizing in *V.* and *Gravity's Rainbow* echoes the paradoxical glossolalia of Pynchon's modernist and postmodernist progenitors, Joyce, Beckett and Burroughs, just as *Mason & Dixon's* character-driven satire of institutions and their cat's-paw aristo-, auto- and bureaucrats resembles portraiture by Pynchon's neoclassical progenitor, Swift.

Summarizing Gulliver's history of England, the Brobdingnagian king mentions "Lines of an Institution, which in its Original might have been tolerable," now "half-erased and . . . wholly blurred and blotted by Corruptions." Adulterated institutions advertise illusions "that Men are ennobled on Account of their Virtue, that Priests are advanced for their Piety or Learning, Soldiers for their Conduct or Valour, Judges for their Integrity, Senators for the love of their Country, or Counsellors for their Wisdom" (Swift 122). Unlike Swift's faded outline of abstract civil ideals, the Mason-Dixon Line is in-the-world analysis, dividing society from nature, event from experience, fact from knowledge, possibility from magic, civilization from humanity and individual from community (Cohen 267-68). Resisting such rationalization requires "a re-enchancement of the Earth as an animated creature and an overthrow of intellection, specifically the analytical system of oppositional logic" (Dewey 123). Grossly oversimplified analytical logic is the stock in trade of *Mason & Dixon's* greedy rationalizers. Pynchon envisions an Enlightenment violated by expedient specialists, time servers and influence mongers shuttling in and out of power vacuums. The Swiftian multitudes of "'Projectors, Brokers of Capital, Insurancers, Peddlers upon the global Scale, Enterprisers and Quacks'" (M&D 487) debase the ideals of reason into rationalizing lies. The ranks of pompous dunderheads and killer opportunists swell with the likes of the charlatan-zoologist Voam, the high-society astronomer Maskelyne, the sadistic religionist Zarpazo, the bloodthirsty gangster Captain Volcanoe,

the violent tergiversator Captain Shelby, the weapons merchant Wade LeSpark, and those sentimental colonizing agents Mason and Dixon.

Such institutional toadies rationalize and exploit a major flaw of Enlightenment culture: the presumption of human perfectibility through idealized reason, or the equivalent social presumption that, to facilitate the natural evolution of individuals and their communities, public rationalism is preeminent in determining political society. Pynchon's rationalizing institution-builders program social theories and political ideologies to control consciousness and community by enslaving both. Generally, Pynchon exhibits "discourses of power, and the functions of institutional control" (Duyfhuizen, TS 88) which explain away and expedite any kind of slavery. For Stacey Olster, the politics of institutional slavery hinge on "ownership more than oppression" and thus provisionalize national identity (286–87). Pynchon displays nationality, religion, race, gender, caste and class circumscribed by Anglo-European institutions such as the Royal Society, the East India Company, the Society of Jesus, and the militaries of Britain and France. Since these bodies rationalize enslavement, characters experience slavery as an institution evincing the Enlightenment ideals of an advancing civilization: "Shared projections form the basis of institutions; unshared, of exile and madness" (Palmeri, SN 116). Exile and death define institutional slavery, the New-World standard of societal insanity. The colonial America of *Mason & Dixon* actualizes a fatal paradox: idealized as a land of liberty, it traffics in and justifies bondage. Pynchon's victim narratives thus dramatize the systematic buying, using and selling of people and communities.

Dialogue, first-person and limited third-person narration, and eccentric omniscience (Pynchon's hallmark) create an "intricate mirroring" of narrative perspectives and frame stories (Wood 123). *Mason & Dixon* "counterpoises multiple frames of understanding without assenting to the authority of any single perspective" (Palmeri, SN 3), entitling (if not requiring) readers to evaluate points of view. Texts pile up, so "sermons, official documents, pastorals, accounts of travel, diaries, essays, poems, and songs" reveal "the conventionality and limitation of any single frame of understanding" (5). Multiple viewpoints, frame stories and reproduced archives urge readers across "the boundaries between fiction itself and the reality or history naïvely" adhered to as official; in *Mason & Dixon's* texts, tales and views, "the most valuable history recognizes its own fictive underpinnings" (Coward 356–57). Characters witness social suppression of collective purpose and relate psychological repression of individual will, victimizations which, Pynchon's readers recognize, make community culturally improbable and politically impossible.

In brief, then, as *Mason & Dixon* perspectively narrates tales of the suppression of community and the repression of consciousness, its literary conventions further elaborate a tale about representational discourse with the productions of American colonial history as fictive pretext and Enlightenment ideology as satiric subtext. Framing Cherrycoke's English persona but framed by Pynchon's authorial omniscience, the narration realizes Enlightenment utopian dreaming as imperialistic act, and enacts colonialism as empire's mandate of institutional rationalization. Fictive enactment subordinates traditional representation by organizing historical acts into literary contexts or, in Pynchon's case, configuring facts in satiric forms that parody both the factual exhibits and the formal displays. Exhibited fact and displayed form mimic "the desire for coercion and capture and return," dramatizing logogrammatic connections "between 'home' and exile, civilization and barbarism" (Schmidt 2). *Mason & Dixon* is "an enactment of history as rhizome," a narration that presents "connections and misconnections" of plots and voices, but in which "points of contact" between fact and fiction "remain unseen and untraceable" (Hinds 203; cf. Sigvardson 23-26). To orchestrate the movement of narration among characterized and omniscient perspectives, Pynchon uses analogy, the technique of representation in rhetoric and poetry that juxtaposes comparative and contrastive images. As recording acts, Pynchon's analogies compare history and myth (or fiction) to uncover similarities between Christianity and capitalism, feudalism and democracy, strategies of rationalizing victimization, forms of slavery in the Old and New Worlds. As fictional enactments, the analogies relate fact with trope to recover differences between city and village, civilization and wilderness, institution and community.

## 2: Representing America: Perspective, Analogy and Satire

To mediate Cherrycoke's filtering, first-person point of view with third-person omniscience, Pynchon locates narrators aloft, above characters, actions and scenes in *Mason & Dixon's* frame tale and framing plot. Excerpting the *Ghastly Fop* serial, for example, the omniscient narrator summarizes not only the Fields-Zhang episode but also the Mason-Dixon adventure and any linear tour of Enlightenment discovery as "a journey onward, into a Country unknown,—an Act of Earth, irrevocable as taking Flight" (M&D 531). The "Westering" conclusion of the novel's part 2 (706-09) lifts Mason's and Dixon's perspectives above the American enterprise to "an Observation Point on high" (707). Dixon recalls his own "childhood flights over the Fells"

(596), and, interrupting the surveyor's "Terra Concava" tale (738-42), the omniscient narrator notes that "means of Flight [had] been develop'd early in the History of the Inner Surface" (740). In the frame story, even the stolid Cherrycoke remembers a dream of flight "above the Surface, down the Visto, straight West" (649). From the elevated perspective of narratorial omniscience, "the uninterrupted visto" appears, "from a certain Height, oddly verminous" (683), even predatory, for a sign of political geography. Hence, Kathryn Hume's commentary on narrative perspectives above (and beneath) persons and plots in *Gravity's Rainbow* explains a trick of omniscience that the Cherrycoke frame in *Mason & Dixon* conventionally supplements.

This inquisitional, airborne helix of characterized and omniscient perspectives frustrates some tradition-bound readers who, secure amid formalist conventions, find *Mason & Dixon* an out-of-focus, avant-garde text of excessive omission. Traditionalists favoring orthodox realism, like Ives LeSpark, complain that Pynchon's novels "'will not distinguish between fact and fancy'" (M&D 351). Yet Pynchon's perspectival narration interrogates individual human truths that animate fiction and history as discourses. His technique conflates the factuality of history "with the uncertainty of fiction" (Foreman 162). Separate truths, "the myriad ways in which mortal human lives" experience themselves, conflict with scientific absolutes, theological certainties and other official ideals (Schmidt 3). Redrafting history as docufiction familiarizes "the past as a largely unmarked terrain upon which [artists] can freely impose their own designs" (Van Delden 133). Pynchon's "imagination of multiple perspectives" thus perforates "logocentric pretensions of the Enlightenment" with "a parallax view of history" (Coward 358): the rationalizing of the institutionalizer and, among the silent Preterite, acquiescence or resistance, each elevated through multiple viewpoints.

Moreover, Pynchon's fiction of multiple perspectives questions the veracity of pigeonholing human knowledge acquired through rationalization, submission or rebellion. The "parallactic" approach to historical fact in *Mason & Dixon* engenders a "contentiously dialectical" depiction of repressive imperialism, scientific progress and colonial expansion (Burns 1). The omniscient narrator claims that "Lies and Truth will converge" in their expression (M&D 530), an axiom Dixon applies in his fable of Inner Earth, where "'ev'rybody's axes converge'" (741). Lyrics from his music-hall dream, however, admit that he and Mason "couldn't tell the falsehoods from the lies" (753) during their adventures. Like Pynchon's readers, Tenebrae and Ethelmer intuit "Relations stash'd orthogonally all about, invisible tho' now and then sens'd otherwise" (528), a discursive intersection of imperceptible tangents that relativizes realistic narration and its right-angled logic of

fact. Since fiction and history are, respectively, truth-symbolizing and truth-recording formulas of language, Pynchon employs a comically exacting “mock-reportorial deadpan” (Kowalewski 200) to represent their expression in eighteenth-century argot. His shifting perspectives present any third-person limited or first-person narrator as compromised, “more like an on-the-spot reporter than a historian” (Hite 141), exhibiting merely mortal insight rather than limitless authorial control and traditional godlike omniscience. Schemes of historical distancing and skeins of journalistic or scientific fact embroidered on *Mason & Dixon* are substantively allusive, but reflexively display a “fabulist history” (Schaub 192) for which readers create “critical interpretations of [their] own” (Gary Thompson 165). Perspectival narration yields “possibilities of interpretation” because it models “the unavoidably uncertain and relativistic condition of all human perception” (Pérez-Llantada 831). Reciprocally, multiple points of view lead readers to “different possible interpretations” that yield varied yet seemingly determinative meanings (Hutcheon 79).

Reflecting historical act in literary enactment, Pynchon’s self-displaying conventions and self-exhibiting events interrogate representation itself. For instance, the omniscient teller describes the Veery brothers, “professional effigy makers” (M&D 289), crafting dummies of beeswax and offal to represent “Line Commissioners” and “Proprietors” that “a Mobility of Rent-payers” burn without singeing actual aristocrats or real regimes (291–92). Characters debate inconclusively the “Topick of Representation,” questioning the qualities of represented enactments, the value of representing acts, and the fabrication of quality and value in political, social, theatrical and religious contexts (404–05). In a suppositional denouement, the omniscient teller mentions chainmen who “would be rediscover’d in episodes to come, were the episodes ever to be enacted” (709), having just enacted some such Westering scenes. Overall, the novel’s relativistic, paradoxical motifs question the primacy of traditional forms, its archaic diction questions the generational standardization of language, and its multiple narration questions the ideologies that hierarchical conventions historically support.

Joel Stein labels this style “epic modernism”; David W. Lawrence, “counterfeit signification” (816); Berressem, “[m]ultiplex storylining” (SRP 10). Less broadly, Linda Hutcheon calls it “historiographic metafiction,” a realistic representation of fact through narration that synthesizes “an uneasy mix of” parody and history by equalizing self-reflexive with historically grounded contexts (14–15; cf. Collado 71, 74). Pynchon layers his satire so that “Howellsian realism underlies Dickensian farce” and “magic realism overlays Loony Tunes” (Logan

431). By exposing anthropocentric assumptions and institutional practices that undergird traditional forms of representation, *Mason & Dixon's* reflexive narration and Augustan congruity unleash "satirical forces profoundly disruptive of generic conventions that govern the writing and reading of novels since Enlightenment times" (Weisenburger, HP 101), and ask readers "to meditate on the deep connections between literary tradition" and innovation (Schmidt 1).

To simultaneously employ and disrupt conventional techniques of both novelistic and historical representation, Pynchon uses analogy, which, as William Logan notes, miniaturizes knowledge-making in the Age of Reason. Analogies configure scientific with occult images, grafting "the stray evidence of one field to the general principle of another. This ability to draw theory from the mass of particulars is scientific method in small" (429). In discursive expositions demanding juxtaposition, analogy anchors paradoxical contexts in metaphor and simile, the respective tropes of implied and asserted comparison. For example, the Gothic *Ghastly Fop* opens with a conventionally sentimental metaphor: Eliza Fields finds "a join'd and finish'd Life" in domesticity's house (M&D 511). Wondering whether military repression in Britain resembles incursions in America, Mason speculates about historical parallels between generals and their targeted victims: Wolfe occupied Mason's home village; Braddock mounted a disastrous attack in Pennsylvania near where the *visto* later passes. And the omniscient narrator also likens the tactics and enemies of these two officers (501). Mason's astronomical-biological analogy "'compare[s] the Aurora Borealis to jell'd Blood'" (726). Captain Zhang uses the human body as vehicle in an earth-organism metaphor: "'Earth, withal, is a Body, like our own'" ; and Mason asks, skeptically, if "'the Planet Earth [is] a . . . living Creature'" (602; Pynchon's ellipsis)—as it was affirmed to be in *Gravity's Rainbow* (590). Personal correspondence-making adjusts sinister line-marking and other divisive institutional acts. Analogies impose romance on reason to dismantle "the very logic of rationalism" as the "single, official perspective" (Coward 356–57).

Embedded texts and reader surrogates involve Pynchon's audience with the craft of correspondence in *Mason & Dixon*. Chaucer's Parson, "a lerned man, a clerk" (GP 480), declares himself "'nat textueel'" (ParsT 57), but scribblers and lectors overrun Pynchon's work. Freeloading author-narrator-cleric Cherrycoke (or the framing narrator, whose voice is often hard to distinguish from Cherrycoke's) reads hanging sausages as "Lines of Text, cryptick Intestinal Commentary" (289). Mason, "seiz'd by Monology," exclaims of a cathedral-like cavern, "'it is Text,—and we are its readers, and its Pages are the Days turning. Unscrolling, as a Pilgrim's Itinerary map'" (497). This metaphor



ties calendar to map, and links life, work, time and space to the pilgrim, a traveler by charter. The broader analogy connotes religious or political exile, pioneering, nomadic tourism, or the colony as home away from imperial manor (cf. Stencil's impersonations in *V.* [63-93]). Yoking picaresque style to postmodern doubleness, Pynchon's comparisons induce readers to respect "every possible metaphoric resource" and to inspect "every possible contemporary idiom" (Kowalewski 205) that his literary-historical parodies evoke. Using image configurations regardless of rhetorical rationale, *Mason & Dixon's* representational analogies create satire unfettered by genre rules.

Ironic representation in *Mason & Dixon* thus "operates in a symbolic space that it simultaneously disrupts" as "a valid mode of political criticism" (Berressem, PP 45-46), analogizing historical referents with fictional signs. Pynchon represents conflict between "different classes, professions, linguistic communities, and ethnic or religious groups" by casting the instituted discourse of "one-sided rationality, the pious truths of an officially sanctioned view," into "the inverting ambiguity and ambivalence of carnival and parodic serio-comic forms" (Palmeri, SN 2). Pynchon's clashing discourses represent institutional, communitarian and individual conflicts, emphasizing "the parodic juxtapositions of genres," the novel's historical and fictional structures; conventional forms, "models of understanding," imply the "systemic view of the world" that rationalizing discourse prescribes (SN 13). For instance, Pynchon presents the marriage of Catherine Wheat and Tom Hynes (M&D 575-84) as domestic melodrama, using the lines and props of clan feud, spousal abuse and ambivalent reconciliation. However, perspectival narrator Shelby substitutes mock-epic double-speak to discuss martial rather than marital strife. The Wheat-Hynes "'domestick drama'" affords Shelby's irregulars "'a practice run . . . for Acts of Publick necessity impending,'" the Stamp-Act riots that foreshadow America's "'will'd Departure from History,'" the Revolutionary War (579). To justify his militarism, Shelby mouths the ideology of liberation, as if the political ideal of individual freedom excuses this surveying renegade's power play (Lawrence 819). Thus Pynchon's "historical multiplexity" compares fearful violence to peaceful liberty (Berressem, SRP 8). He satirizes debate, revolt and generic, familial orderliness to assess "the complex heritage of the Enlightenment," parodying "the metaphysics used to create and justify power inequities" that cause conflict between classes, genders and races (Schmidt 3). This satire of society and genre explodes a prime target: Western civilization's myth of America as an Edenic New World, the religious, political and social representation of Enlightenment idealism—paradise regained.

*Mason & Dixon* demythologizes colonial America's essential historical and literary representation: the utopian analogy or paradisiacal allegory starring pious Euro-exiles—isolated, failure-prone, suffering—in a beautiful wilderness—remorselessly hostile, boundlessly promising, hugely enriching—where the utter distance from civilization signifies danger to body, mind and spirit, but also where characters enjoy “the self-indulgent luxury of the quest for eternal harmony” (Baldwin and Kirby ix–x). A *Mason & Dixon* kabbalist cautions that “‘all who came to America, for Wealth, for Refuge, for Adventure,’” have been denied access to its “‘Secret’” message of discord and conflict, which must be “‘attended to, manipulated, and remember’d’” (M&D 487). Founding colonies does not guarantee freedom for oppressed exiles, but changes them into death-dealing oppressors of natives and each other. That warning challenges traditional, politically benign histories of discovery, exploration and colonization, and preempts conventional fictions about American freedom, equality and democracy, “the sacred drama of American nationhood” (Bercovitch qtd. in Copestake 204). Colonial America exists actually as chartered land in the east and ideally as “a plentitude of possibilities” in the unmapped west (Tanner 225), but tradition and convention preserve a “canned, mythologized past” (Lawrence 824), accentuating “the myth of America’s manifest destiny” (Copestake 204).

Pynchon’s American stories of “hoboes, paranoid fringe groups, unmoneyed squatters, Nazi store owners, and corrupt founding fathers” highlight “the often repressed fact that the legacy of America has to do with disinheritance, silencing, and subjection as well as with birthrights, toleration, and liberty”; his satire, then, illuminates outsider “alienation from the reigning order of the visible and sanctioned establishment” (Palmeri, SN 122). A pivotal gag in *Mason & Dixon* is the “impossibility of establishing with any fixity the actuality of America” as a scientifically discovered nation or a rationally analyzed culture (Olster 294). Still, perspectival narration develops ironic characters the likes of Shelby who dramatize American colonization as a heroic, founding epic “recounting the values of a total civilization” (Brooks 25). Officially, insider values reflect the Enlightenment’s philosophical, scientific and political ideals of exploratory heroism bringing knowledge and civilization. Pynchon’s multidiscursive fiction critiques and devalues the imperialism inherent in that exploration, the gender bias and racial prejudice veiled by that heroism, and the ruin of community rationalized by the institutions of that civilization.

*Mason & Dixon* absurdly reduces the Enlightenment premise that, beneath umbrella philosophies subsuming religion, science and politics to logic, human society is perfectible unto utopia. Pynchon’s satirical

ecology has colonizers rationalizing nature as "some problematic gift crafted by a meddling, capricious deity," or as "some vast, efficient machine bound by a system of laws" (Dewey 116). Eleventh-century Viking Vinelanders stimulated Old-World dreams of exploration and conquest; fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Spanish acolytes and French mercantilists religiously and economically embellished those dreams; seventeenth-century English Puritan settlers socially realized them in a theocracy of deified institutionalism (Bumas 149-50). Eighteenth-century technocrats, David Cowart adds, advanced science to universalize a New-World dream, believing that "human institutions, studied carefully enough, could be made answerable to reason." The Enlightenment established its laboratory of perfectibility with the "great experiment in self-government founded on rational principles: the American nation" (342). Conversely, *V.* and *Gravity's Rainbow* demonstrate that sword, cross and currency symbolize not the dream of governance through individual freedom but "'a dream of annihilation'" (V 206); not utopia-founding through liberal, Western-civilizing progress but victimizing through the expansion of commercial and military institutions in a "'cycle of infection and death'" (GR 724). The sinister unreason in *Mason & Dixon* parodies Enlightenment ideals that forerun "psychology, comparative religion, and community behavior," the modern constructs which have "rationalized the heretofore irrational" (Scholes and Kellogg 152).

The running of the Mason-Dixon Line is the most fully rationalized act of empire. The Line represents a "scientifically-minded Enlightenment trying to re-create the world in its image," using "precise instruments and calculations" to daunt "Old World occultism" and dampen "New World religious enthusiasm" (McLemee 2). Institutional flunkies Mason and Dixon are fated, as Timothy Tox versifies it, "To mark the Earth with geometrick Scars" (M&D 257). To blur this rationalizing inscription, Pynchon devises "'Eneathment'" (359) and revises the American folk tale as democratic guerrilla theater. For example, suffering from "'Kastoranthropy,'" werebeaver Zepho Beck emerges as the natural, laboring-class equal of ordinary beavers, which "'regard him as another breed of creek life'" (619), and as a familiar figure to Indians, whose "Beaver Totem" symbolizes "a protector, sustainer, worker of Miracles" in "Tales of how they and the World began" (620). Magic enactments connote "resistance to the rationalization of modern society," a rationalization overtly represented by "marking an earth coded as a writing surface" (Mattessich 7). Rationalizing America requires Enlightenment science to take magic apart with analysis (McLaughlin 184-85), while miracle-workers and magic-makers like Zepho "oppose the world's disenchantment" (Brand

549) by derailing scientific conclusions. If colonial America exemplifies eighteenth-century perfectibility—political reform through scientific method—then Pynchon dismembers that Euro-utopian assemblage of institutions and their programs of rationalization, the concrete “dissociation of reason and morality in all of its implications” (Habermas 347).

Convoluting eighteenth-century reason and twentieth-century rationalization in *Mason & Dixon*'s narrative frameworks, Pynchon balances historiographic metafiction on the “razor edge of anachronism” to subvert “accepted and invented history, anecdote, myth and hyperbole.” (Boyle). The ironic inversion of forms, including “allegory and history, tragedy and satire, metaphoric and literal” images, exchanges “a new genre or mode of interpretation” (Palmeri, SN 109–10) for discourses of rationalization. Advancing this discursive subversion, Pynchon exhibits Enlightenment idealism and its epitomizing institutions but, through parody, disdains both as antitheses of community. Realistic and fanciful communities appear throughout *Mason & Dixon*. “‘Asiatick Pygmies’” move into time that calendar-reforming Western math wizards forfeit (196–97); Mason and Dixon lodge at a “new Inn,” an emblem of colonial America (362–63, 365); “Elf Communities” know Iron Hill lore (470); Eliza Fields dreams of a “Toll-house” community of “rejected” pilgrims (529–30); Mason and Dixon tour Cumberland, a symbol of American frontier expansion (637–38, 642–43); Mason plans community in “‘a perfect Line’” across the Atlantic (712–13). Molly Hite observes comparable subversion in *Gravity's Rainbow*, in which “proliferating points of view” express “comprehensive sympathy” as “plurality compatible with community” (141).

Owen Flanagan cites three kinds of trust that empower a “set of social relations to constitute a bona fide social union” and thus propagate genuine community: “(1) shared final ends, (2) common activities, and (3) affection and civic friendship among participants” (129). He then defines *community* in a “just society” as any rudimental grouping that permits “an indefinite array of human associations” (130). The communal mirroring of group and self assumes not only that social institutions inevitably manage individuals but also that human community gives managed individuals enough freedom to transform society. Personal liberty thus protects communal human qualities that enliven resistance to and foment change in any onerous governing ideology (McGowan 68). Even with personal liberty totally absent in the “social desert” of a fascist death camp, where inmates confront the “immanence” of a totalitarian status quo, Jean-Luc Nancy proclaims community real and accessible (35; cf. Sigvardson 41). Committed to

such hypotheses of human order and chaos, representations of community incorporate individual acts, random and concerted, in a totality of collective values (Abbas 28).

However, the stabilizing light of humane community in Pynchon's novels often wanes exceeding dim. Firelily's rider in *V.* rationalizes gang rape and other sadistic exercises of power over Herero prisoners as "[c]ommunity," a perversion heightening the brutality of European colonizers on the "foggy, sweating, sterile coast" at Swakopmund (272). The PREP compound in *Vineland* and Dora in *Gravity's Rainbow* also offer little community. Common trust among PREP snitches is negligible, and most Dora inmates' dreams of liberty dissipate, like hope for survival, in mass death. William Plater argues that paranoia in Pynchon's earlier fiction is not a "metaphor or psychosis" but "a social and aesthetic form . . . for relating the individual to community" (190). The knowledge-quests in *Mason & Dixon* also play out as journeys toward what Plater describes as "functional community in the absence of any community at all" (191). Paranoid formalism, however, produces texts that simultaneously represent individual subjectivities and restrict possibilities for communalizing them (Rosenfeld 356). This dichotomy is evident in *Gravity's Rainbow*, where authoritarian political order is undermined but not overthrown by anarchic skepticism that supports "local ethico-political possibilities" for humans, animals, machines and their composites (Palmeri, OP 4-5). In America, community as well as individual identity is agitated in the flux of variegated origins (Heon 154). At least dreams and visions of community in *Mason & Dixon* appear as ethical flashes through the darkness of Pynchon's dystopias. Concentrating self-centered fears of conspiracy, even the endless quest for and transitory hope of community allow individuals to experience humane connection and collectivity.

If the pursuit of viable, unrestricted community is essential to Pynchon's plots (Strandberg 108), the images of community in *Mason & Dixon* may retrospectively inform previous representations. The images suggest that human groups spontaneously adopt collective values resistant to conventional public powers (Copestake 196) but receptive to private ethical motives rooted in family and neighborhood (Thoreen 57, n.8). Even Dixon's antagonist Whike imagines surveyors to be "'the Conscience of the Community'" (M&D 234) when their surface calculations guide underground Pioneers. In this metaphor, surveyors and miners work together when an institution galvanizes them into group action. But on the American Line, Mason compares the surveying party, "'our Royal Commission, and our battery of costly Instruments'" to "'Fleas in the Flea Circus'" (608), trivializing the machines, secret motives and invisible motivators that represent

institutions careless of individual existence and community aims. Outside Randwick Church, "Neighbor Folk of all conditions lined the route" to cheer the progress of a giant cheese (168), but in America on the New Castle Road, "Farmers . . . glare" as the Line-equipment wagon passes (460). Comedy socializes audiences by catering not to "individual appetites" but to "the needs of the community" (Palmeri, SN 10). The big cheese, a satisfying exhibition of Old-World domestic craft, unites a community while the sector, a surveying instrument, scientifically projects institutional powers into the New World to segment communities and separate individuals. Through such analogies, *Mason & Dixon* critiques Enlightenment compacts and methods that idealistically endorse yet practically frustrate political change, social transformation, individual fulfillment and communal transcendence.

### 3: Enslaving America: Death, Money and the Word

Pynchon depicts pre-Revolutionary America as a dysfunctional "community striving towards its own delusions of universality and imperialism" (Smith 193), its institutionally manipulated factions and even whole colonies of victims in social and military conflict. Strife is precipitated by money as well as by slavery and servile ignorance manifested in racism and sexism. White Americans, Captain Zhang decries, do not "'even yet know,—may never know,—that they are Slaves'" (M&D 615). Bandit/patriot Volcanoe labels the contractual-tool Mason "'a Slave'": "'Someone owns you, Sir. He pays for your Meals and Lodging. He lends you out to others'" (406). Affecting uninvolved objectivity, scientists seem ready made as "'the simple Tools of others,'" Dixon admits (669). Chained by "'a Brother-immigrant, who more than any should have known better than to manacle another such,'" Thomas Cresap feels the "'Shame'" of reciprocal slave immorality (640). His captivity narrative diagnoses slavery as a social disease of commerce communicable through civil riot. Eliza Fields's capture accentuates "the surprizing Frailness of secular Life," which Christianity supposedly strengthens against "turns of Fortune in the given World" fraught with random violence and death. Eliza is "obliged to live through again, something she thought she, thought all her Community, had transcended": slavery (512). In every colony, says Dixon, "'Slave-owners and Torturers'" are "'murdering and dispossessing thousands untallied, the innocent of the World'"; and he asks Mason, "'shall we find all the World Tyrants and Slaves? America was the one place we should *not* have found them'" (692–93). Lévi-Strauss observes that "the degree of slavery is a function of the finished character of the given society" (182), and Louis Menand calls

*Mason & Dixon* "a *Tristes Tropiques* of North American civilization," or fiction as cultural anthropology (25; cf. Mattessich 5, 7). Because imperialism represses women, suppresses Native Americans, enslaves Africans and divides European colonists, few characters reach communal accord.

Instead, war panic and genocidal bloodletting victimize the colonial powerless. For example, a frontier mob from Paxton, Pennsylvania, massacres Native Americans jailed in Lancaster (M&D 304). Rooted in fear and nurtured by race hatred, this attack implies genocide, not political protest or self-defense ("Paxton Boys' Uprising"). A petition the Paxtonians submitted to colonial politicians listed among their grievances the lack of "rewards for Indian scalps" as a military oversight. Not offering such bounties "damped the spirits of many brave men" willing to kill Indians for pay (Remonstrance 2.120). Civilized whites thus "become the very savages of their own worst Dreams" (M&D 301; cf. Burns 7). Pynchon views American colonial wars on indigenous tribes as "the imposition of a culture valuing analysis and differentiation on a culture that valued unity and integration" (Letter 240). Even conversion to Christianity fails to make Native Americans the spiritual or cultural equals of their colonial oppressors. Trapped "between the warring sides" during the Seven-Years' conflict, the Indian victims are "distrusted by ev'ryone," yet merely want the community life of Christian converts (M&D 306). Wrenched from nature, tribe, homeland and religion, survivors arrive in Philadelphia coincidentally with Mason, Dixon and their commission to impose boundary lines that settle European charter quarrels.

Caring for those refugees are "Moravians and Quakers" (306) who resemble "the German farmers of Lancaster" ennobled in Cherrycoke's *Spiritual Day-Book*: "truly, literally *Good People*, escap'd from a Hell we in our small tended Quotidian may but try to imagine." These pogrom survivors, like the Paxton Boys' victims, seek "'new Life in Christ'" through community (481). The emigres escape deadly religious persecution in Europe only to witness genocidal violence in America. Free only to become communities of victims, neither Christian immigrants nor Indian converts are rescued by mortal or heavenly intercession. Thus *Mason & Dixon* forecasts the modern victimization *V.* and *Gravity's Rainbow* detail. Comparing immigrant and Christian-Indian victims foreshadows the "collective enterprise" Bernard Williams calls modern evil (46), the ecological waste, totalitarian bloodlust, large-scale monomania and institutional devaluation of personal experience, individual faith and common ethics that all stem from the "erosion of community" (Dewey 118). *Mason & Dixon* thus tests the optimistic American notion that individual and communal actions determine the

national future (Burns 22). Parallel images of Native-American and European Christians targeted for massacre and exile represent the discriminatory, coercive, institutionally enforced commodification of an autonomous Preterite—native, poor or working-class—into religio-political products: converts, slaves or corpses.

Analogous victimization confirms that the American ideal of liberal religious democracy is a dangerous confusion of religious intent with imperialistic political purpose. In a similar vein, Ralph Schroeder discusses Max Weber's apprehension about how citizens could live free in an American "mass democracy," since its atomizing emphasis on individuality furthered an incompatible dependence on political bureaucracy rather than the pursuit of inspirational, charismatic leadership (165). To render characters who rarely succeed "in forming themselves as local ethical and political agents" (Palmeri, OP 38), Pynchon lampoons cultish individuality. Plumbing victimization's American depths, *Mason & Dixon* shows the Enlightenment rationalizing of capitalist colonization behind an agenda of religious conversion. Dixon meets "an ecclesiastical-looking Personage" who claims that, after "'a generation, or two,'" Americans will have "'grown disenchanted enough'" to cause Christ's "'return to the Hearts of His own'" (M&D 568). The anonymous preacher refocuses the Puritan vision of America as the province of salvation for an Elect. In *Gravity's Rainbow*, Election is the American church costume of technological capitalism, the masquerade of a victim-making theocracy running on "[s]hit, money, and the Word" (28). Making a Sartrean exit, Peter Redzinger's Christ equivocates about His return: "'You must live ever in that Expectation'" (M&D 480). One of Cherrycoke's *Undeliver'd Sermons* touts transcendental skepticism as faith: "Doubt is of the essence of Christ. . . . The final pure Christ is pure uncertainty" (511). However, Cherrycoke also resolutely describes America as the place where God reenters "Human affairs" to revise "all the wistful Fictions necessary to the childhood of a species" (353) into a political text of total cultural dominion and complete social control.

The myths of the life of Jesus and the Garden of Eden both undergo totalitarian revision in the novel. George Tinker comments on discrepancies in this warlike iconography of nullification, "Even Jesus, the most important culture hero of America, has become a conqueror in Western story telling" (qtd. in Weaver 16). Pynchon salts Cherrycoke's social assertions about American Protestant integrity with vanquishing terms of democratized, capitalized faith. The Rev<sup>d</sup> Cherrycoke extols the virtues of American revivalist Protestantism, "'The New Religion,'" as impervious to impious confidence men because "'enough people had shar'd the experience'" of the New



World's democratic oversoul (M&D 261). Establishing spiritual democracy's American lodgment, humble preterite masses overwhelm "'scoundrels'" who preach "'falsely for purposes of Commerce, an Awakening.'" Nevertheless, the class rank and political connections of "'Burghers and Churchfolk'" endow Christianity with worldly clout. Cherrycoke's religiosity presumes "'the Holy Ghost, conducting its own Settlement of America'" (261). Another force for conquest and colonialism, crucified, transfigured Christ's absence in Godhead becomes one more imperial, institutional presence in America.

Colonial America harbors neither New Canaan, a benevolent rural haven, nor New Jerusalem, an eleemosynary urban sanctum. Padre Zarpazo complains, "'Faith is no longer willingly bestow'd upon Authority, either religious or secular.'" "'America is perplexing'" in its heresies of power (522). Zarpazo's alter ego, Captain Zhang, finds "in America . . . little *but* Faith" confused by sects, evangelists, congregations and official apostasy (543). Cherrycoke admits to "'perfecting a *parsonical Disguise* . . . in the service of an Impersonation that never took more than a Handful of actor's tricks'" (8). In *Mason & Dixon*, capitalism seals breaches of authority between faith and foolery or church and state. "Spiritual matters," Pynchon writes elsewhere of colonial Philadelphia, "were not quite as immediate as material ones, like productivity" (DS 3); and a Philadelphian in *Mason & Dixon* remarks, "'Religious bodies here cannot be distinguish'd from Political Factions'" (293). Capitalism establishes common social-religious ground; Calvinist and Quaker spiritualities merge into a politically correct religious commodity in Philadelphia, where "intense sermonizing" fills streets on which evangelical sectarians compete "for a share of this Population suddenly rous'd into Christliness" (260-61). The city welcomes religious competition, another political or business enterprise signifying sophistic materialism. Like Emerson's Nature, America's spiritual democracy is always becoming but never completes itself except in commercially competitive politicking and religiosity. Aware of "something styling itself 'America,' coming into being, ripening" (405), Mason "'ascended, descended, even condescended'" there, but never "'*trans*-cended a blessèd thing'" (746)—Pynchon's "'darker' Emersonian" spin (Bell xvi). With no apology to Joel Barlow's *Columbiad*, Tox's *Pennsylvaniad* asks, "'Holy Experiment! O where be Thou, / Where be thy hopes, thy fears, thy terrors now?'" (489). Contaminated by capitalism, American spiritual democracy remains promissory rather than practical, symbolically redemptive rather than truly salvific, exploited or dominated by rather than ethereally advanced through politics.

Instead of progressively transforming individuals or transcending secular communities, contentious segments of pre-Revolutionary American society regress from Enlightenment caste system to medieval feudalism. Pynchon's "conflation—peculiarly American, perhaps—of spatial and temporal" settings "manages to be supremely and elegantly congenial to the intellect at the same time that it frustrates logic in its less imaginative forms" (Coward 350). Cherrycoke reads American slavery as an "ancient," horrific romance of "Lords and Serfs" or "Knights and Castles" for his *Spiritual Day-Book* (M&D 275). In contrast, the humane Dixon discerns no parallel in the "thatch'd and benevolent-romance of serfdom" with "the iron Criminality" of African slavery (347). However, Pynchon implies economic similitude: diligent slavers of every sort and era transmute iron crime into golden opportunity. Trekking the backwoods to "'the infamous Lepton Ridotto'" (410), Wade LeSpark, the frame story's arms tycoon, tours an "Iron-Plantation" on which anonymous workers, supported by invisible slaves, manufacture rifles. The Tartarean estate shows this "Merchant of Purposeful Explosion" (105) a profiteering way "the world might be . . . nothing but this Simplicity" (411). Aristocratic nostalgia for peer-and-peasant innocence recurs at Johnson Castle (531–33), where Captain Zhang and Eliza Fields experience a feudal-colonial Americanization of Max Weber's *Normierung*, the total rationalization of society in displays of systematically enforced ethics, replicated values and mandated standards (Habermas 219). Weber surmised that technologized consumer capitalism might cause the "'external uniformity of life-style'" (qtd. in Schroeder 168) suggested in Pynchon's medievalizing of colonial America. Johnson's Native-American serfs are subjugated not by religious conversion or armed force but through social organization.

Adopting the ruling-noble and laboring-commoner components from European models, American feudalism institutionalizes socioeconomic communities of human objects. Enlightenment strides in theoretical and practical science make throwback feudal oppression more industrial than medieval, partaking less of social ordering than of money changing. In another of *Mason & Dixon's* feudal-industrial scenes, Jonas Everybeet, the surveying party's Quartz-scryer, tells of the Pennsylvania Indians' "'secret Lead Mines,'" which yield "'Perfect Spheres of Lead ore'" (547). Human devastation matches ecological rapine when industrial production exacts its price in downtrodden workers' bad health. The "Fumes and Dust" cause miners "a number of Ailments, from chronick Melancholy to haunting without Mercy, to early Death" (548). Conditioned to psychotic depression by lead poisoning, the peasant Indians victimize themselves, an innovation on

Cresap's slave-by-slave chaining. Indian lead-miner, agricultural serf, flintlock-foundry prole: all are slaves, "embodiments of cognitive-instrumental rationality," human commodities subsisting "in a domain of cultural reproduction . . . wholly tailored to the pragmatic" (Habermas 354). *Mason & Dixon* rejects any "metaphysical discourse or institutional practice" that objectifies people, and reinscribes the "agency of the subject and the discourse on values" (Jay 41) to connect individual emancipation with social-class progress.

*Mason & Dixon* reprises the person-as-thing presentations of female characters like Mélanie l'Heuremaudit in *V.* and Katje Borgesius in *Gravity's Rainbow* by portraying the social suppression and sexual repression of women as an enslaving strain of rationalized, capitalistic victimization. Impresario Itague defines *decadence* as "'a falling-away from what is human,'" dehumanization that bestows ruined values and abandoned qualities on "'inanimate objects and abstract theories'" (V 405). Reactive anthropomorphism, Fausto Majjstral confesses, signifies "a clear movement toward death or . . . non-humanity" (321). "True decadence," according to Christopher Ames, "is the loss of humanity manifested in mechanical sexuality" or in the "orgiastic exhaustion of sexual possibilities with machinelike indifference" (203). For Saar and Skirke, fetishistic characters assimilate the inanimate using "a technology of superimposition" (129). Object-making decadence robotizes human sexuality through artistically or politically camouflaged media: Mélanie's fatal ballet (V 412-14) and Katje's cinematic betrayal (GR 92-94, 113). In *Mason & Dixon*, the "clearest instance of such a medium is money" (McCarthy xxx), and one psychosexual set openly stages the morbid power-play of fetish capital.

Cape Town's "'Company Lodge'" (M&D 149), a combination madhouse and brothel, profits by necrophilic horrors of inanimate decadence (Sears 114-15). Conditioned to degradation and death like the Indians who mine Pennsylvania lead, the Dutch East India Company whores, "for their amusement," occasionally throw "a particularly disobedient employee [in]to a Madman's cell"; then, via a one-way mirror, the "gentlemen" customers "observe . . . the often quite unviewable *Rencontre*." Entertaining johns and whores alike, their sisters' murders also make the Cape prostitutes money. Abject male lunatics, evidently stars of the most popular, lucrative death-sex shows, act out the drive to rape and kill women, or "a greater, Oceanick Impulse, in which, report those who survive, it is unquestionably better not to be included" (152). The ocean image conveys a sociopath's predisposition to objectify and control a victim (Copestake 205). Likewise, for the unbridled capitalist, melding with the monetary inanimate signifies a perverse desire for total control (Burns 8). The

Company Lodge's snuff-peep show, then, dramatizes the same compulsion to capitalistic inanimateness that drove the Dutch and British to sail and chart barely negotiable seas, subdue remote tribes, and found Cape Town and Philadelphia. Mélanie and V. reduce intimacy to inanity that neither slakes desire nor nurtures love but causes death through objectification (V 410–11). The Line, says Captain Zhang in *Mason & Dixon*, is the mark of "'Bad History'" (615); "alignment with the inanimate," hypothesizes V.'s narrator, "is the mark of a Bad Guy" (101). In *Mason & Dixon*, rationalizing institutional villains convert persons into things and communities into collections of things: congregations, constituencies, consumers, serfs, whores or, in pathologically decadent totalitarian representations, slaves and corpses.

Supplementing pay-per-view, antiwoman atrocities at the Dutch Company's bordello/asylum, Johanna Vroom's story shows that gender-image capital socially rationalizes less mortal sexual dramas. The Cape matron spins and spreads rumors about her nonexistent affair with Mason. Resulting gossip admits her to the colony's "adult life" (M&D 147), evidence that her misrepresentation of sexual adventuring thus has the calculated effect of "passing more and more into the public domain" (Steiner 77). Indeed, publicizing sexual liaisons is one of her peers' "multiple acts of sisterhood," but Johanna knows she is "an impostor," a private feeling with "its own thrill of shame" (M&D 147). Her public display and private denial of sexual freedom pervert the meaning of sisterhood, "the exhilaration of growth and self-discovery" in shared understanding (Steiner 140). Johanna's aggressive flirtations, Austra reports, also arouse some white male guests to impregnate female slaves so "[t]he baby, being fairer than its mother, will fetch more upon the Market'" (M&D 65). Institutional promises of "a life informed by reason" become lies in a society "deformed by capitalist modernization" (McCarthy xxxvii). Johanna's sexual tease urges miscegenation—a public disgrace in racist Cape Town—for her monetary gain. She profits from the exploitation of slave women and lives a sexual lie for the sake of racially exclusive notoriety.

The Cape's pretense of social shock at Johanna makes Sunday worship especially "turn lively at last, with smirks and stares and eye-avoidance, in full knowledge that ev'ryone knows ev'ryone else's secrets" (M&D 147). The patriarchal Cherrycoke deplures "'the Girls at the end of the world'" who only "'endure church all day Sunday'" to scout "'the Boundaries there to be o'erstepp'd'" (80). Johanna professes to envy those teases' "'reputations,'" since rumors of her faked adultery parallel her "'Churchly ideal'" with its inverted social self-image, the adventuress (87). The androgyne analogy of "forms, male and female," makes Emerson privy to "the richest informations"

of nature (40-41), and comedy of manners pivots on the illusory affair misinterpreted as social reality by gossip. Yet Johanna's farce requires no male lead, but only Mason as analog or slave-procreator. She performs "before the Faces of the Congregation" in a dumb show of abandon that, "within the Brass-bound mercilessness of Sunday" (M&D 147), religiously codifies conflicting sexual impulses as adulterous temptation and surrender (Booker 24-25). Gossip, the community dialogue on Johanna's false infidelity, carries tales to rationalize her individual desire for sexual and social dominance or submission.

Stig, the surveying party's "Merry Axman" (M&D 610), locates the origins of institutionally rationalized victimization in the New World's natural landscapes. He articulates the minisaga moral "'that the "new" Continent Europeans found, had been long attended, from its own ancient Days, by murder, slavery, and the poor fragments of a Magic irreparably broken'" (612). Stig rises out of "[t]he Frost eternal, the Whiteness abounding,'" from which "'very White'" immigrants emerge and "'impersonate Swedes'" so that northern peoples "'remain unmolested'" by colonizing southern imperialists (612-13). He counts himself among the "'few Emissaries . . . like sacrificial youths and maidens'" dispatched south "'into the Sin-laden World'" as "'a Corps of Intermediaries for Hire.'" His emphatic whiteness, "his Brow pale and trackless as an Arctic Shore," and his employability "'with some American Province'" (613) recall Blicero's pallor (Weisenburger, GRC 31) and possible posting to America after the Second World War (GR 722, 749). As hirelings, Stig and his fellow white youths seem martyrs sullied by capitalism, not a knightly bulwark against economic imperialists but their regimented mercenaries. Like the contracted Mason of Volcanoe's estimation and the slavish yet unaware Euro-Americans of Captain Zhang's description, Stig and the sacrificial northern youths are not heralds or envoys of freedom but serfs or slaves for money. "'Slavery is very old upon these shores,'" Zhang observes, with "'no Innocence upon the Practice'" (M&D 615-16). Murder, too, seems to be an "ancient" evil "that waited for [imperialists] and infected their Souls" in the American wilderness (347). Along with profitable murder on a scale from individual homicide to genocidal warfare, institutional and virtual slavery generates imperialist capital gains, not only polluting ancient America's magic but also promoting modern America's politics of fragmentation.

Stig's story marks Pynchon's second appropriation (the first was in *Vineland* [322]) of Leif Ericson's Norse American saga. "'Swedes have been here from the beginning,'" Stig says (M&D 611), and he provides a compressed Viking legend in his account of "'Thorfinn Karlsefni's settlement at Hop . . . at the mouth of one of the Rivers of Vineland'"

(633). Grandson of Greenland's original colonizer, father of the "first European born on the North American mainland," Thorfinn stars as the Icelandic-American Adam in Stig's pocket epic. *Karlsefni* means "promising boy," and Captain Thorfinn's talent as a sea trader bears out the sobriquet. His three ships fetched 130 colonists to Vineland circa 1004, nearly five hundred years ahead of Columbus's better-publicized triplet fleet. Their second summer, Thorfinn's band battled natives, probably the Eskimos' ancestors, whom the Scandinavians called *Skrællings* and regarded as dwarfish savages ("Thorfinn Karlsefni"; "Skrælling"). To Stig, this battle, the "first Act of American murder," signaled "the collapse of Vineland the Good," depositing a "residue of Dishonor before the Gods and Heroes [that] would never be scour'd away." Despairing survivors drifted to "Ireland, where they were captur'd and enslav'd" (M&D 634). With Norse sagas intricately embedded and telescoped in the narratives of *Vineland* and *Mason & Dixon*, each political subtext—America's authoritarianism in the twentieth century and its colonialism in the eighteenth—dissolves into Stig's "Tales of the Westward Escapes" (634). Both novels fracture traditional literary-historical representations of American discovery, exploration and colonization into evidence of "murder, slavery, and . . . a Magic irreparably broken."

An anachronic, allusive intertext of genius, Pynchon's Westward-escape tale stars "Rogues and Projectors and Fugitives." Like Profane, Oedipa and Slothrop before them, outcasts Mason and Dixon move "without pretext, no Christ, no Grail, no expectation beyond each Day's Turnings." These yo-yoing agonists, displaced and unredeemed, paranoid and solipsistic escapees pursuing absurd, antichivalric quests for some transcendent truth's salvation, Wester on, "haunted by Ghosts," in Stig's words, "more material, less merciful, than" spirits of *Skrælling* dead (634). At the novel's climax, some trademark Pynchon binaries from Mason's perspective evoke these lurking malevolences as the agents of "Murdering." In their paradoxical materiality, these "Spirits . . . dwell a little over the Line between the Day and its annihilation, between the number'd and the unimagi'd,—between common safety and Ruin ever solitary" (769). Unknowable, unidentifiable, their agencies emanate from outside the common cycle of light and dark or the rarefied concepts of mathematics, science and metaphysics. The shades turn persons into things, the most decadent act of absolute victimization. Transported to the New World, Old-World institutions represent Stig's spirits of murder and ruin. Through the rationalizing acts of their representation, business and the military colonize, buy, sell, rape, kill, shackle or cast out, impelling a diaspora of the disenfranchised, the enslaved and the doomed.

#### 4: Partying in America: Town and Country, Garden and Serpent

As clearly as appropriated Norse saga and as readily as parodied Enlightenment political philosophy, descriptions of villages in *Mason & Dixon* intertwine the diaspora narratives of institutional victims. Opposing dead facts from rationalizing establishments, villages represent community with contradictory but humanizing details of fragile centers, margins, social entailments and psychological entanglements. In a parable of imperialism, militarism and coopting industrialization, "the Golden Valley," Pynchon shows how capitalism institutionalizes proprietary village husbandry. Narrated mainly from the omniscient perspective, the Golden Valley parable illustrates how community-wide greed costs workers their freedom and happiness. "Living in a Paradise," weavers nevertheless "chose to enact a Purgatory," to keep "new Mill-Money flowing," and to unite not in a protective labor union but as a capitalistic "League," founded on "Envy, Spite, and Vendetta," which maintain "the Equilibrium of Meanness and Stultification" (M&D 207). In this entropic equilibrium, the weavers' religious, humanistic and economic pastoralism slides into capitalized inertia. Greed stunts their spiritual awareness, blunts their political action and enslaves their community economically.

To Golden Valley native Mason, this parable moralizes the rationalization of a preindustrial rural Eden into an industrial wasteland. Moreover, military occupation supports capitalistic greed. "I was expell'd from Paradise," Mason declares, "'by Wolfe and his Regiment'" (313). Mason damns the clothiers, curses their mills, and describes the decline of community in theatrical analogies and biblical stereotypes, dramatizing the foundational Western myth of innocence and corruption in commercial and political terms: "'what I had imagin'd a Paradise prov[ed] instead but the brightly illustrated front of the Arras'" (313). (This backdrop image ironically recalls the omniscient narrator's description of "*The Rebel Weaver* . . . a light-hearted account of the late battles" in the Golden Valley, involving "nothing more troubling sentimentally, than the comick misunderstandings of an Italian Opera" [292].) Mason likens Wolfe's "'contempt'" for rebel weavers to Braddock's fearful hatred of "'American Indians, — treacherous Natives, disrespectful, rebellious, waiting in Ambuscado'" (501). In America he glimpses again "the Paradise once denied him by the Mills" (679), but this vision, like his Golden Valley recollections, invariably fixes on the imperialistic cover-ups by militarized capitalism that would hide repression from captive colonial audiences.

Vehicles of ultra-aggressive capitalism, battleships and merchantmen obscure the humanity of villages. Vessel-village analogies

frame victims literally inside ships of the line and packets, instruments of imperialism that collect and pervert humanity (Yudice 214–15). Dieter, a ghostly German soldier looking to desert, compares French warships straddling British sea lanes to “village ne’er-do-wells hoping for a fight” (M&D 161). Aboard the frigate *Seahorse*, a village complete with “Idiots” and “Madmen” (52), Jack “Fingers” Soames “enjoys [his] solitude . . . amid, but not of, a floating Village of others . . . busy living lives he’s no desire to enter.” Like all Pynchon’s isolates, Soames “obey[s] commands Outer and Inner” alone (53). Meanwhile, the crew prepares to celebrate the “Grand Event” of an equatorial crossing, fussing “like a Village-ful of housewives” (55). Unlike vessels of war and wealth, villages offer spiritual sanctuary. Displaced in the American West, Cresap seems resigned to “Village life” (641). “God dwells there? At the Horizon?”: with this ontological query, Mason confronts Native-American confidence in human community’s impalpable validity and in nature’s preeminent rarities. Indian delegates to the Euro-American crew indicate their “Spirit Village” with a communal “gesture, straight out the Line, West” (651). Inspired by this biospheric faith, Dixon gives Inner-Earthers a god, “like that of the Iroquois, [who] lives at their Horizon” (740). Just as Rilke’s “terrifying” angel “serenely disdains / to annihilate” its awed representors (151), remote deities keep a natural distance but influence tribe and individual in and through transient mortal community.

For his part, Mason misunderstands ancient tribalism but anticipates modern suburban malaise. He decries London “as a preeminent author of Madness” induced locally in “the hundred Villages strewn” along the Thames and exported to “the wide World beyond” (M&D 117). Pynchon reiterates the theme of exporting madness on “the unpromising Streets of Falmouth, a Town dedicated to Swift Communication” (247), and then in Philadelphia, “Danger’s own Home-Port,” which incites “fatal failures of judgment.” Sailing to Ben Franklin’s city, Mason and Dixon feel “reach’d out to” by colonial urbanism that will “swallow one by one their Oceanick Degrees of freedom” (258). Underscoring exported madness and unnatural consumption, Pynchon draws Philadelphia as a rationalized organism, a living institution. The colonial hub sprawls, “a-hammering and brick-laying itself together,” and “Swift Communication” through its streets licenses “the unforeseen coalescences of Sailors and Citizens” who “sing Liberty and wreak Mischief” (292; cf. Seed 93–94). Pynchon also compares colonial Philadelphia to a “high-output machine, materials and labor going in, goods and services coming out, traffic inside flowing briskly about a grid of regular city blocks” instead of London’s “urban mazework” (DS 3). An urban maze institutionalizes madness and



consumes freedom while public havoc fosters, however dubiously, democratic community.

In cities, Tox says, “‘Affliction ever reigns’” (M&D 684), and urban settings seem “‘Gothickal Structures’” to Mason (559). All cities, Cherrycoke declares, “begin upon the day the Walls of the Shambles go up, to screen away Blood and Blood-letting, Animals’ Cries, Smells and Soil, from Residents already grown fragile before Country Realities” (289). A synecdochic institution, the slaughterhouse hides meat processing as work—screams, butchery, entrails—from the most economically likely eaters of meat as product. If urbanization positions economically empowered (and disempowered) citizens geographically, then locale represents class status, and locative economics decode the City Semiotic. John Frow points out that, in *The Conditions of the Working Class in England* (1844), Engels investigates industrialism by studying businesses, residences and thoroughfares as relational sets of signifiers. In this text of the city, citizens become points on an urban grid or minutiae in its maze of streets. Urbanites polarize themselves, grasping their existence as either universal bourgeois affirmation or individual proletarian victimization (Frow 52–53). In *Mason & Dixon*, a polemical “German of Mystickal Toilette” flays urban capitalists: “‘Their Cities allow them Folly . . . that daily Living upon the Frontier will not forgive. They feed one another’s Pretenses, live upon borrow’d Money as borrow’d Time’” (344). European city-living fosters usury, but the wild American frontier promotes ethical community based on individual effort (Cohen 284). These city-country and vessel-village comparisons critique Age-of-Reason capitalism by enacting, on colonial-era urban and rural sets, Protestant and Catholic religiosity, militaristic Enlightenment civilizing and Gothic socialism.

Astronomer Mason and surveyor Dixon fittingly characterize Pynchon’s fictive lenses for reading city- and landscapes. Urban-rural oppositions mark the astronomer and the surveyor as both complementary characters and historical personages. Defoe and Fielding pioneered this method of characterization as a “new kind of historical or biographical fiction,” a mimetic discourse enacting stereotype, fact and allegory (Scholes and Kellogg 86–87). Because this concoction of characterizations also features commentary “upon the art of storytelling” (Kakutani B1), it annotates as well as enacts its own representation. Dixon in the wilderness dreams of a “‘Sylvan Philadelphia’” for the American West, “‘busy, prospering, sacred’” (M&D 608) and unaccountably pastoral, while Mason broods on an eternally disparate “‘Interior’” of wilderness without restraint. Further denaturalizing Dixon’s bucolic Philadelphia, Mason envisions “‘an Anti-City’” as the metropolis of the Line commissioners’ civilizing urbanity:

“some concentration of Fate,—some final condition of Abandonment, —wherein all are unredeemably alone and at Hazard as deep as their souls may bear,” a marooned citizenry of “lost Creatures” (608–09), undone by death and mired in barbarism. Before reembarking for England, Mason sees America’s megalopolitan future, and his urban paranoia grows apace. He imagines Baltimore’s avenues as whirling “Spokes of a Giant Wheel, whose Convergence or Hub, beyond some disputable Prelude to Radiance, he cannot make out” (700)—intimations of a revelation without the final illumination of an understandable communiqué. The science of astronomy tolerably, even congenially, allows for the limits of human observation and knowledge, yet failures of perception tantalize and anger Mason. In the “exceptional Clarity of the Air” in Ulster, he senses an “optickal Tension among the Stars, that seem’d ever just about to break radiantly thro’” (726). Maestro of the truncated revelation, Pynchon citifies Mason’s frustration and paranoia into an urban nightmare.

First, in the American wilderness, Mason sees scattered “Monoliths” that stimulate phantasms. These stones, “likenesses neither of Gods, nor of men,” represent “dead or sleeping” prehistoric “Guardians” (662). Next, returned to institutional failure in Britain, Mason finds “a sudden Visto of Obelisks” at Pennycomequick Manor. He ponders the camouflaging “innocence” of these stones, which, “in less certain Light, at a more problematick time of day,” portend communication, seem “almost able to speak” (722). (Images of communicative sentience in rock, “a face on ev’ry mountainside, / And a Soul in ev’ry stone,” echo William Slothrop’s apocalyptic benediction in *Gravity’s Rainbow* [760].) Then the paranoid astronomer dreams of “a night-time City” of druidic “monuments.” Like the ancient architects of Stonehenge, the bad-dream builders of Mason’s “City in Chaos” stand unmoved by the communal sacrifice of “poor fugitives who now scurried among” the monoliths, “Night’s Standing-Stones . . . seeking their brute impenetrability for cover” (M&D 749). At last, Mason flees the “social Webwork” (768) of his British failures, yo-yoing back to America for another somnambulistic glance at transhistorical urbanism, “one single dark extended Petroglyph” ominous with truncated revelation: “writing [appears] on some of the Structures, but Mason cannot read it. Does not yet know it is writing” (771). A City Semiotic, Philadelphia reads initially like London, the City Schizophrenic. Each memorial to “unlit Anarchy” (749) reads finally as that municipality of facelessness and dread, the City Chaotic.

While this terminus incorporates bits of eighteenth-century Philadelphia and London, omniscient narration further encrypts Mason’s City Chaotic with signs of “the City Paranoiac”—London again, under

the twentieth-century blitz (GR 172). Uncertain human relations, persistent error and enforced mindlessness dissolve to a penumbrous urban exterior, "the lights too few, the differences between friend and enemy not always clear, and Mistakes a penny a Bushel. Reflection upon any Topick is an unforgivable Lapse, out here where at any moment Death may come whistling in from the Dark" (M&D 750). Through *Mason & Dixon's* Augustan artifice, the 'gazer's dream perspective modifies urban reminiscences of *Gravity's Rainbow*. Because the Nazi V-2 rises above Earth's atmosphere, its victims suffer death from the dark of space, but, because the rocket travels faster than sound, they do not hear it whistling. Its scream crosses the sky after its detonation roars. Its blast, prophesied in Slothropian hymn, brings "the Towers low" and extirpates "the last poor Pret'rite one" (GR 760). Urban parallels here systematize cities into grids and mazes, representational interchanges of "social and subjective complexity" (Mitchell 15), a political effect of Pynchon's art of interconnection. Frow weighs the importance of ideology in such representation: "Every use of discourse is at once a judgment about its relation to dominant forms of power and either an assent or a resistance to this relation" (62).

To resist rationalizing urban ideologies, Pynchon weaves piecemeal an emotive fabric of social, religious and political imagery that idealizes community in a romance of village possibilities. Cherrycoke evokes the solace of togetherness through Dixon's local, the Jolly Pitman, where working-class travelers "seek refuge from a Nightfall pass'd alone" (M&D 229). On his way to embark for America, Dixon ships out with Mr. Snow, a crewman aboard the fog-bound collier *Mary and Meg*, who addresses "Forces invisible" on behalf of "'poor peaceable Folk lost in this uncommon Fret'" (243-44). The quaintly Dickensian phrasing fits Pynchon's salt-of-the-earth characters, colonial and aboriginal alike, impoverished villagers and peasants in the Old World, immigrant and native displaced persons in the New. Mason recalls the symbolism of Christian communion, which represents the faith that grounds and embodies Western community spirit. His father "believes that bread is alive" (204). Assistant baker and unscientific youth Mason kneads a "pale mass seething with live resistance,—hungry peoples' invention," which staves off literal starvation by sustaining mortal bodies, and which, as "a Succedaneum for Our Lord's own Flesh" (205), offers spiritual sustenance by redeeming immortal souls. This urban semiology includes Mason's recollected church, an institution that rationalizes the presentation of spiritual-symbol food to the masses, and Cherrycoke's slaughterhouse, an institution that rationalizes the production of flesh for easeful consumption by the privileged.

Communal semiosis aside, "human decency, like parental love, can always be taken for granted" by power hucksters (Pynchon, F xxv). The Line party exemplifies a community working under pressure to rationalize the aims of privileging institutions. Mason reads it as Axmen, teamsters and "'any number of Refugees'" dispatched and displaced by "'Proprietors, and their Provincial Governments as well'" (426). Thinking of the party's breakup, he wonders, "'what is to become of this rolling Gypsy village,'" to whose inhabitants belongs the Line's "'true Drama'" (610). A community working to finish the Line and fulfill its commission, the "faithful Core" (682) subsists by and labors for Old-World powers. The party instinctively lives out the Line's dividing drama while the class-pretentious Mason founders. To Elizabeth Jane Wall Hinds, Mason's characterization represents a "newly public psychology" in the Augustan Age. His bifurcated middle-class personality not only divulges a social identity shaped by "the values of the market world" but also conceals a private self riddled with "anxieties born of straddling . . . class and social boundaries" (194-95). Dixon knows "Mason cannot admit" that a "Class problem" stalls his Royal-Society advancement, his aspiration to the highest scientific rank. "'Astronomers Royal are suppos'd to be social upstarts,'" Mason fumes (M&D 438). Embittering failures identify the "socially stumbling Philosopher-Fool" (717) who marked the American Line.

On the moral *éclat* of victims and the ethical potential of community, the novel's Line-party subplot equivocates. On the one hand, through Mason's American experience, Pynchon depicts victimization as the rejection of the working class and the exclusion of classless others (Foucault 16) such as refugees and gypsies. The American view intimates that "shared responsibility" accommodates individuals' cooperative skills in a community (McKnight 89) in spite of work hazards or employers' purposes. Indeed, Charles Clerc interprets the Line party as an exemplary community of civil rules and mutual esteem (101). On the other hand, through Mason's British perspective, Pynchon insinuates complicity between imperial institutions and colonial workers. This view hints that the collective skills of communitarian toilers accomplish dangerous work to achieve imperialistic goals. Lacking social or political influence, these wage slaves enrich and empower their absent masters. Here Pynchon's equivocal prose renders preterition for pay, presenting the proverbially paranoid "creatures" and invisible "Master" of *Gravity's Rainbow* (237, 241, 263, 292) *Mason & Dixon* style.

To the mechanical duck, Dixon explains cutting the visto as "'what on our planet is styl'd, 'work'''" (M&D 666). But Captain Zhang protests that the project enacts imperial will: "'Someone wants your

Visto. Not your Line, nor the Boundary it defines. Those are but a Pretext for the actual clear'd straight Track'" (601). Therefore, whatever community its subversive carnival ephemerally signifies, the Line party acts as an extension of invisible commissioners and of the remote, possessive, imperial institutions those commissioners in turn represent. "Allowing community to vent accumulated social pressures in a licensed transgression, a contained subversion, carnival generally helps preserve the status quo"; so Pynchon underscores "the authority of institutions and forms" that organize and motivate the Line party (Palmeri, SN 8). At the same time, the party rationalizes political expediency through common labor and human as well as scientific instrumentality. The "last Cadre" of the disintegrating party "will belong again to . . . Lords" whose institutional "Interests" in the Line "must ever enjoy Priority" (M&D 683) over working-class interpretations of the Line drama. Utilitarian precedence stems from the Line-party members' "willingness to work cheap—and to be sold out, again and again" (Pynchon, F ix). Their visto-chopping is the absolute rationalization of nature (Berressem, SRP 1). From Mason's realistic perspective, images of institutional enterprise both reiterate and undercut the simple values of the impromptu, refugee-gypsy caravan community featured by his more romantic stargazer's Line-party analogies. Nonetheless, the Line party enacts ownership and acts for profit, numbering unreachable but mindful lords with astronomer, surveyor and workers.

Man-machine analogies unite lords, Line and party. The same imperial commission that musters the Line party eventually disbands this temporary assembly of institutional laborers, a set of cogs in the "Engine" of colonialism, "whose higher Assembly and indeed Purpose" remain veiled if not invisible (683). Astronomer, surveyor and workers constitute the drive train of a "'Visto-Engine,'" in Dixon's metaphor (666). The slave trader whom Dixon whips praises nonhuman and dehumanized motors: "'Give me Engines, for *they* have no feelings of injustice,—sometimes they don't exist, either, so I have to invent what I need'" (697) by buying, driving and selling more slaves. Sugar, says a Quaker, smacks of the "'sweetness of immorality and corruption . . . bought as it is with the lives of African slaves, untallied black lives broken upon the greedy engines of the Barbadoes'" (329). The dying Mason tries to reveal "'a great single Engine, the size of a Continent'" (772), a double figure of the United States and slavery, the institution that eventually sundered political unity.

Foucault argues that colonization mobilizes spare citizenry as flunkies and proxies, "cadres, administrative functionaries, as tools of surveillance and control," who victimize natives according to any "rigid racist ideology" intrinsic in the institutions that such utilitarian overseers

represent (17). Through Dixon, Pynchon articulates the Line party's de facto suppression of Native Americans. Cutting the vista sends a threatening message—a "Communication," in Augustan parlance—to the human community in nature: "'As you see what we may do to Trees, and how little we care,—imagine how little we care for Indians, and what we are prepar'd to do to you. . . . We might make thro' your Nations an Avenue of Ruin, terrible as the Path of a Whirl-Wind'" (M&D 679). Hutcheon observes that first-person plural pronouns, "shifters" or context-bound "empty signs," are made meaningful through transformations "of subject and object identities and their construction in and by language" (136–37). Dixon's "we" gathers into the Line party not only Dixon himself, Mason and the workers but also the distant European lords and absent colonial proprietors, who represent institutional power and rationalizing will. Lords and party run mechanically, "'in blind obedience to some ancient Coercion, long expir'd, or in witting Complicity with it,'" Captain Zhang believes (M&D 601). Similarly, a materially overmastering "human elite" in *Gravity's Rainbow* stage the Second World War to test technology (GR 521). Not malignant gods or capricious machines but human will caused that global slaughter, "the real business" of which was "buying and selling" in "a celebration of markets" (105). Finally, *Mason & Dixon's* perspectives represent the Line party as hirelings pieced into marginal otherness, instrumental victims of institutional rationalization, whose "race, class, gender, national or geographical position" seems empty individuation (Jay 47). Equivocally representing the party as an ad hoc community, Pynchon recuperates group humanity to oppose, haphazardly, such devaluation.

Just as he renders the Line party through characters' perspectives, Pynchon produces the colonized island of St. Helena (later the site of Napoleon's exile) through characters' diverging discourses on economics, politics and religion. The population center, St. James's Town, is a minuscule community that "clings to the edge of an interior" conceived as "part of the Other World" (M&D 107). Interfacing commercial civilization and wilderness, St. James's Town resembles an American frontier village. Mason perceives each barely civilizing border habitation through the lens of his class consciousness, a microscopic social view contrasting with the telescopic cosmic perspective his profession encourages. At Sandy Bay, on St. Helena's violent windward side, he finds "'vigilant Folly'" without even the modicum of "'Sobriety'" that "'Commerce'" requires but these settlements dismiss. St. James's Town and Sandy Bay thus represent to Mason "'two distinct nations, in a state of mutual mistrust'" (160). Ironically complementing this illiberal perception is rival astronomer Nevil

Maskelyne, who, Mason grouses, becomes Astronomer Royal through class connections (436–37). Maskelyne's social denigration of St. Helena is more prejudicial than Mason's economic gripe. The "true Extent" of St. James's Town is "Mazy as an European city," he says, with "no end of corners yet to be turn'd" (126), a colonized maze he calls "the Metropolis" of "Squalor" (128). Through story and image, this doubling of perspectives may offer readers meaning, but it can also confuse representation with characters' "misunderstanding, error, or downright falsehood" (Mitchell 12–13), impediments to truth prominent in Mason's and Maskelyne's viewpoints.

From inside Cherrycoke's frame tale, a more intricate double-perspective narration of St. Helena begins with a colony-theater analogy. Citizens figure as a "little traveling Stage-Troupe," and colonizing as "Performance" (M&D 133). A wider perspective extends the analogy between actor and colonist, performance and colonization into the celestial, broadening the political context from theatrical to cosmological. Omniscient narration transforms the colony into a "Plantation, sent out years since by its metropolitan Planet, which will remain invisible for years indeterminate before revealing itself and acquiring a Name, till then this place [St. Helena] must serve as an *Aide-Mémoire*, a Representation of Home" (133). This analogy unfolds into a configuration countering "the Enlightenment *episteme*" that regulates "perceptual freedom," the comparison ranging "from the personal to the geopolitical to the cosmic" (Cowart 353). Key reflexive iterations—stage and performance, plantation and planet, colony and home—connect in characters' exertions "to think independently . . . in terms divorced from their age" of incipient institutional rationalizing (353). "Representation" in the drama-colony analogy means rhetorical or poetical tagging, which, in the planet-plantation analogy, recovers the ideology and irony of colonizing "Home," the locative sign of security and origin. Pynchon rationalizes imperialistic, institutional discourse as quasireligious and pseudoscientific; *colonization* and *colony* become mnemonic nominals in a melodrama about hometown, homestead, homeplace or homeworld.

As the drama-colony and planet-plantation analogies dovetail, community "may show itself most powerfully in the lack of community" (Brooks 18), that is, as equivocal absence represented in narrative discourses as societal presence. Discovered by victimized cultures, theorized by disenfranchised astronomers, and observed at last by sanctioned stargazers (M&D 769), Uranus—also, like St. Helena, "invisible for years indeterminate before revealing itself and acquiring a Name"—orbits enigmatically in *Mason & Dixon*. In the Westering

conclusion, the omniscient narrator mentions two provisional names with approbated resonances of their own, the Georgian and Herschel, that give way to the “official” name of “the new Planet” (708). From a rationalizing, institutional perspective, before European imperialists discovered Uranus and named away its invisibility, the planet did not exist; likewise, before European colonists settled its anonymity, importing slaves to carve out a plantation, St. Helena was not home. Like the theater-war analogy that runs through *Gravity’s Rainbow*, the planet-colony analogy in *Mason & Dixon* represents Pynchon’s satirical rationalization of imperialism, institutionalism and victimization as a deadly melodrama of control.

These merging comparative representations score *Mason & Dixon*’s characterized and omniscient perspectives, which dramatize Pynchon’s discursive turns on fictional realism and historical fact. Characterized and omniscient narrators may alienate hardcore realists, but such blended storytelling sagacity revives “the power of the great commentators” like Cervantes, Thackeray and Dickens. Identification with characterized perspectives and omniscient perceptions enlarges a novel’s scope, so readers may enjoy rhetorical flamboyance and recognize any “parody of previous fiction” (Booth 212–13). Framing commentary joins multiple characterized perspectives on a metanarrative platform apparently unsupported by authorial control (Duyfhuizen, RCC 134–35) but from which Pynchon nevertheless supervises the text’s bizarre play (Sigvardson 136). Complying with Pitt’s request, Cherrycoke tells a tale about America, out of which Pynchon spins the self-reflexive postmodern narrative *Mason & Dixon*. Peter Keough terms Pynchon’s fabulation “concatenating,” a divagating design—with “hallucinatory personae, outlandish variations of historical fact, lame puns, cute anachronisms, and cheeky vaudeville routines”—that blurs representable differences between “the mythic, abstract, and celestial,” and “the mortal, literal, and mundane” (4). Rounding out the planet-colony analogy, Pynchon brings the St. Helena-Uranus conjunction home as American myth.

The titular protagonists can sometimes “believe that they traverse an Eden” in America, “squandering all its Beauty, day after day unseen, bearing them fruits, presenting them Game, bringing them a fugitive moment of Peace” (M&D 476). Anticipating the discovery and naming of Uranus, this glimpse of God’s garden in America, the Enlightenment’s New-World paradise, elicits Mason’s Golden Valley-Eden analogy, which depicts the corruption of an Old-World paradise by militarism and economic slavery. Michael Dirda sees a nostalgic unearthing of American-Dream relics in *Mason & Dixon*’s images of “an Edenic garden,” a preserve of magical freedom before imperialism



surveyed, mapped, marked and charted its "mythic, natural geography" out of humanity's ideal or ideological reach (10). Bernard Duyfhuizen equates line-marking with "world-making" in the novel, with the Line as the "metaphoric locus" for imperialism's subdivision of "the New Eden of America into legal and land development parcels"; so Mason and Dixon's job brings about "one more fall from Grace in the Eden of the New World" (WW). Cherrycoke's tale represents and extends America's foundational religious, political, social and literary myth of appropriation: the New World as Eden retrieved, and relost. The image of an interplanetary plantation hedges in the biblical Garden, Christianized Europe's absent prelapsarian home. The Garden of Eden symbolizes an imageless God's perfect order of nature and society, if not for Eve then for Adam, Western civilization's idol of humanity as perfect male innocence at home in mythic America.

The unremittingly ironic representation of American genesis starts with a nostalgic simile by Aunt Euphie and a sanctimonious analogy by Maskelyne. "'The St. Helena of old had been as a Paradise,' avers Euphonia" (M&D 105), foreshadowing Mason's Edenic visions of the Golden Valley and wilderness America. Maskelyne delineates a more complicated figure echoing the plantation-planet and colony-home comparisons. He describes St. Helena as a "'heretickal'" colony comparable with "'the Garden in Genesis, as an instance of extra-terrestrial Plantation'" (134). Then he supplies the symbol of temptation, transgression and exile, identifying the island's volcano deity as a "'Serpent, Worm, or Dragon'" which bears the "'ancient Curse and secret Name'" of "'Disobedience'" that "'devastated a Garden'" (135). Pynchon Americanizes this version of St. Helena's satanic snake and its cosmology through Dixon, who imagines the visto as a serpentine despoiler, after having told his Lambton Worm story.

Dixon's metaphor for the Line's power transforms it into a "'great invisible Thing that comes crawling Straight on over'" the lands and lives of colonials as well as indigens, "'devouring all in its Path.'" Mason amplifies the visto into a "'living creature'" made up of the whole party and its administrators, "'all of us, temporarily collected into an Entity, whose Labors none could do alone'" (678). Thus the trope of the Line devouring nature both alienates—a symbol of institutional spoliation—and familiarizes—an analogy for the commissioned work of a human collective. Dixon's conceit also turns the visto-engine into a single "'tree-slaughtering Animal, with no purpose but to continue creating forever a perfect Corridor over the Land. Its teeth of Steel, —its Jaws, Axmen, —its Life's Blood, Disbursement.'" Mason personifies this animate mechanistic economic entity by proposing that it has "'a Will'"

(678), integrating the workers' communal intention with the unmasked volition of capitalist commissioners, proprietors and lords.

Images of the mechanical, the animal and the collective merge in the Lambton Worm. Dixon's legend encompasses zoology—the Worm's ventricular anomaly classifies it as other than an eel (588); religious folklore—young John Lambton transgresses a Sunday-fishing ban and catches the Worm; social satire—“his Lordship's heir” indifferently throws the Worm down the well of “[s]ome tenant or something, who cares?” (588–89); fairy tale—the Worm's magical growth starts “almost immediately . . . in that Womb of wet stone,” before it slithers out to terrorize the fiefdom (589); chivalric romance—madcap Childe Lambton dons armor studded “with hundreds of firmly attach'd sword-quality Blades” (592) to battle the Worm with “Obstinacy” (593); and family saga—young John refuses to become a parricide and so brings the Worm-curse upon the Lambton clan (594). The Worm threatens all ranks and all species. “The local folk keep a vigil” because “[t]he Worm continues to enlarge its Zone of emptiness” and then “to coil about the Castle, where it lies all night digesting loudly its day's predation” (590)—reminiscent of Lambton's feudal potentates themselves. (The Worm's voracity also recalls Felipe, Professor Voam's performing electric eel: this *Electrophorus* is “growing irresistibly,” encompassing even “the unspoken possibility” that “human Flesh” might be among his “food interests” [434].) Enlarging emptiness also ties Dixon's Worm (Serpent or Dragon) and its wasted environs to the *visto*, that swath chopped through the American backwoods by the colonial serpent of mechanized nothingness, sign of the iron beast of encroaching rationalization and the curse of unappeasable institutions. After nonchalantly loosing the Worm, young Lambton joins “a party of adventurers from many lands” who, like Mason and Dixon's Line party, mount an institutionally sanctioned predation. These crusaders soldier “more in a privateering spirit” (591), their motives more capitalistic than the ethic of hired colonial-line markers and more artlessly piratical than the zeal of chivalry-veiled warlords of religious attrition.

In *Mason & Dixon* “coil[s] behind all gazes the great Worm of Slavery” (147). The Lambton serfs, like most frontier Americans—men and women, colonial and aboriginal, European or African or Native—represent the slaves of empire. Its institutions hunt, haunt and consume victims of all races and genders on all continents in all centuries. Pynchon's meta-analogy compares the Lambton Worm to the American *visto* and represents the Mason-Dixon party, their continental controllers and the rough-hewn Line. Dixon's Worm legend expresses the corrupting violence of rationalized imperialism. Even so, Western

vilification of the Worm as symbolic evil contrasts with Captain Zhang's trust in "the Dragon of the land"—a phenomenon of terror and power, like Rilke's angel—"above all else" (544). Dixon's Worm legend also mentions Lambton's grudging awareness "that ev'rywhere about, for leagues, sleep Souls in real Bodies . . . impossible longer to ignore" (592). Living peasants form a human community, not a collection of demonic "Qlippoth, Shells of the Dead," "imbecile killers and jokers" (GR 176, 661), or a merely confused mass of the helpless, expendable Preterite. Feudal tradition requires Lambton's stewardship of his vassals; entitlement makes the lord responsible for the serf community. Benevolent as well as patronizing expressions notwithstanding, noblesse oblige entails mastery and servitude, the rationalized binary of capitalistic colonialism.

### 5: Damning Silence

[W]hen th' arch-felon saw  
 Due entrance he disdain'd, and in contempt,  
 At one slight bound high over leaped all bound  
 Of Hill or highest Wall, and sheer within  
 Lights on his feet.

—John Milton (4.179–83)

Like those other testamentary subfictions about the absurd durability of oppression and rebellion, *The Courier's Tragedy* in *The Crying of Lot 49* (65–75) and "The Story of Byron the Bulb" in *Gravity's Rainbow* (647–55), the tale of the Lambton Worm connects stories about the institutional victimization of individuals and communities. Schmidt calls the Worm tale "a brilliant set-piece scene," which, although "clearly marked off from the main narrative," informs the whole novel (3). It fragments the symbolism of the new Enlightenment world into tropes of an imperialism which rationalizes its structuring institutions as community although "it's all theatre" (GR 3). Ship, village, city, country and continent are stage sets in the calculated drama of colonization scripted, produced and directed by European masters and performed in America by the Mason-Dixon Line party. Victim perspectives reprise imperialism's rigged dramaturgy in ironic narratives: European immigrants and American Indians enslaved and slaughtered to capitalize Christianity and democratize feudalism in Cherrycoke's fables of religiosity; objectified women enslaved and murdered after sex-role conditioning in the Cape stories of Johanna Vroom and the Company prostitutes; slaves as commodities, corpses

as products, and survivors without identity as marginal heroes in Stig's Westward-escape tales.

Pynchon's rendering of Enlightenment colonies through events, states, methods and moments of victimization represents no historical world as religiously, socially or politically New. Rather, Pynchon satirizes Eden, the West's most cherished symbol of the New World, to re-represent its most ironic one: institutional America, colonial and contemporary. Institutional irony parallels the collapse of policy. Citing "the failure of public institutions" to resolve conflicts caused by U.S. social diversity and existential variety, former President Clinton censures this century's unrealpolitik. *Mason & Dixon* portrays social rationalizing in the colonies over two hundred years before the American President acknowledged such failing orders. In the 1990s as in the 1760s, America's religious, governmental, scientific and military institutions converge not to solve democratic problems but to consolidate operational force. The power of the Mason-Dixon Line and that of the Lambton Worm create one meta-analogy of nature-consumption, official waste and rationalized death.

The Line-Worm trope also completes the broader analogy of America as New-World Eden by signaling "the ironic return of the demonic," once banished "by the unifying, meaning-bestowing power" (Habermas 349) that emanated from Europe's institutions of representation through the politics of monarchy and the discourse of moneyed privilege. And finally, the Line-Worm trope answers Oedipa's question about the loss of American cultural possibility, individual opportunity and community diversity: "how had it ever happened here[?]" (CL 181). Rationalization devours nature, humanity and space. It precludes the freedom to find and take opportunities, understand diverse cultures and learn from that diversity (Schroeder 174), and leaves America "bickering itself into Fragments" (M&D 6). Displaced Europeans in an Enlightenment already dimming, *Mason & Dixon's* colonial citizens cannot live in fraternity or forge community in solidarity. With stories of institutionalized inequality, not parables about nationalizing freedom, Pynchon's fiction of American history composes not difference but sameness in rationalizing enactments of imperialistic victimization and in colonizing acts of community.

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