

## "The World is at Fault"

Steven Moore

Seven months before Cavalier ran an excerpt from The Crying of Lot 49, the same magazine published an essay on Pynchon and other black humorists that has gone unnoticed by Pynchon's bibliographers. Written by his Cornell friend Jules Siegel, "The Dark Triumvirate"--on Friedman, Pynchon, and Heller--appeared in the August 1965 issue of Cavalier (vol. 15, pp. 14-16, 90-91) and is remarkable for a long quotation from one of Pynchon's letters. Since Cavalier is held by very few libraries, the quotation is reprinted below, along with Siegel's introductory paragraph. The context concerns the meaninglessness of the world:

Pynchon, hiding out from the world in Mexico City, wrote on blue-line graph paper to a suicidal writer friend:

"When Marilyn Monroe got out of the game, I wrote something like, 'Southern California's special horror notwithstanding, if the world offered nothing, nowhere to support or make bearable whatever her private grief was, then it is that world, and not she, that is at fault.'

"I wrote that in the first few shook-up minutes after hearing the bulletin sandwiched in between Don and Phil Everly and surrounded by all manner of whoops and whistles coming out of an audio signal generator, like you are apt to hear on the provincial radio these days. But I don't think I'd take those words back.

"The world is at fault, not because it is inherently good or bad or anything but what it is, but because it doesn't prepare us in anything but body to get along with.

"Our souls it leaves to whatever obsolescences, bigotries, theories of education workable and unworkable, parental wisdom or lack of it, happen to get in its way in its more or less Brownian (your phrase) pilgrimage between the cord-cutting ceremony and the time they slide you down the chute into the oven, while the guy on the Wurlitzer plays Aba Daba Honeymoon because you had once told somebody

it was the nadir of all American expression; only they didn't know what nadir meant but it must be good because of the vehemence with which you expressed yourself." (16)

--Rutgers University