

“Something’s Stalking Through the City of Smoke”: Tracing the Ins and Outs of *Gravity’s Rainbow’s* London

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I have a site in mind. It is an adulterous or, better, pre-adulterous bed. Here is a cite from the site:

Last night, in the house at the edge of the stay-away town, Jessica, snuggling, afloat, just before sleep was to take them, whispered, “Roger . . . what about the girls?” That was all she said. But it brought Roger wide awake. And bone-tired as he was, he lay staring for another hour, wondering about the girls. (87)

The site in question is at the same time a site of question. A major question in the first part of *Gravity’s Rainbow*, “What about the girls?” is, among other things, a Gothic question. Before I try to answer it, a few words about Jessica Swanlake and Roger Mexico might be in order. To start with, not only is their relationship illicit, or semi-illicit; their love nest is illegal too. The couple spend their private moments in an evacuated house in one of the stay-away zones south of London (41). There Jessica asks her dreary question about the girls.

No matter how Gothic the question is, Jessica and Roger do not themselves really belong to any Gothic genre in this context. In all of its proper manifestations, the Gothic requires not only terror but loneliness too. The lovers are not lonely in their hideaway, however fragile everything is there: “It is marginal, hungry, chilly—most times they’re too paranoid to risk a fire—but it’s something they want to keep, so much that to keep it they will take on more than propaganda has ever asked them for. They are in love. Fuck the war” (41–42). Bernard Duyfhuizen has a point when he remarks that Roger and Jessica, “more than Slothrop, are surrounded by falling rockets. Mexico’s ‘network of death’ (56) haunts their love” (12). Still, in a way quite uncharacteristic of the novel, Roger and Jessica are granted their moments of togetherness. Above all, these fleeting episodes seem to allude to romantic films of the 1930s and ‘40s; their first encounter, for example, is characterized as “what Hollywood likes to call a ‘cute meet’” (38).¹

For all the allusions to sentimental American and British films, however, Jessica and Roger are characters in an American *novel*. And very possibly because Pynchon is an American novelist, what we have here is something quite exceptional. As Leslie Fiedler insists, in *Love and Death in the American Novel*:

[I]n France, Italy, Germany, and Russia, even in England, spiritually so close to America, love in one form or another has remained the novel's central theme. . . . Where is our *Madame Bovary*, our *Anna Karenina*, our *Pride and Prejudice* or *Vanity Fair*? Among our classic novels . . . the best attempt at dealing with love is *The Scarlet Letter*, in which the physical consummation of adultery has occurred and all passion burned away before the novel proper begins. For the rest, there are *Moby Dick* and *Huckleberry Finn*, *The Last of the Mohicans*, *The Red Badge of Courage*, the stories of Edgar Allan Poe—books that turn from society to nature or nightmare out of a desperate need to avoid the facts of wooing, marriage, and child-bearing. (25)

In Fiedler's notorious view, classic American novels are almost devoid of the European preoccupation with adult, heterosexual, often adulterous passion. They provide puerile, boyish versions of male bonding instead. Pynchon has one foot in this tradition, and nowhere more distinctly so than in *Mason & Dixon*. Yet the new novel subverts the Fiedleresque buddy tradition at the same time: the haunting presence of Rebekah's ghost keeps intervening between the two protagonists, and prevents their friendship from becoming totally seamless. *Gravity's Rainbow* invalidates the fraternal tradition in another way, by losing sight (though not, indeed, memory) of Tantivy Mucker-Maffick, Slothrop's best buddy, after only the first 200 pages. Nevertheless, the loneliness caused by a loss may be even more crucial to American manhood: "Our great novelists, though experts on indignity and assault, on loneliness and terror, tend to avoid treating the passionate encounter of a man and a woman, which we [whoever "we" are] expect at the center of the novel" (Fiedler 24).

The passionate encounter of Roger and Jessica cannot be located at the center of even the first part of *Gravity's Rainbow*—a text famous for its centerlessness to begin with (see, for example, Hite 29–32). What is more, the relationship will fail when the peace comes. Modifying Fiedler's famous character types—"Good Good Girls," based on Richardson's *Clarissa Harlowe*, and "Good Bad Boys," based on Fielding's *Tom Jones* (74)—one could say that, by selling out to the "Bad Good Boy" Jeremy, Jessica turns out a "Bad Good Girl," and that Roger remains something of a "Good Ambivalent Boy"—which is as

much as one can hope for in the Pynchon universe. Whatever the case, as long as their love flourishes, it represents perhaps the only romantically passionate liaison between a man and a woman in the whole Pynchon oeuvre. Among the living, at least: Mason's otherworldly relationship with Rebekah's ghost in *Mason & Dixon* belongs rather to the Gothic genre, not to the passionate European tradition, and the Franco-German romance between Armand Allègre and Luise Redzinger in the same novel remains too episodic to count in this respect.

All in all, it is exceptional in a Pynchon novel to have a romantic interiority like that of Jessica and Roger, however rickety a sanctuary their house makes in space and time. In their common space they can get *relatively* free from Gothic burdens of the past and apocalyptic threats of the future. Even though "[t]his house, town, crossed arcs of Roger and Jessica are so vulnerable, to German weapons and to British bylaws . . . it doesn't *feel* like danger here." Yet Jessica would like to have neighbors around: "she does wish there were others about, and that it really could be a village, her village" (GR 53). Neighborhoods which, to some degree, resemble villages of that kind will be found later in that slippery continuum of interfaces which is the neotribal Zone. But not in this vicinity, which still belongs to a more demarcated landscape. Yet perhaps it is just because Jessica is left feeling at once intimately allied and lonely that she is able, just out of human interest, to pose the question *What about the girls?* If Jessica did not belong, through her liaison with Roger, to a love-story genre of the novel—a hybrid genre of genres, as both Schlegel and Bakhtin insist (cf. Todorov 86–87)—she might herself be one of the girls she is worried about. So, even if the time and place of their love can, to some extent, resist the threats of the outside, in her dreams Jessica has to confront a more terrifying world:

Something's stalking through the city of Smoke—gathering up slender girls, fair and smooth as dolls, by the handful. *Their piteous cries . . . their dollful and piteous cries . . .* the face of one is suddenly very close, and *down!* over the staring eyes come cream lids with stiff lashes, slamming loudly shut, the long reverberating of lead counterweights tumble inside her head as Jessica's own lids now come flying open. She surfaces in time to hear the last echoes blowing away on the heels of the blast, austere and keen, a winter sound. (53)

Jessica manages to make Roger face emotionally his big professional question as a statistician: "He does want to help, he feels the same unnatural fear of Slothrop that Jessica does. *What about the*

girls?" (91). A quintessential question in the London of *Gravity's Rainbow*. Both positivists and spiritualists try to solve the problem, without, however, the human approach of Jessica, and Roger too. On the contrary, episodes which depict the actions and contemplations of these opposite and equally fanatic parties do not seem to draw their ethos from human-relationship genres, but rather from predominantly detached and impersonal brands of science fiction, fantasy and British mystery, detective and spy stories. The genre of Jessica fits in parasitically with these genres which turn a deaf ear to piteous cries.

Something's stalking through the city of Smoke. The nightmarish presentiment is only one among many instances in *Gravity's Rainbow* where London is depicted in terms of obscurity. The very first scene is not only unclear but totally lightless. It takes place in a subterranean and, for the narrative present at least, imaginary region, presumably somewhere in London. "[A] crystal palace" (3) is about to fall, and bring about a spectacle without spectators. This is an overt allusion to the Crystal Palace, which was set up in Hyde Park for the Great Exhibition of 1851 (some years later it was transferred to south London, where it was destroyed by fire in 1936). The construction became a symbol of progress in mid-Victorian culture. It represented the triumph of bourgeois values and Britannia's escape from the European revolutions of 1848–1849. In the eyes of enthusiasts, the Crystal Palace's glorious transparency manifested a complete break from the past (Tropp 44ff.).

Charles Dickens reacted vehemently against the Crystal Palace and other excesses of the Great Exhibition. According to Martin Tropp, *Bleak House*, published two years after the Exhibition, can be seen as a counterconstruction to the complacent and grandiosely progressivist Exhibition (67). *Bleak House's* buildings have none of the light and clarity of the Crystal Palace. Fog and gloom, mud and smoke prevail instead in and around the novel's haunted and labyrinthine houses. Even Bleak House itself, an authentic provincial refuge which mostly contrasts with the dismal settings of central London, is described as labyrinthine (70–71). *Gravity's Rainbow's* crystal palace is likewise wrapped in darkness, and Pynchon's London passages are filled with hazy vertical structures: chimneys, towers, smokestacks, etc. There are constructions—especially the imaginary St. Veronica's hospital (GR 46)—which strikingly resemble the monumental obscurity of the buildings in *Bleak House*. And again, the smoke itself "is more than the day's breath, more than dark strength—it is an imperial presence that lives and moves" (26). Obscurity, not transparency, is an attribute of the hub of Empire.

Emmanuel Levinas refers to obscurity in more positive terms when he refers explicitly to Dickens in his essay "Reality and Its Shadow"

(1947): "Atmosphere is the very obscurity of images" (CPP 10). The obscure atmosphere is related to the concept of exteriority crucial to Levinas's philosophy. The atmosphere in Dickens's novels "only appear[s] in an exterior vision set up as a method" (10). At this stage, Levinas still thinks of exteriority in spatial terms; later, in his first magnum opus, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (1961), he argues that true exteriority is not spatial, but something wholly other, which cannot be located and appropriated by the interiorizing tradition of philosophy. For the earlier Levinas, though, the exterior vision of Dickens resists division into inside and outside; in this exteriority, characters and their environs exist in the same irreducible, shadowy universe. This "truly novelistic" mode of being is neither an imitation of some "nature" or "reality" extrinsic to it, nor an expression of intrinsic domains like conscious or unconscious minds (CPP 6-7). Timothy Clark summarizes Levinas's remarks on Dickens: "The novels manifest the combined horror and fascination of a world without interiority" (23).

That reading is quite unlike J. Hillis Miller's phenomenological reading of *Bleak House*, which, in genuine Geneva-School fashion, tries to restore the novel to an orderly interiority. The novel's world is becoming totally exterior, but Miller sees this exteriority as thoroughly negative. It means "a general return to the primal slime, a return to chaos which is going on everywhere in the novel and is already nearing its final end when the novel begins" (195). What particularly relates Miller's reading to a whole branch of Pynchon criticism is that, for him, the novel's world has nearly reached the state of maximum entropy (199). Constructive forces opposing this regression have almost vanished. Mud and fog, which spread all over the place on the first pages, point to the process of decomposition. However, there is a ray of hope left in a few characters who still fight the process. "The world organizes itself around such characters as orderly, stable, and clarified, as an integrated circle of which they are the center" (210). These characters are capable of setting up relatively orderly pockets of interiority in the midst of deterministic and entropic exteriority. Esther Summerson's angelic goodness enables her to overcome the external mess, and she and Allan Woodcourt can finally escape the corrupt city. As a manifestation of this escape, the couple are given a replica of Bleak House (Dickens 856-57). Following Miller's interpretation, one could say that emotional and physical interiorities coincide in the new location in Yorkshire. There are, after all, chances for a new start, but only in the interior of the country, not in any urban, transparently exterior Crystal Palace in the vanguard of progress.

In Pynchon's wrecked London of the mid-1940s, Roger and Jessica have no exit to any peaceful Yorkshire; all they get from that direction

is the displaced radio voice of “a quiet Yorkshire girl” (41). The location of their refuge, a “‘regulated’” town “south of London” (41), does not really belong to the city, but is not really outside it either—let alone in the countryside proper. What makes it even less proper is that it is a “town whose name they still don’t know” (53). The chickens Roger has brought there “nest in the empty garage” (41). The town and the house lie parasitically in a borderland. The place haunts them, as if half alive (122), but what is more, the house with its clandestine residents makes a haunting supplement to the city of London too. It is “at the edge” (87) of an edge town,² and Jessica asks her question about the girls inside London when she is on the edge of sleep.

The outside and inside begin to ooze one into the other at this site, but will not dissolve into each other. On the contrary, the absence of official façades brings out porosity, and, paradoxically, makes the haunt relatively safe for Jessica and Roger. This kind of situation becomes generalized later in the novel: occasional and distinct evacuated zones of this sort—with “Outside and Inside interpiercing one another” (681)—become filled with more or less displaced persons in the Zone. The division into interiors and exteriors will, possibly, become less rigorous. But I still haven’t responded to the question about the girls within the city limits of the more traditionally defined, more stagnant London. How do these girls place themselves when it comes to the division into interiors and exteriors?

In her recent study on the Gothic, *The Contested Castle*, Kate Ferguson Ellis regards masculine terror against the enclosed space of women as the main characteristic of British Gothic fiction. In this female Gothic, largely originated by Ann Radcliffe, “villains either usurp the castle or try to destroy it from the outside” (Ellis xiv). Whether one reads Dickens exteriorizingly, as Levinas does, or, like the early Miller, tries to find interior pockets of order, it is difficult to include *Bleak House* in this tradition. *Gravity’s Rainbow* belongs, on one level, to the Radcliffean thread of the Gothic, and it may well contain both kinds of villains: internal usurpers and external destroyers. V-2 rockets can easily be seen as forms or extensions of the latter. Rockets are not sexually blind in the novel, but they are presumably after Slothrop’s “girls,” trying to destroy the enclosed spaces of these women from the outside.

Still, the point of view is not those women’s, but closer to Slothrop’s. Is Slothrop somewhat villainous himself—the traditional Gothic hero-villain as usurper—no matter how unwillingly so? At the very least, he may be an unconscious decoy of sorts, may pave the way for V-2 rockets by seducing those young British women. However, if Slothrop were a Trojan horse—a *stalking* horse—who would the

Greeks be in this case? What is the connection between our internal-usurper candidate and the destructive external forces?

Regarding Slothrop as a transformation of the hero-villain might well suit Fiedler, who wants to see this character type, not the haunted maiden, at the center of the Gothic. That genre is to be distinguished from the Richardsonian genre of seduction, in which Clarissa and her kind do remain central to the narrative (Fiedler 128). Eugenia C. Delamotte remarks, in *The Perils of the Night*, that by emphasizing the masculine element in Gothic narratives, Fiedler downgrades the British strain of the Gothic with its sentimental heroines, and especially Radcliffe's crucial influence on the Gothic imagination (12). Like his countryman Henry James, Pynchon has written novels in which the point of view is, in a British vein, that of haunted maidens: *The Crying of Lot 49* and *Vineland*. On the other hand, male points of view dominate in *Gravity's Rainbow*, in an arguably more American than British way.

The American brand of the Gothic is Fiedler's real subject. This Gothicism, which permeates all classic American novels, is largely contrary to the Gothicism of British writers. Washington Irving's "Rip Van Winkle" is the archetypal American Gothic for Fiedler. It tells the story of male flight from community and, especially, the domestic sphere ruled by women, and into the Adamic wilderness. Similarities with *Gravity's Rainbow* are easy to find here. True, while Slothrop does not mind running away from a few female Londoners, he does not literally flee a domestic sphere ruled by women, but instead the remarkably hierarchical, masculine center of the Old World. Still, the movement is parallel. Slothrop moves from an interior to an exterior, from the threatening vertical castle of London to the more open and horizontal wilderness of the continental Zone.

Yet this change may be only apparent: according to Fiedler, the haunted castle is replaced in the American tradition by the wilderness as the site of evil, as is evident as early as Charles Brockden Brown's fiction. The wilderness as a free outside proves a delusion, since characters find themselves framed by malevolent forces once again (Fiedler 160). However, in *Gravity's Rainbow* these evil forces do not spring, as in Brown and some later writers, from subordinated groups like Native or African Americans, but from the colonizers themselves.³ These forces are connected in some way to forces in and behind the V-2 rockets which bombard London at the novel's beginning.

The threat of these rockets most pronouncedly defines and frames London as a specific, demarcated space—that is, a *place*—in *Gravity's Rainbow*. The danger of destruction both emphasizes and questions the placeness of London. The threat not only conditions the place's

spatiality but also foregrounds its historicity—its past, present and future. It is in this context that the question of interiors and exteriors and barriers between them becomes a question of life and death. One reason atmospheric affinities between the Londons of Dickens and Pynchon have remained unnoticed is probably the much more apocalyptic feeling in the Pynchon novel. In *Bleak House* it is not the future but rather the burdensome past which plagues characters. Admittedly, there is a constantly frustrated hope for a final judgment; the first chapter ends with the wish that Chancery and all its injustice and misery could be locked up “and the whole burnt away in a great funeral pyre” (Dickens 7). Pynchon’s apocalypse feels both more urgent and more terrifying: the constantly menacing rockets turn London into an exteriority where it is impossible to find sanctuary within the city limits. Yet the terror from outside also makes London into a vast interior, grand-scale version of the haunted Gothic castle. In this sense, at least, Roger and Jessica’s parasitic environment is not exempt from the threat of the novel’s London.

Gravity’s Rainbow tells about a very special threat posed to London during several months at the end of the Second World War. But more general menaces also extend well beyond the city’s topical and topographical boundaries. To take the opening scene as an example: where does it take place? Is it just a dream—an illusionary realm, from which the awakening Prentice can return to his real environs? In other terms, is it only an inner narrative level embedded in the reality level?⁴ It is hard to tell for sure. What is certain is that none of these realms is without terror, and that the nature of terror in one realm differs from that in another. The terror in Prentice’s nightmare is general, all-out (even though it takes place in a huge interiority), with “no way out” for the evacuees (4). It is like a universalized Gothic castle.

In this way the novel manifests right from the beginning its belonging to the age of the threat of nuclear holocaust. In this age the nuclear apocalyptic referent becomes, to quote Jacques Derrida’s “No Apocalypse, Not Now,” “the absolute referent, the horizon and the condition of all the others. An individual death, a destruction affecting only a part of society, of tradition, of culture may always give rise to a symbolic work of mourning, with memory, compensation, internalization, idealization, displacement, and so on” (28), while nuclear war would mean total destruction of the archive, of the meaning of meaning, of “the name of the name alone, that is, of everything and of nothing” (30). For the present, the hypothesis of nuclear destruction is a collective “fantasy” or “phantasm,” a postponed metanarrative of sorts, “which conditions every discourse

and all strategies” (23). How appropriate, then, that the witness to the initial scene of threatened annihilation, Pirate Prentice, is a specialist in experiencing other people’s fantasies.

The phantasmic hypothesis of destruction emphasizes the historicity of everything that has been regarded as eternal and/or self-evidently natural. As for the question of place more specifically, Edward Casey argues:

Certain devastating phenomena of this century bring with them, by aftershock as it were, a revitalized sensitivity to place. Precisely in its capacity to eliminate all perceptible places from a given region, the prospect of nuclear annihilation heightens awareness of the unreplaceability of these places, their singular configuration and unrepeatable history. (xiii)

But the prospect of annihilation so intensely dramatized in *Gravity’s Rainbow* does not only nostalgically point to the unreplaceability of places. The novel also makes traditional concepts of placeness tremble—not to destroy placeness once and for all, but rather to hint that there might be other alternatives besides just nostalgic, traditional placeness (so often defined by excluding and marginalizing others) and post-apocalyptic placelessness.

With the horizon of all horizons, the threat of total annihilation, as its starting point, *Gravity’s Rainbow* prompts variations of oscillating tremblings between generalities and particularities, globalities and localities, or what have you, right from the start. This is accentuated by the fact that the source of the initial phantasmic scene never becomes clear: it hovers between private and public spheres—is Prentice dreaming it just for himself, for somebody else, or for “everybody”? At any rate, nothing (and nobody) is safe from this vacillation. In the course of the novel a multiplicity of separating borders is consistently questioned: those between inside and outside, self and other, private and public, subject and object, actual and imaginary, etc. But tensions between these domains never lead to a complete standstill. With the ambiguous case of Slothrop as a possible exception, characters remain on edge, “alerted, full of adrenalin” (389)—though usually this does not give them the edge over anyone.

What is launched by this oscillating trembling resembles a tangle of hermeneutic circles. For Friedrich Schleiermacher, a founder of hermeneutics, hermeneutic circles are acts of interpretation and understanding which trace relations between a part and a whole, between particular and general. Traditionally, one starts a hermeneutic procedure from particularities, on the basis of which, using one’s

competence for divination, one tries to abstract the general whole. This abstraction will in its turn change the way one conceives the parts, and so on (Schleiermacher 153–55).

Gravity's Rainbow sets out the other way around, from the absolute referent, that is, the phantasmic prospect of general annihilation. From the general prospect the narrative oscillates on the second page to the particular, to the special atmosphere of terror as it is experienced in wartime London. This type of danger—that of occasionally-falling rockets—is nowhere near as pervasive as the deterministic feeling in the opening scene, which nevertheless tends to function as a general sounding-board for oscillative motions. The concept of oscillation is most explicit in Schleiermacher. Werner Hamacher notes that in Schleiermacher, oscillation is not primarily a movement between opposite poles; on the contrary, the movement between general and particular is a function of oscillation. The oscillation is the condition of possibility and impossibility of mediation, of understanding the part in the whole and the whole in the part. The placement in-between is the necessary condition of interpretation. As Hamacher observes, the hermeneutic circle is always already elliptically displaced (63).

Gravity's Rainbow dramatizes both this general condition and how the condition has differences within it. Various hermeneutic circles keep getting off the track, entangling one in another, yet there are no sanctuaries to be found outside oscillating motions. The general prospect of annihilation concerns "Us" all; it is what "We" think is the end of Their narrative. Kathryn Hume points out how characters recurrently see themselves as targets at the receiving end of the Rocket (634–37). This is a major catalyst for paranoid hermeneutics in the novel: understanding as under-standing. Yet alongside this universal condition there are particular threats, which concern some people more than others.

Possibly uniting universal and local threats is the text's potential "rallying-point" (GR 738), Slothrop. He somehow embodies both the innocent American Adam (see Lewis), lighting out for the territory from the imprisonment of London, and "'American Death'" (GR 722), which Blicero says has boomeranged back to Europe, including London. The phantasm of apocalyptic destruction is the great limit-possibility which saturates everything in the novel but also sets it going from the "iron afternoon" (26) a-cuteness of London. Later in the novel, a different kind of generality will start to emerge, a general condition of possibilities, a.k.a. the Zone. The limit-possibility of annihilation and other pessimistic scenarios are certainly included among these Zonal possibilities; yet the kaleidoscopic condition may pave the way for more hopeful constellations too. All these possibilities radiate back to London

and other particular localities, each of which becomes reconditioned by its to-and-fro relation to the Zone, and each in its peculiar way.

When it comes to London's peculiar threats, not only women seem to be preferred, but also the poor in the East End, who are "'meant to go down first,'" as Thomas Gwenthidwy fulminates (173). But "stalking" is a sexually loaded word, and the position of women (at least their haunting generic memory) as special Gothic targets remains crucial. For Fiedler the female Gothic is not of much importance in the first place. He considers Clarissa more important than Radcliffe's heroines: Clarissa's flight "takes place in society—in a real, contemporaneous world," while the Gothic heroine flees from "the known world into a dark region of make-believe . . . a world of ancestral and infantile fears projected in dreams" (128). Yet for Delamotte this is just what makes tales with Gothic heroines so important: for them "'the region of make-believe' is also a picture of the 'known world,' but in the form in which women 'know' it" (12).

When the general situation in the real, contemporaneous world becomes conditioned by the region of make-believe, by the phantasmic possibility of total destruction, it is rather sentimental heroines like Jessica who become something of an anomaly. The motley crew of variously mad scientists are having their day in the city of imperial smoke, and in the equally numb ambience of the coastal "White Visitation." Under the circumstances, it may happen that from the house Jessica shares with Roger on the fringes of London, from that porous supplementary fold—exterior interiority, and interior exteriority—she, and perhaps she only, is able to have occasional access to the genre of those who are being stalked in the city. The ontological question about the girls remains nothing if not uncomfortable: "*oscillum* is derivative of *os* (mouth, face), and means 'little mouth,' 'tiny face,' and 'mask'" (Hamacher 61). Piteous cries from little mouths can be heard in passing, and the occasional small face may suddenly come very close; but "[t]he stars pasted up on Slothrop's map" (GR 19) keep pulsating like pain that comes in spells.

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Notes

¹Louis Mackey accuses McHoul and Wills of "textual insensitivity and . . . failure of sensibility" for "describing Roger's and Jessica's Advent experience as 'cutesy'" (149). I want to add that "cutesy" is no more adequate for their affair as a whole, no matter how "cute" their "meet" was.

²Or "Edge City." Here, as so often, *Gravity's Rainbow* seems to have been sensitive to urban changes, especially in the U.S. Much later, Joel Garreau

conceptualized Edge City as the successor in urban geographic imagery to Downtown, the Suburb and the Mall.

³Consequently, the wilderness Slothrop enters on the Continent is not necessarily evil, as in Fiedler. Rather, the Zone becomes a vast space of confrontation for various spooky heritages—for revenants of the Old and New World, but surely for revenants of many other old and new worlds too.

⁴A good recent article on narrative embedding in the novel is Weisenburger.

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