

Strangely Attractive: The Topology of Psychic and Social Space in *Vineland*

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In *Gravity's Rainbow*, Brigadier Pudding oscillates catastrophically between two impossibilities or, as Gilles Deleuze calls them in *The Fold*, "impossibilit[ies]" (60). On the one hand, he attempts to list all historical bifurcations that might come to define the next epoch in a work-in-progress entitled *Things That Can Happen in European Politics*. This project, however, is inherently self-defeating because of what Deleuze and Guattari call the "contingent . . . [and] singular" (AO 140), and thus un-projectable structure of historical time: "'Never make it,' he found himself muttering at the beginning of each day's work—'it's changing out from under me. Oh, dodgy—very dodgy'" (GR 77). On the other hand, Pudding tries to escape history and historiography altogether in his sado-masochistic rituals with Katje Borgesius, "bound [in both senses of the word] by nothing but his need for pain, for something real, something pure" (234). His need for immediacy is a direct result of the fact that "[t]hey have taken him so far from his simple nerves. They have stuffed paper illusions . . . between him and this truth . . . his *true body*" (234–35; emphasis added). Caught in this, for him ultimately deadly, double bind, Pudding seems to flip-flop between controlled, scripted subject and what Deleuze and Guattari would consider out-of-control schizophrenic, between the "theater of representation" and the factory of "desiring-production" (AO 271).¹ In fact, in a notorious anal and fecal passage, Pudding becomes the perfect double image of Deleuze and Guattari's differentiation between the mouth that speaks and the mouth that eats. Yet—and the fact that in Pudding's case the production is a production of pain already insinuates this—things are not this simple.

On first sight, in *Vineland*, a similar war between Oedipal representation and machinic production seems to be raging. Yet *Vineland*, although it is, like *Anti-Oedipus*, a long meditation on the revolution vs. the aggregates of control (or the people vs. the state), deals with a revolution of love, while the revolution in *Anti-Oedipus* is

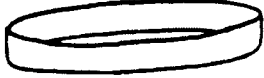


Fig. 1: The twist from bilateral into unilateral, Möbius space

what might be called a revolution of partial objects.² This divergence implies a different alignment of revolutionary energy and capitalist control in the two books.

For Deleuze and Guattari, schizophrenia is a truly capitalistic madness. It is *like* capitalism in that it shares the latter's inherently ex-centric, deterritorializing and thus *partializing* dynamics.³ Except capitalism does not stop saving itself from the chaos of these self-induced deterritorializing flows by continuously reterritorializing the partial objects into more stable aggregates, one of the most prominent of which is the family unit: "daddy-mommy-me" (AO 23); or, as Pynchon, similarly laconic, calls it, the "hard, soft, and helpless" (VI 330).⁴ In this context, a somewhat cynical case can be made for seeing in the syndrome of Multiple Personality Disorder the utopia of capitalist de- and reterritorialization, a splitting up and thus partializing of the subject into a multitude of fractal, although in themselves still complete, egos through a kind of psychic cell-division. Each of these egos can then be reterritorialized and inscribed into a market of its own, so the number of subjects per market becomes as multiple as the disordered personality.⁵

The ultimate difference between capitalism and schizophrenia is thus between molar machines—which stand for quality, transcendence, meaning and the Oedipal(ized) subject—and molecular desiring machines—which stand for quantity, immanence, production and the nomadic, fluid subject.⁶ Pynchon, in contrast, differentiates between two equally molar, phantasmatic and unifying systems.

A second difference is terminological. In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari relate the unconscious to schizophrenia and revolution, and the conscious to representation and control. This unconscious, however, is not the Lacanian unconscious, which is only the belated, retroactive product

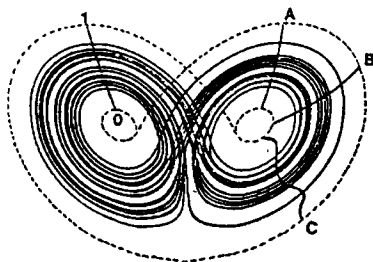


Fig. 2: The flow in the Lorenz attractor (Shaw 96)

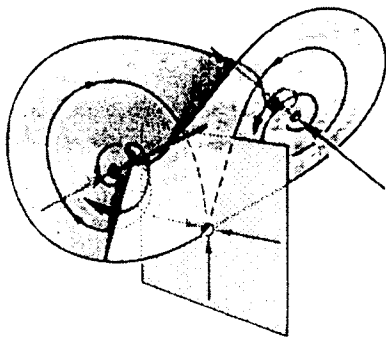


Fig. 3: 3-d representation of the flow in the Lorenz attractor (Abraham and Shaw, OLA 28)

of language and accordingly comes into existence only during the passage from the *imaginary* to the *symbolic*. Rather—and Deleuze and Guattari themselves stress this repeatedly—it is analogous to the Lacanian *real*.⁷

The identification of the unconscious with the *real* implies a different temporal structuration of psychic space. Where Deleuze and Guattari opt, like some of Pynchon's characters, for a lifting of even primal repression and for a return to a pre-repressed state, Lacan argues that such a return beyond the repressed is impossible, because, according to the temporality of belatedness, the repressed actually lies in and also *returns* from the future rather than the past.⁸ Accordingly, the *real*, in Lacan, remains impossible for the subject. In Deleuze and Guattari, on the contrary, it is precisely within the *real* that "everything is possible, everything becomes possible" (AO 27).

A third and final difficulty is the difference between, say, *Anti-Oedipus* and a book like Deleuze's *Logic of Sense*, in which the impossibility of the *real* is highlighted much more. In *The Logic of Sense*, the *real* and its function become identical to what Deleuze calls the "event" or "singularity" (52). Both the *real* and the event are fundamentally excluded moments that cannot be reached and represented directly. Somewhat like Pudding, Sidney Stencil of *V.* muses about this impossibility of the event in his pseudonymous paper "The Situation as an N-Dimensional Mishmash" (470). The structural function of this unrepresentable event for any kind of complete historiography is a first link to *Vineland*, from which I will lift a number of catastrophic moments for closer inspection.

The primal scene or primal event in *Vineland* is the killing of Weed Atman on the seemingly, at least temporarily, deterritorialized campus of The People's Republic of Rock and Roll. Before his death, Weed has already been unconsciously but relentlessly Oedipalized by Larry Elasmó, and thus has already been partly inserted into what Deleuze and Guattari call a group's "most somber organization" (AO 123): Oedipal control. This insertion, which somewhat relativizes Frenesi's betrayal, is fittingly

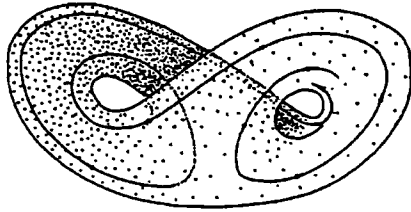


Fig. 4: 3-d representation of the envelope of the Lorenz attractor (Abraham and Shaw, DGB 88)

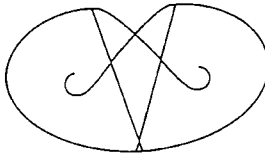


Fig. 5: Schematic representation of the Lorenz attractor

described as the crossing of an unrepresentable border. After his sessions with Elasmó, Weed feels as if he were going “back across a *borderline*, invisible but felt at its crossing, between worlds” (VI 228; emphasis added). Structurally, for Frenesi, the event of Weed’s death denotes the end of the passage from the “soft-focus” (VI 38) realm of the *imaginary* and the signified to the hard reality of the *symbolic* and the signifier: in Freudian terms, from the ideal-ego to the ego-ideal, or, to stress the more somber side of the latter, to the superego. In the möbius topology underlying Pynchon’s poetics, these two realms are not separate: they operate on *one* surface on which they are twisted chiasmatically into each other (Fig. 1). In this alignment, the *real* is, appropriately, the mere cut-and-twist that causes the fundamental ambiguity of the event.⁹ To quote Deleuze, “The event, being itself impassive, allows the active and the passive to be interchanged more easily, since it is *neither the one nor the other*, but rather their common result (to cut—to be cut)” (LS 8)—or, in *Vineland*’s terms, to shoot—to be shot.¹⁰

Like the meeting with the real, therefore, the meeting with the event will always be a fundamentally missed one. In *V*, this dynamic is figurized as “Approach and avoid” (55). As Deleuze emphasizes, “The agonizing aspect of the pure event is that it is always and at the same time something which has just happened and something about to happen.” Even more appropriately in the context of Weed’s death, “The event is that no one ever dies, but has always just died or is always going to die” (LS 63). One moment, Weed is calling out Frenesi’s name, with “the frame . . . twisting and flying off his face,” and the next, he is recorded already dead, “on his face with his blood all on the cement” (VI 246). Yet precisely as a representationally as well as structurally excluded event, Weed’s death creates, in terms of both plot and structure, a strangely attractive moment to which everyone, including Weed and the book itself, continually attempts to return.

The event, then, is neither *imaginary* nor *symbolic*; it is *real*. Symptomatically, only the pure camera can catch the moment of the true event, in graceful moments of autopoiesis, in the sense of both self-creation and machinic creation: “There was little mercy in these images, except *by accident*—backlit sweat on a Guardsman’s arm as he swung a rifle toward

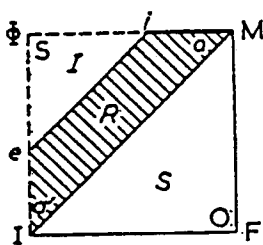


Fig. 6: Lacan’s schema R (197)

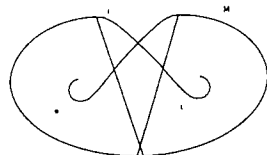


Fig. 7: Mapping of Lacan’s schema R onto the Lorenz attractor

a demonstrator, a close-up of a farm employer's face that said everything its subject was trying not to" (VI 199). When Frenesi is in control, what the camera zooms in on instead are the "lines of force" (200) of the ultimate image of Oedipalization, Brock Vond, who is fascinated in turn by the beautiful revolutionary. Through these psychic deviations, the two realms are folded into each other. Although Vond's personality revolves around the law as the representative of the superego, the repressed spills to the surface on occasion, as when, "In dreams he could not *control* . . . he was visited by his uneasy anima" (274; emphasis added), or when he gets an attack of laughter in front of the Tube, topologically important because it actually carries him "on some course unaccounted for by the usual three dimensions" to a fourth dimension where he "glimpsed his brain about to turn inside out like a sock" (278). Inversely, Frenesi, whose world revolves around the imaginary fantasy of unity—"a mysterious people's oneness" (117)—is subverted by the "ancestral [fascist] curse" that manifests itself in her "helpless turn toward images of authority," her desire for uniforms and men in power, and her initiation into "the *dark joys* of social control" (83; emphasis added).¹¹ Geographically, the internal presence of the other world in each other's reality is crypted into internal foreign territories, the PR³ and PREP, two agencies of education.¹² What this topology creates is the structure of a strange attractor, in particular, the Lorenz attractor (Figs. 2–5).

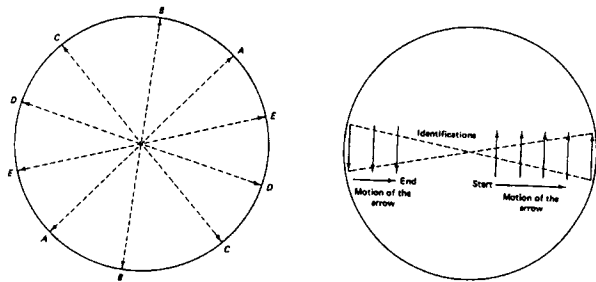


Fig. 8: The unilateral projective plane: At the "line at infinity," "opposites are reconciled," that is, identified (Penna and Patterson 28, 29). Note especially the möbius characteristics of the projective plane.

In Pynchon's literary surface, the shell of one realm (that of Frenesi and the revolution) is folded onto the kernel of the other (that of Vond and control) and vice versa. On "one side," the system circles around the *imaginary* field, which oscillates between the ego (*e*)—experienced as an abject, fragmented body¹³—and the specular image, which presents the sublime image of the ideal-ego (*ī*). From there it folds over

onto the "other side," that of the ego-ideal (I). This catastrophic shift is perfectly captured in what Pynchon himself calls "the Event" (VI 215), the storm during which Frenesi, while indulging her *imaginary* phantasm of "the 'real' Brock, the endearing adolescent who would allow her to lead him stumbling out into light" (216), whispers to the seemingly asleep and thus seemingly psychically unprotected Vond "her heart's overflow" (217), only to discover that he has been awake and thus protected all along, and to have him laugh in her face.

Curiously, after Frenesi has betrayed Weed, her dependency on Vond becomes even greater. Somewhat like a borderline patient, she feels comfortably numb, as if "walking around next to herself, haunting herself, attending a movie of it all" (237). This weakening of her ego causes her to become even more a screen for external, Oedipal, stimuli and to live constantly on the borderline of the external world.

But Vond's "side," the law and the symbolic, which spans from the "signifier of the primordial object" (Lacan 197) (M) to the ego-ideal (I), also flips back onto the *imaginary* side. Such a flip happens to Vond precisely after the loss of Frenesi as his object of desire and control, his, as Lacan calls it, "object *a*." Fittingly, his subsequent search for the revolutionary "without a label" (VI 273), his "mystery revolutionary" (a sort of reversal of the "mystery stimulus" in *Gravity's Rainbow*), catapults him into the position of the fragmented, broken body and turns him, for the first time, into a victim of his repressed. Pynchon evokes a deliberately chaotic scenario when, after Frenesi's escape from PREP, Vond "went right around the bend" and finds himself

past exhaustion, adrift in *the unsleeping clockless iterations* of some hotel near the airport. . . . He cried, he beat himself with his fists on head and body . . . feeling like a skier on an unfamiliar black-diamond slope . . . *in control, out of control* . . . this descent took him all night and wore him at last into unconsciousness. (277; emphasis added)

What I have done in the above is map the structure of the Lorenz attractor onto Lacan's "schema R" (Figs. 6-7), which describes the möbial and thus unilateral (one-sided) surface of human reality. Lacan himself identifies this surface as a unilateral "projective plane" (Fig.

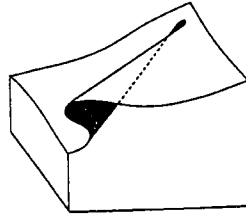


Fig. 9: The phase-space of Rene Thom's cusp catastrophe

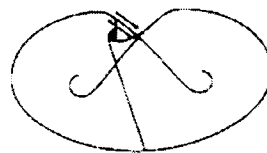


Fig. 10: Mapping of the cusp catastrophe onto the Lorenz attractor

8) defined by an identification of opposite and thus also oppositional points—like the ideal-ego and the ego-ideal—that lie on a line at infinity. Such a mapping is possible because both these surfaces, the attractor and the projective plane, are möbial. On both, that is, two separate sides—and thus systems—are folded onto each other. In this analogy, the concept of the strange attractor can become an important literary reference.

Physically and mathematically, an attractor is “simply any point within an orbit that seems to attract the system to it” (Hayles 147). Some attractors are predictable and thus reversible. The Lorenz attractor, however, has orbits that, although confined to a specific area or envelope, are “chaotic” or “strange,” that is, irregular and irreversible. As N. Katherine Hayles explains, “the orbits stay[ed] within a certain volume . . . but within that volume, no two orbits ever intersect[ed] or coincide[d], an indication that the system never repeat[ed] . . . the same motion exactly” (149). One requisite for this quality of strangeness is that the attractor must be at least three-dimensional, which means that it must be defined by at least three forces. In my mapping, these are the *real* (*id*), the *imaginary* (*ego*) and the *symbolic* (*superego*). Its “odd combination of simplicity and complexity, determinism and unpredictability” (Hayles 149) makes accurately predicting its behavior, as represented in its flow, impossible. To be organized around a strange attractor, a system must, like the psychic system, show a “strong sensitivity to small fluctuations” (Ruelle 25). In the Lorenz attractor, this is best seen at the moment of the catastrophic shift from one leaf—or “side”—to the other, a moment analogous to the shift in Thom’s cusp catastrophe (Figs. 9–10), onto which the schema R can also be mapped (Figs. 11–13).

In the Lorenz attractor, this catastrophic shift is caused by the fact that the outwardly-spiralling flow never hits the identical point when it reaches the border area to which it is attracted by the other force—and thus “side.” At these moments, there is “an intersection of the boundary” (Abraham and Shaw, OLA 23), so the border actually belongs to both sides

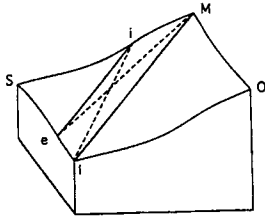


Fig. 11: Mapping of the schema R onto the cusp catastrophe

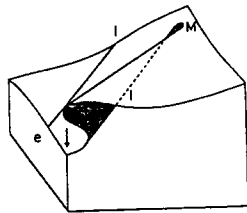


Fig. 12: Mapping of the schema R onto the cusp catastrophe

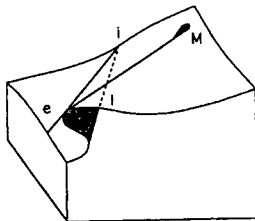
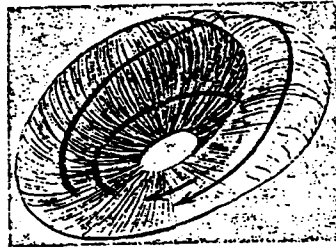
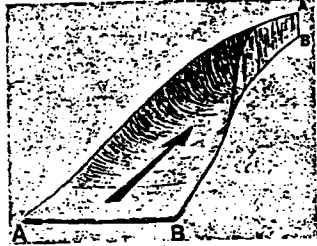
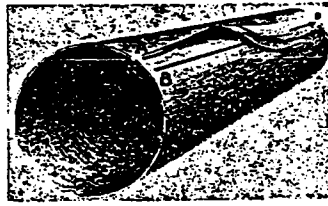


Fig. 13: Mapping of the schema R onto the cusp catastrophe

simultaneously. Pynchon ceaselessly brings the story to such ambiguous intersections. At the Blackstream Hotel, for instance, the real and the spiritual worlds come into contact, so spiritual beings can become real and vice versa: "another order of things . . . [is] believed, through some unseen but potent geometry, to warp like radio signals at sundown the two worlds, to draw them closer, nearly together, out of register only by the thinnest of shadows" (VI 220). Another such border crossing, related explicitly to a—presumably strange—attractor, occurs on the final pages of *Vineland*, when the Holocaust Pixels find "a groove, or *attractor*, that would've been good for the entire trans-night *crossing* and beyond" (384; emphasis added). Another membranous boundary-surface is the TV screen, on which outside reality (the law) and inside fantasy (men in uniform) merge into one unilateral space, as when the two cops come pixeling into Frenesi's semi-tubal reality.¹⁴

At such bifurcation points, or, as Pynchon calls them, "timeless bursts," everything becomes possible: "individuals who in meetings might only bore or be pains in the ass here suddenly being seen to transcend, almost beyond will to move smoothly between baton and victim to take the blow instead . . . there was no telling, in those days, who might unexpectedly change this way, or when" (117-18).

At each of these invisible borders, one system folds over onto the "side" of the other. In this continuous and catastrophic shift—the movement itself is continuous, the systematic shift catastrophic—the bifurcation point, whose function I take to be analogous to that of the Lacanian *real*, functions 1) as the "point at infinity" where opposites are identified and 2) as a "chance generator." Thus its function is different from that of the other two systems. It is "qualitatively



Figs. 14a-c: The folded torus, the horseshoe, and the Rössler attractor (Shaw 99, 94, 94)

invisible," and it operates purely as a "*separatrix*" (Abraham and Shaw, OLA 29; emphasis added). It ensures that, although the flow of the attractor is infinitely expanding, it never leaves the finite spatial envelope and never repeats itself.

The analogy between the topology of chaos- and catastrophe theory and psychic- and literary space becomes even more striking in Robert Shaw's reading of chaos theory against the background of information theory, a topic obviously dear to Pynchon. In "Strange Attractors, Chaotic Behavior, and Information Flow," Shaw differentiates between physical "macroscales," of which we "claim classically to have *complete knowledge*," and "microscales," of which we are "*completely ignorant*" (81). These two seemingly separate levels, which evoke once more Deleuze and Guattari's molar and molecular levels, might also be related, metaphorically, to Freud's differentiation between quantity (related to schizophrenia: the *real*) and quality (related to control: the conjunction of the *imaginary* and the *symbolic*).¹⁵ Shaw's question is precisely the one tackled by Freud, Lacan, and Deleuze and Guattari, especially the Deleuze of *The Fold*: namely, the mode of transfer of information from one level to the other. In answering the question, Shaw also proceeds topologically, arguing that this transfer is not caused or accomplished by the characteristics of the particles *in* the flow, but by the very form of the flow pattern: "*by parts of the flow which have definite geometrical forms*" . . . "particularly those of 'strange attractors'" (81; emphasis added).¹⁶ Shaw links the ratio of information directly to the topology of the flow, arguing that a shift from the macro- to the micro-level is similar to a loss of information because the smaller the measured unit gets, the less information can be generated from the system, so that "*some accessible information has been destroyed by the contracting flow*" (84).¹⁷ In this case, the system becomes more entropic. Conversely, a transfer from the microscopic to the macroscopic level *generates* information. In this case, "*information has been created by the expanding flow. Some hitherto unobservable information . . . has been brought up to macroscopic expression*" (84) in a movement of negentropy and self-organization that recapitulates the dynamics of a continuously expanding flow.

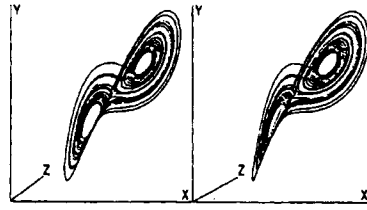


Fig. 15: The Lorenz attractor (Rössler, EC 397)

Normal attractors do not create further information after the movement is terminated (in this case, there is no more new information at all), or after they have become periodic (in this case, the information merely repeats itself). In contrast, strange attractors "systematically create

new information which was not implicit in the initial conditions of the flow" (Shaw 85), because "any physical realization of them systematically brings the uncertainties, the bath of microscopic randomness [the *real*] in which anything physical is immersed, up to macroscopic [the *imaginary* and the *symbolic*] expression" (93-94). In other words, a chaotic envelope "takes information from microscopic length scales and projects it up to macroscopic expression" (107).¹⁸ On this level, the new information throws the system into a completely new orbit. In the same manner, *the Lacanian unconscious is brought to a conscious level by the very topology of the apparatus of translation*. There is thus a close correspondence between the way a butterfly wing can give rise to an earthquake and the way the image of a specific object can trigger a trauma, because in both cases a small, almost invisible and unmeasurable cause leads to a great effect. In fact, in a strange attractor, then, as in the psychic system, information travels up and down scales from the quantitative to the qualitative—and thus from the unconscious to the conscious—and vice versa.¹⁹ Unilateral surfaces like that of the strange attractor or the möbius strip allow it to think such continuous passages outside a logocentric framework.

In his—albeit preliminary—taxonomy of such information-creating surfaces, Shaw relates all of them to the concept of folding. Examples include the folded torus (Fig. 14a),²⁰ the horseshoe (Fig. 14b),²¹ and the Rössler attractor (Fig. 14c)—a variation on the Lorenz attractor.²² Otto E. Rössler describes the Lorenz attractor as "two unstable foci . . . suspended in an attracting surface each, and mutually connected in such a way that the outer portion of either spiral is 'glued' onto the more inner

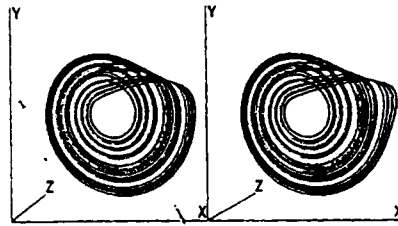


Fig. 16: The Rössler attractor, or folded Lorenz attractor (Rössler, EC 398)

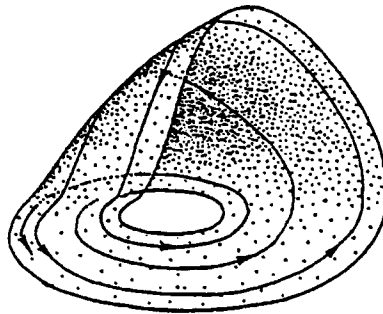


Fig. 17: The Rössler attractor, or folded Lorenz attractor (Abraham and Shaw, DGB 94)

parts of the second and vice versa" (EC 397) (Fig. 15).

Through a mathematical folding, this two-leaved attractor can be transformed into an attractor with identical mathematical characteristics but only one leaf, the Rössler attractor. It is then a "single spiral. The outer portion returns, after an appropriate twist (so that the formation of a Möbius band is involved . . .), toward the side of the same spiral, with the outermost parts again facing the more central parts" (EC 397) (Figs. 16–17). Rössler provides a model of this attractor in which its möbius character is even more visible (CBSRS 262) (Figs. 18–19).

Shaw refers to the Rössler attractor as it is shown in Fig. 16 when he describes the attractor as "a two-dimensional ribbon, [that] after expanding to twice its width, is folded over, 'sutured' together . . . and mapped back onto itself. . . . [T]he two-dimensional object . . . is [then] given a half-twist to the right or left, the ends joined together and the resulting object embedded in 3 space" (94).

It is difficult, especially with the mention of "suture," not to be struck by the similarity between the möbius surface in Rössler's variation of the Lorenz attractor and the möbius topology of the Lacanian concept of an inevitably phantasmatic reality. In fact, already David Ruelle found the phrase "strange attractor" "psychoanalytically suggestive" (qtd. in Gleick 133). One might, then, see in the topology of the strange attractor a figurization of the topology of psychic space Lacan provides in the schema R. Deleuze stresses this möbius topology when he explains that the phantasm "transcends inside and outside, since its topological property is to bring 'its' internal and external sides into contact, in order for them to unfold onto a single side." This structure is what makes the phantasm analogous to the event: "Neither active nor passive, neither internal nor external, neither imaginary nor real—phantasms have indeed the impassibility and ideality of the

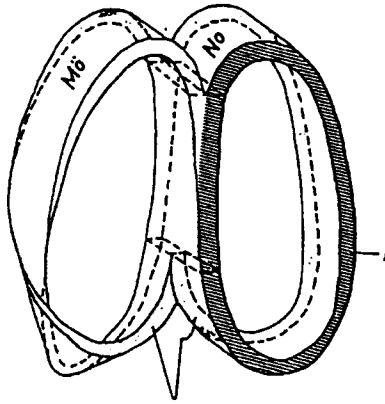


Fig. 18: The möbius character of the Lorenz attractor (Rössler, CBSRS 262)

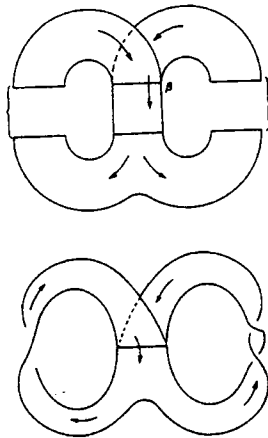


Fig. 19: The möbius character of the Lorenz attractor according to knot theory (Williams 148)

event" (LS 211). As in a strange attractor, "the phantasm covers the distance between psychic systems with ease, going *from consciousness to the unconscious and vice versa . . . from the inner to the outer and conversely*, as if it itself belonged to a surface dominating and articulating both the unconscious and the conscious, or to a line connecting and arranging the inner and the outer over two sides" (217; emphasis added).²³

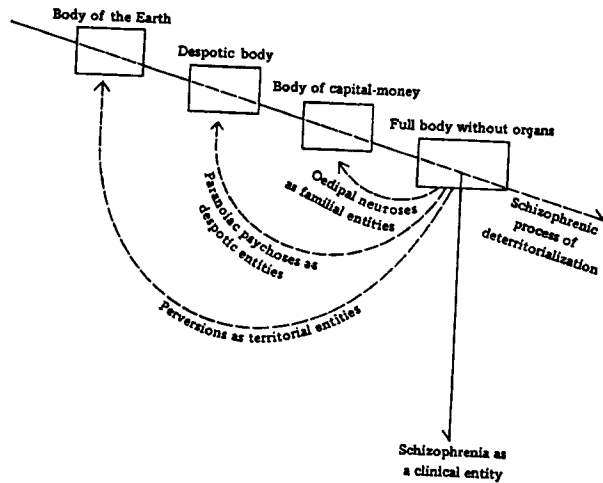


Fig. 20: Schizophrenic breakthrough and deflection (AO 282)

Mapping the flow of the Lorenz or Rössler attractor onto the schema R implies that a breakthrough to a schizophrenic field is impossible, because the impossible insistence of the cut and the twist is responsible for the instigation of the play of condensation, metaphor and the signified, and the movement of displacement, metonymy and the signifier operative in the flow. By bringing into play the purely contingent traumatic trigger that causes the repressed to reappear retroactively from the future, the *real* also inaugurates, again through its very inaccessibility, the repetition compulsion, which is operative in *Vineland* at all times, especially in the many masturbatory scenes that puncture the narrative. Its excluded insistence, its consistent return to its place and its inaccessibility, then, cause the two expanding forces of the *imaginary* and the *symbolic* to fold onto each other, thus creating the möbius topology of the envelope of reality. In *Vineland*, correspondingly, the revolution does not break through the wall of schizophrenia as it is visualized in *Anti-Oedipus* (Fig. 20). The second—or even nanosecond—the subject becomes more than “eventual,” it

deflects back into the repressive system. In fact, even this temporal succession is inaccurate, because the subject has always already been un-eventful. The subject is, thus, catastrophically, neither fully controlled nor fully schizophrenic, but situated in an uncomfortable middle, a space like that defined by Thom's butterfly catastrophe (Figs. 21–22).²⁴

But what about schizophrenia? As I have argued, in möbial space, the schizophrenic field has become a structural and ontological cut.²⁵ As the point at infinity, this schizophrenic moment of the cut denotes the limit of a representational, literary surface that is always already, and "strangely" looped. The cut is unrepresentable, but insistent: it has effects. And this is precisely its function in *Vineland*. Accordingly, there can be only indirect, unwritten glimpses of the body without organs and desiring-production.

Symptomatically, it is in a moment of purely irresponsible (and thus tragically cooptable), mindless counterforce that Pynchon introduces the "indispensable *Italian Wedding Fake Book*, by Deleuze & Guattari" (VI 97). Other such moments are the "motorhead valley roulette," in which the subjects "shared the terrors and ecstasies of the passive, taken rider" (37), an image reminiscent of Deleuze and Guattari's fluid ego on a "line of flight" diagram (TP 3); Zoyd's moment of transfenestration, where the cooptation is probably at its most acute; DL's violently "reclaiming her body" (128) from her phallic father²⁶ and from what Mucho Maas envisions as a "'Fat Police,'" a police after "anything that could remotely please any of your senses, because they need to *control* all that'" (313; emphasis added); Takeshi's "literally mindless joy" (180), that takes up *Gravity's Rainbow's* "mindless" games; the myth of a paradise where people could "'just be'" (166); Weed, when he realizes the nature of police, "[w]ithout thinking, become pure action for the first time" (207); Pastorius's quest for "premodal innocence" (224); and Prairie on the pinball machine, squealing "at the full sensuous effect" (314).²⁷

Especially in *Vineland*, the perspective point of all these moments is the body of America as a body without organs: "the green free America of their childhoods" (314).²⁸ This unwritten and unwritable America is the image of a completely "deterritorialized socius" (AO 33)

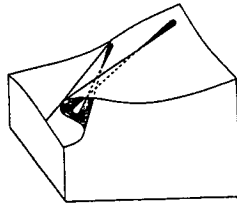


Fig. 21: The phase-space of Thom's butterfly catastrophe

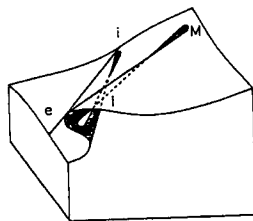


Fig. 22: Mapping of the schema R onto the butterfly catastrophe

with a disorganized, “smooth [rather than striated], slippery, opaque, taut surface” (9) that resists even the schizophrenic cuts of a nomadic subject without “fixed identity” that wanders over this “body without organs” (16).²⁹ Yet this America is, like childhood, irretrievably and always already lost. The reinsertion into Oedipal culture will never cease to have already happened, and in this sense *Vineland* is a self-ironic *Bildungsroman*: a *roman* about the tragedy of *Bildung*, of the shift from becoming to having become, and the subsequent vicissitudes of once more un-becoming.

Yet psychoanalysis, chaos theory and catastrophe theory all teach that conditions are never stable or linear. This is taken up by Pynchon in the juxtapositions and mirrorings of *Vineland*'s several generations. Analogous to the infinity of revolutions in the Lorenz or the Rössler attractor, there will be different ideal-egos and different revolutionaries for each generation. In fact, the presence of the computer in *Vineland* implies the shift into an even more acorporeal state, into a network of what Arthur Kroker and Michael Weinstein call cybernetic “organs without body” (33). Pynchon leaves open whether Prairie will become a revolutionary. Most probably, however, her *jouissance*, or mindless joy, will not lie in skateboarding on the *real* body of the mall of America, but in speeding on the cyberbody of the information highway and in driving into virtual fog banks of data.³⁰

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Notes

¹“To overturn the theater of representation into the order of desiring-production: this is the whole task of schizoanalysis” (AO 271).

²“With every structure dislodged, every memory abolished, every organism set aside, every link undone, [partial objects] function as raw partial objects, dispersed working parts of a machine that is itself dispersed. In short, *partial objects are the molecular functions of the unconscious*” (AO 324); “[t]he partial objects are not the expression of a fragmented, shattered organism, which would presuppose a destroyed totality or the freed parts of a whole” (AO 326).

³Deleuze and Guattari argue that capitalism spans the poles of the despotic, concentric Urstate and the ex-centric capitalist flows, oscillating “between the reactionary paranoid overcharges and the subterranean, schizophrenic, and revolutionary charges” (AO 260).

⁴See esp.: “Civilized modern societies are defined by processes of decoding and deterritorialization. But *what they deterritorialize with one hand, they reterritorialize with the other*” (AO 257).

⁵See also Brian Massumi's discussion of postmodernism's deterritorializations and fractalizations of the subject, its partialization under the

aegis of a specifically capitalist agenda of mutation: “becoming-consumer” (136).

⁶Massumi’s assertion that “*the distinction between molecular and molar has nothing whatever to do with scale*” (54) is theoretically correct, but it may be a bit too categorical, especially with reference to human populations rather than purely physical ones, like heated water. Although the theoretical difference is that “in a molecular population (mass) there are only local connections between discrete particles” while “in the case of a molar population (superindividual or person) locally connected discrete particles have become correlated at a distance” (54), this theoretical difference might be related to an inherent, tragic effect of a cultural shift from small, local aggregates to large, global ones. Massumi’s argument differs from mine in that his perspective point is a “monstrous *fractal attractor*” that diagrams life and onto which “*whole attractors*” (64) are superimposed. In Massumi’s discussion, Oedipalization is the prime movement by which a “fractal attractor is eclipsed by a whole attractor” (74). In contrast, I am dealing with the strangely attractive forces operative within Oedipalization.

⁷See especially: “The unconscious does not speak, it engineers. It is not expressive or representative, but productive” (AO 180). See also: “For the unconscious itself is no more structural than personal, it does not symbolize any more than it imagines or represents; it engineers, it is machinic. Neither imaginary nor symbolic, it is the Real in itself, the ‘impossible real’ and its production” (AO 53).

⁸Through this temporality, the subject is, as Louis Althusser has shown, always already interpellated and thus always already ideological.

⁹As Deleuze and Guattari stress, the cut is the “schizze” (AO 39) of schizophrenia.

¹⁰This also defines the “fields” of the camera and the gun.

¹¹Massumi’s discussion of *Vendemiaire* (108–13) and the subsequent discussion of fascism can be read as a direct parallel to *Vineland*, especially given his definition of fascism as “an attack by the ‘whole’ of society, its image of unity or plane of transcendence, against its ‘parts,’ its bodies or plane of immanence. It is desire turned against itself”; and “the incorporeal transformation of a system operating under two deterministic constraints and tending toward stable equilibrium into a highly unstable, *frenetically* dissipative structure.” In Pynchon, however, the “anarchic . . . schizophrenic” pole of “becoming-other” (116; emphasis added) is continually played out against the revolutionaries’ and Frenesi’s own wish for order and sameness. As Massumi himself writes, “novelists such as Thomas Pynchon . . . point to the ubiquity of fascism-paranoia in modern American ‘democracy’” (198).

¹²See in this context, “they peered at the maps, each with that enigmatic blank in the middle, like the outline of a state in a geography test, belonging to something called ‘the U.S.,’ but not the one they knew” (VI 250).

¹³This is the moment when, according to Deleuze and Guattari, “the schizo, continually wandering about . . . plunges further and further into the realm of deterritorialization, reaching the furthest limits of the decomposition of the socius on the surface of his own body without organs” (AO 35).

¹⁴Pynchon uses such fractal shifts from the micro- to the macro-level in describing the fractal coast near the campus (“The shape of the brief but legendary Trasero County coast . . . repeated on its own scale the greater curve between San Diego and Terminal Island” [VI 204]), and in images of a “fractal halo” (381) and “invisible fractals of smell” (323).

¹⁵Cf.: “There is a whole biology of schizophrenia; molecular biology is itself schizophrenic—as is microphysics” (AO 289).

¹⁶The fact that this transfer proceeds within a fundamentally irreversible system allows for a further analogy between chaos theory and psychoanalysis, because psychic time is similarly irreversible. As the origin of a chaotic system (the event) cannot be deduced, the primal scene cannot be deduced, and for the same reasons. What is important from a topological viewpoint is that the attractors’ informational properties are directly related to their topological properties: “the information generated or destroyed by a given iterated map is a *topological property* associated with the connectivity of that map” (Shaw 91).

¹⁷“If we have a completely determined outcome, with probability unity, the information content is zero” (Shaw 83).

¹⁸See also Deleuze, who sees microperceptions as “little foldings” and macroperceptions as “great composite foldings” (F 87). He differentiates between “molecular perceptions . . . [and] molar perceptions” (87). In Leibniz, the passage from “inconspicuous [unconscious] perceptions does not go from part to whole, but from the *ordinary* to what is *notable or remarkable*” (87–88). The shift from one to the other is caused by differential relations between minute perceptions. “*Differential relations always select minute perceptions that play a role in each case*, and bring to light . . . the conscious perception that comes forth. Thus differential calculus is the psychic mechanism of perception” (90).

¹⁹The similarities between chaos theory and psychic space run parallel to those between chaos theory and poststructuralism that Hayles lists in *Chaos Bound*. The former similarities, however, allow a theory of *how* quantity is translated into quality and back, because this transfer is similar to the one between the unconscious and the conscious. In this way, “the ceaseless and tumultuous flow of *events* in the world reflects in a very direct way the chaotic motion of the heat bath. The constant injection of new information into the macroscales may place severe limits on our predictive ability, but it as well insures the constant variety and richness of our experience” (Shaw 108; emphasis added). The corresponding view of the world is that, “if ‘the world’ can be regarded as a flow governed by some immense partial differential

equation, then *information* moves across the face of the world along the characteristics of the regions of flow from *sources* . . . to *sinks*. . . . Very generally, then, we should expect to find ‘excess noise’ emanating from the sources. ‘Events’ initiated by this ‘noise’ are inherently *unpredictable*, caused as they are by random motions of the heat bath” (108).

²⁰This surface has “*no fixed points, no boundaries*.” Shaw notes “the close similarity of the curl . . . to Thom’s ‘cusp’ catastrophe. . . . In fact, we can crib a chapter from catastrophe theory, and claim that . . . [the folded torus] is the *only* boundary-free strange attractor in three dimensions” (100).

²¹This surface has “*no fixed points but boundaries included*” (Shaw 100).

²²This surface has “*fixed points and boundaries included*” (Shaw 100).

²³Deleuze comments directly on the möbius character of the phantasm: “the phantasm has the property of bringing in contact with each other the inner and the outer and *uniting them on a single side*” (LS 220; emphasis added). He also writes of “Lacan’s paradox: two series being given, one signifying and the other signified” (48). Through a temporal retroaction the phantasm brings about a “resonance” between two series: “sense may be directly apprehended only by breaking the circuit, in an operation analogous to that of breaking open and unfolding the Möbius strip. We cannot think of the condition in the image of the conditioned” (123).

²⁴See also Zeeman, especially the application of catastrophe theory to the treatment of anorexia nervosa.

²⁵“Schizophrenia is at once the wall, the breaking through this wall, and the failures of this breakthrough” (AO 136).

²⁶Note, however, that even she “suffered but would, did, not cry after her lost simplicity—only desired it, as an insomniac might lust for sweet, potent sleep” (VI 177).

²⁷In moments like this Pynchon evokes what Massumi calls “anarchy-schizophrenia” as an “anoedipal desire that respects the partiality of bodies (their polymorphous connective potential; their ‘perversity’; their difference). It induces them to follow the fractal attractor of the world as an infinitely open system” (119).

²⁸See also the image of the body of the Earth as a body without organs in *A Thousand Plateaus*: “This body without organs is permeated by unformed, unstable matters, by flows in all directions, by free intensities or nomadic singularities, by mad or transitory particles” (40).

²⁹“Nothing here is representative; rather, it is all life and lived experience” (AO 19).

³⁰I would like to acknowledge that this essay has profited immensely, especially in its discussion of chaos theory, from my numerous conversations with Sven Haferkamp.

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