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PLAGIARISM RULES AWARENESS STATEMENT

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I hereby declare that I have read and understood the above.

Name: Nick Ruhe

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Date and signature: 4 July 2017

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Thomas Pynchon and the Case of California

The Beach, Technology, and Entertainment in *Bleeding Edge*

Data provided by America's CIA stated that in 2015, the United States counted roughly 276 million internet users and had an estimated 798 million passengers fly, both internationally and intranationally, using registered air carriers. Although Pynchon's characters in *Bleeding Edge* are not observed going into airplanes, it is the connection to the internet that aids Maxine Tarnow in her investigation into Gabriel Ice, those around him, and his girlfriend Tallis. She states that "[f]rom what I can tell off the Internet, she's the company comptroller at hashslingerz" (Pynchon, 119), and illustrates that the internet serves as a useful data-gathering tool. Not only is it evident that internet consumption, and air travel, happen on an incredible scale, it should also be noted that they are far beyond that which is considered 'bleeding edge technology', which refers to a category of technology that has "[n]o proven uses, high risk" (Pynchon, *Bleeding* 78). In other words, telecommunication providers and the aviation industry officials have it in their best interest to maintain the safety and stability of their services, and do so by implementing security systems. Whether those protective measures are physical or immaterial, they are in place to ensure the continuity of their business operations. The active, and financially motivated, business strategies of these aerospace mega corporations, like Boeing and Lockheed, and nationwide telecom giants, such as Verizon and Comcast, are contrasted by the almost inactive product-consumption of the American people.

The image of a middle-aged man, or any person, planted lazily on the couch and watching television, is well a documented phenomenon. A quick glance at the GIPHY website, an internet archive that stores animated fragments of TV shows and movies, provides evidence on the commonality of the aforementioned trope (“Watching TV”). This is also an activity that sees a lot of attention in Pynchon’s literary works. Entities such as Thanatoids, from *Vineland*, are restless spirits of people latched to the material world, whilst being immaterial themselves, and passively absorb the audio-visually transmitted messages of television programming, spending “at least part of every waking hour with an eye on the tube” (170-1). The couch-bound TV viewers of the Topanga Mansion in *Inherent Vice* display a similar attachment to the Tube’s moving pictures. The novel comments that “after a while the concentration level among the viewers had Doc feeling a little restless. He realized the scope of mental damage one push on the ‘off’ button of a TV zapper could inflict on this roomful of obsessives” (Pynchon, 128). It is clear that the element of televisual distraction, and addiction as an extension of it, features frequently within Pynchon’s California-based novels, and can be considered an agent in the pacification of a populace, as is illustrated by the example from *Inherent Vice*. These Tubers’ mental stability depends on maintaining an active connection between their eyes and the TV.

An observable difference between Pynchon’s *Inherent Vice* and *Bleeding Edge* is the setting of the novels, with the former set in California, and the latter based in New York. What should be taken into account during an analysis of *Bleeding Edge* is the work’s setting, and the distinctive attitude that it is argued to channel.

The great defining characteristic of New York is that it is indifferent. There’s a great indifference to everybody and everything. New York doesn’t get excited about anything. Wall Street is here, who cares? Broadway theater is here, who cares? So, all

the television is here, who cares? One thing after another. Fashion industry, who cares? Hollywood gets so excited about the fact that they make movies, who cares? And Chicago gets so excited about the fact that they got some banks, big deal. New York doesn't care, and that indifference is liberating. That means you can do anything in New York you want, and it doesn't care. (Westlake)

The two aspects to be taken away from La Huit's interview with Donald Westlake, before a discussion of its relevance to *Bleeding Edge* is appropriate, are the analysis of Westlake's claim and a closer look at the mystery aspect of New York's coastal opposite.

In this interview, Donald Westlake was asked to speculate what type of character New York might be in detective fiction, his answer serving as the epigraph to Pynchon's *Bleeding Edge*. He voiced that the city would not be "the detective, because the detective cares who killed, New York doesn't care. And it wouldn't be the murderer, because the murderer has to care about something to kill someone". He answers that, in this case illustrated by means of Pynchon's version, "[i]t would be the enigmatic suspect who knows the real story but isn't going to tell it" (Westlake).

A binary opposition exists between New York and California. The word "indifference" itself, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* meaning the "[a]bsence of feeling for or against" (OED "indifference"), defines New York, as argued by Westlake. If Pynchon's Californian novels are to indicate a defining characteristic, they embody the word "obsession", meaning "a compulsive interest or preoccupation" (OED "obsession"). Displayed by the paranoid characters of his Californian trilogy, containing *The Crying of Lot 49*, *Inherent Vice*, and *Vineland*, is this concept of obsession. It virtually pushes and pulls protagonists like Oedipa to investigate the Tristero conspiracy, and Doc, whose drug-fueled

PI work drives him to chase after the Golden Fang. In this case New York asks ‘who cares?’, and remains indifferent, to which California responds with a paranoid ‘what if?’.

However, the Californian question is transplanted into the New York setting.

This is illustrated by March asking “[w]hat if it’s Islamic terrorists or something? ... That hashslingerz money pipeline to the Emirates, remember? Banks in Dubai and shit, I couldn’t stop going back, over and over it, what if that was helping finance the attack on the Trade Center?” (Pynchon, *Bleeding* 119, 343). To be extracted from this, is the fact that a change of setting has not removed the Californian obsessiveness from Pynchon’s *Bleeding Edge* and its New York setting. Maxine, as well, is dragged into enquiring after Gabriel Ice and his sinister activities, and exhibits the obsessiveness found in Oedipa and Doc.

Tracking Pynchon’s movement across the United States of America, it can be found that he spent a considerable amount time in Aptos, California, during the countercultural decade of the nineteen-seventies, and would have come into contact with the place’s surfer, hippie, and narcotic culture (Glassow). The elements which are prevalent in all his California-based novels, also known as the Californian novels, consist of: themes of addiction and substance abuse, whether those are digital or physical, television or weed; paranoia and conspiracies, often on a corporate, if not governmental, scale; and discussions concerning scientific theorem, digital media entertainment and its usefulness as a tool of distraction, as well as California’s beach culture. According to McClintock and Miller:

[t]ypically, California is seen as representing in Pynchon’s fiction what it so often represents in popular culture: ‘postmodern America.’ A place of sleek beauty manufactured to mask inescapable corruption, disillusionment, or mere emptiness – what Judith Chambers describes, quoting *Vineland*, as ‘a land of surfaces and

underbellies where the fog ... [lifts] to reveal not the borderlands of the eternal after all, but only quotidian California again'. (40)

It is correct to postulate that California, underneath its appearance, is not what appears to be, and it has to be said that Pynchon's Californian novels display the ever-perpetuated cycle of rejuvenation, illustrated by the notion that the old, or native, is often replaced by influxes of new energy. The processes of erasure and reconstruction resurfaces, time and time again, in Pynchon's California (McClintock & Miller 50). Of many innumerable examples, there are two that stand out the most. In *Inherent Vice*, it is Tariq Khalil who recites the "sad history of L.A. land use, as Aunt Reet never tired of pointing out. Mexican families bounced out of Chavez Ravine to build Dodger Stadium, American Indians swept out of Bunker Hill for the Music Center, Tariq's neighborhood bulldozed aside for Channel View Estates" (Pynchon 17), and in *Bleeding Edge* similar practices are to be observed, also elaborating on eviction processes, referring to the time "when landlords were reverting to type and using Gestapo techniques to get sitting tenants to move ... Apartment doors removed for 'routine maintenance,' garbage uncollected, attack dogs, hired goons, eighties pop played really loud" (Pynchon 54).

To be taken from all examples, is not the geographical distance that separates them from one another, *Inherent Vice* is set in California, considered to be a Californian novel, and *Bleeding Edge* is set almost in entirety in New York City and its immediate vicinity (McClintock & Miller 189), instead, like the Silicon-Valley-to-Silicon-Alley characters of Justin and Vyrva, like Pynchon's move back from West to East, it is the virtual transplantation of California, into *Bleeding Edge*, that ought to be considered here. The novel illustrates its connection to the State through the inclusion of the five defining industries that characterize California, those being those being the computer, aviation, film, pornographic,

and the Beach. Although not geographically, *Bleeding Edge*, when analytically dissected with pen markings and fluorescent highlights, bleeds California, and may be considered the fourth Californian novel.

It is important to state that the five defining industries of California will be discussed in their historical context, and while the focus of this research is mostly concerned with Pynchon's Californian narratives, and less on the physical entities of the aforementioned industries, as will become clear later, a closer look at the 'meatspace' of these entities is essential in order to understand their relevance to Pynchon.

As a nexus of high-tech development in the United States, Southern California is considered the West Coast's technopolis, where after the Second World War its aviation industry "blossomed into a great aerospace-electronics manufacturing complex whose growth was fueled by large-scale federal defense spending over the postwar decades" (Scott 3). Catering to the military industrial complex, as well as providing airplanes for the registered air carriers, companies such as Lockheed Martin and The Boeing Company are the aeronautic industry's main innovators in the field of weaponized rocket technology, but also develop and construct many of the well-known commercial airplanes used by corporations across the globe. For example, it was at Boeing, in Seattle, that Pynchon got involved with the Bomarc project, as a suspected writer for the *Bomarc Service News* (Wisnicki 9-10, 20-1), and is clear that his knowledge of thermodynamics and flight-data recorders, which are integral to the aviation industry, feature in *The Crying of Lot 49*'s discussion of Maxwell's demon and entropy (Pynchon 105). Boeing, however, also has a strong presence in California. One notable example is its Satellite Development Center in El Segundo, California (Boeing). With multiple research facilities, all around the world, it should also be noted that Lockheed Martin has its Advanced Technology Center in Palo Alto, located in the northwest corner of Santa Clara County.

America's hub of advanced computer research and digital development, Palo Alto, positioned in the now famous Silicon Valley, is a location of notable import to California's high-technology industry, as well as being an agent of scientific advancement. Having come forth as a major growth center, the place:

emerged in Southern California after about the mid-1950s [as] one of the largest and most dynamic electronics manufacturing complexes in the United States, with a multifaceted focus on computers, military and space communications equipment and avionics, and a diversity of components from printed circuit boards to advanced semiconductor devices. (Scott 137).

Bleeding Edge's direct link to Silicon Valley is indicated by Vyrva's reference that she knows "of one or two people back in Palo Alto" (Pynchon 38), clearly casting herself as a former resident.

The industries close in proximity to California's center of technology, categorizable into the plain shape of Hollywood and its equally lucrative, but more perverse, counterpart settled in the San Fernando area, make up what is known as the visual entertainment industry. Getting to facts and figures, it is stated that the San Fernando Valley leads the pornographic industry, estimated to make between \$1 and \$4 billion of the total \$12 billion generated annually by the porn industry in the US" (Danta 16-7), a total comparable to the \$10.5 billion Hollywood made in 2014 (IMDB). Furthermore, it should be noted that there is a reason for the growth of the porn industry in California. San Pornando, a nickname for the valley, has plentiful film locations and enjoys warm weather virtually year-round, but more importantly it has what Danta calls a "ready supply of Hollywood hopefuls to potentially lure into the business" (17). Other than being incredibly predatory, it is reiterative of the "sleek beauty

manufactured to mask inescapable corruption” (McClintock & Miller 40). It displays that the young and hopeful of America, those who believe in the American dream, are affected by the deep-seething tendrils of corrupted California, and its exploitative businesses.

Related to the foundation on top of which all the previously mentioned industries built their fortune, stretched all along California’s coastal border, idly spreads the Beach and that which it represents. The Beach is a prime location for the State’s very own surfer culture, musically represented by bands such as the Beach Boys and is an attractive site for national and international tourism. It is also the the country’s continental terminus when approached from the East. It is in *Inherent Vice* that the concept of ‘the Beach’ is represented the most, both in physical, as well as conceptual, form. Fictional places like Gordita Beach, are home to, amongst countless others, the drug-addicted Doc Sportello, one of the many who are stuck in California’s corrupted sludge. In the early nineteen-sixties, seeking a life removed from common culture, the hippie ideals were attractive enough that “[y]outh flocked to San Francisco to be part of the hippie scene, to dance, to listen to rock and roll, to protest the Vietnam war, and to take drugs, particularly marijuana, hashish, and psychedelic drugs” (Wesson 155). Defining the counter-cultural hippies differently, although in and of themselves they are already a culture, it can be said that they are the culture of the mellow, its slowness attributed to the effects of cannabinoid consumption “associated with impaired function in a variety of cognitive and performance tasks, including impaired memory, altered time sense and decrements in tasks such reaction time, learning perception, motor coordination and attention” (Ameri 318). The culture of the unresponsives, as perceived in *Inherent Vice*, whose addicts are not only narcotically subdued, but also audio-visually tamed, those paranoid Californians are Pynchon’s way, but it has to be recognized that there are more ways out there, of representing the Beach.

Similar to a black box device gathering input, inserting the information into its machinated body, grinding its gears whilst transforming, infusing, and molecularly reshaping the original material, outputting the final product in an effort of producing something uniquely new, Pynchon has taken the defining characteristics of California. From the quarry that is this State, Pynchon has sculpted three pillars; the propaganda poster-clad and distractive pillar of entertainment, the distinctly electronic, but also immaterial, technological pillar, and the counter-cultural sandstone pillar of *The Beach*, all of them coated in a thick layer of paranoid sensitivity.

Although pornography is only mentioned scarcely, Heidi comments during a conversation with Maxine that she “[t]hought it might be Horst watching porn on the Internet” (Pynchon, *Bleeding* 335), it is the concept of voyeurism, in the pornographic sense, that is woven into the narrative of *Bleeding Edge*. Embodied by the self-employed cameraman and his pornographic intrusiveness, Reg is the executing agent to record adult footage. It has to be made clear, however, that the images recorded by Reg are not of pornographic nature, rather the act of filming with a handheld camera, like an amateur enthusiast capturing his POV scenes, and documenting raw footage, whilst also being an intrusive force, illustrated by him walking unsuspectingly through a door, confronting him with “this room, no porcelain in sight, looks like a lab, test benches, equipment and shit, cables, plugs, parts and labor for some job order I quickly realized I don’t want to know nothin about. Plus then’s when I notice all the jabberin A-rabs around, who the minute I come through the door they all dummy up” (Pynchon, *Bleeding* 91), frames Reg as a pornographer. The viewer of the footage, or the reader of this passage, is the intended perverse audience, which, much like a person watching a porn video at home, is the outsider privy to the secret situation, their gaze penetrating into a world behind otherwise closed doors. The surge in internet popularity has aided pornography

in opening these doors, this Pandora's box, and removes the barrier between private and public.

Throughout his Californian novel sequence, Pynchon has illustrated the constancy of one particular medium of entertainment, and that apparatus is the audio-visual home-entertainment device known as the TV, or the Tube as it is commonly referred to. Immediately linking the modern concept of television to California's beach culture by means of surfer lingo, it should be explained that 'tube' also refers to a curling wave in the middle of collapsing in on itself. Perfect for spreading ideas and ideals, circulating propagandistic messages, and generally an instrument of distraction, the Tube in *Bleeding Edge* illustrates very clearly that it has the ability to do all of these. One example within the first thirty-five pages is that Otis and Fiona, who practically race to reach the TV before their daily cartoon violence programming, 'The Aggro Hour', starts. Airing a particularly inspiring show, containing the admirable superheroes Disrespect and The Contaminator, a message of anti-governmental sentiment is acted out by the show's resident reverse trash collector, who "for justice goes around strewing garbage through disagreeable government agencies, greedy corporations, even entire countries nobody likes much, rerouting waste lines, burying his antagonists beneath mountains of toxic grossness" (Pynchon, *Bleeding* 31-2). The scene is lighthearted and innocent, taking in consideration that cartoon actions are exaggerated most of the time, but the underlying essence of the message is visible to the observant eye, and what Rickels rightly notes is that "TV is [...] technology, based on conversion" (165). The Tube can be argued to instill anti-governmental values in these children.

Comparable to the great migration of co-participated movie entertainment to the in-home situation of the modern times, the arcade game halls of the nineties saw a decline in visitation due to an "upswing in the sales of home video game systems helping to draw teens back into the home as they were being encouraged to leave public space" (Riismandel 78).

Going into the Dotcom era, garage-made games like *Pong* were being replaced by visually stimulating and violence-filled games such as *Doom* and *Goldeneye 007*. In the same chapter as the previous example, Ziggy and Otis, with Fiona spectating, are “intensely attending to a screen on which is unfolding a first-person shooter, with a generous range of weaponry in a cityscape that looks a lot like New York” (Pynchon, *Bleeding* 33). They are glued to the screen and appear in to be in an unresponsive state, simultaneously dispatching of people left and right, which suggests that the Tube has encapsulated these children and removed them from the public spaces outside of their homes.

Returning to indifference, and the people who display it, caused by media distractions, shown by *Bleeding Edge*'s characters, holding the candle to Maxine's significant other, it is in Horst Loeffler that we find traits similar to those exhibited by the TV-bound characters of Pynchon's Californian novels. Showing carelessness instead of exhibiting concern, during:

That evening unaccustomed laughter from the bedroom. Horst is horizontal front of the tube, helplessly, for Horst, amused. For some reason he's watching NBC instead of the BioPiX channel. A diffident long-haired person in amber sunglasses is doing stand-up on some late-night show. A month after the worst tragedy in everybody's lifetime and Horst is laughing his ass off. (Pynchon, *Bleeding* 340)

It appears that the events of 9/11 have become irrelevant to most of the unconcerned New Yorkers, who, like Horst, have moved on with their lives. What can be said, or concluded, about this idea, is that the indifference Westlake speaks of, has been re-instilled in people. Horst, when compared to *Inherent Vice*'s Topanga Mansion party-goers, is not so different from being complacent and oblivious to the event unfolding around him.

Similar to the effects that drugs have on the human body, which in California's case of counter-cultural consumers, that narcotic is mostly weed, a process of intake, immediate response, and outcome, can be observed in the receiver of the audio-visually transmitted waves of entertainment. The concept of a never-ending youthful story, explained more succinctly by Lippit, is digitalized and transmitted by one medium; "Television, in Rickels' storehouse of appliances, creates the space for infinite adolescence which in turn provides the television with its 24-hour programming" (1092). Clearly, Californian entertainment industries such as Disney play into this, and it is the cartoonish contents they put on display that is reminiscent of a childhood eternal, but a different event in *Bleeding Edge* motivates child-like behavior.

The aging process is derailed from its temporal tracks after the events of 9/11, as is observed by Maxine and Heidi. Maxine, "noticing the same three kids waiting on the corner for a school bus ... saw this time, standing in exactly the same spot, [...] three middle-aged men, gray-haired, less youthfully turned out, and yet she knew, shivering a little, that these were the *same kids*, the same faces, only forty, fifty years older" (Pynchon, *Bleeding* 336), is clearly observing rapid aging. Heidi, on the other hand, exclaims:

Can't you feel it, how everybody's regressing? 11 September infantilized this country. It had a chance to grow up, instead it chose to default back to childhood. I'm in the street yesterday, behind me are a couple of high-school girls having one of these teenage conversations, 'So I was like, "Oh, my God?"' and he's like, "I didn't say I wasn't see-eeen her?"' and when I finally turn to look at them, here are these two women my own age. Older! *Your* age, who should know better, really. Like trapped in a fuckin time warp or something. (Pynchon, *Bleeding* 336)

To be taken from these fragments is that traumatic events infantilize the adult and age the young, but this statement leaves out these passages' connection to television.

It is argued that, although many witnessed the events of 9/11 directly, for a larger audience “the experience has come to them mediated, mostly by television ... the purpose is to get people cranked up in a certain way. Cranked up, scared and helpless” (Pynchon, *Bleeding* 327-8), and it is “the ‘liveness’ of TV ... that competes with the filmic temporalities of transference. Immediacy allows melancholia (the ability to introject) to sediment instantly into phantasmatic crypts” (Lippit 1091). To be taken away from this is that the Tube is the Californian medium of both Rickels' infantilization and a tool of the State's over-paved corruptive forces that can take away the unassailed innocence of childhood within mere moments. Worded differently, the Tube and the ‘entertainment’ broadcasted by it, is intrinsically Californian, because of its inherent corrupting and infantilizing capabilities, as illustrated by Maxine's and Heidi's comments on 9/11 and the Tube.

At its computational core *Bleeding Edge* discusses a variety of technological inventions and concepts, and its contents are categorizable into three distinct clusters worth discussing; the simulative, the weaponized, and the elevated, are all separate entities endlessly connected like the fiber-strand webs of the “sub-spider country” (Pynchon 240).

The conceptual black box, having transcended its objectified aeronautical function and mechanical body, as an air-crash investigation gadget, as illustrative of incomprehensible algorithmic processes which transform input into output, and as comparable to the human brain (Wiener 148), is ever present in *Bleeding Edge* as “this dark archive, all locked down tight, no telling what's stashed there” (Pynchon 58), ready spill its paranoia-inducing contents onto the inattentive hacker, but is also spun into the strands of the sub-google Deep Web. It is in Eric that the Deep Web's paranoia manifests itself. Considering the fact that “[e]ach time Eric surfaces from the Deep Web he's a little more freaked, or so it seems to those

neighboring cubes, though so many of these [...] may lack some perspective” (Pynchon, *Bleeding* 58), it is clear that attempts to break into the Deep Web’s black box archive lead to full-blown paranoia.

Technological factors aside, it is also perceivable that Pynchon’s use of language in this passage alludes to the text’s connection with his California. The act of resurfacing from a place of considerable depth, with an estimated ninety percent of the internet belonging to the Deep Web, and experiencing an increase in paranoia, allude to that which meanders below California’s familiar surface. Furthermore, the cubicles in Eric’s office, not coincidentally shortened into ‘cubes’, bring forth the idea that the black box is not to be considered a singular entity, rather it is an indication of the black box’s multiplicity.

As a testament to the Deep Web’s diverse population of “[a]dventurers, pilgrims, remittance folks, lovers on the run, claim jumpers, skips, fugue cases, and a high number of inquisitive entrepreneurs” (Pynchon, *Bleeding* 240), with their character avatars ranging from mundane to expressive, it is DeepArcher that should be considered as the imprintable circuit board of Pynchon’s California. The project is open to corruption, distracts its users, and allusive to a California that “for so long played America’s America. The end of the road. Or a second shot at the future” (Rodriguez 273). With the beach being the literal boundary between paved urbanity and the Deep of the Pacific Ocean, simulation is the creative canvas of second-chance seekers. From Maxine’s description of the place, DeepArcher itself is clearly representative of the California of Pynchon’s novels, with Justin who:

wanted to go back in time, to a California that had never existed, safe, sunny all the time, where in fact the sun never set unless somebody wanted to see a romantic sunset. Lucas was searching for someplace, you could say, a little darker, where it rains a lot

and great silences sweep like winds, holding inside them forces of destruction. What came out as a synthesis was DeepArcher. (Pynchon, *Bleeding* 74).

Its creators in direct opposition, illustrative of Rodriguez's claim, their DeepArcher displays the surface and the depth of California. Moreover, just like the manufactured beauty on the minds of McClintock and Miller, DeepArcher is Californian because its combination of virtual components and digital elements make it synthetic. More can be said, however, about this passage, and by keeping in mind the claim made by Rodriguez, it is evident that Lucas' version of California sees the high of the highway end at the Beach, Justin, on the other hand, wanted a second chance at the California that, according to Maxine, never was. In this case, DeepArcher is a binary version of California, both in the sense that it is a digital program made up of binary code, and due to its duality of surface and subterranean.

In addition, much like the seething corruption boiling underneath the pavement of Gordita Beach, affecting the stoner population of *Inherent Vice*, which takes advantage of the unsuspecting drugged-out hippies by means of the vertically integrated Golden Fang corporation, so is DeepArcher caught in a web, assailed from all sides by predatory forces, illustrated on several occasions: by Vyrva, who blissfully exclaims that “[j]ust lately everybody's been after the source code – the feds, game companies, fuckin Microsoft? All have offers on the table? ... another tech company? Big deal this year down in the Alley, hashslingerz?” (Pynchon, *Bleeding* 36), and after the events of 9/11, by Maxine, who “can't help noticing this time how different the place is. ... Yuppified duty-free shops, some for offshore brands she doesn't recognize even the font they're written in. Advertising everywhere. On walls, on the clothing and skins of crowd extras, as pop-ups” (Pynchon, *Bleeding* 354). This development is in line with the corruption of childhood mentioned earlier,

but more akin to capitalist companies infesting the DeepArcher vista in search of new commercial opportunities.

On the other spectrum of technology, the militarized and weaponized forms of tech, it is possible to find corporations such as hashslingerz, with their government contracts, as third-party developers. Although it is not entirely clear what Gabriel Ice's company produces, there are several instances where the veil is lifted to present information on the over-sized gadgets made at the offices, Reg's memory delivering information on a contraption that needs lab equipment, cables, and circuit boards, and explained to be a Vircator, or a "Virtual-cathode oscillator" (Pynchon, *Bleeding* 330). While this electromagnetic pulse deliverance system, or EMP, is a very literal example of weaponized technology, much like the products of technological advancement made by Lockheed at Palo Alto, it can be argued that entertainment, in combination with the appropriate media, such as the television or internet, can be weaponized as well.

Instead of directly attacking or otherwise harming its user, Weapons of Mass Distraction (WMDs) target an audience that wants to be entertained, and it is argued that while "all media today are a great distraction, cable television is particularly so because of its appetite for news and its predilection for entertainment" (Chitty 64). According to Garcia and Bonilla, Pynchon's distrust of the Tube in *Vineland*, which seeps through layers of comical and lighthearted adoration, indicates that he is aware of the power held by the tele-visual media (41). This can be said about *Inherent Vice* and *Bleeding Edge* as well. Horst, a devoted tuber sometimes intensely absorbed, is described at the end of the novel as "semiconscious in front of Leonardo DiCaprio in 'The Fatty Arbuckle Story,' and does not look street-ready" (Pynchon, *Bleeding* 476). Once more Pynchon displays himself as capable of inserting the Californian into the New York setting, and does this by means of referencing the nineteen-twenties' Hollywood actor Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle. Considered to be one of the first

scandals to shake the Californian movie business at its roots, Arbuckle's fame turned into infamy when it was alleged that he "had forced himself on [Virginia Rappe] and accidentally suffocated her while having sex" (Mewse). If not indicative of California's binarity, with a light-hearted comedy actor corrupted by the excesses of wealth and fame, who has a different appearance for surface and depth situations, Pynchon indicates that the past permeates throughout the present.

It has to be made clear that television is a more direct medium of influence, whilst the internet affects indirectly, and although Maxine comments about the sixties that "Tv back then was brainwashing, it could never happen today. Nobody's in control of the Internet" (Pynchon, *Bleeding* 419), it will become clear that she is just as imprintable. Her distraction is not only measurable, but far more extreme than Horst's attachment to the Tube. Nevertheless, she claims that she is "[n]ot addicted exactly, though one day she happens to be back out in the meatspace for a second, looks at the clock on the wall, does the math, figures three and a half hours she can't account for" (Pynchon, *Bleeding* 426). Effectively losing track of time, akin to the effects of marijuana consumption, Maxine wakes up from her trip with a certain amount of disbelief. Although not used against these characters with malintent, to the knowledge of the reader, it is evident that these media are effective at keeping their consumers distracted and complacent, and in Maxine's case even re-iterative of DeepArcher's core processes pertaining to information retention, the program going "a step further and forgets where it's been, immediately, forever" (Pynchon, *Bleeding* 78).

In a discussion of the Beach it is impossible to leave out the Silicon Valley transplants of California, the same claim applicable to their actions, personalities and creations, who even though having been unearthed from the Beach, still carry its sand with them in their journey towards America's urbanized swamps, displaying the epigraph to Pynchon's *Inherent Vice* that:

Underneath the paving-stones, the beach!

Indicative of *Inherent Vice*'s urbanization of Doc's environs, and synonymous with the inescapability of California, is that the Beach may be hidden underneath slabs of concrete, but not kept from influencing the surface, and that a transplanted person still carries cultural baggage with them.

In his lecture on Pynchon's Paranoid California, Cohen discusses the inherent paranoia of the Californian environment, arguing that the immediacy of government-contracted businesses, secretive FBI agents and large high-tech corporations working on unknown projects, combined the threat of a nuclear apocalypse, led to a growing paranoia. Readily visible in several of the transplanted characters, is California's beach culture, paranoia and mysticism embodied by Shawn, leaving the narcotic consumption and free-spirited counter culturalism to the Palo Alto's Justin and Lucas.

A discussion of the Beach would not be complete without including an analysis of *Bleeding Edge*'s resident mystic, and "Leuzinger High School dropout and compulsive surfer, who has taken a certain amount of board-inflicted head trauma while setting records at several beaches for wipeouts in a season" (Pynchon 30), Shawn. The act of surfing, an exciting and engaging activity, challenges the board-bound participants, and much like methamphetamine abusing addicts "chasing an intense 'rush' that occurred right after injection" (Wesson 156), people can become addicted to the adrenaline rush of competing with killer waves.

Furthermore, it is in the brevity in of his described past that the characteristic elements of a slow and forgetful Californian culture come forth, illustrating that not only consumption of narcotics leads to deterioration of the mind and its capacity to remember, as is embodied by *Inherent Vice* Doc Sportello, but that the activity of surfing and association with the Beach's

culture is harmful to brain, leading to the belief that the figurative activity of brain-picking will not yield much. In addition, Shawn, whose web page bio speaks of political exile (Pynchon, *Bleeding* 30), is not much different from those seeking refuge in Southern California during the sixties. In fact, a shared interest in mysticism may be observed. Clarified by Wesson, these migrated people “blended Eastern mysticism, Native American rituals and psychedelic drug use into what would variously be called the ‘hippie movement’ or the ‘psychedelic drug counter-culture’” (154). Observed during the later stages of the novel, Shawn “darkens the blinds, puts on a tape of Moroccan trance music, lights a joss stick” (Pynchon 423), and does this so Maxine can deal with ‘the Wisdom’ and has her repeat a curious mantra. The paranoia, imprinted on the Middle-East, is shown through Shawn as well, who comments that “all it takes is, like a idle thumb on a spacebar to turn ‘Islam’ into ‘I slam’” (Pynchon, *Bleeding* 31).

DeepArcher’s connection to California is established by means of counter-culturalism as well, and explicable by means of an analysis of the program’s conceptual purpose, the creators’ decision to go Open Source with it, and the name itself as well. Beginning with the nomenclature of the program, there are two possible explanations for it being named DeepArcher. The name itself can be considered a reference to travel, with a pronunciation indicating the word “departure”, and although a person can depart from anywhere and by any means, be that train, car, or bike, it is reminiscent of the aviation industry. However, not only planes depart from grounded situation, as is made clear by Vyrva, when she comments that DeepArcher is not a Zen thing but a “[w]eed thing” (Pynchon, *Bleeding* 36). It is self-reflective of Vyrva, showing that she is aware of California’s mysticism and weed cultures, and argues that the use of DeepArcher is akin to the consumption of mind-altering psychedelics. It is clear, in any case, that DeepArcher should once more be considered a

binary entity, as a reference to the urbanized and industrialized means of modern-day travel, and as allusion to California's Beach.

More importantly, however, applicable to the concept of the sea being a redemptive force, a principle in *Inherent Vice*, that the Pacific "becomes a myth of California as an 'ark' (McClintock & Miller 90), is the idea that DeepArcher is a place where exiles can reside peacefully and away from the hostilities of the 'meatspace'. Quoted as "a virtual sanctuary to escape from the many varieties of real-world discomfort. A grand-scale motel for the afflicted, a destination reachable by virtual midnight express from anyplace with a keyboard" (Pynchon, *Bleeding* 74), DeepArcher is California symbolized, because of its symbolic relation to a vessel of safety. Noah's ark, in biblical mythology, sheltered a gathering of animals to save them from the flood. The safe-haven application made by Californian transplants represents the idea, that the depth of the Deep Web bars the surface from threatening the 'meatspace' exiles below. Added to this is the filmic concept of travel. The fact that DeepArcher is not a place, according to Vyrva, but virtual a journey instead, imagines the movement of an ark once it is filled. Furthermore, as previously argued, Californian counter-cultural idealism has worked its way into DeepArcher as well. The choice to go Open Source is an action decidedly anti-establishment, on account of the knowledge that multiple corporations, the government, and even Gabriel Ice tried to acquire the program. However, distributing the program to everyone for free, is also a paradox. On the one hand Justin and Lucas have remained uncorrupted, because their decision kept them from being tech-acquisitioned by Ice, but it also allowed "[a]nybody with the patience to get through it, they want it, they got it. There's already a Linux translation on the way, which should bring the amateurs in in droves" (Pynchon, *Bleeding* 356), and thus, it invites the surface corruption into the Deep, driving those who sought exile even:

deeper, into the deep unlighted. Beyond anyplace *they'd* be comfortable. And that's where the origin is. The way a powerful telescope will bring you further out in the physical space, closer to the moment of the big bang, so here, going deeper, you approach the border country, the edge of the unnavigable, the region of no information. (Pynchon, *Bleeding* 356)

Down at the virtual abyss DeepArcher echoes its Eureka, and like the faint glow visible from the big bang's explosion, 'it' has been found in *Bleeding Edge*. That 'it' is California.

After a life-time of journeying, Thomas Pynchon has illustrated that he is able to capture the essence of the California that paralyzed him and has created, not three, but four uniquely paranoid, conspiratory, and sometimes cartoonishly crazy Californian novels. While much remains to be said about the novel, this succinct, yet in-depth, analysis of *Bleeding Edge*, has been an effort to illuminate Pynchon's California in the New York environ.

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