

## THOMAS PYNCHON IN CONTEXT

*Thomas Pynchon in Context* enables students, scholars, and other readers to engage effectively with the global scope and prolific imagination of Pynchon's work, providing the most up-to-date and authoritative scholarly analyses of his challenging and canonical writing. This book is divided into three sections. The first, "Times and Places," sets out the history and geographical contexts both for the setting of Pynchon's novels and his own life. The second, "Culture, Politics, and Society," examines twenty important and recurring themes that most clearly define Pynchon's writing – ranging from ideas in philosophy and the sciences to humor and pop culture. The final section, "Approaches and Readings," outlines and assesses ways to read and understand Pynchon. Consisting of forty-four essays written by some of the world's leading scholars, this volume outlines the most important contexts for understanding Pynchon's writing and helps readers interpret and reference his literary work.

INGER H. DALSGAARD is Associate Professor in American Studies at the Department of English, Aarhus University. She is the author of numerous essays and articles on Thomas Pynchon and the co-editor, with Luc Herman and Brian McHale, of *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Pynchon* (Cambridge, 2012).



THOMAS PYNCHON  
IN CONTEXT

EDITED BY  
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*Futures: Private Equity, Philanthropy, and the Monetization of Higher Education.*

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## *Abbreviations*

Throughout this volume, page references are given to the original editions of Thomas Pynchon's longer works with the following abbreviations:

- V* *V.* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1963)  
*CL* *The Crying of Lot 49* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1966)  
*GR* *Gravity's Rainbow* (New York: Viking, 1973)  
*SL* *Slow Learner* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1984)  
*VL* *Vineland* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1990)  
*MD* *Mason & Dixon* (New York: Henry Holt, 1997)  
*AD* *Against the Day* (New York: Penguin, 2006)  
*IV* *Inherent Vice* (New York: Penguin, 2009)  
*BE* *Bleeding Edge* (New York: Penguin, 2013)

Editions with the same pagination as the original hardback are still commercially available (from publishers such as Buccaneer, Penguin 20th Century Classics, Back Bay Books, Picador and Jonathan Cape).

Useful conversion tables between these and other popular editions may be found in various readers' guides and companions, such as those by J. Kerry Grant and Steven Weisenburger, and online wikis on specific novels.

## Chronology

*John M. Krafft*

- 1937 Thomas Ruggles Pynchon, Jr., is born on May 8 in Glen Cove, Long Island, New York.
- 1945 World War II in Europe ends (VE Day) on Pynchon's eighth birthday.
- 1952 Pynchon's earliest known stories begin appearing, pseudonymously, in his high-school newspaper.
- 1953 Pynchon graduates from high school and enters Cornell University as an Engineering Physics major.
- 1955 Pynchon joins the US Navy.
- 1956 During the Suez Crisis, Pynchon serves aboard the *USS Hank* in the Mediterranean.
- 1957 Pynchon returns to Cornell as an English major.
- 1958 Pynchon collaborates with Kirkpatrick Sale on a musical, *Minstrel Island* (never finished).
- 1959 Pynchon's first two mature short stories, "The Small Rain" and "Mortality and Mercy in Vienna," are published. Pynchon receives his BA and moves to Greenwich Village. He applies, unsuccessfully, for a Ford Foundation Fellowship to work with an opera company.
- 1960 Pynchon moves to Seattle to work as a staff writer for Boeing Airplane Company's in-house newsletter *Bomarc Service News*. Two more short stories, "Low-lands" and "Entropy," and the technical article "Togetherness" appear.
- 1961 The short story "Under the Rose" appears.
- 1962 Pynchon leaves his job at Boeing, his last known salaried employment, and moves to Mexico.
- 1963 Pynchon's first novel, *V.*, is published.
- 1964 Pynchon tells friends he has recently been denied admission to an undergraduate program in mathematics at the University of California at Berkeley. His last short story, "The Secret Integration," appears.

- 1965 Pynchon turns down an opportunity to teach at Bennington College. In “A Gift of Books,” he praises Oakley Hall’s western novel *Warlock*.
- 1966 Pynchon’s second novel, *The Crying of Lot 49*, and the essay “A Journey Into The Mind of Watts” are published. Pynchon is living mostly in California now.
- 1968 Pynchon’s name appears, along with more than 400 others, in an advertisement protesting the US war in Vietnam.
- 1973 Pynchon’s third novel, *Gravity’s Rainbow*, is published.
- 1975 The American Academy of Arts and Letters awards Pynchon the Howells Medal for *Gravity’s Rainbow*. He refuses it.
- 1983 Pynchon writes an introduction to the reissue of his late friend Richard Fariña’s novel *Been Down So Long It Looks Like Up to Me*.
- 1984 Pynchon collects five of his early short stories, with a reflective introduction, in *Slow Learner*, and publishes the essay “Is It O.K. to Be a Luddite?”
- 1986 Pynchon is invited to accept honorary fellowship in the Modern Language Association of America but declines.
- 1988 Pynchon receives a five-year MacArthur Foundation Fellowship. His review of Gabriel García Márquez’s novel *Love in the Time of Cholera*, “The Heart’s Eternal Vow,” is published.
- 1990 Pynchon’s fourth novel, *Vineland*, is published. Pynchon is now married to literary agent Melanie Jackson and living in New York City.
- 1991 The Pynchons’ son, Jackson, is born.
- 1992 Pynchon writes an introduction to the collection *The Teachings of Don B.*, by his late friend Donald Barthelme.
- 1993 Pynchon’s essay on sloth, “Nearer, My Couch, to Thee,” appears.
- 1994 Pynchon writes liner notes for the retrospective CD *Spiked!: The Music of Spike Jones*.
- 1995 Pynchon writes liner notes for the band Lotion’s CD *Nobody’s Cool* (1996).
- 1996 “Lunch with Lotion,” an interview conducted by Pynchon, appears.
- 1997 Pynchon’s fifth novel, *Mason & Dixon*, is published. Pynchon also writes an introduction to the reissue of Jim Dodge’s novel *Stone Junction*.
- 1999 Pynchon writes “Hallowe’en? Over Already?” for his son’s school’s newsletter.

*Chronology*

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- 2002 *Playboy Japan* publishes sarcastic remarks attributed to Pynchon related to the September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center. Pynchon's agent disavows them.
- 2003 Pynchon writes a foreword to the George Orwell Centenary edition of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.
- 2004 Pynchon lends his voice to the character "Thomas Pynchon" in two episodes of *The Simpsons*.
- 2006 Pynchon's sixth novel, *Against the Day*, is published. Pynchon also writes a program note, "The Evolution of *The Daily Show*," for a tenth-anniversary celebration.
- 2009 Pynchon's seventh novel, *Inherent Vice*, is published, and Pynchon narrates a promotional video for it. The American Academy of Arts and Sciences names Pynchon a Fellow.
- 2010 A play inspired by *The Crying of Lot 49*, directed by Klaus Gehre, is staged in Berlin.
- 2013 Pynchon's eighth novel, *Bleeding Edge*, is published. An adaptation of *V.*, directed by Daniel Schrader, is staged in Berlin. Asteroid 152319 (2005 UH7) is officially named Pynchon.
- 2014 Paul Thomas Anderson's film adaptation of *Inherent Vice* is released.
- 2018 Pynchon receives the first Christopher Lightfoot Walker Award for lifetime achievement from the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

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