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Lost in Time and Lost in Space: Chronotopes in Thomas Pynchon's *Against the Day*

By

Stephen Margavio

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Honors College at the University of South Alabama and the Bachelor of Arts and Sciences in the English Department

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my wife, Jordan, and my son, Oswin. They are my support system and the reason I strive to achieve my academic goals.

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ABSTRACT

In his 1937 essay "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel," Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin coins the term "chronotope" to discuss the inherently interconnected nature of time and space in narrative constructions. According to Bakhtin, there are a number of specific chronotopes (or space/time configurations) that help to define literary genres. Applying Bakhtin's concepts to Thomas Pynchon's novel *Against the Day* (2006), this thesis examines how the idea of narrative space/time can clarify Pynchon's use of genre to make socio-political commentary.

The first chapter of this thesis focuses on Bakhtin's "road chronotope," which is characterized by the chance meeting of people in spaces devoted to movement and transport. In such narrative spaces, we often witness the condensation of social class, time, and history. New York City functions as such a space in *Against the Day*, and Bakhtin's ideas help explain how and why Pynchon can embed the 9/11 tragedy inside a scene set nearly a hundred years earlier.

The second chapter focuses on Bahktin's "threshold chronotope." In fiction, the threshold chronotope is a temporal space removed from the normal flow of narrative time, and often the setting for a character's extended inaction or contemplation in a moment of crisis. One recurring group of characters in *Against the Day* is called The Chums of Chance, a group of boy aeronauts who crew the airship *Inconvenience*. The narrative intentionally separates the Chums from the other characters both physically and metaphorically. Using Bakhtin's idea of the threshold chronotope helps clarify their position in the novel, explaining why they are often presented as more fictional than the other characters. Moreover, the Chums' position on the threshold of the novel's action distances them from the real historical events that are described, providing readers with space and time to contemplate the novel's political import.

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Introduction

Beginning in 1963 with the publication of his first novel, *V.*, Thomas Pynchon's importance as both an American novelist and as a pioneer of postmodern aesthetics have influenced fiction over the course of the past sixty years. *V.* won the William Faulkner Foundation Award, awarded for exceptional first novels. His second, *The Crying of Lot 49*, was awarded the Rosenthal Family Foundation Award for literary achievement in 1967. While these two novels set the foundation for Pynchon's importance, it was his third novel in 1973, *Gravity's Rainbow*, that made a substantial impact on the literary landscape and postmodern criticism. It was the recipient of the National Book Award in 1974 and was unanimously selected for the Pulitzer Prize that year; however, the Pulitzer board contended the novel was too lurid in content and thus did not award it to Pynchon or any other novelist that year (Cowart 2). He has subsequently published well-regarded novels over the past five decades including *Vineland* (1990), *Mason & Dixon* (1997), *Against the Day* (2006), *Inherent Vice* (2009), and *Bleeding Edge* (2013) as well as the short story collection *Slow Learner* (1984). He was also the recipient of the MacArthur Fellowship Award in 1988.

Pynchon's writing style, often humorous and more often esoteric, can be difficult for casual readers. As critic David Cowart asserts, "Pynchon knows and makes artistic use of science" (6). In doing this, he presents, and can sometimes overwhelm, readers with an encyclopedic knowledge about obscure events and niche areas of science or art. *Against the Day*, the novel upon which this project focuses, reframes the scientific study of electricity and light that took place at the beginning of the twentieth century, often blurring the line between science and mysticism in relation to both, while weaving these technical scientific ideas into the framework of the language and the narrative. From Tesla's experiments to pre-Einsteinian

relativity to the metaphysical societies like the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn that sought to study the occult as its own science, Pynchon uses a wide range of time periods and events to reframe historical narrative and then uses that framework to provide a reframing of one's relationship to events of the present day.

Syntactically, his sentences can often reach nearly the length of a page and wind through an excess of metaphor and complex ideas. This can lead to his work being difficult to penetrate because the reality of the situations within the narrative can often blur with the metaphoric. Critic Peter Balbert, in discussing the style used by Pynchon, contends that this overwhelming use of metaphor and language "suggests a major theme: that the truths about the twentieth century…may be inaccessible by any fictional recourse except a language so inflated that it seems to implicate everyone in its resonant arc" (265). Pynchon's work follows the postmodern ideal that follows from the writers like Friedrich Nietzsche that there is no absolute truth behind metaphor. Truth is subjective.

Pynchon's themes typically center around anti-authoritarianism and the quest for order and understanding in a world of disorder. His characters are often a part of some labyrinthine conspiracy involving secret societies that border on the absurd but still have some connection to historical record. In *The Crying of Lot 49,* for example, the communication conspiracy around which the novel is structured has its real-world roots in the Thurn-und-Taxis Post, a private, 19th-century European postal service. Pynchon's novels also play freely with time, and this is another reason they can be difficult to penetrate as a reader. The focus of this project, *Against the Day,* takes place on virtually every continent and is set from 1893 to 1922. The novel's episodes, however, are not positioned chronologically, nor are characters or sections restricted to specific

time periods. Instead, time in the novel is defined by the space in which it occurs and that relationship between time and space forms the crux of this project.

In his seminal 1938 essay "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel," Mikhail Bakhtin coins the term "chronotope" to discuss the use of space and time in a literary context. "In the literary artistic chronotope," Bakhtin writes, "spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole" (84). "Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible," he continues; "likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history" (84). To put this another way, the events that happen over the course of a narrative are spatial for the reader (that is they are most often associated with a particular physical location be it city, house, room, vehicle, etc.) but the context of those spatial events cannot be separated from the chronological time of those events which occur within those spaces—the cohesion of the text is not complete without taking both time and space into account. The physical spaces in which events happen in a novel hold their own chronological structure that is not always dependent on the chronology of events outside of that space. Time flows and holds its own importance to the events in that particular situation that it may not hold outside of it. For example, in a classic detective novel the narrative action typically follows only the protagonist, gaps of information occurring in order to obscure the antagonist. Time flows naturally over the course of the novel until the denouement where the detective/protagonist will recap the actions of the antagonist in a truncated succession, condensing the chronology of the events outside the purview of the protagonist in relation to the slower chronology of the narrative. That narrative location, the space where the solution is revealed, with its own dependent temporality, in essence, becomes its own chronotope. In certain other situations, however, the space represented by particular chronotopes can also involve location in an abstract

way—an historical time can determine how a reader sees the *space* that is the world of the text as a whole. A novel set in an historic time period will create a certain perspective and reference point for the reader. Its locations and peoples are expected to act or see the world in a certain way determined by its place in the chronology of history. To use a real-world analogy, the Grand Canyon is a space the grandeur of which is understood through the passage of time. It is a creation of the passage of time, but also symbolically represents a linear path of time that the river used to cut through and erode it. It is a forged link between spatiality and temporality and cannot be understood on the basis of one without the other.

Ultimately, in fiction, time and space work together to form a structuralized trope—that is, elements that are standard and common to a particular narrative type or genre that are typically seen as expectations of the audience. Much in the same way that audiences process standardized tropes (e.g., the trope in westerns with the protagonist in a white hat and the antagonist in a black hat) chronotopes can act to define narrative conventions. Additionally, time and space can also be defined within the confines of the *space* of the genre (i.e., its beginning and ending narratively). Bakhtin discusses this in the early section of his essay as he explains the *adventure-time* that defines the early Greek romance literature. These works contain adventures that have no "biological or maturational duration" because the protagonists meet, fall in love, and marry in a journey that encompasses a matter of "simply days, nights, hours, moments clocked in a technical sense within the limits of each adventure" (90). The events that happen in between "the arousal of passion, and its satisfaction" constitute an improbable chronology in relation to reality yet stand uniform for the breadth of that genre (90). The stumbling blocks that come between the lovers serve as nothing but narrative hindrances with no chance to alter that predetermined origin and terminus.

In 1974, Bakhtin added an addendum of "Concluding Remarks" onto his essay, expanding the concepts he presented in the wake of postmodernism and its embrace of pastiche and intertextuality. In the addendum to his essay, Bakhtin explains how authors take aspects of different genres and coalesce them into something new with a specific interaction with its own time and space to become wholly unique. In the postwar era, writers began using older narrative models in new ways, seeking not to write a genre piece but to use particular styles as a tool in crafting something else. This creates a new ambiguity in relation to genre that blurs the lines between using tropes to craft a specific type of narrative and using tropes to comment on a larger issue within society through the use of multiple genre tropes. Bakhtin used his "Concluding Remarks" to reevaluate the rigid structure of chronotopes and concludes that multiple chronotopes are able to interact within a single text.

Using Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the chronotope, I argue that first, Thomas Pynchon deploys chronotopic elements within *Against the Day* to create a dual sense of temporality (the historic and the contemporary) within a single space and second, that he uses a different set of chronotopic features to situate certain characters apart from the narrative behind both physical and metaphoric thresholds as a means to provide political commentary. The first section of this argument considers Pynchon's use of what Bakhtin refers to as the *road chronotope*. According to Bakhtin, "On the road…the spatial and temporal paths of the most varied people…intersect at one spatial and temporal point" (243). The act of traveling and the locations visited or described in a text take on an importance that rivals and, in some cases, surpasses that of the events in the narrative. The flow of time is constantly present on the road both in a physical sense with its natural flow during the journey, but also in that the signs are also present in an abstract sense with the ways time, through history, has changed the space along the road. Bakhtin uses the

example of Don Quixote going on his journey on "the boundary line of the sixteenth and seventeenth century…in order that he might encounter all of Spain on that road" (244). Implicit to this journey are the ways in which "the road had been profoundly, intensely etched by the flow of historical time, by the traces and signs of time's passage, by markers of the era" (244). The road chronotope provides an implicit understanding of these historical markers pursuant to the contextual understanding of both characters and readers. When chance brings people and events together on the road, the space between them has shrunk and been aligned; the different chronologies of their lives have been brought together as one.

In the first chapter of this project, I use Bakhtin's conception of the road chronotope to examine the parallelism of time and space between the historic and contemporary in the supernatural horror section set in New York City. This section begins with an artifact found on a scientific expedition taken to New York for study. The artifact is a living entity that awakens on board the ship in dock and brings about violence and destruction across the city. *Against the Day* showcases genre tropes of supernatural or Lovecraftian horror yet places those alongside the horrific events of 9/11 through its use of urban imagery and spatiality. The space of New York is thus responding to the movement of time, loosely defined in this section, and simultaneously speaking to an historic time and a contemporary time. This section is rife with references to transportive imagery to build a bridge from the historical to the contemporary as it comments on the means and circumstances by which a tragedy of this magnitude could take place. Characters react and respond to the environment and events of this section based on their travel within the environment, whether it be to escape, discover, or transcend the horrors around them.

In the second chapter of this project, I examine how the adventures of the Chums of Chance align with Bakhtin's notion of the *threshold chronotope*. Bakhtin's chronotope of

threshold purports a spatiotemporal relationship for characters in both physical and metaphorical thresholds, creating a separation for both the fictional people involved and for the reader from the rest of the novel. The Chums of Chance, a group of aeronauts based on the boy adventure novel genre popular in the mid-nineteenth century, exemplify this as they literally fly above the happenings of the other characters detached from the world's events. They travel the globe in an airship called the *Inconvenience* and perform a multitude of tasks—from exploration to scientific experiments—for the American government. The Chums of Chance's demeanor and genre are antiquated even by their own contemporary standards, yet for much of the novel, they stand outside of the central narrative and provide insight into the rules by which time operates in *Against the Day*. The Chums also experience multiple instances of time travel, which further serves to separate them from the novel's events.

Both the road and threshold chronotopes and their uses define two distinct, yet intrinsically tied threads in a novel that seemingly contains innumerable genres, characters, and plots spread across the globe over the course of three decades. They are separate uses of Bakhtin's central ideas on the connection between narrative space and time that run parallel. The road chronotope's focus in *Against the Day* is on how time interacts in multiple ways with the space of New York City. The chronotope of threshold's emphasis is on how specific characters and the space they occupy interacts with time in a way that is different from the people around them. Paired together, these concepts form the singular evaluative framework for humanity's place within a world as location and time work in tandem to determine self. As Bakhtin writes, "[t]he image of man is always intrinsically chronotopic," echoing Immanuel Kant's philosophy about "the importance of these forms [space and time] in the cognitive process" as a means to understand reality (85, 85n2). The comprehension of literary chronotopes produces a feedback

loop where the reader provides social context to the understanding of a novel's spatiotemporal construction in regard to its cultural commentary, while in turn the chronotopes, especially those particular to *Against the Day*, hope to provide that same commentary to influence and contextualize the reader's worldview.

Chapter 1: New York's Convergence of Roads in *Against the Day*

I. New York as Nexus

While *Against the Day* does not have a centralized location for its overall narrative, New York City recurs, and, furthermore, it is the location of one of the novel's most important and convoluted scenes. The New York City of the novel operates less specifically as a physical location and more as a metaphorically networked hub. The city exists as a space with an amorphous chronology that seemingly occurs along multiple timelines simultaneously. New York is a stand-in for an evolving American cultural identity, the historical landmark of the Twin Towers, genre trope, and metaphorical road bridging a fictionalized past and a shared contemporaneity. It is a city that transforms into "the material expression of a particular loss of innocence" (Pynchon 153). In the novel, the roads of time converge and blur. Bernd Herzogenrath analyzes *Against the Day* through the lens of a hypertext—that is, a novel that operates on some level the same way one would navigate the internet through the use of hyperlinks, often with nonlinear narratives. Hyperlinks are predominantly seen as a tool in digital texts, but Herzogenrath argues that *Against the Day* uses this network of links figuratively. The novel does not so much follow characters between locations across the globe as interact with characters already occupying a space. Herzogenrath writes of *Against the Day* that "[m]ost of the voyaging, in fact, takes place between chapters while the events themselves take place upon arrival" thus, "[b]y the end of the novel the reader has a memory of scattered places visited by a number of characters, rather than any ordered itinerary based on time" (160, 161).

In *Against the* Day then, roads do not function only in a physical way but, much like fiber optic cables guiding digital information, they remain unseen and thus metaphorical for the reader. New York City sits within multiple timelines because, in theory, "the network is an

efficient model of communication…it can include back-and-forth movement in time" (Herzogenrath 158). The flow of information, and subsequently time, along a network does not flow in a linear direction the way humans experience it or in the way a traditional narrative expresses it. A network node or nexus point can be a starting point or an end point, the flow between them able to move in either direction.

While most of the traveling, as Herzogenrath argues, occurs in the margins between chapters, on occasion Pynchon does allow it to bleed into the edges of some sections. At the end of one noteworthy chapter, for example, the perspective shifts to the minor character Hunter Penhallow and his attempt to escape the chaos of New York City. As Hunter wanders lost through the streets, he comes upon a group of refugees that offer him a place in their troupe as they depart. Hunter describes the trip through an underground passage both familiar and foreign as the group finds itself "passing factory spaces, power generators, massive installations of machinery whose purpose was less certain" (Pynchon 155). The underground world Hunter and his companions pass through, industrialized and filled with the height of turn of the century technology, indicates that the journey between New York and the unknown destination of the group speaks to the subtextual, underground nature of the city's power. The power is hidden from view in the same way the transportive road is hidden underneath the text for the reader.

Their transportation, "a curious mass conveyance, of smooth iron" ventures deeper underground yet somehow "through the windows, inexplicably, there were glimpses of the city above them…Either the track was rising here and there to break above the surface or the surface was making deep, even heroic, excursions downward to meet them" (Pynchon 155). In Hunter's journey underground, the sense of space begins to distort. The road, figuratively and literally, no longer passes through time linearly. It ebbs and flows and "[t]he longer they traveled, the more

'futuristic' would the scenery become" (Pynchon 155). The road, rather than moving through physical space, moves through the chronological. The journey and the "hum and wind-rush" of the tunnel indicates a certain amount of speed that would have carried them beyond the boundaries of the city, yet no matter how far they progress, the city is ever in sight only changing in its temporality. New York City and the road within, underneath, and between other locations exists in the metaphoric, operating as a chronologically connective space. The novel's chronology occurs at once and in all time concurrently.

II. The Vormance Expedition and the Road Chronotope

A large portion of *Against the Day* is predicated on the act of traveling. Characters rarely stay in a static location or even region of the world. An important early section of *Against the Day,* for example, details the Vormance Expedition, a scientific voyage to the arctic that both begins and ends in New York City. Fleetwood Vibe is the son of Scarsdale Vibe, the central antagonist of the novel. Scarsdale is a captain of industry at the advent of the Industrial Revolution, and thus he and his family are in the upper echelon of society in terms of power, influence, and security. Scarsdale sends Fleetwood on a scientific mission led by Dr. Alden Vormance into the artic to retrieve what is assumed to be an unearthed meteor but turns out instead to be a monolithic object, both sentient and violent. The doctor, Fleetwood, and the crew travel aboard the *Etienne-Louis Malus*, a ship "named for the Napoleonic army engineer and physicist who…discovered polarized light" (Pynchon 126). Their voyage, bankrolled by Scarsdale Vibe, includes scientists from multiple backgrounds with multiple motives—some in separate fields of science and others to ascertain the practical monetary uses of any discoveries. Fleetwood is being sent by his father for these economic ulterior motives. Scarsdale wants

Fleetwood there “to observe and write down instances of money recklessly spent” and informs the group their primary goal is to determine “rail-worthiness of the terrain” (Pynchon 130). Fleetwood is situated as an outsider from both the scientific crew and the laboring crew, simply there to serve as the eyes of his ruthless father.

Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the *road chronotope* provides a useful lens though which to view the Vormance Expedition. Bakhtin refers to the road chronotope as a means by which “[p]eople who are normally kept separate by social and spatial distance can accidentally meet,” whereby the road itself serves as a nexus (243). Within this nexus “the spatial and temporal series defining human fates and lives combine with one another in distinctive ways, even as they become more complex and more concrete by the collapse of *social distances*” (Bakhtin 243). The act of traveling and the locations visited or described in a text take on an importance that rivals and, in some cases, surpasses that of the events in the narrative. Within a road chronotope, “chance simultaneity” becomes an important operative element (Bakhtin 92). When chance brings people and events together on the road, the space between them has shrunk and been aligned; the different chronologies of their lives have been brought together as one and during that now singular chronology, time functions the same for all individuals present. Thus, the road chronotope intersects—and is dependent upon—chance. When Hunter Penhallow meets and incorporates himself into the group leaving New York, for example, there becomes a synchroneity in social structure and in chronology. Without “chance simultaneity” in the novel, Bakhtin emphasizes that “there would be no plot at all” (Bakhtin 92). The flow of time is constantly present on the road both in a physical and abstract sense (its linear flow during the journey, but also in the abstract signs, with the ways history has changed the space along the road). The historical signs are understood through the new present timeline created by the

coming together of different individuals and the collapsing of their chronologies into one. This is because when the road chronotope interconnects with random chance meetings, "internal time takes precedence over historical time as a general shift from time to space takes place, a space infected with the apocalyptic ideology of a 'time out of joint'" (Ganser et al. 3). The road chronotope and the events that occur within it collapses "representatives of all social classes, estates, religions, nationalities, ages" into a collective existing all at the same level (Bakhtin 243).

In *Against the Day*, the Vormance Expedition provides a clear example of how chance in-transit encounters serve to collapse social distances. Even as the members of the crew aboard the *Etienne-Louis Malus* view Fleetwood's presence on the ship as suspect and worthy of derision, Fleetwood is ultimately placed within the same class as everyone else on board. Early in the journal entries, Fleetwood metonymically positions himself among the crew through the repeated use of "we" and "us" pronouns in close succession. "We were stunned at the immensity of the vehicle which finally came to stand above us," Fleetwood writes, "There were scarcely enough of us to handle the lines they threw down" (Pynchon 139). In the context of this passage, a difference between those not aboard the Vormance ship and those that are is concretely established, especially in the sentence that follows, likening how the approaching ship must see them "like interchangeable insects, scurrying beneath" (Pynchon 139). This journey together, synonymous with a colony of insects, creates a level playing field socially as they share both the locomotive nature of their scientific trip and the prospects, and potential dangers, of discovery at their destination.

This distinction of Fleetwood putting himself in the same class structure as the laboring crew aboard the ship is in stark contrast to the ways his father, Scarsdale, uses to distinguish

class late in the novel. In a public address, Scarsdale uses the same rhetorically repetitive metonymic pronoun scheme that Fleetwood does to different effect, with phrases such as "of course we use them," "we harness and sodomize them," "we set them beneath inhuman loads, we harvest from them" concluding that the monied class's exploitation of the working class allows them to "buy it all up…all this country" (Pynchon 1000). Bernard Duyfhuizen comments that "Vibe's 'We' is a brightly lit evocation of his and his class's arrogant disdain for the common man" (Duyfhuizen). Fleetwood's journey and experiences along the road toward the Arctic allow him to have a different, more unifying and empathetic, experience with different social classes.

Upon returning to New York, the Vormance Expedition's cargo, referred to in the text as the Figure, awakens. Unleashing its power, the Figure causes "electric power" to fail "everywhere throughout the city" and "the gas mains…to ignite" (Pynchon 152). The streets fracture as the "cobblestones erupted skyward, to descend blocks away" (Pynchon 152). When this disaster reaches New York, the social distances between those in the upper echelons of America's capitalist social class and those in the working class are collapsed in the face of life-threatening danger. The New York City of this tragedy is described as "a metropolis where Location was often the beginning, end, and entire story in between" (Pynchon 153). This in-text emphasis of "Location" as a tangible space where all of time occurs simultaneously plays an important role in establishing both a physical and symbolic road for the denizens of the city to traverse. Bakhtin points out the distinction and duality of the road acting as two separate entities, the metaphoric and the physical. "Time, as it were, fuses together with space and flows in it (forming the road); this is the source of the rich metaphorical expansion on the image of the road as a course" he postulates, using examples such as "the course of a life" or "the course of history" (Bakhtin 244). The road's metaphorical usage takes many forms, he asserts, "but its

fundamental pivot is the flow of time" (Bakhtin 244). Pynchon's use of New York City as a nexus point allows the storyteller to, as David Cowart puts it, "simply depict the human condition in a historical frame and thereby link past to present. In other words, narrow canons of accuracy may not be important to historical vision" (389). The chronotopic use of the road between the past, fictional or otherwise, and the present not only condenses social distances, but it also condenses the greater historical timeline.

III. Temporal Bandwidth

While the effects of history have traditionally played a major role in the works of Pynchon, *Against the Day*'s focus is not on giving a teleological analysis of historical events. Instead, it concentrates its narrative on the causational elements and the ways in which those causes repeat throughout history "as yet greater tragedy" (Cowart 394). In *Against the Day*, "[t]he pattern of events in the present finds its mirror in the trajectory of events in the past," so that the latter informs one's response to and predicts the occurrence of the former (Cowart 395). The novel is historiographic in nature, yet it has a fascination with the scientific environment of that history, and in that, the connection and layering of the historical over the contemporary become less apparently intentional. In relation to the scientific principles presented in *Against the Day,* Heinz Ickstadt writes of how "the mathematics of post-Newtonian physics which figure so prominently here…serve as metaphors for the book's structural openness, its narrative space organized as a multidimensional space-time continuum" (224). Science serves as an important cause in many historic events and, in using particular eras, Pynchon connects these two disciplines in order to connect different times within both the physical space of the text and in the mind of the reader.

In his article "Time and Relativity," Simon de Bourcier details Thomas Pynchon's fascination and use of Einstein's Theory of Relativity. In the article, Bourcier paraphrases an idea of Einstein's that is relevant to Pynchon saying, "[t]wo events appearing simultaneous to one observer may, to another, occur consecutively. There is no universal present, no unique chronology" (Bourcier 239). This bears out within the text of *Against the Day*, both for the characters and the reader living in the real-world aftermath of the disaster that was September 11. For the fictional characters of New York, "its inhabitants became, and have remained, an embittered and amnesiac race, wounded but unable to connect through memory to the moment of the injury" (Pynchon 153). A modern reader may not have an immediate connection to the events of 9/11, however, his or her knowledge and understanding contextualize the events of the novel in a way that connects the fictional with contemporary reality. Therefore, the reader, and in particular an American reader, cannot help but journey through New York in *Against the Day* with a preconceived, if potentially subconscious, notion of its connection to 9/11 given their own chronology.

In *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973), Pynchon's most acclaimed novel, the narrator provides an analog for the understanding and contextualizing of two time periods and their connection simultaneously. According to *Gravity's Rainbow*, "'Temporal bandwidth' is the width of your present, your *now*. It is the familiar 'Δt' considered as a dependent variable. The more you dwell in the past and in the future, the thicker your bandwidth" (Pynchon *GR* 517). While this notion, abstract and involving mathematical ideas, seems arcane, Steven Weisenburger explains it succinctly as "to see the 'Δt' (denoting the rate of change, in calculus, by the distance between two points on a time-line) as a 'dependent variable' to the extent that it *does* depend upon the character in question" (64). Extrapolating this idea out from the fictional character and applying

it to the reader, the subjective knowledge and experience of the reader determines how one contextualizes and connects events. When in *V.* (1963)—later in *Gravity's Rainbow*—Pynchon recounts the genocide of the South African Herero tribes at the hands of the Germans at the turn of the twentieth century, he is incorporating a widely unknown event at the time and drawing direct comparison to the Holocaust later in the century. This temporal doubling allows the text to explore events and their connection to relative events without explicitly detailing them for the reader, in order to position the past in the now of the reader. Weisenburger goes on to say that "[o]ne's grasp of the Now as a moment having links to the past and future is, in Pynchon's view, a willed action, and quite free" (64). Therefore, it stands to reason, the involvement of a reader's own understanding of both the past and the present can determine and connect him or her to varying degrees with a historically set narrative and an analog narrative. Pynchon has compressed the time between the historically set narrative and the real-world events to increase the temporal bandwidth of the reader, allowing him or her to inhabit two temporal moments concurrently.

IV. Genre Doubling

Supplementing the sociological and temporal layering, the use of genre layering in *Against the Day* also plays an important role. The novel contains a multitude of genres—from the boy adventure tale, to hard-boiled detective fiction, the western genre, and, for the purposes of this analysis, the pulp horror genre popularized by writers like Arthur Machen and H.P. Lovecraft. In chapters that focus on New York City within the novel, Thomas Pynchon has layered that pulp horror aesthetic on top of the aesthetics of the contemporary 9/11 novel—a genre whose themes Ahmed Gamal defines as "a disenchantment with, and at times a rejection

of, Western modernity and consumerist capitalism; a quest for redefining the relationship between the human and the sacred; and the view of strangeness as problematically engaged with gender and sexuality" in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks (Gamal). The 9/11 genre places a great amount of emphasis on the effects of otherness and the perception of otherness in society. This interweaving of genres is a technique that appears in many of Pynchon's works, and as Sofia Kolbuszewska writes, he "creates hybrid genres but also introduces the collapse of genre boundaries by subversive associations from the across the disciplines" (281). This generic collapse functions in many of the same ways as the folding of social class and temporality do. Sections that articulate the horrific scenes in New York City can be characterized as Lovecraftian, because Lovecraft popularized the form of fiction being appropriated. Pynchon's use of the character/entity of the Figure is an idea lifted and implanted into the narrative of *Against the Day* from the canon of Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos. Not only does Pynchon seemingly lift "the Figure" directly from the Cthulhu Mythos, but he also borrows other narrative elements from Lovecraft as well. In using Lovecraft as a blueprint, one can also see multiple distinct genre elements being deployed, most notably the narrative style of Fleetwood's diary entries, symbolic use of social hierarchy, and the doubling of realities within a given space.

H.P. Lovecraft's fiction features an inner-textual pantheon of otherworldly creatures known as the Great Old Ones. The most well-known of these creatures are Cthulhu, Nyarlathotep, and Yog-Sothoth. A great deal of his fiction deals with hapless scientists, journalists, and academics stumbling upon the history of or inadvertently waking these creatures. These entities are deified "by human beings who cannot comprehend such creatures except by appeals to a deity" even as they come "from the farthest depths of space" (Joshi xi). As with the Figure in *Against the Day*, these "gods" are worshipped by civilizations detached from wider

society: Cthulhu has its Cthulhu Cult, and the Figure has local Eskimo tribes. These tribes refer to the Figure as a *nunatak*, or "a mountain peak tall enough to rise above the wastes of ice and snow…believed to have its own guardian spirit" and believed to be "alive" (Pynchon 139). Thomas Pynchon does not only take influence from the Old Ones of Lovecraft but could be said to have directly expanded the Cthulhu Mythos by including a member of Lovecraft's pantheon.

After Lovecraft's death in 1937, other writers began to use his "pseudomythology" to create their own stories within the same canon (Joshi xi). Writers such as Robert E. Howard, Clark Ashton Smith, and August Derleth took the aesthetics and mythology of Lovecraft in new directions. Before his death, this expansion happened occasionally, and Lovecraft "welcomed these takeoffs of his work, chiefly because he felt that the citation of his synthetic monsters by different writers would lend them greater credibility" (Joshi xii). Pynchon's application of the Figure is more than simply homage and in fact what Wolfgang Müller refers to as the intertextual idea of interfigurality. Interfigurality is "a network of relationships that exist between literary characters of different authors and ages" (Müller 101). It is not a character that is simply taken from an existing work and inserted into another work of fiction because "[o]ntologically and aesthetically, it is, impossible to have entirely identical characters in literary works by different authors" (Müller 107). A character is an amalgamation of his or her traits, personality, and interaction with the events of its particular fictional placement. Thus, it could be said that the Figure—a name that humorously points to Pynchon playing on this idea—is a character repurposed from Lovecraft by Pynchon as many writers before him have done.

When you compare the Figure to the titular character of Lovecraft's "The Call of Cthulhu," their introductions to the reader are incredibly similar. The Vormance Expedition in *Against the Day* and the crew of the *Emma* in "The Call of Cthulhu" both meet their respective

"gods" on seafaring voyages, the former in the Arctic and the latter in the South Pacific. Remains of Lovecraft's Old Ones "were still to be found as Cyclopean stones on islands in the Pacific" (Lovecraft "TCoC" 367). The Figure is found as a monolithic stone structure jutting out of the ground on an island in the Arctic. The crew of the airship *Inconvenience* in *Against the Day* is sent to force the Vormance crew to turn back because of the potential dangers only for the expedition to ignore them. The crew of the *Emma* receives similar orders only to ignore those and stumble upon the risen city of R'lyeh housing Cthulhu. Both the Figure and Cthulhu defy description, a staple of Lovecraftian horror where the fear is derived from the unknown and indescribable. Cthulhu "cannot be described—there is no language for such abysms of shrieking and immemorial lunacy, such eldritch contradictions of all matter, force, and cosmic order. A mountain walked or stumbled" (Lovecraft "TCoC" 377). These "contradictions" in composition and description connect to Fleetwood's account of the crew seeing the Figure for the first time. "Though details were still difficult to make out, the Figure appeared to recline on its side…with as little agreement among us as to its 'facial' features, some describing them as 'Mongoloid,' others as 'serpent-like'" (Pynchon 141). The Figure is, therefore, an intertextual character derived from Lovecraft's fiction rather than being the creation of Pynchon for *Against the Day*.

Lovecraft's stories also often feature what Scott Meyer refers to as the "'gentleman narrator,' who lent certain cultured sensibilities to the direction and tone of the tale" (176). Fleetwood's first-person diary entries place him firmly in that role; he is the outsider from a higher, storied social class cast to describe and experience the unfamiliar for the reader. His very presence mirrors that of what Meyer defines as "the tension of order and natural arrangements hanging by a thread" often utilized in Lovecraft's writing (176). Fleetwood's addition to the

crew of the Vormance Expedition and that juxtaposition of his outsider social importance sets up the larger underlying issues at play socially when the crew reaches New York.

Fleetwood's, and by extension his father's, involvement in the expedition is important in understanding the social condensing that takes place. The presence of the Figure and its return to New York work toward a larger generic collapse taking place. Lovecraft's work within the horror genre is often dependent on the notion of modern society "encroaching on the culture and space of the Old Ones (the ancient alien race of unspeakable monsters who settled and cultivated New England long before the Indians or Puritans)" as "an unsettling disruption to a caste system that ultimately cannot be done" (Meyer 176). In *Against the Day*, the Figure functions as that Old One archetype "with supernatural powers, which no one in its as-yet-unwritten history had ever known how to stop" (Pynchon 151). The Vormance Expedition takes the Figure from its home in the Arctic and somehow believes that it will accept its new place in New York City without incident. This echoes in many ways the thoughts about the reasons for the attacks on September 11, how Western colonialism and imperialism inevitably led to resentment in the Middle East. The text attempts to explain the cause of the Figure's attack in the terms of relocation with one character saying "[t]he usual sanctions—bad ice, blizzards, malevolent ghosts—were no longer available. So the terms of retribution assumed a character more suitable to the new surroundings—fire damage to structures, crowd panic, disruption to common services" (Pynchon 151). The American class system, built through western Capitalism, as a foreign idea does not translate perfectly to the cultural ideologies of the Middle East. The attacks of both 9/11 and the Figure (as Lovecraftian Old One) were attempts to disrupt their contemporary cultural identities (re: social and economic structures).

Another genre convention, connecting *Against the Day* and the fiction of Lovecraft, is that of characters existing in a doubled world, separated only by an unseen veil and existing within space simultaneously. In Lovecraft's short story "From Beyond," for example, the character Crawford Tillinghast finds a way to penetrate the wall between the seen and unseen. Tillinghast tells the narrator that "strange, inaccessible worlds exist at our very elbows, *and now I believe I have found a way to break down the barriers*" (Lovecraft, "FB" 116). The narrator sees a scene that encapsulates the dual nature of time and space present in Lovecraft's writing and in the New York City of *Against the Day*. He informs the reader that the collision of the two worlds "was indeed somewhat familiar, for the unusual part was superimposed upon the usual terrestrial scene much as a cinema view may be thrown upon the painted curtain of a theatre" (Lovecraft 119). New York City in *Against the Day* functions in the same way for the reader as genre conventions and descriptive elements are superimposed upon historical memory.

The aftermath of the Figure awakening and destroying the city is where the parallels take shape between the fictive and the real—this is where the horror genre intersects with the 9/11 genre. The narrative ostensibly removes perspective subjectivity from the characters and places them into an environmentally objective role; that is, the text removes their agency, and the events act upon them. This is a combination of journalistic writing combined with Lovecraftian philosophy. In his writing, "Lovecraft, in a major departure from the previous horror tradition…would emphasize the insignificance of humanity in a universe that appears to be boundless both in time and space" (Joshi xi). *Against the Day* follows a path through the city. The effects of fire and mass panic and crumbling infrastructure have left the city with "charred trees still quietly smoking" and "flanged steelwork fallen or leaning perilously" (Pynchon 150). The image of "flanged steelwork" inclined and surrounded by crumbling buildings summons the

memory of photographs that populated the news media's coverage of 9/11. This particular explanation calls to mind one of the most iconic pictures from that period. Someone reading the novel five years removed from the events of 9/11 would have been hard-pressed to not subconsciously make this connection because the textual destruction observed in the space of New York City could not be as fully appreciated or viscerally understood without the temporal connective tissue tying the two together. Passages spend time attempting to convey the "fear among the populace of twilight hours too abruptly extended, of indistinct faces, of high windows and what might, for the first time in civic memory plausibly enter there…" (Pynchon 152, ellipsis in original). After the horror of planes crashing into the towers of the World Trade Center, this apt portrayal succinctly captures the fear permeating a nation.

V. The Road Taken

Spaces, and in particular, urban spaces, are built of countless personal experiences and interpretations that coalesce into a distinct location. *Against the Day* establishes its New York City through the lenses of temporal, social, and generic layering. Richard Hardack suggests that "[n]arrative style is a political act in Pynchon, for it involves the control, impersonation, mixing, and repetition of voices and identities" (95-6). The roads between text and reader, past and present, lived experience and the temporal bandwidth of future readers, and between distinct genres are all utilized for specific purposes to flesh out a multi-faceted space containing multiple temporalities. The attacks of September 11, 2001 altered the political, cultural, and physical landscape of a city without a singular definition. When *Against the Day* nears the end of its chapter on New York City, the layered elements begin to merge and form a cohesive location

developed and enhanced by all of these literary elements and the lived experiences, perspectives, and information of its citizens.

One particular passage emphasizes this idea and operates as both connective road for the reader and as means to metaphorically underscore again the connection between the generic and the real. As was the public desire in 2001, the New York of the novel builds a commemorative monument. The text communicates this in an abstract way where "at some transition point into the forbidden realm" a plaque "inscribed I AM THE DOLEFUL WAY INTO THE CITY – DANTE" is placed, "above which, on each anniversary of that awful event, spanning the night sky, would appear a night panorama" (Pynchon 154). The "night panorama" clearly represents the memorial lights cast into the sky where the Twin Towers once stood. Yet, where the real-world commemoration is meant as a symbol to remind the United States what was lost in that attack, the novel's panorama, in transforming the city into an aforementioned network hub, is "not quite a commemorative reenactment—more an abstract array of moving multicolored lights against a blue, somehow maritime, darkness, into which the viewer might read what he chose" (Pynchon 154). The memorial display in the novel allows for its citizens and the readers interpretation because, to reiterate Cowart, the accuracy of the allusion is secondary to the symbolic. Pynchon's penchant for historiography is a recognition that "in accounts of the past, fact too often proves factitious and objectivity remains elusive" (Cowart 389). *Against the Day* presents itself as a novel concerned with late nineteenth and early twentieth century history, and therefore, even fictional elements could be perceived as historically inspired or as an alternate telling of history, because, like Bakhtin, Pynchon understands "corresponding generic techniques have been devised for reflecting such appropriated aspects of reality" (Bakhtin 84). As any network transferring information, different cultural perspectives will bring variance in analysis.

The novel transfers analogy from text to reader and does not proffer a definitive statement on its purpose. Cultural context and a reader's temporal bandwidth are necessary to process the passage.

As *Against the Day* reaches the end of its New York chapters, the city, transformed, leads back to Hunter Penhallow directly following the description of the commemorative "panorama." The perspective has been recentered onto a person's movement through the city because the passages featuring Hunter are emblematic of the edges of inter-chapter networked travel bleeding into the text. While the episode mentioned earlier shows his journey through that network, immediately before that his transition into it plays a key role in stressing the changes that have occurred. Hunter, after witnessing the "tragedy unfolding on the horizon" becomes "abruptly lost in an unfamiliar part of town" (Pynchon 154). New York is a city with which he is acutely familiar, yet "the grid of numbered streets…made no sense anymore," and he finds that they have become "an expression of some other history of civic need" (Pynchon 154). This physical alteration of the environment mirrors Lovecraft's interest in non-Euclidean geometry when describing the locations of the Old Ones. Once again, in "The Call of Cthulhu," the text goes into detail about Cthulhu's city with its "broad impressions of vast angles and stone surfaces…the *geometry* of the dream-place he saw was abnormal, non-Euclidean, and loathsomely redolent of spheres and dimensions apart from ours" (Lovecraft, "TCoC" 376). Time shifts as he wanders through the streets, and his journey to escape maintains the same sense of space, if rearranged, and remains New York City. Hunter continues to understand it as New York City, but the streets are "no longer sequentially numbered, intersecting now at unexpected angles, narrowing into long, featureless alleyways to nowhere, running steeply up and down hills which had not been noticed before" (Pynchon 154). It does, however, alter temporally with its "some other history of

civic need." This passage operates as a means to reinforce the duality of the events that precede it. Temporal and historic layering affect his perception of the city; genre layering, and the effects thereof, propels him into the networked metaphysical underground of the city.

In *Against the Day*, the reader sees the road take on numerous iterations that explore a metaphoric and literal course of history, and in this particular case, its effects on a particular location. The novel traces a course through the pre-WWI period into the digital age, the city transforming in the aftermath of disaster. The physical act of traveling takes a backseat to the transportation of information, history, genre, and allusion from text to reader. The combination of generic elements and aesthetics is key to Bakhtin's idea of the literary chronotope. This section of *Against the Day* fuses a Lovecraftian style with that of a 9/11 novel through the use of New York as a nexus within an interconnected network. Pynchon develops a subconscious and metaphoric road between his fictionalized history of New York and the collective understanding of post-9/11 New York of the novel's readers. It is a connecting of two cities which exist, like the double worlds of Lovecraft, alongside each other simultaneously, separated, not in space, but in time.

Chapter 2: Venturing Beyond the Pale: The Chronotope of Threshold in *Against the Day*

I. The Chums of Chance and the Crisis of the Chronotope

Against the Day does not center on any one character as its protagonist; instead, it interweaves narratives from the perspective of multiple characters spread across the globe. The Chums of Chance, however, stand above the novel's narrative thread both literally and figuratively. They are the first characters introduced in *Against the Day*, and they are the final characters to appear at the close of the novel. Their journey dips in and out of chapters at crucial moments, and they experience a majority of the supernatural elements present in the novel. The Chums are a group of young men who operate the airship *Inconvenience*, performing reconnaissance and scientific expeditions at the behest of some nebulous American governmental organization. Aboard the *Inconvenience* are commander Randolph St. Cosmo, second-in-command and disciplinarian Lindsay Noseworth, "'baby' of the crew," Darby Suckling, newcomer and former juvenile delinquent Chick Counterfly, and the dog, Pugnax, a voracious reader who also serves as one of the Chums (Pynchon 3). Each younger member comes from a troubled background—Chick joins the crew after his con man father, Dick, angers a group of local Ku Klux Klan members, forcing Chick to run and happen upon the Chums—and Noseworth and St. Cosmo act as their moral guides through the world of aeronautical adventure. Miles Blundell, handyman and crew cook, factors in as an anomalous character, winking to the audience. His recognition of their narrative placement accentuates their otherness.

The Chums work for and are given orders by an unseen group dubbed at various times as Upper Command and the Organization. For much of the novel they operate without any narrative agency. Darby Suckling comments early in the novel, "*Inconvenience*, we're only the runts of the Organization, last at the trough, nobody ever tells us anything—they keep cutting our orders,

we follow ‘em, is all” (Pynchon 19). The central narrative of *Against the Day* revolves around the events between the World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago and events directly after World War I in 1921. The Chums of Chance appear at varying intervals between these events and often at the moment of climax or change or crisis. While the other characters exist within an interwoven plotline spanning the globe, the Chums of Chance enter in and out of these events through in-text fictiveness—the narrator refers to dime store novels that recount their earlier adventures—or from their own narrow perspective, separated from the purview of other characters. They have been trained to believe that interference or concern for surface world problems is at odds with following orders and completing their missions. Furthermore, the crew only has vague understanding of what is happening down on earth as they fly above it. Randolph St. Cosmo considers major historical events to be little more than superfluous details, creating a detachment from surface issues within the group. For example. as he discusses the ongoing conflict between Japan and China over Manchuria, “Randolph…could appreciate in theory that elements of the surface-world might go to war over gold” (Pynchon 259). However, this disconnection “between the history and the ground-level emotions driving it, the fear of being poor, let’s say, the blessedness of deliverance from some pain, lay this strange interval forbidden for [Randolph] to enter” has little to no value for the Chums (Pynchon 259). The Chums have a single-minded drive to do their jobs without the burden of considering the ramifications. While they begin the novel with this one-dimensional motivation, it eventually evolves to incorporate a number of nuances and increased complexity as they find themselves embroiled in time travel, conspiracy, and even the potential of transcending to a different plane of existence. Nevertheless, they are separated by multiple thresholds from the rest of the novel, both physical and metaphorical.

Mikhail Bakhtin's chronotope of threshold is a useful lens through which to view the adventures of the Chums of Chance in *Against the Day*. The chronotope of threshold, at its core, is "the chronotope of *crisis* and *break* in a life" (Bakhtin 248). Time, in this chronotope, while appearing protracted and robust from the perspective of the characters, "is instantaneous," writes Bakhtin, "it is as if it has no duration and falls out of the normal course of biographical time" (248). Biographical time can be explained as the normal everyday events and structure of one's life, time flowing at a standardized rate, whereas in the breaking point or point of crisis at the threshold, time operates differently. In his essay, Bakhtin uses *Crime and Punishment* as an example. Dostoyevsky, he argues, deploys "the staircase, the front hall and corridor" as "the main places of action…where crisis events occur, the falls, resurrections, renewals, epiphanies, decisions that determine the whole life of a man" (Bakhtin 248). The moments of contemplation before Raskolnikov murders the elderly pawnbroker that occur in the hallways and stairwells of her apartment building serve as prime examples of the chronotope of threshold because his narrative temporality expands and becomes isolated from the normal, biographical flow of time surrounding it.

Bakhtin asserts that "[i]n literature, the chronotope of threshold is always metaphorical and symbolic, sometimes openly but more often implicitly" (248). While the spaces at which characters stand on the threshold are inherently physical, their purpose is as metaphorical crossroad because "the word 'threshold' itself already has a metaphorical meaning in everyday usage (together with its literal meaning)" (Bakhtin 248). These two, the physical and symbolic, like space and time in the chronotope, are intrinsically tied, a threshold's physicality and its meaning to one's life-altering decision-making work in tandem. If, as Bakhtin posits, this chronotope is one "highly charged with emotion and value," then the narrative course of the

novel for the Chums of Chance and their inability to cross physical and metaphoric thresholds is, in part, due to their lack of emotional connection to the events happening beyond those thresholds, and their emotional growth by the end of *Against the Day* serving as a means for them to transcend a different threshold into a new plane.

Much like in Dostoevsky's hallways and stairwells, the action for the Chums of Chance happens within its own temporal pocket, locking them into a timeline that flows at a different rate to the rest of the novel's characters. They are suspended within this threshold, constantly prevented from breaching it and affecting the action below them. From a narratological perspective, the Chums of Chance exist within the boy adventure genre popularized in the late nineteenth century—a genre populated by serialized tales of boys rising from poverty, with an adherence to a strict moral code, such as the works of Horatio Alger, as well as the Tom Swift series, where Tom's adventures focus on his inventions (including, in one case, an airship). The beginning of *Against the Day* sets up the Chums as a both a group of characters in the novel and as a narrative device that serves not quite as agents of change but as audience surrogates, always at the edge or the margin of the novel's central events, who experience and react to the action as if peering over a threshold, neither in nor out, but in between. In fact, examining three specific characteristics of the Chums in light of Bakhtin's threshold chronotype—their fictionality, their compromised agency, and their agelessness—helps to clarify the boy aeronauts' function within the novel. First, the line between fiction and reality is blurred inside the novel, with the Chums' existence within the novel brought into question on multiple occasions, the implication being that they exist in between multiple realities that make up the different genre and character sections of the novel. Second, while they appear at the threshold of events, they are prevented from crossing those thresholds for narrative or narratological reasons. Third, they occupy the widest range of

time periods with the appearance of agelessness, while the narrator of their sections includes anachronistic references to events from a future point in history. Ultimately, the Chums of Chance operate as observers to the changing geopolitical landscape that existed at the turn of the twentieth century as a means to provide perspective and the opportunity for narrative commentary.

II. The Chums of Chance and the Fiction of Reality

In "Escaping the Politics of the Irredeemable Earth—Anarchy and Transcendence in the Novels of Thomas Pynchon," Sean Molloy argues that "*Against the Day* is a pluralized universe in which there are multiple Chums of Chance, multiple pasts and multiple futures" (Molloy). The Chums that appear at different points throughout the novel are not necessarily the same versions. In the same way different temporal versions of New York are stacked atop one another, the Chums operate as separate entities within each of these temporalities. Whereas one perspective, or potential timeline, is given for the other characters, the Chums' perspectives are from the gamut of potential pasts and futures. While other characters—Frank Traverse, Merle and Dally Rideout, etc.—are given generally linear narratives, the Chums bounce around from event to event, with little to connect the episodes or establish a sense of time. Throughout the novel, when the perspective shifts to the Chums, there are often references to other adventures they have taken part in before the events of the text (i.e., *The Chums of Chance and the Ice Pirates*, *The Chums of Chance and the Caged Woman of Yokohama*, etc.). In fact, we even observe some of the other characters in *Against the Day* reading these adventures. For example, during Reef Traverse's journey to bring his father Webb's body back home to be buried, he pulls out and reads one of these books, *The Chums of Chance at the Ends of the Earth.* Of particular note in

this passage is the acknowledgement of how old the book is: “Reef had had the book for years. He’d come across it, already dog-eared and scribbled in, torn and stained from a number of sources, including blood, while languishing in the county lockup” (Pynchon 214-15). The novel does not specifically age Reef, however, but does include that Webb’s children are “silver-boom babies, up and running just in time for repeal” (Pynchon 89). A few paragraphs later we learn that the repeal of the Silver Act took place in 1893. It can reasonably be assumed that Reef, as Webb’s oldest, is no older than mid-20s at the time of Webb’s death. Lindsay Noseworth, still a prominent member of the Chums, appears on the cover of Reef’s book fighting “a bestially rendered gang of Eskimos” (Pynchon 215). The Chums of Chance were adventuring years before *Against the Day* begins (circa 1893), continue their exploits during the novel, and are present at the end of the narrative (circa 1921), yet none of them noticeably ages. As Richard Hardack points out, “*ATD* begins and ends with such temporal disjunctions” (Hardack 116). The first page of the novel calls into question the age, and fictiveness of the Chums of Chance when the narrator comments that “Darby, as my faithful readers will remember, was the ‘baby’ of the crew and served as both factotum and mascotte” (Pynchon 3). This is not the last time the narrator directly inserts itself to point out the fictional accounts of the boys’ adventures present in *Against the Day*.

Toward the end of the first section of *Against the Day*, the Chums of Chance are given orders to leave their station in the South Indian Ocean “to intercept the schooner *Etienne Louis-Malus* and attempt to persuade its commander, Dr. Alden Vormance, to abandon the expedition he was currently engaged upon” (Pynchon 114). In order to expediently arrive in the Arctic, they must pass through a “great portal” at the South Pole that takes them into the interior of the earth, magnetic pole connected to magnetic pole (Pynchon 115). In this section, the narrator of *Against*

the Day emphasizes the Chums fictionality (in comparison to the novel's other characters) by taking an active role when explaining their experiences beneath the surface. In this particular instance, the narrator glosses over a story about a gnome war, telling readers they can learn the details in *The Chums of Chance in the Bowels of the Earth* before editorializing that it is "for some reason one of the less appealing of this series, letters having come in from as far away as Tunbridge Wells, England, expressing displeasure, often quite intense, with my harmless little intraterrestrial scherzo" (Pynchon 117). Tunbridge Wells, incidentally, served as an important military location during the First World War, being a strategic headquarters for the British Army.

There are a number of important things at work here as the narrator directly references himself and his involvement in the adventures of the Chums of Chance. First, the narrative of the Chums is removed from present flow of the novel and positioned far enough into the past to have been novelized by the narrator. Secondly, leading from that is the implication that what the reader is reading may be fictitious even inside the bounds of the novel. In other words, the race of gnomes mentioned by the narrator do not exist within the larger diegetic world of *Against the Day*. The Chums, therefore, represent a fiction within a fiction, and are thus positioned as *more* fictional than other characters and storylines within the novel. Finally, the Chums are situated as inconsequential to the general narrative thrust of the novel. It is quite fitting that *Against the Day* refers to *The Chums of Chance in the Bowels of the Earth* as "my harmless little intraterrestrial scherzo" (Pynchon 117). Not only does this suggest that the narrator of *Against the Day* is the author of the Chums (thus emphasizing their doubly fictive nature) but it also reduces the realism of the Chums' adventure by deeming it a scherzo—that is, a "vigorous, light, or playful composition, especially as a movement in a symphony or sonata" meant as a joke or to lighten the mood of a piece (Speake and LaFlaur). It is also of note how the third-person narrator uses

the word intraterrestrial—a world within a world—to reference this interstitial adventure and emphasize again that we have a fiction embedded within a fiction.

The text also directly references the threshold of fiction and reality the Chums straddle near the beginning of the novel. As they descend onto Chicago for the World's Fair, the narration points to the "exact degree of fictitiousness" exhibited by the fair where "the nonfictional world waited outside the White City's limits" (Pynchon 36). In other words, the World's Fair not only serves as a threshold in the novel between history and fiction, but also between levels of fiction within the novel (that is, the novel's "real" characters and its "fictive" ones). While the doubly-fictive Chums can access the Fair, it is an interstitial place, a threshold they are unable to move beyond (i.e., into the "real" city of Chicago)." The appeal of spending their leave at the World's Fair for the Chums is this inherent connection between their existence and "the entire commemorative season beside Lake Michigan" being "at once dream-like and real" (Pynchon 36). The sensation experienced by the Chums and conveyed to the reader is one that wavers between these two literary ideas the Chums represent as both fictional characters built into the narrative world of *Against the Day* and real physical people that exist amongst the characters in the novel, bound by the constraint of existential threshold.

Later in this same scene, the adventurers interact with the hardboiled detective character of Lew Basnight. Lew is to be a part of a reconnaissance mission that his agency has hired the Chums for, flying above the city looking for any signs of danger that may hamper the World's Fair. The Chums exist between fictitious and actual, within the reality of the novel, but are baffled that Lew has no knowledge of them or their literary exploits. "But every boy knows the Chums of Chance," cries Lindsey Noseworth during their initial meeting (Pynchon 36). This moment is crucial because the narrator has already begun to press the importance of the Chums'

novels as well as the implied familiarity the reader and implied audience would have with them. Lew replies to Noseworth by telling him he read "Wild West, African explorers, the usual adventure stuff" as a child and emphatically tells the Chums, "you're not storybook characters" (Pynchon 37). The narrator then inserts a beat, during which Lew "had a thought" (Pynchon 37). In this instance, the narrator pushes into the boundary of the novel to turn the reader's and Lew's attention away from the idea that the Chums are fully real by having him question himself and ask "[a]re you?" (Pynchon 37).

Against the Day continues to be vague about how real or how fictional the Chums of Chance are. Randolph St. Cosmo sums up how the reader and Lew are meant to view them throughout the entirety of their story by commenting that "the longer a fellow's name has been in the magazines, the harder it is to tell fiction from non-fiction" (Pynchon 37). The more the novel begins to explore the Chums' story, interactions, and self-awareness, the more the line becomes blurred in regard to their dual role as fictional and real characters. In Illinois, for example, the aeronauts visit Candlebrow University for the International Conference on Time Travel. The conference and the topic of time travel have become "suddenly respectable owing to the success of Mr. H.G. Wells's novel *The Time Machine*" (Pynchon 407). After an episode there which causes them to question their own mortality, the boys attempt to abandon their adventuring for campus life, becoming students at the university. At Candlebrow, reflecting on their adventures, they begin to ponder if they are "torn and trailing after-images of clandestine identities needed on some mission long ended, forgotten, but unwilling or unable to be released from it" and question if they "may only have been readers of the Chums of Chance Series of boys' books, authorized somehow to serve as volunteer decoys" (Pynchon 423). Some characters like Reef only know them as fictional adventurers and others like Lew have a physical interaction with

them blind to any knowledge of their literary background. Both Reef and Lew's ideas of the Chums are true within the context of their respective narrative arcs.

III. The Chums of Chance and the Uncrossable Boundary

A second major characteristic of the Chum of Chance is their lack of narrative agency. Partially defined and influenced by the potential of the hyperfictionality of the Chums, a lack of direct impact on narrative situations creates a distinction between them and other characters. Within particular zones or areas, the Chums are able to—and do—interact with other groups of people. However, no consequential effects result from such exchanges. Fleetwood Vibe, for example, writes of his interactions with the Chums, but more as a statement of fact rather than with any consideration to listening to their words of warning. While the group is ordered to intercept the expedition, there is no mention of consequences at their failure, and no one rebukes them for their inability to convince Vormance to pursue another course of action. It is as if they are bound to be present by a narratological force, one that also cordons them off, behind the threshold of effectual action.

One clear example that demonstrates the Chums inability to affect the narrative action occurs when they meet up with the Vormance Expedition. The scientific crew welcomes the Chums and climb aboard the *Inconvenience* to view the Figure jutting out of the barren Arctic wasteland. Upon the arrival of the Chums, the crew of the *Etienne-Louis Malus* are informed of the danger of the mission upon which they have embarked. These warnings and rebukes having been issued from the Chums, Fleetwood says that "[w]hatever we thought we had seen upon the viewing instrument, we had already, in mute fear, dismissed" (Pynchon 142). Chick Counterfly tells the scientific crew of the Vormance Expedition that they are "in *mortal* danger…A Zone of

Emergency has been declared for hundreds of miles' of radius" (Pynchon 139). This Zone of Emergency is put in place before the Chums arrive in the Arctic. The Zone is also important in that it performs, as Chicago does and the scenes under the earth's surface to be discussed here, as a temporal bubble where the Chums can interact with characters. It is a threshold that moves with them for particular scenes allowing for some interaction and limited agency, but never allows them to cross outside of it. Later, as they exit the Zone of Emergency to head off the Expedition, their inability to affect the narrative is underscored.

Counterfly asks the crew of the Vormance Expedition why none of them suspected the Figure to be an "artificial structure" before telling them "it was not situated here by accident" (Pynchon 139). They have instruments on board their airship obtained in ways "that may not even be talked about" that give them a greater understanding of the potential dangers ahead (Pynchon 140). Although, they are able to interact with the crew, the Chums' advanced technology is dismissed, and their advice is unheeded. After their attempt to head off the expedition is ignored, the Chums use "as much fuel as they dared…in a desperate attempt to reach the city before the steamer *Etienne Louis-Malus*" (Pynchon 149). However, the Chums do not appear in the novel for another hundred pages, in a new location, and they are never mentioned in conjunction with the destruction of New York. They appeared to the Vormance Expedition only as outside observers, and do not affect its outcome or witness its tragic consequences. They stand solely at the cusp of catastrophe and move on, their travels in between the Vormance episode and their later appearance in New York nor the time that passes in that interval even mentioned in passing. Chick Counterfly's thought as they leave the Arctic is a reminder that the events down below do not affect them and vice versa—"I cannot but wonder what is to become of those unfortunate devils" (Pynchon 149). The expedition is not stalled, and

the outcome remains the same. The implication here is that the Chums never reach, or are never able to reach, New York because of their lack of ability to cross that threshold of fiction and reality. The narrative of the novel will proceed without any ability by its aeronautical observers to impact it. They are the ineffectual comical Greek chorus, their actions and observations serving at times, such as the one detailed above, as Shakespearian soliloquies foreshadowing events and tragedies.

Another clear example in *Against the Day* that explains the Chums inability to demonstrably affect the narrative action is when Chick Counterfly meets with the representative of the time-hopping Trespassers, Mr. Ace. Throughout *Against the Day*, one subplot involves these actors that serve as a type of boogeyman. From the perspective of the invaded, the Trespassers "have been crossing here, crossing over, between the worlds, for generations" and "arrive here in criminal frames of mind, much like those early Norsemen, who were either fleeing retribution for offenses committed… or seeking new coastlines to pillage" (Pynchon 134). From the perspective of the invaders, their group is one that comes from an undefined future with "worldwide famine, exhausted fuel supplies, terminal poverty" that signals "the end of the capitalist experiment" and come hoping to right the wrongs of the past (Pynchon 415). The Trespassers' future is a result of economic imbalance and overreliance on limited resources. They are foils to the Chums of Chance, positioned in the novel as semi-antagonists looking to use the adventurers for their own ends. According to Mr. Ace, the Chums have been taking on assignments meant to hinder the Trespassers' advancement into the present timeline of the novel. "You are not aware that each of your mission assignments is intended to prevent some attempt of our own to enter your time-regime?" Mr. Ace asks Chick after explaining their journey through the temporal fourth dimension (Pynchon 415). "All this is news to me," Chick replies (Pynchon

415). Chick does not question this new information, nor does he seem particularly surprised by the revelation, instead discussing with the Chums what possible motive the Trespassers have in traveling back in time and seeking them out. They consider potential reasons such as tangible things like "food" and "women" to abstract ideas ranging from "lower entropy" to the "innocence" of the Chums themselves (Pynchon 416). The answer is never revealed, but the Trespassers make it clear that the Chums of Chance have no trajectory based on their own agency. While learning of and dealing with the Trespassers, the boys eventually come to realize that they are observers, used by the novel, a shadowy governmental organization, and the Trespassers as tools. Mr. Ace tells Chick that Chick's actions are guided by Upper Command to hinder his people, information of which he was completely unaware and does little to change. Agency is not only lacking for the Chums, it is also not, in any substantial way, sought.

However, the one member of the group that does seem to have some insight into the world beyond their threshold is Miles Blundell. When Chick goes to meet Mr. Ace for the second time, he brings Miles along with him because he "alone among the crew possessed the clairvoyance the situation required" (Pynchon 417). Miles can see beyond the boundaries and narrative limitations of the Chums, and he recognizes Mr. Ace and begins crying when first seeing him. When Chick asks him where he had seen him, Miles answers that it is "[b]y way of these *visual conduits* that more and more seem to find me in the course of a day…it has been possible for me to look in on him and these other trespassers, as through 'windows' into their home space" (Pynchon 417). Miles is the wink or nudge to the audience that the Chums are outsiders kept in stasis behind thresholds. In the way he can see through dimensions or time periods into that of the Trespassers, he is accentuating the barrier for Chick certainly, but more importantly, for the audience. The visions he has through these "windows" are often disregarded

by the rest of the crew, and thus, seem to operate solely for the audience to understand their physical and metaphorical otherness.

Despite their apparent sentience, the Chums entire existence is predicated on being fictional, novelized exemplars of boyhood innocence and as agents serving the wills of different groups. One of the most important themes of *Against the Day* is the ways technology and time work in tandem to affect geopolitical landscape. The Traverse family, Lew Basnight, Merle Rideout and his daughter Dally, all of these characters and their narrative arcs are influenced by the time in which they are living and the way they interact with the world and vice versa. These elements of the novel do not function in the same way for the Chums. Even as they attempt to affect the outcome of events, they are narratologically prevented from achieving those goals. The inverse is true of the world around them. It does not have the same agency over the lives of the Chums as it does the rest of the novel's characters. The intrepid aeronauts are bound by the constraints of the threshold of their own agency.

IV. The Chums of Chance and the Time of Their Lives

The final characteristic of the Chums of Chance defining them as perpetually bound behind thresholds is their agelessness and ability to time travel, both explicitly and implicitly. All of the other characters in the novel have their plots advance linearly. They may jump forward in time, travel being still being delegated to the margins between chapters, but events follow from one to the next logically. This same rule does not apply to the Chums. The narrator once again interjects himself into the sections featuring the boy adventurers and juxtaposes anachronistic elements with the early twentieth century setting. Through the course of the novel, it is made clear that preceding the start in 1893 and after the end in 1921, the Chums of Chance have not

aged and have engaged in a duality outside of any chronological, or biological, timeline. The text emphasizes this "timelessness" or "agelessness" of the Chums in three ways. First, it implies the seeming ability for any member of the group to have experienced events decades prior to the opening of the novel without having aged a day. Second, the narrator provides reference to events yet to happen in a way that suggests the boys have a working understanding of that knowledge. Third, the Chums appear able to live their lives in concurrent worlds and timelines.

While the Chums seemingly do not age, they nonetheless appear to retain the memories of their past adventures. For example, their traveling within the confines of the earth is explicitly related to the reader. As they approach the, currently shrinking, threshold of "hollow earth" travel, Randolph comments how "[t]he navigation's not as easy **this time**" and how "you can remember the **old days**" (emphasis added, Pynchon 115). This trip is not something new or unknown for the Chums. The text refers to towns and marketplaces of the interior's inhabitants that once bordered the rim of the portal that are no longer there. Inside, they become embroiled in a war between factions of gnomes. In near defiance of their order's "Directives related to Noninterference and Height Discrepancy," the Chums become involved even as the events are not described in any real detail. What is important to this aside is the explanation of the time dilation inside the earth—"After their precipitate escape from the ill-disposed hordes of thick-set indigenous, over another night and day, as time is reckoned on the surface"—and the explanation of the events being compiled into a Chums of Chance novel that exists outside of the novel's narrative (Pynchon 117). Moreover, they also appear to have knowledge of the future, which the narrator often presents by way of various anachronisms. For example, the novel theorizes that "[o]ne day, it was hoped, the technique of intra-planetary 'short-cutting' about to be exercised by the boys would become routine, as useful in its way as the Suez or the Panama Canal had proved

to surface skipping" (Pynchon 115). While the Suez Canal was completed in the late 1860s, the Panama Canal was not completed until 1914, a month after the onset of World War I. The chronology of the novel is amorphous, but it has not reached or referred to any events around that time period up to this point so early in the text. The narration implies the Chums have an explicit understanding of both past and future as "[a]t the time we speak of, however, there still remained to our little crew occasion for stunned amazement" (Pynchon 115). Time operates differently for the Chums, and the line between their involvement in the narrative of *Against the Day* and outside observer is blurred through clues given by the narration. As previously discussed, travel in *Against the Day* is often kept to the boundaries between chapters and rarely explicitly discussed. Locations act as nexus points along a network that connects an ever-expanding global population. The narration pointing to this form of travel's commonplace use at some undetermined future point in time implies the Chums are working with the understanding of foreign knowledge that sets them apart from the general public.

The narrator recounts bullet points of the Chums' war with the gnomes, and this conflict is set up as a humorous allusion to the coming of the Great War on the surface world, one that introduced trench warfare fought from a series of earthen tunnels. Time does not work the same underground as the boys experience battles, the operations of "a certain international mining cartel," and being seduced by a "Circe-like" monarch. For an entire war to play out over the course of only a day or two on the surface, one must accept that time is relative within the confines of the novel and its world. The Chums' participation in this conflict allows for the reader to see their inherent moral compass and for the text to foreshadow their lack of involvement when World War I breaks out late in *Against the Day*. This single paragraph also

touches on an important aspect of all of the Chums of Chance sections, the intertextual, almost fictionalized nature of their existence within the novel.

To emphasize their timelessness and position as temporal outsiders, there is another important point to consider in the group's interaction with Mr. Ace discussed earlier. In exchange for the Chums' help in accepting "a commission from us now and then," the Trespasser offers Chick as well as the other boys "[e]ternal youth" (Pynchon 415, 416). It had become an accepted fact that they were unable to age, for the Chums and their counterparts in the airship community. The group has "unquestioning faith that none of them, barring misadventure, would ever simply grow old and die, a belief which over the years many had to come to confuse with a guarantee" (Pynchon 418). While their inability to cross the threshold of action and inaction or the one of being definitively fictitious or narratively real does not play into the boys' concerns, the notion, whether true or not, that they are not infinite beings and could potentially die causes an existential crisis within their ranks. These events contextualize the temporal juxtaposition of the text by the narrator. The Chums of Chance have traveled the globe multiple times and the affairs of the surface world have become mundane stretched over such an extended period of time. The plurality of their existence keeps them within their own time-space and allows them to visit other worlds as if they are their own.

Late in the novel, an anomaly appears over the Saharan Desert, and the boys choose to investigate it. Their connection to any group of authority has been severed, and they operate on their own. The updraft, as the novel refers to it, appears as a "strangely red cylindrical cloud" that "slowly rose, like a sinister luminary, up over the horizon—sands eternally ascending, bright and calamitous" (Pynchon 1019-20). Once the updraft is traversed, the landscape emerges as a "range of mountains which appeared to be masses of black obsidian, glittering with red

highlights, the razor-sharp crestlines stretching for miles before vanishing into a vaporous twilight" (Pynchon 1020). After landing and an extensive study of their equipment, the boys conclude that they have traveled to Antichthon, "the Other Earth" (Pynchon 1021). As New York did before, here the team exists in parallel times, "[t]hey were on the Counter-Earth, on it and of it, yet at the same time also on the Earth they had never, it seemed left" (Pynchon 1021). The threshold of time is partially crossed but not fully, the worlds and their temporalities run parallel and simultaneously. No other characters experience this duality, consciously or otherwise. After the introduction of the arrival on the Counter-Earth, the concept is left alone, the Chums continuing to look for missions and adventures but a distinction between events happening in one world or the other is never made, they simply coexist.

The Chums of Chance travel through both space and time continuously through *Against the Day*. Events take place on different versions of Earth, in the center of the Earth, and at different points over the course of thirty years, yet the boy adventurers never age. They are tasked with stopping the Vormance Expedition from extracting their quarry and halting the expedition's advance to New York City. The threshold containing their adventures in the north is never crossed, but the reader does see the Chums enter a New York and approach "a memorial arch, gray and time-corroded, seeming to date from some ancient catastrophe, far older than the city" (Pynchon 401). The same sign hangs upon the memorial, "I AM THE WAY INTO THE DOLEFUL CITY – DANTE" (Pynchon 401). The passage of time is only noted through the narration; the Chums do not comment on their knowledge of these events, and the course of the novel's narrative has remained seemingly straightforward. While spatial and temporal boundaries are crossed, the lack of acknowledgement is evidence for the aeronauts' inability to cross the threshold of understanding their own existence within a linear progression of time and

the understanding of time in a singular way. The travails and happenings on the surface and in the reality of the novel are literally and figuratively beneath them.

Toward the end of *Against the Day*, the aeronauts of the *Inconvenience* find a skybound civilization of women known as the Sodality of Aethernauts, in their giant metal-winged airship. These women, where "each had found her way to this Aetherist sorority through the mysteries of **inconvenience**," are the true fate of the Chums of Chance, that "they were destined after all to seek wives, to marry and have children and become grandparents" (emphasis added, Pynchon 1030). Each member of the Chums meets a corresponding member of the Sodality—Chick and Viridian, Lindsay and Primula, Miles and Glee, Heartsease and Randolph, and Blaze and Darby. As the two ships fly above the United States, they happen upon Los Angeles, the date now in the early 1920s. As "they looked down and beheld an incalculable expanse of lights," Heartsease asks "[w]here on Earth is this?" and Chick replies that "[t]hat's sort of the problem…[t]hat 'on Earth' part" (Pynchon 1032). The aeronauts, in finding the Sodality, decide to build a life that allows them to embrace, live, and thrive on the characteristics that set them apart from other characters, "the Chums of Chance choose to create their own world, above and distinct from the unredeemable Earth" (Molloy). The advent of the Trespassers becomes prominent and increases as they enter the novel's timeline through the Tunguska Event in Siberia. The Trespasser known as Ryder Thorn tells Miles Blundell that the earth is on a course for destruction, and now, finding companionship with the Sodality, a chance to build a civilization above the creep of capitalism and violent geopolitics allows the Chums the opportunity for a purer existence to begin. Viridian lays out part of the politics present in the novel when she says "[f]umes are not the future…[b]urning dead dinosaurs and whatever they ate ain't the answer" (Pynchon 1031).

The two crews form a floating city, and each of the wives becomes pregnant. The airborne city begins to grow in size with other families inhabiting it. The world below becomes nothing more than an afterthought in comparison to the new reality in the sky. The Chums had been held behind thresholds both narrative and physical because their fate is in the sky searching for a better outcome for humanity amongst the evil and selfish political maneuvers that dictate the surface. The other characters in the novel sought change through action and anarchy, but "[t]he Anarchist dream of revolution is merely an illusion. A rejection of the unredeemed Earth and all it stands for is the pre-requisite for admission into the community of adventurous, fraternal supermen (and women) who inhabit this sphere" of the skyward idealists (Molloy). Miles believes that the tide is turning for humanity and "good unsought and uncompensated" will "become at least more accessible to us" (Pynchon 1085). "They will put on smoked goggles for the glory of what is coming to part the sky," the Chums remaining behind their thresholds in order to substantiate a better reality as "[t]hey fly toward grace" (Pynchon 1084, 1085). While there is an inherent irony to this conclusion, given that only the Chums and not the whole of humanity is provided with this utopian ending, the novel wants readers to find a hopefulness alongside the ironic. It poses the question: would this not be a wonderful ending for us all?

Conclusion

Bakhtin's chronotopic theory formalizes and names the foundational elements of how genres are established and how they operate in various forms of literature. In his essay, he writes that "the chronotope, functioning as the primary means for materializing time in space, emerges as a center for concretizing representation, as a voice giving body to the entire novel" (Bakhtin 250). In the first chapter, I explore how New York City functions both metaphorically and physically along a road constructed of information. Temporalities converge and manifest simultaneously, and tangibly, to affect a space that functions as "both a point of new departures and a place for events to find their denouement" (Bakhtin 243-44). In the second chapter, I discuss how time is also given physicality, and is personified within, the Chums of Chance, in their apparent agelessness, understanding of both the past and the present, and indifference to the whims of society.

The spaces within a novel stand as static components devoid of contextual meaning that cannot advance without specific temporalities, and, in that, cannot take shape to expound on the intangible, symbolic meaning assigned to them by a reader. "All of the novel's abstract elements—philosophical generalizations, ideas, analyses of cause and effect," Bakhtin writes, "gravitate toward the chronotope and through it take on flesh and blood, permitting the imaging power of art to do its work" (250). The chronotope provides an appropriate avenue for exploring how the use of particular spaces and specific intervals of time, tied into one, comments on the complex connections a reader sees in a literary work, both historical and contemporary. A genre is nothing more than a predefined set of parameters—building blocks of a narrative. They are tools to be ardently adhered to or subverted in order to serve the greater meaning underlying. Thomas Pynchon's *Against the Day* does both, often in as interconnected a way as a generic

chronotope does with time and space. The road and the threshold are not unique to Pynchon's novel, but their utilization and the message behind them are singular.

*Against the Day'*s playfulness with genre show expert craftsmanship and an immense knowledge of multiple writing styles in a cohesive literary work. While these larger generic styles are commendable, the minute intricacies evident in both the stories of the Vormance Expedition and the overarching narrative of the Chums of Chance offer us the opportunity to consider how fiction and reality—and in particular, history—can, in essence, coalesce. Bakhtin says of fiction that "[a] literary work's artistic unity in relationship to an actual reality is defined by the chronotope," and it "always contains within it an evaluating aspect that can be isolated from the whole artistic chronotope only in abstract analysis" (Bakhtin 243). Neither the road nor the threshold chronotope is connected in *Against the Day*, both are distinct. The Vormance Expedition episode uses the road chronotope, to quote Bakhtin, as a "metaphor (but not entirely)" (84). In positioning New York City as a nexus point, the novel forms a vertical road where all the information contained within—social, historical, and generic—is woven together in a new spatiotemporal location. The passage of time can be seen along the road in this chronotope, and though it may be a short one, it is one that speaks to the relationship of fiction and an actual reality that Bakhtin writes about. All of this is done to connect the reader to the palpable horror the residents of New York City experienced on September 11, 2001. The incomprehensible fictional worlds of H.P. Lovecraft invaded reality for New Yorkers and Pynchon reverted that back into fiction for *Against the Day*, synthesizing the two.

With the Chums of Chance, the use of the boy adventurer genre, and the insipid purity typified in its characters, the novel takes this idea to transcendent absurdity, and hides the boys behind multiple thresholds in order for them to retain their disconnection from the corruptive

nature of mankind. They, whether ultimately successful or not, become the arbiters of a new civilization bent on not giving in to the capitalist and political follies of the world below them. The thresholds put before them are a barrier keeping them physically, culturally, and metaphorically above the other characters in the novel. The Chums of Chance are given the opportunity to seize a happier ending than their narrative colleagues. *Against the Day* gives them an apparent agelessness and timelessness, thus making them something different, and perhaps better, than the rest of humanity. They are one potential ideal for us as readers to seek, a future that may turn out better than the warring, conniving, cynics on the surface. "Such is the representational significance of the chronotope" (Bakhtin 250).

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