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Many sexual encounters in Thomas Pynchon's fiction have occurred beyond the mainstream, generating theatres of perversity which dramatise the death wish and enact power relations from wider arenas. However, in *Inherent Vice* they change in nature. With the exception of scenes which use Charles Manson to fuel fantasies of domination and submission, they have lost their transgressive bite. Instead, the sheer profusion of variations, and the insouciance with which they are greeted, evinces the influence of a sexualised mainstream colonised by hardcore pornography. Paradoxically, much hardcore catering to the mass market is appreciably less transgressive than Pynchon's fiction has been. The narrative of his seventh novel, with its noir conventions and accompanying sexual motivation, is driven by the commissions his detective protagonist receives from femmes fatales and damsels in distress. The transference of these women from man to man becomes the novel's sexual currency.

### Keywords

Pynchon; pornography; fiction; Manson; sex

## Mansonoid and Pynchonoid

In *Inherent Vice*, Pynchon appropriates the sexual submission of female acolytes of Charlie Manson, whose trial began on 15 June 1970 as the stuff of pornographic fantasy. This is the sexual trope which most recalls the transgressive taboo sexuality of his earlier fiction. However, throughout the novel women dressed like porn stars, and with their sex-positive approach and versatility, drive the narrative through sexual agency.<sup>1</sup> They relate or hint at submissive narratives of themselves with other men or other women, aspiring as the most taboo fetish to the submissive status of a female Manson acolyte. They initiate good sex as an end in itself, and not as a sign or a signifier of anything else. They do not seek commitment and their sexual stories come with enthusiasm, but also insouciance about power relations. Ultimately, the variety of this sex adheres to the taxonomy of ubiquitous acts consumers have come to tolerate or anticipate in a hardcore adult feature.

Hippie private investigator protagonist Larry ‘Doc’ Sportello has a stoned tryst with Penny Kimball, the assistant DA he is seeing, soon after she’s ‘shopped him to *los federales*’.<sup>2</sup> Before either of them even mentions Manson, she spins him a punishment fantasy yarn with extra perversion added by her profession and his drug consumption. In mock indignation, she suborns Doc to be the threatening Other in her sexual narrative:

You know, if somebody I cared about, even in a casual-sex sort of way, had shopped *me* to the FBI? [...] if it was *my* dick? and some self-satisfied lady prosecutor thought she was getting away with something? [...]

‘Just try it’, she cried, ‘you drug-crazed hippie freak, get your hand out of there, who said you could do that, let go of my, what do you think you’re – ’ By which time they were fucking, you could say, energetically. It was quick, not too quick, it was mean and nasty enough, it was great stoned fun. (IV, p. 279)

Sex in this novel is mostly stoned and fun, but the monster on the Tube is recruited to add a little edge. In their post-coital calm, Doc and Penny watch Manson trial TV reports and Penny, disgruntled at hitting a glass ceiling and being excluded from the legal action by male colleagues, shifts her analysis from the professional to the prurient: ‘The only part I enjoy anymore is hearing how all these hippie chicks did everything Manson told them to do. The master-slave thing, it’s kinda cute?’ (IV, p. 280) She teases Doc with the prospect of Mansonoid role-playing:

You're almost short enough. I guess. But, see, it isn't only the hypnotic stare, Charlie's big appeal is that he's down there eyeball to eyeball with the ladies he's ordering around. It might be about fucking Daddy but the really perverse thrill is that Daddy's only five foot two. (IV, p. 280)

The thought sticks in Doc's dope-addled memory long enough to resurface during their next phone call: 'If I could find you a Manson-chick type wig to wear? Would it be, like, a problem?' (IV, p. 283) Later, Doc briefly discusses with Tariq Khalil the merits of Leslie van Houten and Lynette 'Squeaky' Fromme ('Yeah, ain't *she* some righteous – ass bitch' (IV, p. 293)). This idle chatter touches a nerve even with the woman present: unshockable, two-men-at-a-time Clancy Charlock.

Meeting Penny at the hairdresser prompts Shasta Fay Hepworth, the femme fatale who instigated this dopehead noir plot by coming back into Doc's life, to collude with her in embellishing the fantasy both women apparently want Doc to have: 'Submissive, brainwashed, horny little teeners', Shasta continued, 'who do exactly what you want before you even know what that is. You don't even have to say a word out loud, they get it all by ESP. Your kind of chick, Doc, that's the lowdown on you' (IV, p. 304). However, it is moot whether Penny and Shasta are supposed to do anything beyond appropriate the dominant Californian media figure of 1969–1970 to add spice and zeitgeist to their sexual fictions. This is less of a sexual simulacrum (details of Mansonoid murders or sexual peccadilloes remain unseen) than a tokenistic piece of horrorshow: paranoid writing on the wall about the end of the hippie era and implosion into violence. Pynchon has Manson leave a pervasive atmospheric mark whenever he's mentioned in the novel:

[...] it was during that very freaky time right after Sharon Tate. It had occurred to very few in the hopeful-starlet community that regular features and low body weight might not after all be counted on to buy you a thing that mattered. The shock of the Cielo Drive murders was bad enough out in civilian life but the impact on Shasta and her friends was paralyzing. You could be the sweetest girl in the business [...] and still be horribly murdered for your trouble. (IV, pp. 308–9)

Manson becomes an index of safety/danger: Shasta's appraisal of undead saxophonist Coy Harlingen as a good friend hinges on the fact that he 'even strung out most of the time on smack had never looked at her in that creepy Mansonoid way' (IV, p. 311). Also, when Doc, Denis, Dr Blatnoid and Japonica get pulled over by traffic police on a

new 'Cultwatch' citizen-monitoring programme: 'Doc noticed for the first time that both cops were . . . well, not trembling, the police wouldn't tremble, but *vibrating* for sure, with the post-Mansonian nerves that currently ruled the area' (IV, p. 179). Manson may be the prime contemporary source of paranoia, but his presence in the novel is no less peripheral than that of Governor Reagan. Charlie is not the libidinal energy behind the novel's sexual narratives, just a totem of extremity and control, and the source of thematic material which grounds them in this 1970. Pynchon goes further than porno which, though promiscuous about where it appropriates thematic material and frequently inclined to satirise politicians, performers and public figures, appears to have largely stayed away from Manson to date.<sup>3</sup>

Bogey-man Manson references aside, almost two decades after *Vineland*, Pynchon's return to California, the state with the largest and most formulaic pornographic film industry in the world, has reduced the previously transgressive and emblematic sexuality of his characters to patterns apparently codified by that industry.<sup>4</sup> Where sexual encounters previously tended to be either countercultural, revolutionary acts or the instrument of the elect, in *Inherent Vice* they become an almost chapter-regular device for furthering the plot, much like the recurring consumption of soft drugs and rock 'n' roll. This sexually liberated characters' interest in multiple partners takes the narrative from episode to episode, and many people are conjoined by mutual conquests. So Doc has sex with Shasta Fay, who has sex with Mickey Wolfmann, who has sex with Luz, who has sex with Doc. Wolfmann's wife Sloane has sex with Riggs Warbling, and so forth. However, it is not all this physical conjoining which ties the novel together. It is the participants' accounts of it to others, chiefly Doc.

The 1970 sexscape of *Inherent Vice* is in the words of British novelist Martin Amis, 'a pregnant widow'.<sup>5</sup> Patriarchal control over female sexuality has been rescinded but no new post-revolutionary system has been constructed to manage male-female interaction. Pynchon imagines sexually liberated women anxious to couple with all manner of men, but they have hardly shaken off the chains of sexism: they are groupies or girlfriends ('old ladies'), receptionists or stewardess, maids, waitresses or singers. Dynamic white-collar careers seem available only at the prosecutor's office and in the novel's only moment of quasi-feminist political correctness or anti-sexism, Doc's waggish lechery arouses the ire of Penny's assistant DA colleague: "And Miss Frothingham, may I add, that skirt length on you today is especially attractive." Rhus screamed and picking up a galvanized trash can prepared to throw it at Doc's head' (IV, p. 282). This augury of raised consciousnesses and longer skirts to come is an ironic exception as Pynchon populates *Inherent Vice* with an ensemble cast of more than

twenty individually or dually introduced 'presentable' young female characters in abbreviated and lasciviously described apparel.<sup>6</sup>

'Oh, Doc ...' (IV, p. 13). Downstairs from private eye Larry 'Doc' Sportello's office there's a doctor who prescribes amphetamines. Dr Buddy Tubeside's receptionist is Petunia Leeway: 'a stunner in a starched cap and micro-length medical outfit, not so much an actual nurse uniform as a lascivious commentary on one' (IV, p. 13). Later, at the Golden Fang dental collective, Doc visits 'lecherous toothyanker' Dr Rudi Blatnoyd. Xandra is his 'Asian receptionist wearing a black vinyl jumpsuit and a distant expression' (IV, p. 168). She returns unprompted a couple of pages later, jumpsuit unzipped: "Oh, Doctor," she breathed, half singing it' before whisking her boss away for cocaine-fuelled sex (IV, p. 170). These breathless Moneypennys and Bond girls ('Oh, James ...') fill this pre-feminist male-fantasy 1970 with flirtatious availability and gently fetishist glamour. Pynchon's touch is ever comic and whimsical and his characters, male and female, are 'unabashedly cartoonish'.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, our view of these women is filtered by the libidinous male gaze of our single-point of view (POV) protagonist. Pynchon may be ribbing us about our expectations of the backend of the sixties but there is more to this than hippie nostalgia and casual Bond-girl sexism. The sexual code which runs through *Inherent Vice* has been adulterated with twenty-first-century data.

Ongoing sexualisation of the mainstream, it has been argued, 'implies a certain schooling of desire', raising consciousness of myriad sexual eventualities and breaking taboos against them.<sup>8</sup> Pynchon is a long-time exhibitor of sexual excess and non-normative sexualities taken to bizarre extremes, to all manner of ends, but in his seventh novel the intimate interactions of his characters are constrained within a kind of flatness and conventionality, a shadow of the experimentation of his earlier fictions. *Inherent Vice* is 'a gumshoe pastiche set in surfside L.A. in 1970' (Rosenbaum): a hippie-dopehead homage to the American, or Californian, hard-boiled detective novel, an oft-filmed form.<sup>9</sup> '*Inherent Vice* is eminently filmable. Filmable, meaning that the plot goes in straight lines, the characters are distinct and rounded, and the book features large amounts of dialogue that is not only speakable but also very funny.'<sup>10</sup> A second film genre also contributes narrative structure to this most novelish of Pynchon's works: the adult feature. This plot is driven by detective assignments issued by noir femmes fatales, but their liaisons also link its episodes. A post-feminist sexualised mainstream populates and infects a nostalgic pre-feminist world of new sexual liberation as the sexually charged Pynchonoid women Doc encounters tell him stories about their experiences and their lovers which bring these men (Mickey Wolfmann, Puck and Einar, Tariq Khalil, Riggs Warbling) into focus. Doc is sexually

stimulated by these accounts and learns about the men, and their crimes and misdemeanours, through the women.

In 1970, the hardcore porno feature film was just starting to assert its dominance over the 8 mm stag film and the 16 mm loop. These formats, intended respectively for the private showing or the sex shop booth, were filled almost entirely with sex:

The 16 mm loop is outlined in the same manner as the stag movie. All you need to do is to establish the setting and the reason for the sex. The reason need not be any more than two people in the woods looking for some fun. Sexual action is the most important element.<sup>11</sup>

Features have flourished for four decades despite fierce competition from plotless gonzo hardcore, which has dispensed with conventional narrative and instead dramatises its own making.<sup>12</sup> For the first time cinematic porno required plot development: narrative segues as bridges between sex numbers. In *Inherent Vice*, sex certainly does not outweigh the rest, as hardcore requires, but it does run the gamut of conventional hardcore variations and build plot-significant bridges between characters and episodes of detecting, drugs and rock 'n' roll. We may also find that the plethora of 'longhaired, short-skirted cuties' (IV, p. 126) who would be required to shoot the glamorous movie of *Inherent Vice*, for all the humour and tenderness with which they are imagined, invites accusations of casual misogyny.

Julie Christine Sears' analysis of perverse sexuality in Pynchon's work lists its ramifications. In general, this means power relations which extend beyond the sexual into the social, the political and matters of life or death:

In *Gravity's Rainbow* and *Mason & Dixon*, Thomas Pynchon tends to equate perverse sexuality with a proclivity to embrace technology as a replacement for humanity, a desire to kill or subjugate masses of people, an indulgence in decadence by oppressive, controlling institutions, and an obsession with suicide.<sup>13</sup>

Pynchon's characters sate urges beyond the sexual. In *Gravity's Rainbow*, among many other things, sexual acts facilitate control of technology, language and other people.<sup>14</sup> Tyrone Slothrop's well-documented bomb-predicting erections, Prentice's ejaculation on to a piece of impregnated paper to reveal a message (GR, p. 71), and the paedophile Ned Pointsman's control of Brigadier Ernest Pudding through the dominatrix Katje Borgesius (GR, pp. 232–6) are among a multitude of episodes which reveal that 'the actions of sexual deviants have consequences that reach

far beyond the bedroom'.<sup>15</sup> Sears goes on to assert that 'since *Gravity's Rainbow* Pynchon has revised his presentation of deviant sexuality' (p. 120). In many cases sex has come to be analogous with loyalty.

That process of revision was apparent between *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973) and *Vineland* (1989). The plot of the latter turns on heroine Frenesi Gates' betrayal of the countercultural movement and offers her submissive lust for sadistic prosecutor Brock Vond as chief motivation. There's even an account of how, in government custody and having Stelazine and Thorazine forced into her in suppository form, her attitude changes. 'I started looking forward to it – I wanted them to come and hold me down, stick needles in me, push things up my ass. Wanted that ritual . . . ' (VL, p. 261) The asymmetrical relationship between the elect and the preterite is expressed in directly sexual terms. Frenesi's great-grand-aunt Lake Traverse's masochistic ménage à trois with the corporate hirelings who murdered her father, Deuce Kindred (who she marries) and Sloat Fresno, in *Against the Day* (2006) is similar in theme, if rendered with increased violence.<sup>16</sup> In neither case is the direction of the causal relationship between sexual excitement and complicity with the enemy uncomplicated: neither middle is excluded. It may be possible to read Shasta's fascination with Mickey in *Inherent Vice* in the same light but Wolfmann, for all his Freudian name and reputed annoyance at any erroneous spelling which drops the second 'n', is a shadowy figure of abstract threat who cannot match the visceral impact of Brock or Deuce/Sloat. Another heuristic offers itself: a fetishistic narrative stripped of its transgressive force in a pornified world.

### Porno's inherent vices

Linda Williams recounts a taxonomy of pornographic 'numbers' essential to the hardcore feature. She cites the first seven from Stephen Ziplow's 1977 *Film Maker's Guide to Pornography*, and adds an eighth to compose a list which has dated little to this day. While it best describes the adult feature from the 1970s on, and would require extension to incorporate some of the subsequent innovations of gonzo hardcore, it stands as a monument to what Williams terms 'the genre's conventionality'.<sup>17</sup> Though Pynchon is largely restrained in his sexual descriptions and flouts hardcore convention in two significant ways, *Inherent Vice* indulges in all eight categories of sexual action in the Ziplow/Williams list:<sup>18</sup>

- (1) Masturbation. Riggs Warbling 'couldn't keep from jerking off anytime Sloane was in the room' (IV, p. 144); 'Shasta draped across [Doc's] lap her hands playing with her pussy' (IV, p. 305).



- (2) Straight sex. Doc with Luz (IV, p. 143), Penny (IV, pp. 279, 281) and Shasta (IV, p. 305), Mickey Wolfmann with Luz in the shower (IV, p. 63), Tariq with Clancy on Doc's office floor (IV, p. 288), Sloane with Riggs (IV, p. 144), Trillium with Osgood (IV, p. 227).
- (3) Lesbianism. Jade and Bambi at the Chick planet massage parlour with its 'Pussy-eater special' (IV, p. 20): 'Jade was already reaching for that bikini' (IV, p. 21). 'Lourdes and Motella meanwhile were behaving very badly indeed, having chosen to assault a couple of local gun molls as a sort of tag-team [ . . . ] Clothing was ripped, hairdos disarranged, skin exposed and many holds with sexual subtexts wriggled in and out of – the usual allurements of girl wrestling' (IV, p. 88). Sloane and Luz, which Luz tells Doc about and gauges his reaction, 'You guys and this lesbian thing . . . ' (IV, p. 143).
- (4) Oral Sex. Cunnilingus: Jade/Ashley discovers herself, and the truth, on an acid trip: 'The era, she couldn't help noticing, was conveniently providing not only girls, but also sweetly passive long-haired boys everywhere she looked, eager to devote to her pussy the oral attention it had always deserved' (IV, p. 136). Luz sits on Doc's face (IV, p. 143). Fellatio: Boris gets a blow job (IV, p. 152) Penny sucks Doc's cock during his explanation of a movie (IV, p. 281).
- (5) Ménage à trois. (Williams comments: 'It seems to go without saying that while two female members of such a configuration may involve themselves with each other, it is taboo for two men to do so in heterosexual hardcore.') This usually involves two-men-one-woman threesome numbers (Clancy-Aubrey-Thorndyke, Clancy-Puck-Einar, Trillium-Puck-Einar) or a man tacitly assenting to his wife sleeping with another man (Mickey-Sloane-Riggs) but also Doc's vicarious interest in both Shasta Fay and Luz's accounts of their sex with Mickey. Perversely, for a novel which lines up women in pairs for us to admire, there is only a single instance of a man with two women: Mickey-Sloane-Luz. This is the only true ménage à trois, being a domestic arrangement, and we do not see them in action.
- (6) Orgies. These carry on between band members and groupies at the hangout of zombie surf band The Boards.
- (7) Anal sex. Immediately upon meeting Puck, who she first sees in a bathroom mirror coming up behind her, Trillium Fortnight rapidly finds herself outside in a car 'being seen to California Dept of corrections style'. Puck is smug: 'Chicks say they don't like it this way [ . . . ] and then before you know it they're back again, begging.' She keeps going back for more because she cannot resist: 'A humiliating heat would envelop her' (IV, p. 223).
- (8) 'Sadie-max': a scene depicting sadomasochistic relations such as whipping, spanking or bondage, performed with or without paraphernalia.

[Added by Williams]. Both Penny (IV, p. 286) and Shasta narrate punishment fantasies to provoke Doc into acts of very mild, playful sadism but only Shasta gets a spanking and then ‘... no more than half a dozen sincere smacks’ (IV, p. 305), before simultaneous orgasm punctuates the scene. The women appear to be in cahoots, or at least Doc thinks his current casual girlfriend Penny has acquainted his reappeared ex-girlfriend Shasta with a fantasy he had (presumably jokingly) related. ‘She and Penny had met at that same hair salon, where at least one topic of conversation had been him, and sure enough, “Word’s around that you have this thing about Manson chicks?”’ (IV, p. 304)

The eighth category added by Williams, which interlocks characters’ sexuality with the wider world, readily splits into two mutually exclusive sub-genres. Puck Beaverton’s sadistic exploitation of Trillium Fortnight, with all its prison sex overtones, girlfriend beating and overstretched limits of consent (‘What’d you do to her, Puck?’ ‘Nothing she didn’t want’ (IV, p. 319)) could have been taken from an extreme gonzo hardcore movie. The kind of movie made by men, ‘for men who have problems with women and like to see them humiliated’, in the words of David Foster Wallace.<sup>19</sup> We hear second-hand about Trillium’s admission to hospital, and imagine the damage might be psychological as well as physical.

However, there is also a form of consensual, game-playing sadomasochism on show, with verbal narration at its centre, limits at least implicitly defined, and no evidence of ensuing trauma or suffering.<sup>20</sup> As such it is reminiscent of features hard-core, even conceivably female-authored or couples-market fodder. Penny and Shasta collide in spinning Doc sexual narratives of playful punishment or retribution, assigning him a predilection for submissive Manson chicks which remains safely anchored in fantasy. He remains cheerfully unaffected by this darkness and we cannot detect any latent misogyny. He has no predilection for slapping and castigating misbehaving female hysterics as we might expect a hard-boiled gum-sandal to do. He rescued Japonica Fenway; he wants to save sexual victim and cocaine casualty Trillium from abusive Puck and consults the pre-Internet ARPANET to check whether she’s OK; he helps to reunite Hope Harlingen’s infant daughter Amethyst with her wayward absent father and he likes Petunia Leeway for more than the view up her skirt. So despite being palpably excited by parading micro-skirted cuties, Doc, our unwavering single focaliser in the novel, retains the capacity to respect and cherish women, if not to sustain long-term relationships.

Sexual episodes punctuate sections of the plot. Ziplow is candid about the calculated balance between acting and action in hardcore: ‘Before I wrote one of my many epics I was given the percentage of sixty percent

sex and forty percent everything else.<sup>21</sup> The 40 per cent was a new but necessary inconvenience for pornographers in the 1970s, because of the difficulty of filling ninety minutes with sex and concerns about the 'utterly without redeeming social value' legal test for pornography dating back to the landmark *Roth* ruling (1957). Joseph W. Slade's porno chronology charts the birth of the feature, and of the 'golden age of pornography' it created:

1970: Bill Osco releases *Mona, the Virgin Queen*, the first hardcore feature film to be distributed nationally.

1972 Gerard Damiano makes the film *Deep Throat* for \$25,000 in organized crime money, and the Mitchell Brothers shoot *Behind the Green Door* for \$18,000; both render hard-core pornography 'chic'.<sup>22</sup>

These trailblazers, along with *The Devil in Miss Jones* (1973), in which the protagonist returns from the dead to become the embodiment of lust on earth, set a much-mocked pattern of storyline absurdity. See *Logjammin'*, the fictitious porno film-within-a-film in the Coen brothers' *The Big Lebowski* (1998) for one hilarious satire: German nihilist porn star Karl Hungus knocks on the door of Bunny La Joya-Lebowski ('*meine* dispatcher says there's something wrong with *deine* cable') as real-life porn star Asia Carrera walks in wearing a towel ('This is my friend Sherry, who just came over to use the shower').<sup>23</sup> However, no matter how facile, the early 1970s movies all had plots of a fashion and have become capable of engendering nostalgia. 'These films have since been established as classics and milestones in both scholarly and popular porn historiographies.'<sup>24</sup>

Sexually available women travel in pairs in the novel, but offer themselves to men singly (with the notable exception of the Mickey-Sloane-Luz domestic arrangement, or ménage à trois). For 'stewardii' Lourdes Rodriguez and Motella Hayward and house groupies Bohdi and Zinnia, it seems a matter of double-dating. Jade and Bambi at Chick Planet and Sloane and Luz appear to be pursuing at least casual same-sex relationships. Shasta and Penny share hairdressers and intimate confessions. Aside from fetish nurses and dental assistants, a regiment of women offer themselves to the male gaze in swimsuits or high hemlines.<sup>25</sup> The array of fantasy types on offer is almost satirical in its plenty, some of them qualifying as light fetish, like the D.A. Penny Kimball in 'one of those grey polyester business outfits with a very short skirt' (IV, p. 68) and the black-clad grieving widow: 'Mrs Sloane Wolfmann strolled in from the poolside wearing black spike-heeled sandals, a headband with a sheer black veil, and a bikini of negligible size made of the same material as the veil' (IV, p.

57). Pynchon also jumps into the interracial market segment with lesbian Caucasian-Chicana action between Sloane and Luz and hetero African American man Tariq Khalil with Caucasian Troilist Clancy.

Despite all the lipstick lesbianism, outfit fetishism and interracial action, there are two major ways in which a hypothetical screenplay faithful to *Inherent Vice* would be compelled to flout features porno convention. The whole relationship between Puck and Einar, and all the threesomes they engage in, would break the taboo against male homosexual contact in hetero movies, especially given Clancy's complaint: 'Don't ask me to go into details. The boys have a slightly different idea of what a three-way is. I ended up feeling, let's say, underused' (IV, p. 215). This rivalrous machismo contest would have to be scored in heterosexual conquests rather than energy expended in homosexual coitus. Second, no sex scenes are punctuated by the inevitable visible external male ejaculation. In fact, female or mutual orgasms bring things to a close, in opposition to the pattern documented by Williams: 'Probably the most striking way that the feature-length hard-core film signals the narrative conclusion of sexual action is through the new convention of external penile ejaculation – or to use the jargon of the industry, the "Money Shot".'<sup>26</sup> Or as Ziplow reminds the porno filmmaker: 'when I write a script now I never put in less than ten shots.'<sup>27</sup> In fact, the novel's only reference to 'the money shot' is an act of murderous violence as the camera captures Wolfmann bodyguard Glen Charlock getting shot down (IV, p. 142). Strikingly, rather than acting as a full stop or period, this is the moment which kick-starts various strands of the plot, sending both Tarik and Clancy to enlist Doc's services.

Ziplow suggests that the easiest way to segue from dialogue into sexual numbers during the making of what he terms 'three-day wonders' (90-minute porno features shot in their entirety within three days) can be expressed in 'three-in-one-out theory'.<sup>28</sup> He claims this means that in adult movies one person, a performer who does not have on-screen sex but rather provides acting talent for narrative segues, often departs from a gathering of three, leaving the other two free to have sex. In *Inherent Vice*, Doc is left standing by pairs who step (just) out of his company for what appear to be zipless fucks: Trillium and barfly 'pussy-hound' Osgood (IV, p. 226) and Rudy Blatnoyd and his receptionist (IV, p. 170).<sup>29</sup> Clancy and Tariq reverse the pattern when Doc inadvertently discovers them *in flagrante delicto* on his office floor. This inadvertent voyeurism could have been classic porno, but Doc retreats to consider his options. Elsewhere he's not so squeamish and indulges us in his version of a pornographic subgenre called *upskirt* (strictly speaking unauthorised picture-snapping up women's skirts): when he encounters Petunia at the office: 'Doc couldn't help noticing her lilac turnout today did not seem to

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include matching, or indeed any, underwear. Good thing he was wearing shades, which allowed him to gaze for longer than usual' (IV, p. 287). He has evidently been engaging in puerile peeking since high school: 'it was Mrs. Keeley, and I got to look up her dress now and then' (IV, p. 277).

## Tie-ing it all together with Paranoia

### *Porno media*

Porno industry artefacts surface in three ways in the novel: Doc's subscription to *Naked Teen Nymphs* (IV, p. 62), Mickey's collection of porn ties (IV, p. 63), and Adrian Prussia's torture and liquidation of a 'pornographer and pimp at the fringes of the movie business, with interests in nudie bars, modelling agencies, and "specialty publishing"' (IV, p. 321). The first is an old joke about dopehead functional illiteracy and wankmag onanism ('pages stuck together' (IV, p. 62)) which achieves resonance only when Doc's trying to work out why the returned Shasta has tapped into his desires so uncannily. 'Hey. You the one's been stealing my magazines?' (IV, p. 304) The paranoid suggestion here is that the magazines, Shasta and Penny have all colluded in constructing a porno simulacrum which maps out his sexuality in advance and precedes the real. Doc embraces the predictability with relish.

Just as Shasta goes corporeally missing early in proceedings, her porno image on a tie is missing from womaniser Wolfmann's collection of conquest image ties, a classic hardboiled clue waiting to be solved. The tie as a symbol of elect power (the uniform of corporate control or law enforcement, as opposed to hippy preterite tielessness) is a bizarrely appropriate canvas on which Pynchon can inscribe and record Shasta's chattel status. When Doc (accidentally, as usual) tracks the porno tie down it is hanging around the neck of an oblivious orderly at the Chryskylodon 'high-rent laughing academy' but, armed with telescopic voyeur vision, he discerns Shasta 'in a pose submissive enough to break an old man's heart, that's if he was in the mood' (IV, p. 190). The closing caveat assigns emotional response to this porno image the status of an option. On the way home afterwards he compulsively fills in more detail and comes to 'recall unavoidably the hand-painted image of Shasta Fay, on her back, spread and wet, and, if he was not mistaken, though he'd only caught a fast glimpse, just about to come, too' (IV, p. 193). Shasta's pornified representation awakes sexual nostalgia. Ultimately, though, his piece of mind is easy to preserve. It just takes a whimsical, philosophical separation between sign and signified: 'the nudie necktie is not the girl' (IV, p. 194).

The novel, however, contains a starkly opposed reaction to porno from a criminal in the pay of law enforcement, a man who joins two squadrons of the elect. There are a number of powerful, evil men or their instruments who use violence: Glen Charlock (deceased), Mickey Wolfmann (converted to generosity by the healing power of drugs), Puck Beaverton and Einar, Crocker Fenway but the most extreme and perverse of them is loan shark Adrian Prussia.<sup>30</sup> He is persuaded to defend Governor Reagan's administration against embarrassment or blackmail from an unnamed pornographer who 'had also kept lengthy and detailed files on a sex ring based in Sacramento' (IV, p. 321). Prussia mixes 'lethal indignation he felt towards pinkos and pornographers' (IV, p. 324) with sheer lust for murder and makes the punishment fit the crime by hiring 'a couple of professionals who specialized in gay S&M' (IV, p. 322) to prepare the man before he kills him:

'You corrupt the innocent', he addressed his victim, who by now, covered with bruises and welts, had grown unappeasably erect, 'plus, you keep millions of freaks and losers addicted to their stupid-ass appetites for bleach-blonde pussy and oversize cock, you ruin their family life, you get 'em to piss so much of their money away ...' (IV, p. 322)

The Prussia murders may present an analogy between sex and violence: they are dramatised in plain sight to make them conspicuously prosecutable but with the body removed to exclude a conviction and permit recidivism. In porno the sexual act is dramatised in plain sight with the emotional or physical consequences removed to facilitate instant recidivism. However, if pornography is harmlessly consumed by the lovable protagonist and despised by the evil psychopath, is Pynchon giving us a positive reading of it? The reading is at any rate paranoid since, as well as arousing suspicions about the sincerity of sexual acts, porno, much like drugs and hippie clothes, may occasion the ire of the elect and visit retribution upon purveyors, performers and consumers.

#### *The female principal*

Although Tarik Khalil initially enlists his help to find the (deceased) Glen Charlock, it is four sexually attractive but unavailable women (only initially in Shasta's case – she unaccountably seduces Doc later) who drive the narrative by contracting Doc to find their missing men.<sup>31</sup> Shasta comes 'along the alley and up the back step the way she used to' and wants him to find her lover Mickey (IV, p. 1). Hope Harlingen rings him up at work to

commission him to find her undead saxophonist husband Coy (IV, p. 35). Clancy comes by the office and wants him to find out why her brother died (IV, p. 146). Finally, Trillium wants him to fly to Las Vegas with her to recover lover Puck (IV, p. 218). None of these damsels in distress entice the hippie P.I. with promises of cash ('All this time Doc assumed he'd been out busting his balls for folks who if they paid him anything it'd be half a lid or a small favor down the line or maybe only just a quick smile, long as it was real' (IV, p. 314)), but they all recount tales of the sexual liaisons which caused the situation they describe. The currency three of them pay in appears to be sexual narrative, with Hope's account more of a wholesome appeal to Doc's personal ethical system and faith in romantic love and family. Clancy and Trillium inspire immediate tumescence in Doc, associated with 'Cootie food' or *coup de foudre*, a thunderclap or love at first sight. Doc chases off to a new exotic location to find something out for these women, but all these alluring customers turn out to point him towards bad shit. Sexual nostalgia and a mental image of Shasta in a T-shirt and bikini bottom takes Doc to the Chick Planet massage parlour where he is knocked out cold, and later, in disguise to the Wolfmann residence. A postcard from her is enough to send him over to the *Golden Fang* dental syndicate and, via Japonica Fenway, to the Chryskyodon nuthouse where he sees her image on a tie. The warm feeling he feels in the presence of Hope Harlingen – 'a California blond [...] almost a 100-percent classic specimen' (IV, p. 36) – and her daughter Amethyst takes him to see policeman Pat Dubonet at the Gordita beach station house or 'Hippiephobia central' (IV, p. 46) and to zombie surf band The Boards' house in Topanga, and roomfuls of tubal obsessives of the *Vineland* thanatoid kind. Clancy telephonically confronts him with the spectre of paranoia when she reveals that Boris, with whom Doc had just communed, had disappeared: 'Could Bigfoot be right? Was Doc the kiss of death, laying bad karma on everybody he touched?' (IV, p. 215) Trillium's trip to the Kismet Lounge Casino in North Las Vegas is safe enough but she marries Puck and the last we hear of her she is in the emergency room, 'admitted with a concussion, cuts and bruises ...' (IV, p. 366).

### *Two boys for every girl*

Despite all the abundant legends of submissiveness and compliance and generically attractive women presenting themselves in pairs, Doc still never participates in a threesome. Even at the beachfront mansion of Lourdes and Motella, the alluring 'stewardii' turn out to be 'headed down [...] to meet their current heartthrobs [...] wrecking any hopes

he might have entertained for any drug induced three-way among just him and the girls' (IV, p. 77). The triangles he joins involve a female object of desire and her former, or at least absent, sexual partner or partners. Here his voyeurism does not involve being in the room while two people engage in coitus. He participates vicariously at a physical remove through narrative, which prompts actual sex, much as the male hardcore features viewer. Shasta Fay reads him the text of her encounters with Mickey to enact and facilitate their own coupling. In non-specialist discourse 'Troilism' means any sexual play between three, but Kaplan and Kruger list five forms of voyeurism as a paraphilia (sexual disorder), including:

4. Troilism (or triolism): a paraphilia wherein there is a dependence on 'observing one's partner on hire or loan to a third person while engaging in sexual activities, including intercourse, with that person. A threesome or group sex does not, per se, constitute a paraphilia'. Troilism differs from voyeurism in that the person being observed is not a stranger.<sup>32</sup> (p. 298)

It is possible to read Doc's distance-voyeurism and excitement as Troilism since he knows Shasta very well and spends much of the novel trying to piece together a picture of Mickey, who he glimpses in the flesh just once (IV, p. 243). From page one Doc is wistfully nostalgic about his time with Shasta, and the sexual narrative he constructs about her and Mickey serves to quell this sadness. Shasta's allure increases because she is no longer just a hippie 'old lady' and has been appropriated by an elect authority figure, just as in *Vineland* Brock Vond appropriated Frenesi Gates from Zoyd Wheeler. But Mickey is no federal prosecutor with seemingly unlimited powers. His authority rests on money and the bodyguards it pays for, but drug-induced repentance is causing him to give it away. It is no wonder he has to be kept offstage throughout the novel: we can only glimpse big, bad Mickey in our peripheral vision because Doc keeps failing to catch up with him. The sexual pivot of the novel is Shasta's arousal of Doc with a porno narrative of Mickey's dominance:

Mickey ... He was just so powerful. Sometimes he could almost make you feel invisible. [...] he'd bring me to lunch in Beverly Hills, one big hand all the way around my bare arm ... He might as well have been bringing me in on a leash. He kept me in these little microminidresses, never allowed me to wear anything underneath, just offering me to whoever wanted to stare. Or grab. Or sometimes he'd fix me up with his friends. And I'd have to do whatever they wanted ... (IV, p. 305)



This submissive response to the dominant male grasp is reminiscent of Jessica Swanlake's spontaneous orgasm when her lover Roger Mexico grips her wrist for the first time in *Gravity's Rainbow* (GR, p. 120). However, the Mickey-Shasta game retains the ambiguity Jessica Lawson assigns to the fight between Tyrone Slothrop and Katje (GR, pp. 221–2) which leads to penetrative sex and Katje screaming into the pillow:

Depending upon how motives are attributed to these actions, this episode could feature either a sexual assault that is reimagined in the false or distorting guise of consensual play, or an implicitly consensual act, which draws pleasure for its participants by masquerading as an assault.<sup>33</sup>

Lawson refrains from committing to either reading, arguing that such an excluded middle 'would rob the scene of its structural richness'.<sup>34</sup> We can read Shasta's account in several ways: as a faithful rendition of a situation, in which she was complicit, aimed at persuading Doc to emulate Mickey; as a concoction designed to stimulate Doc to enact her desires without her having to ask explicitly; as a way of using experience with Mickey and friends to supply the fantasy material she thinks Doc needs, etc. But since the ostensible compulsion writes a porno text for a third party, it becomes almost impossible to read the Doc-Shasta play as anything other than explicitly consensual. By retrograde extension it seems safe to read the Mickey-Shasta interaction, if it so occurred, as play and at least implicitly consensual. Sears has suggested a long-time progression in Pynchon's fiction away from the pejorative association of perverse sexuality with fascism, morbidity and death. In the context of *Mason & Dixon*, she imagines that: 'Pynchon's decision to include fewer examples of perverse sexuality as a negative force could be owing to a greater degree of sensitivity to sexual diversity'<sup>35</sup> and assesses this as Pynchon texts escaping from or transcending 'society's prejudices'.<sup>36</sup> Could we read Pynchon in the context of a sexualised/pornified mainstream which permits the articulation of all kinds of sexual narratives, in marked contrast to the 1973 account in *Gravity's Rainbow* of sex in 1945? Is this articulation beneficial in rendering consent more explicit, more reliable?

Shasta's helplessness as damsel in distress, or even a kind of trafficked slave, recurs in the episode in which she 'hustled [her] way off' the *Golden Fang* schooner (IV, p. 306). She dramatises her submission through an account of bartering freedom for sex as 'desirable cargo' with ship's chief cook Porfirio on a sailing ship with 'all the ropes and chains and pulleys and hooks and things ...' (IV, p. 307). She is manoeuvring herself into the most categorically adult position of the novel: 'She knelt on the couch, put her face down on a pillow, and presented herself' (IV, p.

307). Perhaps this is a second way in which so many of *Inherent Vice's* women are 'presentable'. Manson chick or not, Shasta's sexual texts objectify her or pornify her, at least in the fiction within the fiction, and spur Doc into two charged references, one to our distant future with its tattoos as sexual decoration: 'You need a tattoo right here. How about "Bad, Bad Girl?"' (IV, p. 307) and the other to a contemporary model of submissiveness derived from the Vietnam War: 'What kind of a ChiCom sex slave are you anyhow?' (IV, p. 307)

On the way back to Shasta, Doc had inherited a secondary chattel from Mickey, the obliging (and inevitably 'presentable') Luz. The flirtation between them is initiated by her description of the places in the house where Mickey took her to have sex, with Sloane's complicity. Then she spins him the girl-on-girl porno spiel: 'That bed downstairs Mickey would never fuck me on? That's ours now' (IV, p. 143). After cunnilingus and fucking, Doc presses Luz for further narrative about Sloane. Or is it really about Mickey?

'Riggs said it wasn't so much that he got to fuck her as that Mickey didn't.'

'Uh, huh. What'd Riggs have against her husband?'

'Nothing. They were ol' *compinches*. Riggs would have never gone near Sloane's pussy if Mickey hadn't encouraged him.'

'Mickey was gay?'

'Mickey fucked other women. He just wanted Sloane to have some fun, too.' (IV, p. 144)

It is hard not to hear both interest and disappointment in Doc's momentary conclusion about Mickey's orientation. He may be ostensibly detecting here, the P.I. cunningly using pillow talk to his advantage, but once again the upshot is more sex after a narrative with Mickey at its centre – and even better with Mickey playing his own Troilist games. Sex with Luz becomes another act of vicarious Troilism, *in absentia*.

Doc's erections in the presence of Clancy and Trillium Fortnight are equally intense but stem from complimentary, opposite erotic texts.<sup>37</sup> Clancy excites him, apart from the chance to stare at her breasts, primarily because the challenging sexual narrative of herself she thrusts at him. Her insistently proclaimed desire for threesomes with two other men means he fails to match up on his own and needs to bring a friend. Her needs are too specialised for her to contemplate settling for Doc alone and ultimately only black male sexuality offers her an antidote. Trillium offers Doc 'a deep, unreachable innocence, all of which sent the throbbing idle of his

lecherousness into overdrive' (IV, p. 216). The pull of this 'dishevelled girl in a tiny skirt' (IV, p. 216) (another echo of Frenesi Gates) comes from the strength of her desire for another, which is validated by an acceptance of the Puck and Einar two-for-one.<sup>38</sup> But the greatest satisfaction Doc derives from all his escapades, and the denouement of the novel, is the reuniting of a family unit. He is emotionally drawn to both Coy and Hope and takes vicarious pleasure in the thought that their lives will continue pleasantly: the P.I. as volunteer marriage and drug counsellor (at least if the drug fails to meet with contemporary hippie approval, as heroin does).

One difficulty with hardcore, from the narrowly heterosexual male POV, is that most of the time male viewers watch men have sex in scenes book-ended by male erection and male ejaculation. This may have a homoerotic element, but the experience is intended to be primarily vicarious: the male viewer inhabits the male performer as avatar, enjoys the woman through him.<sup>39</sup> *Inherent Vice* may offer the lavish window dressing of female pulchritude, but its true erotic currency resides in the sharing and passing of women, in a sense just as pornographic images can be shared and passed. This sexual carousel needs two boys for every girl, or rather every boy needs his girl to be or have been with another boy, and to tell him porno stories about how good it was.

In the pre-dawn of mediated sexuality, visible pubic hair in *Penthouse's* April 1970 edition was still capable of causing consternation.<sup>40</sup> Showings of *Deep Throat* and *Behind the Green Door* (both 1972) in mainstream cinemas had yet to suffix 'chic' to porno and bring sexual representations on/scene, to use Linda Williams' term.<sup>41</sup> An incremental process eroding the counter-cultural status of speaking about sex was about to begin. Successive technologies mediating sexual images, culminating in Internet streaming video emanating from the worldwide porno-hub which is the San Fernando Valley adult film industry, have since sexualised the mainstream. Since Pynchon's 1970 requires sexual liberation as an inseparable component of its frisson, *Inherent Vice* both succumbs to a pre-feminist sexual nostalgia trip, and becomes a palimpsest overwritten with four subsequent decades of sexual codes. This retrograde inflection makes it possible both to fetishise 'presentable' short-skirted female hordes and instil in them the drive to erotic variations entailed in twenty-first-century Californian porno industry scripts. It seems that this Californication of sexuality has, in this late Pynchon novel, overtaken and neutralised the taboo-breaking sex still evident in *Vineland* and *Against the Day*. Where these novels dramatised female submissiveness (and only occasionally their assertiveness) as an exceptional vice which, in individuals like Lake Traverse and her great-grandniece Frenesi Gates, is both emblematic of and inherent in elect/preterite power relations, *Inherent Vice's* California is a state where the mass of women know that

sexual availability and versatility are expected of them as matter of course, and must hope to encounter Doc Sportello and not Charlie Manson. It speaks for the power of the Californian mediated sex industry's ubiquitous products that they evince the potential to suborn a writer whose earlier works did as much as any to locate the description of the sexually extreme at the forefront of the counter-culture.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

### Notes

- 1 The exceptions are bit parts for older and wiser women with unspecified hem-lines: realtor and land-use guru Aunt Reet, cannabis-curious mom Elmina Breeze-Sportello and acid-trip guide and Ouija-board diviner Sortilege.
- 2 Thomas Pynchon, *Inherent Vice* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2009), p. 274. Further references are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in text as IV.
- 3 See, for example, *Who's Nailin' Paylin?* (2008), the first in a series of pornos satirising former U.S. vice-presidential candidate Sarah Palin. The *Internet Movie Database* lists a forthcoming feature called *Manson Girls* (2014), directed by Susanna Lo, promising 'Sex, drugs, and an infamous Rock & Roll deal gone murderous in the Summer of '69' and featuring porn legend Ron Jeremy as a porn director.
- 4 Thomas Pynchon, *Vineland* (London: Seeker & Warburg, 1990). Further references are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in text as VL.
- 5 Explaining the title of his 2010 novel *The Pregnant Widow*, like *Inherent Vice* set in 1970, Amis wrote:

The Russian thinker Alexander Herzen said that after a revolution we should, on the whole, be braced by the fact that one order has given way to another; but what we are left with, he added, is not a birth, not a newborn child but a pregnant widow – and there will be much grief and tribulation before we hear the baby's cries. In other words, consciousness is not revolutionised by the snap of a finger. And feminism, I reckon, is about halfway through its second trimester.

Martin Amis, 'You Ask the Questions', *The Independent*, 15 January 2007. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/profiles/martin-amis-you-ask-the-questions-432146.html> [Date accessed: 9 November 2011].

- 6 Aside from the cornucopia of microskirted cuties name-checked elsewhere in this essay, the following also join the procession down the *Inherent Vice* catwalk: a night club singer wearing a 'Little Black Dress from the 1950s and interestingly high stiletto heels' (IV, p. 160); 'a pair of cupcakes in red vinyl minidresses, black fishnet hose and lacquered hair [who] sang backup while doing white-chick time steps' (IV, p. 229); Zirconia 'a young woman in a wine-coloured minidress' (IV, p. 230); Chlorinda: 'a waitress in a combination Nehru jacket and Hawaiian print shirt, just long enough to qualify as a minidress' (IV, p. 91); two house groupies named Bohdi and Zinnia' (IV, p. 125); Japonica Fenway in a 'striped minidress of many psychedelic colours' (IV, p. 170); 'a presentable young lady in a paisley Qiana minidress [who] came up and introduced herself as a Lark' (IV, p. 237) and Adrian Prussia's nameless receptionist in 'a minidress she had no more idea of how to carry than a starlet did a Victorian gown' (IV, p. 316).
- 7 Bill Millard, 'Pynchon's Coast: *Inherent Vice* and the Twilight of the Spatially Specific', *College Hill Quarterly*, 4 (Fall 2009). <http://www.collegehillreview.com/004/0040501.html> [Date accessed: 11 January 2012].
- 8 Susanna Paasonen, Kaarina Nikunen, and Laura Saarenmaa, 'Pornification and the Education of Desire', in Susanna Paasonen, Kaarina Nikunen, and Laura Saarenmaa (eds.), *Pornification: Sex and Sexuality in Media Culture* (Oxford: Berg, 2007), p. 13.
- 9 Joshua S. Rosenbaum, 'Pynchon on the Beach: Why Has He Settled for a Stoned-out Detective Story?' Review of *Inherent Vice*. *Slate*, 3 August 2009. [http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/books/2009/08/pynchon\\_on\\_the\\_beach.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/books/2009/08/pynchon_on_the_beach.html) [Date accessed: 11 January 2012]. See Millard for a detailed account of how *Inherent Vice* obeys the conventions of American noir detective fiction.
- 10 Tim Martin, Review of *Inherent Vice*, *Daily Telegraph*, 24 July 2009. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/bookreviews/5893305/Inherent-Vice-by-Thomas-Pynchon-review.html> [Date accessed: 18 January 2012].
- 11 Steven Ziplow, *The Film Maker's Guide to Pornography* (New York: Drake, 1977), p. 22.
- 12 'Gonzo became the term to describe a cameraman who intervenes from behind the camera to change the events in front of it.' Anna Span, *Shoot Your Own Adult Home Movies* (London: Carlton, 2006), p. 101.
- 13 Julie Christine Sears, 'Black and White Rainbows and Blurry Lines: Sexual Deviance in Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* and *Mason & Dixon*', in Niran Abbas (ed.), *Thomas Pynchon: Reading from the Margins* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2003), p. 108.
- 14 Thomas Pynchon, *Gravity's Rainbow* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1973). Further references are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in text as GR.
- 15 Sears, 'Black and White Rainbows and Blurry Lines', p. 110. See Lawson for a discussion of Prentice's 'interpretive gesture' (p. 234).
- 16 Thomas Pynchon, *Against the Day*. (London: Jonathan Cape, 2006), p. 262. Further references are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in text as AD.

- 17 Linda Williams, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the 'Frenzy of the Visible'* (Berkeley: University of California, 1989), p. 126.
- 18 Ibid., p. 126; Ziplow, *The Film Maker's Guide to Pornography*, pp. 31–2.
- 19 David Foster Wallace, 'Big Red Son', in *Consider the Lobster and Other Essays* (London: Abacus, 2007), p. 27.
- 20 This fits in with the views of Ziplow's porno producer interviewee Mr Blue (a pseudonym) on the limits commercial considerations impose.

Domination is less popular in the physical sense than in the psychological. Mild forms of bondage and pain are acceptable, but if your entire picture relies too heavily on this subject matter, you may be alienating too large a portion of your audience. (p. 18)

- 21 Ziplow, *The Film Maker's Guide to Pornography*, p. 28.
- 22 Joseph W. Slade, *Pornography in America: a Reference Handbook* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2000), p. 154.
- 23 Since *The Big Lebowski* is very loosely based on film adaptations of Raymond Chandler's *The Big Sleep* (1946, 1978), it is no surprise that Larry 'Doc' Sportello reminds us of its dope-smoking, incompetently investigating protagonist, Jeffrey 'The Dude' Lebowski. See Carvill for a discussion the characteristics *The Big Lebowski* and *Inherent Vice* share as 'stoner noir'. John Carvill, 'The "Bong" Goodbye: Will Thomas Pynchon's Lightest, Brightest Novel Put Him in the Hollywood Spotlight?' Review of *Inherent Vice*, *Bright Lights Film Journal*, August 2009. <http://www.brightlightsfilm.com/65/65pyynchon.php> [Date accessed: 18 January 2012]. Porno plot absurdity has also been seen as boring, a punishment. In Mark Leyner's lightweight satirical novel *Et tu, Babe* (1993), convicted felons are taken out of their house each Monday, strapped down in a government white van and compelled to watch three hours of videotape edited together from the narrative segues of porn movies. With the sex missing.
- 24 Susanna Paasonen and Laura Saarenmaa, 'The Golden Age of Porn: Nostalgia and History in Cinema', in Susanna Paasonen, Kaarina Nikunen, and Laura Saarenmaa (eds.), *Pornification: Sex and Sexuality in Media Culture* (Oxford: Berg, 2007), p. 23.
- 25 The Pynchon narrator and POV had already evinced a strong, late-sixties short-skirt fetish in *Vineland* through the POV of Takeshi Fumimota, and everyone's nemesis Brock Vond: 'There was DL lying in bed, hat long earrings, *miniskirt*? Incredible! This Vond character must be – a miniskirt man too!' (p. 151). Heroine Frenesi Gates, who Darryl Louise Chastain is impersonating in this passage, also frequently appears in miniskirt or bikini.
- 26 Williams, *Hard Core*, p. 73.
- 27 Ziplow, *The Film Maker's Guide to Pornography*, p. 79.
- 28 Ibid., p. 29.
- 29 'Zipless fuck' entered the language after being coined by Erica Jong in her 1973 novel *Fear of Flying* to express a sexual encounter devoid of subsequent consequences.

## Textual Practice

- 30 A corrupt and vicious character with something of James Elroy's Dudley Smith about him: anti-communist and racist, if a porno-hater rather than a porno distributor.
- 31 Doc locates women with greater ease. Jade is worried about Bambi but they bump into her almost right away (IV, p. 156) and in one of the book's longer flashbacks he locates errant daughter Japonica for Croker Fenway.
- 32 Meg S. Kaplan and Richard B. Krueger, 'Voyeurism: Psychopathology and Theory', in Richard D. Laws and William O'Donohue (eds.), *Sexual Deviance: Theory, Assessment, and Treatment* (New York: Guilford, 1997). <http://www.scribd.com/doc/51243898/Sexual-Deviance-Theory-Assessment-And-Treatment> [Date accessed: 14 November 2011].
- 33 Jessica Lawson, '"The Real and Only Fucking Is Done on Paper": Penetrative Readings and Pynchon's Sexual Text', in Sascha Pöhlmann (ed.), *Against the Grain: Reading Pynchon's Counternarratives* (Amsterdam: Rodolpi, 2010), p. 241.
- 34 Ibid., p. 248.
- 35 Sears, 'Black and White Rainbows and Blurry Lines', p. 113.
- 36 Ibid., p. 112.
- 37 The Slothrop conditioned response also occurs in the form of Doc's spontaneous tumescence whenever John Garfield co-star Ida Lupino is mentioned (IV, p. 59). This amuses rather than appals Sloane, in very porno fashion.
- 38 In *Vineland* Brock sees Frenesi who, 'came striding toward him now through the drizzle, a few pounds thinner, her hair full of snarls, barelegged' (p. 273).
- 39  
Most relevant to our discussion here is the greater narrative coherence of both the feature film as a whole and each of its sexual 'numbers'. In feature-length ' pornos', these numbers tend to be complete dramas of arousal, excitement, climax and (usually) satisfaction that permit both the (male) character *in* the film and the (usually male) viewers *of* the film to 'withdraw satisfied' after first getting into then back out of the picture. (Williams, *Hard Core*, p. 72)
- 40 Slade, *Pornography in America*, p. 154.
- 41 Linda Williams, *Porn Studies* (London: Duke University Press, 2004), p. 3.