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Martin Paul Eve, 'It sure's hell looked like war': Terrorism and the Cold War in Thomas Pynchon's *Against the Day* and Don DeLillo's *Underworld*', *Of Pynchon And Vice: America's Inherent Others*, ed. by Zofia Kolbuszewska (Wydawn: KUL, September 2013)

'It sure's hell looked like war': Terrorism and the Cold War in Thomas Pynchon's Against the Day and Don DeLillo's Underworld

The announcement of Thomas Pynchon's 2006 novel, *Against the Day*, was heralded by an intriguing press release, originally seen on amazon.com and purportedly written by the invisible man himself. Boasting of a historical range spanning the 1893 Chicago World's Fair to World War I with a cast comprised of airships, anarchists and shamans, the pre-release blurb also featured the following statement which was omitted from the final book jacket: "No reference to the present day is intended or should be inferred." In the indisputably ironic tone of the final sentence, crucial issues of metaphorical relativity and absolutism are raised that bring the contemporary politics of *Against the Day* to light.

This piece explores, necessarily briefly, the conceptions of terrorism in two novels that stand separated by the calamitous events of September 11th, 2001: Pynchon's *Against the Day* and Don DeLillo's *Underworld*, with special focus upon the genesis of these depictions in Cold War politics. While there are cases to be made for many geographico-historical connections in both Pynchon's and DeLillo's work – for instance, Sam Thomas has recently highlighted the Balkans – the Cold War presents a locus of economics, religion and terror that is to be found at few other points. In many ways I am also staging, as no doubt will many others, a direct engagement with Kathryn Hume's piece, "The Religious and Political Vision of Pynchon's *Against the Day*," which suggested an overt "seriousness" in which a "more aggressive" Pynchon "appears to support political violence"; terrorism (Hume 164). Here I will present the cumulative textual evidence that complicates such a stance through the fact that – in the thematic matrix of the Cold War which grounds this theme – the religious, the political and the

terroristic cannot be cleanly separated.

It is necessary to begin with some context. The analogy between aspects of the Cold War and post-9/11 terrorism has a strong grounding in US policy-making academia, the foremost proponent of these views, Larry Diamond, noting that "[t]he political struggle against international terrorism has many of the features of a new Cold War" (Diamond 2). Furthermore, he also refers to jihadist terrorists as the "Islamic Bolsheviks" while mapping parallels between their levels of education and that of Russian revolutionaries, specifically Lenin. Unfortunately, Diamond's political stance, which rationalises terrorism within an over-simplified civilized/barbarian dichotomy is at best naïve, at worst imperialistic. To brand systems as "predatory societ[ies]" while seeing the American "civic community" as a "culture of trust, cooperation, reciprocity, respect, restraint, tolerance and compromise" demonstrates a belief that the fault for inequality and its consequential bitterness lies with the victims (Diamond 7). Evidently, while a superficial case could be made for a direct comparison between anarchists and jihadists, it will be far less profitable than an analysis which first troubles the concept of terrorism.

Terrorism is defined by the US state department as "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience" (G. E. Schweitzer and C. D. Schweitzer 24). However, Christopher Harmon, a theoretician, as opposed to policymaker, defines it differently as "the deliberate and systematic murder, maiming, and menacing of the innocent to inspire fear for political ends" (Harmon, 7). The crucial non-intersection of these statements is that, while the US government seeks to restrict terrorism to subnational agents – as when the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg crafted the

charges to ensure that the atomic bombings could not be construed as war crimes – Harmon makes no such claim.

A second useful re-evaluation of standard media concepts of terrorism is to be found in Kanan Makiya and Hassan Mneimneh's "Manual For a 'Raid'" which concludes that the September 11th hijackers' fragmented text known as "Attas's Document" represents a mythic re-appropriation of the Prophet's state-building raids and is dangerous primarily because it could itself become part of the tradition that it misrepresents. As they put it: "to take the shell of a traditional religious conception and […] refill it with radically new content which finds its legitimation in the word of God […] is a deeply subversive form of political and ideological militancy" (318). Yet, as will become clear, in both Pynchon's and DeLillo's worlds – in the model of what Naomi Klein has popularly termed the "shock doctrine" – Western society has already accepted the integration of communal benefit over individual liberty. The *ghazwah* (raids) of the prophet in the name of the community and "state-building" are now raids upon our personal freedoms while the legitimation of a new system in the word of God has precedent, not from the individuals who carry out violence and terror in its name, but in the State now United with the market.

Capitalism, Religion and Anarchism in Against the Day

Among the many fictional texts introduced in *Against the Day*, the "wonderful book" kept to hand at all times by Lew Basnight's short-lived assistant, Tansy Wagwheel – "A Modern Christian's Guide to Moral Perplexities" – offers stunning advice to align anarchistic dynamite with contemporary terrorism: "Dynamite Them All, and Let Jesus Sort Them Out" (*Against the Day* 178). The phrase, which originally derives from the Papal legate's proclamation on the Albigensian Crusade, is

commonly rendered as “kill them all, let God sort them out,” and has also found roots in present-day terrorist culture of Ulster Loyalist paramilitaries (Wood 178). More importantly, it conflates the religious and terroristic; a convergence centred, through anarchism and Protestantism, upon the political history of the United States.

Despite its written constitution and highly formalized procedures of government, America itself has a long heritage of anarchistic politics, derived from the individualism inherent within its founding ideology. This is evident in the double-bound intentions of the Pilgrim fathers. While the individualist nature of their religious separatism was later embodied in the, albeit geographically distant, anarchist theories of William Godwin and Max Stirner, their legislative, state-building legacy remains, as with their constitutionally held truths, self-evident. In the egoistic reactionary strains of anarchism – under which the minority are forced to comply with the intolerable power wielded by the state in the name of the majority – a common refuge is a legitimation of terrorism as a viable form of protest; the basis for a reading of *Against the Day* that would support violence as an appropriate response.

Yet, there also remains the still compelling, argument of Max Weber who suggests the root of the American economic establishment – and particularly its fixation on the morality of work – lies within the opiate of the people itself: Protestantism. While Weber's tract has been constantly disputed, not least for its erroneous detection of a Calvinist crisis regarding proof of election (MacKinnon), this well-known analysis posits the spirit of modern capitalism as resting upon four tenets of religious underpinning: the removal of usury laws; the notion of religious calling as a parallel to vocational labour; the potential of material wealth to indicate membership of the Augustinian/Calvanist predetermined “elect”; and the conception of ascetic Protestant practices resulting in an accumulation

of wealth. While Pynchon's references to Weber have already been critically acknowledged it should also be noted that the "every man for himself" individualist spirit inspired by this Protestant-fuelled breed of capitalism has strong resonances with the philosophies of individualism and autonomy, areas closely aligned with individualist anarchism. In Pynchon's text, the individualism in individualist anarchism is presented as a dualism; on the positive side, the product of a liberating socialism, but also, in its terroristic capacity, an affirmation of neo-liberalism – most accurately reflected in Reaganomics – the outcome of devolved autonomy; as clearly explored in *Vineland*.

To begin to address these themes at a basic level in Pynchon, it is worth examining the representation of anarchism in further detail. *Against the Day* makes direct reference to a large number of prominent historical anarchists: Benjamin Tucker (*Against the Day* 370), Leon Czolgosz (*Against the Day* 372), Mikhail Bakunin, Peter Kropotkin (*Against the Day* 373), Jean-Baptiste Sipido (*Against the Day* 528), Gaetano Bresci and Luigi Lucheni (*Against the Day* 739) among others. However, the absurd conflation of genre parodies reveals that a non-mimetic depiction is underway. Indeed, in a swipe at the many critics who have accused his characters of lacking realistic depth, Yashmeen remarks that "[t]hese people […] they're all so unanchored, no history, no responsibility, one day they just appear, don't they, each with his own secret designs" (*Against the Day* 224). In this unanchored mode, Pynchon dispels what Daniel DeLeon has called the "cartoon image of the anarchist as a shaggy-headed Frankenstein's monster with a crazed glint in his eyes, loaded down with an armful of bombs" by presenting that very same cartoon image and labelling it as such (DeLeon 4). Indeed, Lew Basnight finds himself unable to reconcile the "bearded, wild-eyed, bomb-Rolling" description furnished by his agency with the people he actually meets in the company of Moss Gatlin, the travelling anarchist preacher (*Against the Day* 50). The injustice of the social stereotype is, therefore, finally driven home when Pynchon writes of the betrayal felt on account of the mainstream

representation: “[t]he Anarchists and Socialists on the shift had their own mixed feelings about history” (*Against the Day* 654).

This aspect of social injustice is dampened, however, when Pynchon's text is directly tied to the attacks of September 11th, 2001. This metaphor is cemented through the apocalyptic depiction of Manhattan that is a result of the ill-fated Vormance Expedition and the distinctly adenoid-esque beast they bring home. The scene is presented as one of “fire, damage to structures, crowd panic” and “disruption to common services” (*Against the Day* 151-153). This act of “fire and blood” that is “appropriate […] to urban civilization” occurs in a city that, while attempting to “deny all-out Christian allegiance,” has become the “material expression of a particular loss of innocence,” its inhabitants now an “embittered and amnesiac race” who are “unable to connect” to the “moment of their injury, unable to summon the face of their violator”. As if to make the allusion as clear as possible, Pynchon's city even creates a “night panorama” on “each anniversary of that awful event”. At a first glance, Pynchon seems to contextualize anarchism within a tradeoff between the injustices of destruction, offset by the injustices that induce people to destroy; the material loss of innocence against the material conditions which acted as provocation. Pynchon's text appears, as in Kathryn Hume's reading (Hume 164), to be perpetrating the same relocation used in “Atta's Document”; a mythic framework that glorifies, or at least partially vindicates, acts of terrorism.

This is undoubtedly linked to the confrontation between, and reciprocal genesis of, capitalism and individualist anarchism. Stemming from his recurrent trope of the politics of the Sanjak of Novi Pazar almost pre-empting World War I (*Against the Day* 809, 841, 937; *Gravity's Rainbow* 13-14, 16), Pynchon highlights that in the event of Europe-wide warfare, while “corporations, armies, navies, [and]

governments" would "all go on as before, if not more powerful," "Anarchists would be the biggest losers" (*Against the Day* 938). Indeed, the justification of a crackdown on civil liberties through terrorism is well understood by both contemporary theorists (G. E. Schweitzer and C. D. Schweitzer 231) and Pynchon, whose villainous Vibe entrepreneurs bomb their own railway lines to provoke this very response (*Against the Day* 175). As can be seen, while undermining the legitimacy of the State Department's subnational conception of terrorism through self-aware stereotype, Pynchon presents his anarchists as maligned victims of social injustice.

However, it would require a double standard to accept the depiction of anarchist suffering at face value, while insisting that the representation of their violence is self-aware caricature. Nevertheless, this can be accounted for when it is understood that individualist anarchism contains rationales for both socialism and the supply-side, laissez-faire economic liberalism of the Reagan administration. Indeed, as Iwan Morgan puts it, Reagan purported his economic policies to embody "the fundamental values of individual freedom" (Morgan 105). This stance is, purely in the terminology of tax, more "egalitarian" than a truly equalising socialism; nobody is exempt from taxation. In a similar narrowing of scope, Pynchon's anarchists, in their terroristic capacity, justify their indiscriminate conflation of civilians and combatants through the assertion that there are no "innocent bourgeoisie" (*Against the Day* 181, 235).

Through such a representation, Pynchon has captured, in his stereotyped, yet maligned anarchists both the extreme poles of individualist anarchism. When blamed for terroristic activity, the anarchists are the socialists who could, with only a few tweaks to the world as we know it, have been interred in REX84. When inflicting violence these anarchists are, however, the libertarian Reaganites

themselves who see no reason to target their attacks more specifically; everyone is hurt equally. Osama Bin Laden's World Islamic Front has used religion for this justificatory purpose. As shall be shown, Pynchon audaciously puts forward capitalism. In Pynchon's text, which, of course, makes no reference to the present day, capitalism and religion – specifically Puritan-derived Christianity – should be read as metaphorically exchangeable.

Such a substitution is, in essence, the same militant ideology described in "Atta's Document"; a refilling of religious doctrine with a new politics. It is also an indication, as John McClure has noted, of a post-secular strain in Pynchon's writing. McClure posits that both Pynchon and DeLillo adopt elements of the mystical in order to dispel the illusion of secularism, namely that (citing Derrida) secularism is "a thinking that 'repeats' the possibility of religion without religion," an establishment that by its "very structure," teaches "something corresponding to the dogmas of a given religion" (McClure 13-14). Indeed, the correspondence between its Protestant underpinnings and its secular form is that capitalism is a system of domination. In the religious "period," domination of nature is a right, given to mankind by God, while in its later, secular phase, domination is justified by the pliability of nature; the weak shall be conquered (McClure 14-15). However, while post-secularist critique often turns upon a recognition of this unjustified domination of nature, Pynchon and DeLillo are also interested in the consequential domination of people that this system entails in its fusion of the religious and the secular.

One of the clearest instances of the means by which capitalism harbours a religico-mystical component for purposes of domination – and thereby merits a Weberian reading (do not the Chums themselves sail towards a clearly capitalist "grace"? (*Against the Day* 1084-1085)) – is evident in the conversation between Webb Traverse and Merle Rideout, in which it is posited that "modern chemistry

only starts coming in to replace alchemy around the same time capitalism really gets going" (*Against the Day* 79). The conjecture that "*capitalism* […] didn't need the old magic anymore" is refuted instantly: "[w]hy bother? Had their own magic […] instead of turning lead into gold, they could take poor people's sweat and turn it into greenbacks, and save that lead for law enforcement purposes". Aside from this sophistic use of the term "magic" to support socialist ideology, there are, as Fabienne Collignon highlights through her Adornion reading of Pynchon, more sinister mysticisms at play, namely the "suspect operations and purposes of science, its blinding and autocratic radiance" which "invests the "luminous utopia" with buried depths whose existence the Enlightenment originally intends to dispel" (Collignon 554). This exceeds even the hypothetico-deductive model resulting from a Humean critique of induction; it is a total denial of experience in the scientific method, a dehumanising secularist doctrine – repeating the mystical structure – which attempts to "fence in, and fix, the world through mathematical theorems" (Collignon 554). To some extent this also accounts for, although doesn't excuse, the resort to terroristic violence by disenfranchised individuals; against such a seemingly vast conspiracy of rationalised power and menace, violence appears to be one of the few remaining solutions against a state that defines terrorism in order to exempt its own actions. This conspiratorial underside of scientific progress, manifested in its doctrinal structure as a restated mysticism, presents, once again, a reversion to legitimated terrorism.

As is now apparent, the environments I have described in *Against the Day* function on three different levels. Firstly, they highlight the heritage of anarchism within American individualist, capitalist and religious cultural history, drawing particular attention to the mystical/religious lineage of modern capitalism. Secondly, Pynchon concurrently condemns both the stereotype of the socialist anarcho-terrorist – which was constructed, in *Against the Day*, by capitalists in order to discredit socialism – and also the "no innocent bourgeoisie" rhetoric employed by the fringe outside minority,

thereby complicating an argument for any outright advocacy of violence. In short: the differing roles played by the differing faces of anarchism require greater specificity of reading. Finally, through the structural conflation of religion and capitalism, Pynchon shows that actions justified by a "chill, comfortless faith in science and rationality" (*Against the Day* 585) are as morally baseless as those justified by any other mystical/religious entity. As shall be shown when I return to Pynchon, this dilemma is also played out in American identity through the Cold War animosity towards communism, an area which has subtle, yet important, resonances with the terrorism.

DeLillo and Underworld: Why the Cold War?

A similar conflation of religion, capitalism and terrorism is woven by Don DeLillo in his magnum opus, *Underworld*. Preemptively, in anticipation of chronological objections: while it is impossible for *Underworld* to have foreseen the catastrophic events of 9/11 – and in an awareness that DeLillo has written explicitly on the topic – the focus of this analysis will be on the fact that *Underworld* admirably depicts the conditions that produced September 11th, 2001 while also reflecting fruitfully upon notions of statehood. Indeed, in his post-9/11 essay, "The Ruins of the Future," DeLillo suggested that a major contribution to these conditions of possibility must be attributed to "[t]he Bush Administration['s …] nostalgia for the Cold War," a fascination which ended "in the rubble" ("The Ruins of the Future" 33-34). In addition to this, DeLillo also wrote of the urgent need to abandon the "Us and Them" dichotomy, a divide that was already being dismantled in *Underworld* through the presentation, as shall be shown, of the state as terrorist. As such, a culture of terror will be revealed, in *Underworld*, to have existed long before 2001 in the form of the Cold War and that through such a connection, DeLillo foregrounds the conflict in terms of Truman's battle for capitalism.

It is in the name of his epilogue – "Das Kapital" – that the target of DeLillo's critique is most clearly revealed to be the capitalist system, the environment depicted in this final segment being the chaotic new world of the Internet, signified by DeLillo's malformed URL (*Underworld* 810). This setting is apt, for the Internet is the ultimate embodiment of postmodern paranoia; the perfect place for everything to become "connected," "gathered and linked" (*Underworld* 825) and, indeed, it is only through this final invocation of the Internet that Sister Edgar is explicitly linked to her namesake, the former head of the FBI. Yet, as in Pynchon's text, the connections made are also strongly religico-capitalist; Sister Edgar's dying moments are infused with material wealth, Christian piety and the terrorism of the Bomb: "[t]he jewels roll out of her eyes and she sees God. / No wait, sorry. It is a Soviet bomb she sees, the largest yield in history" (*Underworld* 826).

This reference to the *Tsar Bomba* nuclear test of October 30th, 1961 is one of several parallels, also noted by Peter Knight, that brings DeLillo's text back to its starting point: the Giants vs. Dodgers baseball game and the Soviet Union's second atomic test (Knight 295). Although, in reality, the relevant Soviet test actually took place on September 24th, 1951, a week and a half earlier (Holloway 219), critics dealing with this theme (Cowart 192; Duvall 259; O'Donnell 108; Remnick 134) have thus far neglected that DeLillo's newspaper source (Howard 121) marks the date on which the *American public* learned of the detonation, not Hoover. This aside, the chief concern of DeLillo's fiction – the threat of Mutually Assured Destruction from The Bomb – is of vital concern for terrorism for, within this environment, there is a strong comparison between the state, and the individual.

The best example of this binary scaling is found in the events of the Texas Highway Killer. In a clear allusion to the Kennedy assassination, several of the murders are captured on film, to the delight

of the media outlets who run the footage on loop (*Underworld* 155). These same media outlets serve as a platform for the Killer to dissociate himself from the stereotype of the lunatic, insane murderer: "[l]et's set the record straight. I did not grow up with head trauma. I had a healthy, basically, type childhood" (*Underworld* 216). This fits well with Gus Martin's assessment of the mainstream, as opposed to expert, opinion on the logic of terrorism as irrational:

> This presumption suggests that terrorism is a priori […] irrational behaviour and that only deranged individuals […] would select terrorist violence as a strategy. Most experts agree that this blanket presumption is incorrect […] their behaviour is neither insane nor necessarily irrational. (Martin, 48)

Comparing this with the threat of nuclear warfare reveals several key similarities. Both situations emerge from rational, normative beginnings: a desire for a deterrent or a typical childhood; both situations lead to a state of intimidation and violence: the policy of M.A.D. and the terror campaign of the Highway Killer; and both situations must finally realise that they no longer serve their logical origins: an arms race that has escalated beyond all intuitive explanation and an inability to answer the question posed by the media outlet, "[w]hy are you doing it?" (*Underworld* 216)

However, there are also crucial differences between the "small-scale" terrorism of the Texas Highway Killer and the terrorism inflicted upon a population by either its own, or a foreign, state. The difference of scale was noted by DeLillo in a 1999 interview in which, when questioned on whether bombs were "an extension of firearms," he replied: "[b]ombs [(specifically, atomic)] are different. Bombs are a product of the superiority of one's technology" (Moss 168). Although I have some qualms

about this (how far technologically are mere pistols from spears?), atomic weaponry, with its vast prerequisite research facilities with which firearms can dispense, is inextricably tied to an economic support base, the most lasting of which – in the century that produced the atomic bomb – has been capitalism. Amid suggestions that a threat to the economic model is more frightening than the destruction of human life, DeLillo posits that the atomic bomb is actually an ineffectual weapon of capitalism, a mere stepping stone on the path towards its logical conclusion, the neutron bomb: "[t]he perfect capitalist tool. Kill people, spare property" (*Underworld* 790).

The fear of death and the redundancy of humankind that such weapons introduce is a facet which, in DeLillo's view, is an integral part of the capitalist state. DeLillo represents this phenomenon on a miniature scale, once more through Sister Edgar. Placed in a position of power over her students, rather than seeking to instil fear for their protection, she instead terrorises in order to affirm her own identity in alterity:

> And she wanted to teach them fear. This was the secret heart of her curriculum and it would begin with […] omen, loneliness and death […] They would know who she was and so would she. (*Underworld* 776)

While Sister Edgar, not only in her authority, but also in her religious capacity, acts metaphorically as the state apparatus, DeLillo additionally brings focus to the loss of the individual subject that occurs in such a system of universal death for, while *Underworld* is littered with waste, this same waste is also the key to an individualism which only serves "to say something awful about the bearer"; a constituent demeaned by the structure it constitutes (*Underworld* 310). Once again, in a disturbing juxtaposition of the state and the individual, DeLillo gives us not only the waste produced by humans, but humans as waste. Amid such loss of the subject, can Americans know who they are?

Finally on this theme, DeLillo's Cold War also shares many of the structural oscillations of Pynchon's anarchist West. Perhaps the pivotal moment in *Underworld* is the conversation with Marvin Lundy, which intersects many of the novels thematic concerns. Already of note for a parallel reading with Pynchon owing to its relevance towards non-linear time, the passage also contains the crucial message to the American that "the Cold War is your friend. […] You need it to stay on top […] the whole thing is geared to your dominance in the world" (*Underworld* 170-171). This antithesis between the purported desire for peace and the reality of perpetual war – the perpetual siege of Pynchon's *V.* – is further illustrated by DeLillo's presentation of the American comedian Lenny Bruce, whose routines infamously redefined the criteria for obscenity in the United States. Invariably offensive, with a subversive political twist ("there are words that offend me [… for example] segregation" (Collins and Skover 16)), DeLillo's depiction of Bruce is a more spontaneous figure than history records (Test). Much of the structural resonance with Pynchon's work comes about, however, through the insinuations of communist sympathies created by DeLillo's time-shift effect. Although the episodes take place eleven years apart, DeLillo's structure positions Bruce's satire on racism directly adjacent to an explicitly anti-McCarthyist dialogue (*Underworld* 543-544). This is compounded, just a few pages later, when Bruce references Fidel Castro (*Underworld* 547) and then Kruschev (*Underworld* 586), in several of his "bits" that are humorous at the expense of the US. However, Bruce's behaviour towards his audience is, albeit at the opposite political polarity, an embodiment of McCarthyist hostile intolerance. With remarkable similarity to the attitude of the House Committee on Un-American Activities, those who walk out of Bruce's shows are branded as Nazis ("Josef Mengele's head nurse") and despots ("Attila the Huness") for, "those were the terms of Lenny's act. If you didn't like the bits he did, you were a mass murderer" (*Underworld* 583). Such action serves as an affirmation of the system that, for ideological consistency, should be under attack, but actually presents a bi-polar oscillation that troubles the relation of the state to the individual and therefore, in the context of terrorism,

problematizes the government's definitions.

Against the Day and the nuclear age

While, so far, the Cold War connotations of *Underworld* have been prioritised, Pynchon is also riffing on this theme. The first indication of this is given when the Americans, the Chums of Chance, encounter the Russian airship, the *Bol'shaia Igra*. While acknowledging its namesake – the *glasnost*-era, 1988 television adaptation of Iulian Semenov's detective novel *Press-Centre* – Pynchon opts for "The Great Game," rather than using the literal translation, "The Big Game," which entirely changes the scope (*Against the Day* 123). As is made clear in a later direct citation of Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*, "The Great Game" refers to the late nineteenth-/early twentieth- century rivalry between the British and Russian empires (*Against the Day* 226-227). However, far from making a simple analogy between the two conflicts, Pynchon notes the binding dependence between them, calling the rival airship not only a "nemesis," but also, "counterpart" (*Against the Day* 123). The constant "shadow" of the Russians throughout the novel leads the Chums to speculate on a vested government interest in perpetual conflict. Thus, the Chums become aware that their hegemony furthers such a conspiracy but, more crucially, Randolph St. Cosmo posits that the device holding them in this complicity is "fear" (*Against the Day* 246).

The fear exhibited by the Chums in 1902 is tied to the nuclear age by repeated reference to the extraterrestrial impact at 7:17am, 30th June 1908 over a region of Siberia which destroyed 9000km^2 of forest, now widely referred to as the Tunguska Event (Kelley, Seyler, and Larsen 3). Described by Pynchon as "an artifact of repeated visits from the future" (*Against the Day* 782) and speculated to be of "Bolshevik" origin (*Against the Day* 781), the event is also linked to both the atomic bombing of

Hiroshima and the area of Chernobyl, famed for its nuclear power station accident in 1986. The link to atomic weaponry is cemented in the "Quaternionic Weapon" (*Against the Day* 542), which is infinitely more than "a common firearm". Indeed, it is "a means to unloose upon the world energies hitherto unimagined," and, as with the speculations on the Tunguska Event, a "weapon based on Time". In contemporary terms, there is only one weapon capable of bestowing its wielder the title of "most feared person in history"; the atomic bomb (*Against the Day* 558). Furthermore, this connection is strengthened by the description of the Tunguska Event which reads, as a stark isolated sentence at the beginning of the chapter, "[a] heavenwide burst of light" (*Against the Day* 779). This bears a remarkable similarity to the depiction of the atomic bombing in *Gravity's Rainbow* where Pynchon writes of a "roaring and sovereign" "fireburst," which some believed to be a "Western deity" (*Gravity's Rainbow* 694). Through the term "burst" and the religious connotations of "heavenwide" and "deity," which extends DeLillo's invocation of Sister Edgar, Pynchon evokes his previous explosion and thereby ties the two together.

Similarly focused upon the nuclear age are the novel's two references to Tchernobyl. The first follows directly from the speculation that the "Tunguska Event" might "have been caused by the discharge […] of a Q-Weapon," the aforementioned nuclear device. However, as a trans-temporal weapon, it is interesting that those venturing too close to the site of the Event begin "raving about Tchernobyl," referred to as "the destroying star known as Wormwood in the book of Revelation" (*Against the Day* 784). Although the passage at Revelation 8.10-11 could well be referenced in recognition of the literal events of the novel, it also appears to anticipate the destroying star far later in that region's history: the catastrophic positive scram of reactor number four in 1986. The second instance makes this even plainer when, shortly after the mention of Tchernobyl, Pynchon asks if the Event is "something which had not quite happened yet […] originating in the future" (*Against the Day*

797). This link to nuclear energy is apt for, as was first realised in the Cold War era, it is impossible to sever the collective heritage of its peaceful and military use.

Through such reference to atomic devastation, Pynchon's Q-Weapon becomes the most formidable of all terroristic devices; it is a nuclear weapon in the hands of a non-state actor, the possibility of which has been described by leading expert Stephen van Evera as among "the worst failures of government in modern times" (15). While an attack with such a weapon would result in unthinkable casualties, a reading of Jean Baudrillard would reveal it as the ultimate symbolic assault. In Baudrillard's account, the "success" of the September 11th attacks was their leverage of the Western psyche against itself. This was achieved through a combination of "modern resources" and the "symbolic weapon" (Baudrillard 21) of their "sacrificial" suicides (Baudrillard 16-17); a shock to the core of a system that prizes technology for the attainment of a zero-death ideal. An attack with nuclear weapons, the pinnacle of technology, would extend this perversion of technology's purportedly Hippocratic purpose even further.

From this interrogation, it should have become clear that both DeLillo and Pynchon centre their investigations on the theme of terrorism around the structures of fear employed by governments in the Cold War. By dismantling the standard definition of the terrorist as a necessarily subnational agent and allowing the state itself to be cast in this light, a re-evaluation of the political sympathies in these works, and particularly Pynchon, is possible. While there is, on the obverse side, an implicit support for terroristic violence, the reverse shows a disgust with terrorism because it is patent that elements of capitalism, which fulfills in various capacities the same role as religion, facilitate and employ this very terror. For this reason, the paranoid structures of opposition presented in the Truman Doctrine provide

an excellent glass through which we can see terror, darkly. While terrorism will persist in any system that alienates through alterity, the conditions that allow such events are, in the worlds of Pynchon and DeLillo, by no means the worst failures of government; they are the conditions, as *V.* and *Against the Day* would put it, of "permanent siege"; they are, at least partly, the conditions of a religico-capitalist, terroristic government's own possibility.

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