Bleeding Edge and the Vision of Power

Bleeding Edge and the Vision of Power[1]

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Thomas Pynchon's latest work, *Bleeding Edge*（2013）presents a setting and a plot much similar to those of his earlier work *The Crying of Lot 49*（1966）. Both are detective novels with the woman sleuth protagonists who explore darkness and confusion of a big city for the hidden mechanism of power. Both novels put a particular focus on the communication network. The major differences between them are the time of creation and the setting. It is the post system that the typical postmodernist piece in the Cold War era imagines as a model of the conspiratorial scheme, while the enigmatic system that mystifies the world of 2001 is Internet. It may rightly be assumed, then, that in the latter the questions of Internet as a cutting-edge communication medium are considered first and foremost. The world of *Bleeding Edge,* however, does not develop along that line. Instead it only projects the visions of either a cheap cyber SF romance or a very old-fashioned Cold War terror story.

The key concept that pervades over the earlier conspiracy novel, *The Crying of Lot 49,* is the post. Oedipa Maas investigates what seems to be the hidden network of antiestablishment activities and its relation to her former boyfriend, late Pierce Inverarity. During her inquest she encounters a variety of things "postal," which range from enigmatic Triestero post horn logos, to the Thurn and Taxis postman in a Jacobean drama, a former Pony Express rider, the WASTE mailmen, and to the auctioned stamp collection. These items reveal that the power struggle is waged over the post system not only as communication and medium but also the power of the state. Other elements for the conspiracy with which Oedipa is entangled are a giant firm like Boeing, a pseud "Beatles" Group, Psychoanalysis, and "Maxwell's Demon," all of which color the tumultuous years of the Cold War era. The post system in this confused and deranged world raises some fundamental media and communication issues: people cannot but communicate with each other; it is yet hard for one to get through to the other; and what rules the communication system rules all.

It is a letter that opens the story of *The Crying of Lot 49,* conveying Inverarity's will to Oedipa. The mail dominates the enigmatic and turbulent world in the shadow of a rich and powerful tycoon. "It is the mail that is Master"（Richard 122）. There is a clash, though Oedipa is not really sure whether her ex-boyfriend belonged to the establishment or the counter-establishment. "The empire is a postal system, and the postal system is war"（Siegert 2）. One point of the Triestero counter-establishment assaults is that they are expressed not as direct attacks but as a kind of guerilla battles like counterplotting, cheating, and scoffing,

as shown in the parodied (muted) Thurn and Taxis post horn logo or the fake stamps.

Another point is strange ahistoricity. These attacks in the novel are described in the shred of history. The story goes back to the age of Renaissance, several years before the alleged Jacobean play was written, to describe a Thurn and Taxis courier. Tristero, which appears in the play as a group of assassins, and which Oedipa vaguely recognizes as a secret society, has a history of antiestablishment activities. Those challenged the Thurn and Taxis gradually turned to be "the secular Tristero" (Pynchon 1965, 136), which might have staged the French Revolution. Oedipa guesses that Tristero then exiled to America.

> She knew a few things about it: it had opposed the Thurn and Taxis postal system in Europe; its symbol was a muted post horn; some time before 1853 it had appeared in America and fought the Pony Express and Wells, Fargo, either as outlaws in black, or disguised as Indians; and it survived today, in California,.... (88)

After all those years, however, the post system that Oedipa conjectures is run by Tristero in the Cold War-Postmodern era seems quite elementary and primordial. In the 60's the electronic revolution has already started at the general level. Oedipa visits a bar with "strictly electronic music policy" (34). Driving into San Narciso she views the swirling houses and streets as the "printed circuit" (14) of a transistor radio. She even mentions "matrices of a great digital computer" (150). But strangely enough the sense of communicational drive in the novel is only embodied in the simple and manual labor contrary to the age of developing technology. Such images as the Thurn and Taxis, a post horn, and Pony Express are all old-fashioned post items that would converge into the simple, manual work of letter carrying. Even in the present day California, Oedipa witnesses another muted horn used for the private postal system, in which letters are handled literally by hand.

> Toward midday a rangy young wino showed up with a sack; unlocked a panel at the side of the box and took out all the letters.... [He] rendezvoused with another carrier, and they exchanged sacks. Oedipa decided to stick with the one she'd following.... She followed him for hours along streets whose names she never knew.... One by one his sack of letters emptied. (106)

Where this anachronism comes from is not certain. It may represent a vision of human power against powerful and tyrannical modern technology. Or it may mean simple nostalgia. The latter is suspected because it is not made clear whether the conspiracy imagined is attributed to the Postmodern world system or that of the Cold War as the aftermath of WWII. There seems to be frequent and obsessive return to the WWII in the story. On the one hand Oedipa lives in the age of Hippies and LSD. She visits UCLA, Berkeley where students are active in various political activities including the anti-Vietnam-War movement. On the other, what triggered her to go to see *The Courier's Tragedy* is the episode of the bones of the WWII soldiers retrieved from the bottom of the lake to be turned into the charcoal cigarette

filter. A mad psychiatrist Hilarius was a Nazi doctor at a concentration camp. There are people who sell the swastika armbands and SS uniforms. It seems the novel is more sympathetic with the pre-digital era.

It is worth noting that the communication and its medium are imagined as realization of the human will against technology. In the previous references to electronic and digital media, Oedipa perceives behind those patterns of printed circuit and matrices of a computer a transcendent meaning, "a hieroglyphic sense of concealed meaning, of an intent to communicate" (14). Integrated circuit may epitomize expansion of the power of computer into the network of Internet. But the circuit is "printed," which intimates that the network is imagined as something visible, tangible and substantial. This substantial network culminates in the postal system with the physical manual labor of postmen in gathering and delivery, and the connection between people by physical contact. Here the idea of communication involves the letter and letter carrying, which means the human will to communicate and the human involvement in the system.

The post theme of this novel reveals what the post system really means. After the various counter-establishment activities and sabotages related the post in Europe, Triestero came to the States, as Oedipa learns from dubious sources, around 1845 when "the U.S. government had carried out a great postal reform, cutting their rates, putting most independent mail route out of business" (143). The United Kingdom Penny Post reform in 1840 preceding that of the United States standardized the post system so that it would strengthen the state power on communication and change the nature of communication: "it was possible to formulate a communications theory that did not depend on the question of intention or understanding" (Siegert 109), where "data sources and destinations — such as humans who transmit messages and other humans who understand them" (109) are disregarded. Toriestero's alternate post system WASTE has become "a network by which X number of Americans are truly communicating whilst reserving their lies, recitations of routine, arid betrayals of spiritual poverty, of the official government delivery system" (Pynchon 1966, 141). Claude Richard argues that the "postal power is the parable of power" (Richard 124), while WASTE "is an ironic commentary on the desire for the absolute incarnated in postal law" (126).

WASTE, therefore, has two sides. On the one hand, it is against the state power of regulation. It seeks to gain power to establish another empire, since WASTE is the abbreviation of the motto: "We Await Silent Tristero's Empire" (Pynchon 1966, 139). On the other hand Tristero is silent, which reflects their conspiracy's emphasis on "silence, impersonation, opposition masquerading as allegiance" (143). They outdo the standardization to build up the network of alienated and forgotten people, who are excluded from inhuman technology or the quantification of communication. WASTE means surplus that does not deserve being reserved. It is this surplus, or noise, that would obstruct the flow of communication that is supposed to go through smoothly otherwise. No wonder the noise is sometimes imagined as a human figure of postman in the post system.

It is very ironical that this anti-Postmodern move of Tristero is said to predict inversely the grass-root democratic network of Internet today. More ironically, however, in the quasi-

postmodern world of the novel pervades a bit outdated fancy for WWII. It is probably be-
cause the author's imagination was nurtured through the experiences in the war, which
fruited in the earlier works as *Gravity's Rainbow*. Madness and disorder against the appar-
ently rational laws of technology is most conspicuous in the field of war, where technology
creates a fetish like the rocket:

> The historical V-2 theme, in other words, has the ability to refer beyond the novel ― to
> the history of World War II, to the future of Third Reich weapons programs in the Cold
> War United States ― whereas the 00000 rocket is more readily seen as a narrative device
> within the fiction. The rocket is an object and an objective, indeed a fetish...
> (Dalsgaard, Herman and Mchale 161-2).

It is believed that the post system functions as a figure of the Modern, but in this novel, it
also works as "the parable of power," and as something human against technological.

Fifty years later, *Bleeding Edge* illustrates a highly technologized, globalized and terrorized
world of the twenty-first century. It is very hard to recount the complicated story of this
novel that abounds in bizarre characters and characters with weird names who mainly speak
with the pop culture allusions, and in slung and eccentric coined words. Very roughly, it is
a story of search and investigation by a de-facto detective Maxine Tarnow for the conspiracy
of dotcom tycoon Gabriel Ice with the Middle East relations, in New York around September
11, 2001. In the middle of her search, she encounters a mysterious virtual world on the web.
　　Maxine Tarnow, a freelance fraud investigator living in New York, happens to find that
entrepreneur Gabriel Ice and his computer-security firm "hashslingrz" are making dubious
move. Ice is a son-in-low of her friend March Kelleher, an antiestablishment activist since
70's. Maxine has two sons, Ziggy and Otis, with her ex-husband Horst Loefller. The begin-
ning of the story is the request of Reg Despard, a documentary film director, to investigate
his employer, hashslingrz. While conducting the search, Maxine comes across diverse
characters like Russian mafia Igor Dashkov, a former hashslingrz employer Lester Traipse,
and a hit man Nicholas Windust. She is also introduced into a virtual reality web site
DeepArcher, the purchase of which Ice seems to be very much interested. Finding a suspi-
cious flow of hashslingrz money and Arab connection, Maxine confronts Lester, but he is
soon found dead, probably killed by Windust. The day after Maxine attended an orgiastic
party occur the 9:11 attacks. She is relieved to find her sons and Horst all safe. In the
DeepArcher, she witnesses 9:11 ghosts, and other strange visions among which is Windust's
body. The story ends somewhat incomplete with riddles left unsolved.
　　Bleeding Edge is obviously in parallel with *The Crying of Lot 49* in that a woman sleuth
investigates the world conspiracy with which she herself is entangled. There are, however,
marked differences in setting between them. *The Crying of Lot 49* starts with Oedipa coming
back from a Tupperware party to find a letter to tell her that she was named an executrix of
the late tycoon Inverarity. Even though Tupperware intimates her housewife status, Oedipa

is not at all domestic but already deeply connected to the institutional power. *Bleeding Edge,* on the other hand, starts with a down-to-earth family scene of a quasi-single working mother walking her two sons to school. Maxine lives in New York, and the time is spring 2001. We know what will happen later in this particular year to this particular city, which is the more focused and loaded locus than San Narcisso. The novel with its epigraph, "New York as a character in a mystery … would be the enigmatic suspect who knows the real story but isn't going to tell it" suggests that the real enigma could rather lie in the city itself than one mogul. Maxine's family style is a real thing, or it may even be the core of the story. The family value in this almost hardboiled detective story with quite a lot of violence strongly confirms that the human factor serves as counter-force against the gigantic, vicious conspiracy. Most significantly, there is no political, social, cultural engine that would move and complicate the narrative as the post system in *The Crying of Lot 49*. The digital network, which is already envisaged in this earlier work as a major system of the future communication, does not play such a key role as it is supposed to play in the twenty-first century. Internet is not in the least esoteric, but what it really means to the society or how it can possess the power over the society is obscured and left unexplored.

The most problematic in the allegedly edgy novel is this ambiguous stance to Internet that has already permeated the new Millennium. It is true that the digital consciousness is focused in the beginning of the story, but it soon recedes and goes astray. While Maxine is escorting her two sons to school at the opening of the story, she meets a PTA friend Vyrva. Vyrva and her husband Justin are introduced as "transplants, Silicon Valley to Silicon Alley," Justin somehow managing to "glide through the dotcom disaster last year" (Pynchon 2013, 4). Vyrva jokingly introduces her husband, "Talk to Bill Gates here" (4). These few sentences may give us an image of New York as a new center of digital business at the turn of the century. But once Maxine steps into her office of the fraud-investigation agency, she is surrounded by such non-web items as telephone and TV, and her communication is dominated by direct personal contacts. The main plot starts by her friend Reg visiting Maxine to request her to search a computer security firm "hashslingrz." This is a dotcom company, all right, but Reg is a documentary film maker, and he says to Maxine that he is looking for something that "probably won't be anyplace any search engine can get to" (9). Even though Reg hired "an IT type," he now turns to Maxine for help. The bad guy is the CEO of hashslingrz, Gabriel Ice, "who walked away in one piece when the dotcom fever broke" (11). It seems that the bad guy's side is staged as digital and cyber while the good guys are classified as analog and even physical.

The letter or post may not the main concern of this novel, but Maxine in 2001 does not even bother to send Email: "There is very little email in the novel, and the web itself remains ancillary" (Auerbach). Even the few instances when Email is mentioned are simply connected to Email addresses along with phone numbers: "His e-mail, his phone, his doorbell, it's all dangling links anymore" (Pynchon 239). These addresses have nothing to do with Maxine's communication activities. Only near the end of the book, Maxine reads the text of an Email reply from a web-page designer Driscoll (433). Most of the time Maxine meets

people personally and makes phone calls at best. As we see later, even the fantastic web site is a place where people "meet." In fact, when September 11 attack occurred, it was mainly on mail and on SNS that people who were watching the disastrous scenes talked together worldwide. There is even a novel in a Walsh scene on the very day of terror, composed solely by Email.[2] It is extremely strange that Maxine in the midst of turmoil never turns to mail even when her ex-husband is missing without any phone call.

Indifference to Email means that, even if Internet is designed as a key, it is not used here for communication, or for knowledge for that matter. It is true that computers are not invented as medium and the web system does not function for communication alone, but Internet, which virtually started from Email, must entail the factor of communication along with that of knowledge and information. The web is a configuration of the world in which people are all connected worldwide, just like by the post system. Internet in this novel, however, is imagined not as a medium for the relation between the people, but as one big computer game, some fantastic SF-like field that the computer could create to expand the imaginary or even physical range of human faculties. Moreover, while Internet here is conceived to be a hotbed of crime and conspiracy, the crimes peculiar to the net, interrupting the path to, and vandalizing the storage of, knowledge — hacking, leak, or sabotage — are not the main action. The center of concern seems to be security, either in Maxine's investigation job, or in Ice's IT security firm hushslingrz, but its prime offense is the foul flow of money. Although the fraud should be committed through the net, and this may have affected the national security, the Internet security itself is not the issue. No mention is made of the fact that the real terror is Internet.

The fuss about Y 2 K was overblown, but it was not the only anxiety syndrome of the turn of the century. As any century had an incident at its beginning that was to be described as a symbolic event of the era, the bimillennium witnessed the fierce terrorist attacks of September 11 in 2001. The interpretations of this catastrophic incident are diverse. President George Bush has taken it as an assault on the US main land by Iraq. There are many who believe like him that the terrorism schematizes the confrontation of the Western world vs. the Islamic world. On the other hand, there are others who find in this atrocity acute resistance against the contemporary world system. "It is a mistake, then, to characterize this as a clash of civilizations or of religions," claims Jean Baudrillard. "This is the clash of triumphant globalization at war with itself" (Baudrillard 14). He also suggests that terrorists have maneuvered images and symbols: "This terrorist violence is not 'real' at all. It's worse, in a sense: it's symbolic" (18). He even goes on to equate terrorism with media: "There is no such thing as a good use of the media. The media are part of the event, they're part of the terror; in one way or another they play along" (18).[3]

However this novel of the seemingly dotcom conspiracy fails to project the relation between the terrorist destruction of the city and the madness of technological and informational empire. It is no doubt that the televised images of the fall of the World Trade Center had an enormous impact of terror. But the image could propose another aspect of the media problem: the relation between media and technology, and media and power. Employing the

commercial airplanes for Kamikaze suicide attacks means the transformation of medium into agency: the human operated machine destroying the human made construct and human operated institutions. There are many novels on September 11, but they mainly deal with the psychological confusion of the people who have confronted the disaster. A novel like *Bleeding Edge,* the plot of which pivots around this momentous incident in New York and the conspiracy in the computer empire, could have presented more radical view of the role of media in the twenty-first century world. *The Crying of Lot 49* has developed an idea that it is communication and media that rule the modern world, and even suggested the future potential of network. *Bleeding Edge* conveys an impression that the decay of the civilization is caused and aggravated by the cybernated and digitalized society dominated by the computer, but there is no confident recognition of Internet at the center of the crisis.

When September 11 happens, Maxine's or Pynchon's response to it is diversely criticized. The descriptions of the disaster stay generally reserved and underwhelming, though some pathetic emotion is discerned. One harsh criticism says: "Despite the requisite gestures to New Yorkers' mourning and fear, Pynchon seems to have slept or slipped through 9/11" (LeClair 4th), as Horst did in the novel. The treatment of Internet is also less enthusiastic than expected, although it is understood that the incident cannot but involve it. Before the analysis and disputes about the attack, there must have been whirling mail or SNS exchanges running around Internet in and out of New York, inquiring about safety or just spreading rumors. The novel does not refer to such network communication, but only later it is told, along with the chaotic disputes on the cause of terror, that Internet flames up.

> If you read nothing but the Newspaper of Record, you might believe that New York city, like the nation, united in sorrow and shock, has risen to the challenge of global jihadism, joining a righteous crusade Bush's people are now calling the War on Terror. If you go to other sources — the Internet, for example — you might get a different picture. Out in the vast undefined anarchism of cyberspace, among the billions of self-resonant fantasies, dark possibilities are beginning to emerge. (Pynchon 327)

Then Eric Outfield, an IT expert, intimates to Maxine the conspiracy of Gabriel Ice:

> That hashslingrz money pipeline to the Emirates, remember? banks in Dubai and shit, I couldn't stop going back, over and over it, what if that was helping finance the attack on the Trade Center? then Ice isn't on just another dotcom douchebag, he's a traitor to his country. (343)

Eric also suggests the possibility of the CIA pretending to be jihadist (343). Internet is glimpsed in the horrible scene, and it is intimated that, since a dotcom magnate seems to be in the back, Internet is not unrelated. But Internet as agency and resource of power is never focused.

Internet here surfaces as dark enigmatic space with mystery and malefaction, not

trustful but unreliable, not social but orgiastic, and not democratic but anarchic. Observing the cursing site Eric has created, Maxine comments that "the internet as it turns out exhibits a strange affinity for the dynamics of curses" (344). But Internet is not the sole tyrant of the empire. Instead she reduces it to a part of the mechanism. As "systems crash, data are lost, bank accounts are looted" (344), she finds that "there are also the real inconveniences" and that "the Internet is only a small part of a much vaster integrated continuum" (344). Such reservations about the power of Internet might be caused by the characters' vague underestimation of or alienation from its function in the early century. It would be also because the dominant image of Internet in this novel is neither search engines nor blogs, which the characters may have access once in a while as excuses, but are mainly limited to a virtual space of the game and the SF-like cyberspace of the time machine. It is just a "magic" (397), by Horst's word, that depends on belief.

"Deep Web" is mentioned several times to suggest that if there were secret or conspiracy, it would be there away deep in Internet. Eric Outfield is said to have "been down in the Deep Web looking into hashslingrz's secrets" (57). Deep Web, which is estimated to be far more voluminous than the "surface" web, usually means the invisible, unsearchable sites, like password-protected or dynamic pages and encrypted networks. But in the novel it is "supposed to be mostly obsolete sites and broken links, an endless junkyard," and according to Eric, "behind it is a whole invisible maze of constraints, engineered in, lets you go some places, keeps you out of others" (226). Deep Web here does not indicate hidden, and yet more active, elaborate and significant function of Internet, where all the problems of security and archiving converge. Instead it seems to be imagined as a chaotic junkyard, from which nobody knows what comes out. Apparently Deep Web is only discussed to introduce "DeepArcher," the game-oriented virtual cyber space, which is said to be located way down in the network. Deep Web and DeepArcher share something "deep" and its depth is the focus of dispute. The site does not look deep enough, however, since it just looks like a Nintendo role-playing game, no matter how sophisticated characters believe it is. At the beginning the access to it is highly restricted, but later, when the codes are open, even Maxine's young boys are found playing there.

DeepArcher has been created by the two guys from Silicon Valley, Vyrva's husband Justin, and his partner Lucas. With the cover figure of an archer aiming, this is a site where the players as avatar can travel over the places. When the program is loaded, Maxine notices images "flaring beyond the basic videogame brown of the time into the full color spectrum of very early morning ..." (75) and "A framed lucid dream, it approaches, and wraps Maxine, and strangely without panic she submits" (75). This is a typical virtual reality experience. The passengers at the station she meets "have been given real faces" (75). In the conversation, which is probably conducted in text, Maxine is told to use the cursor and click to explore the site. There is a lounge, the station, where "departure" keeps postponed. She gets on the train but soon she is lost in the dark screen. Later in another occasion, Maxine enters DeepArcher to find that the train depot turned to a spaceport. She is told by Lucas (in the program) that he and Justin decided to go open source. When she continues to wander

corridors, she "begins to pick up a chill sense that some of the newer passengers could be refugees from the event at the Trade Center" (357). She recognizes that "for those who may be genuine casualties, likenesses have been brought here by loved ones so they'll have an afterlife, their faces scanned in from family photos, …" (357). The program becomes a field where the living and the dead could rally.

It is interesting that the website has literally succeeded to revive the dead, to create ghosts. Ghosts may remind us of the problematic media or postal ghosts, the communication noise. The terrorist group Triestero in *The Crying of Lot 49* may be interpreted as those postal ghosts incarnated. But the ghosts here seem to be the spirits of those who were victimized by the subversive and aggressive terrorists. They are communal fantasy created freely by unspecified people who grieve at their "loved ones."

> If these are not the actual voices of the dead, if, as some believe, the dead can't speak, then the words are being put there for them by whoever posted their avatars, and what they appear to say is what the living want them to say. (357)

These ghosts are loaded with the desire of those who are alive, the vehicle of general grief and anxiety. DeepArcher site functions as a variation of intimate SNS, where living people under the phantom masks gather to find consolation, or the online role-playing game where unspecific people try to fight inscrutable evils.

Mainly imagined as cyber space almost like "virtual reality dataspace" in William Gibson's *Neuromancer*, Internet in this novel is anything but medium. It is not where people are connected to each other to search for information mostly through writing. The network offers a community place where people not so much chat (even by text) as share the space or mingle virtually. In other words, the cyber space is expected to enable people distant both time- and space-wise to get together. It is this sense of game-playing and socializing that deprives depth of DeepArcher. Mitchum Huehls argues that the novel's vision fails to present the sense of depth that implies hierarchies and power in the earlier novels and, although "*Bleeding Edge* reinforces this sense of verticality" to some extent, the novel has to watch the symbolic picture of tall towers falling down (Huehls 867). He also says of DeepArcher that it "designates that search for vertical depth in the radically flattened twenty-first century" (868), but that "[t]he DeepWeb becomes so shallow, in fact, that even Maxine's kids (Ziggy and Otis) are there" (870). When Ziggy and Otis join the site, it becomes their playground. They have "located graphics files for a version of NYC as it was before 11 September 2001" and "reformatted now as the personal city of Zigotisopolis" (Pynchon 2013, 428). Soon their grandparents participate in the game, the city becomes very much retro New York.

Anachronism makes the concept of Internet more problematic. According to Tom LeClair, it is due to the author's sympathy with California in the '60's. The vision of the novel is "the mellow yellow version of the California '60s in and through the style of *Inherent Vice* (2009)" and "Like *DeepArcher Bleeding Edge* is a synthesis, but it's sunny Justin who seems responsible for the book's mellow sensibility and pastoral sympathies, who makes it an East

Coast *Inherent Vice*, updated to include a passel of computer geeks in Silicon Alley" (LeClair). But it is not Justin alone who is responsible. March Kelleher, a long time antiestablishment activist, as a survivor of the tumultuous '60–'70s and an old hippie, is imbued with an old vision of conspiracy and power. Maxine's parents Ernie and Elaine, who demonstrated against Regan's Nicaragua policy, apparently belong to the same generation. They are "probable sources for all" the retro NY city in DeepArcher. They remember the previous Madison Square Garden that had been located at Fiftieth and Eighth till 1968. It suggests that Ernie could go further back to Cold War era. There are even some indices to WW II by other elder members. That may be more problematic to the critique of Internet. It is Ernie who teaches the history of Internet:

> You know where it all comes from, this online paradise of yours? It started back during the Cold War, when the think tanks were full of geniuses plotting nuclear scenarios.... Your Internet, back then the Defense Department called it DARPAnet, the real original purpose was to assure survival of U.S. command and control after a nuclear exchange with the Soviets. (Pynchon 2013, 419)

DARPAnet is what was then called ARPAnet, the original Internet created in 1969. Pynchon has already mentioned it in *Inherent Vice* (2009) situated in the '70s California. The allusion to it here shows the novel's propensity for the pastoral California, but this embryonic network also insinuates the controversial role of Internet as part of Cold War conspiracy. There seems to be a firm assumption that every conspiracy stems from Cold War, or its genesis, WWII. March Kelleher says on September 11 that the incident is "Reichstag fire" (317). A boyfriend of Maxine's friend Heidi is a guy who has "longtime obsession with" (234) Hitler and his cologne. The flagrance in the past fills the air with enigma and threat. March says:

> Any more than Germans were back in 1933, when Nazis torched the Reichstag within a month of Hitler becoming chancellor. Which of course is not at all to suggest that Bush and his people have actually gone out and staged the events of 11 September. It would take a mind hopelessly diseased with paranoia ... even to allow to cross her mind the possibility that terrible day could have deliberately been engineered as a pretext to impose some endless Orwellian 'war'.... (321).

It is as if the sound of invisible V rockets in *Gravity's Rainbow* is ever approaching. In *Bleeding Edge* they are metamorphosed into two airplanes that smash twin towers. But if any conspiracy is tracked back to Hitler's stratagem, if any conspiracy of digital or Internet form is just regarded as a derivative of Cold War system, then it will be difficult to deal with the enormous conspiratorial power of Internet, what Google or Facebook or Big Data means to us.

It is ingenious of *The Crying of Lot 49* to detect the power of post system and the meaning of communication in the modern world. *Bleeding Edge* cleverly tries to tackle Internet and

illustrate what virtual space is like. It is disappointing, however, that the novel falls short of the target. If media are the part of terror, Internet could be the part of terror, and in Internet inheres the real power in the global world. Internet matters most when it concerns with knowledge, memory, and archive. While in DeepArcher, after meeting September 11 ghosts Maxine falls into conversation with a woman, "maybe a woman," at a café. The woman says she is here to find out how long she can stay "at the edge of the beginning before the Word" (358). They reach a sort of observation platform, where in the posture that Maxine believes to be just like the Archer, the woman says:

> There's a faint glow, after a while you notice it ─ some say it's the trace, like radiation from the big bang, of the memory, in nothingness, of having once been something .... (358)

This is the only place in the novel where Internet is conceived to involve the "trace," of "having once been something."

At the end of the novel, Maxine seems to be back to the safe and happy meatspace (real world). She sees off her sons grown up enough to do without escorting. It is difficult to believe that Internet stands against a reality, remaining just a playing cyberspace from which you could easily get out. Now Internet IS the meatspace.

Notes

1. The resources for the construction of this paper were supplied by Seikei University Grant-in-Aid for Humanities Research.
2. David Llewellyn, *Eleven* (2006).
3. Some passages of Baudrillard's original article are not translated in *Harper's*. One omitted passage is interesting. English translation is by Rachel Blaul at School of Social Science, Australian National University (http://humanities.psydeshow.org/political/baudrillard-eng.htm).

   Il est d'ailleurs vraisemblable que les terroristes (pas plus que les experts!) n'avaient prévu l'effondrement des Twin Towers, qui fut, bien plus que le Pentagone, le choc symbolique le plus fort. L'effondrement symbolique de tout un système s'est fait par une complicité imprévisible, comme si, en s'effondrant d'elles-mêmes, en se suicidant, les tours étaient entrées dans le jeu pour parachever l'événement.

   Dans un sens, c'est le système entier qui, par sa fragilité interne, prête main-forte à l'action initiale. Plus le système se concentre mondialement, ne constituant à la limite qu'un seul réseau, plus il devient vulnérable en un seul point (déjà un seul petit hacker philippin avait réussi, du fond de son ordinateur portable, à lancer le virus I love you, qui avait fait le tour du monde en dévastant des réseaux entiers). Ici, ce sont dix-huit kamikazes qui, grâce à l'arme absolue de la mort, multipliée par l'efficience technologique, déclenchent un processus catastrophique global.

   (It is even probable that the terrorists (like the experts!) did not anticipate the collapse of the Twin Towers, which was, far more than (*the attack of*) the Pentagon, the deepest symbolic shock. The symbolic collapse of a whole system is due to an unforeseen complicity, as if, by collapsing (*themselves*), by suiciding, the towers had entered the game to complete the event. In a way, it is the entire system that, by its internal fragility, helps the initial action. The more the system is

globally concentrated to constitute ultimately only one network, the more it becomes vulnerable at a single point (already one little Filipino hacker has succeeded, with his laptop, to launch the I love you virus that wrecked entire networks). Here, eighteen (*dix-huit in the text*) kamikazes, through the absolute arm that is death multiplied by technological efficiency, start a global catastrophic process.)

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