

# Thomas Pynchon:

## An Inventory of His Collection at the Harry Ransom Center

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### Descriptive Summary

<b>Creator:</b>	Pynchon, Thomas
<b>Title:</b>	Thomas Pynchon Collection
<b>Dates:</b>	1958-circa 1990, undated
<b>Extent:</b>	2 document boxes, 1 galley folder (gf), 3 folders (Restricted); (.84 linear feet)
<b>Abstract:</b>	This small collection documents three of Pynchon's works: "Minstrel Island," <i>V.</i> , and <i>Vineland</i> . Also present is a small volume of correspondence, currently restricted.
<b>Call Number:</b>	Manuscript Collection MS-03358
<b>Language:</b>	English
<b>Access:</b>	Open for research. Three folders of correspondence restricted during the lifetime of Thomas Pynchon. Researchers must create an online Research Account and agree to the Materials Use Policy before using archival materials.
<b>Use Policies:</b>	Ransom Center collections may contain material with sensitive or confidential information that is protected under federal or state right to privacy laws and regulations. Researchers are advised that the disclosure of certain information pertaining to identifiable living individuals represented in the collections without the consent of those individuals may have legal ramifications (e.g., a cause of action under common law for invasion of privacy may arise if facts concerning an individual's private life are published that would be deemed highly offensive to a reasonable person) for which the Ransom Center and The University of Texas at Austin assume no responsibility.
<b>Restrictions on Use:</b>	Authorization for publication is given on behalf of the University of Texas as the owner of the collection and is not intended to include or imply permission of the copyright holder which must be obtained by the researcher. For more information please see the Ransom Centers' Open Access and Use Policies.

**Administrative Information**

**Acquisition:** Gift, 1968; Purchases, 2000 (R14802), 2002 (R15035), 2006 (R15447), 2015 (15-08-012-P)

**Processed by:** Stephen Mielke, 2008

**Repository:** [Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin](#)

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## Biographical Sketch

Thomas Ruggles Pynchon, Jr. was born May 8, 1937 in Glen Cove, New York to Thomas Pynchon, an industrial surveyor, and Katherine (Bennett) Pynchon. He grew up in the nearby town of Oyster Bay, and received an engineering physics scholarship to Cornell University in 1954. His studies were interrupted by two years of service in the U.S. Navy from 1955 to 1957. When he returned to Cornell, he pursued a liberal arts degree and graduated with a B.A. in 1959.

Pynchon began work on his first novel, *V.*, in 1959 while living in New York City. He moved to Seattle, Washington, in 1960 and worked two years as a technical writer for Boeing Aircraft, then lived in California and Mexico while finishing work on the book. Published in 1963 to great critical acclaim, *V.* received the William Faulkner Foundation Award for best first novel.

Pynchon's literary reputation grew with his next two books, *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966) and *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973), the latter a best-seller and National Book Award winner considered by some critics to be the most important piece of fiction since James Joyce's *Ulysses*. His later books *Vineland* (1990), *Mason & Dixon* (1997), and *Against the Day* (2006) did not enjoy the critical praise of his earlier works, but his status as one of the most important American writers of post-modern fiction remains unchanged.

Starting with the publication of his first novel, Pynchon has shunned publicity, refuses to be photographed, and closely guards his privacy. Little is known about his personal life. In addition to his novels, Pynchon has written essays, reviews, and short stories appearing in publications such as the *New York Times Book Review*, *New York Times Magazine*, the *New York Review of Books*, the *Kenyon Review*, and the *Saturday Evening Post*. In 1984, he published a collection of his short stories written in the late 1950s and early 1960s titled *Slow Learner: Early Stories*.

Source:

"Thomas Pynchon" *Contemporary Authors Online*

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## Scope and Contents

This small collection documents three of Pynchon's works: "Minstrel Island," *V.*, and *Vineland*. The materials are arranged in alphabetical order by title and date from 1959 to circa 1990.

"Minstrel Island" materials consist of one folder of handwritten and typed notes, outlines, and draft fragments of an unpublished, unfinished musical written by Pynchon and his friend, John Kirkpatrick Sale. The materials date to spring 1958 and were written while both Pynchon and Sale were attending Cornell University.

Materials related to Pynchon's first published book *V.* make up the bulk of the collection and consist of six folders of typed mimeo copies of a late 1962 draft of the book, one galley proof, and eight typed letters from Pynchon to John Kirkpatrick Sale and Sale's wife, Faith. The letters date from both before and after the book's publication in 1963 and discuss the editorial process, evolution of the text, and the critical response to the book. Also included is a paperback edition of *V.* containing annotations made by the seller's staff indicating page numbers corresponding to the typed draft mimeo copy.

Pynchon's 1990 book *Vineland* is documented with a photocopy of a complete, fair copy, typed draft of the book.

Forty-two letters written by Pynchon, dating from 1967 to 1982, are restricted during Pynchon's lifetime.

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## Related Material

The following Ransom Center collections also contain Thomas Pynchon related materials and are described in archival inventories in the Ransom Center reading room or online at [www.hrc.utexas.edu/research/fa](http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/research/fa):

Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. Records

Norman Mailer Papers

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## Index Terms

### Subjects

American literature -- 20th century.

### Document Types

Correspondence.

Galley proofs.

Typescripts.

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"Minstrel Island," handwritten and typed draft fragments, 1958	<b>Container</b> 1.1
<i>V.</i> (1963)	
Composite typed draft copy, circa 1962	<b>Container</b> 1.2-7
Galley proofs, circa 1963	<b>Container</b> gf
Correspondence, 1962-1964, undated	<b>Container</b> 2.1
Paperback edition with handwritten notations, undated	<b>Container</b> 2.2
<i>Vineland</i> (1990), typescript draft photocopy, circa 1990	<b>Container</b> 2.3-5