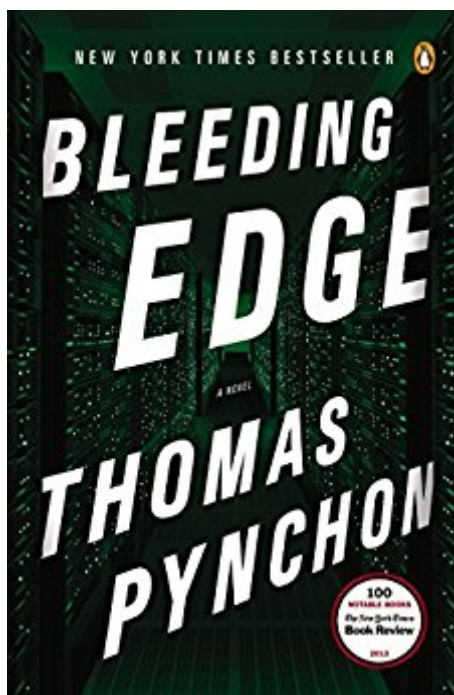


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# Bleeding Edge: A Novel



## Synopsis

The Washington Post "Brilliantly written | a joy to read | Bleeding Edge is totally gonzo, totally wonderful. It really is good to have Thomas Pynchon around, doing what he does best." (Michael Dirda) It is 2001 in New York City, in the lull between the collapse of the dot-com boom and the terrible events of September 11th. Silicon Alley is a ghost town, Web 1.0 is having adolescent angst, Google has yet to IPO, Microsoft is still considered the Evil Empire. There may not be quite as much money around as there was at the height of the tech bubble, but there's no shortage of swindlers looking to grab a piece of what's left. Maxine Tarnow is running a nice little fraud investigation business on the Upper West Side, chasing down different kinds of small-scale con artists. She used to be legally certified but her license got pulled a while back, which has actually turned out to be a blessing because now she can follow her own code of ethics "carry a Beretta, do business with sleazebags, hack into people's bank accounts" without having too much guilt about any of it. Otherwise, just your average working mom "two boys in elementary school, an off-and-on situation with her sort of semi-ex-husband Horst, life as normal as it ever gets in the neighborhood" till Maxine starts looking into the finances of a computer-security firm and its billionaire geek CEO, whereupon things begin rapidly to jam onto the subway and head downtown. She soon finds herself mixed up with a drug runner in an art deco motorboat, a professional nose obsessed with Hitler's aftershave, a neoliberal enforcer with footwear issues, plus elements of the Russian mob and various bloggers, hackers, code monkeys, and entrepreneurs, some of whom begin to show up mysteriously dead. Foul play, of course. With occasional excursions into the DeepWeb and out to Long Island, Thomas Pynchon, channeling his inner Jewish mother, brings us a historical romance of New York in the early days of the internet, not that distant in calendar time but galactically remote from where we've journeyed to since. Will perpetrators be revealed, forget about brought to justice? Will Maxine have to take the handgun out of her purse? Will she and Horst get back together? Will Jerry Seinfeld make an unscheduled guest appearance? Will accounts secular and karmic be brought into balance? Hey. Who wants to know? Slate.com "If not here at the end of history, when? If not Pynchon, who? Reading Bleeding Edge, tearing up at the beauty of its sadness or the punches of its hilarity, you may realize it as the 9/11 novel you never knew you needed" | a necessary novel and one that literary history has been waiting for. "The New York Times Book Review Exemplary" | dazzling and ludicrous... Our reward for surrendering expectations that a novel should gather in clarity, rather than disperse into molecules, isn't anomie but delight." (Jonathan Lethem) Wired magazine "The book's real accomplishment is to claim the last decade as Pynchon territory, a continuation of the same tensions " between freedom and

captivity, momentum and entropy, meaning and chaos â ” through which he has framed the last half-century."\*\*\*A New York Times Notable Book of 2013\*\*\*

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

the writing swings, rollicks, rolls, is darkly humorous and lacks nothing of Pynchon's normal brilliance. The story takes us back to the post dot-com bubble and for the main portion exists in that pre-9/11 world that seems so distant now. Fresh and lively, a pleasure to sit down with

As a long-time fan of Pynchon, I've always stood on the side of his novels. Not involved with Mason and Dixon, or Thurn and Taxis, I watched with amusement as he pokes at the people and places in his novels. "Bleeding Edge" reads like an alternate reality of my own life on the edge of the dot-com bust, involved in tech without being a techie, 9/11 touching, but not directly hurting me, and watching as our subsequent loss of freedoms was justified by rising stock prices. Maxine Loeffler, one more too-sane person surrounded by insane circumstances, is Pynchon's strongest protagonist so far. 'Bleeding Edge' is perfect for lovers of Pynchon's fever-dream writing, his 10,000 foot view of

life's absurdities and his grasp of the small comforts of life, like a Doc Martin's Cream Soda. This book is pure New York, pure Pynchon, pure joy.

Bleeding Edge is not Pynchon's most gripping and the place and subject matter Johnathan Lethem has dealt with before, but this take on the gumshoe dime novel involves perhaps Pynchon's most elaborate treatise on the necessity of pop culture in art. Bleeding Edge smells of Pokemon, has the same surprises as Hideo Kojima and uses language in ways so contemporary their relief shows how vast language has come since his last chronicle of the sixties in *Inherent Vice*. The two novels together comprise some of Pynchon's most elaborate fictional worlds. The New York of Bleeding Edge is rendered in such exacting detail from the Echo and the Bunnymen tracks to the fictional schools based on discarded Freudian schools of thought. It in other words is a bit surreal to read someone so much older than myself render the culture and lingo of a period I remember incredibly clearly with so few faults (there are a few mixed up techno metaphors etc.) but the novel also delivers on his re-embodying of the gum shoe in different guises and the protagonist (Maxine) makes an excellent gum shoe. The novel's only real fault is closure. Fans give it a shot.

This recent offering from TP is different from his previous books. Not quite 'Pynchon lite' as many dubbed *Inherent Vice*, but not as expansive as *Against The Day*, *Mason & Dixon* or *Gravity's Rainbow*. Many of the major Pynchon concerns are here: Betrayal, personal, sexual and political; corporate greed; feckless behavior by folks in high places. But this book is more confined than earlier works, set almost entirely in New York City around the time of the attacks on the World Trade Center on Sept 11, 2001. New York City is the locale, and virtually a character in and of itself in this book. This one is also more 'domestic' in that it closely follows the trials and tribulations of a single mom living on the upper west side -- she's also an investigator of fraud and other kinds of malfeasance. But missing is Pynchon's usual concern about History, which is so important in the longer works. This one also feels more edited -- Pynchon's marvelously descriptive lists (i.e., Mucho Maas encountering the interiors of used cars in Lot 49; Slothrop's desk in GR), which can go on delightfully, are truncated here. A description of a NYC dump site, which provided the author an opportunity to really stretch out, is surprisingly brief. There is another trip down the toilet, but this one not nearly as entertaining as Slothrop's drug-induced journey in GR. Near the end there is a brief foray into Central America (a backstory to one of the main characters) that in earlier books would have been a novella in and of itself. On the plus side, the humor is still there. including the encyclopedic references to late 90's pop culture; the trenchant social commentary; karmic justice

distributed to those most deserving; and the quest to find meaning -- in this book hidden in the lower reaches of the 'deep web.' Like all Pynchon books, this one deserves multiple readings to enjoy its full richness and complexity.

Why do people make Thomas Pynchon out to be a difficult author to understand? Just as with Gravity's Rainbow, all that's required is a sense of humour and the ability to just relax, sit back and let him drive you through a world that's as familiar as it is strange. With lashing of that goofy, hip humour seen running throughout Inherent Vice (and who else is breathlessly awaiting Paul Thomas Anderson's film version?), the skewed retelling of history seen in Mason Dixon, and the "don't look over your shoulder I think we're being followed" feel of Gravity's Rainbow, Pynchon takes off from the events surrounding 9/11 to wander the stratosphere of our collective human experience. Bleeding Edge is provoking, funny, irreverent, and above all emphatic. And that's why it works. From nervous Jewish mothers, computer geeks, California new age savants to Russian gunsels, you find yourself relating to one of the most varied cast of characters to be found anywhere. So don't overthink it. Just settle back and enjoy this madcap tour of one man's fin de siècle funhouse.

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