



Been Down So Long It Looks Like Up To Me

Richard Fariña , Thomas Pynchon (Introduction)

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

Been Down So Long It Looks Like Up To Me

Richard Fariña , Thomas Pynchon (Introduction)

Been Down So Long It Looks Like Up To Me Richard Fariña , Thomas Pynchon (Introduction)

Fariña evokes the Sixties as precisely, wittily, and poignantly as F. Scott Fitzgerald captured the Jazz Age. The hero, Gnosis Pappadopoulos, weaves his way through the psychedelic landscape, encountering-among other things-mescaline, women, art, gluttony, falsehood, science, prayer, and, occasionally, truth.

Been Down So Long It Looks Like Up To Me Details

Date : Published August 29th 1996 by Penguin Classics (first published April 1966)

ISBN : 9780140189308

Author : Richard Fariña , Thomas Pynchon (Introduction)

Format : Paperback 352 pages

Genre : Fiction, Novels, Classics, Literature, American

 [Download Been Down So Long It Looks Like Up To Me ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Been Down So Long It Looks Like Up To Me ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Been Down So Long It Looks Like Up To Me Richard Fariña , Thomas Pynchon (Introduction)

From Reader Review Been Down So Long It Looks Like Up To Me for online ebook

Paul Secor says

I read this in the late sixties and wasn't impressed back then. I first experienced Richard Farina as a mediocre singer and songwriter, and his fiction writing fell into the same category. I guess that much of his reputation rests on his good looks and his early death in a motorcycle accident - also his friendship with Thomas Pynchon. None of which has anything to do with good writing. I have no desire to reread this. I'll trust my early memories.

Mandy says

This is the worst book I have ever read. Yes, it's trippy, but it's also sexist as hell, sensationalist, and extremely pretentious -- in both style and matter. It's counter-culture in all the stupid ways -- oooh, drug-taking is awesommmmmeee man -- and not critical of the protagonist, whose name actually means "knowledge," as he acts on the same base prejudices that make mainstream culture so rotten. A hands-down trash book.

Peter Tillman says

Someone recommended this book as the quintessential novel of the 1960s. Well, I found it a confused mess, and didn't get far before giving up. The protagonist is a drunken college student and con-man who is remarkably unlikeable. Nothing that he does goes well. Including the sex. Or the drugs. Anyway, I read a chapter or two, then started skimming, until it became clear that I pretty much hated the book. Not for me!

Jesse says

Richard Farina is something of a role model to me. If I could model my life after his I would - all except the dying in a motorcycle accident two days after my first novel is published. But besides this I would like to:

1. release acoustic driven music with my beautiful girlfriend/wife
2. Publish a novel centered around a smooth-talking, fast-living, drug-ingesting protagonist named Gnosso (yes, that's right his name is Gnosso and you don't even wanna know his last name)
3. Participate in campus demonstrations against draconian campus policies.

and 4. Be Thomas Pynchon's best friend and have Gravity's Rainbow dedicated to me; I mean how fuckin' cool would that be.

But all personal coolness aside, "Been Down So Long.." is actually a good novel. While a bit dated (as this was written in the sixties), and a bit misogynistic (he lies about using a contraceptive just so he can get

some), the novel is buzzing in style, dripping in a sixties coolness and an extemporaneous desire for change. Gnossos, while sometimes loathsome, is also entertaining to be around. This is not a novel I would recommend to most women; they might like it if they are into Bukowski or something similar, but most probably will not. I think I like the novel more than I think it is actually good. When I picked it up the title struck me as something so modern, like the title of some indie rock band's second album, and when I read the first chapter it was written with such verve and humour that it immediately had me hooked. More so than that the ending threw me for a loop and showed me that this was more than an "On The Road" wanderlust excuse to drink and take drugs (although there is a rather large element of that) But more so it was about the effects of trying to maintain a detached cool in the midst of so much cultural change; and even more universal than that, it's about trying to go through life and never be embarrassed or made foolish, and only portray the most laid-back, witty, and insouciant calm that no real person actually has. And, of course, anyone who drinks, takes drugs, lies and sleeps around is the complete opposite of these things; he's an insecure man who has been down so long that it starts looking like up.

Madeleine says

There are two big things this book had working in its favor before I even cracked open Richard Fariña's under-appreciated final gem: The Pynchon connection (which is what nudged me in the direction of this novel in the first place, albeit more than a year after "Gravity's Rainbow" mournfully introduced me to Fariña) and my own probably-over-romanticized-at-this-point affinity for my college experience, with Pynchon's intro (which includes an obligatory kazoo-choir reference!) being, of course, a voyeuristic delight of the highest order right until the moment it crashed back to heartbreaking reality and the novel's not-entirely-fictitious collegiate antics serving as a not-entirely-unpleasant reminder of *why* I was so reluctant to let go of college life.

And then, during the year's last handful of blessedly slow days at the Crappiest Place on Earth, I discovered that actually taking my lunch hour to hunker shoelessly down in the backseat of my car with a blanket and a book is pretty much the best thing to ever happen to my ~~sanity~~ professional life. Observe the photographic proof of my sublime on-the-clock refuge:

(Thank bouncing Baby Jesus that Fariña's Cornell chum desensitized me to complex equations interrupting literature.)

So now a novel that was published two days before its author's far-too-early death has found an even fonder association in my own personal landscape, thanks to my unyielding dissatisfaction with and need to escape from a job that takes me farther and farther from where I wanted to be at this point in my life.

I am so glad that I read this book now, rather than as a starry-eyed undergrad with dreams of running the NYT and writing The Greatest American Novel of My Generation on the side. I have a better sense of how life is not something that can be planned for, that growing up is fucking *hard* even with a willingness to let one's inner child have a say every now and again, that death is always lurking around every corner, and coming to this novel without even one of those hard lessons under my belt would have reduced this from a poignantly frenzied love song of youth's last discoveries to an instruction manual for college kids who just want to shake things up (not that there's anything inherently wrong with living in the moment and taking inconsequentially stupid chances, for those are the backbone of the best Hey, Remember When...? tales). I absolutely would have embraced any opportunity to cause a scene at a formal frat-house dinner like Gnossos Pappadopoulis (Fariña's thinly veiled stand-in for himself) did, just as I had also proclaimed myself in love

with wrong guy after wrong guy based on a series of limited-engagement liaisons, as Gnosso did with Kristin, his obsession in green knee-socks and loafers.

My tendency to relate too personally with literary characters came out to play for keeps as Gnosso became a clearer and clearer picture; save for a few lapses into first-person narration, this is a story told mostly in third-person with a focus on GP, so it takes some time to get a sense of his motivation and how others perceive him (it takes a little longer to reconcile the two seemingly at-odds realities). And perhaps I was imposing my own inner workings on Gnosso but I left this book with a sense of awed kinship inspired by his mostly successful attempts to hide his soft heart under an ornery facade. He wants to feel, he wants to live, he wants to be earnest in his devil-may-care approach to throwing himself into *living* but he is woefully, painfully afraid of doing so because fully embracing life means also acknowledging that death is the inevitable end game.

Gnosso seems like the kind of maniac ringleader whose enthusiasm and passion attract unresisting friends and followers in droves but his attitude obscures a desperate desire to fall in love rather than indulge in a series of unemotional physical encounters, which is what it seems will finally help him stop fighting thanatos with an unequivocally driving life force. Had I not read Pynchon's "Entropy" in college, I would have probably missed the significance of how Gnosso has hermetically sealed himself inside every room he occupies in an attempt to artificially preserve life against the natural encroachment of death -- until his night with Kristin has him throwing open windows with the zeal of a man possessed. He is a character who fights the unpleasant reality with the much more pleasing act of losing oneself in the moment and clinging to that happiness as if that's all it takes to preserve that joy for eternity. As his attempts at pleasant stasis become more desperate and he loses control over situations that initially plopped him on top of the world, it becomes more obvious that this is a guy who wants freedom without responsibility -- and, in the end, isn't that what college is all about?

It's Bukowski once you've swapped the booze for drugs. It's Hunter S. Thompson with an overt awareness that death is nipping at his heels. It's Kerouac as a college kid. It's Pynchon with narrative restraint. But most of all, it's both proof that Fariña's early death was a huge loss to the literary world and a tribute to a screamingly talented artist who knew how to find the biggest truths in the smallest moments while laughing and kicking death in the ass. Because as much as Gnosso (and, presumably, Fariña) feared death, his ability to suck the marrow from every moment is the ultimate victory of life.

Trish says

When I read that Pynchon was best buds with Fariña and that this novel had a setting at Cornell, I was interested. However much Pynchon loved the guy, this is not particularly good writing. Think the drugs are a little harder to work around for some folks. Fariña was lucky that he had a great, nourishing friendship in a gorgeous, bucolic setting. His immortality is not guaranteed with this work.

Shaun says

Read this at a particularly poignant time in my young college life. Lots happened during the 1978 through 1982 time period that I can relate exceptionally well with this writer and this particular book. Right up there with "The Graduate" and "The Crying of Lot 49" -- both kind of coming-of-age books read at the same time as "David Copperfield." What struck me as particularly ironic was the fact that the author, Richard Farina, died in a freak motorcycle accident a few days after this book was published. Like J. Garcia and the Grateful

Dead sing, "what a long strange trip it's been [since]" thanks to the likes of DeLillo, Farina and Pynchon. I wished Farina had lived longer to write more but that might not have suited this rebel well. Live hard, die young and leave a good looking corpse probably were this author's dogma.

Drew says

This is what *On The Road* would/could have been if Kerouac had A) been a much better writer, and B) had more complex attitudes about stuff like race and gender. Another winner from Pynchon.

Jeff says

Been Down So Long It Looks Like Up to Me is one of those novels like Naked Lunch that seems to have been written in a drug-induced frenzy. Though the word frenzy might suggest speed, it took Richard Fariña over five years to write this book. Sometimes I think that all would be revealed if I got high before reading it, sort of like getting high before a Grateful Dead concert. God knows it drags when you're straight and sober.

The main character, Gnosos Pappadopoulos, has long been cited as the missing link between the beatniks and the hippies. He evolves from beatnik into the original, archetypal hippie. He set out on the road and found nothing but did find the keys to inner enlightenment in the form of hallucinogenic drugs. Whereas the beatniks used drugs to escape reality the hippies used them to transcend reality. But in the end it all amounts to the same thing.

Although it was set in early in 1958 at Cornell, it wasn't published until the spring of 1966. Fariña was ahead of his time and probably couldn't have gotten the book published before that, but the times were changing and rapidly catching up with him. But by the time the world had caught up with him, he was gone, killed in a motorcycle accident two days after the book was published.

His death only contributed to the cult status that the book would achieve, heralded as it was as being the Catcher in the Rye or On the Road of that decade. It might have been different--no, it would have been different if Fariña had lived to write again. In retrospect it would have been a first novel that merely showed promise rather than the voice of a unrealized genius snuffed out in the prime of life. Like James Dean dying at 25 after having made only three movies rather than growing old and bloated like Brando. Fariña is the James Dean of literature, he will always be young and good looking.

Kirk says

Well, if you ever want proof of how sixties totems don't really age well, this is the book for you. The cult following has been long if somewhat subterranean, its duration due in part to the unfortunate circumstance of its author dying in a motorcycle accident only a couple dozen hours after its publication (and only a few months before the mythological motorcycle accident of Farina's "brother-in-law," Bob Dylan). It also helps your literary endurance to have gone to Cornell with both Thomas Pynchon and C. Michael Curtis of Atlantic Monthly fame. Readers will be forgiven for wondering, in fact, if Pynchon didn't have a hand in the book since its manic energy and style are simpatico to both *V* and *The Crying of Lot 49*. When I first read this the summer before I went to college (right after the edition with Farina's face on it came out---the new edition with the upside down crotch shot doesn't do much to sell the legend) there were even rumors that

Pynchon WAS Farina, or Farina WAS Pynchon. Or something like that. In the end, reading the book is a lot like watching WILD IN THE STREETS or maybe even VILLAGE OF THE GIANTS (best scene: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zy40TT...> thanks, MST3K): it's best enjoyed with tongue in cheek. Maybe in the end the important thing this book documents is how the youth rebellion associated with the sixties had a hard time rising about juvenility. (Suffice to say that a moral stand in this plot revolves around flipping off the evil campus VP). All that said, you can still watch clips of the Berkeley Free Speech days and appreciate why aggressive generational politics was necessary back in the day: old people really acted like mean old people before 1966. Nobody above 25 gave two shits about being cool or hip. So the book really captures the late 50s period when weed, premarital sex, and long hair were indeed considered threats to the social order. That makes for an interesting if not always sympathetic document. As many commentators have remarked, rebellion here is a boys club--you can draw a straight line from the humor to Animal House and realize frattness was in the blood even if you were vehemently anti-frat. Anyway, worth a gander for nostalgia's sake. Farina's musical career is actually more emotionally engaging if you aren't put off by the sort of folk music that prefers dulcimers to acoustic blues noodling and has titles like "Reflections in a Crystal Wind." Personally, I dig it, baby. RF's wife was the gorgeous and highly underestimated Mimi Farina (Joan baez's kid sister). She survived her husband by thirty-five years but still died way too young, nearly a decade ago now.

Lindsey says

After attending a book signing party for "Been Down So Long..." Richard Farina climbed onto a guest's motorcycle to attend his wife's birthday party, but he was killed in an accident before arriving. Though his wife had been upset with him at the signing because he had failed to get her a present, she returned home days after his death to find the apart they had shared filled with flowers he'd arranged to have delivered. Much like these forgotten blooms, Farina's sole novel should be considered precious. Friends of Thomas Pynchon and Bob Dylan, a patron of the White Horse and protest folk singer, married to Joan Baez's sister, Farina was entrenched in 1960's New York bohemian and beat scene. It is this that lends a certain authenticity to his caricature as character, Gnossos Pappadopolis.

Gnossos is a controversial, bombastic, drug-addled dreamer, hip to the point of modern myth amongst his peers and at the same time, utterly peerless. He becomes entangled with political protest groups, dope pushers, spacey neighbors, and one certain femme fatale, and Farina takes us along for the ride. The result is a comic trip and shimmering, secret, psychedelic gem. Not as well known as the work of Farina's counterparts, "Been Down So Long" waits patiently to be discovered, much like the blossoms he'd seemingly sent to Mimi from beyond the grave. It is by turns outrageous and brilliant, and Gnossos is as frustrating and awful as he is lovable, surrounded by a cast of mad geniuses and impassioned coeds.

While "Been Down So Long" is written in a very specific setting, the larger picture it creates is one of youth desperately searching for meaning in a possibly random world. Of course, it is not the only novel to explore this, but it deserves a place alongside the greatest of its ilk. It's hard to say what Farina might have added to his legacy had he not met his end so prematurely, but if "Been Down" is a true indicator of his talent, it makes his passing all the more tragic.

Neil says

Zippo Bang! Wayward university student Gnossos Pappadopolis returns to school after an absence that is the subject of many rumors, steals figures from the campus nativity scene, smokes great quantities of marijuana, trips on mescaline, falls in love, incites a campus riot and goes to the Cuban Revolution.

I enjoyed this book so much that I will read it more than once-possibly even annually. My first exposure to this book was in the summer of 1975 when I found it in my big brother's book case. He had a paperback edition from the late 1960s. It had a naked lady on the cover, so, naturally, 12 year old Neil had to skim it in search of sex scenes. Fortunately, the first occurs in the second chapter. Only now I know that "Night in Tunisia" is a jazz composition, not an orgasmic utterance. Richard Farina was familiar to me even then because my big brother had all of his record albums and I had heard his dulcimer cacophony over and over again as a youngster. Recently, my manager, a staid sixty-plus-years-old tax attorney, saw the book on my desk and was very excited. Much to my surprise, he had read it a long time ago. He sang its praises as a great book for charades. According to him, no one can ever guess the title.

Sadly, Richard Farina died shortly after it was published, so we'll never enjoy any more of his storytelling.

Vit Babenco says

Been Down So Long It Looks Like Up to Me – the title is already a pure poetry. And everything that you may find inside is thoroughly innovative and absolutely and fantastically postmodern. Not for nothing Thomas Pynchon dedicated his *Gravity's Rainbow* to **Richard Fariña**.

“We mistake induction for generation.”

Mankind is on the wrong as usual. And on the quest to find the meaning, hiking through the psychedelic landscapes, one may find instead human meanness without limits.

Ryan Chapman says

This is my hands-down, desert-island favorite novel, and like all favorite novels, my own adoration is rooted in such particular tastes I understand why very few of my friends like the book.

Farina was a successful folk musician, playing with his wife Mimi Baez and touring with Bob Dylan and her sister Joan in the 60s. The Cuban-Irish author was also a published poet, and wasn't known for his fiction until this novel, his first and last. Three days after its publication, Farina was killed in a motorcycle crash.

This novel stands on its own even without the coincidental pedigree of its author (friends with Pynchon at Cornell). Essentially a 60s campus novel set at a veiled Cornell in the 50s, our perspective is a unique third-person limited omniscience written in the same tone and voice of the protagonist, Greek itinerant Gnosos Pappadopolis. There's a level of farcical allusion and playful lyricism that put off many readers, but rewards close reading. It allows Farina to encapsulate a wide range of topics without appearing false: the youthful hubris of immortality, here called Immunity; the naive spirit of protest and general counterculture billowing on campuses nationwide in the Age of Aquarius; the outside world, a place of spurious rules and authority figures best ignored as long as possible; and even, despite the protective bubble of the college setting, real consequence and sadness. Farina tackles almost every American issue in this beguiling text, all through the eyes of one of Kerouac's "mad ones."

Of course, the bubble of Immunity pops in the end, grounding the book in a reality all too familiar for 60s children. The journey there, with its unforgettable characters and set pieces (and that language!), is one I take at least once every year.

Oriana says

before

Picking this up seems like a very logical progression from *Stone Junction*: both mystical journeys, both introduced by Thomas Pynchon, both books I remember loving a decade ago but don't really remember.

I'm a little nervous re-reading this, because it shines in my mind as one of the best things I ever read, and I certainly don't want to prove that *untrue*. But I'm sure it's as amazing as I remember it, right? Right????

after

Spoiler: wrong.

This past summer I went to a "Summer of Love" exhibit at MoMA. Let me just make it clear that I was raised by hippies and even lived on a hippie farm for the first few years of my life; Grateful Dead was my favorite band until I was 13, and I still compost every single carrot peel and eggshell, even though it means schlepping a gross drippy bag of rotting fruit bits on the subway twice a week. So yeah, I obviously went to the "Summer of Love" exhibit at MoMA with very high hopes.

Turned out I actually found it really confusing and depressing. Not because the art was bad; it was great. But all the "trippy" neon and psychedelic tie-dye and black-lit swirls just felt so silly to me, so overdone and clichéd and kind of pathetic.

But here's the thing: *none* of that stuff was clichéd. It's just that every freaking thing that's been done since ripped it off, reducing and devaluing it all by sheer oversaturation into something cloying and mass marketed and hokey.

And so it is with *Been Down So Long It Looks Like Up to Me*. I know that in the '50s when this was written, the jargon, the attire, the struggles and quests were groundbreaking and awe-inspiring and amazing. But now... it's just been copied ad nauseum, more and more reductively and simplistically each time, by so many awful wannabes, that the whole thing feels stale, a little clunky, a little sad.

And so oh la. This is still an amazing book, but in a crushing blow I've had to demote it from my "perennial favorites" shelf to "formative reading." I mean, this book had a dramatic effect on me as a teenager, but -- though it grieves me to admit -- it just didn't blow my mind as a semi-adult.

For those who've never read it, it's absolutely worth a look, as long as you're prepared to be kind to it, and meet it on its own terms: serious psychedelica, spirit quests, campus unrest, an inevitable road trip to Cuba, and lots and lots and lots of drugs.

Neil says

Like, I imagine, many people who read this book, I picked it up because Thomas Pynchon dedicated *Gravity's Rainbow* to its author and, when I looked him up on the Internet, it seemed he was an interesting character and it might be worth reading a book by him. The fact that this was his first novel and that he was killed in a motorcycle accident just two days after its publication just adds to the mystery and myth that surrounds Farina.

But, if truth be told, this book has little to recommend it to anyone other than students of the Sixties. The

book cover states: *Richard Farina evokes the Sixties as precisely, wittily and poignantly as F. Scott Fitzgerald captured the Jazz Age*". That might well be the case (I was only 5 years old when the book was published and only 9 years old when the Sixties turned into the Seventies, so I can't really comment), although somehow I doubt it: the writing isn't great (I cannot see how some people came up with a theory that Farina and Pynchon are/were the same person) and the story isn't actually all that interesting.

Interestingly, the book cover also says the book *as Thomas Pynchon writes in the introduction, "comes on like the Hallelujah Chorus done by 200 kazoo players with perfect pitch."* I've read the introduction twice including once as a web version I found where I could use the text search option, and I can tell you he doesn't say that (I believe he may have said it on the dust jacket of one edition, but certainly not in the introduction included in this edition).

So, not a complete waste of time (the section with the wolf story redeems it a bit), but 1.5 stars rounded up to 2.

Paul Bryant says

Smirky superior hectoring hipster cultivates cringemaking condescension, bullying braggadocio and sexual sneering in wearisome war on straight society. I really would have liked our protohippy hero Gnosso Pappadopoulis to die of a drug overdose around page seven but he didn't. Could be Gnosso is actually Holden Caulfield on acid. That would account for my immediate and total hatred of him.

Arcadia says

Richard Farina's style is upbeat, frantic, surreal and unpredictable. It actually told a story, had a narrative of some sort, and that was surprising. I overall enjoyed the book, but I am aware that the style is not for everyone. I especially liked it because it has a resonance with my own writing style, this Kerouac-ian adversity to full stops. I admittedly lost track whenever there was a conversation going on in the novel, as Farina is faithful to the characters egoistic dispositions, and has each character talking about its own thing, a perplexing blurting of ones own needs. A lot of madness, monkey-demons, drugs, backstabbing, but all this without taking the 'realness' out of it. A definite recommend to anyone interested in 60s university life! I quite liked Gnosso too.

Dan says

I would like to think that attitudes have evolved since this book first appeared in 1966. Certainly I would like to think my own have evolved since I first read it decades ago. Re-reading it now, it is as misogynistic as I remember.

So why did I re-read it in 2018, while the #MeToo movement continues to make the news? Partly for Thomas Pynchon's introduction to the novel, and partly for the pleasure of Farina's style. Like much of Pynchon's work, Farina's writing here is a poetry of hip (for 1966) cultural references, college humor and Zen monk clowning. But in order to enjoy the text on this level, you have to be able to disentangle it from the more repellent parts of the plot. So it is like reading *Lolita*. Perhaps a better comparison could be made to watching Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*, where you can enjoy the technical mastery of the

cinematography and editing while disagreeing with everything you are seeing on the screen.

Still interested? With all its sex, recreational drug use and destructive pranks *Been Down So Long It Looks Like Up to Me* is like an edgier, darker *Animal House*. The protagonist, Gnosso Pappadopoulos, is a hippie Zorba and a spirit of anarchy not unlike Dean Moriarty (*On the Road*) or Randall McMurphy (*One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*).

John says

I am convinced that Farina could have become a really good novelist. However, his first and only outing has many shortcomings. Farina has a very unique writing style, not unlike Pynchon, except whereas Pynchon writes about rockets and science, Farina writes about drugs, women, and Greek food. He has an entertaining shwagger in his writing style, but I constantly felt that parts and stylings were contrived and awkward. He tries too hard appealing to ambiguity, and it leaves a lot of plot confusion and needless amorphous flourishes. I often would have to go back and reread chapters because I wasn't aware 'Motherball' was a person. Another flaw involves character development; I had little clue who the characters were outside of Gnosso.

The story errs on the hollow side, not much of importance happens outside of drinking and drug experimentation, and in turn I felt emotionally apathetic to all the characters. The death of Heffalump momentarily introduces a serious tone into the novel, but ultimately goes awry when I realized I had very little notion of who Heffalump was to begin with. Mostly the book centers around Gnosso's social interactions, drinking, and penchant for speaking in references and slang. I still don't know; did people really talk like this in the 60's?

I think I would recommend this to someone who has exhausted Kerouac, and still needs a beatnik-ish fix. Ultimately, I was little underwhelmed, and also disappointed that 'Been Down' hints at Farina's undeniable, yet unrealizable potential; especially if he had a better story, and a few tips on plot development.
