CHAPTER IV

TRISTERO'S HIEROGLYPHICS

The entropic decadence of western culture and the post war predicament are treated with apparently greater coherence in Pynchon’s second novel *The Crying of Lot 49*. Superficially about a conspiracy, it contains a more refined worldview than *V.*, and anticipates the still more sophisticated view of *Gravity’s Rainbow*. Besides its compactness enhanced by the author’s light tone and feeling for American popular culture, *The Crying of Lot 49* is equally complex and deep like *V.*. Both *V.* and *The Crying of Lot 49* revolve on quest themes, with the plots moving from one episode to another, creating a proliferating network of connections that baffle the protagonists as well as the readers. Entropy in the form of cultural decadence being the major theme of both the novels, one can decipher in them the same anti- vision and the same ambivalence. Yet both the novels trace a gradual revelation of order, unity and hopefulness within the multiplicity of experience of the questing protagonists. In either case the hero/ heroine is confronted with a mystery to be solved and he/ she sets out to complete. Pynchon makes the manipulation of clues and plots sinister and playful simultaneously by his magnificent assimilation of the detective spy genre and the comic fiction. But in the second novel the plot takes a
different turn, for its protagonist does make the connections and discovers the meaning of signs. though a full disclosure is withheld from the reader.

Obviously, *The Crying of Lot 49* does not present vast historical panoramas like Pynchon’s other novels, but “provides a specific and detailed view of the California of the sixties” (Berressem 82). The protagonist of *V.* moves about in Cairo, New York and a good number of European cities, whereas Oedipa, the protagonist of *The Crying of Lot 49*, moves only within the state of California, which can be considered as a microcosm of American culture. The second novel is heavily invested in the cultural background from which it emerges and contains countless references to aspects of both high and low culture. The reader can find the most ordinary as well as the most extreme manifestation of post war American culture in the Californian context. It is certain that Pynchon gives a daring and lucid depiction of life in *The Crying of Lot 49*. Tony Tanner treats it as “one of the most deceptive as well as the most brilliant short novels since the last war” (56). Structurally it is the finest novel, “written as if to answer critics who charged *V.* with formlessness” (Slade 107). While the counter culture enthusiasts regard the novel as one of the quintessential books reflecting the “sixties experience,” Robert D. Newman considers the book as “a commentary on American culture” (68).

Any serious perusal of the novel presupposes a patient waiting for the gradual unfolding of its meaning. The reader as well as the heroine is
confronted with a series of signs, interconnecting symbols, acronyms, code words, patterns of theme, which never demand to be interpreted, but which always offer themselves as materials that are available for synthesis and order. Like every sophisticated work of fiction, "The Crying of Lot 49 contains within itself guides to its own interpretation" (Mendelson 137).

On the title page of The Crying of Lot 49, Pynchon has included a note: "A portion of this novel was first published in Esquire magazine under the title "The World (This one), The Flesh (Mrs. Oedipa Maas), and The Testament of Pierce Inverarity." From the original title it becomes evident that the author had in mind the three fold temptations that a human soul confronts in life in accordance with he teachings of orthodox Christianity. Naturally then the fragment, "The Testament of Pierce Inverarity" might represent the Devil. The theme of decadence of western culture portrayed in the novel can be examined on the basis those three grounds.

The protagonist's name "Oedipa," echoes its association with Sophocles's Oedipus Rex, whose protagonist is tormented by the riddles of man's place in the universe, which he does not understand. In The Crying of Lot 49, Pynchon's Oedipa, as her name implies, is also confronted with riddles and with the obligation to discover an order. The metaphysical, political, epistemological and religious problems faced by King Oedipus and Oedipa are similar in their essence. The problems they encounter overlap and intertwine with one another. As King Oedipus had given himself to the
temptations of the flesh, wealth and power, Oedipa too became a victim of the same kind of temptations. Joseph W. Slade finds Pynchon’s play on Arthur Conan Doyle’s “Professor James Moriarity,” a master of nefarious design and arch foe of Sherlock Holmes, in naming “Pierce Inverarity” (108), though the likening of Oedipa to Holmes seems inappropriate. In the backdrop of Oedipa’s quest for unravelling the meaning of “Tristero,” Pynchon depicts the contemporary American capitalist society, which discards ethical/cultural values and gives itself to unbridled temptations of the flesh, wealth and power.

As in V, where Sidney Stencil’s dossiers thrust Herbert Stencil into the quest, Pierce Inverarity’s will jerked Oedipa out of her routine life and pushed her into a life of terrific activity and cumbersome pursuit. Oedipa got a letter from the law firm of Los Angeles, signed by somebody named Metzger who had to act as the co-executor and special counsel. It revealed that Oedipa had been designated executrix of Pierce Inverarity’s estate. Inverarity, her former lover and real estate mogul, “still had assets numerous and entangled” (CL 9). He had died in the previous spring, and the lawyers had just found the will. Information about Inverarity’s wealth bred insatiable greed in Oedipa’s heart. But Oedipa, a naive Californian housewife, was totally ignorant of the ways of the world. “She had never executed a will in her life; didn’t know where to begin; didn’t know how to tell the law firm in L.A. that she did not know where to begin” (CL 12). Her
existence so far was divided between cooking, visits to the local supermarket and Tupperware parties. Though she felt stifled by the constraints of her conventional domestic existence, she felt obliged to conform. Finally, she decided to unravel the magical entanglement of Pierce Inverarity’s estate, “having no apparatus except gut, fear, and female cunning” (CL 21).

Whereas Pynchon presents the mysterious female figure V. as the symbol of sexual perversion, deception, death and inanimateness, his female protagonist of *The Crying of Lot 49*, Oedipa Maas, is a victim of male chauvinism, sexual exploitation and deception right from the beginning of her quest. Oedipa’s husband, Mucho Maas, who knew about the will and her affair with Pierce, directed her to consult Roseman, the lawyer. So the next morning she met Roseman and discussed issues relating to the will she had to execute. Oedipa’s meeting with Roseman could be understood as the formal beginning of her quest. He outlined all that she had to do in connection with the execution of the will:

> Learn intimately the books and the business, go through probate, collect all debts, inventory the assets, get an appraisal of the estate, decide what to liquidate and what to hold on to, pay off claims, square away taxes, distribute legacies....

(CL 19-20)

Oedipa sought the help of Roseman for all that he instructed her. But he asked her to discover what she alone could do. Then they went to eat
lunch together and Roseman tried to seduce her. Though insulted, she decided not to make any fuss. Liberated from the constraints and security of family life, Oedipa was treated as an object of illicit sexual pleasure by the depraved society. As things developed, “she was to have all manner of revelations” (CL 20).

Oedipa left Kinneret for San Narciso, the city built by the business magnate by unfair means. It had been Pierce’s domicile and headquarters. She wanted to meet Metzger, the co-executor, and to look into Pierce’s books and records. Her husband, Mucho, was sad but not desperate to see her go. As she reached San Narciso, she had a number of strange and shocking experiences. She watched the buildings of the Galactronics Division of Yoyodyne Inc., one of the giants of aerospace industry and San Narciso’s big source of employment. Pierce, she happened to know, being the founder father of Yoyodyne had owned a large block of shares. She stopped off at a motel named “Echo courts” in the Los Angeles suburb of San Narciso. At the motel, there was a thirty feet tall painting of a nymph, whose face was much like Oedipa’s. She realized that beneath the outward patterns there was a “hieroglyphic sense of concealed meaning” (CL 24). The manager of the motel, Mr. Miles, introduced himself to her also as a member of the music troupe known as “the Paranoids.” He too shamelessly disclosed his immoral desires before her saying: “I have a smooth young body. I thought you older chicks went for that” (CL 28).
Again, in one of the calculated moves made by Mr. Metzger, lawyer and co-executor of Inverarity’s estate, Oedipa became an addict of alcohol and accomplice in adultery. Metzger showed up at the motel with a debonair bottle of French Beaujolais and smiled out at her wickedly. He came in, sat on the floor, opened the bottle, poured her a drink and began to talk. When Oedipa switched on the TV set, the movie that appeared was *Cashiered*, the one acted by Metzger some twenty years before. “That’s me, that’s me,” cried Metzger (CL 30). That coincidence appeared extremely strange to Oedipa who suspected that to be a plot, an elaborate seduction plot. Yet she could not resist the seduction. Oedipa filled her wine glass. “They lay now, staring at the screen, flanks lightly touching” (31). Metzger either made up the whole thing or he bribed the engineer over at the local station to telecast that film.

Metzger also made Oedipa a victim of his perverted sexual interests in front of the music troupe known as Paranoids. Metzger urged her to ask as many questions as possible. But for each answer she had to remove something of her clothing, which he called “Strip Botticelli” (CL 36). She yielded to Metzger’s demand and they were watched on the doorway Miles with his troupe, the Paranoids (CL 38). The paranoids began their shuddering and ear rending song playing the thick guitar chords. Metzger and Oedipa stood at the window listening to the Paranoids’ song. He took her palm and kissed it. What followed was a crude relationship of adultery.
between Oedipa and Metzger: “She may have fallen asleep once or twice. She woke at last to find her getting laid; she’d come in on a sexual crescendo in progress…” (CL 42). She wondered then if this were really happening in the same way as her first time in bed with Pierce. In the meanwhile a commercial advertisement on Beaconsfield cigarettes, whose ‘filters used bone charcoal’ flashed on the TV screen. “Bones of what?” wondered Oedipa (CL 34). Metzger revealed to her that Inverarity who owned 51% of the shares, knew the truth.

It can be noted that Metzger’s seduction of Oedipa was facilitated by the adverse impact of the Television. In V. also Pynchon has projected the unhelpful influence of the electronic media, especially in the context of Esther’s nose surgery and the Davy Crockett advertisement. Now in the second novel the entire seduction scene between Oedipa and Metzger occurs in the backdrop of a TV film, which is also an index of the misuse of the media. Moreover, the reader confronts here the situation of adultery committed by a lawyer with his client, yet another instance of the despicable ruin of the noble ideals of professional ethics. Oedipa and Metzger moved into a strange bar known as “The Scope” near the Yoyodyne plant, as Echo Courts became inconvenient for several reasons. “Blank windows,” “stillness of the pool,” and prevalence of the teenage voyeurs who could cheek in at whim on any bizarre sexual action, were some of the reasons (CL 47).
In San Narciso, Oedipa was driven into the swallowing vortex of the mysterious Tristero System, the principal goal of her quest. Actually the Tristero was a secret mail service system much misunderstood by Oedipa. It seemed that Oedipa was getting revelations incessantly from everywhere. “Much of the revelation was to come through the stamp collection Pierce had left” (CL 45). She received a letter from her husband, on the envelope of which was written: “REPORT ALL OBSCENE MAIL TO YOUR POTSMASTER” (CL 46). She asked Metzger what a “potsmaster” meant. Metzger suggested that it might be a misprint. On another occasion, in a bar named “The Scope,” Mike Fallopian, a frail young man introduced himself to Oedipa and began proselytising for an organization known as the Peter Pinguid Society. He started with the circumstances that led to the birth of this society: the very first military confrontation between America and Russia, the resignation of Peter Pinguid, the commander of the naval fleet, his settling down with the crew near L.A., his acquisition of wealth from real estate business and so on. In Colville’s view, by presenting the Peter Pinguid Society, “Pynchon parodies the extreme right conservatism best represented by the John Birch Society of California” (58). The discussion continued at night until they were startled by a great shout followed by the appearance of a fat young man carrying a leather mail sack. He started calling names and throwing envelopes into the crowd at the bar.
Oedipa headed for the ladies’ room. Among obscenities on the latrine wall she noticed the following message: “Interested in sophisticated fun? You, hubby, girl friends. The more the merrier. Get in touch with Kirby, through WASTE only, Box 7391, L.A.” (CL 52). Below the message she observed for the first time in her life a strange symbol consisting of a loop, triangle, and trapezoid drawn faintly with a pencil. At first Oedipa suspected it to be something sexual. Immediately she copied the address and the symbol in her diary thinking it might be something of hieroglyphics. Fallopian then disclosed to Oedipa that they used Yoyodyne’s interoffice mail delivery system. “To keep up some kind of reasonable volume, each member has to send at least one letter a week through the Yoyodyne system” (CL 53). The very mention of “Yoyodyne” brought to her mind Inverarity’s connection with the secret mailing system. As an illustration of the mailing system Fallopian showed her the letter he had received. It contained information about the book Fallopian was writing on the history of the private mail service in the U.S., attempting to link the Civil War to the postal reform movement that had begun around 1845. Thereafter Oedipa started her crazy investigation on the mystery of the underground postal system, The Tristero. “So began for Oedipa, the languid, sinister, blooming of The Tristero” (CL 54).

Oedipa attended the Yoyodyne stockholders’ meeting with the hope of getting clues about the underground postal system. But there again the
men attempted to seduce her. She could not do anything there, but felt it might redeem her from inertia. "For hours she sat between two old men whose hands alternatively kept falling on her thighs as if their owners were asleep" (CL 83).

Hunting for clues about the Tristero, Oedipa accidentally came across the concept of entropy and the means to overcome the entropic drift. But she was not able to grasp the subtleties of the thermodynamic concept. After the routine business hour, Oedipa wandered among the light blue desks of the Yoyodyne and found one Stanley Koteks, ‘doodling with a fat pencil the sign’ of the muted horn (CL 84). From Koteks she got the brilliant information about Maxwell’s Demon and the Nefastis Machine. Oedipa did not know anything about the machine. John Nefastis, the inventor had developed the machine based on the theory known as Maxwell’s Demon. Koteks then gave an account of the theory proposed by James Clerk Maxwell, according to which the Second Law of Thermodynamics could be violated generating uninterrupted motion:

The Demon could sit in a box among air molecules that were moving at all different random speeds, and sort out the fast molecules from the slow ones. Fast molecules have more energy than slow ones. Concentrate enough of them in one place and you have a region of high temperature. You can then use the difference in temperature between this hot region of the
box and any cooler region, to drive a heat engine. Since the Demon only sat and sorted, you wouldn’t have put any real work into the system. So you would be violating the Second Law of Thermodynamics, getting something for nothing, causing perpetual motion (CL 86).

Koteks went on explaining how the Nefastis Machine contained ‘an-honest- to God’ Maxwell’s Demon. Having noted the address under the symbol in Oedipa’s memo book he remarked that it was not “waste” but W.A.S.T.E., an acronym, and that it was better not to go into it any further (CL 88). Advising her to forget it, he opened a book and proceeded to ignore her.

Oedipa’s contact with Manny Di Presso, the lawyer who became actor, was highly rewarding in the sense that she could gather much information regarding Inverarity’s nefarious business connections. Oedipa and Metzger in company with the Paranoids decided to spend a day out at Fangoso Lagoons, one of Inverarity’s last big projects. They came to a place named Lake Inverarity and wandered down the beach toward a small marina where Di Presso, met them. Di Presso announced that he was prepared to initiate legal action against the estate of Pierce Inverarity (CL 58). The company enjoyed tequila sour and Metzger induced Di Presso to tell them about the lawsuit. Di Presso revealed that his client, Tony Jaguar, supplied Inverarity some bones for which he did not pay (CL 60). He said: “These
bones came from Italy. A straight sale. Some of them” (CL 61). Some of the bones were used in Inverarity’s filter programme. Di Presso also reported that Tony Jaguar had harvested them all from the bottom of a lake at Lago di Pieta, between Naples and Rome. It had been the scene of a tragic battle in 1943 during the advance on Rome when the Germans massacred a good number of American troops and put all the dead bodies into the lake. Tony Jaguar, who was a corporal in an Italian outfit attached to the German forces at Lago di Pieta, knew what was at the bottom of the lake.

After the World War II Tony Jaguar excavated the bones and sold them to an import-export firm through his contacts known as ‘Cosa Nostra’ (CL 63). Then Osteolysis Inc., the company that made filters for Beaconsfield cigarettes, purchased the bones. Inverarity held a major portion of the shares of that company. From Manny Di Presso’s account, it can be ascertained that Inverarity was a crook and perhaps, a worse kind of criminal through the human bone business. By tracing Inverarity’s association with such a forbidden trade, Pynchon highlights the nexus between the capitalists and the criminals.

Information about Inverarity’s bone business deviated Oedipa’s attention from the Tristero for a while. Having heard the story of the ‘human-bone turned into charcoal,’ one of the girls belonging to the Paranoids remarked: “this has a most bizarre resemblance to that ill, ill
Jacobean revenge play we went to last week" (CL 63). Miles recollected it as The Courier's Tragedy, by Richard Wharfinger.² Another girl said none of them smoked Beaconsfield cigarettes while Leonard, the drummer, distributed marijuana cigarettes among his companions. The public distribution and use of marijuana cigarettes indicate the cankerous spread of drug addiction and the consequent paralysis of the society.

Oedipa decided to watch the play herself and even persuaded Metzger to take her to the theatre. A San Narciso group known as the Tank Players was staging The Courier's Tragedy. Oedipa and Metzger came to the partly filled playhouse. The play was fashioned by Wharfinger for his 17th century audience. The costumes were gorgeous and the lighting imaginative. But the dialogue was in “Transplanted Middle Western Stage British” (CL 65). Within a very short time Oedipa found herself immersed in the play.

Pynchon summarizes the wonderfully convoluted plot of The Courier's Tragedy within the context of the novel. It resembles a typical Jacobean play based on the tragic death Niccolo, a courier of Thurn and Taxis postal system. The different acts of the play are interlaced with conspiracies, incest, fratricide, disguise, bribing, treason, and macabre massacre. In the play, the bodies of those massacred by the wicked Duke Angelo of Squamuglia were thrown into a lake. Later on the bones were fished up again and made into charcoal, and the charcoal into ink, which
Angelo, having a dark sense of humour, used in all subsequent communications (CL 74).

Actually, Oedipa liked to see the play in order to collect more information about Inverarity’s business, which turned human bones into charcoal. Being so much involved in the play, she was especially puzzled by the two expressions, “Thurn and Taxis” and “tryst with Trystero” in a character’s (Gennaro) note in verse form at the end of the fourth act: “He that we lost as Thurn and Taxis knew/....Who’s once been set his tryst with Trystero” (CL 75).

Immediately after the performance of the play, Oedipa rushed backstage to have a discussion with the director, mainly to clarify her doubts and to gain more information. One Randolph Driblette who had also played the role of Gennaro directed the play. When Metzger tried to dissuade her from talking with Driblette, she said, “Metzger, ... I want to see if there is any connection. I am curious” (CL 76). She met Driblette. But he refused to talk about the play saying: “You came to talk about the play. Let me discourage you. It was written to enlighten people. Like horror movies. It isn’t literature, it doesn’t mean anything. Wharfinger was no Shakespeare” (CL 77). Then Oedipa wanted to see the script of the play. The script she could find was worn, torn, and stained with coffee. So she requested for the original. Driblette directed her to get the anthology, Jacobean Revenge Tragedy form Zapf’s Used Books by the free way. Still her insistence on
knowing more about the text infuriated Driblette. He said: “You don’t understand. You guys, you’re like Puritans are about the Bible. So hung up with words. You know where the play exists, not in the file cabinet, not in any paper back you’re looking for, but...” (CL 79). By a gesture he showed that the play existed in his head. As she left Driblette she recalled that the purpose of her meeting was to ‘ask about the bones’ and that instead they had talked about the Tristero thing. She realized that she did not know what she was looking for exactly.

The play within the novel, *The Courier’s Tragedy* reminds the reader of the ballet “L’ Enlevement des Vîrges Chinoises” (Rape of the Chinese Virgins) in *V.* As in the ballet, Pynchon depicts the abominable expressions of incest and sadism in *The Courier’s Tragedy*. In *V.* the incestuous relationship was between Mélanie and her father, while in *The courier’s Tragedy* the incest is between Angelo and his sister. Besides, Angelo himself arranges an incestuous marriage between his sister and her son. The atrocities portrayed in *The Courier’s Tragedy* surpass those enacted during German colonial administration under Von Trotha and Foppl in Southwest Africa. The play offers in concentrated and often inverted form the main concerns of the novel as a whole. The plot of the play is quite as elaborate as that of any genuine Jacobean tragedy. In the performance that Oedipa attended, Driblette had altered the text to conform to the version that actually mentioned the Tristero.
She headed for Zapf's Used Books. Mr. Zapf, the bookseller, helped her to find out the paperback edition of *Jacobean Revenge Plays* Driblette had mentioned. She came back to Echo Courts, and began to browse the single mention of the word “Trystero.” She observed a note in pencil against the word Trystero, “Cf. variant, *1687ed.*” (*CL* 90). According to a short preface, the text had been taken from a folio edition, undated. She checked the copyright page and found that the original hard cover had been a textbook published by The Lectern Press, Berkeley, California back in 1957. She therefore decided to visit the publisher of the book in Berkeley.

Oedipa then drove up to Berkeley with the intention of finding out Wharfinger's source of information about the Tristero. She found the Lectern Press, the publishing company of Jacobean plays. They directed her to their warehouse at Oakland from where she collected the book by the afternoon. She searched for the line that had brought her there. But the phrase “tryst with trystero” was not there in the line. She spent nearly an hour more, searching through all the footnotes, finding nothing. But Emory Bortz, Professor of English, signed the editor's preface. She headed for the Berkeley campus, to find Professor Bortz. But a girl in the Department of English informed Oedipa that Professor Bortz was teaching at San Narciso College, California (*CL* 103).

As the information became overabundant and complex, Oedipa decided to augment her enquiry. She began to think that the envelope with
the "WASTE" symbol she noted on the table of Koteks came either from John Nefastis or somebody like him. Besides, people like Mike Fallopian of the Peter Piuguid Society helped only to embellish the suspicion. Fallopian said, "Sure this Koteks is part of some underground... an underground of the unbalanced" (CL 88). It then appeared to her that a pattern was beginning to emerge so that she had to enquire further about the mail system and how it was delivered.

The next day she drove out to Vesperhaven House, a home for senior citizens that Inverarity had built in San Narciso, and met Mr. Thoth, an old man of 91. He shared with Oedipa, the stories his grandfather, a rider of the Pony Express, had told him.3 "That cruel old man," said Mr. Thoth, was an Indian killer" (CL 91). Mr. Thoth picked up a knitting bag and took out blue yarn, needles, patterns, and finally a dull gold signet ring. He said that his grandfather had cut that from the finger of one of the Indians he killed. Oedipa stared as she noted the WASTE symbol on the ring.

She again met Fallopian to collect more information about the Tristero and the Pony Express. She showed him the WASTE symbol. But he did not know much about that. He had also difficulty in knowing the text thoroughly, as the author was dead. "Odds are the author will be dead. There's no way to trace it, unless you want to follow up an accidental correlation, like you got from the old man" (CL 93). So for the next connection she approached Genghis Cohen, who was the most eminent
philatelist in the L.A. area. Metzger had entrusted this expert to inventory and appraise Inverarity's stamp collection.

Metzger had taken the stamp albums to Genghis Cohen from safe-deposit storage a week before. Cohen wanted to meet Oedipa as he had noted some irregularities among the stamps. She began guessing that the "irregularities" would tie in with the word Tristero and that he might know about private carriers. First he showed her the U.S. commemorative stamp, the Pony Express issue of 1940, 3¢ coloured henna brown, and asked her to check the watermark. She noted the WASTE symbol on the stamp. Cohen himself did not understand what it meant. So he wanted to refer that to the Expert Committee. From the same plastic folder he took out an old German stamp bearing the legend Thurn und Taxis along the right hand margin.

Oedipa knew from The Courier's Tragedy that Thurn and Taxis stood for some private couriers. But Cohen began giving a brief historical account of the same: "From about 1300, until Bismarck bought them in 1867, they were the European mail service" (CL 96). He asked Oedipa to keenly observe the sides of the stamp. She saw on each corner of the stamp a horn with a single loop in it, almost like the WASTE symbol. Cohen remarked that it was the "post horn," "the Thurn and Taxis symbol" which could be found in their coat of arms too. Examining thoroughly every philatelic detail of the collection, Cohen had assessed the majority of the stamps as
counterfeits. She realized that postal fraud had a history of several centuries and that it was apparently still quite active.

Walking along the Broadway in San Francisco she caught sight of the muted post horn again. She met a group of guided tourists and one of them led her to a bar called The Greek Way. She was thus swept into the queer gay nightlife famous in North Beach. Inside the bar she jammed against a tall fellow in suede sport coat on the lapel of which she spied a pin in the shape of the Tristero post horn (CL 111). She asked the man about the lapel pin, and wanted also to assure whether it was a homosexual sign. Then the man said, "The pin I'm wearing means I'm a member of the Inamorati Anonymous" (CL 112). He also told Oedipa how the founder came across the symbol of their organization rather accidentally from the stamps.

Oedipa, now the only woman among a room full of drunken homosexuals, sat alone. Despair came over her, as nobody around has any sexual relevance to her. The Greek Way resembles a carious cave beneath the superficial lustre of the city. She got up after a while, left The Greek Way, and entered the city again. She spent the rest of the night finding the image of the Tristero post horn (CL 116). While psychological perversions like fetishism and lesbianism are treated in V, perversions like homosexuality and drunkenness are exposed in The Crying of Lot 49 in the context of the gay nightlife in San Francisco.
In Chinatown, in the dark window of a herbalist, she thought she saw
the sign among the ideographs. But the streetlight was dim. Later, on a
sidewalk, she saw two of them in chalk, 20 feet apart. Between them there
were a complicated array of Boxes, some with letters, some with numbers.
She copied the diagram in her memo book. Later, she had difficulty in
sorting the post horn symbols real and dreamt (*CL* 117).

In search for clues Oedipa played the voyeur and listener and
experienced an astonishing cavalcade of post horn images. She always
witnessed it in some form or another. She came down to the city beach very
late at night and walked through a drifting, dreamy cloud of delinquents in
summer jackets with the post horn switched on in thread that looked pure
silver in the moonlight. They had all been smoking, snuffing or injecting
something and perhaps did not see her at all. Riding in a bus among an
exhausted group of Negroes going on to graveyard shifts all over the city,
she saw scratched on the back of a seat, the post horn with the word
"DEATH." But unlike WASTE, somebody wrote under the sign in pencil:
DON’T EVER ANTAGONIZE THE HORN (*CL* 121).

The profusion of post horns was such that it seemed to crumble her
optimism, beat her up, and immobilize her. But with an uncompromising
decision to detect the Tristero system directly, she walked secretly among
the dark concrete underpinnings of the freeway, finding drunkards, drug
addicts, bums, pedestrians, pederasts, hookers, and psychotics but found no
secret mailbox. Finally she came on a four feet can with a trapezoid top, on the swinging part of which were hand-painted the initials W.A.S.T.E. (*CL 130*). She hid herself and waited curiously. Toward midday a lanky young wino showed up with a sack; unlocked a panel at the side of the box and took all the letters. Oedipa began to follow him. The carrier crossed the market and went toward the City Hall. He rendezvoused with another carrier and they exchanged bags. The one Oedipa had been following came to the trans-bay bus terminal, where he bought a ticket to Oakland. So did Oedipa.

The carrier got off in a neighbourhood of Oakland, which Oedipa could not identify. She followed him for hours along streets whose names she never knew. He went through slums and small houses and one by one his sack of letters were emptied. At length he climbed on a Berkeley bus, and Oedipa followed him. Halfway up he got off and led her down to a pseudo Mexican apartment house. John Nefastis lived there. She was back where she had started.

Pynchon refers to the subversion of curative systems and consequent reversal of their roles in the society by presenting a psychotherapist who became a psychotic. Dr. Hilarius, the psychotherapist, who, like Dr. Schoenmaker of *V.* had a perverted sense of professional ethics. While Schoenmaker sexually misused his patients, Hilarius used his clients as guinea pigs for illicit experimentation, reminding the readers of the cruelties
of German doctors in concentration camps. Dr. Hilarius conducted experiments on a large sample of suburban housewives with hallucinogenic drugs like LSD-25, mescaline, psilocybin, and related drugs. And Oedipa was one of the Hilarius’s favourite clients on whom he induced hallucination artificially.

Though Oedipa had the direct experience of the Tristero system, she felt she had lost her mental equilibrium. She experienced both mental and physical sickness. There was nobody who could help her. They were all on something mad. Old fillings in her teeth began to bother her. She would spend nights staring at a ceiling lit by the pink glow of San Narciso’s sky. She laughed nervously more than she spoke. Waves of nausea would strike her at random, cause her deep misery, and then vanish as if they had never been. There were headaches, nightmares, and menstrual pains. She still felt that she knew nothing. “She might well be in the cold and sweatless meat hooks of a psychosis (132).” She had decided on route, to go and meet Dr. Hilarius, her psychotherapist, and tell him everything:

With her own eyes she had verified a WASTE system: seen two WASTE postmen, a WASTE mailbox, WASTE stamps, WASTE cancellations. Yet she wanted it all to be a fantasy—some clear result of her several wounds, needs dark doubles. She wanted Hilarius to tell her she was some kind of a nut and needed rest, and that there was no Tristero. (CL 132)
At Hilarius’s clinic she had a terrifying experience. As she was entering Hilarius’s office, she was startled by the report of a gun. In no time she realized that somebody was shooting at her. Helga Blamm, Hilarius’s sometime assistant, informed her that Hilarius had gone crazy. Hilarius had locked himself in the office with a rifle. He allowed Oedipa to enter his room, grabbed her, and locked the room again. “I work on experimentally induced insanity,” said Hilarius (CL. 137). Then Oedipa saw Hilarius had left the rifle on his desk and was across the room ostensibly trying to open a file cabinet. The sirens had reached the front of the clinic. She picked the rifle up, pointed it at him and said, “I ought to kill you” (CL 138). Oedipa called the cops in. The cops yelled and broke in. A number of cops approached Hilarius. He was caught and taken to the community hospital. The cops asked Oedipa to stay around Kinneret in case there was legal action. The reversal of the role of Dr. Hilarius from that of a psychotherapist to that of a psychotic, points to the collapse of the systems that are supposed to support and ameliorate human life.

Pynchon presents conjugal fidelity and honesty as rare virtues in post war American society. Oedipa got back to Echo Courts and found Miles, Dean, Serge and Leonard arranged around on the diving board at the end of the swimming pool with all their instruments as if posing for an album illustration. She realized that Metzger, her accomplice, lover and co-executor had run off with Serge’s young daughter to Nevada, to get married.
On the top of the TV set in her room Metzger had left a note telling her not to worry about the estate, that he would turn over his execution to somebody at Warpe, Wistfull, Kubitschek and McMingus, and they should be in touch with her, and it was all squared with the probate court also. There was not even a word to recall that Oedipa and Metzger had ever been more than co-executors.

Characters like Zapf represent the swindlers who misappropriate public money in American Society. Oedipa passed by Zapf’s Used Books, and was alarmed to find a pile of charred debris where the bookstore only a week ago had stood. Later she was informed that Zapf, the wicked businessman, had set fire to his own store for the insurance. “You’re a chicken, she told herself, snapping her seat belt. This is America, you live in it, you let it happen. Let it unfurl” (CL 150). By these words of Oedipa, the author criticises the general indifference of the American society to issues like swindling.

Corruption and depravity among scholars and academicians are illustrated by the example of Professor Emory Bortz who taught at San Narciso College owned by Inverarity. Though the professor imparted reliable information on the topic of Oedipa’s enquiry, he seduced her towards the end of the meeting. When Oedipa approached Bortz, he was resting in a hammock, surrounded by a few graduate students, and an astounding accumulation of beer bottles (CL 150). She asked him about
historical Wharfinger.' Bortz replied that historical personages like Shakespeare, Marx and Jesus are dead. Only their words remain and so he would talk about their words. Oedipa then quoted the line, "Who's once been set his tryst with Trystero," from *Courier's Tragedy*. Bortz guessed that she quoted the line from the version in the Vatican library. Oedipa showed him the paperback with the line in it. He told her that the copy of *Courier's Tragedy* kept in Vatican is the pirated pornographic edition. Bortz told her that the one who could speak authentically on historical Wharfinger was Randy Driblette. But it was reported to Oedipa that Randy committed suicide by walking into the Pacific a couple of nights before. "Oedipa kept silence, waiting to be illuminated" (152).

The absurdity of Oedipa's quest for the original text is illustrated by Bortz's comment that the pirated pornographic edition of the play is kept in the Vatican library, which reminds the reader of the original version of Father Fairing's sewer diary which also is kept in the same library. "The artist is anonymous, so is the poetaster who wrote the play" said Bortz (CL 155). Quoting D'Amico he pointed out that the pornographic version was a Scurvhamite project. The Scurvhamites were not fond of the theatre. It was their way of putting the play entirely away from them, into hell. To damn the play eternally they changed the actual words.

Oedipa's enquiry on the beginning of Tristero continued. Bortz introduced to her Dr. Diocletian Blobb's account of the organization.
Oedipa could then fit together clues as to how the organization began. Emergence of the Tristero is connected to the advent of Hernando Joaquin de Tristero y Calavera, perhaps a madman, perhaps an honest rebel into the agitated political scenario of Brussels in 1578. Tristero had kept up what amounted to a guerrilla war against his cousin Jan Hinckart, the executor of Thurn and Taxis monopoly (CL 160). When Hinckart’s power structure weakened and tottered, Tristero set up his own system. Soon he added to his iconography the muted post horn and a dead badger with its four feet in the air. He began a campaign of obstruction, terror, and depredation along the Thurn and Taxis mail routes (CL 160).

What followed Botrz’s instructions was seduction and he invited her to watch some dirty films. Oedipa spent the next few days in discussion with Emory Bortz and Genghis Cohen, and visiting libraries. But as with Maxwell’s Demon, she could not communicate, as Driblette was no more. The libraries did not reveal her much about the Tristero.

She drove back to San Narciso to have another look at the list of Inverarity’s assets. Inverarity had owned the whole shopping centre that housed Zapf’s Used Books, The Tank Theatre and Tremaine’s place. Every access route to the Tristero could be traced back to the Inverarity estate. The dead man owned also the San Narciso College where Emory Bortz taught (CL 170). She began reasonably suspecting that Bortz, Metzger, Cohen, Koteks, the tattooed sailor in San Francisco, the W.A.S.T.E. carriers she had
seen were all Inverarity’s men. Standing before her reflection on the vanity mirror, she thought that it was merely a hallucination. Or a plot had been mounted against her, so expensive and elaborate, involving items like forging of stamps and ancient books, constant surveillance of her movements planting of post horn images all over San Francisco, bribing of librarians, hiring of professional actors and Pierce Inverarity only knew what all besides, all financed out of the estate in a way either too secret or too involved for her non legal mind to know about even though she was co-executor (CL 171).

On her way back to San Narciso again she pondered over the Tristero problem. “With coincidences blossoming these days wherever she looked, she had nothing but a sound, a word, Tristero, to hold them together” (CL 109). 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; sometime before 1853 it had appeared in America and fought the Pony Express. It survived today, in California, serving as a channel of communication for those of unorthodox sexual passion and inventors who believed in the reality of Maxwell’s Demon. “Either Tristero did exist in its own right, or it was being presumed, perhaps fantasised by Oedipa, so hung up on and interpenetrated with the dead man’s estate” (CL 109).

Genghis Cohen, the philatelist informed Oedipa that the Tristero stamps collected by Inverarity had to be auctioned out as “Lot 49.” She
attended the auction that was duly held on a Sunday afternoon, in perhaps the oldest building of San Narciso. The auction hall was also dominated by black, signifying the dominance of the powers of darkness: “The men inside the auction room wore black mohair and pale, cruel faces” (183). Oedipa sat alone toward the back of the room. In the auction hall, Genghis Cohen announced that Loren Passerine, the finest auctioneer would be crying that day. Passerine’s actions resembled more the performance of black magic than the processes of an auction. Passerine, on the podium hovered like a puppet master, his eyes bright and his smile practised and relentless. He spread his arms in a gesture that seemed to belong to the priesthood of some remote culture, perhaps to a descending angel. Oedipa settled back to wait the crying of lot 49. The last words of Pynchon’s text reiterate the title: “The Crying of Lot 49” (CL 183).

She had dedicated herself, weeks before, to making sense of what Inverarity had left behind, never suspecting that “the legacy was America” (CL 178). Being mad after the Tristero and the post horn symbol, Oedipa was confronted with the bewildering multiplicity of clues. Each clue that came was supposed to have its clarity, its fine chances for permanence. But then she wondered if the “gemlike clues” were only some kind of compensation. She continued her search and observed the post horn symbol repeatedly. Then the narrator (implicitly the author) suspects whether she was led astray by the quest for the clues to the extent that she lost the words
of enlightening revelation: “To make up for her having lost the epileptic
Word, the cry that might abolish the night” (CL 118). The capitalization of
“word” makes a direct reference to the Scripture. Tanner notes, “the clues
with their potential for infinite replication offer scant compensation for the
loss of the Word” (181). The “night” could represent Oedipa’s condition of
uncertainty, or the marginal condition imposed by the western culture on so
many of its members. It alludes probably to the necessity of listening to the
Word of God that liberates and illuminates the human soul from the powers
of darkness.

The reader, persistently following the peregrinations of Oedipa in her
quest for solving the riddle, realizes that she began and ended her quest in
San Narciso. This circular structure acquires the semantic dimension of a
“vicious circle”. And after many trips she goes back to Kinneret, more
confused than ever, to consult her psychoanalyst who has incidentally gone
mad (CL 132). Could Oedipa ever realize her goal? The answer to this
question will remain a disputable issue. Certainly, Oedipa is one of
Pynchon’s “roundest” characters prior to those in Vineland. In The Crying
of Lot 49, Pynchon’s Oedipa, as her name implies, is also confronted with
riddles and with the obligation to discover an order. It will naturally impel
the reader to ask the author why he left the protagonist as well as the reader
in a state of quandary. The author may come up with Professor Bortz’s
answer to Oedipa’s query on the author’s role. But any work of art should
certainly be a reflection of life or a criticism of life.

Oedipa’s venture to execute the will of her former lover Pierce
Inverarity can be understood as an ordinary Californian housewife’s
audacious plunge into complicated worldly affairs. She was both ignorant of
and inexperienced in matters related to the execution of a will. Then why
did she undertake the task? Certainly, she was allured by the immense
wealth of the industrial tycoon. Basically, it was the fascination of wealth
that sucked her into the currents and cross currents of mundane matters
which took the form of conspiracies and epistemological quests. Pynchon
makes use of this plot to draw a magnified microscopic cross section of the
Californian society. If one examines the social structure in the novel, Pierce
stands at the top of the pyramid as a capitalist “founding father” (CL 26).
He owned the Yoyodyne factory, the Fangoso Lagoons, Zapf’s Used Books
and the entire shopping centre, sponsored San Narciso College and more or
less held the whole city in the palm of his hand. Below him one can note
politicians such as Fallopiam, private business men like Zapf and
professionals like Cohen, Hilarius, Roseamn, Metzger, Manny Dipresso,
Bortz and Koteks. In the Hollywood suburbs one can also find media people
and actors like Driblette. And beneath them are placed the exploited middle
class people like housewives, the working class represented Helga Blamm,
and the social outcasts like Oedipa’s husband Mucho Mass and the old
sailor. Beneath the mantle of American prosperity, industry and culture, as
in V. Pynchon presents the terrible underworld of swindlers, drunkards, drug
addicts, pederasts, hookers, homosexuals, forgers, bums paranoids,
psychotics and so on.

When Oedipa was intoxicated with the prospect of becoming the
heiress/ executor of her former lover’s estate, she did not hesitate to keep in
abeyance her dignity as a woman and her duties and responsibilities as a
wife. From then on the temptations of the flesh followed her until the very
end of the quest. She spent most of her search-time driving in freeways and
drinking heavily in bars. Roseman the lawyer tried to seduce her. Later
John Nefastis and Professor Bortz also seduced her.

Oedipa’s separation from her husband leads to the ruin of their family.
Mucho Maas was a disk jockey who suffered regular crises of conscience
about his profession. Oedipa didn’t understand why her husband was so
upset. For a couple of years he had been a used car salesman who believed
that the cars were “motorized metal extensions” of their customers (CL 13).
By the time he married her he had already been two years at the station,
KCUF. After his wife’s separation Mucho became a neurotic and addict of
LSD, leading to the total wreck of the family life. She had deceived her
husband with her co-executor Metzger at the very beginning of her quest.
She began feeling that her men were being stripped away from her. Her
friend and physician Dr. Hilarius became mad. Metzger, her extra marital
accomplice and co-executor, deceived her by eloping with a 15-year old chick. All these instances prove to be symptomatic of the decadence of postmodern America in matters related to sexuality, professional ethics, human dignity and social decorum. With reference to the original title of the novel, putting it crudely, one can say that Pynchon presents Oedipa as well as the world around her entangled in temptations of the flesh.

It can be plausibly guessed that the third segment of the original title “The Testament of Pierce Inverarity,” stands for the work of the devil/forces of evil. Inverarity was a typical representative of capitalist power. The resemblance of his name to “inveracity” aptly suggests his character, just as the names of the members of the Whole Sick Crew signified their personality. In fact he was both a Big Wheel with the capitalist business world and a Big Fish connected with the underworld. “Every access route to the Tristero could be traced also back to he Inverarity estate” (CL 170). Similarly every clue to the Tristero could be connected to Inverarity. It is evident that he amassed enormous riches by fraudulent means like human bone business, forgery of stamps and involvement in conspiracies. Since the reader is not informed of the content of Inverarity’s will, he can sensibly doubt whether “the will” of Inverarity itself was a bogus document prepared by Pierce himself as part of his devious design to harass his one time mistress. He can also suspect it to be a forged deed prepared by Metzger, the co-executor, as his later actions would suggest. She felt awfully
confused “like walking among matrices of a great digital computer” (181). She felt a total loss: “she’d lost her bearings” (177).

Pynchon, by depicting Oedipa’s situation of being caught up in the labyrinthine matrix of evil forces, moral failures and uncertainties, truly portrays the post war predicament. Though he generally presents the dismal and despairing decadence of the post war society suffocating in the stranglehold of evil forces, there are a few instances of benevolent action and resistance against vices whereby Oedipa and a number of other characters gradually liberate themselves from the forces of evil. Such ennobling actions cast rays of hope against the darkness of despair.

During the course of her quest Oedipa met a group of children who were playing the ‘jump rope game’ at the Golden Gate Park. They had, inside their circle, an imaginary fire. There was the chalk diagram of the post horn drawn on the ground. They knew about the post horn, but nothing that pestered Oedipa. A little girl explained the jump rope game. The players jumped alternately into the loop, the bell, and the mute, while one of them sang:

Tristoe, Tristoe, one, two, three,

Turning taxi from across the sea. (CL 119)

Oedipa asked whether it was ‘Thurn and Taxis.’ But the children had never heard it that way. The only person who gave Oedipa an innocent explanation (though incomplete) of the sign was the little girl. The little girl
was of course, a mirror image, suggesting to Oedipa that she needed to return to the sources of her childhood. But she rejected it, and stopped believing what the children said. The strange jump-rope game, as Colville puts it, "echoes various stages of Oedipa's quest" (86). Oedipa had come across the loop (loopholes), the mute (stamps, post horn and the young mute at the hotel) and the bell (the cry or the lost word) only the girl friend is missing.

Genghis Cohen, the philatelist, was one of the characters endowed with exceptional integrity and professional competence. While many other characters depicted wantonness, he was the one who upheld the nobility of professional and ethical values. He was extremely helpful to Oedipa in her attempt to unravel the mystery of the Tristero. One day Genghis Cohen called sounding excited, and asked her to come and see something he had just got in the mail, the U.S. Mail. It turned out to be an old American stamp, bearing the device of the muted post horn, belly up badger, and the motto: "WE AWAIT SILENT TRISTERO'S EMPIRE" (CL 169). So that's what it stands for," said Oedipa.

Towards the end of her pursuit Genghis Cohen handed over to her the translation of an article which disclosed the idea that some people connected to the Tristero reached America: "All the Tristero refugees from the 1849 reaction arrive in America" (CL 173). While other immigrants got easily assimilated into the culture of the 'melting pot,' the Tristero refugees stayed
on in the context of conspiracy. By all means now they keep themselves from the mainstream society: “Their entire emphasis is now toward silence, impersonation, opposition masquerading as allegiance” (CL 174). It was Cohen who informed Oedipa about the final arrangements of the auction programme to dispose of Inverarity’s stamp collection.

It might be argued that wealth, freedom, power and pleasure were the factors that tempted Oedipa and pulled her into entangling quest. But one can note that the protagonist could overcome all such temptations as the quest progressed. Dr. Hilarius had induced hallucination in Oedipa by administering drugs. But on a later stage she realized the harmful effects of such drugs and denied them. She did not want to be an addict of such drugs. Once, at three o’clock in the morning Oedipa was disturbed by a phone call from Dr. Hilarius, who imitated the voice of Pierce Inverarity. Oedipa replied: “I am having a hallucination now, I don’t need drugs for that” (CL 17). She had told him that she didn’t want to be hooked in any way. She also added that she did not want to be pestered anymore.

Oedipa’s husband Mucho had become a drug addict. Oedipa met him after her escape from the mad psychiatrist’s clinic. They drove down to a pizzeria and faced each other. “How are you getting on with Metzger?” he said (CL 141). Oedipa replied that there was nothing at all. He put a little clear plastic bottle on the table between them. “That’s LSD?” she said. Mucho smiled back. He informed her that he got it from Hilarius as he
broadened his programme to include husbands. He asked Oedipa whether she wanted those pills. She shook her head showing dislike and advised him not to use such pills at all (CL 145).

In matters related to sexual morality too, one can note a gradual regeneration of Oedipa. It was proved from her premarital affair with Inverarity, the industrial tycoon, that she had the least regard for conventional principles of morality. Also in the early stages of her quest, as evidenced by her relationship with Metzger, Roseman, Professor Bortz and the two old men at Yoyodyne, she had discarded such principles. But gradually she became morally upright.

In the hotel at Berkley she was grabbed by a group of deaf mute drunkards. She was too weak to save herself from the gesturing swarm. A handsome young man in the ballroom seized her about the waist. She followed her partner's lead, limp in the young man's clasp. Oedipa danced for sometime curtsied and fled (CL 132). The next day she checked out of the hotel and drove down the peninsula to Kinneret. The deaf-mute assembly resembled the Whole Sick Crew of V. in many ways.

Oedipa's interaction with John Nefastis to collect more information about his machine that disproved the theory of entropy, could serve as an instance to prove her integrity. Oedipa approached Nefastis in accordance with the direction she received from Stanley Koteks. She introduced herself and Nefastis beamed at her and brought out his machine from a workroom in
the back. He began then to talk about entropy. For John Nefastis there were
two kinds of entropy, thermodynamic and informational. Equations of both
of these forms looked alike by coincidence. But it was too technical for her.
She only grasped that there were two distinct kinds of entropy (CL 195). As
instructed by Nefastis, Oedipa waited with utmost concentration for the
Demon to communicate from the machine. For fifteen minutes she waited,
but nothing happened. “It’s no use,” she cried (CL 107). Then Nefastis
asked her to come in on the couch to have sexual intercourse. But Oedipa
screamed and fled. By describing Nefastis’s attempt to seduce Oedipa,
Pynchon projects the degeneration in the higher echelons of the society.

In spite of the frustrations and hallucinations in her personal life,
Oedipa was touched by ideals of humanitarianism at least towards the fag
end of her quest. In San Narciso she found an old sailor on whose left hand
was the post horn tattooed in old ink. He was shaking with grief. When
Oedipa approached him, he gave her a letter that looked like he had been
carrying around for years. Telling her that his wife was in Fresno he
directed her to send that letter through the Tristero system by showing the
tattooed post horn on his hand (CL 125). She saw the familiar 8¢ airmail
stamp on the envelope with a jet flying by the Capitol dome. Overcome by
the need to touch him, she took the man in her arms. The man was crying.
He reminded her: “Just mail this letter” (CL 127). Moved by pity she gave
the old sailor a ten-dollar bill. She bade him goodbye, walked downstairs and then on, in the direction he had told her.

An appraisal of Oedipa’s tiresome endeavour to execute the will of Pierce Inverarity delineates the fact that she begins her quest as an energetic and ambitious Californian housewife who discards modesty and age-old teachings of morality. She has been allured by the prospect of having riches, power and pleasure. Very soon she gets entangled in the labyrinth of her former lover’s notorious connections. The focus of her attention deviates from the execution of the will, to unravelling the secrets behind the Tristero and Thurn and Taxis. In the meanwhile she loses her moral integrity and wallows in the quagmire of iniquities. In fact she experiences absurdity as she fails to execute the will. Despite her experience of absurdity she is forced to have a vision at the extreme end of her quest:

She asked herself whether it would matter anything even if he (Inverarity) had owned all of San Narciso. San Narciso had no boundaries. No one knew yet how to draw them. Inverarity had never talked business with Oedipa but once he told her, ‘keep it bouncing, that’s all the secret’ (CL 178).

She returns to her husband Mucho and to her hometown Kinneret as a person who upholds the ideals of integrity, charity and fidelity. Like Joseph Heller, Thomas Pynchon has “forced a vision from his characters at the point of extremity” (Hunt 40). Even though the entropic forces appear to be
powerful, there can be “local enclaves” that uphold life. The world is not the dull, fragmented, disconnected meaningless thing it appears to be.

Beyond the apparent discontinuity, darkness, void and meaninglessness, it is sustained by transcendent meaning and subtle values like love and goodness of heart.

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1 Tony Tanner dismisses Nefastis as “a lunatic who believes in a crazy fantasy of his own making” (184).

2 Jacobean playwright of Pynchon’s imagination. Both Cowart (Art of Allusion 105) and Colville (30) point out that the name means the manager of a commercial wharf. But Kerry Grant agrees with Sidney Sondergard that Pynchon may have consciously or unconsciously conflated the names of a number of seventeenth-century tragedians- Webster, Heywood, Marston, Ford, and Massinger- to arrive at his fictional playwright (59).

3 The Pony Express formed in April 1860 carried messages between St. Joseph, Missouri, and Sacramento, California, by means of relays of riders who covered as much as 250 miles a day. It lasted only some sixteen months until the telegraph lines put it out of business (Kerry Grant 72).

4 Georgiana M Colville commenting on Oedipa’s quest, suggests that the circular structure of her journeys symbolizes semantically a vicious circle. She also likens the reader’s attempts for deciphering the meaning to waiting for “Godot” who never turns up (14).