

Pynchon, JFK and the CIA: Magic Eye Views of *The Crying of Lot 49*

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On the surface, *The Crying of Lot 49* is so much a novel about Oedipa Maas, her life, her loves, her thoughts, that it hardly qualifies as what Irving Howe would describe as a political novel.¹ Yet while this miniature masterpiece is not a manifesto or a call to arms, some critics see reading it as a “subversive experience” that could generate contempt for power, a disrespect for the national leadership, because *Lot 49* is a scathing history lesson, a look behind the political events and historical figurations that led America into the mess that was the mid-sixties (Kolodny). To study *Lot 49* is to decrypt Pynchon’s encoded messages and enter split-level consciousness, to read the narrative against the subtext of historical allusions, to find how skepticism toward government is central to Pynchon’s work. When we do, we find *Lot 49* to be Pynchon’s encrypted meditation on the assassination of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

In 1977, Jules Siegel recalled asking Pynchon a decade earlier: “What are you always so afraid of? . . . Don’t you understand that what you have written will get you out of almost anything you might get yourself into?” Siegel also recalled recognizing Pynchon’s unvoiced answer: “You think that it is what you have written that they will want to get you for” (172–74). “They?” Which they? “Get you,” Pynchon, the invisible novelist? “Get you for” what? For writing, albeit in deep code, about the Kennedy regicide.

When Pynchon was writing *Lot 49*, the lingering scent of President Kennedy’s death hung over the land like pollen on a humid day. Telltale whiffs of napalm from Vietnam caused U.S. Senator J. William Fulbright to warn the nation against succumbing to the “arrogance of power.” Politicians and politics of many stripes were emerging, from Mario Savio and the Free Speech Movement at UC Berkeley, Donald (“Buzz”) Lukens and the Young Americans for Freedom, Tom Hayden and the Students for a Democratic Society, Stokely Carmichael and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, the John Birch Society, H. Rap Brown and the Black Panther Party, the religious right, Betty Friedan and the nascent National Organization for Women, William F. Buckley and his *National Review* conservatives, Gilbert Harrison and his *New*

Republic liberals, Allen Ginsberg and the nascent gay-rights movement, George Lincoln Rockwell's American Nazi Party to Timothy Leary and the would-be drug-legalizing hippie anarchists. They were all competing for the nation's ear, which (through the McCarthy period and the Eisenhower administration) had been deaf to the needs of many of these constituencies. "If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem." Louder and more strident expressions of anti-war sentiment trumpeted against government pro-war propaganda daily. Each special-interest group making up the counterculture tried to piggyback its issues onto the Vietnam War, much as Eleanor Roosevelt had tried to use the Second World War as a springboard for women's and blacks' rights a generation before. As more and more young people turned against the Vietnam War, the political arena became livelier and noisier. Those closest to the president were divided in their opinions, for and against the war. Still, a thousand young Americans a month would be sacrificed to the faulty domino theory.

President Johnson, and later Nixon, called on the FBI, the CIA, the National Security Agency and the Joint Chiefs of Staff to find ways to quash dissent against the war, and these agencies obliged by greatly expanding their domestic spying programs, Cointelpro, Chaos, Shamrock and Minaret.² These most secret programs (exposed in 1975 hearings chaired by U.S. Senator Frank Church [D., Idaho] and by U.S. Representative Otis Pike [D., New York]) in their time caused many strange things to happen to civil-rights and anti-war groups: times and places of demonstrations got confused; hecklers disrupted meetings; double-agents penetrated "the movement"; individual motives were questioned and intramural factions encouraged (Olmsted 111). Between 1967 and 1973, some sixteen hundred American civil-rights and anti-war activists were watch-listed by NSA telephone eavesdroppers. Government interventions became increasingly violent. Numbers of young people died prematurely, some fired upon by National Guardsmen during anti-war rallies at Kent State and Jackson State universities. Even the staid old Baltimore *Sun* acknowledged, albeit decades late, that NSA activities of the period had made evident "the ineradicable aroma of the Police State" (Shane 14A).

Pynchon's college friend Richard Fariña died in April, 1966, in a motorcycle accident. Though no one suggested publicly that Fariña had been a Cointelpro target, he had openly expressed anti-war and pro-Cuban sentiments. The paranoid climate of the times was so fierce that nearly any explanation could seem plausible. Siegel thought of Pynchon's writing—dismissed in some circles as "well-executed, mildly nasty, pretentious collage" (Rose 40)—as so politically incendiary that it might make "them" mad enough to get him.

In the spring of 1966, just when anti-government sentiment was growing in proportion to President Johnson's escalation of the war, J. B. Lippincott published Pynchon's curious novel *The Crying of Lot 49*. Many people were burning draft cards, making moral commitments that would last a lifetime, leaving the country, or passively resisting the war—as would Fulbright's sometime worshipful assistant and driver Bill Clinton. Even then-Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, an architect of the war, admits having known during the time of his complicity that the Vietnam War was "wrong, terribly wrong," and that it could have and should have been stopped at many decision points along the way. Maybe it was just bad luck that Pynchon offered his little Menippean satire at such a moment.

Increasing polarization of public opinion followed the increased commitment of American troops in Vietnam, and *Lot 49* seemed to gain weight, to become more grave. It is possible the novel could have taken on the aura of sedition in the eyes of Nixon's somewhat unpredictable (later convicted felon) Attorney General John Mitchell. Was Siegel onto something? New York Jets' free-wheeling quarterback Joe Namath was on Nixon's enemies list, though for what is hard to tell. Was Pynchon, too, on the list of the proscribed? We may never know. He did sign a full-page anti-war ad, along with hundreds of other well-respected people opposed to the escalating war, in the *New York Review of Books* (15 Feb. 1969: 9). Natalie Robins has documented that Thomas R. Pynchon, Jr., was on the FBI's Index, a list of people known to be unfriendly to government policies on whom the FBI kept active dossiers. Pynchon's name appears among hundreds of "Writers, Editors, Agents, and Publishers Indexed by the FBI because they signed Civil Rights and/or Anti-war Protests during the 1960s" (411). Enemies lists, watch lists, Chaos, Cointelpro, Shamrock, Minaret; mail openings, telephone taps, direct surveillance, breaking and entering, and stealing files: it appeared American politics could get no worse. Pynchon had already opted to live as a stranger in his own strange land.

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For thirty years *Lot 49* has had critics groping for new metaphors to articulate the tactics and strategies required to read it. One strategy is to alternate attention between the overside and the underside of the tapestry (Dutch *maaswerk*). Perhaps an even more apt analogy can be gleaned from the techniques for reading Magic Eye® books. Magic Eye® illustrations are patterns printed in two dimensions on a flat page that, when the eyes diverge, become startlingly three dimensional. The creators at Magic Eye Inc. tell us:

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In some illustrations, the variously repeated patterns seem to float at various distances; in others, a seemingly innocent repeating rose wallpaper pattern may slowly develop (like an instant photograph) to reveal a cupid (hands in front, body between, with a discernable George Washington haircut, wings behind) hanging in space before a large valentine-shaped balloon, which floats in turn before a flat wall—all composed of the same rose pattern. The effect is often mind-bending.

Some viewers don’t get the hang of it. They don’t recognize anything beyond the flatly two-dimensional view of the printed page. So it is with reading Pynchon: some people just don’t get it.

Magic Eye[®] 3D illusions have an obvious division of foreground and background. Some have as many as ten, twelve or sixteen distinct layers. The deep images reward the attentive viewer with many curious details at each level. People often sit for ten or twenty minutes staring at one plate. This is the kind of response first-time Pynchon readers used to report.³ Kolodny and Peters write of developing the “trained eye” Pynchon mentions at the beginning of *Lot 49*, where Oedipa “wondered, wondered, shuffling back through a fat deckful of days which seemed (wouldn’t she be first to admit it?) more or less identical, or all pointing the same way subtly like a conjurer’s deck, any odd one readily clear to a trained eye” (CL 11). Pynchon alerts us that we, like Oedipa, have to train our eye to discern subtle differences. Reading Pynchon with a trained eye transforms *Lot 49* into an analogue of a Magic Eye[®] book with levels of dimensionality available to readers who have the knack, the magic eye.

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Diverging Method—Hold the center of the image RIGHT UP TO YOUR NOSE (it should be very blurry). Stare as though you are looking through the image (try not to blink). VERY SLOWLY move the image away from your face until it comes into focus and you see depth within the image; then HOLD IT STILL, and the hidden image will slowly appear. Once you see the hidden image and depth, you can look around the entire 3D image. The longer you look, the clearer it becomes.



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Since each Magic Eye® illustration is encoded to project a particular image, there is little variation in response. If you decode properly, you get it. A cupid is a cupid. A rose is a rose. There is no need for a Marxist or a feminist or a pothead take on each plate. There are no old critics, new critics, modernist, postmodernist, structuralist or deconstructionist Magic Eye® viewers. The computer-generated images do not allow for misinterpretation. A rose is not a cupid; a cupid is not a rose. A rose is a rose—and only a rose. Cupid is cupid, though arising out of roses. In like manner, Pynchon's text determines the depth of our readerly vision. If we keep one eye on the text or narrative (the overside of the tapestry) and the other eye on the subtext or allusions (the underside of the tapestry), and allow our brains to decode, to fill in enthymematically the implied connective structures, we find a vivid, vibrating multi-dimensionality to the novel that is often missed, misperceived or obfuscated.

An essay on *Lot 49* could 1) analyze Pynchon's themes—disinheritance and return, preterite vs. elect, received wisdom vs. hidden history, etc. (As Nehru observed, "history is almost always written by the victors."); or 2) catalogue Pynchon's favorite tropes—allusion, enthymeme, analogy and many others⁴—to demonstrate how what Pynchon himself calls his "strategy of transfer" (SL 21) amplifies his themes; or 3) focus on the narrative to illustrate how what Pynchon writes is often ironic, or parodic, and seems skeletal—how the narrative (like a dream ripe for Freudian interpretation) often misdirects us to a deeper or a displaced meaning we have to flesh out. Each of those approaches might make a self-contained though isolated essay. But a comprehensive reading of *Lot 49* must account for how Pynchon's themes, tropes and narrative strategy interweave, must demonstrate how Pynchon structures the narrative (or overside) and allusions (or underside) of the novel into a unified whole.

I parse Pynchon's techniques and effects roughly in order of their first occurrence in *Lot 49*. Chapter 1 is an exercise in allusion and name dropping that sets the tone and context for the entire novel. Chapter 2 makes many-layered allusions to mythic and religious rituals for the sanctification of the dead. Chapter 3 is an extended and complex game of naming, layering, enthymemes and analogies which uses the text within the text (*The Courier's Tragedy*) as a principal vehicle. Chapter 4 introduces the recent history of the military-industrial complex and competing American industrial/financial cliques. Chapter 5 mentions the names and half-names of men who ran things in the post-Second World War period, the McCarthy Era, and suggests how and why they did it. Chapter 6 draws further analogies (the process begins early in the novel) between sixties America and Nazi Germany, and between the

United States and certain totalitarian regimes—Diocletian’s Rome, William of Orange’s Low Countries—in which the form of government shifted from republic to monarchy or dictatorship, and state murder was common.

Chapter by chapter, step by step, Pynchon leads us to the assassination of President Kennedy, without ever mentioning the then-recent event directly. We have to catch his allusions, solve for the missing elements in his analogies, infer the unexpressed conclusions of syllogisms and punchlines of dark jokes. Pynchon also warns us, by allusion, of the dire consequences of politically analogous historical events. Some of the political revelations central to a fully realized reading of *Lot 49* are couched in the language of religious experience. The carefully laid sequence of unfolding information in this densely packed novella unpacks startlingly when read with a trained magic eye.

Chapter 1: The Name Game

The first pages of *Lot 49* are nearly as dense with proper nouns as “Entropy.” To sort the important from the routine (the first task in decoding), we must gather as much information as we can about each of them. Pynchon has picked up where he left off in his short stories, with dozens of place names, people names, institutional names, firm names, artwork names; names that contain smutty puns, body parts or allusions to fictional characters; and sometimes half-names that lead us to whole historical people, places and situations. Oedipa Maas, Tupperware, Pierce Inverarity, California, TV, God, Mazatlán, Cornell University, Bartók *Concerto for Orchestra*, Jay Gould, Warpe, Wistfull, Kubitschek, McMingus, Metzger, Kinneret-Among-The-Pines, Muzak, Fort Wayne Settecento Ensemble, Vivaldi *Kazoo Concerto*, Boyd Beaver, *Scientific American*, Wendell (“Mucho”) Maas, *Huntley and Brinkley*, Transylvanian Consulate, comic-Negro, Pachuco, Gestapo, Germany, Lamont Cranston, Commissioner Weston, Professor Quackenbush, The Shadow, Oed, Jack Lemmon, Hungarian pastry, KCUF, Second World or Korean Wars, Japs in trees, Krauts in Tiger Tanks, Funch, Roseman, Dr. Hilarius, Gestapo, *die Brücke*, LSD-25, Uncle (Sam), Rorschach, TAT, Fu-Manchu, Perry Mason, Palo Alto, Mexico City, Spanish exile Remedios Varo, *Bordando el Manto Terrestre* and Rapunzel form the *maaswerk* of chapter 1. Here Pynchon sets his agenda for the novel and offers us instructions on how to read *Lot 49*.

Some of these names are playful, sportive, silly; some are literary; some sinister. Some are freighted with pop-cultural meaning, others with historical-political resonance. This variety serves many purposes. First, by naming ordinary everyday facts of American culture (from

Tupperware to Perry Mason), Pynchon offers us the mundane so that, recognizing the culturally familiar, we accept tacit ownership of the tale and become active participants, communicants in the communion of reading. The audience at Roman plays sang along with favorite passages, as today's audiences often recite favorite patches of dialogue along with the characters in classic films or TV shows: "Play it again, Sam," or "Beam me up, Scotty." Familiarity develops engagement, cultural ownership. Second, by using familiar names like Perry Mason and playful names like Mucho Maas (a pun on the Spanish for "Much More"), Pynchon creates cover for the more heavily freighted names, allusions that carry historical-political meaning: Bartók, Jay Gould, Kubitschek, Wendell [Wilkie], [St.] Hilarius [of Poitiers], Gestapo, Var[r]o. The allusive names are offered blandly, as if they were equal in value, meant as little, as Tupperware, Fort Wayne or Jack Lemmon. Mixing lightweight allusions with more heavily weighted ones, this overt/covert, public yet secret integration creates distinct levels of meaning, like the overside and underside of a tapestry or the two distinct patterns the eye must focus on in a Magic Eye® print.

On the jacket flap of John Dugdale's *Thomas Pynchon: Allusive Parables of Power* is an enticing sentence. "Close readings of the texts reveal a hidden political content, and show how their use of allusion and parody creates a complex 'second story' beneath the surface 'first story' in each case." Dugdale offers a Freudian analysis of Pynchon's multi-dimensional texts, of how he plays off the manifest (everyday) against the latent (political) level of his work. Dugdale argues that Pynchon's *oeuvre* is "centrally concerned with the effects on the individual of the extension of the public domain" (1), or the increasing dominance of citizen by state—in short, politics. This concern manifests itself in Pynchon's writing "as a double (or multiple) structure with an extensive and elaborate subtext generated largely by the technique of allusion" (12). Dugdale asserts that each of Pynchon's works has a political subtext, a second and secret text beneath the surface of public narrative, and it is the critic's job "to discern and decode, to find internal and external connections, to read between and behind the words on the page" (12).

For Pynchon, writing itself is dangerous. Dugdale identifies "a desire to reveal the self, to bring things into the open . . . but it is always countered by an opposing force, the sense of the risk of exposure and dispossession, the inclination toward secrecy. . . . [T]he texts contain political messages which [Pynchon] is unwilling to communicate directly" (2, 3). Harry Levin reminds us that political satirists, who hold state folly up to public ridicule, have often received harsh state treatment—beatings, imprisonment, loss of property, exile, death. So

Pynchon communicates indirectly, and clues us in by using, of all possible names, Oedipa for the name of his central figure. He took the Freudian model to his bosom because it lent itself so well to his narrative method. Oedipa, of course: what more Freudian name is there?

Dugdale also reminds us that Freudian interpretation of dreams often relies on "nodal points," "switch words" or "Freudian slips" to gain access to the latent meaning. Laying clues to political meanings, Pynchon sometimes uses seemingly casual names, like Peter Pinguid (Peter is slang for penis, and pinguid means greasy or oily), that invite interpretation; or he models characters on recognizable historical or fictional figures (Is ex-Nazi LSD-researcher Dr. Hilarius analogous to Dr. Timothy Leary? Is Pynchon implying something sinister about Leary's advocacy of hallucinogens?); or he names characters for places (Metzger, familiarly called Metz) where significant historical events occurred. According to Dugdale, "The technique corresponds to the Freudian 'displacement' (de-centering), whereby a trivial element in an idea-complex enters the manifest dream, while the central important aspect remains secret" (8). Then later in the text, Pynchon might frame the casual name or character in a context that allows it to be understood. Thus Dugdale sees that "A latent structure in Pynchon's work is normally a set of hidden connections underlying the surface elements of the text, resembling the underside of a tapestry" (8). It is with the political underside (the *maaswerk*) of *Lot 49* that this study is concerned.

For example, the name Boyd Beaver reduces the fictional Vivaldi kazoo soloist to a woman's crotch. Pynchon often reduces characters to body parts, sometimes playfully (Dewey Gland in *V.*), but also to engage readers and sensitize them to forbidden or otherwise resonant names. Kerry Grant glosses the name Peter Pinguid as "greasy prick" (49). Peter Pinguid, Mike Fallopien says, eventually made a fortune in Los Angeles real estate, which amuses Oedipa no end because **Pierce Inverarity** also made his fortune in Los Angeles-area real estate. Are these real estate moguls analogues? "Pierce," as a verb, is synonymous with "prick." "Inver" means "mouth" in Gaelic; thus Inverness is the town at the mouth of the Ness, the river that flows out of Loch Ness. And a "rarity" is, according to the *OED* (Oed is Mucho's pet name for Oedipa), a thing of "unusual or exceptional character, *esp.* in respect of excellence." So we might gloss the name Pierce Inverarity as "excellently-mouthed, or smart-mouthed, prick."

On one level, Pierce is merely a smart-mouthed prick, but that may be Pynchon's cover story for a weightier meaning. In speaking a number of dialects to Oedipa in the telephone call she remembers,

Pierce might be said to have spoken in tongues. On the profane level, he may be only a body part, while on the sacred level, he may be an announcing angel. By making Inverarity's phone call a secular parody of the Pentecost, Pynchon lends "high magic to low puns" (CL 129).

Another split-level paradigm besides Freud's model of manifest and latent content is Mircea Eliade's model of the sacred and the profane. Edward Mendelson demonstrates how Pynchon used Eliade in *Lot 49*, and in "Pynchon's Politics," I showed how Pynchon used sacred/profane as an organizing principle as early as "The Small Rain" and "Entropy." In *Lot 49*, "hierophanies"—visitations of the sacred upon everyday, profane consciousness—reveal new ways of perceiving ordinary reality. In the course of the novel, Oedipa receives information from hieroglyph-like signs, from Vatican documents, from characters with religious or quasi-religious names. I hold, with Dugdale, that these realizations (or epiphanies), which Oedipa doesn't get but which we must, are political, that Pynchon's motive for writing *Lot 49* is political. Eliadic machinery is another means for Pynchon to launder forbidden historical material and bring it up from the underside to the overside, and reader-detectives should be alert to it. For example, Pierce Inverarity, as a name and a character, has both high magic and historical import, as we will see.

Called "The Mephistopheles of Wall Street," and "Promoter of Rascality *Sans Pareil*," **Jay Gould** was an American financier of the Reconstruction period, a rival of J. P. Morgan, who (with his partner Jim Fisk) tried unsuccessfully to seize control of a Morgan railroad during the post-Civil War boom, in 1869—a fact Pynchon also uses in "The Secret Integration." In 1902, Gould's son, George Jay Gould, led another raid on Morgan, and was again outmaneuvered. By naming Gould, Pynchon summons the multi-generational conflict between Gould and Morgan interests. As owner of the Erie Railroad, Gould granted kickbacks to Standard Oil, the Rockefeller enterprise. Pierce Inverarity tried to pattern his career on Jay Gould's, we assume, since Gould's bust is "the only ikon in [Pierce's] house" (CL 10). The name Pierce also recalls Henry Clay Pierce (of The Pierce-Waters Oil Company), another self-made mogul—similar to Jay Gould—with questionable scruples (Chernow 255–56).

From the law firm of Warpe, Wistfull, **Kubitschek** and McMingus, we get an emotionally twisted, yearning, Czech bebopper (Charlie Mingus?). A joke. But if we investigate, we see that Juscelino Kubitschek was a Brazilian social reformer, president of Brazil from 1956 to 1961, who was forced into exile when the CIA (an institution closely associated with the Dulles family, longtime lawyers and administrators for the Rockefellers) directed a military coup against the

popular, democratically elected Goulart regime (1961–1964). So, Pierce Inverarity evokes the Standard Oil team in a multi-generational feud with J. P. Morgan, and his law firm reminds us of the CIA's role in postwar American foreign policy.

Bela **Bartók**, a Hungarian nationalist forced into exile by the Nazis during the Second World War, fled to New York, where he wrote his *Concerto for Orchestra*. The concerto's frantic fourth movement has no "dry, disconsolate tune" (CL 10). Maybe the ailing Bartók was disconsolate, but the music is not. This inversion is Pynchon's way of flagging Bartók so we will review his biography. Bartók is mentioned in "Mortality and Mercy in Vienna" as well; the category of the exile was already important to the undergraduate Pynchon. *Lot 49* also mentions the Vivaldi Kazoo Concerto (a joke carried over from *V.*) to offset the Bartók reference, to make it appear equally casual. But Vivaldi was not a dispossessed political exile, as Bartók was—a fact the mention of "a refugee Hungarian pastry cook" (13) reminds us of despite its joking context.

Wendell ("Mucho") Maas recalls a Wendell of some significance—Wendell Wilkie, Republican candidate for president in 1940, and campaigner for the Republican nomination in 1944, a "World Federalist" who called for a postwar world governing body before the Second World War actually ended. Wilkie was once a utilities lawyer for J. P. Morgan. Similarly, Lamont Cranston recalls one Thomas W. Lamont, a senior partner at J. P. Morgan and one of the major banking figures of his time. So Pynchon stresses the Morgan-Rockefeller competition again here, as he did in his short works,⁵ through such use of half-names.

Mucho's current employer, radio station KCUF, appears to be a mere schoolboy joke, until we find the allusion to *Through the Looking Glass* in the first sentence of chapter 3: "Things then did not delay in turning curious" (44). In a conspicuously odd construction, Pynchon refers to "the Second World or Korean Wars" (15): for Lewis Carroll, the Second World was entered through the looking glass. KCUF is the mirror-reversal of a profanity (a schoolboy joke), but the looking glass may provide a window to the sacred for Mucho—another investment of a low pun with high magic.

Dr. **Hilarius**'s name is not Hilarious; it takes the Latinate form of the name of St. Hilary of Poitiers, St. Hilarius of the Arian Controversy. Dr. Hilarius is an ex-Nazi now doing drug research, and of course the Nazis were involved in a modern Aryan controversy. Dr. Hilarius recalls St. Hilarius, and Arian recalls Aryan. Aryan recalls Hitler's economic "Aryanization" program: Jews were declared non-citizens, and the wealthy were forced to sell their businesses at far below market value, while the less fortunate were simply dispossessed of their property,

which was either seized by the state or dispersed among Nazi Party favorites.

The name of the “beautiful Spanish exile Remedios **Varo**” (CL 20–21) points to that of the Roman satirist Marcus Terentius Varro (c.115–27 BCE), who codified what has come to be known as Menippean (sometimes Varronian) satire—Pynchon’s favorite form. Menippus of Gadara, a Greek philosopher-slave, developed the prose form in the first half of the third century BCE. Menippean satire is characterized stylistically by its union of humor and philosophy, a looseness of structure, a tolerance of digressions, and opportunities for incidental versification (which becomes song in Pynchon’s hands). Two and a half centuries after Menippus, Varro wrote about one hundred and fifty satirical essay-like books that were so popular they inspired subsequent writers to carry on the Menippean tradition, most notably in the *Satyricon* of Petronius and *The Golden Ass* of Apuleius. In sixteenth-century France, *Le Satyre Menippee* (1594) married Petronius’s satiric style to state affairs and sired a new genre, the political satire. By mentioning Varo, Pynchon evokes Varro and signals that *Lot 49* is to be read as a political satire. The Varo paintings also introduce the tapestry motif. Thus the name Varo does double duty. Pynchon’s *maaswerk* holds up state affairs to ridicule—something to do with Morgan-Rockefeller competition, with Nazis and Jews, with sacred and profane revelations, drug-induced and otherwise.

Chapter 2: Sanctification of the Dead

Chapter 2 interweaves Greek, Egyptian, Hebrew and Christian threads of significance into the *maaswerk* of *Lot 49* and alerts us to many layers of meaning. The episode inverts the Greek myth in which Echo fails to seduce Narcissus, who has fallen fatally in love with his reflection in the water. Here, the narcissistic Metzger seduces Oedipa, who resembles the image of the nymph at the Echo Courts motel. Oedipa begins to experience a “hieroglyphic sense of concealed meaning” (24). Hieroglyphics, of course, are the pictographic writing of the ancient Egyptian priesthood. Soon Oedipa experiences “some promise of hierophany . . . private access to the water, Book of the Dead” (31). The Egyptian *Book of the Dead* is the ancient sacred text explaining what living Egyptians must do for their departed to ensure them a good and sanctified afterlife, similar to what the Egyptian gods did for Osiris. I have demonstrated in “Pynchon’s Politics” how “The Small Rain” uses the Egyptian motif of the sanctification of the dead; *Lot 49* uses the legend of Osiris in a similar way. That we are to think of the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* here, not the Tibetan *Book of the*

Dead, is confirmed later when Oedipa meets Mr. Thoth at Vesperhaven House, another of Inverarity's holdings. Thoth (sometimes Toth) was the ancient Egyptian god of communication and writing.

The "Ritual of Osiris," as described by James G. Frazer in *The Golden Bough*, is one of death and resurrection. Osiris was a fertility god often represented in tumescent state, much as Pynchon depicts Metzger: "She came back in to find Metzger wearing only a pair of boxer shorts and fast asleep with a hardon and his head under the couch" (41). In the name of Osiris, mimetic sexual acts were performed to ensure the fertility of the ancient Egyptian land. Indeed, the Ritual of Osiris was not only a fertility rite and an act of devotion to Osiris, but also a kind of All Souls' Night, a sanctification of all the dead who dwelt in the underworld where Osiris reigned. In "The Small Rain," Nathan "Lardass" Levine (a Levite or member of the hereditary Hebrew priest caste) and little Buttercup, through an act of sexual mimetic magic, sanctify the dead victims of the recent Louisiana flood. In *Lot 49*, Oedipa and Metzger similarly seem to sanctify the dead Pierce Inverarity by coupling. In so doing, they establish the conditions for a hierophany, a visitation from the sacred to the profane.

Wittingly or un-, Oedipa and Metzger begin their Ritual of Osiris on a Sunday, a holy day, filled with revelations and "odd, religious instant[s]" (24). They perform a nighttime vigil, drink potions, manage to slow time—in accord with Eliade's model. By having Oedipa mummify herself in layers and layers of clothing (including an "old Orlon muu-muu" [36]), Pynchon reinforces the analogy to the ancient Egyptian sacraments, only Oedipa's role is now like that of the male Osiris, and it falls to Metzger/Isis to unwrap her mummy-like layers of clothing and resurrect her from the dead-drunk with his priapic ardor. They are not brother and sister, as Osiris and Isis were, but they may both be Jews, as we will see, and they may even be sanctifying a co-religionist. At the end of this episode, Oedipa weeps over a revelation about Inverarity. With this last detail, Pynchon returns our attention to the dead "founding father" (26), reframes the context, and we can now begin to see how this episode sanctifies the dead.

The runaway can, or bomb, of hair spray, "whoosh[ing]" to the accompaniment of "the buzzing, distorted uproar from the TV set" (37), recalls the German buzzbomb raids on London during the Second World War; and right on cue, a Paranoid groupie asks, "'Are you from London? . . . Is that a London thing you're doing?'" (38). So the lovers' All-Souls' Ritual of Osiris also sanctifies the dead of the London blitz in their mimetic-magical reënactment of the London event, a reënactment followed by a significantly coincidental blackout when the Paranoids blow a fuse.

The unguided missile breaks the bathroom mirror, recalling the orthodox Jewish proscription against admiring oneself in mirrors during periods of mourning. Also, in orthodox Jewish practice, one should rend one's garments as a sign of disregard for worldly things and of respect for the dead, and as a *mitzvot* renewing one's covenant with God. Pynchon, who describes a Jewish house of mourning in "Mortality and Mercy in Vienna," knows about these orthodox practices.⁶ Surely when the lights come back on after the blackout, and Oedipa and Metzger find themselves "twined amid a wall-to-wall scatter of clothing and spilled bourbon" (42), they have satisfied the requirement for rent garments as well. So, Oedipa and Metzger have sanctified Pierce Inverarity, the Christian dead of the London blitz, the Jewish Holocaust victims, the Egyptian dead, and, by extension, all the dead.

Oedipa's "peculiar seduction" and "other, almost offhand things" (45) should sensitize her to ritual magic and revelations "in progress all around her" (44), revelations Oedipa just doesn't quite get. If readers stand to *Lot 49* as Oedipa will soon stand to Tristero, we should closely examine her peculiar seduction and the almost offhand things, particularly the switch words.

Oedipa's home is in the suburban community Kinneret-Among-The-Pines. This name seems at first a nasty mocking of pretentious Jewish suburbs built on Long Island during the postwar boom of the late 1940s and 1950s, when Pynchon was growing up there. More important, Kinneret is another name for Galilee, the region in Israel that not only was the chief scene of the ministry of Jesus Christ but, after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE, became the main center of Judaism in Palestine. So, by making Oedipa's home in Kinneret, Pynchon hints she may be a Jewish girl from a Jewish neighborhood, a "section . . . which seemed to need [no redemption]" (55). The text also suggests in other ways that Oedipa is Jewish. Pierce phones as "a Gestapo officer asking her in shrieks did she have relatives in Germany" (11). Oedipa uses yiddishisms freely, referring to Metzger and Perry Mason as "'shysters'" (33), and calling Manny Di Presso a "'schmuck'" (60). The Maases' lawyer, Roseman, has a common Jewish name. Oedipa sees the Yoyodyne plant in Nazi concentration-camp images of "barbed wire" and "guard towers" (25). As Jay Gould enthymematically implies his vanquisher, J. P. Morgan, the Second World War references and allusions imply the German war against the Jews.

When Oedipa finds Dr. Hilarius flipped out into paranoid fugue, fearful of Israelis who might prosecute him for his Nazi role during the war,⁷ she perceives him for what he is; pointing his own rifle at him, she says, "'I ought to kill you'" (138). Later, when she meets Winthrop

Tremaine, the swastika salesman and SS-uniform enthusiast, she wonders if, in response to his racist nastiness, "she should've called him something, or tried to hit him with any of a dozen surplus, heavy, blunt objects in easy reach" (150). These incidents may also hint that Oedipa is Jewish. Of course she neither kills Hilarius nor bops Tremaine: she is too well-bred. Nice Jewish girls from sheltered backgrounds don't make scenes.

Tremaine, incidentally, shares his given name with one of the five Rockefeller brothers, sons of John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Winthrop Rockefeller, twice elected governor of Arkansas, was "Widely regarded as the *shnook*, *shlemiel*, and *shlepper* of the family, by The Cousins as a black sheep" (Lundberg, RS 272). Pynchon links the Rockefellers to the Nazis by naming the owner of the "Swastika Shop" (168) Winthrop. The novel contains many German allusions and, as we will see, allusions to Rockefeller retainers Forrestal, Dulles and McCarthy; and Pierce Inverarity evokes Pierce-Waters Oil, in which the Rockefellers owned a controlling interest. But the use of Winthrop is the most overt suggestion that the Rockefellers were themselves racist Nazis.

Metzger, Pierce's lawyer, has a German name that translates as "butcher." Di Presso addresses Metzger twice, familiarly, as "Metz" (58, 64). Metz, a French city in the Moselle region, was "a major cultural center of the Carolingian Renaissance" in the eighth century, and "a prosperous commercial city with an important Jewish community" in the tenth (*New Columbia Encyclopedia*). Metzger confirms this clue by telling Di Presso certain contracts were "drawn up in most kosher fashion" (61). Earlier, Metzger uses the line about his mother being "out to kasher me" (29) as a seduction ploy, and Oedipa adroitly parries with the pun on the movie title *Cashiered*. So, although the novel gives no biographical information by conventional expository means about either Oedipa or Metzger, the switch-word place names Kinneret and Metz associated with them tell readers with a magic eye that both of them are probably assimilated secular Jews. If Oedipa and Metzger (and perhaps Pierce Inverarity himself, for Jay Gould is said to have had a Jewish ancestor) are Jews—well that certainly casts a new light on *Lot 49*, and may help explain all the German references and Nazi allusions. For Nazis without Jews would be like cowboys without Indians, a morality play without a moral.

In *Cashiered*, the 1930s anti-German Hollywood movie Oedipa and Metzger watch, a St. Bernard dog named Murray reminds us of the American labor leader Phillip Murray, whose main claim to fame was his being fired by John L. Lewis of the United Mine Workers for supporting Roosevelt in the election of 1940. The UMW officially supported

Wendell Wilkie. St. Bernard of Clairvaux, on the other hand, among many other accomplishments, "stopped a wave of pogroms in the Rhineland (A.D. 1146)" (*New Columbia Encyclopedia*).

Tracing the names in a Pynchon work can reveal startling confluences. At first, Wendell ("Mucho") Maas seems merely another schlemiel, whose name may summon Wendell Wilkie. Then Murray the St. Bernard evokes Phillip Murray, an American labor leader who got in trouble for not supporting Wendell Wilkie. First one suggestive half-name, Wendell, the indicator, and later another half-name, Murray, the confirmer; the two together seem unrelated in the narrative, but each serves as the other's interlocking datum on the underside. Using half-names of two different characters, Pynchon makes connections to historical episodes to frame the context, as if to say, "Yes, that is the one I mean." And these extra-textual historical episodes become the unspoken referent against which the narrative develops. In this case the elections of 1940 and 1944, the activities of the pro- and anti-Wilkie forces, set the time frame of the underside to include the events before, during and after the Second World War. Similarly, the place names Kinneret and Metz, and all the German Second World War references hint that *Lot 49* has something to do with the Holocaust. Then as confirmation we find that St. Bernard of Clairvaux is known for having stopped a wave of pogroms, one little holocaust, carried out by returning French crusaders.

In the course of this careening chapter, we come across Beaconsfield Cigarettes (34), a brand distinguished by the use of bone charcoal in its filter, a brand name that sounds innocently enough like Chesterfield to seem plausible. But the first Earl of Beaconsfield was Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881), English author and statesman, regarded as the founder of the modern Conservative party. He was born a Jew, but his father, Isaac D'Israeli, had him baptized a Christian. Here is another bit of Pynchonian misdirection. Beaconsfield leads to Disraeli leads to a Jew baptized as a Christian for purposes of assimilation, who shinnied up the slippery pole of success with the help of the Rothschilds, whose man he was. Is *Lot 49* a meditation on the role of the Jews as far back as the rise of the Rothschilds? Will more layers of "breakaway gowns, net bras, jeweled garters and G-strings of historical figuration . . . fall away," and we, like Oedipa, receive "words [we] never wanted to hear" (54)? Things do get curiouser and curiouser.

Chapter 3: Allusion, Parody, Analogy and Enthymeme

Here Pynchon develops an elaborate structure of camouflaging parodies, mockeries and burlesques, mixed with allusions and historical

references, to create the most important enthymemes and incomplete analogies for us to solve. Without Pynchon's naming names, we have to catch on by virtue of his strategy of transfer and fill in the blanks. This chapter contains some of the most humorous writing on the overside of the narrative, and the most serious on the underside.

Oedipa and Metzger go to The Scope, where patrons from the concentration-camp-like Yoyodyne plant “dig your Radio Cologne sound” (48), the electronic music of the German Karlheinz Stockhausen (not the Italian Luciano Berio or the French Edgard Varèse). Mike Fallopian tries to recruit Oedipa and Metzger into the right-wing Peter Pinguid Society, and relates an account of a (fictional) Russian-Confederate naval encounter off the Northern California coast during the American Civil War. The three banter about political postures, eventually agreeing that working conditions under industrial capitalism are not very different from working conditions under industrial Marxism. They talk about canny real-estate speculation. Fallopian explains the Peter Pinguid Society (PPS) mail system when the letter carrier De Witt enters. Fallopian is writing a history of the U.S. Mail as a parable of power. Oedipa, the narrator tells us, is attending a “unique performance” (54) where something special may eventually be revealed to her, something she may not want to hear, something “terrible” (54) beneath all the layers of historical figuration that must be stripped away.

On an outing to Lake Inverarity, Oedipa and Metzger meet Manny Di Presso, who is suing the estate of Pierce Inverarity on behalf of a small-time Cosa Nostra operator, Tony Jaguar, who is chasing Di Presso—trying to borrow money from him. Amid many inversions (attorney Di Presso runs from clients, flees ambulances), Oedipa hears two stories about bones: bones fished out of a lake and used for research and development of bone-charcoal cigarette filters, and for decorating the bottom of Lake Inverarity; and bones exhumed from a cemetery in the right-of-way of a freeway.

The Paranoids and their chicks flag the analogy between Di Presso's story of bone charcoal and Richard Wharfinger's Jacobean Revenge play, *The Courier's Tragedy*. The play is filled with gory murders, gorier revenge, betrayal and incest, in a “landscape of evil” (65), and has as little significance, Randolph Driblette asserts, as “horror movies” (77). Oedipa, however, feels she sees certain analogies between the play and Pierce Inverarity's estate; thus Pynchon alerts us to think in analogies.⁸ Although Driblette is reluctant to tell her anything about Tristero, Oedipa, undaunted, is interested enough in what this spot of randy dribble may be able to tell her that she offers the sexual tease “I'll call” (80) as she leaves. That is the surface story.

On the underside, another whole story is developing. Pierre-Yves Petillon traces what I call Pynchon's misdirection of Tristero through a line in *The Waste Land*:

[T]he whole concept of the Tristero seems to derive linguistically from a reference in Eliot's *The Waste Land* to "*le Prince d'Aquitaine a tour abolie*" (line 430). This line itself bears a cryptic reference to Gerard de Nerval's poem 'El Deschidado,' in which most of the major themes of the Tristero are sounded (the exile into a shadowy, marginal world; the former prince whose 'tower' has been 'abolished'; the 'black sun of melancholia'). Nerval's poem, in turn, takes its title from the motto on the shield of the mysterious Disinherited Knight who turns up at the beginning of Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*, and who will eventually represent both the Saxons and the Jews evicted from their estates by Norman chivalry. This might well seem the sort of crazy hunt for idle sources and clues that any would-be scholar feels he or she might indulge in, were it not that Pynchon is perfectly aware of the implications of those half-hidden references woven both lexically and thematically into his "text" at large. (144)

Petillon's reference offers yet another way of understanding the preoccupation with Jews in *Lot 49*. Elite Jews, like the Biblical Joseph, have had alliances with elite Gentiles, like Pharaoh, since the Egyptian period. As we have noted, Di Presso's familiar "Metz" evokes the French city, with its important Jewish settlement as far back as the tenth century. Stockhausen, whom Pynchon mentions, began a center for electronic music at Cologne in the 1950s; Cologne, an important shipping center as far back as Roman times, also had an important Jewish settlement during the Hanseatic League (from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century). Pynchon also mentions the California town Carmel-by-the-Sea (49), named for the Biblical Mt. Carmel in Israel; and, again, we have Kinneret. The name of the PPS mail carrier De Witt (53) alludes to the Dutch statesman Jan De Witt (1625–1672), a friend of the Dutch-Jewish philosopher Baruch Spinoza. Further references to Beaconsfield reinforce the Disraeli-Rothschild-nineteenth-century financiers thread. Zapf's Used Books (78) recalls the Egyptian Zaphnath Paaneah, Pharaoh's name for Joseph of the coat of many colors, the interpreter of Pharaoh's dreams. Pynchon's loading *Lot 49* with Jewish names reminds us how Jews have periodically been historically important in matters of state, only to be "evicted from their estates" in the ebb and flow of politics (see Ginsberg).

The Russian-Confederate naval encounter may seem merely silly at first, with its improbable-sounding names (Popov is, however, genuinely

historical) and its ambiguous and inconsequential actions. Yet we know from "Entropy" and *V.* that *The Education of Henry Adams* is an important source for Pynchon, and we see in *The Education* that Secretary of State William H. Seward (1861–1870) sent new Minister Cassius M. Clay to St. Petersburg on the same ship that carried another new Minister, Charles Francis Adams (and his twenty-three-year-old son Henry), to London. In hindsight, the post-Civil War purchase of Alaska from Russia ("Seward's Folly") suggested that the Union had contracted with Russia to stir up the global pot in the Crimea to keep the British Navy in the Mediterranean and to keep England from intervening in the American Civil War on behalf of the South. Intervention was a real possibility at the time. Despite her anti-slavery rhetoric, England, or rather Palmerston, "desired the severance [of the South] as a diminution of a dangerous power" (Adams 115). That is, British statesmen realized the U.S. was likely to become their competitor for world power if the Union survived, and might have intervened in the war on behalf of the Confederacy but for Russian sabre-rattling.

Lest we think that connection farfetched, such an allusion unintentional, Pynchon provides the confirming datum when Di Presso says Metzger will have to "do something really Darrowlike" (58) to revive interest in the proposed TV series based on Metzger's career as an actor-turned-lawyer. Clarence Darrow (1857–1938), the foremost lawyer of his generation—defender of labor leaders, evolutionists, even thrill killers—had the middle name Seward. This is Pynchon's way of telling us decoders that, yes, it is Seward's Folly he means to evoke, with the implication that the Russians kept the heat on the British in return for the U.S. purchase of a worthless-seeming tract of land, a dicey-looking real-estate speculation called Alaska, for about two cents an acre.

As still further confirmation that Seward's Folly is the referent of the Peter Pinguid story, Oedipa offhandedly mentions Fairbanks, Alaska, while discussing Maxwell's Demon with Stanley Koteks. The post office could mis-sort and send Koteks out in a mailbag to Honolulu, or Grand Forks, or anywhere else, but Pynchon highlights Alaska.

Pynchon might also be using the tale of Russian-Confederate conflict, Dugdale argues, to parody "the events of 2–3 August 1964, the so-called first and second Tonkin Gulf incidents (the latter entirely fictive), which Lyndon Johnson used as a pretext to launch bombing strikes and acquire new powers to conduct the [Vietnam] war in secret" (155). So, on the underside of the joke narrative, we have one level of allusion to the role of Russia in the American Civil War and another to

the way real or imaginary naval encounters provided the pretext for increasing U.S. presidential powers during the Vietnam War. Pynchon is zeroing in.

The Dutch statesman Jan De Witt favored local rather than international priorities for the Low Countries, opposed William of Orange and was killed—killed and dismembered, his limbs displayed publicly on lamp posts as an example: dismembered, like many victims in *The Courier's Tragedy*. The PPS mail system may “not [be] as rebellious as it looks” in challenging “a government monopoly” (52); but Fallopian says the PPS mail carrier De Witt is “the most nervous one we’ve had all year” (53). No wonder. The later reference to Motley’s *Rise of the Dutch Republic*, and the discussion of Dutch history (158–60) confirm that we have the right De Witt (not, say, De Witt Clinton).

Fallopian explains that PPS mail-delivery operates only in San Narciso, but has pilot projects in “Washington and I think Dallas” (53). Dallas might have raised red flags in the minds of characters in 1964, the time of the narrative, and would have raised red flags in the minds of readers in 1966, when the novel was published. Dallas was where, on November 22, 1963, President John F. Kennedy was assassinated. In 1964, the year of the Warren Commission’s report on the assassination, Dallas was a buzzword, nearly synonymous with assassination and coverup, as loaded with sinister implication for Americans as the name Tristero was for the Jacobbeans at the time of *The Courier's Tragedy*.

The Courier's Tragedy is a mystery that focuses Oedipa’s attention on the identity of the Tristero: “the mystery concerns the identity of, and the menace presented by, those who are to carry out a political assassination” (Dugdale 4). If we stand to *Lot 49* as Oedipa stands to *The Courier's Tragedy*, there should be some relation between what we get and what she gets. The play, the text within the text, reveals something analogous not to what Oedipa is looking for (information about bones and some connection to Inverarity’s estate) but to what we should be alert to by now, having to do with political assassination. We have been alerted to Dallas. Oedipa, like other Pynchon characters faced with information they have been seeking, doesn’t get it. We should. The analogue in the play is a political assassination. The once-mentioned word in the play is Tryster, and in the novel is Dallas. Solving for two unknowns, we should come up with a political assassination in Dallas.

The novel mentions Dallas once, only once; the edition of *The Courier's Tragedy* Driblette uses for his script has only a “single

mention of the word *Trystero*" (90). In each case, the singularity signifies the name's highest importance. "I think Dallas." On the one hand, "a kind of ritual reluctance. Certain things . . . will not be spoken" (71). On the other, "It is all a big in-joke" (72). Think Dallas.

San Narciso is a California defense industry town; Washington, the nation's capital; Dallas, the site of a then-very recent regicide. This defense-government-assassination nexus calls to mind President Eisenhower's alarm, upon leaving office, that the nation should not be allowed to fall into the hands of the military-industrial complex. Pynchon gives us all this in a few innocent paragraphs about the "not as rebellious as it looks" underground mail system.

The technique here is enthymematic. An enthymeme is a rhetorical device consisting of a logical construct with the conclusion unexpressed—to be drawn by the reader or listener. One type is the incomplete syllogism. "All men must die. Socrates is a man"; the reader concludes, "Socrates must die." In *Lot 49*, the reader who recognizes the allusion to Jan De Witt will conclude something like this: The historical De Witt opposed the state and was murdered; the PPS carrier De Witt opposes a state monopoly and is very nervous. The conclusion is to be filled in by the audience. Yet the only thing the two De Witts share is their name, a switch word, so it might be just a joke, a dark one, at that.

But the next paragraph presents the chilling nexus of San Narciso, Washington and Dallas. De Witt was opposed to the state and was killed; someone unnamed was killed in Dallas, so (filling in the enthymeme) JFK must have been opposed to the state (or the military-industrial complex). Enthymeme by analogy: the House of Orange (the state) is to Jan De Witt as the military-industrial complex (the state) is to Dallas—which in 1964 stood for JFK. No joke.

The enthymeme is the rhetorical technique of choice for a comic who wants his audience to infer the withheld punchline of a crude joke. "What's the difference between a lawyer and a rooster? The rooster clucks defiance . . ." What is funny is the comic's withholding the taboo words in public while conjuring them up in the collective mind of the audience: "The lawyer fucks de clients."

Likewise, a great jazz soloist, like Paul Desmond, flirts with a melody, plays around it, transposes it into various keys or rhythms, offers a fragment or a phrase something like the written melody but not quite, moves through arpeggios or linear inversions, and later (to keep listeners abreast of where he is in the structure of the song) offers another bit or snippet of something vaguely like the original text, never quoting the tune directly, and still gets the audience to sing the lyric in



Voltaire, by Jean-Antoine Houdon (replica). Image courtesy of Christopher's Art & Antiques.

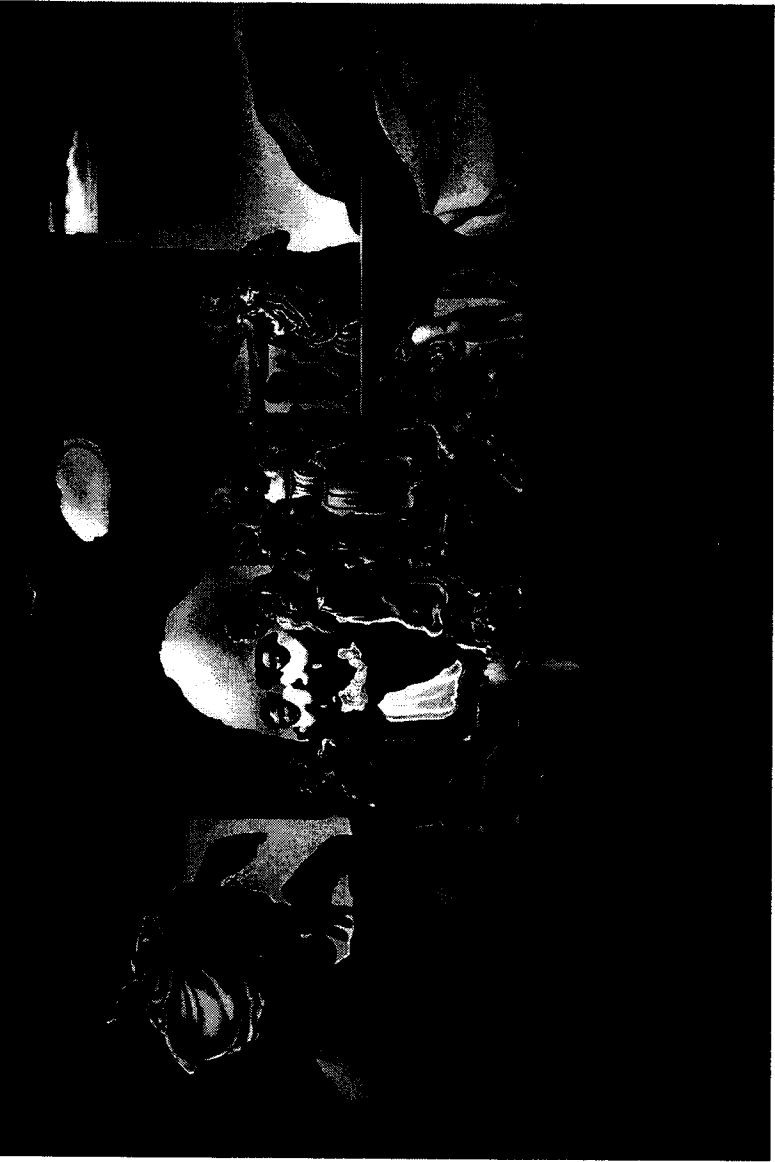
their minds. He succeeds to the extent he can take an old tune and make it new with unexpected allusions to similar tunes, quotations from soloists of previous eras, surprising flourishes or diminuendos, always striving to get the audience to sing the lyric in their minds. The audience is expected to bring to the performance a working knowledge of jazz, its current practice, its history.

A great painter, like Salvador Dali, can do something similar with images. He can paint seemingly innocuous marketplace figures that appear to be one thing but turn out (when the viewer reverses foreground and background) to be something quite other, something with a very particular referent. In Dali's *Slave Market* (1940), later known as *Slave Market With*

Disappearing Bust of Voltaire, the painting of a dozen human figures, some walls and a bowl of fruit has embedded in it an image of Jean-Antoine Houdon's *Voltaire* (1781), sculpted just before the French Revolution. This Enlightenment ikon is the referent that makes *Slave Market* sly, and political.

Slave Market requires a magic eye in the viewer. For a viewer with no image of Houdon's *Voltaire* in mind, it is attractive enough, filled with architectural fragments, great distances and vistas, deep landscape, the usual vocabulary of Dali's surrealistic tropes. Knowing that Dali painted Voltaire—the father of the Enlightenment⁹—like an apparition floating above a *slave market*, in Spain during the early years of the Franco regime, makes the painting appear an ironic statement possibly approaching sedition: "The Enlightenment will outlive Fascist slavery."

In each of these cases (comic, jazz man, painter), the audience has to perform mental operations, fill in blanks, catch wordplay, recognize referents, complete syllogisms or analogies, bring a working knowledge of history to the artistic experience, understand enough to reach the right conclusions. Pynchon is a master at leading us on, then leaving us historical-political blanks to fill in. If we follow the trail of the indicators



Slave Market with the Disappearing Bust of Voltaire (1940). Oil on canvas.
18 1/4 x 25 3/8 inches. Collection of The Salvador Dalí Museum, St. Petersburg, Florida.
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he carefully lays down for us, we will arrive at answers that unify on the underside what seems like disunity on the overside.

The strategy of *Lot 49* on the overside is to lead us toward an event that is supposed to clarify the growing mystery, but then remains unseen. Withholding the crying of the 49th lot alerts us that the manifest plot is not all the book is about. The strategy on the underside is to hold up state folly to ridicule, without openly naming names. Incomplete syllogisms, analogies, Freudian dreamwork, allusions, indicative and half-names, inversions, jokes and puns lead us along, then leave conclusions for us to infer. In this indirect way, using the strategy of transfer, Pynchon puts critical thoughts into our consciousness, and the censors can't imagine what is happening right under their noses. Reading *Lot 49* with a magic eye, we recognize that it is a Menippean—political—satire. Reading it with a magic eye, we can recognize the "malign and pitiless" (54) words no one ever wanted to hear, the terrible truth beneath the gauze and net of historical figuration.

Toward the end of *The Courier's Tragedy*, a miracle occurs. Duke Angelo's "lying document" becomes "now miraculously a long confession by Angelo of all his crimes" (74). The play shifts from revenge tragedy to miracle play. In a miracle play, "frequently a problem in contemporary life [is] solved by divine intervention" (Shipley 272). Thus Pynchon's involved game of analogies: Oedipa is to *The Courier's Tragedy* as readers are to *Lot 49*, and the sacred level of the novel, or underside or *maaswerk* of the tapestry, has to do with a problem in contemporary life. If a conspicuous problem in mid-sixties America was the unsolved assassination of President Kennedy (which Pynchon alludes to enthymematically), there should be some hint of miraculous solution encoded in *The Courier's Tragedy*.

There are clues: Thurn and Taxis, the historical postmasters of Europe; Tristero, the mysterious counterforce, whose name no one dares utter. Angelo, who as duke is the state, "flies into an apoplectic rage, and orders Niccolò's pursuit and destruction. *But not by his own men*" (71; emphasis added). Here, "things really get peculiar," ambiguous; and "a new mode of expression takes over. . . . Certain things, it is made clear, will not be spoken aloud" (71). But by innuendo, Angelo makes his intentions obvious, and by stagecraft, the other characters show they understand perfectly: "It is all a big in-joke. The audiences of the time knew" (72). *Not by his own men* means the job has to be contracted out, means some instrument not of Angelo's bloodstained state (one wonders, after all the slaughter, why not) must be called upon to perform this assassination, some Renaissance Murder

Incorporated, some Cosa Nostra. The objective correlative Driblette uses is a trio of black-clad assassins.

In 1991, Oliver Stone's film *JFK* promoted the idea that President Kennedy was caught in triangulated cross fire, and it indicted the CIA and the Defense Department. In March, 1995, the *Los Angeles Times* described some of the ten thousand newly declassified reports and memos concerning the Kennedy assassination just made public by the National Archives. Among them were some that revealed that:

[I]nvestigative files on Chicago crime figures Sam Giancana and Gus Alex . . . were examined in 1978 by a special House panel that reviewed the Warren Commission's investigation.

The House panel questioned whether a single gunman such as Oswald could have fired all the shots. It also concluded that organized crime elements might have participated in the assassination.

Among the newly released documents was a June 17, 1964, report from the late J. Edgar Hoover, director of the FBI, which imparted information gleaned from an unnamed FBI source whom Hoover deemed "reliable."

The document said that Castro ordered his own tests made on a similar rifle and concluded "that Oswald could not have fired three times in succession and hit the target with the telescopic sight in the available time" and that therefore "*it took about three people.*" (Jackson; emphasis added)¹⁰

Through the underworld connections of Jack Ruby, Sam Giancana and Gus Alex, the Cosa Nostra was somehow implicated in the death of the president. The Hoover report was being gossiped about in DC while Pynchon was working on *Lot 49*. Whether Pynchon had heard about it or seen a copy, we will probably never know. Hoover allegedly sometimes leaked sensitive documents himself, out of a sense of inter-service rivalry with the CIA. It is likely many Washingtonians and interested others, including members of Pynchon's set, had heard the three-gunmen theory.

Who were Pynchon's set? According to David Cowart, while Pynchon was in the Navy in the mid-fifties, he dated a woman "who worked for 'an intelligence agency' in Washington" (63). Jack Newfield notes that Adam Walinsky, one of Senator Robert Kennedy's closest aides, "roomed across the hall from novelist Thomas Pynchon" at Cornell (52). And Newfield reports that, in his office, Walinsky "kept framed on his desk an old cover of *Motive* magazine with Camus's quote, 'I should like to be able to love my country and still love justice.' . . . [U]nder the Senate frank, [Walinsky] mailed to a dozen friends

reprints of the anti-LBJ speech Norman Mailer delivered at Berkeley's 1965 Vietnam Day celebration" (51). So Pynchon knew people near the center of American politics, at least one of whom sometimes mailed items of interest to friends.¹¹

If Pynchon had somehow learned of the information in Hoover's report, it could have inspired him to have Driblette stage the murder of Niccolò by three black-clad (black ops?) assassins. So could the gossip of inside-the-beltway types.

Chapter 4: The Military-Industrial Complex and Plausible Deniability

On the narrative overside, chapter 4 sees Oedipa tracking down Pierce's various holdings. She attends a Yoyodyne stockholders' meeting and visits the nursing home Vesperhaven House just to see what Pierce's estate actually consists of. She also visits Genghis Cohen, the philatelist who is appraising Pierce's stamp collection. On the underside, Pynchon takes his meditation further. At Yoyodyne the stockholders sing company songs that rehearse a partial list of the defense contractors making up the military-industrial complex. Mr. Thoth tells Oedipa an addled tale Fallopien interprets as an episode in the Federal suppression of challengers to its postal monopoly, a tale with overtones of plausible deniability. Cohen points to evidence in the brazenly forged stamps of a counterforce, a counterforce of which the government already knows.

Near the beginning of chapter 4, Oedipa jots down in her memo book, "Shall I project a world?" (82). This question evokes Bertolt Brecht's conviction that a series of small heroisms by a series of small heroes can "project a new world," free of oppressors (Ewen 414). Later, in chapter 5, wandering through Golden Gate Park, Oedipa finds a "circle of children" who tell her they know "nothing of the chalked game Oedipa had seen on the sidewalk" (118). Chalk and circle so close together point to Brecht's *Caucasian Chalk Circle*, originally meant to be acted by children. Near the beginning of that play, a minstrel recites:

O blindness of the great!
They go their way like gods,
Great over bent backs,
Sure of hired fists,
Trusting in the power
Which has lasted so long.

But long is not forever.
 O change from age to age!
 Thou hope of the people! (35)¹²

Other confirming data are the nearly contiguous references to "[l]iberal SS circles" and to the "Brechtian vignettes" (137) used to induce insanity among inmates at Buchenwald. Oedipa's "Shall I project a world?" evokes Brecht just before she goes to the Yoyodyne stockholders' meeting, absurdly but appropriately contrasting the totalitarian Pierce and his concentration-camp-like enterprise with Brecht's idealized individual.

At the meeting, Clayton ("Bloody") Chiclitz leads in singing a roll of the nation's largest defense contractors, a membership list of the military-industrial complex: Bendix, Avco, Douglas, North American, Grumman, Martin, Lockheed, Convair, Boeing—all in league with the Department of Defense. Eisenhower introduced the phrase "military-industrial complex" when, leaving office, he was free to express his anger over the CIA's handling of the U-2 affair. Chiclitz's seemingly silly song again confirms our sense of Pynchon's deadly-serious concerns.

As a typical Pynchonian irony, Chiclitz's first name, Clayton, reminds us of Henry De Lamar Clayton, U.S. Congressman from Alabama, who sponsored the Clayton Antitrust Act of 1914. A modern Chief Executive Officer, "Bloody" Chiclitz, named for a historic anti-truster. The Clayton Act prohibited "exclusive sales contracts, local price cutting to freeze out competitors, rebates, interlocking directorates in corporations capitalized at one million dollars or more in the same field of business, and intercorporate stock holdings" (*New Columbia Encyclopedia*). Of course, subsequent judicial decisions have eroded much of this 1914 law; and since a million dollars isn't what it once was, the corporations Chiclitz sings of would not be in compliance nowadays.

The nonagenarian Mr. Thoth, at Vesperhaven House, has clues for Oedipa. His grandfather, who had a horse named Adolf, was a bloodthirsty Pony Express rider who drooled when he told about killing Indians. With some difficulty, Thoth recalls his grandfather's accounts of attacks by "'Indians who weren't Indians'" (92). The attackers were white men masquerading as Indians, one of whom wore a Tristero ring decorated with a muted post horn. When Oedipa asks Fallopian about Mr. Thoth's story, he speculates that the false Indians were "'Probably hired by the Federal government. Those suppressions [of independent mail services] were brutal'" (93). Fallopian points to plausible deniability: a tactic usually involving a cover story (here, [bogus]

Indians) that disguises how the objectives of the state (here, achieving a postal monopoly) are accomplished (here, by armed suppression of competition) using means that contradict professed policies or principles of the state.

In *The Courier's Tragedy*, Tristero is a contract-killing Murder Incorporated. The evil Duke Angelo has Tristero, not his own men, commit the state execution of Niccolò (an ostensible Thurn and Taxis man). In the novel's base narrative, Fallopian suggests that Tristero may have been active in North America in the mid-nineteenth century, hired by the U.S. government to consolidate its postal monopoly. Both narratives imply that the state sometimes uses hired assassins to murder unwanted or difficult persons so it can achieve its ends and yet disavow any official involvement should the matter come to light.

Mr. Thoth's dream about his grandfather, he tells Oedipa, "'was all mixed in with a Porky Pig cartoon'" (91). Yet while apologizing, he digresses to drop another clue: "'The children told me that [Porky Pig] has a nephew now, Cicero'" (92). Cicero recalls another victim of state murder, the Roman orator and senator Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 BCE), who opposed Julius Caesar and was eventually executed by Augustus. Not coincidentally, Varro was a contemporary of Cicero. Varro managed to live through the war of the triumvirs, and rose to the status of a minor noble, only to be ruined when Mark Antony defeated Pompey. Varro's property was plundered, and worse might have befallen him had Caesar not intervened and raised him to the post of Public Librarian. His property was restored, but upon Caesar's assassination (another state murder), Varro was placed on the list of the proscribed a second time. Again he managed to make peace with the state, and, at the cost of his property, he was allowed to live out his life in study and writing. So the mention of Cicero leads us to the era of the triumvirs and thus to the second evocation of Varro. And although Mucho's boss, Funch, is mentioned in chapter 1, only in chapter 5 do we learn Funch's first name: Caesar.

The philatelist Genghis Cohen, whose surname is that of a Hebrew caste of priests, appears in *Lot 49* wearing a Barry Goldwater sweatshirt. Barry Morris Goldwater, the Republican presidential candidate in 1964, was born of Jewish parents and converted to Christianity, not unlike Disraeli. He was an arch-Conservative, the leader of the extreme-right wing of his party, and a supporter of Senator Joseph McCarthy. Cohen illuminates for Oedipa the existence of the actual Thurn and Taxis—somewhat. Advising Oedipa that they should not "'tell the government'" about Tristero, he says, nervously or evasively, "'I'm sure they know more than we do'" (98). Cohen's behavior and the chain of associations connected to him remind us that

some Jews have been known to collaborate with the state: the harsh *converso* Torquemada, Spanish Grand Inquisitor, and Roy Cohn, Senator McCarthy's legal aide, for instance.

The literature on postal history, like that Oedipa explores in chapter 6, includes *Histoire de la Poste aux Lettres et du Timbre-Poste* (Paris, 1876), by Arthur De Rothschild, which contains a long discussion of Thurn and Taxis. The Rothschilds also prove matter for Pynchon's misdirection. Virginia Cowles writes:

Ever since Waterloo the brothers had concentrated on assembling the best network of intelligence agents on the continent, and organizing the fastest means of transmitting the intelligence from one point to another. All the branches had carrier pigeons trained to fly to the various capitals as occasion demanded; but now Rothschild "stations" were set up on the main European highways to provide fresh horses and carriages for the Rothschild messengers, dressed conspicuously in the blue and yellow family livery. At Calais and Dunkirk boats and skippers in the exclusive pay of the family crossed the Channel in all weather. (71)

And:

The Rothschilds were in a unique position to unearth the most secret secrets, for they were on the closest terms with the princely family of Thurn and Taxis who ran the Central European postal service. The Rothschilds had lent considerable sums of money to the Prince, the hereditary postmaster, who lived at Frankfurt. Consequently the Prince was not at all averse to giving instructions that certain letters should be steamed open, and a *precis* of the contents sent to old Mayer, who passed on the intelligence to his sons. (45)

Thus Oedipa's concern with Tristero leads us to the relation between Thurn and Taxis and their allies the Rothschilds. The House of Rothschild was a frequent banking ally of the House of Morgan as well, from the 1870s through the 1920s (and perhaps is to this day).

Through Oedipa, then, Pynchon misdirects us to a French history of European postal systems, to Thurn and Taxis, to the Rothschilds, and to the Morgans, in whose sphere of influence Pynchon's relatives operated (before the stock market crash of 1929) one of this country's largest stock brokerages, Pynchon & Co. Morgans and Rothschilds, Yankees and Jews: the threads are coming together. After *The Courier's Tragedy*, Metzger says of Oedipa:

"Some people today can drive VW's, carry a Sony radio in their shirt pocket. Not this one, folks, she wants to right wrongs, 20 years after it's all over. Raise ghosts. . . . Forgetting her first loyalty, legal and moral, is to the estate she represents. Not to our boys in uniform, however gallant, whenever they died." (76)

Pynchon highlights the curious reality that somehow the Germans, whose population was decimated, whose industrial capacity was devastated, recovered to become one of the strongest economic forces in the postwar period. Conversely, the Rothschilds (Warburgs, Sasoons and others) never regained their former preeminence in European finance, as the Morgans (Drexels, Du Ponts and others) never regained theirs in the U.S. How did that happen? Loftus and Aarons, in *The Secret War Against the Jews*, say the combination of the stock market crash, the Great Depression, Hitler and the Second World War was too much for what I call (in "Pynchon's Inferno" and "Pynchon's Politics") the Old Dynasty.¹³

Cohen says of the dandelion wine he serves Oedipa, "'A few months ago it got quite cloudy. You see, in spring, when the dandelions begin to bloom again, the wine goes through a fermentation. As if they remembered'" (98). But Oedipa thinks "No. . . . As if the dead really do persist, even in a bottle of wine" (99). Though some Rothschilds died in the death camps, of course, their Chateau LaFitte has persisted.

Chapter 5: Who? What? When? Where? Why?

On the narrative overside of chapter 5, Oedipa makes her San Franciscan long night's journey into day, finding muted post horns and picking up other clues everywhere. In an almost offhand, encrypted way, as before, Pynchon clues us in to attend to things very different from those Oedipa attends to. We should begin by attending to proper nouns.

Oedipa checks into a "German-baroque" hotel during a convention of the "American Deaf-Mute Assembly" (101). In her room, she barely notices the reproduction of another painting by Remedios Varo. She has a persistent nightmare about a sinister, invisible something in the mirror: "Nothing specific, only a possibility" (101). This sinister something on the other side of the mirror signals something sinister on the underside of the narrative, like on the underside of a rock: something political and having to do with Germany, something 1964 America is deaf to and mute about, something Pynchon has to convey in his version of sign language.

Next day, walking across the campus of the University of California at Berkeley, Oedipa sees evidence of the students' seething political activism, and feels both attracted and alien.¹⁴ She recalls "Secretaries James and Foster and Senator Joseph . . . who'd mothered over Oedipa's so temperate youth" (104). Who are these half-named Secretaries and Senator? U.S. Secretary of the Navy (1944-1947) and Secretary of Defense (1947-1949) James V. Forrestal; U.S. Secretary of State (1953-1959) John Foster Dulles; and U.S. Senator (R., Wisconsin, 1947-1957) Joseph R. McCarthy. While the public-sector careers of Forrestal and Dulles have been extensively documented, their private-sector careers are less widely discussed.

Forrestal was an oil man, an owner of Texas Oil Company (Texaco), which was, on paper, the principal supplier of oil to Franco during the Spanish Civil War. In 1938, he became president of Dillon, Read, a Wall Street banking house that had been helping finance German industry since 1925, and the Hitler regime since 1934. When the German petrochemical cartel IG Farben set up its American subsidiary, General Aniline and Film (GAF), Forrestal served on its board and arranged huge loans for it. "While undersecretary of the Navy in 1941, and just before the United States joined the war, Forrestal gave immunity to Standard Oil of New Jersey ships supplying the Nazis with much-needed oil" (Loftus 157). Though Germany and the U.S. were not technically at war, the Germans were making submarine attacks on British and U.S. merchant ships in the North Atlantic.

Dulles was a lawyer, grandson of John Watson Foster, U.S. Secretary of State (1892-1893) under Benjamin Harrison, and nephew of Robert Lansing, U.S. Secretary of State (1915-1920) under Woodrow Wilson. As a relatively young man, he served as special counsel to the U.S. Delegation to the Paris peace conference after the First World War, and drafted much of the international law governing warfare that defined what would and would not constitute a war crime. He wrote what would be of special interest to multinational corporations, the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles concerning trade with the enemy. Between the wars, Dulles became a prominent international lawyer as a partner in Sullivan & Cromwell, the principal law firm of Standard Oil. Before, during and after the Second World War, Sullivan & Cromwell represented IG Farben (oil, chemicals), Vereinigte Stahlwerke (steel), the Shroder Trust (banking)—Hitler's financial agent—and other large German industrial combines. It also represented several German provincial governments, a number of large American companies with interests in Germany, and some rich German individuals. Dulles came to be known as a pro-Hitler spokesman

because of speeches like an obviously pro-German and non-interventionist address at Princeton University in 1936 (Mosley 90). He also served for a time as chairman of the Rockefeller Foundation. President Eisenhower appointed John Foster Dulles Secretary of State, and his brother, Allen Welsh Dulles, director of the CIA.

During the 1930s, IG Farben "owned two percent of the giant Standard Oil Company and next to the Rockefeller family was the largest single stockholder" (Borkin 185). As fellow multinationals, Standard Oil and the IG made friendly arrangements to meet the contingencies of war. In 1936, they agreed to share world markets, and, just before the war, as an act of good faith, they exchanged some two thousand patents. Dulles knew this agreement was in the works when he gave his Princeton speech. When the U.S. was drawn into the war in 1941, the cartels' mutual loyalties were so strong that the U.S. government had to bring legal action against both Standard Oil of New Jersey and IG Farben for illegal monopolistic practices involving patents for gasoline, toluene and synthetic rubber. Ultimately, the U.S. government seized many of these patents (Borkin 194). Standard Oil also gave the IG technology, personnel and equipment to produce tetraethyl lead, without which Germany would have had no high-octane aircraft fuel and thus perhaps would have had a less formidable luftwaffe. Then-Senator Harry S. Truman, chair of the Senate Special Committee to Investigate the National Defense Program, viewed the relation between these multinational corporations as treasonous (Loftus 64). In a 1947 decision, circuit court Judge Charles Clark, who wrote the opinion in a case involving transfers from IG Farben to Standard Oil, "volunteered a startling observation—that Standard Oil could have been considered an enemy national in view of its relationship with I.G. Farben after the United States and Germany had become active enemies" (Borkin 203). And near his death, former U.S. Supreme Court justice Arthur Goldberg opined, "'The Dulles brothers were traitors'" (Loftus 71). These were the opinions of a president-to-be and two Federal justices, not a bunch of hippies.

How ironic, then, that McCarthy and McCarthyism became bywords during the postwar period for accusing others of being traitors: McCarthy was on the side of Forrestal and the Dulles brothers.¹⁵ By reckless use of inquisitorial techniques—unsubstantiated accusations, unreliable informants, refusal to allow the accused to confront their accusers—McCarthy smeared many people with charges of being Communists, or of being fellow travelers (a man is known by the company he keeps), or of just being "soft" on Communism. He hounded many liberals—never conservatives—out of government. Their vacant positions were always filled with "trusted" men, often oil men.

Forrestal, Dulles and McCarthy were all loyal retainers of the oil companies, major players in what is called in V. "The Big One, the century's master cabal . . . the Ultimate Plot Which Has No Name" (226)—of which Pynchon & Co. was one earlier casualty.¹⁶ By 1948, on the eve of a presidential election, McCarthy had become Allen Dulles's mouthpiece in the Senate. From Dulles, "both [then-Representative] Nixon and Senator Joseph McCarthy received volumes of classified information to support the charge that the Truman administration was filled with 'pinkos'" (Loftus 222). Early in the Eisenhower administration, John Foster Dulles, the new Secretary of State, wanted to get Roosevelt appointees out of the State Department. He enlisted brother Allen, the new CIA director, to develop damning material on the targeted persons (like Alger Hiss), who were then roasted by Nixon in the House and McCarthy in the Senate. Later, when McCarthy smeared people in the U.S. military, President Eisenhower managed to silence him.

In her night journey through San Francisco, Oedipa meets an old acquaintance, Jesús Arrabal, a member of the CIA, "Standing not for the agency you think, but for a clandestine Mexican outfit known as the *Conjuración de los Insurgentes Anarquistas*, traceable back to the time of the Flores Magón brothers and later briefly allied with Zapata" (119). Even if calling the group the CIA is a joke, mentioning the Flores Magón brothers and Emiliano Zapata opens another can of historical worms, and is no joke. The Flores Magón brothers published anti-government broadsides, were clapped into prison, and eventually fled to the U.S. Zapata was an Indian land-reformer, in whose name a contemporary Mexican land-reform movement in Chiapas province has recently become active. A populist during the early decades of this century, Zapata was betrayed and killed in 1919. In a curious mixture of religion and politics, Mexicans venerate his grave as a holy place to this day. How ironic—or cynical—it was, then, that George Bush named his CIA-front oil company Zapata Petroleum (Loftus 367–68).

According to Ferdinand Lundberg, Porfirio Díaz's government in Mexico was brought down in 1911 by the Pierce-Waters Oil Company—a firm 65%-owned by Standard Oil—and Francisco Madero was installed as nominal leader by Henry Clay Pierce, "a confidential Rockefeller henchman." By 1913, Madero was out, and Victoriano Huerta was installed as dictator, "a pawn of British oil interests" (ASF 124). But U.S. President Wilson refused to recognize Huerta's government. Venustiano Carranza and his lieutenant, Pancho Villa, took to the field in the north against Huerta, with the backing of Cleveland H. Dodge, a Rockefeller in-law. "On April 21, 1914, American warships, upon instructions from Washington, shelled Vera Cruz to

prevent a German ship from landing munitions consigned to Huerta." On July 15, 1914, Huerta was forced out, and "Carranza took office on behalf of the National City Bank" (125). Carranza had sold Villa and Zapata out:

When Carranza seized the executive power, Zapata and Villa warred against him. Zapata's forces occupied Mexico City three times in 1914-1915 (once with the followers of Villa), but finally retired to Morelos, where Zapata resisted until he was treacherously killed by an emissary of Carranza. . . . To the Indians [Zapata] was a savior and the hero of the revolution. (*New Columbia Encyclopedia*)

Oedipa's revelations come to her from Cohen (a priest), Thoth (a god) and Jesús (the son of God). With increasing insistence, the allusions on the underside of *Lot 49* use the metaphors of revelation and hierophany to point to historical figures and political conflicts. Minor players are glossed in offhand ways (Darrowlike, Beaconsfield Cigarettes). Major figures are often indicated by half-names (James and Foster, Wendell). Figures behind major international historical events like the rise and fall of empires—the Rothschilds, the Morgans, the Rockefellers—are never named outright. We have to pursue references to Thurn and Taxis, Jay Gould, Emiliano Zapata into extra-textual sources to find the biggest players. The struggles among industrial cliques and the tensions among the social philosophies they represent are the stuff of recent history, and they are what Pynchon writes about.

That is not to say *The Crying of Lot 49* is only about the struggles for supremacy among corporate cliques in this century: it is not. It is also about Oedipa. Through the interlocking holdings of Pierce Inverarity, Oedipa does get glimmers of the "interlocking corporate directorates" C. Wright Mills discusses in *The Power Elite*. The *maaswerk* of the text, the level of inter-connecting allusions, is the referent, the unquoted melody against which the jazz soloist invents variations, the id-driven and superego-censored expression of the unconscious, the forbidden political message against which the state-censored narrative resonates. As Oedipa's story accelerates, the underside of the tapestry/story/melody gets louder, and meanings leap out at the reader who has a trained magic eye. But that is still merely the subtext. Loudly accused of being a soft-headed bleeding-heart liberal, Mrs. Maas answers: "'Metzger,' Oedipa whispered, embarrassed, 'I'm a Young Republican'" (76). This joke is as close as the manifest narrative comes to any explicit party politics.

Chapter 6: Most Damning Analogies

The manifest narrative of *Lot 49* comes to no very conclusive conclusion. Tracking down possible leads, Oedipa comes up with little that makes much more sense to her than this: "Pierce Inverarity was really dead" (177). Her husband, Mucho, her shrink, Hilarius, her "extra-marital fella" (153), Metzger, her guide to Tristero's mystery, Driblette, her used-book seller, Zapf, are all unavailable to her. She is now alone before the question of whether her attempt to track down Tristero has any significance "that mattered to the world" (181-82) or is only the result of an elaborate hoax, a joke (167, 170). And if we stand to the entirety of *The Crying of Lot 49*, upside and underside, as Oedipa stands to her perplexity, how are we to read the novel? Is it a hoax, a joke on us?

Before we can fully appreciate a tentative answer, we need to illuminate some last allusions. When Oedipa visits Emory Bortz, he tells her of an edition of *The Courier's Tragedy* in the Vatican library, a pornographic version, "'[i]llicit microfilms'" of which Bortz "'[s]muggled out'" of the Vatican in 1961 (154). This datum, together with the earlier name Jesús Arrabal—Jesus of the Suburbs (Spanish *arrabal* = suburb)—evokes the Second-World-War Vatican adventures of one James Jesús Angleton, a legendary player in the real CIA, with its suburban Washington campus in Langley, Virginia, the CIA Pynchon has teased us with all along.

The young Lieutenant James Jesús Angleton became head of the OSS's X-2, counterintelligence, Italian desk in London in 1944, and head of X-2 for Italy in 1945. His father, Hugh (an early supporter of Mussolini), had been assigned to X-2 in Italy in 1943, but was put out of commission when a jeep accident shattered his leg (Loftus 86-87). (V. contains a father-son team in Italy, Hugh Godolphin, "the veteran spy" [174], and his chubby son, Evan.) In 1939, while a student at Yale, Angleton had hosted Ezra Pound's visit to New Haven. Pound, who was making one of his periodic American tours giving poetry readings, was already a resident of Italy, an outspoken Fascist ideologue, a supporter of Mussolini, and would become an anti-U.S. radio propagandist during the war (Heymann 87). Ultimately, Angleton became chief of CIA counterintelligence, a position he held for a generation before, like Forrestal and McCarthy, he finally went mad.

Near the end of the war, in a scenario at least as complicated as *The Courier's Tragedy*, Angleton set up an underground railroad running out of Germany, into the Vatican and out again. Aarons and Loftus's *Unholy Trinity* presents a detailed and well documented account of this

operation. Angleton smuggled Nazi intelligence agents who, it was thought, would be helpful against the Soviets in the already anticipated Cold War. He smuggled jewelry and other artifacts, cash, banking records, intelligence files and gold—railroad cars filled with gold bullion. Some of the gold was the property of German industrialists and bankers; some was the gold of New York and London bankers and financiers; but most was the gold of the corporations and the governments of the countries Germany had conquered and occupied.¹⁷ Angleton's underground railroad smuggled people and assets from Germany, through Switzerland (under the supervision of the OSS's Allen Dulles), to the Vatican, then out of Italy to Argentina, Australia, Canada and, of course, the United States.

Angleton forged a series of documents he alleged originated in the Vatican to cover the trail of this underground railroad and to throw off British, Soviet and American intelligence. His actions were treasonous: the war was not yet over, and he was giving aid and comfort to the enemy. A traitor, Angleton had to cover his trail. While he was at it, he had a rare opportunity to conceal various wartime financial transactions and negotiations between German and American corporations, especially clients of the Dulles brothers.

Which brings us to the Vessel affair. Angleton created a fictitious Vatican spy, code-named Vessel, with the help of Monsignor Domenico Tardini. Vessel would provide Angleton with cover in the event the scheme was discovered.¹⁸ (*The Courier's Tragedy* features a treacherous Domenico.) "Tardini had just the fall guy in mind: Virgilio Scattolini, a pornographer who supposedly had seen the light of God and obtained a job on the Vatican newspaper. . . . It was a small step to promote him to master forger of Vatican intelligence" (Loftus 92, 93). The OSS's chief of Secret Intelligence for Italy, Vincent Scamporino, would verify the forged documents, which were then sent on to the White House. The elaborate scheme, managed from "Angleton's OSS office in Rome at 59 Via Sicilia" (Loftus 94), defrauded two U.S. presidents, Roosevelt and Truman, with bogus intelligence (forged Vatican) reports. The intelligence group believed their activities were more important than the presidency in 1945.¹⁹ It sounds Pynchonian: the tardy Tardini provides a patsy in the person of the scatological Scattolini, whom the scampish Scamporino vouches for as the one true source of legitimate intelligence within the Vatican, a source who turns out to be a forger—all to protect James Jesús Angleton from exposure as a traitor on behalf of Dulles and his Nazi clients.

It may seem a stretch from Bortz's smuggled microfilm of a book in the Vatican library to the history of forged wartime Vatican intelligence,

from Jesús Arrabal and his CIA to James Jesús Angleton and his CIA; but this is where Pynchon's incomplete analogies lead. Misdirection has worked this way in Pynchon's fiction since his first short story, leading us from something in the text to something outside the text, from profane parody or sometimes apolitical events on the overside of the tapestry to sacred meaning or historical-political significance on the underside, through the window where passage between the two worlds is possible: through switch words and half-names and double meanings that have relevance on both sides of the tapestry. When we read with a magic eye, these surprising associations leap out.

Angleton and the Vessel affair provide the answer to the question of how a decimated, devastated Germany rebounded to become the strongest economic force in postwar Europe. Germany recovered with the help of John Foster Dulles, Allen Welsh Dulles, James V. Forrestal, James Jesús Angleton, and the CIA (and its predecessor, the OSS), and with the help of gold recycled through Argentina by way of the Vatican. Conversely, at the end of the First World War, the Rothschilds, the Morgans, and the Pynchons of Pynchon & Co. were among the world's richest people. They survived the Second World War with much-reduced status, money and power, while many ex-Nazi German industrialists became some of the world game's biggest power-players, some of the world's richest men.²⁰ What might Pynchon's fiction be like if his family had been on the other side—tales of corporate intrigue, like those of Louis Auchincloss?

Implicit in Pynchon's fiction is the view that events in recent American history have led to a virtual constitutional crisis, a challenge to the supremacy of the presidency by the intelligence community. Many of the events in *Lot 49* have to do, however indirectly, with this crisis. In his farewell address to the nation, January 17, 1961, President Eisenhower said:

In the councils of Government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.

We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes.

We should remember the events against which this warning about the military-industrial complex resonates. When Eisenhower made his "open skies" proposal, on July 21, 1955, at a Geneva summit conference, calling for unrestricted but monitored overflight of national territories on both sides of the Iron Curtain, many observers felt its

acceptance would have gone a long way toward thawing the Cold War. To make a gesture of good faith toward Soviet Premier Khrushchev, the president ordered the CIA (under Allen Dulles) to halt its U-2 photo-reconnaissance flights. But Dulles secretly arranged for the flights to continue. When Francis Gary Powers's U-2 spy plane was shot down in the Ural mountains on May 1, 1960, and Khrushchev announced the fact to the world media, the embarrassed Eisenhower lied to cover up. To many it appeared that the CIA had disobeyed a direct order from the Commander-in-Chief. The St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* asked the next day, "Do our intelligence operatives enjoy so much freewheeling authority that they can touch off an incident of grave international import by low-level decisions unchecked by responsible policy-making power?" (qtd. in Andrew 246). Had Dulles disobeyed a direct order from Eisenhower when Ike was seeking greater détente with the Soviets? Later, when Lee Harvey Oswald's possible role in the U-2 affair became known, some observers felt Dulles's action implied that the director of the CIA was above the president and that the military-industrial complex could do what it pleased, independent of the will of the people as expressed by the popularly elected and duly constituted chief executive. No wonder Ike was peeved: the CIA was running the U.S. the way it ran Latin America. The U-2 affair was no mere personality squabble, Ike vs. Dulles; it was two institutions of the executive branch vying for supremacy, the presidency vs. the CIA, hence the democratic process vs. a form of totalitarianism.

Concern also ran high about Cuba, Castro and the exporting of Cuban communism to the rest of Latin America even before the beginning of the Kennedy administration. The CIA had already planned the April 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion before Kennedy took office in January, and when the invasion failed, Kennedy felt that the CIA had set him up. He let it be known he intended to dismantle the CIA and assign its functions to the other intelligence units within the government. He reportedly vowed "to splinter the CIA in a thousand pieces and scatter it to the winds" (Marchetti 29). Kennedy, a Democrat, forced the Republican Allen Dulles to resign, along with other senior CIA officers. But the CIA was too deeply involved just then in operations around the world to be disassembled. Kennedy was assassinated in 1963, in a way that implicated the CIA. Though it smacks of post hoc fallacy, many people—journalists, filmmakers, critics of the Warren Commission Report, maybe even J. Edgar Hoover—believed the CIA had some hand in Kennedy's assassination and the coverup. *Lot 49* hints that the CIA had something to do with the assassination and coverup. If it had, the CIA was again demonstrating that the presidency was subordinate to the CIA.

Ironically, the link between Eisenhower's struggle with the CIA and Kennedy's is Lee Harvey Oswald, history's all-time patsy. In *Oswald and the CIA*, John Newman reports that, "whether witting or not, Oswald became involved in CIA operations" (xv). One of the first things Oswald did when he defected to Russia was "offer to furnish the Soviets information he possessed on U.S. radar" (444), in front of an American official. Oswald's job in the Marines was tracking U-2 flights. His defection, termed a "dangle" in intelspeak, seems to have led to the downing and capture of Francis Gary Powers, and to have subverted Eisenhower's attempt at détente. The CIA records on Oswald, from the day of his defection onward, disappeared into a black hole in the CIA's Counterintelligence/Special Investigation Group—CI/SIG—the extremely sensitive and closely held realm of—you already guessed—James Jesús Angleton. The public course of Oswald's career once he arrived back in the States is well known.

In a very short time, two presidents, a Republican and a Democrat, ran afoul of the CIA. The result amounted to a constitutional crisis, a change in our actual form of government without benefit of a duly ratified constitutional amendment. The crisis is reminiscent of that period in Roman history when the Praetorian Guard could sell the office of emperor to the highest bidder and then, after a time, assassinate him and have a new auction. To this day, the president has never again challenged the CIA, though the agency has made its share of egregious errors. With the election of former CIA director George Bush, the presidency and the CIA effectively merged. Nowadays, given the dissolution of the former Soviet Union, there is again talk of downsizing or even eliminating the CIA and placing any of its indispensable functions under other, more appropriate government agencies. Maybe the CIA—its tactics and strategies—was justifiable only as long as there was a Cold War. Maybe now we can return to our old form of government. Maybe. Or maybe the CIA has gained strength from its role in the Wye Accords, while the presidency has been weakened by the Clinton impeachment.

The extent to which *The Crying of Lot 49* alludes to these political issues, or to issues of government and society, may not have been entirely clear when the book was published, before Watergate and Iran-Contra. I credit Pynchon with a lot of prescience, which he may or may not possess. But *Lot 49* itself suggests the analogy between the crisis in mid-sixties America and a crisis in Roman history by giving us, late in the novel, Dr. Diocletian Blobb. Why bring in this name after all that has gone before? Diocletian was a Roman emperor (284–305 CE) whose reign marked a change in government. Under Diocletian, local autonomy disappeared, the taxing system compulsorily tied the country

people to the land, the Senate became weak and ineffective, the army grew much larger and stronger, and the mercantile class was taxed to the limit. Diocletian established a military dictatorship. With the dissolution of any semblance of republican government, there were no theoretical or practical checks on the emperor. When Diocletian's scheme for price stabilization failed, the empire went into a long political and economic decline from which it never recovered. Could Pynchon see the gap between wealthy insiders and what used to be called the American middle class widening thirty-five years ago?

Finally, Pynchon half-names Augustine Blobb (158), alluding to the church father St. Augustine (354-430 CE). Augustine's *City of God* (which quotes Varro copiously) offers the Christian view of history as the Creator's providential preparation of two cities: His own, and the devil's. Using the fourfold system of patristic exegesis, Christian scholars could discern whether various historical events would cause their principals to wind up in heaven, the city of God, or hell, the city of man. Such allegorical reading (separating the literal, moral, allegorical and anagogical levels) was available to the spiritually advanced. Augustine felt the arduous task of exegesis (of pagan myth, pre-Christian history, Hebrew scripture and Christian scripture) was a "sweet labor" that reaped the benefit of spiritual delight. Secularized, Augustine's expectation of "exercise followed by pleasing discovery" seems central to Pynchon's narrative method. Naming Augustine, Pynchon instructs us to expect secular delight for our sweet labors of interpreting his many-layered and highly politicized subtext.

So *The Crying of Lot 49* is about Oedipa, her life, her loves, her mental states, and her curious quest to decipher the estate of Pierce Inverarity. And, by allusion, it is also Pynchon's meditation on the state of American affairs in the mid-sixties, about Russo-American relations during the American Civil War, about the fate of Jan De Witt during the founding of the Dutch republic. It is about the acrimonious U.S. elections of 1940 and 1944, and about the OSS in Italy during the Second World War. It is about Thurn and Taxis and its relation with the Rothschilds, and about the relations of the Rothschilds and the Morgans. It is about how certain American corporations and banks were instrumental in preparing Germany for war, and (by implication) about how those same corporations and banks were instrumental in driving Pynchon & Co. into receivership. It is about how McCarthyism hounded lots of Yankees and Jews out of the government, about how Germany rebounded from the Second World War to become one of the world's richest nations, about how so many former Nazi officials went on to rank among the world's elite. It is about how the CIA got to be superordinate to the presidency in American *realpolitik*. It is about how

mid-sixties America resembled Nazi Germany, the Dutch republic and the Roman empire at their worst, about the fear that the cessation of political and intellectual exchange would cause a new decline of the West. And all these meditations were triggered by the assassination of President Kennedy.

Pynchon published this political satire under his own name during a dangerous time, raising most secret secrets in public, albeit in code, warning, statesmanlike, of a possible dire outcome. The Menippean pattern has been there in the text, plain as the nose on our faces, since 1966, lying there like a Magic Eye[®] print few people recognize. The funny thing about Magic Eye[®] prints is that, when you see them in two dimensions, you can't understand all the fuss, but once you see them in three dimensions, you can't imagine why everybody doesn't see them that way all the time.

Is *Lot 49* a hoax, or is it something that matters to the world? If we stand to the novel as Oedipa stands to her experience, then the novel provides a means for us to uncover the secret mysteries of recent history as Oedipa executes the estate of Pierce Inverarity. Any historical name alluded to, literary name, corrupted name, place name, or pun on any of those may lead to a body of information that explains how we all got to be in this boat, this postwar America. Pynchon guides us through a history lesson. If we learn how to decode his encrypted clues, hints, pointers, enthymemes, incomplete analogies, quotations, near quotations, names, half-names, puns and various other signifiers; if we are willing to do the necessary rooting around in library stacks; if we remember to view the work as a Menippean (political) satire; if we are adept at Freudian interpretation; if we are willing to consider critical background information about Pynchon, his friends and family; if we are willing to endure the chill shiver of paranoia, the eel in the bowel of fear; if we follow up on all the leads, round up the usual suspects, in standard reference books (not necessarily classified documents); if we can keep our heads while those around us are losing theirs and blaming it on us, then we will wind up with a lot more than the overt narrative of *The Crying of Lot 49*. We may wind up with words we never wanted to hear, but we may become those who know.

—Baltimore, MD

Notes

¹Howe characterizes the political novel as having ideological conflict and passionate moral sentiments, balancing didacticism with feeling. Like the writers of old, political novelists must instruct as well as entertain (22). Since Pynchon is hardly didactic in Howe's sense, *Lot 49* would not qualify.

²On 22 Dec. 1974, the *New York Times* ran an exposé by Seymour M. Hersh with the lead paragraph beginning: “The Central Intelligence Agency, directly violating its charter, conducted a massive, illegal domestic intelligence operation during the Nixon administration against the anti-war movement and other dissident groups in the United States, according to well-placed Government sources” (qtd. in Olmsted 12). Hersh went on to demonstrate how the CIA, forbidden by law to operate in the United States, had gathered files on ten thousand American citizens, conducting illegal break-ins, wiretaps and mail-openings.

³William Gibson, author of *Neuromancer*, once said, “*Gravity’s Rainbow* stopped my life cold for three months. My university career went to pot. I just sort of laid around and read this thing” (62).

⁴For a more extensive list and discussion of Pynchon’s favorite tropes, see my “Where’s Wanda?”

⁵See my “Pynchon’s Politics.”

⁶According to Justin Martin’s obituary for Thomas R. Pynchon, Sr., Pynchon has at least one relative, an aunt, with a Jewish-sounding last name, “Roth.”

⁷James Forrestal’s fear too (Loftus 213).

⁸Speaking of analogies, Robin W. Winks describes “the Holohan case,” an inter-service affair: one Major William G. Holohan was killed in Italy in 1945, and the Lake of Orta was dredged for his bones (then and again in 1950) in search of evidence suggesting he had been murdered, as rumor had it, by an OSS man (359–60).

⁹Voltaire may also be one of Pynchon’s heroes: see my “Abrams Remembers Pynchon,” and TR Factor.

¹⁰The article does go on to report: “FBI experts, however—using the same rifle as Oswald—determined that three shots could have been fired by one person within the five to six seconds that Kennedy’s assassin took” (Jackson).

¹¹I am indebted to Stephen Tomaske for reminding me of the information in Cowart’s book and for calling my attention to Newfield’s memoir.

¹²Not surprisingly, Brecht was summoned to appear before the House Committee on Un-American Activities in 1947, when Richard M. Nixon (under the tutelage of Allen Dulles) was one of that committee’s leading lights. “Sick Dick and the Volkswagens” [(CL 23) = “Nixon and the Nazis?”], indeed.

¹³*The Secret War Against the Jews* is also a how-to manual on plausible deniability. The book was not much publicized on its release by St. Martin’s because its publicity budget was eaten up by legal fees, for lawyers to double check that none of its allegations were slanderous or libelous and therefore actionable. I have not heard of any litigation. I think *Secret War* will achieve the status of a classic after ten or twenty years, much like Alfred W. McCoy’s *Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia*.

¹⁴“For she had undergone her own educating at a time of nerves, blandness and retreat . . . this having been a national reflex to certain pathologies in high places only death had had the power to cure” (103). One of the pathologies here is McCarthyism; the confirming datum, “Senator Joseph” (104), comes later in the same paragraph. McCarthy became prominent in 1950, was censured in 1954, and died in 1957. His death ended the DC reign of bureaucratic terror and the period of silence and conformity outside the beltway known as the 1950s. This characterization of Oedipa is ironic or understated in that she is a clueless dweeb, educated during a period when any important thinking beyond “pursuing strange words in Jacobean texts” (104) was rare, and training to think critically was rarer. Oedipa, a schlemiel, is played upon by events beyond her control, misses nearly all the important clues that have been visible around her throughout the book, and focuses instead on items that turn out to be of only passing importance to the estate of Pierce Inverarity.

¹⁵Cockburn and St. Clair’s *Whiteout* (131–39) documents that Forrestal was in cahoots with the Dulles brothers on specific matters, and suggests cooperation with them throughout Forrestal’s career. In addition, *Whiteout* examines the nether side of politics, especially the various tactics for plausible deniability, making it another useful casebook. Exhaustively researched, it stands to gain grudging respect, if only by default; no one else has written such a detailed account of the CIA’s misdeeds since Seymour Hersh’s work during the 1970s on domestic spying, Chile, etc.

¹⁶Oil, in the form of gasoline, is a key to revelation in the story of the former Yoyodyne executive who becomes the founder of Inamorati Anonymous (its initials are one of the novel’s several enthymemes for the CIA)—the tale of a middle-management career gone wrong, a triangular love affair and an attempted suicide. Saved from immolating himself after the fashion of a Buddhist monk in Vietnam, the executive takes the muted post horn revealed by the gasoline in which he had doused himself for a sign, and he vows to found a society of people who have renounced love: “and this sign, revealed by the same gasoline that almost destroyed me, will be its emblem” (116).

¹⁷Only recently have Swiss banks admitted to having held the contemporary equivalent (by some estimates) of some seven billion dollars in Nazi gold since 1945, and only recently has the World Court begun an investigation to discover the rightful owners of that gold. See the British Foreign Office white paper *Nazi Gold*.

¹⁸Loftus and Aarons contend that Angleton’s fictitious Vessel, and a main source of his bogus information, was actually the very real British double agent Kim Philby, unbeknownst to Angleton at the time (107). Those who find Loftus and Aarons too partisan should see Winks (353–56). When he wrote *Cloak and Gown*, Winks was the Randolph W. Townsend, Jr. Professor of History at Yale. His account of the Vessel affair (in his chapter on Angleton, “The Theorist”) is

somewhat sketchier, but it largely corroborates the facts, if not the interpretation, in Loftus and Aarons's account.

¹⁹The Vessel affair did not come to light until fifty years afterward when William E. Gowen, the son of an alleged informer, obtained newly declassified documents and worked to clear his father's name.

²⁰Christopher Simpson's *Splendid Blond Beast* offers one account of the German side of this history. Simpson uses Nietzsche's metaphor to describe the conditions under which genocide can be made state policy. The Nazis coopted many through "offering bystanders money, property, status, and other rewards for their active or tacit complicity in the crime" (5). Soon Germany's business leaders were coopted in the same way, but on a larger scale, by the Aryanization laws. The most powerful figures in business benefitted on the largest scale and managed to keep their wealth after the war.

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