



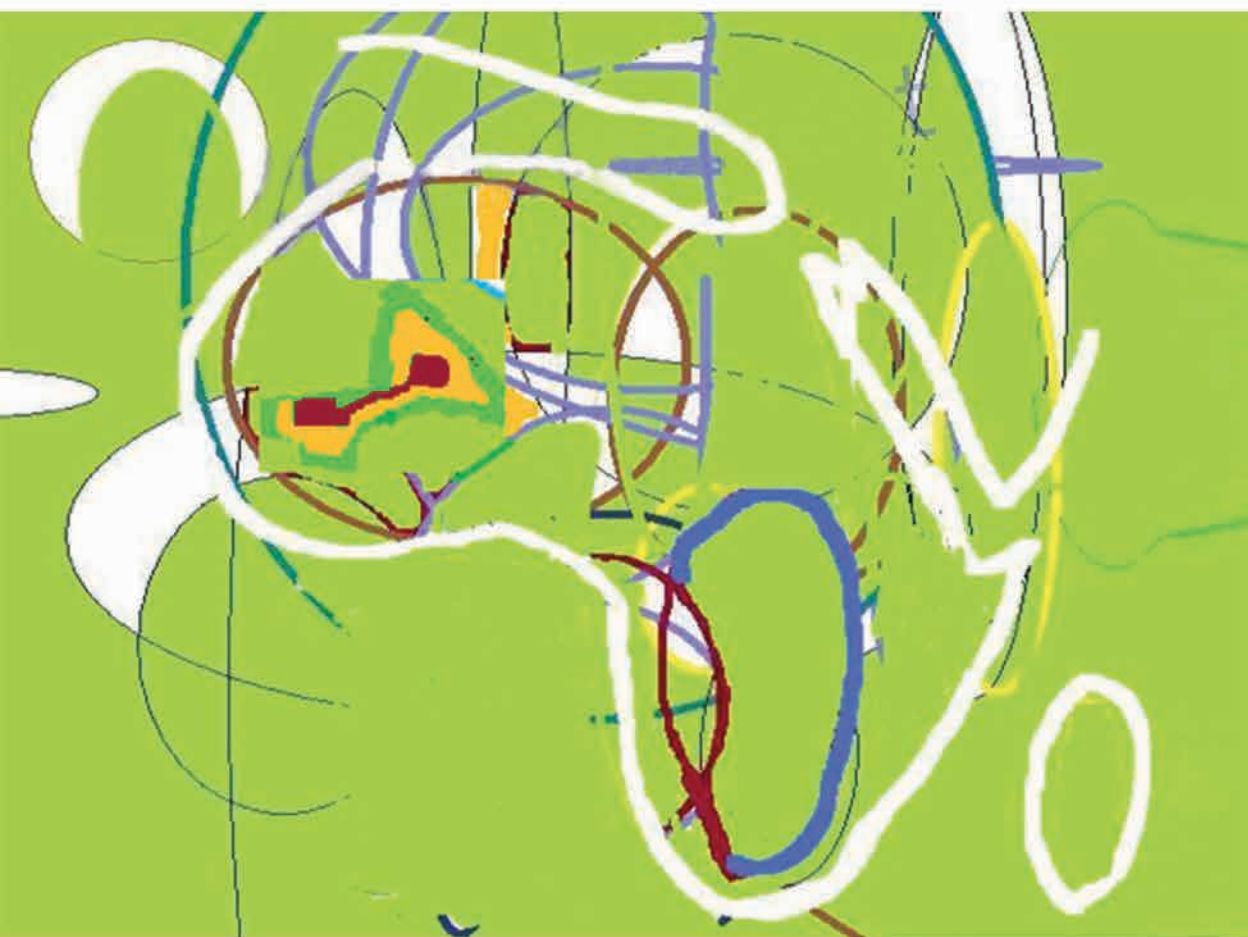
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# Sommaire

Contributeurs	TITRE DE LA CONTRIBUTION	Page
DIOP FATOU	L'INTÉGRATION DU GENRE DANS LES ETABLISSEMENTS D'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR (EES) AU SÉNÉGAL : QUELLE CONFIGURATION À L'UCAD ET À L'UGB ?	7
M.TOTI AHIDJE Zahui Gondey,	ECRITURE DE LA GUERRE DANS <i>ALLAH N'EST PAS OBLIGE D'AHMADOU KOUROUMA</i> ET DANS <i>JOHNNY CHIEN MECHANT</i> , D'EMMANUEL DONGALA	25
Nadège Zang Biyogue,	LIRE LE STYLE POPULAIRE DANS LE COIFFEUR DE KOUTA DE MASSA MAKAN DIABATE ET <i>LES MATITIS</i> D'HUBERT FREDDY NDONG MBENG	45
JOHNSON Kouassi Zamina	<i>THE CRYING OF LOT 49</i> BY THOMAS PYNCHON: A SEMIOTIC AND SEMANTIC READING OF SYMBOLS	58
HAÏDARA Mohamed Abdoullah	ETUDE SOCIOLOGIQUE DE LA CORRUPTION ET SOUS-DEVELOPPEMENT DU MALI	73
MEITE Ben Soualiouo BROU Konan Alain KOUAME N'Goran Bertin	LA CONTRIBUTION DE L'AIDE FRANÇAISE AU DEVELOPPEMENT SOCIO-ECONOMIQUE DE LA CÔTE D'IVOIRE (1960-1970)	93
SILUE N'Tchabétien Oumar	LE « RETOUR DE JÉSUS » À LA SORBONNE DU PLATEAU EN CÔTE D'IVOIRE. BILLET RETOUR DANS L'ARÈNE DE LA JOUTE ORATOIRE APRÈS LA CRISE POST-ÉLECTORALE DE 2010-2011	113
Angba Martin AMON	AMBIGUÏTÉ DU LIEN ENTRE SOUVERAINETÉ ET MONDIALISATION	130
N'Cho Brou Hyacinthe,	PROBLEMATIQUE DE L'INSERTION SOCIOPROFESSIONNELLE DES JEUNES DIPLOMES DES UNIVERSITES PUBLIQUES DE COTE D'IVOIRE : CAS DES UNIVERSITES ALASSANE OUATTARA DE BOUAKE (UAO) ET JEAN LOROUGNON GUEDE (UJLOG) DE DALOA	145
Dr Pierre Kouakou TANO Dr FANNY Losséni	L'ANIMATION SOCIOCULTURELLE ET LE THEATRE DANS LA RESOLUTION DES CONFLITS : ACTIVITES SOCIOCULTURELLES, ENCADREMENT, ET FORMATION DES LIENS SOCIAUX	164

Marico Adama	<b>LA CONDITION HUMAINE ET LE CONTRAT SOCIAL CHEZ D'HOLBACH ET CHEZ SAMUEL VON PUFENDORF</b>	<b>175</b>
Siaka KONE,	<b>NIETZSCHE : LA PHILOSOPHIE COMME SAGESSE D'UN CORPS ENTHOUSIASTE</b>	<b>192</b>
Asmao Diallo	<b>CHALLENGES RELATED TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGRICULTURAL ORIENTATION LAW ON WOMEN AGRIBUSINESS ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN MALI: THE CASE STUDY OF SAMANKO AND BAGUINEDA WOMEN</b>	<b>204</b>
Issa Coulibaly	<b>LE FAIBLE NIVEAU DES ECOLIERS MALIENS : CAS DU VILLAGE DE WACORO</b>	<b>227</b>

# ***THE CRYING OF LOT 49* BY THOMAS PYNCHON: A SEMIOTIC AND SEMANTIC READING OF SYMBOLS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The Crying of Lot 49* turns around social, historical, cultural and political events formulated in the message that evokes the social crisis by the means of symbols. Symbols themselves are not static at all but rather varying depending first on cultural perception, ideology, and second on improvised aspects. Beyond the novel, the author translates the gender relationships interspersed with the detritus of patriarchal ideology derived from the dynamic gender identity of the American society and its culture. The novel tells about some individuals who have lost the traditional use of social norms: it brings about the chaos due to moral dehumanizing and destructive atmosphere of human existence.

## **KEY WORDS**

Crisis, patriarchy, invisible forces, upheavals, symbols.

## **RESUME**

*The Crying of Lot 49* met en exergue des événements sociaux, historiques, culturels et politiques exprimés dans un message qui évoque la crise sociale traduite par l'usage des symboles. Les symboles ne sont du tout pas statiques mais plutôt variantes selon d'abord, la perception culturelle, idéologique et ensuite, dépendent des aspects improvisés. Au delà du roman, l'auteur traduit les relations du genre émaillées de débris de l'idéologie patriarcale dérivée de la dynamique de l'identité du genre de la société américaine et de sa culture. Le roman mentionne certains individus qui ont perdu l'usage traditionnel des normes sociales: cela engendre le chaos dû à la déshumanisation morale et à l'atmosphère destructive de l'existence humaine.

## **MOTS-CLES**

Crise, patriarcat, forces invisibles, bouleversements, symboles.

# INTRODUCTION

Reading *The Crying of Lot 49* by Thomas Pynchon is no more just a matter of consumption of the novel, but it calls for an interpretative interaction between the writer and the reader for a relative semiotic and semantic reconstruction. Semiotics is the study of signs and symbols, especially in writing, and what they mean and how they are used. As for semantics, it refers to the branch of linguistics dealing with the meanings of words and sentences.

This study focuses on the semiotic and semantic reading of symbols in *The Crying of Lot 49*. As such, Thomas Pynchon, through his text, conveys a particular culture derived from the American society. Therefore, when we talk about symbolism in *The Crying of Lot 49*, we mean to study the interconnections between social events and other similar bizarre revelations that the protagonist, Oedipa Maas is undergoing. Some references to science and technology and to obscure historical, social and economic events, contributing to the present American society and its culture. Beyond, there are punning names and many references or aspects of popular culture including confusing plot features. The novel itself deals with Oedipa Maas, a Californian housewife who becomes entangled in a complicated historical mystery, when her ex-lover, Pierce Inverarity dies having named her as the co-executor of his estate. The catalyst of Oedipa's adventure is a set of stamps that may have been used by a secret underground postal delivery service called the Tryster (or Tristero).

The objective of this paper consists in dealing with some relevant symbols around which *The Crying of Lot 49* turns and without which the novel would not have a consistent content. In other words, to what extent can the content of the novel be analyzed as relevant signs, signals, figures and symbols which function in diverse modes of signifying systems? How are these symbols used and what do they mean? To succeed in achieving this objective, we focus on Marxism and deconstruction as literary theories to support the analytic approach of the study that is composed of three major axes. The first part will deal with invisible forces and the image of individuals behind relevant symbols. The second section of the paper will show how symbols are used as ideological discourse by Thomas Pynchon in order to reflect the American social crisis. The third and last portion of the study will consist in putting out the critical analysis of the American capitalistic society behind symbols.



# 1- INVISIBLE FORCES AND THE IMAGE OF INDIVIDUALS BEHIND RELEVANT SYMBOLS

The novel, *The Crying of Lot 49* is replete with many symbols among which the relevant ones that must be considered as the most contextual devices of the present study. Pynchon expresses his interest in symbols by evoking more than once the word 'symbol' itself and developing at any stage of the novel his social ideology around symbolism. It is even the central substance of the author's way of communication: « There were to both outwards patterns hieroglyphic senses of concealed meaning, of intent to communicate» (14). What is more striking in this context is the use of "tower" as one of symbols the study will more focus on. The tower's existence and significance will be of great importance for the comprehension of this novel. Pynchon notes it down in the first chapter:

What did she so desire escape from? Such a captive maiden, having plenty of time to think soon realizes that her tower, its height and architecture, are like her only incidental: that what really keeps her where she is magic, anonymous and malignant, visited on her from outside and for no reason at all. Having no apparatus except gut fear and female cunning to examine this formless magic, to understand how it works, how to measure its field strength, count its lines of force, she may fall back on superstition, or take up a useful hobby like embroidery; or go mad, or marry a disk jockey. If the tower is everywhere and the knight of deliverance no proof against its magic, what else? » (11-12).

The tower keeps on resounding along most of the length of the novel with the same message. Pynchon sees in the tower the expression of power.

The novel points out the American social atmosphere, precisely in California in the mid-1960s. In the city, the tower is expected according to people's intent, to reach heaven. That would certainly have been the greatest achievement, because of its height: a daring enterprise, almost defying the authority of God. The tower is the symbol of superiority. Pynchon increasingly underlines this idea of superiority in *The Crying of lot 49* by considering the tower as a pattern or value that symbolizes the idea of domination:

Still, when she got a look at the next motel, she hesitated a second. A representation in painted sheet metal of a nymph holding a white blossom towered thirty feet into the air; the sign, lit up despite the sun, said "Echo Courts". The face of the nymph was much like Oedipa's, which didn't startle her do much as a concealed blower system that kept the nymph's gauze chiton in constant agitation....(16).

In the first chapter, the reader notices that the author draws his/her attention to the tower by saying « If the tower is everywhere and the knight of deliverance no proof against its magic, what else? » (57). He therefore calls the critical

mind to participate in the debate providing him with more particular tool that is the tower, whose symbolic understanding helps more understand the novel.

Beyond the existence of the tower, Pynchon also refers to the superiority of the “invisible forces”. Their intrusion in the world has greater consequences on human beings’ lives. The same point Peter Stearns develops when he says that «Men at all times have been subject, as they believe or experience, to forces from the stars, from the gods, or to forces that now blow through society itself, appearing as the stars one did to determine human fate ». As such, individuals are not in control of their own lives in the universe. They are at the mercy, being vulnerable of an external will. Oedipa herself, the protagonist of the novel, *The Crying of Lot 49* is working with at least two functions. First, she is portrayed with her literal status as human being. Second, she is presented in her symbolic identity. This symbolic value invested in Oedipa is the extension of the ideal pursued by the author in the use of the tower: «...The face of the nymph was much like Oedipa’s...» (16).

Before the symbolic value of Oedipa as an invisible force, it is important to examine something found on top of the tower in Eco Courts motel: «a representation in painted sheet metal of a nymph holding a white blossom towered thirty feet into the air; the sign, lit up despite the sun, said Eco Courts» (50). The nymph is the Greek and Roman divinity representing female beauty which may be defined as «one of a lesser deities of mythology, conceived of as beautiful maidens inhabiting the sea, rivers, woods, trees, mountains, meadows, etc... and frequently mentioned as attending a superior deity ». Pynchon presents the nymph on top of the tower with striking description. She appears with a «white blossom», a symbol of intimate relation, love; she is shining in spite of the daylight with a «blower system» that keeps her constantly moving.

With a certain approach, Oedipa’s symbolic identity may be considered as an influencing invisible force when she is said to have similar face like the nymph. Before this similarity, Pynchon manifests his intention to invest Oedipa with the symbolic value of spiritual forces by relating her to a “whirlwind”: «or out of the eye of some whirlwind rotating too slow for her heated skin» (14). She sees a nymph on the top of a tower, being moved by an artificial blower system which she is identified to. The use of the name “Oedipa” for a female protagonist is reminiscent of the story of King Oedipus in greater respect. It makes the reader of the novel evoke the idea of destiny but in a seductive way. There is interaction between both the seducer and the seduced. This seduction is much described in the «white blossom» and the female character that Pynchon tells about: the interconnection between men and the invisible forces. The idea

of seduction is more pointed out: « when those kids sing about ‘she loves you’, yeah well, you know, she does, she’s any number of people, all over the world, back through time, different colors, sizes, ages, shapes, distances from death, but she loves. And the ‘you’ is everybody» (117).

From the first the pages of the novel, the protagonist is surprised for being chosen as the executrix of the will of Pierce Inverarity in spite of her former intimate relation with him. By this fact, the author shows his deliberate intention to call the attention of the reader to the involuntary mission of Oedipa. She unsparingly embarks on the boat of detective without any idea whatsoever of whether her search will be successful or not. Once more, Pynchon’s vision of the sinking world appears clearly in the function of his protagonist.

The cohabitation of «Maxwell’s Demon» with men in their activities, the symbol W.A.S.T.E defined as We Await Silent Tristero’s Empire, are revelators of the utter subjugation of men unto the invisible forces. In the numerous developments of the symbol ‘Tristero’ in the book, an aspect deserves being focused: “The postal monopoly belonged to Ohain by right of conquest, and Ohain belonged to Tristero by right of blood. He styled himself El Desheredado, The Disinherited, and fashioned a livery of black for his followers, black to symbolize the only thing that belongs to them in their exile: the night” (132).

The symbol ‘Tristero’ takes an arcane aspect alongside the novel. It becomes the center of focusing Oedipa’s quest but ultimately it does not yield any clear discovery. In the above passage, the author presents ‘Tristero’ as the name of a certain Disinherited whom on account of his disinheritance leaves to the night as his only possession. The term Disinherited is written with capital “D” thereby showing the author’s particular attention to that term. To what may be assimilated the Disinherited? But this:

And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him  
».

In this quote, we find the Disinherited, Satan, Tristero whose Empire is silently awaited by men. Here, Satan is reported as he who “deceiveth” the whole world with the implication of his angels. Once more, appears the notion of deception, seduction that we earlier underlined before the nymph with white blossom on top of the tower in Echo Court. Pynchon shows an aversion for the American religion that is Christianity. While showing disbelief proofs in Christianity, he develops ad nauseam the presence of invisible forces. It is of great evidence that

Pynchon is proponent of the so-called 'beat generation'.

In what appears as clear ironical use of religion, the sentiment of Pynchon lies in favor of the substitution of a new spiritual awareness for what is of remote culture, Christianity. The ties of sensitivity entertained between the Demon and Nefastis towards invention, justify this desire for a substitute. That invention is only possible when you hold a relationship with the Demon. For only the Demon does the work (68). That is why Pynchon comes with the idea that "In school they have been brainwashed... into believing the Myth of the American Inventor... (70). He condemns the belief that Americans themselves are the inventors, as if to turn the reputation of invention to the account of those spiritual forces. But this relationship to invention does not exclude in any manner the image of suffering of men in the novel.

The deteriorating image of individuals under the effect of the invisible forces is subtly expressed through what Pynchon calls "Entropy": "Entropy is a figure of speech", then, Nefastis sighed, a metaphor. It connects the world of thermodynamics to the world of information flow. The Machine uses both. The Demon makes the metaphor not only verbally graceful, but also objectively true" (85). Entropy, in its literal sense, is the loss of energy which, ultimately may result in the condition of loss of value or even death. Jonathan Kincade, for instance, uses the notion of "symbolic exchange" in his essay on *The Crying of Lot 49*, to point out death as an evidence of the process of transformation. He shows that human being is undoubtedly subject to gaining entropy, that is, his progressive drive to his death. Entropy, otherwise viewed as the notion of "symbolic exchange" which better describes the downgrading image of the characters encountered in Pynchon's novel. In a word, Pynchon makes his reader mind the American social crisis throughout relevant symbols.

## 2- THE AMERICAN SOCIAL CRISIS BEYOND SYMBOLS

As far as symbols *The Crying of Lot 49* are concerned, they are perceived as « Pynchon's literary creation is rather ingenious, and it is a major challenge to the traditional novel. The symbolism of his work is to provide readers with more space of imagination and interpretation... ». Symbols such as invisible forces, nymph, W.A.S.T.E, Tristero, tower, etc. that constitute the core elements of this study, can stand as important interpretative and meaningful devices which, therefore, allow a comprehension of the novel. Furthermore, its hybrid unfolding structure gives the reader several instances of interpretations. For instance, Li-Xia Kong while giving her point of view about

the novel, she says «The novel is very obscure. Seemingly, it is a detective novel with a labyrinthine plot, but in fact it reveals a range of complex issues...».

Consequently, Pynchon keeps the mystery of “Tristero” unsolved. Oedipa pursues this symbol, searching for its meaning till the end of the novel. Unfortunately, she never succeeds in finding this meaning. The more desperately she sights, the more it remains awkward. In sum, the pursuit of Pierce Inverarity’s estate is converted into a quest of Meaning. Pynchon highlights the importance of meaning by writing it with capital ‘M’. It still remains to know what Meaning is in the conception of Pynchon. Can meaning be single, when one is related to a book for instance, of course, not at all.

Considering this great space of imagination and interpretations, the novel, *The Crying of Lot 49* turns around social, historical, cultural and political events formulated in the message that evokes the social crisis by the means of symbols. Symbols themselves are not static at all but rather varying depending first on cultural perception, ideology, and second on improvised aspects. In the same vein, Dan Sperber gives his point of view telling this: «In form, symbolic motivations resemble technical ones. Just as we say that a product is good for a certain purpose because it has certain qualities. So, we seem to say that an object is good for symbolizing this or that because it has these or those properties». Otherwise, Pierre Zima turns the same idea into his own concrete meaning by giving a generalizing view of the term ‘ideology’ like this: «Ideology can be defined as a discursive (lexical, semantic and syntactic) manifestation of particular social interests (...) ideology is inherent to every philosophical or scientific literary text».

Based on this comprehension of what ideology is, it is evident to detect at least an ideology that proves the core matter of the discourse. Besides many, let us consider that the first and foremost purpose of Pynchon’s novel is to point out the decadence of people and the involvement of invisible forces. With different themes narrated in the novel such as homosexuality, drug addiction, alcohol consumption, human bones, etc. it is easy to understand Pynchon’s great concern about the difficult living conditions of his surroundings.

On top of the tower, the author presents the reader what follows: «a representation in painted sheet metal of a nymph holding a white blossom towered thirty feet into the air, the sign, lit up despite the sun, said Echo Courts. The face of the nymph was much like Oedipa’s...» (49). Here, the author, by identifying Oedipa Maas, the protagonist, to the nymph, he tells the reader that it is Oedipa herself that is on top of the tower. That is where the author projects the dualistic

use of his protagonist. Doing so, he helps comprehend that he is willing to stress both the literal as well as the symbolic sides of Oedipa Maas. However, focusing on the literal sense of her as human being, she is consequently judged by the author according to her feminine gender. Implicitly placing Oedipa Maas on top of the tower, being lit up and constantly agitating, Pynchon makes his reader pay attention not only to female characters but also to the particularism of feminine gender. Oedipa's presence in the air so that she may be seen by anyone, becomes a way of isolation; because of her social responsibility.

In terms of traditional values, women are in part of the origin of social evils as they are in "constant agitation". This isolation is more translated into facts in the novel as Oedipa Maas is deprived of all her company: «Oedipa is isolated from the men in her life, Mucho Maas and Metzger, because of her adherence to pursuing a society that others dismiss as imaginary, not in line with the normal truth of society».

The plot of the story tends to lend the air of misogyny to Pynchon. Is it fortuitous that on the death of Pierce Inverarity, his ex-girlfriend, Oedipa Maas, who knows nothing about executing a company, be chosen as the co-executor? In her quest, though she has been suggested, that the matter of Pierce's estate may be a simple joke, she unyieldingly pursues; so that her presence in the room the day of the auction surprises Loren Passerine. In addition, in the auction room Oedipa Maas becomes an increasing center of interest: « They watched her come in » (152) as if they accuse her or know her as an object of threat. Like on the top of tower, Oedipa Maas finds herself in particular position to be well known and feared; finally, she gets separated from the others, she « sat alone toward the back of the room» (152). This quotation seems to prove Pynchon's assertion that women are not welcome in the auction room. Otherwise, the author's point of view about feminine gender is discovered in the following expression: «"It was in the ladies' room, right here in the Scope, Mike". "Women", he only said who can tell what goes on with them?" (75).

The novel contains a wealth of references to Oedipa Maas as women's representative figure symbolizing the male characters' look at the female ones. Beyond the novel, the author translates the gender relationships interspersed with the detritus patriarchal ideology derived from the dynamic gender identity of the American society and its culture. Here, Pynchon is not telling that it is only women that misconduct in the novel. He also includes men. But for him, women must be blamed for the misfortunes of the Californian society as he shares the disapproval for women's behaviour.

Furthermore, Oedipa's presence in the backward places inside the auc-

tion hall makes the reader mind or conceive a far-reaching meaning. Such a situation involves the idea of patriarchy, a male dominated society of the 1960s America. It is at that period though not the first in American history, that women like Betty Friedan rose with the National Organization for Women to battle for women's participation in the mainstream of the American society.

As for Oedipa Maas who represents the female characters in *The Crying of Lot 49*, she is the only female who attends the room, the auction room, but she sits near the bottom of the hall, in the back behind men. The room itself somehow symbolizes the 1960s American society; full of men's dominion and women standing the rear scale. Indeed, Thomas Pynchon shows the social, political and cultural image of the period when the American patriarchy was spread at any stage of activities to favour men's power. Meanwhile, as Oedipa refuses to resign her search for the truth that it is a joke played on her, she finds herself in the position of those women unwilling to resign their rights against men that do not accept to cede their power but attempt to deceive women. As the reader may understand, Pynchon unconsciously presents a heroine, Oedipa who is ready to deal alone boldly with patriarchy. Oedipa, under this consideration, has not the charge of detecting but possibly, the saving mission, making the difficult decision to defend many women against a men-crowded-room.

In the novel, the author seems to indicate that Oedipa is expecting the worse face to "her target" and "her enemy" represented by male values that negate female emancipation. Her efforts stand to praise the image of feminine heroines who, through individual devotion, push women ahead in their fight for their rights. That is, as Pynchon denounces the feminine gender's misbehaviour; the project to promote patriarchal ideology. The reader of the novel does not dismiss the possibility of praising these women. For that reason, he or she returns to the figure on top of the tower. The figure is reported to be lit up, in spite of the daytime. Women or desperate women are praised for their great achievement in favour of an equitable and advanced democratic society. More daringly, Pynchon sees in them the light of society, a light stronger than the light of men; since the figure lights up distinctively against the daylight.

From the symbol of the tower, the female character or feminine gender is enthroned for dominion and, her light reaches further ahead. Pynchon upsets the American society; he deconstructs the traditional norms towards establishing a female-dominated society. Like language as an unreliable tool of communication, the tower as a symbol, suggests some possible comprehensions almost antagonist. However, both ideologies overlap to give the reader an overall image of American society in crisis. A society in constant social, cultural and political upheavals because of the personal or collective interests that make the promo-

tion of the capitalistic system and destructive traditional values.

### 3- FROM SYMBOLS TO THE CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF CAPITALISTIC SYSTEM

In thematic sequential subdivision of *The Crying of Lot 49*, the reader notices that Pynchon conducts his novel on three major forms of discourse: the religious, social and political issues. The American society is the greatest country among the States considered as capitalistic societies in the world. In other words, the German historian, Daniel S. Werner would not withhold from praising America as the “Canaan of capitalism”. In this development, one of the main elements of capitalism, vigorous competition, may easily get lost. This concentration of economic power and influence in social and political life then becomes the basis for the demand that such economic concentration be remedied by government intervention, which leads to more governmental responsibility and power.

In *The Crying of Lot 49*, one of Pynchon’s characters involved in capitalism is the giant Pierce Inverarity whose estate set in motion the whole narration. Pynchon writes this about him: « Spurs ran off here and there into factory property. Pierce may have owned these factories too. But did it matter now if he’d owned all of San Narciso? » (147). As the novel unfolds, the concentration of wealth becomes self-evident. All of the productive means, Yoyodyne factory, Fangoso Lagoons etc., have something to do with Pierce Inverarity. Pynchon offers the image of the American society, by extension, the rest of the world, which relies more on a capitalistic system that deepens the economic abyss between the poors and wealthy. Such a dehumanizing system, as described by Marxist criticism, exploits the mass labour class for a minority’s profit. Pynchon sees in the same system the destruction of human existence. His point of view about the system coincides with the Social Darwinism, as Di Presso declares: « my client supplied some bones (...) Inverarity never paid him » (56). The Social Darwinism is a thought drawn from Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution by natural selection, in his book entitled *On the Origin of Species*

The development of capitalism in *The Crying of Lot 49* as a literary approach used by the author may be viewed and analyzed on economic, social and political issues. The contextual capitalistic system based on “Laissez-faire” economy results in the survival of the working class represented by Oedipa Maas, Mucho Maas and the others; as opposed to Pierce Inverarity, Randolph Driblette who symbolize those who have the means of production, the bourgeoisie. As Py-



nchon uses the expression “human bones” and the lack of payment, he explains how many people would die being utterly dominated and pressed as far down as from starvation to death. The author’s cynical point of view about the system of capitalism is mentioned as follows:

But that sounds”, objected Metzger, “Like he was against industrial capitalism. Wouldn’t that disqualify him as any anti-communist figure?” “you think like a Bircher,” Fallopien said: “Good guys and bad guys. You never get to any of the underlying truth. Sure he was against industrial capitalism. So we are. Didn’t it lead, inevitably, to Marxism? Underneath, both are part of the same creeping horror (36).

The author’s sense of a capitalistic American society is expressed in this way: his position is neither for capitalism nor for Marxist ideology because both are accountable for the social illness. Not only him, but also those who undergo the harmful effects of capitalism are against the system. Pynchon only identifies himself as one among the huge pool torn apart by a social system of the like. The coming part of the present study leads the reader to consider the interests that symbols arise in *The Crying of Lot 49*.

The novel tells about a society in crisis morally speaking. Some individuals have lost the traditional use of social norms: it brings about the chaos of an upside down society due to moral dehumanizing and destructive atmosphere of human existence. For instance, the motel *Echo Courts* is, in the novel, the concentration of the image of a deviating society which undergoes the horrible scenes of sexual acts in search for money and pleasure. This ongoing crisis in the American society is manifested in the fundamental domains of human existence. For instance, Thomas Pynchon identifies those landmark domains in these social facts: sex, money, illness, despair. And, in the above quotes appears the expression «bizarre sexual action», «teens voyeurs », «pills», etc. (133). This depreciating social fact is part of a whole expressive network of the horrible condition of the society that the author passionately figures out. Pynchon unsparingly expresses the cultural identity or living conditions of Californian society under the principles of capitalism. California has a particular history in the midst of the American States. Its populace in great part is based on the pursuit of wealth. When in 1848, gold was discovered in the territory, the following year 1849 registered 80,000 immigrants in search for better living conditions. All of them rushed into the State with hope of wealth . Pynchon’s use of ‘49’ in the title *The Crying of Lot 49* only reminds the reader this particular movement of Californian population toward wealth. In other words, the semantic approach of historical events referred to the Californian capitalistic start should help understand how in the novel the State of California represents a symbol that is encroaching on exploiting the proletarian class.

The same explanation Pierre Zima develops when he claims that «it is on semantic and lexical levels that social interests are clearly articulated in language ».

Consequently, the expression « bizarre sexual action » interpreted as any sexual act irrespective of the natural usage, helps understand the intention of the author. Thomas Pynchon insists all along the novel on the shameful sexual activities including above all the climax of this social plague, homosexuality or incest as the results of a huge capitalistic system all over California. Oedipa encounters, in the Greek mythology, the homosexual community, the «members of the third sex». Thus, Pynchon implicitly says that Oedipa herself is homosexual. Oedipa adheres to the company of these men; she also enters that bar before she has been granted a pin that is identical to the pin of that company:

Let me lay this on you, a voice spoke into her ear, because I just left, and she found being deftly pinned outboard of one breast this big cerise ID badge, reading HI! MY NAME is Arnold Snarb! AND I'M LOOKIN' FOR A GOOD TIME! Oedipa glanced around and saw a cherubic face vanishing with a wink in among natural shoulders and striped shirts, and away went Arnold Snarb, looking for a better time (88-89).

That is when Oedipa receives her ID badge from a strange creature with a cherubic face. Her partner in the bar shows her his badge: «She met his eyes' void for a second after all, and shrugged. "I'll tell you what I know then", he decided. "The pin I'm a member of the IA. That's Inamorati Anonymous. An inamorati is somebody in love. That's the worst addiction of all" (91). To prove her adherence to the homosexual community, Oedipa does not get rid of the pin she has been struck with. It is not until she has a seat by her companion that she puts it in an ashtray. She keeps the pin for long in the Greek Way bar; so that the man she stays with knows her as Arnold Snarb; a name written on the badge.

Thomas Pynchon identifies homosexuals as «the members of the third sex» meaning neither the feminine nor the masculine sex. This term specifically addresses these social isolates, that is, a man holding intimate ties with another man and also a woman doing the same thing with another woman. In addition to sexual deviance, there is the use of pills, LSD-25 prescribed by Hilarius. His pills' effect weighs on Oedipa's husband Mucho Maas. She finds him estranged when she comes back to Kinneret after a while of absence. There is no doubt the author's appeal to Mucho Maas, in first place, is a straight forward intention to show what might happen to the American society in its excessive reliance on medicine. The handling of these products expected to do good to human being, are not without perils. But, in the real sense, Pynchon associates the pills with the consumption of drugs:

But there may be a chance you're not addicted yet". "Oed," looking at her puzzled, "you don't get addicted. It's not like you're some hophead. You take it because it's good. Because you hear and see things, even smell them taste like you never could. Because the world is so abundant. No end to it, baby. You're an antenna, sending your pattern out across a million lives a night and they're your lives too (117-118).

The condition that Mucho Maas describes is far beyond the effect wrought by the simple pills. The identification of pills to drugs puts to the forefront the declining image of the medicinal agents. Hilarius will not be the contradicting character as a shrink in the novel. Is Pynchon playing with the health care staff by suggesting a psychiatric shrink who, in the end, goes mad? As probably as he points at "the pharmacists" as a source of threat ready to harm and that for this reason, one should take heed of them:

"Cherish it" cried Hilarius, fiercely, "what else do any of you have? Hold it tightly by its little tentacle, don't let the Freudians coax it away or the pharmacists poison it out of you. Whatever it is, hold it dear for when you lose it you go over by that much to the others you begin to cease to be"(113).

Through those words, Thomas Pynchon erects himself into a watchman whose role is to warn of the imminent danger of capitalistic dehumanizing and its destructive use on human existence. He also tries to express the eventual dispositions to take to ward off this danger. The author, thus, ceased from the satirical outline adopted so far against a decayed society in his book, to becoming an angel protector of the surrounded victims. He wants to save those that can yet be spared.

It is in this function that Pynchon takes a paranoid behavior when he calls the individuals to stay away of those that he can see as danger. The only thing to trust in the view of the author is oneself in the corrupted world or society that proves the signs of immanent destruction.

## CONCLUSION

Throughout *The Crying of Lot 49*, Thomas Pynchon, in postmodern style, points out the social crisis in America by the means of the protagonist Oedipa Maas who is charged to assign the huge task of executing the will of Pierce Inverarity, a giant capitalist. The reader of the novel ponders whether Oedipa, as a female character in a male-dominated society, succeeds in being a good co-executor when her ex-boyfriend, Pierce Inverarity dies having named her as the co-executor of his company named Trystero. Then, what does she become: would she finally realize that she has been victim of a conspiracy, or, would she

finally discover who the strange bidder is? Only Pynchon, the author is the one who conditions the process of the plot according to the quality of his imagination. This quality is also associated with polysemic use of the expression of the symbol “Tristero” or the assortment of wealth that Pierce Inverarity left before dying.

The author leaves the readers more often with the intention of forgetting about the main problem to be solved. Otherwise, the juxtaposed interrelated events retrace the course of the novel which ends without clear note on Oedipa’s mission. In this manner, Pynchon leads the reader to understand that he is not only interested in one problem, but in many problems that he treats with the same degree of care. He is unstable, dynamic in the content of his work whereby giving the feature of the postmodern style. As postmodern writing that develops schizophrenia, Pynchon deftly depicts the American citizen in quest for identity. Another remark about the author’s writing, the structure of the sentences deepens the reader’s understanding of the social destructive crisis narrated in the novel: «Before she was ready for it, back came Cashiered....I didn’t know”, Oedipa smiled. On came a loud commercial...» (20). To end up, behind symbols, Thomas Pynchon himself symbolizes a great diversity of literary activities and productions.

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