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**The Pursuit of Meaning in Thomas Pynchon's
The Crying of Lot 49 (1966)**

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Master's Degree in
Anglophone Literatures and Civilizations

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Declaration

We assert that this modest study is the outcome of our own particular labour and creative assertion of our own investigation. Where appropriate, references and acknowledgements are made.

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Dedication

My thesis is in honour of my wonderful parents who supported and encouraged me during my studies as well as my loving siblings especially my sister who never fails to have faith in me. I am so thankful for anyone who was involved in aiding me throughout my journey.

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I must first acknowledge my lovely parents, without their support and selfless cooperation this work would certainly has not been accomplished. My friends Hanane and Imane, there are many others whom I could also thank, but space here is limited so I will simply say you know who you are and you know what your contribution has been.

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Abstract

This study explores how Oedipa Mass's journey, roams in an enigma that intersects self-discovery with the emblematic willingness to maintain power through choice. As a matter of fact, this thesis traces the shift that transformed this female protagonist's quest from an inactive agent into an active subject in the making of her future *In the Crying of Lot 49* by the well-acclaimed American novelist Thomas Pynchon. Additionally, it demonstrates how the quest for female emancipation deals with how the female body is portrayed as both a tool of empowerment and disempowerment. The first chapter of this thesis discusses the socio-political and historical context. The second chapter explores Oedipa's journey into series of quests and explains the mental crisis and struggles that she felt during her search for her real existence by relying on Heideggerian, Sartrean and Nietzschean perspectives, that discuss the relationship between human beings and the universe. The third chapter focuses on Oedipa's character change from a traditional passive woman from the middle class to detective searching for clues and meaning. This will be conducted by following Naila Kabir's theory of *Woman's Empowerment* (1999) in which she analyses empowerment through three interconnected dimensions and explains how women take control and ownership of their lives.

Key words: *The Crying of Lot49*, Trystero, Jungian, Nefastis Machine, Nihilism, enigma

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

As Dennis Ford (2007) puts it in his work *The Search for Meaning* (2007) that “the reality is that we cannot take our world for granted because we constantly question why there is something rather than nothing .This leads us to ask , how do people invest their life with meaning ?”(10). Hence, it appears that the stage of being intoxicated by fictitious meaning is over as numerous roads and trails lead to various solutions as long as humans continue to explore the universe. In light of this, the meaning is “not only if life is something we once had but have no longer lost meaning is also something toward which has the effect of making any attempt to query truth and meaning a mirage” (16). In other words, the quest for the full comprehension and significance of life is weakened.

In terms of deciphering its general meaning, postmodernism has produced a lot of ambiguity, disillusionment, despair and state of obligation. It disavows both the influence of the totalizing hypothesis as well as the division between high and low culture whether it is implied or explicit. Postmodernism, indeed, places a strong emphasis on disintegration, absurdity, contradiction, and blending of several genres while outlining conventions in order to produce a new and unique postmodern work. The subjects and techniques used by postmodern writers to blend reality and imagination include language experimentation. A number of postmodern writers, such as Thomas Pynchon, reinforce the issues of modern society through his portrayal of the protagonist Oedipa. In his novel, he discusses several themes including the role of gender in society, mental illness and the difficulties of trying to make meaning of the world around us.

Thus, this study aims to demonstrate how individuals naturally seek out and analyse proofs to comprehend their surroundings. Pynchon demonstrates, through Oedipa, through the individual quest of looking for a purpose in chaotic world. As interesting as it might get, despite

being fully assimilated into the masculine corpus of the preceding era, Pynchon centers his narrative on a female character, Oedipa Maas, a woman who, in the face of overwhelming opposition, works to transform her surroundings into an important entity.

Oedipa, the protagonist of Thomas Pynchon *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966), is a traditional married woman who is thrust into a bizarre and surreal world after the death of her ex-boyfriend, Pierce Inverarity. She is a complex and enigmatic character who embodies several characteristics and themes that set her apart from the female heroines that came after her. As a post-modern character, Oedipa represents the disorientation and paranoia that pervaded the cultural and social climate of the time, she is confronted with a convoluted and uncertain world, where multiple interpretations and competing narrative abound. In contrast, the heroines that came after her Oedipa exist in different literary movements, contexts, and cultural environments. They may be a product of different historical periods, feminist ideologies and narrative style.

Thomas Pynchon, an American novelist born in May 8th, 1937, is noted for his dense and complex novels. He won the 1973 US National Book Award for Fiction. After publishing several short stories in 1950, his most significant works are *The Crying of lot 49* (1965), *Gravity Rainbow* (1973), *Mason and Dixon* (1997), *Slow Learner* (1984), *Inherent voice* (2009). Pynchon's first published novel, *The Crying of Lot 49*, portrays the life of American women in postmodern society. The novel represents Oedipa; an ordinary housewife who learns the reality of her society through TV and suddenly receives a letter from her ex-boyfriend to become the executor of his will. She travels to San Narciso, where she faces a lot of signals such as the secret of the Trystero that pushes her to search for their meanings. Throughout the novel, Pynchon explains all the struggles that face Oedipa all along her journey to discover her existence.

Justification of the study:

The selection of the topic as well as the object of the research is of great significance and importance. This novel is to prove and seek for reality and the quests of existence as well as the hidden purpose of life that occurred in people's inner thoughts during modern era. Most importantly, this work focuses on the life of societies after their devastation due to wars and great depression in which they started to ask for a solution to their meaningless, absurd life that is controlled by capitalism.

Review of literature:

The Crying of Lot 49 by Thomas Pynchon discusses different issues related to the pursuit of meaning in postmodern society. Many reviews have been conducted on the novelist's fictional endeavours since its publication. Several critics have studied the selected novel from different perspectives.

Peter Cooper claims in his article "Thomas Pynchon and Contemporary World" (1984) that Oedipa finds herself completely alienated due to her loss among bounds of communication here was nobody who could help her nobody in the world" (171). The modes of communication includes the media, television, telephone and of course verbal communication. This bust of communication is itself a bloc of signifiers Oedipa cannot recognize instantly after she knows that she has been made "executrix of Inverarity estate" (9). She struggles in silence fearing death while she avoids spelling out her illusion "Oedipa stood in the room, started at by the greenish dead eye of the TV tube" (9). Oedipa prefers solitude from the outside world as means of coping with her struggle. Since she is living in her realm of illusion, her thoughts and mental disease are kept hidden from view. Yet, unlike Cooper's reading, our contribution lays on the fact that Oedipa wasn't fully alienated after her pursuit to execute the will. Indeed, she moves

from being passive to active and this shift marks her reveal of the hidden part of the American society.

Similarly, Mark Conroy offers another perception that reflects Oedipa's struggle with communication and alienation. In his article "The American way and its Double in *The Crying of Lot 49*" (1989). He states that Pynchon's protagonist seeks an answer of the felony and finds that it dates back to the ancestors of herself and the offenders. He mentions that Oedipa plays the role of the American society which in general has so many issues, crimes, corruption and lack of communication and isolation due to the truth hidden by the authority figures modern society becomes harsh for people as Oedipa struggles to find a solution for her mental issues that tossed her in a meaningless life. The world of isolation and alienation served in the disappearance of humanity's emotions. However, Conroy's reading fails to justify that Oedipa's quest eventually led her to achieve a sort of a seminal recognition of reality behind the screen and passivity of media.

Leo Bersami explains in his article entitled "The Culture of Redemption" (1990) that paranoia is something suspicious. The hostile environment causes the protagonist to lose her knowledge of everything while looking for acknowledgment of her existence. It is understood that Oedipa lives in paranoia and possible madness that got her into deep thinking and the fragility of her mind. It is true that Oedipa, throughout her quest to fulfil the will, discovered aspects that are new to her which made her deconstruct her perception of the life she had lived before. This being said, however, Oedipa was able to develop a new awareness of her surroundings i.e. she reconstructed another vision on life.

In addition, David Cowart claims in his article "The Act of Allusion" (1994) that "Oedipa is a mental Rapunzel, locked in the epistemological tower of herself"(6). He elaborates that "she lives in a labyrinth as the only thing she gains from her pursuit of meaning

is a series of infinite unanswered questions” (6). Again, the critic fails at analysing Oedipa’s journey as a journey towards the self. This applies to the postmodern definition of meaning as instead of being a traditional heroic journey, it shifts into an anti-heroic quest to explore the mental and psychological endeavours of the human being.

The above-mentioned studies and reviews on Thomas Pynchon’s *The Crying of Lot 49* shed light on different issues such as politics, isolation and lack of communication. However, the previously mentioned critics have not elaborated on how Oedipa Maas, the novel’s protagonist, is torn in a quest of self-discovery/ fulfilment and an urge to empower herself as a principle agent of her own journey. Indeed, she transforms herself from a passive observer into an active searcher for existence. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to close this information gap. Considering the aforementioned knowledge gaps, the aim of this study furthermore, is to scrutinize the extent of Oedipa’s success in her journey as the aims triggered towards revealing pluralities in truths and meaning. The novel, indeed, highlights the causes of paranoia and the pursuit of meaning in Oedipa’s life as a result of modern society, isolation, and lack of communication. In other words, and by following a Heideggerean reading, this thesis elaborates on Oedipa’s journey from authenticity to inauthenticity. In this regard, the thesis focuses on elaborating on a new theoretical dimension that defies the Heideggerean quest for meaning by showing how the protagonist fails to achieve authenticity at the end of the novel.

Theoretical tools:

This study relies on a number of theories to analyse Thomas Pynchon’s *The Crying of Lot 49*. It employs Martin Heidegger’s *Being and Time* (1925). Heidegger’s *Being and Time* is a complex work that explores the ontological questions of existence and offers a new framework for understanding human being. Heidegger introduces the concept of ‘Dasein’ which refers to human existence. Dasein is characterized by its capacity for self-reflection, awareness of its

morality and the ability to engage with the world. Moreover, he distinguishes between authentic which involves being true to oneself and embracing one's own possibilities. In contrast, inauthenticity arises when individuals conform to societal expectation and lose touch with their authentic selves. This study also utilises Naila Kabeer's theory of *women's empowerment* (1999) in which she analyses empowerment through three interconnected dimensions which are agency, resources and achievements and explains how women take control and ownership of their lives, expanding their choices and how that power manifests itself in real life as well. It also refers to the theory of Sartre's *Existentialism and Humanism* (1946) in which he discusses human life and its nature. According to the principles of this theory, humans act in certain way to create meaning in their lives and the purpose of their existence. The study will also depend on Nietzsche's *Beyond the Good and Evil* (1886). The major theme of *Beyond the Good and Evil* is about truth and seeks to make it important notion, in the opening part of his book "he introduces the notion of the will to truth" (106).

The above theories are applied in *The Crying of Lot 49* and how Pynchon represents the pursuit of meaning, the human thoughts and the search for the truth through the main character Oedipa and all that she will see through her journey to uncover the truth. It also seeks to demonstrate how the fact that Oedipa's journey to find the reality of her own world lead to the loss of her own being which is itself significant of her inauthentic existence.

Outlines:

This thesis will be divided into three chapters and a conclusion. The first chapter will be entitled "The socio-political and historical context". It will discuss in detail the socio-political and historical setting, in addition to the main themes of communication, technology, entropy, and paranoia, it will additionally discuss about a fictional approach that is closely related to these themes' subjects.

The second chapter is an analytical chapter entitled “Oedipa’s journey of untangling the secret in *The Crying of Lot 49*”. It is divided into two sections. The first section is entitled “Oedipa’s Journey to Untangle the Trystero” it focuses on Oedipa’s journey into a series of quest untangling the struggle regarding the Trystero. The second section is entitled “Oedipa Maas’s Identity Crisis” which explains Oedipa’s mental crisis and struggles that felt during her searching and quest for her real existence.

The third chapter is entitled “Oedipa’s Unresolved Enigma”. It is divided into two components. The first component is entitled “the dynamic development of Oedipa Maas’s character through her journey” this section will shed the light on Oedipa’s character change from a passive state to an active state and how she perfectly succeeded to embody the postmodern gender roles in her journey to search for clues and meaning. The second component is entitled “Oedipa’s struggle for power for achieving her mission” this section focuses on the things that Oedipa Maas has achieved and whether she has power over things to achieve her goal.

Finally, the conclusion will sum up the findings of this study. It will demonstrate Pynchon’s representation of the main character Oedipa Maas who quests the meaning that lies behind investigative events.

Chapter One

The socio-political and historical context

The first chapter of this thesis is devoted to discuss in detail the socio-political and historical background and the representation of the contemporary American society. It also seeks to explore and demonstrate the fundamental issues such as communication, (media) technology, entropy, paranoia and the negative effects of media and modern technology on people's lives of the characters. Besides, this chapter tends to scrutinize the idea of Existentialism in this era. At last, a brief conclusion serves as a summary to all previous points and ideas.

1. The Representation of the Contemporary American Society in Literature

Skeredsving states in his book that the “The American dream is an integral component of the history, literature and lives of the people of the united states” (39). The United States history, literature and people's daily lives are all deeply influenced by the American dream. Along with significant impact on the nation's cultural values, economy, social and political development, it has also influenced how people developed psychologically and spiritually as well as the American community as a whole. The critic claims that the “American dream has defined, revised, analysed and interpreted in as many ways as the number of people who undertake the risk” (40). American people believe that rather than relying on luck, achieving the American dream requires sacrifice, taking risks and hard effort. It has remained a crucial component of the American mentality despite political manipulation, literary interpretation as well as the historical explanation. One of the driving elements behind American civilization is commonly identified as the “American dream” In fact, The American ideal encompasses

political overhaul, religious modification, and academic success, sexual behaviour rather than being based on one particular notion. Dream is not centred on only one single definition. According to Cullen, the American dream was first built on religious themes and ideals, however through time, it progressively became independent of religion to include the opportunity for both economic and social advancement for individuals. For Cullen, the American dream had evolved over the course of several centuries to become more about personal freedom than it had been about religious observance. Since then, the American dream has been used to illustrate what makes America special (75-92).

J. Akesson writes that “the American dream” was forever regarded “as a representation of hope and idealism turned into disillusionment, depravity and falsity” (24). The American society has kept his self-righteous faith in the distinctiveness of his nation and people throughout the following generation. However, the question for material achievement, power and fame has distorted the American people’s perception of the American dream during the twentieth century. The mid-nineteenth century saw the emergence of the bleak side of the American dream. Several writers like Mark Twain and Edgar Allan Poe who became completely disillusioned with the contemporary America wrote of industrialism, capitalism and social corruption. *The Great Gatsby* (1925) serves as an example of these historical aspects. Keshmiri argues that “Fitzgerald’s predisposition to symbolism using colour patterns is drawn from periods of America history”(129). By portraying his heroes as carrying ideals and having a fundamentally American desire, Scott Fitzgerald ties the American dream to American history. The green light, for instance, that Gatsby observes across the bay from Daisy Buchanan's house is a symbol of wealth, greediness and enmity. *The Great Gatsby* is an iconic novel of the 20th century which regarded as an American classic because of its brilliant analysis of the American ideals and the fact that the American dream is inevitably unobtainable.

The early twentieth century is depicted in *The Great Gatsby* as a vehicle for life at that time when Gatsby should have been able to reach the upper class due to his money. Given that his ambitions are impossible regardless of how much money he has, *The Great Gatsby* serves as a symbol for the fallacy of the dream, as shown by Fitzgerald's novel. In time when gaining wealth and material possessions was the norm, Gatsby embodied the demise of the American dream. Batchelor goes in the same direction when he writes that “America during the 1920s was a country where citizens started to compare material possessions with their own self-worth” (41). The possessive behaviour of the main characters in *The Great Gatsby*, together with their extensive homes and vehicles, serves as an example of this. Fitzgerald critiques his characters' materialistic mentality by painting a tragic and depressing picture of their lives, showing how their material success cannot make them happy. In pursuit of his dream and ambition, Gatsby ultimately loses himself which leads to his terrible demise.

The contemporary interpretation of the American dream and additional evidence of its major impact on the American society. Cranfordova maintains that the society represented in the novel is “a system of power structure, and twisted orders of simulacra driven by commodity fetishism” (13). It is controlled by an influx of images and advertisement. The obsession with images, models and simulacra has changed people's perceptions of reality, breaking the boundaries between real and non-real. In his novel, Ralph Ellison draws attention to the fatal belief in the American dream. Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952) tells the trips and adventures of Unknown African-American young narrator from high school graduation till the heated racial issues in Harlem which are shown in the novel. The hero's psychological growth and physical trip are characterised by his social isolation along with the discriminatory institutions of the early 20th century America as well as the suffering and the obstacles which stands in the way of his American dream and the longing of the invisible Man to be recognized. *Invisible Man* is “One of the more complex, multi-faceted novels in the twentieth century American literature

which reverberates with myriad themes and motifs Central to the black experience in the united states of America'' (Yarborough 47).

Hence, this novel of the 20th century is filled with numerous themes that are essential to understanding the black issue and experiences in the country. The journey of unnamed narrator can be examined and understood in terms of the goals he strives to realize for himself. Booker Washington's speeches serves as "the gospel of the American dream" (Ellison 38). *The invisible man* is unable to understand the racial oppression he experiences there. "uniforms pressed, shoes shines, minds laced up, eye blind like those of robots" (Ellison36). He and the other African-American are dehumanized and treated like objects with no basic human rights

African-American students like Ellison's hero exist in a context of absent cultural heritage where a lacking sense of freedom creates an indoctrination of young African-Americans to a mainstream American line of thinking which puts pressure on them to sway from their cultural identity (Aksesson15).

In an attempt to reclaim his sense of visibility and liberty, the central character of *Invisible Man* struggles with his identity and the way in which society perceives him. He now understands that the racial mindset that permeates society and identifies him as only African-American thus, unqualified a fact he can never change makes it impossible for him to realize the American dream.

Ellison's protagonist comes to the conclusion that "he cannot view his dreams as a political, financial, territorial or religious prize to won ... because this would violate its original promise" (Yarborough52). Whenever a person is placed in a particular ethnic, political or financial group the invisible man conveys the message that he can never achieve the American dream. Therefore, his experience provides irrefutable evidence that the American dream is an illusion.

In *The Great Gatsby* (1925) and *Invisible Man* (1952), the link between the two characters and the capitalist, liberal American ideology is examined. It is concluded that both of the heroes have a fatally foolish faith in the American Dream.

America in 1960s grew more powerful, homogeneous and privatized. However, all of this came with a price as a number of anti-establishment organizations representing well-known political and countercultural movements including anti-Vietnam war, the drug culture, civil rights, sexual revolution, women's rights, John Kennedy's assassination and the era of technology made it hard for it to maintain control. America entered a new era in its history during the middle of the twentieth century. After World War II, Americans appeared to want nothing more than to return to their peaceful homes and peacefully living far from the tensions of the outside world.

The American economy was expanding rapidly and the social conservative prevailed in politics at that time. In this era, the United States of America can be defined as a period of “conformity and highly materialistic world view” (Fitzmaurice 4). Since the economic sphere required both the consumers and the employees which was imposed onto the Americans by the government as well as the media. On the global scene, the United States was stretching its political and economic muscles. This era brought about a significant event which is mainly the decolonization and nationalism, nuclear power and space exploration, science and technological advances, revolutions in the shape of African-American civil rights movements, Jazz and Rock music. However, not everything was as bright as the media presented to be. The fever of the Cold War was just getting started in the mid of the twentieth century, a period in which the dread of communism was at its highest and widespread across the country.

In the early of 1950s, there was a hysteria known as the red scare about the alleged threat presented by the Communists in the United States of America during the Cold War (Foster8). A number of decisions made by The Red Scare while had a significant and a great impact on

both the American society and government. The House American Activities Committee looked into claims that the Federal government and Hollywood Film Industry and Federal Employees were assessed to see if they were loyal to the government. By the late 1950s, the atmosphere of oppression associated with The Red Scare had started to dissipate. A variety of references to the twentieth century American society mentioned in Jack Kerouac's novel *On the Road* (1957).

It is obvious that Kerouac sought to describe the contemporary American people who were an integral part of this journey, as well as the country itself. Sal and Dean travelled across the deep heart of America experiencing not only the natural surroundings and the endless stunning horizon yet also people from various social levels as well as local food and music. Kerouac expresses his dissatisfaction with the contemporary American consumerism on several occasions and he shows the importance of living a simple life and seeking one's spirit over material wealth. However, despite the fact that Jack Kerouac's novel is regarded as a critique of American society, he tries to influence the society to adopt an unconventional way of living and not constrained by political fear and consumer life styles but rather “presents an attempt to consider one's own position in the world and search for a deeper meaning in life” (12).

2- Technology in the American society:

Postmodern life of the American society affected its individuals in a negative way, especially through the wrong use of technology through which it gave a completely wrong picture on the lives of Americans. “night mare by night mare dream vision by dream vision the realities beyond the appearance of American and the meaning behind the characters empty words” (Muzak 86). That means what is in the outside picture of the American society is not what is on the inside. Everything is shadowed, unclear and ambiguous even in the words of characters which have a nonsensical and a meaningless purpose. In addition to that the use of media devices such as TV does not really showcase the truth of their corrupt lives. Beyond the

hard reality of every American regardless of how they are defined. As the foundation of religion, Cathy and Dulles characterized experiences as “good or bad, communist or American rational or irrational, black or white” (102). As for women, who have no right to point out their mind or status. Since citizens who live by their government’s regulations and have no understanding of the realities of the world are being misled into thinking humanity is less important than the pursuit of power and capitalism. as an example of the represented characters of most postmodern societies who, by the end of the novels, try to search for their meaning in life and embrace the reality and uncertainty of their existence.

As a way of searching what was happening in the society, postmodernist writers used technological media as a weapon of communication to depict the reality of the world. These media, apparently, are more than the meaning used in most postmodernist books. With the development of cables, radio and television both played increasingly vital roles and viewers could now watch CNN and MTV for hours at a time America was so thoroughly invaded by the media that it now pervades every part of Americans. Ads that are broadcast on radio and television. In addition, according to MC Lohan, a more thorough investigation is required to establish the potential effects of technology on society. Media actually affects how humans view the modern world by determining what the bulk of people can and cannot see and hear.

During post era, many critics agreed on the importance of media culture into people’s lives to the point where they “provide materials out of which people forge their identities” (Kellner 2-3). This media culture is the shape of our perception and acts as it is what people should be, which attend to reflect on the way society is emitting what is given to them by this media’s shows or news, it seems that people have no clue on what the real world really is they only copy what their government teach them to do. In other words, the media plays a significant role in shaping public perception and potentially hide aspects of reality detaching them from the existence. In addition to that, it defines someone’s rationality, ethnicity and social status.

Media views the world and its values because it defines every aspect in it, it establishes what is right and wrong, good and bad and both good and evil. McLuhan notes that “it is the media that shapes and control the scale and form of human association and action” (McLuhan 1). Media is a sort of consumer since media culture, which refers to persons who seek for private profit, and consumer culture are intertwined in order to regulate behaviour and conceptions of human life.

Jamson explains that after the World War II, this monarch of society started to appear thus for him post modernism is “a periodizing concept whose function is to correlate the emergence of a new type of social life and a new economic order” (19-20). Finally, the characteristics of this new society, which are primarily tied-to novel forms of media viewing, represent that dominated pre- war society. As stated above, media culture indicates an important influence in a lot of American work.

According to many postmodern novels, television creates individuals who can no longer take an original approach unperceiving reality and thus are only passive consumers of what is served to them. The role of television in postmodern culture was dealt with so many theories since it influences is widely embodied society. Baudrillard argues in his book “*simulation*” (1983) that “the contemporary world is the world of simulation, where signs no longer differ from their representations” (4). In the postmodern media and consumer culture, according to Baudrillard, everything turns into image, sign, spectacle, a trans-aesthetic, object, materialization art, a replication of earlier forms and styles and a production of additional pictures and artistic items. Therefore, media and consumer culture shape our perception of reality. In addition, in postmodern societies, the distinction between reality and simulation becomes blurred and everything is reduced to images and signs. People are only imitating and copying the image given to them by the capitalist, therefore the whole nation and its citizens

become only the meaningless image of what they see due to the fascinated masses by the infinite flow of bizarre “juxtaposition” which takes the viewer beyond stable sense.

The postmodernists emphasize how technology shapes people’s experiences because, according to Firat the world is increasingly defined by images, illusion and simulation. When people over-consume information, the impact it has on them fades to the point where they are unable to recognize between the beneficial findings and opposite ones. Thus, for that society consumes what is given to it without seeking for reality as a result, information loses its importance to the point that the importance of suggestion overcomes human experiences as stated by Baudrillard in *The implosion of meaning in the media (1994)*. Which means that media and what it gives control society and people’s attitudes, manners and thoughts. Therefore, people will lose the real meaning and purpose of life and it could be lead to an empty existence.

According to O’Day, television is a self-referential hyperreality’’ (13). which means that reality is affected by others. Therefore, when people copy the fake image that they see on TV it becomes their reality and by that this reality becomes their lives.

Furthermore, Television in a lot of postmodern novels, such as the *Gravity’s Rainbow (1973)*, is the control device of people’s reality and the hangs in their lives. The unclear role of TV portrays a deep shaping in the character’s identities in which somehow their existence is nothing but an imitation of what they see on the screen. It symbolizes the dehumanization and objectification of individuals. It reduces the individual to a mere image, reinforcing the idea that television reduces people to passive consumers, devoid of agency and authentic existence.

Another outstanding term that should be highlighted is entropy and its rule in the contemporary society, the notion serves to represent the constant striving of modern society towards chaos. “Entropy,” just as it did in many books, links the world of thermodynamics and interaction as demonstrated by the “Nefastis machine” the machine also uses people and

communities as a closed framework, raising doubts about the validity of all analogies in the process. As this notion reveals the disorder system and the invalidity of its work, therefore no one is living in a stable society or a regular scheme. In addition, Freese writes:

The symbolic relationship can either be positive, beneficial and meaningful, giving one the connection they need to relate to both themselves and the outside world, unwholesome delusive and dangerous, releasing the obsession which plague one with paranoiac fear of plots and conspiracies (13).

As Freese also explains in his essay *The entropic end of the American Dream* (1985) that in an organization like NADA National, Automobile Dealers Association where a lot of previously used work energy is squandered on activities that create useless work a lack of communication results in both communities and people functioning as closed systems in which entropy steadily increases (69) Individual's experience this personally as well. Despite being surrounded by people, they feel utterly alone since they have no way to utilize the information about the mysterious organisation.

In a society where media manipulation and television advertising frequently generate the impression that reality has a predetermined view of the postmodern individual, Farrell contends that the Self has turned into a "shallow artefact of cultural production" and has lost its prior depth. Similar justification may be given for the term lifestyle" (54) namely that the consumer culture tends to view established patterns of living as no longer needing cohesiveness. Although sympathetic to artists and cultural experts' way of life, modern social intermediaries a growing segment of the new middle class-focus less on promoting a solitary existence than they do on accommodating and expanding the range of styles and lifestyles that are accessible relatable to discuss how curbatoy stressed the importance of self-expression through consumption of hyperreality created by the media as a result the importance of the imaginary is given value by the integration of image through the means of communication.

As it took on many forms in the current works of the postmodern writers, technology has permeated both daily life and postmodern American literature. One can acknowledge technology. Due to social realism technology now plays a major role in how we live.

3-Existentialism in Postmodern Era:

In an effort to define a meaning for the individual in the current society, Existentialism and contemporary fiction share a common goal. Existentialist views and ideas ,that are prevalent in several contemporary works, demonstrate that the only possible way for a person's being to battle the inhuman aspects found in the postmodern society is to analyse their own existence An outdated idea of the person's relationship to society has persisted in American literary criticism which generally sees the human being and society as interactive but distinct entities; notwithstanding the recent two centuries' concentration on the social roots of subjectivity. The two are, in fact, frequently viewed as being in polar opposites with the individual being of primary portrayed as the victim of American society regardless of how psychology and society are dialectically connected.

The disorders and challenges that people are facing during this period are coming through the loneliness and lack of communication that their society teaches them although humans were born with a complete stable mind and manners yet, they lose these gifts by the time they are living in a society and affecting themselves and their mind-set .Moreover, The division of psyche and society is an unworkable theoretical construct because both elements of the split are formed by wants that neither originate in nor confer hegemony to any category. Although it has highlighted the ways, the idea of a contradictory subject is used to conceal society's intellectual operations. The poststructuralist view of individuality as none more than an accumulation of cultural recognition merely swings the theoretical pendulum away from the modernist focus on free will to a postmodern social structuralism without significantly altering the terms of the

dichotomy or reducing its influence, however, theories of subjectivity based on social determinism are unable to significantly challenge the victimization of individuals in regard to society. We run the risk of continuing to alternate between these two theoretical poles as so-called ethical critique, which aims to establish the autonomous subject among other things, gains favour. It suggests that in certain societal context, individuals may feel detached from their authentic selves or may struggle to express true identity.

The problem, however, is not the incapacity to select among two alternatives, but rather the narrowness of the opposing approaches of subjectivity. Once we realize that the one's subject is neither wholly an autonomous agent nor merely an outcome of society, the conceptual framework we have opened does not allow for a return to the autonomous subject. In his *Being and Time 1927*, Heidegger elucidates that "daze in is always my personal daze in" (35). Hence, being is linked to the individual and cannot be shared. Heidegger assumes subjectivity throughout his entire examination of Being, by contrasting the authentic and inauthentic Beings, Heidegger emphasises the importance of subjectivity once more. For that, he explains the importance of the individuality and the privacy that each human being should maintain to himself.

According to existential philosophy, persistent striving exposes a person to meaninglessness. At its end, it exposes the individual to the void and meaninglessness of existence. Persistent striving is essential since it enables the individual to return from the void. In other words, the meaninglessness of life does not persist. This fundamental component of Existentialism gives rise to two concepts. Along with persistent striving, other concepts of meaningless universe or meaningless human being which are recurrent in many contemporary fictional narratives including *Gravity Rainbow (1973)* and *Slaughterhouse-five (1953)* "Existentialism shows the values of the individual as cannot be so affected by the outdoor scheme" (26). Walter Davis also describes in *Inwardness and Existence* which influences the

argument between deconstruction and classic humanism. An existential model suggests that social variables may be significant, identify us initially but they do not freeze us at that point without our daily assent.

According to Davis, each person is a historically placed Marxist subject of psychoanalytic desire who is condemned to their own existential fate whether they choose to cooperate, consciously or subconsciously with societal forces or to resist (78). The dialectic between the human being and socius like that between the Marxist psychoanalytic and existential realities that constitute individuality does not issue in some reified Hegelian Geist but instead stays in a state of contingency and flux fixed in the real world, completely existentialized this is how subjectivity is shaped by what might be called a destabilized Hegelianism.

Characterization in several books like *the Great Gatsby* and *Gravity Rainbow* makes it appear as though postmodern American culture is predicated on a shared desire to simulate existential subjectivity. The majority of minor characters feel threatened by an existential experience and they fight back in ways that define who they are as people. In fact, by highlighting the types of avoidance made possible by commodity culture and behaviours, the minor protagonists may be considered to describe the framework of current cultural psychology.

Part of existential psychology's history might be seen as a revolt against modernism as emotion, human limitations and subjective forms of knowledge were displacing modernism. Rollo May and James Bugental introduced to the behaviourists excessively rationalistic and materialistic idea of psychology (2). Another rather different view point would contend that existentialism was a precursor to postmodernism. Ontological and epistemological terms describe existential psychology as ontological in that it focuses on the fundamental study of existence what does it mean to be alive, many psychological theories especially those with a

psychotherapy bent, aim to manipulate or eradicate human life. Existentialists, instead, seek to be honest about the human condition and understand it as it is. Human nature is deal for everyone, not something to conquer. In order to achieve great results in existential therapy, it is important for humans to learn how to embrace, not to conquer the humanity (69-73).

The epistemic aspect of existentialism is the constant inquiry into “how do we know about existence” (Hoffman 101). What really distinguishes it from the majority of other subfields of psychology is its epistemology even though a large portion of psychology has concentrated on personal experiences, qualitative study and the subjective reality. This is not to imply that quantitative research or objective truth are not regarded or accepted rather, it is to state that they were not given the same unquestionable authority that they were in the modernist rooted schools of psychology.

To conclude, this chapter attempted to demonstrate a detailed overview on the contemporary American society which symbolizes a system of hierarchies and intricate systems of simulacra driven by commodity fetishism that blurs the line between reality and fiction. Additionally, this chapter seemed to provide a clear explanation about the affectation of media and technology on the lives of the characters as well as a profound commentary on Existentialism in this era.

Chapter Two

Oedipa's journey of untangling the secret in *The Crying of Lot 49*

This chapter dives into the analysis of Thomas Pynchon *The Crying of Lot 49* relying on Jean Paul Sartre's *Existentialism and Humanism* (1946). Sartre's theory of existentialism and humanism had a significant influence on 20th century philosophy and existentialist thought. It emphasizes the individual's freedom, responsibility and the importance of creating a world devoid of inherent purpose. Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886) challenges prevailing moral and philosophical assumptions and encourages individuals to embrace their own desires, passions and potential for self-creation. It advocates for a more life affirming and individualistic approach to ethics and human existence. In addition to Sartre's perspective, this chapter uses Martin Heidegger *Being and Time* (1927) in which he explores the fundamental question of the nature of human existence and our understanding of Being. Besides, this chapter indicates the way Pynchon reveals the existence of individuals and their search for meaning in life through his character of Oedipa. The abundance of theories applied to this study highlights the novel's complexity and its invitation to multiple interpretation.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section "Oedipa's journey to untangle the old Trystero System" showcases the action of the main character in her whole journey to find the purpose of her life. The second section "Oedipa Mass's Identity Crisis" deals with Oedipa's mental crisis and struggles that she felt during her search and quests for her real existence. These two sections are intended to analyze Pynchon's portrayal of these characters in the light of the theory of Martin Heidegger *Being and Time*.

1- Oedipa's Journey to Untangle the Old Trystero System

Heidegger makes reference to the distinctive way that humans exist in the world in his concept of "Dasein" (Heidegger 58) which is translated as "being there" (Heidegger 59). He contends that the existence of humans differs fundamentally from that of other things, such as objects and animals. This concept highlights how dynamic and even evaluating human existence is.

Heidegger maintains that because of their contacts with the outside world, humans are always in the process of becoming and constantly creating and altering their identities. He argues that the person often avoids facing his own morality and instead engage in with what he calls inauthentic mode of being as a result of the fear of the nothingness that arises when the person confronts the possibility of non-being or the meaninglessness of existence. However, by confronting the possibility of non-being the person can find his own possibility and embrace them authentically. Thus, in his novel, the protagonist of the novel, Oedipa Maas, embarks on a quest to unravel a mysterious conspiracy known as the Trystero which is a mysterious and complex network or conspiracy that serves as a central plot element. It is an underground postal system that allegedly dates back centuries and operates outside of the official recognized postal system. Through her journey she questions her own identity and the authenticity of her experiences. Oedipa's investigation into the Trystero and the symbols associated with it create a sense of paranoia and a fear of being left in dark. Therefore, the fear of nothingness, as understood in Heidegger's philosophy, is reflected in Oedipa's constant search for significance and her fear of being trapped in a world devoid of meaning.

"Oedipa, had been named executor, after the death of her ex-boyfriend who left her as the only executor of his wealth, through this event the protagonist made her first move

outside her comfort zone and went out to meet the lawyer she saw a weird symbol in which she kept looking for its meaning along her journey”. (Rowell 46)

Oedipa is defined as a nonresponsive, neglected lady stuck in a made-up universe, far from looking as traditional heroine in the Homeric definition. Ironically, the one individual who can help her is a corporation employee who opposes the fundamental idea of compassion, as she increasingly feels encircled by the Trystero, conspiracy as the novel progresses. She cries out to the unknown inamorati participant in a frantic attempt to get somebody to clarify what is going on. The main character is a conventional wife but Pynchon challenges readers to reevaluate what a regular woman implies. Readers come to see that Oedipa is substantially more resilient than the male in her life. Despite being helpless, she is smart and curious that she opened to meet the Trystero and its secret.

Oedipa is engaged in an interior voyage of knowledge-seeking in which some linguistic hints identify Pynchon’s clear usage of the “Jungian shadow archetype” (Collado 158). Oedipa Maas undergoes a journey of self-discovery and exploration, which aligns with Jungian concept of individualism and the postmodern thrust of depth of the human psyche. Oedipa’s quest to uncover the truth about the Trystero and her increasing sense of isolation and disconnection can be interpreted as a struggle to integrate her unconscious aspects and achieve a sense of wholeness along with a numerous aspect of a parodic animus indicate to the need for Oedipa to discover the purpose of her life and the purpose of contemporary America. She has so many questions that did not leave her mind, therefore, she tries not only to seek the meaning of her being but also the reality of her country and its system which has been hidden all along her life. Thus, she could not see or learn about it because she has never seen the outside world only through TV. She did not even interact with people from other social status to learn from them what was going on.

Sartre's philosophy, particularly his concepts of existentialism and bad faith, can help illuminate the character's experiences and the broader themes of alienation, absurdity and the search for authenticity in the novel. Sartre's existentialism emphasizes the importance of individual freedom and personal responsibility. In *The Crying of Lot 49* the protagonist, Oedipa Maas, finds herself caught in a web of mysterious conspiracies and symbols. Her search for meaning and truth becomes a journey of self-discovery and an exploration of her own agency. Sartre's theory can be applied to analyze how Oedipa's choices, actions and reactions reflect her quest for personal freedom and her struggle against external forces that limit her autonomy.

Sartre's philosophy also delves into the concept of existential angst, the anxiety and despair that arise from confronting the meaninglessness and absurdity of existence. In this novel, Pynchon portrays a chaotic and fragmented world filled with cryptic signs and symbols. By applying Sartre's theory, the character's experiences of confusion and uncertainty reflect the broader existential condition. Oedipa's quest becomes a metaphorical journey through the absurdities and uncertainties of modern life.

Sartre's ideas about the "others" (Sartre 78) and intersubjectivity can be applied to analyze the protagonist's experiences of alienation in the novel. The sense of isolation and estrangement that Oedipa feels can be seen as a reflection of Sartre's notion of the "look" and the gaze of others (Sartre 103). The protagonist's struggle to connect with one another and the larger world mirrors the existential challenge of finding meaning and identity in a fragmented and alienating society.

In fact, Oedipa's personality and her ambition to find her purpose to her existence make her a perfect embodiment of Heidegger's mentioned theory. According to Heidegger, the relation between human beings and their world is the response for their existence thus, humans change when they interact socially and they learn from different people they meet. He also places an importance on "the basic state of Dasein" (Heidegger 38). For him, this term

indicates the peculiarity of human existence. In other words, humans seek to unravel and discover the meaning of their lives both individually and morally. It is like a dilemma to humans who are lost and trying to seek their true being and their relationships with other people. In order to examine Dasein, one must concentrate on what people actually do on a daily basis. By doing this, one can better grasp Dasein, then by seeing it as a thing that can be defined.

Heidegger reminds us of the significance of active participation in the world and via this engagement we come into a full understanding of what it is. This statement can be applied on Pynchon *The Crying of Lot 49* through the portrayal of his main character Oedipa Mass who faces an identity crisis along with the quests of her life's purpose and searching for the outside world's reality. In addition to her moments, every time she sees Trystero, she engages in a deep line of thinking about its essence. Pynchon writes "there would either be transcendent meaning behind the obvious or more either Oedipa in the orbiting of a true or a real Trystero" (10). This indicates the ambiguity of the representation of the symbol and whether Oedipa herself has a hidden relationship with it.

Oedipa discovers the truth in those who are frequently excluded on her quest to unravel the Trystero secret, but she also discovers perplexity inside herself, she must act upon whatever is preventing her from changing and anything around her that will stop her from moving forward to the solutions in order to find transformation. Oedipa looks for an inner reality in items than what the community has revealed to her, more significant than what normal individuals experience typically do not look for. As a sleuth, Oedipa constantly links and dissociates thoughts, events and efforts to grasp everything. In the search for Oedipa's revelation, destruction followed, relying solely on this being drawn into the system trying to discover some kind of rationale and direction, Oedipa distances herself based on what she thought would be the solution. Trystero was either an independent entity or it was assumed that Oedipa may have fantasized about it to the point where it became hung up on and permeated

the deceased man's inheritance. The stamp stands for a revalue around a constant search for solution. Trystero might merely be Oedipa's need-driven fantasy to think that there must be a reason for everybody she knows to be moving toward cruelty, if not she is either paranoid, an American who is Trystero, or an alien. These markings appear to be mysterious but the paradox is that there is no solution for it or its meaning.

Oedipa wondered whether[...] she tonight not be left with only compiled memories of clues, announcement intimations, but never the central truth itself, which must somehow each time be too bright for her memory to hold, which must be blaze out, destroying its own message irreversibly (Pynchon 95)

Oedipa's inner thoughts travel to another dimension, her mind is confused and all what she thinks about is who am I, what is the purpose of me being alive, what is the hidden reality of the world or society and another question of finding the symbol that she meets throughout her journey.

One truth and lies stand alone, and the devil serves as the conduit for the message being sent by the transmitter whatever information is contained in the channel will be exact and true to the receiver, but any detail that escapes during transmission will be lost and may even turn out to be a falsehood that Oedipa may have built her entire life on. Including the time when Oedipa squandered on Trystero, the system lost value "everything she saw smelled dreamed remembered, would somehow be worsen into Trystero" (Pynchon 65). Heidegger argued that designs function as a fail that project themselves forward to investigate and seize or avoid their potential possibilities and the retrieves of the past in order to suitably adjust their existence, these possibilities are rendered imaginable by Dasein's capacity to interpret its past and potential futures, and they are made achievable by Dasein's capacity to choose to exist in a particular way. For him, humans choose their own being in order to find the aims they need to focus their Dasein on.

Dasein “includes inquiring as one of the possibilities of its being” (Heidegger 27). In addition, to acknowledging that each possibility has potential, one must also recognize that no possibility has an absolute advantage over another. Dasein “should not be constructed in terms of some concrete possible idea of existence” (Heidegger 69). Instead, it is each Dasein’s responsibility to determine the kind of being it wants to be by interpreting its past, its own potential and by interpreting its past and future in relation to one another. As a result, “Dasein is a constantly interpreting being that must draw direction and meaning from ordinary occurrences”. (Heidegger 69). Pynchon’s main character struggles in life, she suffers to construct her individuality and meaning of life, as Heidegger’s Dasein explains how Oedipa realized that there is no meaning in life without one another. She started seeking for the truth over things, people even within herself because she understood that humans exist within their being and the truth of this reality is unconnected.

Oedipa's journey to find the purpose of her life in *The Crying of Lot 49* can be connected to Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophical work *Beyond Good and Evil* in several ways. Nietzsche's exploration of morality, truth, and the self provides insights into Oedipa's quest for meaning and her struggle to navigate a complex and uncertain world.

Nietzsche challenges traditional notions of morality and values, advocating for a reevaluation of established norms. Similarly, Oedipa finds herself confronted with a world that seems to lack a clear moral framework. She encounters various conspiracies and hidden truths that blur the line between good and evil, leading her to question the validity of conventional moral judgments. In her search for purpose, Oedipa is forced to confront the ambiguity and fluidity of moral values, echoing Nietzsche's critique of absolute moral truths. Furthermore, Nietzsche emphasizes the importance of the individual in shaping their own values and determining their own meaning. Oedipa's journey can be seen as an existential exploration, as she grapples with the subjective nature of truth and the construction of meaning. Like

Nietzsche's idea of the "will to power" (18), Oedipa's quest is driven by her desire to exert agency over her own life and to uncover a truth that resonates with her personal experience. Nietzsche's concept of the "Übermensch" or the "superman" (57), also relates to Oedipa's search for purpose. The Übermensch represents an individual who transcends societal conventions and creates their own values. Oedipa, in her pursuit of meaning, challenges the status quo and ventures into the unknown, embodying a similar spirit of individualism and the rejection of conformity.

Moreover, Nietzsche's critique of truth and knowledge as perspectival rather than absolute resonates with Oedipa's experience. Throughout the novel, Oedipa encounters multiple interpretations of reality, leading her to question the nature of truth itself. Nietzsche's idea of "perspectivism" (5) suggests that truth is subjective and influenced by individual perspectives and interpretations. Oedipa's struggle to discern truth from illusion reflects this perspective, as she grapples with multiple narratives and uncertain realities.

2- Oedipa Maas's Identity Crisis

In his *The Crying of Lot 49*, Thomas Pynchon explains the importance to find the meaning of human life through his main character Oedipa and minor characters such as her husband Mucho, therefore, to showcase and represent the nothingness or non-existence, the novel's protagonist, Oedipa Maas, struggles to find purpose in a meaningless world while also trying to understand the nihilistic issue that is suffocating her. She holds her newly discovered morality to make a web of numerous attributions from the past. She ultimately descends into existential nihilism; a philosophical position that asserts the inherent lack of objective meaning or purpose in human existence and the universe at large. The philosophy suggests that life is fundamentally devoid of any ultimate or intrinsic value or significance.

Oedipa, a housewife in the 1960s, embarks on a journey as she disconnects with her isolated and meaningless zone in Kunnert to carry out the last wishes of her deceased lover, pierce Inverarity. She travels to San Narciso after finding hints that point to the presence of the Trystero a massive anti-government conspiracy involving private postage black clad assassins faked postal stamps, and more people who were trying to understand what was going on around her were bombarding her with cryptic talks and lazy clues. In her relatedness quest to learn reality, Oedipa conducts an extensive investigation that sends her on an inner discovery quest and launches her battle against existential nihilism. Thus, for Heidegger, the main purpose of curiosity is to observe everything in the universe superficially, which leads Dasein to an inauthentic existential state, most Dasein are motivated by curiosity, “or the propensity toward a particular way of letting the world be encountered to us in perception”(Heidegger 214). Which enable them to care about learning and experiencing new things.

However, curiosity is not always a pure desire, one may choose to explore for other reasons than deep sustained learning, such as the desire to see another place, inauthentically curious people only want to be able to pretend that they are “well-versed and well-travelled”(heidegger214).Rather than actually being curious about things, “curiosity does not involve seeing things and marvelling at them or being impressed to the point of not comprehending them” (Heidegger 217). Because of idle chatter and interest “being in on it with someone” (heidegger217).Takes precedence above actual comprehension. All the above mentioned could be applied on Oedipa’s characteristics. As the women in the artwork go through their repetitious motions, she starts off on her trip like a maiden locked in a tower.

She is contained by her everyday responsibilities and her unpleasant one-sided marriage to Mucho. Oedipa spends her time in Kunnert performing menial activities like going to Tupperware parties, going to the grocery store, and preparing meals for her adulterous spouse. Days for her are routine and monotonous, blending together “through the rest of the afternoon

...she wondered, wondered, shuffling back through a fat deckle of days which seemed (wouldn't she be the first to admit it?) more or less identical ..." (Lott 3). Every part of her life is infused with a sense of futility and imprisonment in an unpleasant boring existence. This has a strong resonance with "existential nihilism" according to Alan Pratt "existence itself all action suffering and feeling is ultimately senseless and empty" (23). As a result, Oedipa feels unimportant in a large and complicated world, her sorrow seems to have no rhyme or a reason. Oedipa compares the road to a "Hypodermic needle ...nourishing the mainliner, keeping it happy, coherent, protected from pain ..." (23)

As she travels down a roadway in San Narciso Pratt asserts "the life of mortals is so mean a thing as to be virtually un-life" (23). when compared to the vastness of the world surrounding her, Oedipa's life and suffering as an ordinary mortal living, a simple life is meaningless due to her lack of responsiveness to the world around her and her desire to escape the pain of pointless suffering, Oedipa has become existentially depersonalised (24).

Heidegger proposes that the self is only generated via reactions to the environment and that our choices for living define who is a human being, in fact in Sartre's writing "existence precedes essence" (42). Thus, Oedipa's lack of sensitivity to the environment around her from developing a sense of self, allowing her to remain numb and unaware, she merely remains in her tower and adamantly rejects to look out the window rather than confronting the nothingness or wearing golden clothes. empty commodity signs such as muzak which by requiring no existential involvement and being deeply secure insulating, and no- threatening allow her to become disconnected without suffering any repercussions, making her dissatisfied yet at ease in her protected environment. However, Oedipa recounts the numerous facts of her existence obviously without much commentary or investment in what is happening, but this is entirely due to her choice to numb herself rather than the isolation of her surroundings.

When she encounters her attorney Roseman, to talk about the heritage, she is such a passive character that her passiveness and interaction in this moment represents her withdrawal from anything that happened to her. Oedipa has shunned herself and trapped herself in existential depersonalization by going unresponsive because our sense of self is established by how we respond to the world around us. She acts like a machine going through life and only partially exist, she even refuses the notion that emotions are the antithesis to her stupor personality, telling her husband Mucho that he is “too sensitive” (Pynchon 3) as he shed tears to his own misery. In this way, she regards emotions and the resulting development of a self as a problem or a source of despair and the change of the whole personality is the answer.

Oedipa applies her newly discovered empathy after leaving Kunnert and shedding her weakness to turn chaos into commands creating herself and using Nietzsche’s supported pursuit of prudence to defeat the nihilism and nothingness that menace her “she would give them order; she would create constellations (Pynchon7).

In order to achieve significance, creativity, self-mastery and insight, Frederic Nietzsche identifies three ways of exceeding the animal existence or a greater humanity. These three ways of exceeding animal existence—self-overcoming, will to power, and eternal recurrence—reflect Nietzsche's emphasis on personal agency, self-transcendence, and embracing the fullness of life. They provide a framework for individuals to strive towards a state of greater humanity by actively shaping their own destinies and finding meaning and purpose in their lives. Oedipa seeks understanding. She strives to become one of those “rarest and most valuable of exemplars” (Nietzsche 66). Of which Nietzsche declares that those who discover the truth, who read the written word, who can help others, choose the correct road. Many characters in the novel such as Yoyo dyne, Stanley, and Berkeley, as well as John Nefastis refer to her as a sensitive. Someone who can process a great deal of information and this is the motivation that ultimately propels her forward, her search for meaning itself is what gives her purpose in the

end. As results, she makes the decision to organize as much as she can while still feeling frustrated that she cannot perceive more of herself and transforms into this pursuit the reality of ordering's constellation the people surrounding her and she adding light on any remaining areas of darkness.

Oedipa's answer to the imaginary play the courier tragedy which represents irrationality and misery and has death and pain happening practically. However, Oedipa picks up on minute elements that are relatable to the outside world and hint to a larger meaning, such as the mention of Trystero and the black-clad assassins, throughout this parade of tragedy. By identifying signs of purpose, she might use this play as a figure for her own existence other people nearby who are suffering needlessly. She discovers proof of a higher purpose for existence itself in the performance. Considering that only she can solve this riddle, she believes that this gives Oedipa and her significance. She is filled with questions such "why did Pierce pick me to be executor? why does my husband cheat on me?" (Pynchon 55).

While some authors refer to this as a "liberation from her Rapunzel" (Moore, Klemp 78). Like life in Kinnert that reveals her to the chance of oracle, indicating her to the existence's aim, she was not fully liberated from her tower, everything become suddenly obvious and significant every plight become useful and clarified, and she develops her own comprehension of this life and why everything occurs.

Oedipa, however, has become overly sensitive, causing her to take in every detail to the point that she becomes overwhelmed and declares that "it is over, they have saturated me" (Pynchon 197) which brings to mind the opening of the novel when she numbs herself to the outside world. However, she is obstructing the enormous fullness of the world around her rather than her own emptiness. She has uncovered so much proof of a deeper meaning that it is no longer available.

After an extended struggle with the quest spinning in her head, Oedipa notices that this desire has become to her identity and that, therefore, not only her satisfaction but her very existence relies on discovering purpose. After her late-night walk, where she is bombarded by an abundance of absurd proofs and realization about death and destiny, she becomes confused and scared looking for sense while frightened of its possibility. Oedipa turns to Kunnert and asks her psychologist for help due to her increasing feelings of confusion, paranoia, and uncertainty. The novel presents Oedipa's journey as she becomes entangled in a web of conspiracy theories and mysterious symbols, causing her to question her own sanity and the nature of reality.

“I can” she replied “hoping you could talk me out of a fantasy” cherish it! Said Hilarious “for what else do any of you have?” (Pynchon 55- 56). By discovering and joining a cause bigger than herself, as well as by journeying Trystero, she has forced herself to go, she also attempts to overcome the “Nothingness” by forming social interactions with others, relying on Heidegger’s belief that the specific aspect of humanity known as Dasein is a gregarious figure, that cannot exist in isolation, however, Oedipa finds herself detached and is overcome by despair. Heidegger’s view about intellectuality and build individuality may be a valid solution to nihilism. Oedipa additionally discovers oneself by this, uniqueness having as much to do with her search for purpose as it does with utilizing the men around her to look for it. He writes that to the identity can only be preserved with regard to one unreserved commitment that determines the individual, for example “a knight defines himself by this love for a princess” an analogy that is repeated in the novel (Heidegger 214).

Her attempt at suicide came as the only response to her survival and the pointless life she had to live. However, many people around her were angry such as Mucho and Hilarious. After the suffering, Oedipa realised her mistakes of keeping asking what is her existence, she

follows nihilism and stops looking for the true purpose and the only way to achieve that is just be and exist.

This forward inertia, the phenomenon toward an aspect while never getting there, affect the entire book and as Pierce makes it “keep bouncing” (pynchon100) the absence of recovery at the novel’s ending and thus, its entire thematically form repeating this feeling. Finally, in the final phrase of the novel, she arrived back “to wait the crying of lot 49” (pynchon102).Anticipating her final, answer just on the cusp of her experience.

This illustration the cyclical nature of her journey as Oedipa travels through problem and insights believe and uncertainty the pursuit of meaning and the pain of the emptiness, continually coming back to hopefulness and then getting into sadness while she is not accepting this nothingness, far from it, she has discovered how to deal with its potential while not letting go her struggle to overcome it.

Chapter Three

Oedipa's Unresolved Enigma

The last chapter of this thesis is entitled “Oedipa's Unresolved Enigma”. It is divided into two sections. The first section “the dynamic development of Oedipa Maas's character through her journey” focuses on Oedipa's character change from a traditional passive woman from the middle class to a detective searching for clues and meaning. Oedipa who represents the disillusioned lower-class woman appears to be a terribly lonely and profoundly bored woman stuck at her home watching TV the whole day with her radio DJ husband, Mucho. She feels completely spiritless and disconnected from society. However, she adopts the persona of a detective and strives against all odds to remake the world into a place of meaning and structure. This analysis relies on the androgyny theory. It demonstrates the fact that Oedipa can possess a similar highly levels of stereotypical ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ characteristics. The second section is entitled “Oedipa’s struggle for power to achieve her mission” in which Pynchon creates a female character who struggles for power in a society that consistently deprives her of it. He also tends to show the things that Oedipa Maas has achieved in her mission. The section relies on Naila Kabear's theory of woman's empowerment in which she analyses empowerment through three interconnected dimensions which are agency, resources and achievement and explains how women take control and ownership of their lives by expanding their choices, and how that power manifests itself in real life as well.

1. The Dynamic Development of Oedipa Maas' Character throughout her Journey

Oedipa has a variety of characteristics as a person. She has a strong distancing from society, but it is balanced by an intense curiosity that draws her through a range of different socioeconomic classes and environments. These two main characteristics that she exhibits drive the plot’s progression of the novel. In fact, her name evokes thoughts of Freudian interpretation

or a Greek hero. However, none of these are accurate, there is only a willful implement of a will, there is no great quest. Oedipa Maas is portrayed as a woman who is both internally and externally seeking something that is just out of reach. The appearance of Oedipa Maas is very unremarkable. A middle aged Northern Californian who has become accustomed to the routines of suburban life. Her outer appearance is extremely suburban with a Californian touch. It is a little bit more edgy but still quite conservative. As she ages her hair's color and tanners are starting to alter. She has a well-bronzed complexion and is of Caucasian race.

When *The Crying of Lot49* was published, the second wave of the feminist movement or the women's right movement was just beginning to gain acceptance, and the sexual revolution made possible by "the pill" was well underway. Oedipa, however, was stuck in the void between the two:

she starts out as a hum-drum housewife who ventures out into the unknown with a simple mission regarding a probate matter, but ends up like Philip Marlowe, alone hell-bent on solving the Trystero mystery, operating solely among men (Mharlyn 6)

Oedipa's action is neither very feminine nor particularly masculine. Hence, Pynchon seeks to achieve gender equality and balance of men and women. In terms of the character's presentation, Oedipa's first description is already profoundly significant. Oedipa is depicted as an ordinary lower-class housewife who was mostly preoccupied with the prosaic tasks of her regular lifestyle, she is portrayed as having a limited character and consciousness. Until she learned about her Ex-boyfriend's will she was trapped in a loveless marriage and felt like a deeply frustrated housewife. Oedipa is a round character, whose identity changes throughout her quest. At the start of the novel, Oedipa sees her middle-class environment as a closed room and feels herself as "a prisoner among the pines and salt fogs of Kinneret" (Pynchon11). Later on, she becomes more enthused about her mission, which aids in her character development.

Oedipa, the central figure in the novel, emerges from her personal life to the external sphere in search of identity, independence and freedom. Her pursuit of the subject of agency and self-development distinguishes her as an “androgynous character” (Cathy 4). In which refers to the combination of both masculine and feminine characteristics qualities within an individual. It is a state of being and presenting oneself in a way that blurs or challenges traditional gender norms and expectations. Androgyny and gender subversion approaches are implied in order to dismantle conventional gender celebration and develop a new unconventional view and understanding of gender as androgyny, as well as challenges all the traditional divisions between femininity and masculinity. Oedipa's decision to abandon her husband, Mucho, in order to satisfy the will of ex-lover, her ongoing struggle to deal with business as well as her affair with a lawyer all show her act of defiance of femininity expectations. The transformation of Oedipa Maas from dependent to independent from object of passivity to subject of activity as well as her desire to go beyond patriarchal limits, represents her picture of androgyny. She questions traditional heroism, which has always favored men rather than women. She selects the very but best human attributes from both females and males’ spheres, mocking male heroes. Oedipa gains the power to work for herself. Her journey is bold and new, in fact, it deviated dramatically from the usual heroic journey

‘one summer afternoon, Mrs. Oedipa Maas came home from Tupperware party whose hostess had put perhaps too much krish un the fondue to find that she, Oedipa had been named executor, or she supposed executrix of the state of one pierce Inverarity, a Californian real estate mogul who had one lost two million dollars in his spare time but still had asset numerous and tangled enough to make the job of sorting it all out more than honorary’. (Pynchon1)

According to the preceding description, Oedipa is a lower-class female who attends a Tupperware party in California. She has received a letter declaring her the executor of her Ex-boyfriend, Pierce Inverarity state. A wealthy man who has got a lot of possessions, yet he previously lost two million dollars. She than starts to look into his property and his unexplained demise. Oedipa abandons her husband, Mucho, and then makes the audacious decision to travel to the new state of San Narciso to uncover the truth about Pierce Inverarity's death. As a result, her transition from the private to the public sphere is as males for the outside world demonstrates double gender roles in her action. She makes a bold choice to abandon her husband and then consults with a lawyer named Metzger. A married woman embarks on adventures that depicts her as a new lady of the early sixties. She has no clue about where to start or how to start her adventure as a typical innocent woman having no experiences, yet she grows stronger and aspires to attain her aim in whatever way possible. She evolves from a condition of limitation to self-directed action, from an immature to matured woman and from innocent to enlightened and responsible woman in order to achieve Pierce's will. Gurjeet argues that

“gender roles are socially constructed based on the differences in the patterns of behavior of men and woman. It is socially constructed meaning of the biological differences of male and female which affects their responses to one another in a given situation”. (6)

According to the behaviors and habits of men and women, gender roles are formed by families, societies and communities. The roles of gender are influenced by a variety of structures such as culture, media, education and language. In our society, women are assigned to domestic tasks like cooking, cleaning and child-caring while males are assigned to outside jobs. Similar to distinct racial and cast groups, inequality exists between men and women. Oedipa however, decides to travel to carry out her ex-boyfriend's will by challenging men by performing outside

missions. By challenging gender roles, she breaks the mold. As a result, she departs from a passive state to an active state pushing the stereotypical gender roles and her traditional life to the corner, she then achieves a great heroism by overcoming all the odds:

“when Oedipa Maas, the protagonist of *The Crying of Lot 49* rejects her cultural inheritance along with its restrictive definition of womanliness, she certainly does not become a being who is biologically parts male-androgyny for her, means finally refusing to be fractured by societal definitions of what she, as a woman should or should not be”. (Cathy 4)

Oedipa, in Cathy's opinion, transcends the traditional gender roles. She violates social norms and definition of womanliness such as being weak and subservient. As a result, societal definitions limit gender in certain works. She even “challenges cherished male dominated society” (Pavidson1).

“Oedipa’s special alienation as a woman from the media images surrounding her, has not been analyzed satisfactorily by any critic, and it is helpful to have it at least identified. But the gender issue is rather swallowed up by the comment on networks, so that Oedipa is looking for a lost system of communication”. (Pavidson3)

He claims that Oedipa has been searching for a lost communication system. Over the course of her adventure, she appears to be disoriented and a pathetic. Despite continuing with her objective, she encounters difficulties and estrangement as a result of being a woman. Oedipa challenges the gender binary. Even difficult scenario is met with fight and resistance from her. It is wonderful that she has remained consistent and committed to her goal. To accomplish her mission, she is a self-driven and destiny-inspired woman. Oedipa continues her investigation into the enigma in spite of the unexpected results. She sees it as her responsibility. She deals

cleverly with Stanley Koteks asking him bluntly and direct questions such as “what that symbol mean?” to achieve and fulfill her goal.

“Who’s that with beard? Asking Oedipa. James Clerk Maxwell, explained Koteks, a famous Scotch scientist who had one postulated a tiny intelligence, known as Maxwell Demon... she'd decided to come tonight to the scope not only because of the encounter with Stanley Koteks, but also because of other revelation, because it seemed that a pattern was beginning to emerge having to do with mail and how it was delivered... she asked about the initial W.A.S.T.E’’. (Pynchon68)

James Maxwell is questioned by Oedipa about the Maxwell Demon which worked with molecules that moved at varying random speeds in accordance with the second law of thermodynamics which is a branch of physics, deals with the principles governing the behavior of energy and the transformation of heat into mechanical work. She also questions how it works while she visits scientist John Nefastis. She looks for scientific explanations for the mysterious underground postal system's use. She next makes the decision to go to Stanley Koteks after hours to learn more about postal delivery. She works alone on each of these tasks. She is prepared to overcome every challenge that arises during the course of her androgynous adventure. She breaks convention of gender roles and creates a new identity. She acts as a detective pursuing her goal. Oedipa is the most inquisitive and intelligent figures in the novel, even though she isn't exactly Sherlock Holmes. In contrast to the entirely worthless men she is surrendered by.

In short, the Central figure in *The Crying of Lot 49* is a regular and conventional housewife. Nevertheless, Pynchon challenges the reader to reconsider what exactly a normal housewife is. The reader will discover that Oedipa is a mistreated yet much more resilient than the men around her. She is helpless but a smart woman. She's trapped but inquisitive, she

accepts an active position as the executor of Inverarity inheritance, one for which she is utterly unprepared since “ the people that would actually prepare for this type of role are always of either gender”(Ibid 4).

2. Oedipa's Struggle for Power to Achieve her Mission

Oedipa Maas, sets out on a mission to discover the truth about a complicated case. She exhibits persistence and tenacity during her trip in spite of her early hesitation and confusion, pro-actively looking for solutions and refusing to accept the current quo. Oedipa's tenacious search for truth can be understood as an act of empowerment because it pits her against the powers that want to keep her in darkness. During her quest Oedipa starts “collects data on each and every one” (Pynchon72). And “connects the world of thermodynamics to the world of information flow”(Pynchon79). The journey begins when Oedipa is lured in by the mystery of the Trystero system. She has little impact over her discoveries, which are somewhat unintentionally caused at the very beginning. Each scene is connected to the next, which inexorably leads Oedipa who lacks the ability of a systematic research. Later on, she is “quick to read the messages encoded in the medium of America”(Schaub26). In addition, she is looking into literary and historical sources. She examines the original manuscript of a play associated with the Trystero system in an effort to determine who changed it and why the protagonist ended up having a series of adventures that built on one another without any sort of overarching pattern. Therefore, Pynchon's female character is a multi-dimensional and show a variety of personalities, reasons for doing things and desires. She is not constrained by passive roles or stereotypes. Her agency and complexity add to the narrative of female empowerment by highlighting the various ways in which woman can assert themselves and handle challenging and complex situations.

Considering the effects of patriarchy, capitalism and other social systems on women's empowerment, Naila Kabeer's theory (1999) emphasizes the significance of power structures in determining women's lives and how they effect and influence the opportunities and choices available to female characters in the novel. The main character, Oedipa, is a typical housewife who grew up in 1960s suburban America. At the age of twenty-seven, she spends her time cleaning, cooking and hosting Tupperware parties. She routinely sees her psychiatrist Dr. Hilarius, who tries to convince her to participate in his LSD testing, which she fiercely resists. Even worse, he phones her in the middle of the night invading her personal space. Her spouse, Mucho Maas, is a former used car salesman who is now a radio discjockey. She looks forward to his arrival every night. He cheats on her with teenage girls. Mucho does not react to his wife's queries, or comments on her problems. As a result, Oedipa is so depicted in the patriarchal framework of their suburban society. She does not tend to her personal needs while staying at home, she solely takes care of her husband. Overall, she is under the control of males who do not respect her or listen to her requests for assistance. She receives zero attention from Mucho and no encouragement. Dr. Hilarius, her psychiatrist, attempts to exploit her in his drug testing on housewives. Even her lawyer, whom she consults for guidance on the will she needs to execute, tries to harass her while she is having a lunch with him. Moreover, the will she has to execute demonstrates that her ex-boyfriend still has some influence over her. Oedipa endures all of this without pausing to consider her place in a patriarchal society.

Pynchon portrays Oedipa's battle for power in a world that keeps taking it away from her during the course of the novel. When Oedipa is sent to San Narciso as part of her ex-boyfriend Inverarity's will, there is an expectation that she would be capable to gain power inside herself, free from the control of her partner, Mucho Maas, and her psychiatrist Dr. Hilarius. When Oedipa first arrives, she compares the city's "ordered swirl of houses and

streets” to the circuit of transistor radio, which gives her an “unexpected, astonishing clarity” (Pynchon14). She later on, gains understanding and strength from this clarity.

“though she knew even less about radios than about Southern Californians, there were to both outward patterns a hieroglyphic sense on concealed meaning of an intent to communicate”.(Pynchon14)

Oedipa still concludes that the city is attempting to connect with her in spite of the attempts to bring her back down by highlighting her ignorance, demonstrates her growing strength. Consequently, just as circuit acts as a map for moving currents, directing them to power, Oedipa's route through San Narciso's circuit acts as a map for Oedipa, directing her to power. Oedipa's authority is abruptly removed, though as if someone had turned off his circuit, with no indication that any outside factors including the author himself are to blame. This is similar to how an abuser willfully deprives his victim of her power and causes everything to fall on her. The novel goes on from where Oedipa left off with his analysis of San Narciso's communication

“there would seemed no limit to what the printed circuit could have told her so in her first minute of San Narciso's a revelation also trembled just past the threshold of her understanding”.(Pynchon 14).

Any influence that Oedipa may have had is destroyed only by using this single sentence. Even if San Narciso is able to communicate, for certain reasons, this communication does not go through as implied by the phrase “could have told her”(Pynchon14). Along with the phrase “if she had tried to find out”(Pynchon14) which makes fun of Oedipa and places all the guilt on her. Pynchon recognizes what San Narciso is trying to say, and it was Oedipa's procrastination that kept this message from getting through to her. Given that a capability to give and receive thoughts is related to one's capacity to take part in society, if comprehension

of what is happening is “just past the threshold of her understanding”(Pynchon14). Oedipa gets extremely close to communication and eventually power. However, she is prevented from achieving that power at the very moment she would have done so.

While other figures in the novel are also messed with in terms of knowledge, Mucho only gains a better awareness of the world surrounding him after beginning to take LSD. Their level of understanding is not on them, only Oedipa gets blamed for her lack of knowledge and thus authority. As a result, the guilt is successfully shifted onto Oedipa, there by establishing her as a subordinate to the forces that be. Oedipa becomes weak, powerless and helpless as other characters decide how she will end up. This fits with Pierce and Pynchon on a deeper level, as Pynchon's authorship and Pierce's will both direct Oedipa to visit specific locations and connect with particular people. Oedipa has some Independence and free agency but because Pynchon and Pierce are the driving forces behind her fate, she receives actions rather than initiating them. Similar to how a victim of an emotional abusive relationship would feel when the abuser dictates all of their actions. Oedipa is unable to comprehend the extent of her captivity when pressed into a direction, she is unable to hold her ground. The submission to their power is one that the other entities particularly want to take. Oedipa has less authority and loses the power to make decision since she is Pynchon's character who can manipulate her thoughts to the point where she is physically and mentally controlled. On the other hand, since this role is established so earlier in the plot it is nearly difficult for Oedipa to elude it. It works to put her in a submissive and vulnerable state from the beginning of the novel.

That does not mean, however, that Oedipa is not trying to flee from it. After talking with Mr. Randolph Dribble about his Job as a theatrical director, describing him “the projector at the planetarium” (Pynchon64). Oedipa asks “shall I project a world?” (Pynchon64). Oedipa has proved to be in control, so when she inquires about whether she will be the only one to “project a world”, she takes back control from these who are holding it over her. Additionally, the verb

“shall I project a world?” is far more assertive than the verb “can” and “should” which both challenge the speaker's competence and seek for permission. This demonstrates the empowered way of thinking is her query. Oedipa is speculating as to whether she will project a world in future, not if she can do so or whether she needs authorization to do so. And Oedipa's final query words simply serve to underscore this impending change of power. Because Oedipa will be both the maker and the projector, she won't even find herself lost or helpless again. If she projects her own universe and makes her own map.

The abusive atmosphere in which Oedipa finds herself causes her to start losing herself:

“she busrode and walked on into the heightening morning, giving herself up to a fatalism rare for her. Where was the Oedipa who'd driven so bravely up here from San Narciso? That domestic Baby had come on so like the private eye in any long-ago radio drama, believing you needed was grit resourcefulness, exemption from hidebound cops 'rules, to solve any great mystery”.(pynchon100)

Oedipa emphasizes her feelings of helplessness and shows her loss of identity by “giving herself up to a fatalism rare for her” both of which result from her belief that she has only a little power over her life. For the very first time, she becomes aware of how she is being controlled, especially when she discovers that greater power is making decisions about her life rather than her. However, the fact that it is “rare for her” suggests that she hasn't already come to this conclusion and that it is extremely improbable that she will ever see it again in her life, which is consistent with her sentiments of helplessness over her seizure like revelations. Furthermore, “giving herself up” demonstrates that Oedipa appears so defeated that she is feeling that resisting the authority figure who is directing her is no longer worthwhile. She is ceding not only her power over her life yet also her identity, which has only been verified and ridiculed by

the question “where was the Oedipa who'd driven so bravely up here from San Narciso?” (Pynchon100).

After demonstrating her lack of identity, Oedipa is subjected to more sentimental torture by the free indirect discourse that first refers to her as an optimistic baby while being an optimistic is a positive feature, calling someone a ‘baby’ after they are one is demeaning. Oedipa's optimism is also naïve, it is the attitude of someone who has not lived in the world of long enough to have experience it. Additionally, as newborns are unable to take care for themselves, implying that Oedipa is a baby indicates that she is impotent, powerless and incapable of carrying out her purpose because she cannot take care for herself. Hence, since Pynchon's narrative approach lends itself to numerous interpretations, the portrayal of women's emancipation may also be ambiguous. While some readers would find the characters' actions and agency is empowering, others might contend that Pynchon's handling of women could be criticized or complicated by elements like objectification or any open plot threads.

As she acknowledges her status as a bystander in her life at the novel's conclusion, Oedipa is explicitly bound to an endless cycle of emotional abuse:

Oedipa is “trying to guess”(pynchon109). And so is unable to pinpoint precisely what she's looking for, that's similar to as watching a film while having no idea what's on the screen exactly, even though “sitting” in “the back of the room” and “looking”(pynchon109). sounds like an improvement from her attempt to watch a blurry movie at the start of the novel. Light is connected to enlightenment, which can produce power. The scene of Oedipa is later on lost due to the lack of light in the space. In the end, Oedipa “await[s] the crying of lot 49”, returning her to the submissive position, as the auctioneer “cleared his throat” and gets ready to speak. “Set back” (pynchon109). Merely emphasizes her submission to people in positions of power and acceptance of her inevitable powerlessness because sitting denotes consenting to a circumstance despite having strong negative feelings against it. Oedipa can only succumb to

the emotional abuse at the novel end, and any chance for her an entirely different conclusion for her come to an end since her acceptance saps any power, she had left to oppose what is happening to her.

Oedipa is standing outside the theater, watching the streetlights blink on and off. She is overwhelmed by a sense of loss and isolation, feeling disconnected from the world around her. She is back to her passive state and this suggest a lack of empowerment as she is continually confronted with unclear and contradictory information, making it more and more difficult for her to distinguish between truth and delusion. Thus, she is again inauthentic and uncertain about her true being. Oedipa's loss of her own being can be seen as a reflection of the existential crisis she experiences throughout the narrative.

General conclusion

The Crying of Lot 49, a novel by Thomas Pynchon, has been studied and examined in the light of this thesis, which revolves around seeking meaning in a meaningless world. Oedipa Maas, the novel's main character, is followed as she navigates a complex web of conspiracies and mysterious symbols. This research examines the nature of meaning and the difficulties of finding it in an increasingly fragmented and perplexing reality through a detailed examination of the novel's themes, characters and narrative structure. With the incorporation of Pynchon's complex narrative, this thesis aimed to shed light on the search for meaning and coherence that underlies all human endeavours in a chaotic and unreliable environment.

This study has been an attempt to depict Oedipa Maas' journey to uncover the Trystero conspiracy, which became intertwined with her quest for personal identity. As she works her way through the complicated web of symbols, connections and uncertainties, she learns to comprehend herself in a new light, discovering her own being in the process. In order to understand the above-mentioned process, a clear analysis has been given from the perspective of different scholars. Sartre's theory of existentialism and humanism discusses human life and its nature. According to the principles of this theory, humans act in certain ways to create a meaning in their lives and purpose of their existence. This study also depended on Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* which investigates the human being and his individuality that he gains within time.

This thesis also aims to provide light on the character development of Oedipa Maas through her trip. Her shift from passive observer to an active seeker of truth leads her through a maze of mystery and perplexity, prompting her to question her perceptions, identity and the nature of reality. She becomes disillusioned with her quest for truth and begins to doubt the validity and significance of the conspiracy she has been pursuing, as well as how she

successfully player both feminine and masculine characteristics to accomplish her journey, pushing all the stereotypical genders roles imposed by her society and her traditional life to the side-lines. Hence, this study aimed to examine the novel from the standpoint of Pynchon's use of non-traditional portrayal of women, particularly Oedipa Maas as an agency, an independent being and a freedom seeker. Her unrelenting struggle for total independence and personal identity, as well as her passion are all depicted in her struggle, she embodies the shifting postmodern gender roles.

Despite the fact that the society is based on the notion that patriarchy has domination over women, Pynchon has created a female anti-heroine, Oedipa Maas, who has changed from being a victim of male dominance to a strong and independent woman. Applying Naila Kabeer's theory of female empowerment to *The Crying of Lot 49* allows for a more in-depth examination of Oedipa Maas' agency, the power dynamics at the novel and the intersectionality of her experiences. It serves as a prism through which to examine the nuances of women's empowerment inside the novel as well as it sheds light on broader themes of gender and power. However, it is vital to emphasize that Pynchon's novel investigation of women's emancipation is multifaceted and can be read in a variety of ways. The novel's fractured and enigmatic structure allows for numerous readings, as Pynchon frequently blurs the lines between truth and delusion. As a result, depending of the reader's perspective and interpretation, the novel's concept of women's empowerment may be perceived as both empowering and perverted.

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Résumé :

Cette étude explore la façon dont Oedipa Mass, la protagoniste du roman, pense et comment son voyage la transforme d'une observatrice passive en une chercheuse active de l'existence. Dans "Le Lot 49" de l'écrivain américain Thomas Pynchon, elle démontre également comment la quête de l'émancipation féminine traite de la représentation du corps féminin à la fois comme outil d'autonomisation et de dépossession. Le premier chapitre aborde le contexte socio-politique et historique. Le deuxième chapitre explore le voyage d'Oedipa à travers une série de quêtes et explique sa crise mentale et les luttes qu'elle ressent lors de sa recherche de sa véritable existence, en s'appuyant sur la théorie de Heidegger sur "L'Être et le Temps", le "Existentialisme et Humanisme" de Sartre et "Par-delà le bien et le mal" de Nietzsche, qui abordent la relation entre les êtres humains et l'univers. Le troisième chapitre se concentre sur le changement de caractère d'Oedipa, passant d'une femme passive traditionnelle de la classe moyenne à une détective en quête d'indices et de sens. En s'appuyant sur la théorie de l'autonomisation des femmes de Naila Kabir, qui analyse l'autonomisation à travers trois dimensions interconnectées, l'étude analyse comment Oedipa prend le contrôle et la propriété de sa vie.

Mots clés : Le Lot 49, Trystero, Jungien, Machine Nefastis, Nihilisme, Énigme.

ملخص

تستكشف هذه الدراسة كيف يفكر أوديبا ماس، بطل الرواية، وكيف تحوّلت رحلاتها من المراقبة السلبية إلى الباحثة النشطة عن الوجود في رواية "صراخ الكثير 49" للكاتب الأمريكي توماس بينشون. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، توضح كيفية التعامل مع سعي المرأة للتحرر من خلال تصوير الجسم الأنثوي كأداة للتمكين والتحطيم. يتناول الفصل الأول السياق الاجتماعي والسياسي والتاريخي. يستكشف الفصل الثاني رحلة أوديبا في سلسلة من المغامرات ويشرح أزمته العقلية وصراعاتها التي تعانيها أثناء بحثها عن وجودها الحقيقي، ويستعين بنظرية هايدغر عن "الوجود والزمان" وعن "الوجودية والإنسانية" لسارتر و"ما وراء الخير والشر" لنيتشه التي تناقش العلاقة بين البشر والكون. يركز الفصل الثالث على تغير شخصية أوديبا من امرأة سلبية تقليدية من الطبقة المتوسطة إلى محققة تبحث عن الدلائل والمعنى. باستناد إلى نظرية تمكين المرأة لنانلة كبير، التي تحلل التمكين من خلال ثلاثة أبعاد مترابطة وتشرح كيف يتحكم النساء في حيات

الكلمات المفتاحية: صراخ الكثير 49، تريستيرو، يونجيان، آلة نيفاستيس، النّيلية، لغزهن ويمتلكنها.