Composition and Publication History of Thomas Pynchon’s *The Crying of Lot 49*

One of the fundamental problems with an investigation into the history of a text is the assumption that information is accessible: Oedipa Maas, the protagonist of *Lot 49*, approaches her etymological inquiry of “Trystero” with the supposition that she need only locate earlier, definitive editions of Richard Warfinger’s *The Courier’s Tragedy* for enlightenment.\(^1\) While *The Crying of Lot 49* does not exhibit textual variance progressively through history, Pynchon satirizes literary historians in the novel, especially through English professor Emory Bortz, who aids Oedipa’s search as an erudite bibliophile. It is difficult not to correlate scholars and critics with the one-dimensional characters of Bortz, entropy expert John Nefastis, and postage expert Genghis Cohen, who obsess over the precious textuality of folios and quartos and who glorify trivia like chemist Clerk Maxwell and variant stamps. Similar to the characterization and futile scholarly searches in *Lot 49*, Pynchon personally mocks his obsessed fans and critics with his reclusive lifestyle: since the 1970s, Pynchon has effectively withdrawn from the public eye and has occluded details concerning his whereabouts, biography, and literature both past and forthcoming. While little definite information is known about the textual history of *Lot 49*, we can ascertain elements of Pynchon’s composing and publishing the novel from biographical and historical evidence, especially his publishing short fiction pieces in magazines.

In the fall of 1953, Thomas Ruggles Pynchon, Jr. entered Cornell University at the age of just 16 as a scholarship student; during his first year, Pynchon worked in the physics engineering program (*Dictionary of Literary Biography*). This early major is significant to Pynchon’s literary career, as it establishes his scientific background and legitimates the accuracy of the scientific information in his fiction. For example, in *Lot 49*, John Nefastis explains to Oedipa both entropy and Maxwell’s Demon, the theoretical violation of the second law of thermodynamics (84-5); while Pynchon combines thermodynamic entropy and Information Theory in this context, Maxwell’s Demon was considered to illustrate the similarity of the two disciplines. Additionally, Pynchon wrote a short story entitled “Entropy” during his last two years at Cornell.

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\(^1\) My discussion and quotations of the novel refer to the 1999 First Perennial Classics edition. To my knowledge, no significant discrepancies exist between published editions of the novel.
After serving a two-year term in the Navy, Pynchon returned to Cornell in 1957 and wrote several short stories that he later published as *Slow Learner* in 1984. In 1960, Pynchon published “Entropy” in *Kenyon Review*, the story “foregrounds the theme of entropy in a variety of ways and also schools the reader in applying the metaphor of entropy to representations of breakdown in everyday life” (*DLB*). Pynchon certainly extends this metaphor throughout *Lot 49* as a prominent theme of the novel, which readers can recognize as allegorical of the social entropy in mid-twentieth century America. In his article entitled “Source Materials for Thomas Pynchon’s Fiction: An Annotated Bibliography,” Javaid Qazi asserts that Pynchon found entropy as the “metaphor for his own ideas about cycles of decadence and regeneration” in Henry Adams discussion of history as entropic in *The Education of Henry Adams: An Autobiography* and *The Tendency of History* (8).

Like “Entropy,” another short story that Pynchon wrote during this same time period can presumably serve as precedent for *Lot 49*: published in 1960 by *New World Writing*, “Low-Lands” concerns the underground or marginalized members of society. Pynchon reprises this topic in *Lot 49* by exposing Oedipa to unconventional groups like the Peter Pinguid Society (35), “Inamorati Anonymous” (91), and the Alameda County Death Cult (99). The *Dictionary of Literary Biography* notes the significance of the “gypsies” in “Low-Lands” as indicative of Pynchon’s later fiction (“Thomas Pynchon”); additionally, the setting with “network of tunnels and rooms” signals the imagery that Oedipa observes throughout *Lot 49*, including “the ordered swirl of houses and streets” (14), telephone wires (149), digital computers (150), and “hieroglyphic streets” (150).

Several aspects of *Lot 49* appear to have derived directly from Pynchon’s personal experience. While critics speculate whether Pynchon took classes with Vladimir Nabokov at Cornell, Pynchon surely learned the conventions of Jacobean tragedy from a Cornell English seminar in Elizabethan/Jacobean drama, according to fellow Cornell alumnus, Professor Robert Daly (lecture, 10/13/04). Therefore, Richard Wharfinger’s *The Courier’s Tragedy*, the play that Pynchon invents and describes in chapter three of *Lot 49* (49-63), displays the dramatic conventions of the period by Pynchon’s design. Pynchon features Oedipa’s study of *The Courier’s Tragedy* in her investigation of the Trystero prominently as one of the novel’s focal points; additionally, Oedipa’s schizophrenic travel around southern California drives the plot of *Lot 49*. After writing his first novel *V.* in Mexico, Pynchon moved to California (*Contemporary Authors Online*); Pynchon actually resonates this autobiographical fact early in the novel when Oedipa recalls visiting Mexico City (11). Finally, the Galatronics Division of Yoyodyne, Inc., “one of the giants of the aerospace industry”

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Hink 3

(15), clearly represents Boeing, for whom Pynchon worked as a technical writer in Seattle in 1960 (DLB); Stanley Koteks, the engineer with whom Oedipa converses (67-70), is probably a composite character of Boeing engineers.

Aside from his personal experience, Pynchon’s reading also serves as the origin for characteristics of Lot 49. In The Interruption of Nature and the Psyche, C.G. Jung describes synchronicity, “the acausal connecting principle behind apparent change and coincidence” and cites “psychic phenomena, precognition and telekinesis” as signs of the collective unconscious (Qazi). In one instance, Pynchon writes, “Dr. Hilarius, if asked, would accuse her of using subliminal cues in the environment to guide her to a particular person” (67). Also, Oedipa’s obsession with the sign of the muted post horn and the Trystero mythology echoes concepts from The Collected Works of C.G. Jung,\(^3\) with which Qazi connects “the value and meaning of myth and symbols” in Jung and Pynchon (“Source Materials”). While some readers may mistakenly identify the paranoia in Pynchon’s fiction as his own, Pynchon learned about twentieth century psychology from both Pavlov’s Conditioned Reflexes and Psychiatry II\(^4\) as well as Watson and Rayner’s “Conditional Emotional Reflex”\(^5\) (Qazi).

Furthermore, the philosophy that most informs Pynchon’s early fiction is Ludwig Wittgenstein’s Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus; Qazi observes, “The relationship of Pynchon’s ideas and the concepts of Wittgenstein is intimate. From the Tractatus, Pynchon takes many ideas to support his own view of the world” (“Source Materials”). Wittgenstein’s explanation of the world as “the totality of existing states of affairs,” which are “like linked chains of objects” (“Tractatus”), appears in Lot 49 as Oedipa contemplates connectivity at the end of the novel. While Qazi does not explain his access or references to Pynchon’s source materials, it is quite plausible that Pynchon would both read and comprehend these texts considering his scholarly credentials.

Between the 1963 publication of V. (Philadelphia: Lippincott) and 1966, Pynchon emerged as an active mainstream author. Pynchon published two excerpts of The Crying of Lot 49 during the four months before the novel’s publication date: “The World [This One], the Flesh [Mrs. Oedipa Maas], and the Testament of Pierce Inverarity” appeared in the December 1965 issue of Esquire and covers the first two chapters of Lot 49; in March 1966, Cavalier printed “The Shrink Flips,” a portion of chapter five. In “Pynchon’s Textual Revisions of The Crying of Lot 49,” David Seed notes, “It is not clear why excerpts appeared before the novel itself” (39), although Seed speculates about

Hink 4

Pynchon’s monetary motivation. This proposition appears likely considering that Pynchon published his short story
“The Secret Integration” in The Saturday Evening Post on December 19, 1964 and an essay entitled “A Journey into the
Mind of Watts” in the June 12, 1966 issue of New York Times Magazine (DLB). John K. Young insightfully observes,
“(B)ly studying these stories within their full textual history can we understand Pynchon’s place within popular media
and his responses to the consumer culture through which he developed his initial authorial image” (“Popular
Magazines”).

In March 1966, J.B. Lippincott (Philadelphia) published the first edition of The Crying of Lot 49; however, “In
the introduction to Slow Learner, Pynchon disparages The Crying of Lot 49 (1966) as a ‘story ... which was marketed as
a “novel,” and in which I seem to have forgotten most of what I thought I’d learned up till then’” (DLB). While the
bibliographic context of V. and his short fiction probably helped Lot 49’s sales, Richard Poirier treated the novel as
merely the sequel to the critically and popularly heralded V. in the first review of Lot 49: “Pynchon’s second novel, The
Crying of Lot 49, reads like an episode withheld from his first, the much-acclaimed V., published three years ago”
(“Embattled Underground”). Lot 49 may have been treated as simply another of Pynchon’s short stories, especially in
the context of Pynchon’s freelance publishing; certainly their appearance in Esquire and the Post partially shaped
Pynchon’s initial audience, which can account for mainstream underestimation and misreading of the novel, such as
Poirier’s inaccurate analysis: “What is also noticeable...throughout the novel, is that the major character is really
Pynchon himself” (“Embattled Underground”). Pynchon’s attitude toward the novel may indicate that Lot 49 was not a
culminating achievement of artistic ardor like The Great Gatsby, which Fitzgerald composed during two years and
which Lot 49 recalls: “As the ‘story’ began to exceed the size limit for most periodicals... [Pynchon] may have come to
see it as a means of fulfilling the standard second-book clause in his contract with J.B. Lippincott so he could negotiate
a better deal for Gravity's Rainbow” (DLB). Regardless of negative perceptions of the novel, The Crying of Lot 49 won
a Richard and Hilda Rosenthal Foundation Award from the National Institute of Arts and Letters in 1966 (DLB).

Because Pynchon’s manuscripts are completely concealed, critics can only speculate about revision; David
Seed contrasts the first edition of Lot 49 with the ur-text excerpts published in Esquire and Cavalier in an attempt to
determine Pynchon’s editorial choices for the first edition. Young remarks of the Esquire excerpt, “By selling himself
on the market for the ‘sophisticated’ fiction that Esquire represents, Pynchon sacrifices some of his usual reclusiveness
to become a particular kind of public author” (“Popular Magazines”); this appears ironic considering that critics and
readers can only access Pynchon’s public (published) texts and not his manuscripts, which substantiates his reclusive
identity. In the overall transition to the novel, Pynchon edited the grammar and punctuation of the published excerpts and revised for conciseness in several instances on the sentence level: Seed treats several omissions in detail, and generally observes that Pynchon cuts text to withhold information and prolong mystery. For example, as a result of Pynchon’s cutting two complete sentences from the Esquire excerpt, the novel limits the characterization of Oedipa’s husband Mucho in the early chapters; likewise, Pynchon removes the words “their Republic” from the first chapter in favor of revealing this theory in the last chapter of the novel. Both of these omissions can be read as Pynchon’s obscuring details from the reader just as evidence is hidden from Oedipa in the narrative, especially the “Republic” revision, which would have informed readers about one of the premises of the novel much earlier (incidentally, this does not disclose any mystery, but merely what the mystery is possibly about). Seed concludes that an “intermediary text” between the excerpts and the first edition must exist because Poirier quotes a passage in his review that does not appear in the first edition; he notes that Oscar Handlin “suggests that uncorrected copies of the galley-proofs were sent out for review” (“Textual Revisions”).

Subsequent editions of Lot 49 were published faithful to the 1966 Lippincott edition, starting with the first British edition in 1967 (London: Jonathan Cape), which featured a plain yellow cover with the muted post horn, designed by Peter Barber (Ware). This cover is worth noting only because I have not found any scholarly mention of an alternate 1967 British edition that I discovered on eBay.com: this full-color, magazine-like cover displays a blonde American girl, “W.A.S.T.E.,” pills (LSD?), an American car, and the words “United States Postage.” Bantam Books published the second American paperback edition, the “Windstone Edition,” of Lot 49 in 1982; its hand-drawn cover appears intended as a library book, and it is the only edition thus far to feature a drummer alongside a blue-haired, psychedelic Oedipa (Ware). In 1986, Perennial began issuing paperback editions of Lot 49, beginning with the Perennial Fiction Library / Harper and Row version, which was reissued in 1990 (Ware); in 1999, HarperCollins released Lot 49 in its “Perennial Classics” series, which remains the present edition.
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Critical History: The Crying of Lot 49 and Postmodernism

In 1966 occurred two landmark events in contemporary American literary history: Thomas Pynchon published The Crying of Lot 49, and Jacques Derrida delivered his essay “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences” at Johns Hopkins University. Although these two incidents are not implicitly connected, the epoch of American literary postmodernism begins this year in the context of fiction and criticism. Certainly this claim may evoke repudiation from a variety of critical perspectives; however, major theorists of postmodernism in the latter half of the twentieth century, despite their diversity, have included Pynchon as exemplary of a postmodern author. Furthermore, a significant shift in criticism on Lot 49 occurs in the late twentieth century, which illustrates postmodernism as established in academia rather than merely the transitional, reactionary, and unformulated epistemic movement of the mid-twentieth century. While the year 1966 arbitrarily links Lot 49 and postmodernism, the scholarly articles of second-generation Pynchon critics demonstrate this connection, which indicates Lot 49’s significance throughout dynamic critical or discursive trends.

Derrida’s conference presentation, in which he critiques Claude-Levi Strauss and Structuralist principles, effectively transports French poststructuralist trends across the Atlantic and prompts the direction of American critical thinking. At this time, Derrida had yet to formally name Deconstruction, and John Barth was writing about modernist (Joyce, Kafka, Beckett) and international (Borges, Marquez, Calvino) precursors of (also unnamed) postmodernist literature in 1967’s “The Literature of Exhaustion.” In 1969, Richard Wasson, in his article “Notes on a New Sensibility,” observes an emerging “new sensibility” in the works of Iris Murdoch, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Barth, and Pynchon that displays “a deep mistrust of modernist aesthetics” (Bertens 33). This skepticism correlates with Derrida’s critique of logocentrism as the dominant epistemology of Western modernity, to which Derrida alludes in his 1966 presentation and which he formally explicates in De la Grammatologie in 1967.

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Continuing into the 1970s, American literary critics move closer toward French poststructuralist ideas. In *The Idea of the Postmodern*, Hans Bertens explains the emergence of “deconstructionist postmodernism” (6): “Accepting Derrida’s exposure, and rejection, of the metaphysical premises [of] the transcendent signifier […] postmodernism gives up on language’s representational function and follows poststructuralism in the idea that language constitutes, rather than reflects, the world, and that knowledge is therefore always distorted by language” (6). Therefore, while early *Lot 49* readers and critics may have viewed Pynchon’s novel from traditional or modernist perspectives at the time of the critical/theoretical changes that Bertens describes, subsequent students of the developing postmodern discourse illustrate the paradigmatic shift in literary studies.

As postmodernism developed in various forms in opposition to modernity’s dominant ideologies and modernist aesthetics, a common principle emerged among the diverse theoretical camps, including poststructuralists, Foucauldian postmodernists, Jamesonian Marxists, and categorical hybrids that feature feminist and psychoanalytic tenets. Bertens articulates the nascent crisis of representation recognized by the collective postmodern movement as “a deeply felt loss of faith in our ability to represent the real, in the widest sense. No matter whether they are aesthetic, epistemological, moral, or political in nature, the representations that we used to rely on can no longer be taken for granted” (11). In his 1974 article “*Pynchon’s Linguistic Demon: The Crying of Lot 49,*” John Leland employs entropy as both the theme of the novel and the “central interpretive metaphor” (46); discussing both Thermodynamic and Information Theory entropy, Leland asserts that *Lot 49* “is not only about entropy but is itself entropic” (46-7). Due to a number of factors including Pynchon’s personal experience (physics major through Sophomore year; technical writer for Boeing), his 1960 short story “Entropy,” and textual evidence, many critics have fixated upon thermodynamics and entropy regarding Pynchon’s novels.

Leland, though, applies the metaphor of entropy within the aforementioned context that Bertens describes twenty years after Leland’s article. While he does not use Bertens’ language, Leland addresses precisely the problem of representation for postmodernist critics: “*Pynchon’s art stands as a profound denial of the mimetic, and criticism which insists on a mimetic function can only offer us a superficial understanding*” (47). In his analysis of the novel proper, the diagetic and hypodiagetic textual events, and language as closed, entropic systems, Leland (inadvertently?) resonates

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the poststructuralist problematic of “reality” as constructed linguistically; he writes, “Language as a mirror of reality or as a medium capable of establishing significant contacts beyond its own closed system is radically denied in Pynchon’s fiction” (49). As a subsequent-generation critic, Kate Hayles reprises and updates several of Leland’s notions in her 1991 essay “‘A Metaphor of God Knew How Many Parts’: The Engine that Drives The Crying of Lot 49”\textsuperscript{10}.

By the 1980s, critical theorists formally developed positions and views of postmodernism, which included foregrounding Pynchon’s work as postmodern literature. In 1979 (translated in 1984), François Lyotard refines the “new sentiment” of the 60s to a postmodern “incredulity towards metanarratives” (xxiv) in \textit{The Postmodern Condition}; the same year, Barth categorizes “the postmodernists” of American literature in “The Literature of Replenishment”: William Gass, John Hawkes, Donald Barthelme, Robert Coover, Stanley Elkin, Kurt Vonnegut, Pynchon, and (of course) John Barth (195). While Barth attempted to describe the literary movement in which he was participating as a twentieth-century American author, Frederic Jameson’s Marxist critique concerns postmodernism as a phenomenon of contemporary Western culture; nevertheless, Jameson writes in his 1983 essay “Postmodernism and Consumer Society,” “The works of William Burroughs, Thomas Pynchon and Ishmael Reed on the one hand, and the French new novel on the other, are also to be numbered among the varieties of what can be called postmodern” (\textit{The Cultural Turn} 1). Writing in yet another critical context in 1987, one that includes literary and cultural movements, Ihab Hassan classifies Barth, Burroughs, Pynchon, Barthelme, Walter Abish, John Ashbery, David Antin, Sam Shepard, and Robert Wilson as American authors who represent “a constellation of values, a repertoire of procedures and attitudes” in “Toward a Concept of Postmodernism” (274). This postmodern posture of American authors that Hassan describes emerged formally in \textit{Lot 49} criticism in the 1980s.

In the 1970s American English Departments gradually shifted their critical/theoretical attitudes to adopt/include and then to promote/propagate postmodern perspectives; most famously, the Yale critics Geoffrey H. Hartman, J. Hillis Miller, and Paul de Man established Deconstruction through the 70s and 80s as American critical theory and no longer as a radical movement of French poststructuralists (“Deconstruction”). Correlatively, the journal \textit{Pynchon Notes} began publication in October 1979, and it continues presently from the University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire; several articles on \textit{Lot 49} published in this journal during the 80s illustrate the discursive shift in literary criticism toward postmodern theories. For example, Alec McHoul and David Willis’s project “Telegrammatology” engages Pynchon’s fiction in relation to Derrida’s “grammatological concerns” (39) throughout several essays. In

“Telegrammatology Part I: Lot 49 and the Post-Ethical,” McHoul responds to Willis’ paper “PLS RECORD BOOK BID LOT 49 STOP J DERRIDA” regarding Willis’ fictional telegram from Derrida (on the diagetic level of Lot 49); additionally, McHoul addresses various ways to read the novel as well as prior critical speculation of “Pynchon’s contribution to the ‘morality’ of the 20th century” (39).

Aside from Derridean deconstruction, two critics whom Pynchon Notes published in the 80s focus on other significant aspects of postmodernism, including semiotics and aesthetic techniques. In 1987’s “The Death of the Real in The Crying of Lot 49,” Maurice Couturier calls attention to the prevalence of signs and the problem of referents for Oedipa in Lot 49; Couturier examines this proliferation of signs as a function of simulation in the terms of Jean Baudrillard, who theorized the postmodern problem of simulacra within contemporary culture in Simulacra et Simulation in 1981. Applying Baudrillard’s semiotic notions to Lot 49, Couturier explains that Oedipa’s interpretive “crusade lamentably fails, because she keeps unearthing more and more texts which duplicate reality and make the ‘real’ more elusive” (5); additionally, Couturier states that the “real” Oedipa seeks to find “her elusive self,” (5) which later postmodern critics would certainly censure on the grounds of essentialism.

Secondly, Vivienne Rundle addresses one of the characteristic techniques of postmodern fiction in “The Double Bind of Metafiction: Implicating Narrative in The Crying of Lot 49 and Travesty,” in which she examines Pynchon’s and John Hawkes’ respective novels as metafictions, “those self-conscious texts which demand that the reader react intensely to the world of the text while simultaneously acknowledging its fictionality” (31). Rundle presents Linda Hutcheon, another postmodern theorist, as the theoretical starting point of her discussion; Hutcheon notes the paradox of metafiction for the reader (akin to Rundle’s above description) and for the text that is both self-reflexive and directed toward an audience. Regarding the effect of Lot 49’s narrator on readers, Rundle’s is a precarious assertion: her suggesting that readers oscillate between accepting and rejecting the ontological world of the novel indicates a binary opposition between reality and fiction that is not quite postmodern and that assumes a logocentric, archetypal reader.

In the 1990s, the confident, radical analyses of Pynchon critics illustrate that a postmodern shift has occurred, unlike their discursive predecessors who may have hesitated to break completely with traditional perspectives or whose innovation may have been limited by their writing during the transitional phase. In 1991, Lois Tyson published both an

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article on *Lot 49* and the pedagogical essay “Teaching Deconstruction: Theory and Practice in the Undergraduate Literature Classroom,” of which the latter displays the established position of deconstruction in American academia. Tyson immediately confronts the binary epistemology present in both criticism and Pynchon’s novel in “Existential Subjectivity on Trial: The Crying of Lot 49 and the Politics of Despair”; she sagaciously points out how prior critics have reduced interpretations of the novel to binary oppositions, just as literary criticism on the whole has treated the individual and society as polar opposites (6). Like her brief critique of literary discourse, Tyson asserts that unless “Oedipa can begin to think beyond the binary limits of her dualistic vision of psyche and socius, she will remain, despite her existential engagement, epistemologically paralyzed by the either/or dilemma” (8). Furthermore, Tyson discusses Oedipa in existential terms with an awareness of poststructuralist (6), Marxist, and psychoanalytic notions of subjectivity (7), which clearly indicates her choice of existential criticism as deliberate and relevant to *Lot 49*.

Progressing beyond the critical inquiry/discourse of the novel’s meaning, Tyson treats the minor characters’ “bad faith” as contrasting Oedipa’s movements toward “existential awareness” (10) within a “self-perpetuating culture of emptiness” that Tyson identifies as “postmodern America” (8); explicating in these terms qualifies her speculating Oedipa’s “existentially authentic subjectivity” as informed by the philosophical movement and not (the contemporary critical faux pas of) essentialism.

While she neither critiques nor references Tyson’s article, Tracey Sherard evokes Hélène Cixous and the debate between essentialism and constructionism in feminist theory to begin “The Birth of the Female Subject in The Crying of Lot 49.” Regarding *Lot 49*, Sherard situates Oedipa within this debate as trying on the one hand to find the meaning of the Tristero (akin to discovering Cixous’ *écriture féminine*) and alternatively to create “the subjectivity she has previously been denied by her culture’s system of representation” (61). Continuing the latter point, Sherard explains Oedipa via Luce Irigaray as defined as the (binary) opposite object to the masculine subject and characterizes her as “Oedipa-as-woman’s lack of subjectivity” (62); for Sherard, *Lot 49* chronicles Oedipa’s realizing and subverting Western culture’s binary position of women, particularly at one point in the novel when she feels “the indignation necessary to reject male myths and begin creating her own” (68). Sherard focuses extensively on the scene at Echo Courts hotel involving Oedipa and Metzger’s sexual flirtation, desire, and game, for after this scene Oedipa begins “actively to think for herself” (71): Sherard correlates with Cixous’ “The Laugh of the Medusa” how in this scene, Oedipa’s laughter significantly catalyzes the shattering of the mirror (69), which relates back to Irigaray’s

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specularization/objectification of women. Unlike most articles, Sherard analyses the great significance of a particular scene in relation to the overall novel and overall issue for women; she also illustrates both her command of critical theory and her discursive awareness, as she additionally references prior *Lot 49* critics Couturier, McHoul, David Cowart, and Deborah Madsen.

Several additional articles on *Lot 49* published in the early 90s represent the full emergence of postmodernism in literary criticism overall. The influence of contemporary French poststructuralist theorists Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari appears in John Johnston’s “Toward the Schizo-Text: Paranoia as Semiotic Regime in *The Crying of Lot 49*” and William Gleason’s “The Postmodern Labyrinths of *Lot 49*,” of which the latter modifies (critical darling) Jorge Lois Borges’ prototypical labyrinths to correspond with Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizome. Johnston’s, Gleason’s, or additionally Wail Hassan’s early 90s essay could all serve as exemplary of adroit current scholarship on *Lot 49*: in “This is Not a Novel: *The Crying of Lot 49*,” Hassan boldly classifies Pynchon’s postmodern classic as “metacritical,” as “it is beyond traditional criticism, as well as about the inutility of such criticism” (87). Discussing traditional readers and critics in the postmodern epoch of criticism, Hassan similarly identifies Oedipa as “that logocentric critic for whom signifiers stand to be decoded in order to yield a precise meaning” (88) and explains that as a result, “She beings to doubt the epistemological value of signifiers and hence the validity of her ‘reading’” (93). In his metacritical essay, Hassan situates himself within the *Lot 49* discursive tradition that addresses interpretation, but he recognizes “the failure of positivism that informs reading and interpretation” (97) and anticipates “a new, non-logocentric mode of expression” (97); Hassan conveys perhaps a new description of the postmodern condition when he declares that, like fruitless readers, Oedipa’s dilemma occurs because “she is a logocentric human being in a decentered world” (96).

At present, criticism on *Lot 49* has continued at a steady rate, although most subsequent articles have focused on exceedingly specific aspects of the text with far more limited views than Hassan and company (excepting Hayles, M.W. Rohland, and Gregory Flaxman), with topics including the American 1960s (Farrell), the CIA (Hollander), Pierce Inverarity (Brazeau), Oedipa etymology (Herzogenrath), nonverbal communication (Richwell), mattresses (Carter), and music (Eklund).\(^{14}\) Additionally, *A Companion to the Crying of Lot 49* by J. Kerry Grant and *New essays on The Crying of Lot 49* show the dedicated scholarly interest in Pynchon’s early novel, which the masses of critics and professors have established as a novel implicitly connected with postmodernism.

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\(^{14}\) See additional bibliography.
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