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**The Frustrated Reader
of *Pale Fire* and *The Crying of Lot 49***

Vladimir Nabokov was born into a prominent Russian family in turn-of-the-century St. Petersburg. For 18 years, the young Nabokov stayed in St. Petersburg with his family. Then came the Bolshevik Revolution and Nabokov's father decided to cut the family's losses and abandon their home for Western Europe. It was in Berlin that Nabokov's father would be accidentally assassinated by Communists after giving a speech—an event that would later feature in his most puzzling work. Before the assassination though, young Vladimir himself had taken his considerable literary knowledge to America and began teaching. He taught at a number of colleges and universities but for some reason Cornell sticks out. Most biographical endeavors on Nabokov focus more on his time at Cornell than any other institution and it may simply be that Nabokov himself just spent considerable more time there and started his literary career shortly after joining the faculty. Or perhaps there is something more sinister.

American author Thomas Pynchon was born into a well-off family on Long Island. Little else is known about Pynchon's private life beyond this. He keeps well out of the public eye by avoiding photographers and journalists. This, to such an extent that “they” have labeled him a “recluse.” While Pynchon is at times a contributor to journalistic publications, he never contributes photographs. As a result, only a handful of grainy black-and-white photos exist of him. His most frequent public appearance has been on *The Simpsons* where he tellingly appears with a paper bag over his head and a question mark on his chest. Though no photos exist from the time, Pynchon also made two nonconsecutive appearances as a student at Cornell. His time there was split by a stint in the navy but his first couple years of attendance were in the early 1950s, coinciding with Nabokov's time there (!!).

No journalists have got close enough to interrogate Pynchon on this “coincidence.” And

Nabokov, who was often willing to speak from memory at length, couldn't seem to remember Pynchon—not in his literature class, not at all at Cornell. But Pynchon's wife Vera spilled the beans when she admitted to grading papers from Pynchon for Nabokov's class on Russian literature. A conspiracy starts to take shape here and in the 1960s both authors would go on to write bestsellers: Nabokov would write *Lolita* and Pynchon, *V.* and *Gravity's Rainbow*. Indeed, they each wrote other prominent works but Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* and Nabokov's *Pale Fire* were published within only four years of each other and were surely being written at the same time. At first the novels seem very different: Pynchon's is considered his most accessible and Nabokov's is his most experimental. They seem to have met in the middle here though, and may even have collaborated (!!).

Once a person is willing to compare these two novels, the parallels start to add up exponentially and may even result in paranoia, justified or otherwise. As readers read these novels and start to compare them and start to see the parallels in how the writers wrote them, the reader finally becomes frustrated. The endings are, for the reader, disappointing, even upsetting, in their anti-climax. Also, the sprawling landscapes of the central riddles, the “Tristero” in *The Crying of Lot 49* and the kingdom of Zembla in *Pale Fire*, have to be sorted out by the reader. Finally, the protagonists that the reader has associated with, Oedipa Maas and Charles Kinbote, have lost their credibility and their entire narrative may be just as twisted as they are. An abbreviated key sounds something like the working title for *The Crying of Lot 49*, first the World the reader is left with, the Testament of the antagonist, and the Flesh, or the true identity of the protagonist.

Focusing first on the endings of the novels is not the result of a commentator's madness. After all, the endings are key parts to the puzzles presented by both authors. But not only that, it is clear to the reader upon finishing each respective work that the work is unfinished. The reader is first frustrated, and then drawn into the fray to complete the work on a level far above that of many other works of fiction and in a way far more autocratic than the work of an everyday postmodern author.

Pale Fire's ending is first assumed by the reader to be the culmination of Kinbote's Commentary on John Shade's poem "Pale Fire." This is frustrating because the ending seems only to offer the fulfillment of Kinbote's Forward, which proclaims in its first page that Shade has died. Furthermore, this is not the novel's only ending. The poem itself is a text of its own and has an ending. Though this is complicated by the fact that the poet Shade has left the work unfinished, at least according to his commentator Kinbote. Many readers (critics) accept Kinbote's assertion that the poem is unfinished, left so by Shade's accidental assassination. The critic Neil D. Isaacs pokes holes in this "assumption" because as he correctly sees it the "thousandth line looping back to first . . . is imposed by a madman" (320). For Isaacs, a psychologist, this symmetry is symptomatic of obsessive-compulsive tendencies of the paranoid (320). He goes on to link Kinbote's Commentary with Brian Boyd's "tapestry" in *Nabokov's Pale Fire: The Magic of Artistic Discovery*, in which Isaacs finds "small knots" such as the previously noted "dubious" conjecture of a Line 1000 which is "most important, *not in the poem*" (319-320). Boyd becomes a Kinbote all his own.

The true, though terribly unconventional ending of the novel is actually the Index. At first glance, it may seem like just a tool for the reader added by Nabokov but it is in fact placed there by Kinbote. A truly incomplete ending for a complicated read: just a listing of names and other nouns from Kinbote's Commentary. The Index though is not "just a listing." As it is a product of Kinbote (a character in Nabokov's novel) it gives insight into his mental state and is just as integral to that end as the Commentary. Deciphering the Index requires the reader either to be able to pick up on Nabokov's anagrammed and multilingual names and puns or to follow Kinbote's implicit homosexuality. Both these routes meet at a rather large clue. In his biography of Nabokov, Andrew Field points out that the men listed in the Index as "Zemblan patriots" by Kinbote are also homosexual as King Charles the Beloved (Kinbote) himself is (343). They are listed by Kinbote with conspicuous approval, such as "man of fashion" or "man of theatre" which imply nothing in and of themselves. When taken together

however, with Kinbote's perceived persuasion and also with Field's further assertion that “all the Zemblan patriots have doubles who are traitors” it shows that Kinbote's narrative is itself a delusion based on, though not caused by, his desires (344). One of his desires appears to be for the poet Shade, they go on long rambling walks and share a relationship above all others, according to Kinbote. This relationship for Kinbote is therefore higher to Shade than that of the relationship with his wife Sybil. As such Kinbote is able to find envy and slights in whatever Sybil does as she *clearly* wants to keep the two apart. When Kinbote is not welcomed to Shade's birthday party, Kinbote childishly confronts Sybil but finds no fault in Shade not beyond the allowed intercession of his wife.

Kinbote's unrequited love for Shade though is more about his Zemblan patriotism though. When Shade is killed at the beginning of the Commentary, Kinbote is far more concerned with his “native Zembla” having been immortalized in poetry. Shade's actual death is dismissed by placing the emphasis on the killer Jack Grey, or the “assassin” Gradus. Nabokov uses his skill as writer in the anagrammed aliases given to Jack Grey to show Kinbote's convoluted reasoning. It is this reasoning that allows Kinbote final authority over the Zembla narrative accounting for everything from the killer's bad aim to his political motivation. Mary McCarthy, an early critic (reader), knew Kinbote couldn't be trusted to give an accurate account. She is correct to note, Grey is not Gradus, he is not an assassin but an escaped lunatic—“just what he claims to be”—and his target is the man who sent him away, Judge Goldsworth, who Shade resembles—not the the king of Zembla (Kinbote) who is in the way, yet missed.

These resolutions require the readers participation and perseverance. The book is incomplete if left where Kinbote ties everything so neatly together. Kinbote's world though fits too perfectly and suggests it's own incompleteness by the madness clearly involved in his method. The World at the “end” of *Pale Fire* is incomplete and frustrating to the reader. Completeness comes from the reader seeking out the clues hidden in plain sight. A reader, Amy Reading (critic), points out “the novel

precisely complicates the equation between meaning and authorial intention” (84). Thus, readers must not look too deeply for what Nabokov intended or what his many characters might have intended. Reading also contends that “the reader looks over Kinbote's shoulder at Shade” and as such we are prone to believing his delusions as the World.

Similarly, we are left looking at Oedipa's World over her shoulder at the end of *The Crying of Lot 49* and readers are even more frustrated than they are with *Pale Fire's* ending. The ending is after all, indeterminant as the reader finishes the book without resolution wondering if a revelation has been missed. Pynchon never provides the revelation for the reader, and it can be assumed, not for Oedipa either. This indeterminacy is a main focus of the novel as Oedipa uncovers the secret history of the Tristero/Trystero and their WASTE postal network and is uncertain if it is a vast conspiracy or a vapid constellation. The end of *The Crying of Lot 49* features the promised (to the reader) crying of lot 49 at auction. Oedipa has been promised a mystery bidder who is after a piece of Pierce Inverarity's estate, which Oedipa is executrix of. The rarity that the mystery bidder is after is the Trystero-laden stamp collection that has offered Oedipa and the reader a number of clues. The mystery bidder however, is never revealed and Mark T. Decker points out that the “quest does not collapse into a neat narrative with a fully developed sense of closure.”

This ending is frustrating to the reader and hugely unsatisfying but upon further inspection it is climactic in its un-resolution. The ending is only concerned with the Trystero in that it offers an example of indeterminacy. Pynchon's intent is not buried in its alternate history but in Oedipa's uncertainty about it. She never decides on any of the possibilities that could be behind the Trystero, once she has fully discovered it. For Oedipa, the Trystero could be an untruth, a twisted plot by Pierce and his variety peers. It could equally be “a hallucination, a fantasy, a real historical phenomena,” but ultimately “she cannot decide” (Decker). The critic Christopher J. McKenna summed up what he read as Oedipa's problem in the idea that she is searching for a “who in a whodunit?,” for her the mystery

bidder is in on the conspiracy that robbed her of the men in her life and killed Randolph Driblette (35). But the Tristero is not a 'who', it is a 'what' (35). Exactly what, as noted, is unclear. The Trystero doesn't even have a determined name, it could just as well be the Tristero, and is—the names are distinct but the conspiracy they represent is amorphous.

To tie in the alternate history, the WASTE “system”, *The Courier's Tragedy*, and the changes in her life, Oedipa created the banner of Tristero/Trystero. Her quest allows her to develop as a character and she goes “about as far as it is possible to go” with this Tristero but as a result, “she goes nowhere” (Pearce, 147). Richard Pearce thus asserts that leaving the reader waiting for the crying “thrusts us into the moment when the quester's uncertainty is most sharply focused and felt” (147). At this point in the novel Oedipa's world is a super-efficient computer of “zeros and ones” conspiring against her (Pynchon). The reader though has to find this out for themselves and get over their frustration with the novel's ending. Only then can a reader see the World as Pynchon had intended. The World for Pynchon and every reader willing to look is in post modernity. It is a world of multiple perspectives without an authoritative text or metanarrative where science offers us demons instead of determinacy, reason cedes to sensitives and the principles are uncertain. The first step to a resolution is admitting the problem.

Unfortunately, both Oedipa Maas and Charles Kinbote are unable to admit the problem. They go out of their way to avoid addressing it and apply convoluted solutions to the outside World that needs no such solutions. These endeavors are aided by absent antagonists. Though perhaps that is not their intention. Both Pierce Inverarity and John Shade die and leave behind their Testament. The people they leave their Testaments to turn out to be unfit for the job, but in determining that readers are encouraged to sort out the larger tale and not dismiss digression as a postmodern lack of focus.

The Testament of John Shade takes the form of a 999-line poem that he had completed at the time of his murder. By hook and by crook, his mad colleague Charles Kinbote saves the poem, but not

his dear friend from Jack Grey. He is able to whisk the poem away to Cedarn, Utana where he ultimately slaughters it by somehow finding references to his imagined Zembla. Kinbote's Commentary avoids discussing the actual contents and subject of the poem and the cross-references to his own notes begin in the Forward. Thus, the readers who choose to follow Kinbote's mad path never get to hear Shade's life Testament. They can only follow Gradus's (Jack Grey's) synchronization with the poem that leads to Shade's death because Kinbote's notes literally go around the text of the poem.

On the other hand, readers who choose to read the collected texts in order as a novel pick up on Kinbote's narrativization as a digression that is distinct from the poem. These readers may hold out for the remainder of the book hoping for a grandiose tie-in where the Commentary and “Pale Fire” will be shown to be reflexive by the work of a madman. In this scenario the Commentary is initially the digression as it becomes clear that Kinbote is off the path in more ways than one. But when the reader realizes that the whole of the narrative is contained in the Commentary, “Pale Fire” becomes the digression—and the reader's frustration; in Field's words, the poem seems “glued on” (341). Shade's Testament has been subverted by the digression of Kinbote's Commentary but therein lies the story and the themes that many pick up on first. According to McCarthy, Kinbote “has convinced himself that the poem is his poem—the occupational mania of commentators.” In this way Nabokov uses Kinbote to ridicule critics, reviewers and academia—those who want so much to find hidden meaning they are willing to draw out single words as a pretext, just as Kinbote does. This is only one level of the novel, and it is true that readers should not err as Kinbote by going down too many levels, but there is more to the poem's relation to the Commentary.

While, it is unwise to accept Kinbote's “Line 1000” argument, he makes another assertion that makes more sense—and actually contradicts the initial idea. Kinbote is able to pick up on death as *a* central subject in the poem and suggests that Shade's death actually completes the poem in a way. This was definitely not Shade's intent but it does indeed secure the finality of the work. It is also unlikely

that Shade would have stopped before a simple repetition of the first line. When he says he has “practically the entire product. . . [a] few trifles to settle” he is more likely referring to his variants and finalizing his draft (Nabokov, 226). The coincidence of Shade's death with his nearly complete poem is just that, coincidence. But Kinbote has pulled this chance occurrence, along with others, into his thetic narrative of Zembla, which is less a kingdom than “a paranoid political structure in [Kinbote's] exiled fantasy” (McCarthy). Not only that but through the introduction of the assassination plot in his digressions from the actual poem “Shade's death paradoxically becomes both a cause and effect of the Zembla story” (Belletto, 758).

Coming back to another of Kinbote's contradictions, the death completes the poem, which gives Kinbote license to commentate (digress) on it and is thus a cause for the introduction of the Zembla narrative. A key part of that narrative however is Gradus's movement towards Shade and the consequent (subsequent) murder. Shade's death is thus seen by Kinbote as an effect of Zembla's turmoil (narrative). Readers too can be drawn into this paradox and accept all of Kinbote contradictions as facts. His hidden paradoxes though only create an “illusion of control” over the text (Belletto, 763). All these twists and turns that lead Kinbote down the wrong paths with Shade serve to frustrate readers looking for truth in the commentary of a madman who has *somehow* sneaked into academia.

The frustrated readers are likely to see “Pale Fire” as glued on and dismiss it as a digression because it does not illuminate the perplexing Zembla narrative. They should instead return to the simpler answer and see it for its own beauty as a poem—digression is intended and beautiful. At the same time though, it is part of the text of a cohesive novel and Kinbote does refer to the text at least minimally before digressing himself. This achieves elements of reflexivity in Shade's Testament and Kinbote's Commentary.

The Testament that Oedipa Maas is executrix of is more literal. It is the actual Testament of

Pierce Inverarity, real estate tycoon and her deceased ex-boyfriend. Inverarity may well be an antagonist playing a trick from beyond the grave (similar to Boyd's stretched assertion about *Pale Fire's* John Shade) but he is definitely the prime mover or first cause of Oedipa's quest and subsequent digression. Some readers and critics have dismissed this digression as that of its postmodern author Pynchon. But it is central to an understanding of what exactly Oedipa is doing and is therefore the intent of the author, not his own digression. In fact, this digression is set up from the beginning as the premise for the novel. Oedipa's task of executing Pierce's estate is only a premise for digressing since Oedipa invariably falters on her task and begins to find links among Pierce's considerable holdings, though at first she cannot see Pierce at all. In short, Oedipa's quest for what becomes the Trystero is actually a digression from her legal duties. This digression is *The Crying of Lot 49* and the digression comes full circle as Oedipa returns to her duties as executrix of Pierce's estate at the crying of lot 49. She is there, though on that other little business of finding out who the mystery bidder is, which she believes will lead her to the answer of the Trystero mystery.

This mystery is in actuality not existent or rather, indeterminate. For Oedipa and frustrated readers, it could well be a prank from beyond the grave, truly a testament to Pierce's sense of humor; it could similarly be a worldwide conspiracy with roots in medieval Europe. But at the novel's end, it is the indeterminacy that frustrate readers. Some readers and critics come to accept the indeterminacy as “just” a satire. To them it is an absurdity to poke fun at authorial intent and meta narratives, just as Oedipa's name appears to be. But indeterminacy is not just an an absurdity and Oedipa's name can illuminate this and the digression that is the novel. On the surface Oedipa's name is an indeterminacy like all the others in the novel and doesn't need to be looked at more than that. Some critics (readers) go a step further to overcome there frustration though and see an allusion to Oedipus, the Sophoclean riddle solver. This sidestepping of the Freudian allusion accepts that Oedipa's name is just an absurdity.

The critic David J. Ferraro is able to read a reasoning for a Freudian name from the content of the novel though, specifically the play within the novel. *The Courier's Tragedy* exists only within the context of the novel, as such Pynchon could incorporate whatever he wanted into it. He includes two references to incest, that in a way are themselves incestuous. Ferraro points out that in the play Francesca is in an incestuous relationship with Angelo, her brother. This relationship allows Angelo to convince his sister to marry her son Pasquale as part of the play's tragic plot. The play ultimately becomes a keystone for Oedipa's Tristero/Trystero conspiracy as it provides an historical, even if fictional, plot. In Ferraro's words, all her “frameworks for making meaning out of her world . . . are incestuous cobblings together of previously recycled fragments.” These fragments are nothing but waste, information fit for the trash bin. And yet, Oedipa does uncover the Tristero conspiracy in the WASTE system. When Oedipa is first introduced to *The Courier's Tragedy*, she questions the director Randolph Driblette about his addition of the Trystero assassins on stage. He tells her it was just a personal choice based on nothing more than his own aesthetic: “the reality is in *this* head. Mine. I'm the projector at the planetarium” (Pynchon, 62).

Instead of taking Driblette's advice on not over analyzing texts, Oedipa takes it as a warning of something sinister and “simply adds the Trystero to her list of things to account for” (Decker). Unfortunately, Oedipa finds conspiracy at the planetarium, not a constellation. She cannot recognize that her sinister underworld is a forced grouping of ideas in the San Narciso night sky and that there purpose is one she similarly forces on them. Readers might even be willing to accept the idea that diverse movements would share an underground mail system. They might even want to believe that these people are mailing things when they have nothing to say just to circumvent a government monopoly. But upon further inspection the whole thing is the inversion of Occam's Razor, with Oedipa assuming the most complicated solution to be the truth. WASTE is a model of inefficiency and wastefulness and as a result can't be real outside the walls of Yoyodyne and The Scope, where she gets

her only hard evidence.

The same can be said for Oedipa's treatment of the Trystero narrative, “which runs off and on for sixteen pages of the novel, is erudite, plausible, polished, and thoroughly unconvincing” (Decker). *The Crying of Lot 49* is Oedipa digression from the Testament of Pierce Inverarity. Some readers may see Pierce's Testament as a prank on Oedipa. Most readers definitely want their to be a conspiracy, whether global or localized around San Narciso. Oedipa should have stuck to Pierce's actual Testament, though the readers wouldn't have much there—more frustrating even than the lack of a name for their own constellations.

The execution of a testament brings frustrated readers to the question of who the executor/executrix actually is. The reader is after all looking over the protagonist's shoulder. There should be an attempt then to gather the author's clues in order to flesh out who the reader is dealing with. Kinbote presents the most obvious problem for the reader because he is also the humble narrator. Without an understanding of who he is, readers are bound to be frustrated by his mad claims and contradictions if they are taken at face value.

Kinbote is in the Flesh not who he claims to be. His credibility is damaged even before his story of Charles Xavier the Beloved becomes autobiography. Kinbote never actually reveals this delusion, he just hints at it until he shifts to using 'I' in referring to the king. This is frustrating to the reader who wants a clear constellation. By claiming that he is not Kinbote but actually King Charles II of Zembla, readers can dismiss both because the latter is known to be a delusion and the former is just a cover up. Thus, Kinbote is neither King Charles or Charles Kinbote. And as many readers and critics have found, he is actually V. Botkin, a professor at Wordsmith College who “fancies himself to be the exiled king of Zembla” (McCarthy). Kinbote is first, a clear bastardization Botkin and Nabokov has used doubles throughout the novel as a symptom of Kinbote's psychosis.

Secondly, Kinbote, as if afraid to look in the mirror, glosses over his true self in the

Commentary where his only reference to Botkin is an “American scholar of Russian descent” (Nabokov). Later, his colleagues poke fun at Kinbote as they dissect the anagram of his name to uncover Botkin, but Botkin is safe in his delusions. Some critics have read Botkin as a clue not from Nabokov but from Shade. Field makes the claim that Botkin “is the 'real' person out of whom Shade fashions” (346). This represents the “Shadean” argument where the poet is not communicating from the grave but through the commentary in the character of Kinbote. This digs too deep; there is no *real* evidence to suggest Shade has created the madman other than his assumed artistic genius. The poem itself is testament enough to Shade's genius. But ultimately the entire text is a testament to Nabokov's genius, and his authorship. Kinbote is not real but he is Botkin in the Flesh.

Botkin's (Kinbote) identity is hidden from readers in more ways than one and offers a further frustration for readers. The Commentary is riddled with even more clues to his sexual identity than to his actual identity. Botkin is a homosexual and readers can see that in both sides of his narrative: Zembla and Wordsmith. Belletto writes that the story of Zembla “functions, in part, to manage the open secret of Kinbote's homosexuality” (755). Botkin's trouble finding “ping-pong partners” along with his long list of young male boarders are early indications of his sexuality around real-life Wordsmith College. The desperate professor also has strapping gardeners. But homosexuality does not itself undermine Kinbote's (Botkin) credibility, though it most definitely would have in 1950s New Wye. The Zembla delusion is what undoes Botkin's delusions for the reader. Zembla, as it turns out, is actually a homosexual fantasy land. Botkin becomes not only Kinbote but King Charles II the Beloved. And how beloved he is, especially by his many male consorts—the true patriots of Zembla. Reading doesn't have to get to close in order to see that the secret of Botkin's “homosexuality and that of Zembla are virtually indistinguishable” (Belletto, 759). Shade himself is aware of Botkin's secret. When Botkin offers to reveal to Shade the one who provided his “theme”—referring to Zembla—Shade offers “I think I guessed your secret some time ago” (Nabokov, 226). Shade has not determined

that Kinbote is actually King Charles but that Botkin thinks of himself as the latter and is actually a homosexual.

Shade's awareness is not a sudden realization and it can be glimpsed earlier for readers alongside Botkin's paranoia. Shade tries to point out that the world doesn't have to fit so perfectly together:

Shade: There are rules in chess problems: interdiction of dual solutions for instance.

Kinbote: I had in mind diabolical rules likely to be broken by the other party as we discover them. (Nabokov, 179)

Kinbote's response highlights his mania and his reasoning for crafting his own reality in his assertion that constellations are actually conspiracies. The critic Helen Oakley points out that *Pale Fire* owes a debt to detective fiction in that the book starts with a "definite crime, therefore a literal victim and villain" (483). Oedipa is too a sort of detective uncovering the many clues to the Trystero in *The Crying of Lot 49* and the previous exchange between Kinbote and Shade also gives us insight into what exactly she is uncovering. Shade's idea of "dual solutions" echoes Oedipa's option to settle for indeterminacy over design. Kinbote's worldview however, with its "diabolical rules" is the way Oedipa decides to see things.

Readers are quick to pick up on Oedipa's role as a detective but in that quickness they miss some more important points about who she is in the flesh. The ending of *The Crying of Lot 49* doesn't make sense as detective fiction because the central plot is never uncovered nor are any central criminals or mystery persons. Thus readers are frustrated when they see Oedipa as a detective and not what she actually is in the flesh. The first clue is in the first chapter of the novel when Oedipa receives a late night call from her psychiatrist Dr. Hilarius. The scene should tip off readers to Oedipa's lack of

credibility but Oedipa has refused Dr. Hilarius's prescription of LSD. This diverts readers' attention to who Oedipa really is and allows them to perceive Oedipa as credible for not being on acid. Her following experiences cannot then be drug-induced hallucinations. Readers then take Oedipa's Trystero for what she claims it to be—a huge conspiracy, perhaps with no goal other than conspiracy. But Oedipa's disconnect from reality should be a clue to readers not to follow her too closely down her path.

Shortly after leaving her husband Mucho behind in Kinneret, Oedipa takes a look at herself and sees nothing:

At some point she went into the bathroom, tried to find her image in the mirror and couldn't. She had a moment of nearly pure terror. Then she remembered that the mirror had broken and fallen into the sink. (Pynchon, 29).

This shows her disconnect from reality. First, she is about to separate herself from her husband by cheating on him with the lawyer Metzger. Next, Oedipa's anxiety foreshadows her paranoia about being cut off from the men in her world by a sinister force. The problem for Oedipa is that her paranoia is what cuts her off as she ignores her own marriage. This problem circles back again for Oedipa because she uses the Trystero as a “narrative framework” to support her voluntary disconnect but also to “support her desire for connection” back to the man in her suburban life (Rosenfeld, 356). Her responsibility for the disconnect is apparent in her infidelity and her lack of image in a mirror she broke. Oedipa is drunk in this scene and a number of others and while some readers have experienced very credible drunks, Oedipa's drunkenness further discredits her.

She is seen drinking a number of times in the book and goes to The Scope bar at least twice. It

is at The Scope where she first discovers the gold once-knotted post horn and the WASTE system scrawled in a cryptic note in a bathroom stall. She also witnesses an actual WASTE delivery through a Yoyodyne courier. While she is certainly not hallucinating she combines these two events with the postal history of America provided by right-wing extremist and Yoyodyne employee Mike Fallopian. This Fallopian character has his own biases and only explains why he uses WASTE. Oedipa is the one who connects it to European royalty and the whole incestuous lot of her evidence. Her ability to find connections everywhere is not sound detective work but a manifestation of her paranoiac mania. The crying of lot 49 functions to frustrate readers also searching for that final connection. All readers should instead look to Oedipa for the solution and they are given one more chance to do just that when Oedipa returns to Kinneret. Her visions of the post horn having gotten out of her control, Oedipa seeks out Dr. Hilarius. That Oedipa would want to see her psychiatrist after the evidence for the Trystero is most clear and present to her is what damages the credibility of her narrative. Not only that, but upon reaching Dr. Hilarius's office, Oedipa and readers realize that the good doctor is actually out his mind and a former Nazi "doctor." Just because Oedipa goes to a psychiatrist doesn't prove she is delusional. But the fact that her psychiatrist is armed, dangerous and very insane doesn't bode well for her own healing process. Oedipa could have seen the result of Dr. Hilarius's paranoia as a warning for her to abandon her delusions but she and the reader have their attention diverted again by LSD. Mucho is on the scene to report and Oedipa discovers that he is on LSD and too far gone to come back to her. Oedipa uses this as another disconnect from reality and blames the Trystero. She thus continues to carry her delusions through to the crying of lot 49. The reader leaves Oedipa waiting to cause a "scene violent enough to bring the cops" (Pynchon, 151) when she discovers the bidder. This is possibly an indication of a chemical imbalance but before that can be determined by the arrival of the mysterious bidder the story ends and many can only posit indeterminacy, out of frustration, as the meaning. While this is the intended meaning behind the book's closing, it is quite clear that the Trystero is a delusion

created by Ms. Maas, even if not an actual hallucination.

In the end, there are significant parallels between the Worlds of *Pale Fire* and *The Crying of Lot 49*. The characters of Oedipa Maas and V. Botkin are taking stock of a life and in their own ways, executing a Testament. Both characters, once seen in the Flesh, are very different but just as delusional. Retracing these steps backward from there frustration over the ending, readers are frustrated again and again along the way through the narrative's digression but slowly make it to the beginning and the first character they saw. The ending of Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* stops short of its namesake but does reveal something about the indeterminacy of Oedipa's Mass world. Looking back the reader can start to see how the entirety of the sinister Trystero was nothing more than a tryst between pieces of waste but definitely a good read. Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire* has three endings but the Index helps readers overcome there frustration by reconstructing the Zembla narrative. Readers quickly pick up on the fact that Kinbote is delusional and not the King of Zembla. But if they really pay attention readers can see that Kinbote is actually Botkin.

The parallels don't stop there though. Both works contain a number of overt references to Nabokov's earlier novel *Lolita*. Some of these references are overt and others are hidden but they are there—I have read them myself. Readers could also maybe see parallels in that deaths tend to happen around lakes in both novels. There are also regal themes throughout both. Reflexivity also features and readers should reflect on whether or not they are reading too much into certain details, like seeing the ghosts of John Shade and Pierce Inverarity. One thing is for certain in this comparison and is that that readers must conclude, simply must (conclude now!!), that all these similarities ultimately lead to the shared identity of Thomas Pynchon and Vladimir Nabokov. It's all there in the clues. Or not. No, definitely not. Besides everyone knows that Pynchon is actually the equally reclusive J. D. Salinger. But it is best not to read to deep into these things.

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