



DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES
AND LITERATURES

THE CRYING OF LOT 49: The 'Anarchist Miracle'

Author: Matthew Tanz

Essay/Thesis:	15 hp
Program and/or course:	EN1311
Level:	First Cycle
Semester/year:	St2015
Supervisor:	Marcus Nordlund
Examiner:	Ron Paul

Abstract

Essay/Thesis: 15 hp
Program and/or course: EN1311
Level: First Cycle
Semester/year: St2015
Supervisor: Marcus Nordlund
Examiner: Ron Paul
Keywords: Thomas Pynchon, anarchy, miracles, excluded middle, Deleuze and Guattari, Maxwell's Demon, postmodernism, *A Thousand Plateaus*

Abstract: This essay will explore the theme of anarchy in Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*. Specifically, I will examine to what extent anarchy can be understood as a unifying principle in *The Crying of Lot 49* as it pertains to the passage of the book in which the revolutionary anarchist, Jesus Arrabal, declares an 'anarchist miracle' as a moment defined by "another world's intrusion into this one" (120). Focusing on this passage, I wish to examine how anarchy might be understood by Jesus Arrabal, and more importantly how this might serve well to help illuminate a thematic reading of the book along the lines of miraculous anarchic events, in which 'collisions lead to consensus'. In addition, I will compare how this model fares alongside two other key models used by critics – the Rhizome analogy authored by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* and Pynchon's own central allusion of the Nefastis Machine. Grouped together, my aim is to see how all three reveal important distinctions and understanding of the text as a whole. Ultimately, all of these models work together in many ways, but their subtle differences evoke a pivotal concept in *The Crying of Lot 49* – the law of 'excluded middles', which is defined by the narrative as a dialectic between the dominance of reason pitted against the muddled world of uncertainty and myth.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....1

2. The ‘Anarchist Miracle’ Model.....5

3. The Rhizome Model.....14

4. Maxwell’s Demon as a Machine Model.....19

5. Conclusion.....23

Bibliography.....25

1. Introduction

This essay will explore the theme of anarchy in Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*. In particular, I will examine to what extent anarchy can be understood as a unifying principle in *The Crying of Lot 49* as it pertains to the passage of the book in which the revolutionary anarchist, Jesus Arrabal, describes an "anarchist miracle" as a moment defined by "another world's intrusion into this one" (120). My position is ultimately grounded in the premise that the novel is what Scott Drake declares "a self-reflexive text that theorizes its own fiction" (1). As a result, we can test the hypothesis of an 'anarchist miracle' as a central unifying principle to see how it compares alongside another key model found in the text – the Nefastis Machine (Maxwell's Demon), and for an outside vantage point, use the non text-based biological analogy of the rhizome, proposed by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*. These models not only incorporate a lot of the existing criticism devoted to *The Crying of Lot 49*, but also when compared alongside each other, open up the wonderfully rich world of 'excluded middles'. This is a world that Tony Tanner keenly describes as "those strange, atmospheric conditions, not easily classifiable, in which moistness and dryness seem strangely mixed, which might make us – illogically, unphilosophically – long to admit [...] a middle term for something real but unascertainable" (189).

Published in 1966, *The Crying of Lot 49* is the second book written by Thomas Pynchon. In short, the story follows the narrative of Oedipa Maas, an American housewife who inherits the estate of her dead ex-boyfriend, Pierce Inverarity, opening up a progression of multiplying mysteries around the inheritance, including the possibility of a vast secret underground mail system called the Tristero. In her pursuit of answers, she struggles from a progressive mental breakdown as the onslaught of new clues and characters reveal greater mystery and inscrutability to her plight and relationship to the estate and her existence.

The Crying of Lot 49 is what many consider the definitive postmodern work, born out of a time of great political instability in the United States. The violence in Vietnam was escalating and the Doomsday Clock hovered at around ten minutes to midnight as the Cold War maintained the prospect of wiping human life off the planet. Looking at *The Crying of Lot 49* as a reflection of the times, this new breed of postmodernism can be defined as "devices which work to fracture the logic of hegemonic codes [...] semantic dislocation and syntactic disruption, or paradox and lacunae – internal subversions of logic and form which militate against an integrated reading experience" (Maltby 186). Brian McHale states that "[p]ostmodernism has been characterised a multitude of ways, some compatible with each

other, others not. No matter how it is characterized, however, the fiction of Thomas Pynchon appears to be universally regarded as central to its canon” (97).

At the same time, new scientific theories of quantum mechanics were gaining momentum and breaking down the old laws of classical physics. As Carmen Auría points out, “modern science acknowledges the idea that causality can actually be reduced to a statistical principle of probabilities and that, consequently, reality cannot be known with absolute precision” (2). In *The Crying of Lot 49*, we witness the interweaving of these great political and scientific instabilities into the narrative of Oedipa, a middle class American housewife lost in a crucible of existential anguish. As Edward Mendelson states, “Pynchon organizes his book according to historical and scientific theory – according, that is, to an order independent of literary imagination, an order derived more from the realms of politics and physics than from the self-conscious Modernist reflexivities of language and literature” (14). Again, in the same way that quantum physics shattered the comfort of classical physics and objectivity, postmodernism was born elusively out of the inability of modernism to describe our world through language. Pynchon’s narratives play and thrive in the muddled world of quantum uncertainty, revitalizing the obscure world of ‘the other’ into the ambiguities of language itself.

The text thus opens up great contradictions and resistance towards central meaning, and as Kerry Grant sensibly asserts, “even after a number of readings, the novel resists interpretation to an extraordinary degree, especially if ‘interpretation’ is taken to mean the effort to tease out a unitary and more or less comprehensive account of the novel’s message from the tangled network of metaphor and allusion that is Pynchon’s trademark” (Grant x). Consequently, critical approaches range from those who take great heart in scrupulously piecing together each potential clue for every possible endeavour for every possible routing of meaning, possibly carrying meaning beyond the world of the text itself, and those who even question the potential for classic literary theory to maintain any relevance in relation to the work. As Mendelson quips, “[t]here is, of course, nothing that requires a critic to think as his author does – literary history would be in chaos if there were – but when an author questions the basis of a critic’s enterprise, then that critic ought at least to acknowledge that the question has been raised” (15). Mendelson challenges contemporary criticism to unmoor itself from the what he believes to be the trappings of self-reflexive modernism, and to instead appreciate how Pynchon is “always pointing towards the real conditions of a world more serious than the world in his imagination: *pointing towards*, not embodying, not displacing” (Mendelson 4). In short, he argues that we might consider encouraging the reader and critic alike to obsess

less over our own plight and look back, with a greater humility and appreciation, towards the ever-changing frontier of language and its relationship to the greater cosmos around us.

In terms of the immense criticism surrounding the novel, two models stand out, and serve as an umbrella to the many competing concepts of interpretation. For one, Scott Drake refers to the theoretical work done by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, eloquently modeling the coherence of the text to that of a rhizome. As Drake puts it, “[t]he concept of the rhizome theorizes movement or growth from which there are only lines or flows that disrupt or escape the structure that codes them back towards the supposed unity imposed by a master sign” (224). This concept works well to encompass the open qualities of novel’s patterning and therefore much of the surrounding criticism in this area. Second, we have Pynchon’s own Nefastis Machine, which alters the real life thought experiment of Maxwell’s Demon proposed by the 19th-century Scottish physicist James Clerk Maxwell. Under this presiding model, we can group a lot of the criticism that undertakes the relationship of the scientific world with the mystical, and ultimately, due to the machine’s failure – evidence that we are perhaps confronted with a closed system after all.

Many, if not a majority of the essays written about the book, stake out a pointed interest in the passage of Jesus Arrabal and ‘the anarchist miracle’. The passage serves as a meeting place where a lot of criticism intersects, despite launching into wildly different viewpoints and theories. Few critics doubt that Pynchon has an intense appreciation for the fundamental force of politics, although to what extent remains debated. Some critics share the view, as Tony Tanner suggests, that “[t]he ‘anarchist miracle’ would not involve the intrusion of the ‘sacred’ world into our profane one; rather it would be a kind of ‘revolution’ leading to a whole new way of living together in this world” (187). Graham Benton, finally, who has devoted a great deal of work towards the notion of anarchy in Pynchon, states that “[w]hile Pynchon frequently invokes a concept of anarchism as a powerful mechanism for social engineering, as a utopic horizon, and as a valued political philosophy, he is also wary of fully endorsing an anarchist position because he recognizes such a position to be open to any number of violent corruptions and betrayals” (Unruly Narratives, iii). Anarchy is surely omnipresent, but to what extent or what purpose as it relates to the metaphysical or even religious aspect of ‘miracles’ as a unifying force, is debated and investigated in my essay.

I find that the ‘anarchist miracle’ is a powerful motif worth exploring alongside these other abstract critical metaphors of the rhizome and even Pynchon’s own metaphor of the Nefastis Machine (Maxwell’s Demon). Pynchon weaves the possibility of the mystical and sacred emerging through the catalyst of anarchy, delivering an important layer of unification

despite the overarching context of destruction and dithering of any central structure. In this analysis, there will be a focus on how, through the coded message of anarchy, we can better understand the narrative thread in which certain objects or characters are unified by an anarchist principle and others appear to ‘fall from grace’. Essentially, are some of the anarchic organizations such as the Tristero vitally different from the dominant systems they aim to subvert, or are they shadow copies, wholly part of the same closed system of the Inverarity estate? With the ‘anarchist miracle’ in mind, this paper aims to explore how these series of rare moments, spread out like a vast network of neural dendrites, reserve the possibility to open or synaptically fuse brand new lines of thought. In the seemingly chaotic arrangement of Oedipa’s narrative, the notion of two worlds colliding through these collections of moments bring us along one pathway in the vast network of plots and ideas to a particular state of joy, and humanity, found in the WASTE and fallout of *The Crying of Lot 49*.

2. The ‘Anarchist Miracle’ Model

To propose the idea that *The Crying of Lot 49* is unified to a great extent by the notion of an ‘anarchist miracle’ we must first examine the passage where the idea is spelled out. The revolutionary anarchist, Jesus Arrabal, tells Oedipa:

You know what a miracle is. Not what Bakunin said. But another world’s intrusion into this one. Most of the time we coexist peacefully, but when we do touch there’s cataclysm. Like the church we hate, anarchists also believe in another world. Where revolutions break out spontaneous and leaderless, and the soul’s talent for consensus allows the masses to work together without effort, automatic as the body itself. And yet, sena, if any of it should ever really happen that perfectly, I would also have to cry miracle. An anarchist miracle. Like your friend. He is too exactly and without flaw the thing we fight. In Mexico the privilegiado is always, to a finite percentage, redeemed – one of the people. Unmiraculous. But your friend, unless he’s joking, is as terrifying to me as a Virgin appearing to an Indian. (120).

Tucked neatly into this passage, we are confronted with many core themes in *The Crying of Lot 49*. For one, Arrabal’s ‘miracle’ is described as both a ‘cataclysm’ and ‘another world’s intrusion into this one’. Second, the moment of the anarchist miracle is also ‘spontaneous and leaderless’ and relies on a certain type of ‘consensus’ to exist. Furthermore, there is the notion in this passage that suggests the sacred world, or unidentifiable ‘other’ interfering with the visible, observable world. Finally, within this spectre of possibility versus reality, Oedipa’s narrative hangs in a discrete space between equal opposing forces – resolution/dissolution, inheritance/disinheritance, rationality/paranoia, and finally anarchism/authoritarianism. As Frank Kermode states, “Oedipa is poised on the slash between meaning and unmeaning, as she is between smog and sun” (13). And this obscure space that she represents calls into question the notion of an ‘excluded middle’ that we will also explore as it relates to the underlying premise of an ‘anarchist miracle’. All events in *The Crying of Lot 49* are suspended in a state of uncertainty, full of latent possibility, as if waiting for something to disrupt the status quo fundamentally, to produce an entirely new ‘miraculous’ reality that will not quite add up if we measure all of the observable ingredients.

To unpack the ‘anarchist miracle’ in terms of its active ingredient, anarchy, one is posed with an almost infinite array of meaning; very much open to possibility and inscrutability as Pynchon’s postmodern style is known for. The concept of anarchy outside of the text and within *The Crying of Lot 49* is a kind of Pandora’s box of interpretation, as it remains elusive and ever changing. In a sense, the moment anarchy attempts definition is the moment it ceases to be. As an end to a means, anarchy in the text is a force that seeks to zoom in and dissolve its object, resisting any singularity. The weight of interpretation forces the core impulse of anarchy to collapse (Thomas 128). Benton accurately points out that “[t]he moment

anarchism ossifies into a program, a manifesto, or a creed, many anarchists suggest, is the moment it is rendered impotent, when its promise of unforeseen freedoms collapse under the weight of traditional and determinate theories of social change” (*Unruly Narratives* 25). According to Harold Bloom, “[w]hat is more startling about Pynchon is that he has found ways of representing the impulse to defy the System, even though both the impulse and its representations always are defeated” (2). Although anarchy itself is a nebulous term, we can identify some of its parameters as it functions in relation to the text. In regards to anarchy, Benton effectively sums it up:

As Pynchon represents constellations of controlling systems of power that entangle his subjects in social structures, a concept of anarchism invites us to interrogate the world as it appears and to question the realities that are produced and tailored for public consumption. Moreover, anarchism cannot simply be reduced to "a state of society without government or law," but rather is comprised of a family of discourses that vary widely in the degree to which the government, the state, and forms of authority in various institutions are held in contempt (“Network of all Plots” 535).

In this manner, we see anarchy as a loosely held collection of beliefs that are at most unified along the lines of process, scrutiny, and contempt for any form of power or calcified ideology.

Anarchy, although elusive, is the acting catalyst of movement in the book. The structure of the text is defined by continual states of both organization and disunion and anarchy is the dissolving agent. The anarchistic forces and characters that work to resist dominant power structures are present throughout. The central mystery of the Tristero organization is portrayed as a subversive anarchist group. This and many other anarchist forces are constantly at work, sub-plotting, subverting, and maneuvering around an intricate design of power play. Benton argues, “by procuring the possibility of a sustained oppositional force that survives and modifies itself despite, but perhaps because of, the dominant social and political networks, is suggesting that there is always an undercurrent to oppressive structures, and he identifies this undercurrent with anarchism” (“Network of all Plots” 538). Jesus Arrabal is a Mexican revolutionary anarchist who stands diametrically opposed to Pierce Inverarity and the industrial capitalism he represents. Remedios Varo, the painter of the Triptych, was a real life anarchist as was the famous Mikhail Bakunin, who is mentioned a number of times throughout the novel, not least in the passage of the ‘anarchist miracle’. In this passage, Arrabal states “You know what a miracle is. Not what Bakunin said” (120). Juxtaposed to this reference is the radical right wing group, The Peter Pinguid Society, which is described as waiting for the arrival of Bakunin in *The Crying of Lot 49*. The embrace of Bakunin’s ideology by the Peter Pinguid Society followed by Arrabal’s rejection of the idea in the ‘anarchist miracle’ passage, offers a glimpse into what Arrabal meant. According to Arrabal,

a real ‘anarchist miracle’ is leaderless and could not possibly accommodate the orthodoxy of a figurehead like Bakunin to the movement.

When Jesus Arrabal states, “[l]ike the church we hate, anarchists also believe in another world”, we encounter another key item central to the text and this analysis. It lays out the thematic exploration of various worlds operating, and, in particular, it questions what might be deemed a closed world or an open one. Interweaving between the scientific, political, and metaphysical, the central question is laid out – is Oedipa’s world closed and dictated by a master sign, or is it somehow open to a completely new plane of existence? Trying to determine a fruitful answer to this question is best approached by the meditation upon how the world(s) of the text interact, pattern, and see where the fault lines begin to emerge.

Therefore, if we focus on the *function* of anarchy as it relates to ‘miracles’ in *The Crying of Lot 49*, we can more appropriately observe the aesthetic fracture lines that begin to emerge between the many worlds found in the text. It is precisely the interplay that exists between these modes of ‘anarchism’ and ‘miracles’ that Pynchon exploits in *The Crying of Lot 49*. Pynchon compels the reader to venture towards the fantasy of interpretation, not for any definitive conclusion, but to augment the nature of the tension itself – the dissonance and possibly even harmony that lies between the more obvious strands of harmonic scales. So in terms of the ‘anarchist miracle’, we can interpret Oedipa and her narrative as a cognitive interloping between a closed world, (defined by limited choices) and an open one, offering a ‘sacred’ escape route, or as Oedipa contemplates at the end, “onto a secret richness and concealed density of dream [...] maybe even onto a real alternative to the exitlessness, to the absence of surprise to life, that harrows the head of everybody American you know” (170).

Through the persistent pressure of anarchistic processes, *The Crying of Lot 49* starts from a highly ordered ‘one world’ state to that of a panoply of dynamic worlds. Oedipa starts her journey observing the artwork of Remedios Varo, titled “Bordando el Manto Terrestre” and proclaims “such a captive maiden, having plenty of time to think, soon realizes that her tower, its height and architecture, are like her ego only incidental: that what really keeps her where she is is magic, anonymous and malignant, visited on her from outside and for no reason at all” (21). Her observation constitutes the first allusion to two worlds interacting, and at this stage, her captivation by one.

Furthermore, the passage of the Varo painting presents the entropic curve of many worlds opening up out of the oppressive world of the Inverarity estate. The first chapter opens up in a straightforward, one-dimensional, and ordered manner. Coming home from a Tupperware party, and embodying the comfortable and monotonous lifestyle of middle class,

post war, American housewife, Oedipa “wondered, shuffling back through a fat deckful of days which seemed (wouldn’t she be first to admit it?) more or less identical, or all pointing the same way subtly like a conjurer’s deck, any odd one readily clear to a trained eye” (11). But very quickly, the order to Oedipa’s life is fundamentally challenged. She states, “as things developed, she was to have all manner of revelations” (20). Oedipa goes on to describe the moment in Mexico City, where they stumble into the artwork of Remedios Varo. She describes the painting as such:

[...] in the central painting of a triptych, titled “Bordando el Manto Terrestre,” were a number of frail girls with heart-shaped faces, huge eyes, spun-gold hair, prisoners in the top room of a circular tower, embroidering a kind of tapestry which spilled out the slit windows and into a void, seeking hopelessly to fill the void; for all the other buildings and creatures, all the waves, ships and forests of the earth were contained in this tapestry, and the tapestry was the world. Oedipa, perverse, had stood in front of the painting and cried (21).

Here we encounter a visible opening to her gradual breakdown. She relates the imagery of the painting to her world – one giant tapestry being manufactured to fill a void. Furthermore, as she observes the painting, she questions her existence and is emotionally disturbed enough to cry.

Tears and crying in the book in the book are not only difficult to ignore, but in particular, can be interpreted in the context of an ‘anarchist miracle’. Tears represent a metaphor that stands out, as they are carefully interspersed throughout a book that rarely provides literal recognition of human emotions. Tears exist at this first juncture, as she stares into the painting, later, as she encounters the dying sailor with delirium tremens, and finally, as the title serves and resolves the final page of the book, to await “the crying of lot 49” (183). With the Varo artwork, her tears unintentionally fracture and dilute the one-dimensional aspect of a painting – welling up the abstractions that stem from her vision and interpretation of the work. Staring into the painting, she says, “[s]he could carry the sadness of the moment with her that way forever, see the world refracted through those tears, those specific tears, as if indices as yet unfound varied in important ways from cry to cry” (21). So to add to the weight of Oedipa’s own interpretation of the painting, her tears literally and figuratively refract her mode of vision in the same way anarchic forces simultaneously open up and confound her world. Dana Medoro, in her essay *Menstruation and Melancholy*, supports a similar interpretation of tears in the novel. She states that “[c]rying also appears to allude to a passionate response to the tear between signifier and signified” and when “Oedipa breaks down and cries [...] her tears prefigure or instigate a kind of epiphanic knowledge, or at least the desire for some experience of this knowledge” (73).

Oedipa's melancholic interpretation of the Varo painting also suggests that, for the first moment, Oedipa is confronted with a new and frightening awareness of her entrapment of some kind of larger, pernicious system at work on her fate. Kerry Grant suggests, "By this stage we may be ready to see a degree of complementarity in the apparently conflicting notions of solipsism and magic" (31). Her position, like that of the maidens in the painting, is set towards work and motion, although left with the existential uncertainty and question of – by what purpose, and whose making? Debra Castillo suggests that, in respect to Oedipa and the Varo painting, "[c]aught up in a web of her own weaving, in an ecstasy of discovery and reordering, Oedipa passes almost imperceptibly from fabricator to fabrication; she is taken into her desiring machine and lost" (40). Oedipa is lost, but at the same time a map, or labyrinth is exposed in the frame of a picture.

Although her coordinates are unclear, we see some emergence of a position opening up – of what Oedipa later calls "the excluded middle" (181). The 'excluded middle' is a central concept in my investigation as it, by one interpretation at least, signifies the existential anarchic space that Oedipa's narrative represents. And in particular, this space illustrates her perpetual wavering between one binary and logic based system and another world that can be described as a highly unstable quantum like multiverse with infinite possibilities. Jumping to the final pages of the book, Oedipa, still ultimately confounded by her fate, states:

The waiting above all; if not for another set of possibilities to replace those that had conditioned the land to accept any San Narciso among its most tender flesh without a reflex or a cry, then at least, at the very least, waiting for a symmetry of choices to break down, to go skew. She had heard all about excluded middles; they were bad shit, to be avoided; and how had it ever happened here, with the chances once so good for diversity? For it was now like walking among matrices of a great digital computer, the zeroes and ones twinned above, hanging like balanced mobiles right and left, ahead, thick, maybe endless (181).

Castillo, on a discussion about the symmetry found in the book, points out that "Chaos, rather than ceding to order and reason, resists interpretation, not as an actively malevolent force, but as a kind of deadening inertia [...] leaving an uncanny trace trapped in an 'excluded middle' between meaninglessness and meaning" (30).

From the Varo painting to this final section of the book, Oedipa contemplates escape from the 'matrices of ones and zeros,' questioning and flirting with the spaces that hide between the pixelated and perhaps digital nature of the universe. In this philosophical questioning of the limits to rational science, or at least where classical physics breaks down, she projects movement, even though she may after all remain locked in place, frozen in time, in the greater labyrinth of the cosmos, as articulated in the tapestry of the painting. Castillo rightly points out that "The purposeful movement of the detective fades into Oedipa's

exhausted overstimulation and her dawning awareness that even the most frenetic mental and physical exertion merely disguises an external stasis and an almost entirely *internal* perception of an advance in the plot” (30). Oedipa has, along with the reader, taken great heart as a careful detective amidst the expansion of information overload, but ends up still back at the margins of being in either a closed system, or an open one “[a]s if there could be no barriers between herself and the rest of the land” and “Pierce Inverarity was really dead” (177).

The ‘excluded middle’ remains muddled and obscured by the observation point of the narrative, much like theories of quantum uncertainty, which to date prevent an observer from simultaneously recording the exact velocity and location of a particle. For instance, Oedipa describes the pattern of a can of hairspray whizzing through the air: “[t]he can knew where it was going, she sensed, or something fast enough, God or a digital machine, might have computed in advance the complex web of its travel” (37). This relates directly to the blurriness of Oedipa’s narrative in the context of the novel as a whole. At the crux of her epiphany with the dying sailor, she states:

God help this old tattooed man, meant also a time differential, a vanishingly small instant in which change had to be confronted at last for what it was, where it could no longer disguise itself as something innocuous like an average rate; where velocity dwelled in the projectile though the projectile be frozen in midflight, where death dwelled in the cell though the cell be looked in on at its most quick” (129).

The excluded middle is Oedipa’s consciousness, her narrative and the readers – exploring the disjunction between subjective reality and accepted scientific rationality. As Stefan Mattessich elaborates on this state of being:

To be a “person” is to experience complicity in a world that effectively depersonalizes, reduces to caricature, to outline, to silhouette. What this means is that the subject in its activities, processes, or consciousness can experience its difference only as a generality, or only in a certain theoretical apprehension of the ways by which singularity comes to be the reflection of a dehumanizing mode of production. This displacement of the subject (character, author, and reader) to the negative spaces around what “is”, to the molded (usually plastic) stencil of being, is what Pynchon attempts to represent in his fiction – a loss of substance, of affect, of reality (43).

Her desire for movement, even if ultimately trapped in a static box, alludes to something greater – a possible miraculous aspect of the observable universe.

Finally, Arrabal’s message of ‘one world’s intrusion into this one’ further supports the underlying symbolic patterning of the book. For in Arrabal’s terms, a real miracle would be defined by two truly separate worlds forming a union through a cataclysm of sorts. By placing Oedipa’s narrative on the fault line itself, *The Crying of Lot 49* opens up a symbolic play of opposites and their potential entanglement.

The core desire of sex and the machinery of reproduction is one example of this intimation. Sex is alluded to throughout the book – between Mucho and his underage radio fans, between Oedipa and Metzger, and the sadistic sexual play endorsed by John Nefastis as he invites Oedipa to have sex while watching war scenes on TV. The idea of sex in the context of machines (TV, radio, etc.) also elucidates the complex battle of biology and machinery inherent in the text – the miraculous versus the profane world. The biological forces represent the sacred world and are at odds with the cold ‘exitlessness’ of Inverarity and the industrial capitalism his estate represents. Oedipa’s husband Mucho wakes up ‘howling’ from the torment of his nightmares about his dead end job as a used car salesman. He imagines the spiritual degradation of watching endless trade-ins as they represent the conversion of human lives into the waste of used cars. To Mucho, “each death, up till the moment of our own, is miraculous” but the endless trade-ins from the car wrecks represent a “malfunctioning version of himself for another, just as futureless, automotive projection of somebody else’s life. As if it were the most natural thing” (14).

The WASTE mail system in *The Crying of Lot 49* further illustrates the entropic degeneration of miracles into the profane world of corporate machinery. As part of the WASTE underground mail system, Oedipa encounters the anarchic Inamorati Anonymous (IA) group, founded by a man automated out of a job at the industrial weapons corporation of Yoyodyne. The group of self declared ‘isolates’ serves to prevent people from falling in love, “the worst addiction of all” (112). Samuel Thomas claims that the “IA channels the social and political antagonisms of the decade through its fugitive space: freedom and domination, love and hate, peace and war, activity and passivity, inside and outside, public and private, resistance and withdrawal” (Thomas 128).

Oedipa’s vertiginous descent into the underworld of alcoholics, wounded, and IA members who organize against the ‘act of love’ represent an anarchistic patterning of the book and with it, the ‘miraculous’ aspect of death and decay. In one of the most vulnerable and compassionate scenes of the book, Oedipa holds and comforts a dying sailor suffering from delirium tremens. She holds him “as if he were her own child” (127) and ponders the sadness of the event:

She knew, because she had held him, that he suffered DT’s. Behind the initials was a metaphor, a delirium tremens, a trembling unfurrowing of the mind’s plowshare. The saint whose water can light lamps, the clairvoyant whose lapse in recall is the breath of God, the true paranoid for whom all is organized in spheres joyful or threatening about the central pulse of himself, the dreamer whose puns probe ancient fetid shafts and tunnels of truth all act in the same special relevance to the word, or whatever it is the word is there, buffering, to protect us from. The act of metaphor then was a thrust at truth and a lie, depending where you were: inside, safe, or outside, lost. Oedipa did not know where she was (129).

Here, we witness the duality of metaphor as it contains both ‘truth and a lie’ determined by the dichotomy of inside or outside. Furthermore, this passage represents a collision of two different worlds. Oedipa is the missing ingredient, the spontaneous link (or intrusion of one world to the other) to the truly separate world of the WASTE mail delivery system and its outcasts. According to Samuel Thomas in *Pynchon and the Political*, the scene with the sailor “is arguably Oedipa’s only moment of unmediated human contact in the whole novel” (130). Although Thomas argues that this instant does not qualify as a “revolution”, it does convey a sense of departure for Oedipa towards an undisclosed truth of suffering, hidden from the superficiality of the Inverarity estate. John Johnston supports the idea that the world of the alienated (represented by the WASTE mail system) could qualify as an ‘anarchist miracle’ in the sense that “those politically, socially, and sexually unrecognized in official American life” (67) are separate but somehow still communicating “the silent, almost unrecognizable intrusion of an alien world into the official one” (67). These instances of anarchic ‘calculated withdrawals’ in the book illuminate the melancholic sense of loss and destruction of ‘miracles’ due to industrial machinery. As Pynchon himself articulated in his 1984 essay “Is it O.K. to be a Luddite?”:

The craze for Gothic fiction after "The Castle of Otranto" was grounded, I suspect, in deep and religious yearnings for that earlier mythical time which had come to be known as the Age of Miracles. In ways more and less literal, folks in the 18th century believed that once upon a time all kinds of things had been possible which were no longer so. Giants, dragons, spells. The laws of nature had not been so strictly formulated back then. What had once been true working magic had, by the Age of Reason, degenerated into mere machinery (40).

Here, Pynchon articulates one of the central issues of *The Crying of Lot 49* – that the power of myth and miracles once served as a powerful mechanism for inspiration and meaning, and how the ‘Age of Reason’ has bulldozed this sense of wonder into a locked matrix of ‘ones and zeroes’, and ‘unvarying grey sickness’ that defines the dominant world in *The Crying of Lot 49*.

In literal terms, the closest we get to an ‘anarchist miracle’ is when Oedipa stumbles upon a dance with deaf mutes in chapter 5, shortly after her confrontation with Jesus Arrabal. She describes the odd nature of the event as follows:

But how long, Oedipa thought, could it go on before the collisions became a serious hindrance? There would have to be collisions. The only alternative was some unthinkable order of music, many rhythms, all keys at once, a choreography in which each couple meshed easy, predestined. Something they all heard with an extra sense atrophied in herself. She followed her partner’s lead, limp in the young mute’s clasp, waiting for the collisions to begin. But none came. She was danced for half an hour before, by mysterious consensus, everybody took a break, without having felt any touch but the touch of her partner. Jesus Arrabal would have called it an anarchist miracle. Oedipa, with no name for it, was only demoralized (131-132).

At this moment we are confronted with a chaotic situation where somehow, much to Oedipa's surprise, a 'mysterious consensus' of harmony takes shape. This allusion to order emerging out of what she expects to be a mess is conjoined with another key idea when she imagines this 'unthinkable order of music' as somehow 'predestined'. The passage presents an 'anarchist miracle' as the possible agent to bring about certain changes, and in the context of the novel as a whole, calls into question once again the nature of Oedipa's quest – is the world preordained, closed, and limited, or is there the possibility of some greater plane of existence, a secular or religious 'excluded middle' that exists between the seemingly binary choices she appears to be stuck with.

3. The Rhizome Model

With the great scientific themes looming as a backdrop in *The Crying of Lot 49* it is not surprising that certain natural and biological models have been applied to the text. The model of a rhizome authored by Deleuze and Guattari has been applied to the text in a way that reveals important similarities with that of the ‘anarchist miracle’, and works wonderfully to describe much of the anarchic patterning of the book in many ways. The fundamental aspects of the philosophy of the rhizome, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is illustrated by the biological structure of a rhizome – an inherently free routing system, containing no center, multifarious, open, and designed by “variation, expansion, conquest, capture, offshoots” (42). Their model also explicitly differentiates the patterning of a rhizome from that of the linear and binary nature of an arboreal diagram, which is built by reproduction, tracings, and is ‘innately hierarchical’ (Deleuze and Guattari). Essentially, their view attempts to model the postmodern syndrome of uncertainty and multiplicity through erratic ‘lines of flight’, mimicking the biological framework of a rhizome. Before moving on to what this model lacks in its application towards the text, let us first explore how this idea shares many of the congruences found in the concept of the ‘anarchist miracle’.

For one, it incorporates an essential ‘nomadic’ freedom of movement, beyond a preordained structure, much the way anarchy is symbolized in *The Crying of Lot 49*. The inherent multiplicity of structure in the rhizome allows patterns to go off course, enabling the possibility of escape and the formation of new symbiotic forms of life; in Oedipa’s terms, something what we might call an ‘anarchist miracle.’ According to Deleuze and Guattari, with the rhizome, “there is neither imitation nor resemblance, only an exploding of two heterogeneous series on the line of flight composed by a common rhizome that can no longer be attributed to or subjugated by anything signifying” (31). This analogy applied to the text is well suited to explain the frenetic and unpredictable movement of anarchic organisations. For instance, the structure of the Inamorati Anonymous group mentioned in the previous section is what Samuel Thomas describes as “[a] world of loveless isolates, of empty prosthetic lives – circulating without direction, consuming and expending, all soundtracked by the continuous whirring of IBMs” (126).

The rhizome would also account for brand new systems emerging that avoid any ‘imitation’ or ‘resemblance’ to any signifying order. The novel sets out with limited choices for Oedipa. At the conclusion of chapter one, while contemplating the implications of the

Varo painting, she asserts that “[h]aving no apparatus except gut fear and female cunning to examine this formless magic, to understand how it works [...] she may fall back on superstition, or take up a useful hobby like embroidery, or go mad, or marry a disk jockey” (22). And at the end of the book, after a profusion of information and an unsettling quest, Oedipa still is left with limited, but vitally different choices of belief. In short, she has discovered the possibility of the Tristero to be true, or to be false – a joke played on her by Inverarity. The pattern of the book therefore is suited well by the symbiotic evolution of a rhizome in which a whole new set of circumstances is born out of an old one.

In addition, the rhizome exhibits a tendency of new lines of flight to assemble into new authoritarian, closed dimensions; which syncs well with the way power structures coalesce out of anarchic conditions in *The Crying of Lot 49*. This could suggest a tendency, even in states of anarchy, for the social forces to assemble into the very power structures it aims to subvert. The impulse of anarchy is consequently represented as a way to self-reflexively illustrate the workings of power. It provides no stable coherent solution, but more as Benton claims, serves as a ‘utopic horizon’ illuminating the desires and systems of its polar opposite – authoritarianism and industrial capitalism. The two work in tandem in *The Crying of Lot 49*. Both are fantastically pitted against each other and inescapably intertwined. Just as Jesus Arrabal claims that Pierce is too perfect, “too exactly and without flaw the thing we fight” (120), the many shadow oppositional groups, most evidently The Tristero, but also many others like the radical right wing group, Peter Pinguid Society, represent the paradox and similarities between polar opposite political groupings. Anarchy works as diagnostic tool towards identifying the ills found within the oppressive dominant culture of Pierce Inverarity. But once the methods or parameters of these subversive groups define themselves, they begin to align into the very destructive forces they aim to subvert. Deleuze and Guattari state that with a rhizome “[y]ou may make a rupture, draw a line of flight, yet there is still a danger that you will reencounter organizations that restratify everything, formations that restore power to a signifier, attributions that reconstitute a subject – anything you like, from Oedipal resurgences to fascist concretions. Groups and individuals contain microfascisms just waiting to crystallize” (10). As Oedipa narrates during the final few pages of the novel, “Behind the hieroglyphic streets there would be a transcendent meaning, or only the earth [...] either some fraction of the truth’s numinous beauty (as Mucho now believed) or only a power spectrum” (181).

Where things start to fall apart in *The Crying of Lot 49* in relation to the rhizome analogy is that the novel paints two patterns – one inclusive of the rhizome, but also another

framework better identified with the constricting, hierarchical and binary nature of an arboreal formation. And most importantly, the novel stands as a dialectic between the two models. As Scott Drake informs us in his analysis of the rhizome and *The Crying of Lot 49*: “[t]he formal structure of *Lot 49* reproduces the very binary system it attempts to subvert” (224). Again, no conclusion is given, but the philosophical domain, the ‘excluded middle’ if you will, that rests between the arboreal and rhizomatic model, is where Oedipa and reader find themselves. And this is where the ‘anarchist miracle’ analogy is more suitable as it geared to explore the dissonance in between the grid and the chaos. As Tony Tanner remarks, “Oedipa is mentally in a world of ‘if’ and ‘perhaps’, walking through an accredited world of either/or. It is part of her pain, her dilemma and, perhaps, her emancipation” (189). As mentioned in the previous section, there is a distinct genealogical aspect to Oedipa’s narrative and the groups she encounters. Whether it is the IA, the Tristero, of the WASTE underground mail system – they are in fact reproductions and tracings left over from the Inverarity estate. Her position is of course in the middle of it all, attempting to sort what is real and meaningful, and ultimately if there is a ‘miraculous’ exit point from the dominant system and its fallout.

One extended example of this is portrayed through the dialectic of author and reader in *The Crying of Lot 49*. This theme mirrors anarchic elements and certainly lends well to the idea of two worlds colliding. Pynchon is notably anonymous, only signified by his text. The reader, however, is in a plight similar to Oedipa’s and attempts to sort through and make sense of the exponential growth of information. The subtext plays with, and, to a great degree, harnesses the ambiguous relationship between authorship and production. Oedipa is forced on many occasions to question the intent of the original producer of the messages she receives, and she finds hardly any satisfying answers or clues. If anything, her questioning is ridiculed by some of the characters she meets. Towards the end of the novel, Emory Bortz talks about how *The Courier’s Tragedy* was altered from the original text to anger the religious sect of the Tristero, and proclaims: “Remember that Puritans were utterly devoted, like Literary critics, to the Word” (156). The tension emerges out of Oedipa attempting to approach the problem as that of a scientist, always trying to find the concrete, visible evidence, ‘the Word’ that would ‘abolish the night’. Oedipa is startled by the utterance of the word ‘Tristero’ towards the end of *The Courier’s Tragedy*, the play embedded in the story that confirms its mysterious connection to her own plight. When she attempts to find out why Randolph Driblette, who is the producer of the play, uttered the fateful word of ‘The Tristero’, which supposedly was not included in the original play, he retorts:

The words, who cares? They're rote noises to hold line bashes with, to get past the bone barriers around an actor's memory, right? But the reality is in this head. Mine. I'm the projector at the planetarium, all the closed little universe visible in the circle of that stage is coming out of my mouth, eyes, sometimes other orifices also (79).

Here, as in many other parts of the book, Oedipa is challenged to preserve her own ordering of the information she receives, and at least to question her own vested interest and experience as it relates to the blossoming mystery of her fate.

This passage also reveals another potential disparity between the shape of the novel's themes and the rhizome theory. Fundamental to the rhizome, argued by Deleuze and Guattari, is the fact that the rhizome exhibits "a map, not a tracing" (33). More specifically, "the map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification" (Deleuze and Guattari 33). The key point here is that the rhizome expresses a fundamental open quality to the system it represents. The idea behind the 'anarchist miracle', and the text as a whole, is that Oedipa lives in the potential plane of both a closed and open system. It is closed in the sense that the 'miracle' is forever kept out of reach as what Graham Benton argues to be a 'utopic horizon'. It is an event horizon, always alluded to, but arguably never achieved. Driblette further admonishes Oedipa's pragmatic detective stance at the end of chapter 3: "[y]ou can put together clues, develop a thesis, or several, about why characters reacted to the Trystero possibility the way they did [...] You could waste your life that way and never touch the truth" (80). The possibility remains that Oedipa is in fact trapped in a closed system with no more than binary choices available. Oedipa is still posed with the haunting notion that perhaps her choices are ultimately limited and preordained, and that the cosmos is either a disinterested digital vacuum of 'ones and zeroes', with no other motive except the laws of thermodynamics, or some mysterious god in charge of her fate.

This brings us to another key aspect of the 'anarchist miracle' not covered by the rhizome – and that is the religious aspect of the novel. The steady allusion to 'revelations' and 'miracles' throughout the text always hints that one possible escape route to her closed system is the quasi-religious realm of the mystical. By definition, the very idea of a possible miracle occurring infuses the religious overtones of the novel, infecting the anarchic and muddled scientific issues prevalent in the text. As Auria astutely point out, "[e]ither myth or transcendence – understood as Revelation in religious terms – reify an arbitrarily constructed order that can be superimposed upon human existence and give meaning to that existence. If the history of modern culture, as Pynchon portrays it in the novel, is characterized by insecurity, instability, and absurdity, a mythical or religious alternative can also fill the gap

between the individual's existential despair and a never-graspable external gnoseology" (12).

Both, the self-reflexive nature of *The Crying of Lot 49*, and the religious symbolism are involved in tailoring this idea. John Johnston presents important ideas on how semiotics works in *The Crying of Lot 49*. He argues, "[i]n the interstices and cracks of a now increasingly entropic system, what had been invisible and repressed rises to the surface in the form of 'signs' heralding the possible emergence of an entirely different order of meaning" (Johnston 70). Johnston goes further to explore how Oedipa's role is central to the dispersal and configuration of signifiers, which conflate some hidden central but obscured truth, or as Oedipa states, something "anonymous and malignant, visited on her from outside and for no reason at all" (21). The language of Pynchon, carried through the narrative of Oedipa, is in a perpetual state of signaling the mysterious and religious – without outright landing on it. The self-reflexive questioning and simultaneous use of metaphor work together to illustrate numerous discrete boundaries within *The Crying of Lot 49*. Although interpretation is left open to the reader with the answers carefully left out of reach, it is precisely the signaling that Pynchon draws out that provides at least a hint – an ambiguous silhouette of what might be the mysterious "other" or even possibility of a miracle.

In the same manner, the mystical aspect of the novel, and even the possibility that the Tristero does in fact exist projects the argument that perhaps there is a central signifying order. The possibility of some master sign, God, or Tristero works against the nature of the rhizome, which evades the possibility of a central order. Deleuze and Guattari state "In contrast to centered (even polycentric) systems with hierarchical modes of communication and preestablished paths, the rhizome is acentered, nonhierarchical, nonsignifying system without a General and without an organizing memory or central automaton, defined solely by the circulation of states" (42). We cannot ignore the distinct possibility that Oedipa is in fact living in a closed, despotic system, fully controlled by a central force.

4. Maxwell's Demon as a Machine Model

Maxwell's Demon presents us with a powerful scientific metaphor of a machine, also central to the overriding structure of the book, and notably the crosshatching of anarchy, realism, and fantasy that we have explored through the rhizome and the 'anarchist miracle'. Kerry Grant states, "with the introduction of Maxwell and his demon we begin our attempts to grasp the novel's central and most elusive metaphor" (82). Maxwell's Demon represents a real life thought experiment designed by the renowned 19th-century Scottish scientist James Clerk Maxwell. In the book, the idea is altered and presented as the Nefastis Machine. Put simply, the machine is designed to somehow overcome the second law of thermodynamics by situating a 'demon' (some conscious entity) in the middle of a heat engine capable of sorting warm and cold particles into separate parts of the box. If the correct information can be captured about the particles (velocity and position), then they can hypothetically be sorted, creating usable energy, and preventing the heat-death of the engine, subverting entropy. After looking at the 'anarchist miracle' as a central allusion, and observing how the rhizome incorporates many of the free and anarchistic qualities of Oedipa's world, Maxwell's Demon colours the other side of the 'excluded middle' in which Oedipa finds herself – namely the machinic and binary conditions that exist in the novel.

On one level, the Nefastis Machine works against the rhizome analogy. Deleuze and Guattari point out, "[b]inary logic is the spiritual reality of the root-tree. Even a discipline as 'advanced' as linguistics retains the root-tree as its fundamental image, and thus remains wedded to classical reflection" (26). And furthermore, "binary logic and biunivocal relationships still dominate psychoanalysis [...] linguistics, structuralism, and even information science" (Deleuze and Guattari 26). Information science, crucial to the metaphor of the Nefastis Machine, is bound to the laws of binary computing. Christopher McKenna builds upon the idea of the narrative as a system similar to that of a computer program, which fits well with the allusion to the machinery of the Nefastis Machine. He argues, like many others, that the characters are often objectified and reduced to parts and things, binding them to the greater machinery of the world around them. And in this regard, the story can be understood as a computer-like program, with almost infinite possibilities, although binary in command, in which the protagonist and reader can work the program to execute different states of being. McKenna points out the historical importance of computer programming during the 60's in its relation to *The Crying of Lot 49*. He states, "Oedipa begins to think of the Tristero as 'a metaphor of god knew how many parts.' Modern systems engineers, in their

desire to create more dynamic applications, construct systems composed of objects – which are themselves consisting of data and functionality” (McKenna 39). The ‘eureka’ moment Nefastis is chasing with his machine could be understood as an instant where the seemingly lifeless machine exhibits “otherworldly” behaviour, defying the built in limitations of structure. Pynchon has laid out the design, and the reader can play with the knobs and switches, much like Oedipa, to reveal no movement at all (stasis) but also the possibility of rare or unseen connections (the intrusion of one world into another world) that bring uncharacteristic life to the machine.

In this latter sense, the Nefastis Machine does pair well with the ‘anarchist miracle’ and rhizome analogy in that it represents the core *desire* of Oedipa and many of the characters to flee from the constraints of an existing system. In the context of the machine, the goal is to somehow resist one of the fundamental laws of nature – entropy. The thought experiment was historically proven to not work as it essentially discounted the entropy necessary for the hypothetical demon to sort the information. As Oedipa shrewdly notes herself, “sorting isn’t work?” (86). Nefastis, the eccentric inventor in *The Crying of Lot 49*, offers the concept to include a ‘sensitive’ enough reader of the information, who can via a pseudo-scientific form of telepathy, sort the information. Oedipa gives the machine a whirl, wondering if she is sensitive enough to make the machine work, but ultimately fails. Nefastis explains to Oedipa “Entropy is a figure of speech, then [...] a metaphor. It connects the world of thermodynamics to the world of information flow. The machine uses both. The Demon makes the metaphor not only verbally graceful, but also objectively true” (106). Although the reader like Oedipa see the project as objectively ‘not true’ as it does not work for her, we do come to appreciate the significance of intention behind Nefastis and his machine. Debra Castillo argues:

The Nefastis Machine functions most clearly as a dream of functioning, and works in the novel as a hallucination of utility, its meaning defined in the muted distortions of pure loss. Analogously, the role of the literary detective (Oedipa, the reader) in Pynchon’s novel is less one of separating clues into valid and fraudulent than of engaging, slipwise if necessary, the system machinating what might be termed structural incapacity to think without binary categories (39).

The idea sits well with the suggestion that in the grand scheme of things, Oedipa is indeed trapped in an infinite yet paradoxically closed system, just as she fears at the start of the book as she sadly ruminates over the implications of the Varo painting. The whole process of movement, of life itself, is maintained as perhaps only an illusion – that in the end, everything is part of one meaningless system, or ‘the void’. On the other hand, the grand illusion is portrayed as a dream worth fighting for – that even if entropy ultimately can never be subverted in reality, the illusion, the fantasy itself becomes real enough. Amidst his own

demise, Dr. Hilarious emphatically urges Oedipa to ‘cherish’ her fantasy. He states, “for when you lose it you go over by that much to the others. You begin to cease to be” (138).

Furthermore, although the Nefastis Machine relies on ‘pseudo-scientific’ means of telepathy, the experiment does represent an essentially scientific oriented escape route as opposed to the ‘mystical’ and political nature of escape suggested by the ‘anarchist miracle’. About halfway through the book and already oversaturated with information, Oedipa ruminates:

She could, at this stage of things, recognize signals like that, as the epileptic is said to – an odor, color, pure piercing grace note announcing his seizure [...] Oedipa wondered whether, at the end of this (if it were supposed to end), she too might not be left with only compiled memories of clues, announcements, intimations, but never the central truth itself, which must somehow each time be too bright for her memory to hold; which must always blaze out, destroying its own message irreversibly, leaving an overexposed blank when the ordinary world came back (95).

Grant points out, “the idea that this truth might prove inaccessible, beyond her ability to articulate it, is therefore threatening to her, particularly at this stage of her quest” (Grant 92). Beyond indicating a growing distress over an increasingly ungraspable reality, the passage foregrounds the metaphor of the Nefastis machine and its allusion of how information theory and thermodynamics appear to intersect. The keyword here is ‘appear’. Pynchon himself admitted that his knowledge of the real life Maxwell’s Demon experiment was not very good. But this is less important than the function of the metaphor in *The Crying of Lot 49*, which is to say that although information theory and thermodynamics ‘seem’ to intersect – form a union of sorts, it is hypothetical, and could in the end be just another erroneous illusion. As in scientific principle, Pynchon is playing with the basic tenet that correlation does not necessarily equal causation. The correlation might suggest two worlds merging, providing newfound life or energy in a system, but it could also prove to be, just like so many other things in Oedipa’s life, a mere coincidence. Consequently, this intersection might after all be an allusion to the fact that Oedipa is still ultimately stuck in the same entropic system – one of decline, heat-loss, and death.

In *The Crying of Lot 49* Oedipa’s narrative represents a desire for meaning in both scientific and mystical terms. She ultimately finds hope in at least the possibility of science or the mystical to change the closed ‘tower’ of false objectivity that has been built around her. George Levine argues that most criticism suggests that Pynchon is either “[a]sserting the inevitable heat-death of the world and the futility of resisting it, even in its local manifestations, or (b) suggesting that life, in its extraordinary capacity to produce surprises, constantly resists the heat-death, as must we all; that there is nothing to be done, or that there is everything to be done” (69). The initial creative end of the scientific spectrum involves

speculation, and within this realm of imagination there remains a distinct possibility for real creation, or in anarchic terms what Benton calls a 'utopic horizon'. Simply put, the fiction of our life, like Oedipa's, is worth reading. And in the case of Nefastis the nutty inventor, his desire to make the machine work is more important than the fact that the machine does not work in reality. As Friedman and Puetz illustrate on this point:

While the general tendency of physical processes is towards increasing disorder, twentieth-century biophysics has realized that life violates the pattern. We grow from a few molecular cells, increasing in complexity and order, adding atoms from potato fields, the ocean depths, and the earth itself [...] Of course, entropy will take over eventually, individuals will decay, die, and return to a disorganized scattering of atoms" (24).

Our desire to resist entropy is as much a part of our makeup as Oedipa's fight against the humdrum of middle class housewife, as is the anarchist impulse to resist power in *The Crying of Lot 49*.

5. Conclusion

In this analysis, there has been a principal focus on the passage of Jesus Arrabal's 'anarchist miracle' and this has been compared and tested against the hypothesis of the rhizome and the Nefastis Machine. My hope is that the correlation of how these ideas intersect has helped provide a better picture of the fascinating concept of 'excluded middles' that Oedipa and her narrative open up. As originally stated, the excluded middle represents the intangible 'anarchic' space between seemingly contradictory forces present throughout the novel. The realm of the excluded middle is represented by Oedipa's narrative and is portrayed as the timeless human desire for meaning in a world stuck between logic and myth.

What makes *The Crying of Lot 49* such a fascinating novel, and still highly relevant to our time almost fifty years since its creation, is that the excluded middle poses the great philosophical and scientific questions of our time in the form of fiction. By questioning the very limits to language and literature in the 'Age of Reason', Pynchon has at the same time defended the role of fiction and its implications in the postmodern age. He has, with great vitality, brought theoretical physics into the drama of our lives and consequently questions what it means to be human in an age where the gap between human consciousness and our machines is smaller by the day. The realm of quantum physics and its indeterminable structures continue to baffle scientists today as much as it did in the 60's. We are perhaps closer to unlocking a unified theory of the universe and developing conscious machines, but the question of whether we will ever reach these singularities is still left open for debate. We also still live in incredibly unstable times. The Doomsday Clock is today almost as close as it has ever been to midnight, shy by only three minutes. The adventurous pursuit of the great scientific questions continue to either threaten our species with extinction, or will extend us, like a cosmological rhizome, off into the labyrinth of the universe. Ultimately, scientific exploration will either be our salvation or prove to be our undoing.

My focus on the 'anarchist miracle' has hopefully demonstrated the mystical aspect of what is ultimately a scientific novel. I believe a focus on this aspect of *The Crying of Lot 49* provides an additional appreciation for the deeply human ingrained *desires* for meaning, myth, and miracles in the 'Age of Reason'. Pynchon, as he articulated in "Is it O.K. to be a Luddite" in 1984, has shown great empathy for the revolutionary spirit of the early Luddites. Perhaps Jesus Arrabal was a literary manifestation of the respect Pynchon has for the Luddite revolutionary spirit as they fought against the more insidious workings of the machine. It might also reveal a slightly modernist sensibility of the author. As Pynchon says himself, "TO

insist on the Miraculous is to deny to the machine at least some of its claims on us, to assert the limited wish that living things, earthly or otherwise, may on occasion become Big and Bad enough to take part in transcendent doings” (“Luddite” n.p.).

Although my paper has provided a peripheral discussion of some of the profound scientific themes latent in the text, my aim has been more situated around the human desires and reactions that stem from the world of machinery in *The Crying of Lot 49*. In the future, it would be interesting to explore how new research and theoretical work in the areas of quantum computing and artificial intelligence can be examined in the relation to *The Crying of Lot 49*. However, as readers continue to search for answers in *The Crying of Lot 49*, we will always find ourselves in the twilight zone of the ‘excluded middle’ where art and science sometimes overlap with astonishing beauty. Richard Feynman, one of the great theoretical physicists of our time, once emphatically wrote in *The Feynman Lectures on Physics*:

Poets say science takes away from the beauty of the stars—mere globs of gas atoms. I too can see the stars on a desert night, and feel them. But do I see less or more? The vastness of the heavens stretches my imagination – stuck on this carousel my little eye can catch one-million-year-old light. A vast pattern—of which I am a part... What is the pattern, or the meaning, or the why? It does not do harm to the mystery to know a little about it. For far more marvelous is the truth than any artists of the past imagined it. Why do the poets of the present not speak of it? What men are poets who can speak of Jupiter if he were a man, but if he is an immense spinning sphere of methane and ammonia must be silent? (chapter 3)

Feynman also reminded us that, after scientifically analysing a glass of wine, “[t]o let us put it all back together, not forgetting ultimately what it is for. Let it give us one more final pleasure; drink it and forget it all!” With this in mind, let us occasionally forget theory and logic, and instead, like Oedipa, ‘project a world’ and ‘create constellations’ through our own innate feeling for the book and allow us to inhabit that place “[i]n a land where you could somehow walk, and not need the East San Narciso Freeway, and bones still could rest in peace, nourishing ghosts of dandelions, no one to plow them up. As if the dead really do persist, even in a bottle of wine” (90).

Bibliography

Primary Source

Pynchon, Thomas. *The Crying of Lot 49*. Great Britain: Lowe & Brydone, 1967. Print.

Secondary Sources

Auría, Carmen Pérez-Llantada. "On Fractal Geometry and Meaning Dissemination: Re-thinking Pynchon's "The Crying of Lot 49"" *Atlantis* 17.1/2 (1995): 229-43. *JSTOR*. Web. 22 March 2015.

Bloom, Harold. Introduction. *Thomas Pynchon*. New York: Chelsea House, 1986. 1-10. Print.

Benton, Graham. "The Network of all Plots may Yet Carry Him to Freedom: Thomas Pynchon and the Political Philosophy of Anarchism." *Oklahoma City University Law Review* 24.3 (1999): 535. *HeinOnline*. Web. 5 Mar. 2015.

Benton, Graham. *Unruly Narratives; The Anarchist Dimension in the Novels of Thomas Pynchon*. Diss. New Brunswick Rutgers. The State University of New Jersey, 2002. Ann Arbor: UMI, 2002. Web. Feb. 2015.

Castillo, Debra A. "Borges and Pynchon: The Tenuous Symmetries of Art." *New Essays on The Crying of Lot 49*. Ed. Patrick O'Donnell. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991. 21-46. Print.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987. Print.

Drake, Scott. "Resisting Totalizing Structures: An Aesthetic Shift in Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* and *Gravity's Rainbow*." *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* (2010): 223-40. *Taylor & Francis Online*. Web. 5 May 2015.

Feynman, Richard P. "The Relation of Physics to Other Sciences." *The Feynman Lectures on Physics*. Ed. Robert B. Leighton, Matthew L. Sands, and Richard P. Feynman. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Pub., 1963. N. pag. Print.

Friedman, Alan J., and Manfred Puetz. "*Gravity's Rainbow*: Science as Metaphor." *Modern Critical Views: Thomas Pynchon*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House, 1986. 23-36. Print.

Grant, J. Kerry. *A Companion to The Crying of Lot 49*. Athens: University of Georgia, 1994. Print.

Johnston, John. "Toward the Schizo-Text: Paranoia as Semiotic Regime in *The Crying of Lot 49*." *New Essays on The Crying of Lot 49*. Ed. Patrick O'Donnell. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991. 47-78. Print.

Kermode, Frank. "The Use of Codes in *The Crying of Lot 49*." *Modern Critical Views: Thomas Pynchon*. 1st ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House, 1986. 11-15. Print.

Levine, George. "Risking the Moment." *Modern Critical Views: Thomas Pynchon*. 1st ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House, 1986. 59-78. Print.

Maltby, Paul. *Dissident postmodernists Barthelme, Coover, Pynchon*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991. Print.

Mattessich, Stefan. *Lines of Flight: Discursive Time and Countercultural Desire in the Work of Thomas Pynchon*. Durham: Duke UP, 2002. Print.

McHale, Brian. "Pynchon's Postmodernism." *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Pynchon*. Eds. Inger H. Dalsgaard, Luc Herman, and Brian McHale. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2012. 97-111. Print.

Mckenna, Christopher J. "'A Kiss of Cosmic Pool Balls': Technological Paradigms and Narrative Expectations Collide in *The Crying of Lot 49*" *Cultural Critique* 44 (2000): 29-42. *JSTOR*. Web. 5 Mar. 2015.

- Medoro, Dana. "Menstruation and Melancholy: *The Crying of Lot 49*." *Thomas Pynchon: Reading from the Margins*. Ed. Niran Abbas. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2003. 71-90. Print.
- Mendelson, Edward. Introduction. *Pynchon: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1978. 1-15. Print.
- Pynchon, Thomas. "Is it O.K. to be a Luddite?" *The New York Times Book Review* 28 Oct. 1984: 40-41. Web. 15 Apr. 2015.
- Tanner, Tony. "The Crying of Lot 49." *Modern Critical Views: Thomas Pynchon*. 1st ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House, 1986. 175-190. Print.
- Thomas, Samuel. *Pynchon and the Political*. New York: Routledge, 2007. Print.