Japan Bilingual Publishing Co.

Philosophy and Realistic Reflection

https://ojs.bilpub.com/index.php/prr

ARTICLE

Things Fall Apart in the Well of Lost Plots... Stories... Clues... Signs… Symbols... Meanings: A Philosophical Formalist Hermeneutic on Thomas Pynchon's "The Crying of Lot 49"

Alvin Servaña

Department of Philosophy, De la Salle University, Manila 1004, Philippines

ABSTRACT

Using Philosophical Formalism, I am executing a close textual examination of Thomas Pynchon's "The Crying of Lot 49" as a "postmodern" novel. By looking into the implications of genre and/into the supposed self-aware critico-novelistic vision of Pynchon, I cascaded this critique as follows: Part 1: the semiotic/semiological texture of the novel; Part 2: the novel as a critical attempt to the Enlightenment-infused concepts in the contemporary time-space reality; Part 3: the novel as a psychedelic commentary on the modernist psychosis, thus a celebration and an interrogation of the legacies (?) of the intricacies or the lack thereof of the Postmodern cultural mood; for better or worse. What we can gleaned from this novel as a signifying practice of the Postmodern turn is something that is open to interpretations that I wish to consolidate and bring forth to the discourse—(con-)current to the issues that hover the Subject—elsewhere.

Keywords: Philosophical Formalism; Philosophy in Literature; Postmodern Novel; Critical Studies; Contemporary Criticism; Cultural Criticism

*CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Alvin Servaña, Department of Philosophy, De la Salle University, Manila 1004, Philippines; Email: alvin_servana@dlsu.edu.ph

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 20 June 2025 | Revised: 7 August 2025 | Accepted: 15 August 2025 | Published Online: 22 August 2025

DOI: https://doi.org/10.55121/prr.v2i1.467

CITATION

Servaña, A., 2025. Things Fall Apart in the Well of Lost Plots... Stories... Clues... Signs… Symbols... Meanings: A Philosophical Formalist Hermeneu-tic on Thomas Pynchon's "The Crying of Lot 49". Philosophy and Realistic Reflection. 2(1): 141–149. DOI: https://doi.org/10.55121/prr.v2i1.467

COPYRIGHT

Copyright © 2025 by the author(s). Published by Japan Bilingual Publishing Co. This is an open access article under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) License (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0).

1. Introduction

In her study done some a couple of decades ago, Castro (1997)[1] singled out the significations of the 'unclarified' characters in "The Crying of Lot-49"[2] (TCL-49) which are seemingly nothing but purely drifting symbols in the sea of possible meaning relations. Castro provided for the technical semiotics of the names of each character to establish, decode, if not, decipher the lurking meanings of the said character-turned-symbol personages. From the synthesised views of Lang[3] and Nussbaum[4], this act is due to putting a framework for meaning-understanding of the elusive, ludistic Novel.

Not to say that what Castro did is against the tenets of Postmodernism, though, as TCL-49 is attributed to, but on the supposed sense of the Movement, it is clearly stated that meaning is not needed be achieved for the sake of prescription, unifications, and homogenization of interpretation, thus the non-necessity of the identification of the internal, meaning, textual-meaning structuralisation[5], that which is very Formalistic and prescriptive—something Postmodernists ontologically refuse to accept and are protesting against.

2. Methods

2.1. Theoretical Framework and Philosophical Approach

This study employs Philosophical Formalism as its primary methodological lens, drawing upon the tradition established by thinkers such as Viktor Shklovsky[6] and later developed through the works of Jacques Derrida and Roland Barthes. This approach allows for a systematic examination of textual structures while maintaining sensitivity to the philosophical implications embedded within Pynchon's narrative architecture. The formalist methodology here operates not as a purely structural analysis, but rather as what we might term a "post-formalist" engagement—one that recognizes form as inherently ideological and philosophically charged.

The methodological foundation rests upon the understanding that "The Crying of Lot 49" functions simultaneously as literary artifact and philosophical treatise, requiring an analytical approach that can accommodate both its aesthetic innovations and its epistemological interrogations. This dual nature necessitates a methodology that can move fluidly between close textual analysis and broader cultural-philosophical critique.

2.2. Analytical Framework: The Tripartite Structure

The analytical methodology unfolds through three interconnected yet distinct phases of investigation, each building upon the insights of the previous while maintaining its own theoretical integrity.

2.2.1. Phase One: Semiotic/Semiological Texture Analysis

The first phase employs semiotic analysis rooted in the Saussurean tradition but extended through post-structuralist developments[7], particularly the work of Julia Kristeva[8] and Umberto Eco[9]. This phase involves systematic examination of the novel's sign systems, focusing on how Pynchon constructs meaning through the interplay of signifier and signified within the postmodern context. The methodology here involves mapping the novel's symbolic networks, tracing how signs proliferate, multiply, and ultimately destabilize their own referential foundations. Particular attention will be paid to the recurring motifs—the Tristero system, the postal horn, the various acronyms and organizational structures—as nodes within a larger semiotic web that both generates and undermines interpretive certainty.

This analysis will employ what Roman Jakobson[10] termed the "metaphoric" and "metonymic" axes of language, examining how Pynchon's prose operates through substitution and combination to create what we might call a "paranoid semiotics"—a system of meaning-making that is simultaneously hyper-rational and deeply irrational.

2.2.2. Phase Two: Critique of Enlightenment Epistemology

The second analytical phase shifts toward ideological critique, examining how the novel interrogates and potentially subverts Enlightenment-derived concepts of rationality, progress, and systematic knowledge. This methodology draws upon the Frankfurt School tradition, particularly Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's "Dialectic of Enlightenment"[11], while incorporating insights from Michel Foucault's archaeological method[12]. The analysis will trace how Pynchon's narrative structure mirrors and critiques the

organizational principles of contemporary techno-rational society. This involves examining the novel's treatment of institutions—corporate, governmental, and communication systems—as manifestations of what Jürgen Habermas would term "instrumental reason"[13] and how the protagonist Oedipa Maas's journey represents both an embodiment of and resistance to these rationalized structures. The methodology here requires careful attention to the novel's temporal consciousness, examining how Pynchon presents the collision between modernist faith in systematic knowledge and postmodern skepticism toward grand narratives. This analysis will be particularly attentive to moments where the text appears to perform its own epistemological critique through narrative structure rather than explicit statement.

2.2.3. Phase Three: Psychedelic Modernist Psychosis and Postmodern Cultural Analysis

The final phase employs what might be termed "cultural symptomatic reading," drawing upon Fredric Jameson's notion of the "political unconscious"[14, 15] while incorporating insights from cultural studies and phenomenological analysis. This methodology treats the novel as both symptom and diagnosis of what the abstract identifies as "modernist psychosis" and its relationship to emerging postmodern cultural formations.

This phase requires examining the novel's consciousness-altering narrative techniques—its paranoid structure, its proliferating conspiracies, its dissolution of stable meaning—as formal innovations that mirror the psychedelic sensibility of the 1960s counterculture while simultaneously offering a critique of both modernist alienation and postmodern fragmentation. The methodology here involves analyzing how Pynchon's prose style enacts what it describes, creating a reading experience that reproduces the disorientation and hypersensitivity that characterizes both psychedelic experience and postmodern consciousness. This requires attention to the novel's recursive structures, its use of entropy as both theme and formal principle, and its treatment of information systems as both liberating and oppressive forces.

2.2.4. Close Textual Analysis Procedures

The close reading methodology operates through what might be termed "archaeological attention"—examining not only what the text says but how it constructs the conditions of its own saying. This involves systematic analysis of Pynchon's prose style, particularly his use of technical discourse, his incorporation of multiple registers of language, and his deployment of what Linda Hutcheon has termed "metafictional" strategies. Each textual passage will be examined for its multiple layers of signification: the literal narrative level, the symbolic/allegorical level, the self-reflexive metafictional level, and the broader cultural-historical level. This methodology requires what Derrida would call "double reading"—attending simultaneously to what the text appears to say and to how it undermines or complicates its own apparent statements[16].

2.3. Integration and Synthesis Approach

The three analytical phases will be integrated through a methodology that treats their insights as mutually illuminating rather than simply cumulative. This requires what we might term a "dialectical hermeneutics"—an interpretive approach that recognizes the tensions and contradictions between different levels of analysis as productive rather than problematic. The synthesizing methodology will examine how the novel's semiotic innovations serve its epistemological critique, how its critique of Enlightenment rationality relates to its diagnosis of postmodern cultural conditions, and how all three levels of analysis contribute to understanding the novel as what the abstract terms "a signifying practice of the Postmodern turn."

2.4. Limitations and Reflexive Considerations

This methodology acknowledges its own positioned nature within the very postmodern condition it seeks to analyze. The analytical framework therefore incorporates reflexive moments that examine how the act of interpretation itself participates in the cultural-philosophical dynamics the study investigates. This requires maintaining what Paul Ricœur called a "hermeneutics of suspicion"[17] not only toward the primary text but toward the methodology's own interpretive procedures. The study recognises that its tripartite structure necessarily creates artificial separations between elements that in Pynchon's novel exist in complex interdependence. The methodology therefore incorporates strategies for examining these interconnections while maintaining analytical clarity and argumentative coherence.

3. Discussion and Analysis

The Crying of Lot 49: A Semiotic for Deconstruction or a Deconstruction of Semiotics?

Meaningless Names as Unnamed Meanings

Although Shakespeare, through his character Juliet, already questioned the rigidity of giving so much emphasis in providing names with essence(Cf. Act 2, Scene 2, when Juliet asks: "What's in a name? That which we call a rose, by any other name would smell as sweet."), it is still undeniable that names are used to carry the meaning or the characteristics of a thing or a person. Pynchon seems not to have deviated from that traditional "trend", except that he inserted the most comically satirical implications/significations for the usage of names/characters and for giving so much gravity on it that his ideas simply float in scattered pieces.

Oedipa Maas: The Failed System of "Truth" and "Absolutes"

If Steinbeck has Rose of Sharon; Hardy, Jude theObscure; Woolf, Mrs. Dalloway and Joyce, Stephen Daedalus, Pynchon has Oedipa Maas for his heroine. Obviously, the names of the characters of the first mentioned authors carry a particular "notion of truth". Each character has a definite role, task, and disposition, i.e., to embody the very theme of the text they belong with. Contrastingly, Pynchon played 'ludistically' around such notion. Oedipa, as the heroine's first name, brings into memory Sophocles' "Oedipus". By intertextuality, readers will see that the name, even with a female derivative, connotes the idea of 'search' (of truth and light), as the a priori character willfully searched for his true identity, the true murderer of the (father) king Laius, his true family and for justice as he finds out that he is him whom he is looking for. Relatively, Oedipus arrived at the truth and executed what is "absolutely" just for his penance. Similarly, Oedipa was searching for almost the same elements, save that the one who summons her and the one she is searching for is, technically, not her kin, for she is homeless, in fact. One sees that initially, Oedipa was on the 'right track' as she finds some clues of the Trystero System, i.e., the muted post horn, as a part of Pierce Inverarity's last will and testament. It could also be taken that Oedipa was searching for the cause of Pierce Inverarity's death. Oedipa, though reluctant at first, gradually embraced the task of being an executor, until she fully imbibed it:

> "Under the symbol she'd copied off the latrine wall of The Scope into her memo book, she wrote Shall I project a world?…". ([2], p. 62)

At this point, readers start feeling that the Novel, like the Sophoclean drama, is becoming a 'detective' story, which puts together the pieces of the broken reality, for the purpose of arriving at the ultimate truth. However, her search for all of these "truths" went in vain when it was revealed that there is the great possibility that all of the clues she saw, even the so-called play by the fictional playwright, Richard Wharfinger, The Courier's Tragedy, are all made up by Pierce before he died, as it is said in verbatim by Mike Fallopian:

> "Has it not occurred to you Oedipa, that somebody's putting you on? That this is all a hoax, maybe something Inverarity set up before he died?". ([2], p. 126)

In other terms, the efforts she exerted, as the embodiment of the "self" who searches for "truth", through what is observable, rationally connected and empirical, ergo scientific information, are useless, pointless, and aimless, as Oedipa herself becomes the illustration:

> "Perhaps her mind... no longer existed; would be betrayed and mocked by a phantom self as the amputee is by a phantom limb. Someday, she might replace whatever of her had gone away by some prosthetic device...". ([2], p. 121)

At this point of discussion, one can already see that Pynchon seems to have shredded all the possibility of the "correlative" ideas to create a complete (?) picture of "truth" and "reality". On the level of aesthetics, Pynchon implicatively counter-pointed the Formalists in their claim, "Art entails form" and form has got something to do with the meaning of the art[18]. With regard to meaning-object, if not, the Saussurean signifier-signified relations, one could even claim that Pynchon meets Eliot eye-to-eye as the former, a Postmodernist, defies the latter's notion of the Objective Correlative, i.e., ostensibly, a manifestation of a rigid, limited and elitist art of and for the Modernists. In essence and as epitomised by Eliot and even by Joyce in his way of present-

ing epiphany, Modernists/Modernism are aware of the idea of fragmentation and scattering of "truth", "meaning" and "essence", but they lament that the "meaning" is fragmented, thus connections have to be made in and by the art/-ist. On the farther end, here comes Pynchon, the one who celebrates the "truth" that "truth" is scattered and fragmented and is not necessarily a whole with supposedly correlating pieces (i.e., clues and hints) (vs. those that hold a stronger ontological grounding[19]). To this effect, Pynchon seems to have fully carnivalised the "legacy" of the aforementioned writers of the Modern tradition, thus Oedipa's surname, "Maas". Taken as a pun, "Maas" could be read as the slang for "my ass", hence, "Oedipa" (or Oedipus- the signifier for the search of "truth") "My ass" (nothing... nonsense... useless). By implication, Pynchon delivers a playfully critical discourse that a character used to embody, hence a vessel for (the search of) truth is nonsensical at all, because in Postmodernism, "truth" is multiple and does not need to be taken as something "broken", which needs the "repair" of the artist. Contextually, for Flax[5], the characters cannot embody the meaning of the whole self since the "self", itself, is in an endless search of "truth", and that the "truth" depends on the facticity of the "unrelated" beings. [Absolute] truth should not be, because it cannot [just] be contained in one "vessel".

Concepts, Constructs, and Contraptions: The Enlightenment and its Unraveling in the Novel

Pierce Inverarity: The Epitome of Maligned Capitalism Thus the Failed Modern Economic System

Read closely, readers understand that most of the decisions and turn of events in the life of Oedipa Maas were caused by Pierce Inverarity. Although readers do not encounter him, Pierce Inverarity's hand is strongly felt all the same. He "died" (out of an unknown reason) and assigned Oedipa as an executrix of his last will and testament: defend his large amount of estate and find out what the Trystero System is. As the story unravels, it is also revealed that Oedipa was an "abducted" woman of Inverarity from Mazátlan, a town in Mexico. All of these happenings led to Oedipa's feeling of senselessness and aimlessness as mentioned and illustrated in p. 121 of the Novel. By signification, Pierce Inverarity's name can be dissected and interpreted in numerous ways.

At one point, his name reads like an imperative to Oedipa as he suggests her to penetrate and see through the truth (distortedly written as pierce in veracity). Initially, he seems to want Oedipa to partake of what kind of life he has, both as an estate holder and a business tycoon, being an owner of the Yoyodyne company. This company is ostensibly imperiled by a lingering sort of conspiracy, the Tystero System. However, on another level of signification, 'Pierce Inverarity' connotes antagonistically, as it exudes all the authority and malevolent uses of power. His name could be taken as "sharp lie", with the syllable "in-" now taken as a prefix, denoting negation to the transliterated root-word "veracity".

Moreover, "-verarity" could still be taken as a combined extended pun for "veracity" and "rarity", which exacerbates the notion of "rareness" of "truth", thus when taken as a whole, Pierce Inverarity means, "getting into the rare truth". Now, if "truth" is rare, then what is prevailing is lie. It then follows that Pierce Inverarity, in either sense of signification, symbolises the "truth-concealing" factor in the Novel. From this hypothesis comes the query, what enables him to conceal the "truth"? The answer is none other than power, propelled by money and influence. Taken from a transactional/Marxist perspective, Inverarity possesses all the factors of production, thus the assumption, if not, the conclusion of Mike Fallopian in p. 126. He has the means of production (of lie? Of truth?): his wealth. He has the mode of production, the people/workers: Metzger, the ostensible co-executor of Oedipa, Genghis Cohen, the elaborator of the "myth"/"legend" of the Trystero, from way back 16th century, Randolph Driblette, the producer of The Courier's Tragedy, serving as a major "clue" for the cracking of the conspiracy, and Professor Bortz, a professor in San Narciso, the mentor of Driblette. All of these personages are revealed as cohorts, explaining why "Every access route, (meaning, clues and pieces of evidence), to the Trystero could be traced back to the Inverarity Estate"[20]. It means now that Inverarity has been a "big brother" over the life of Oedipa. On macro-perspectival signification, Inverarity could be taken as one of the grandest claims of the modern economic system as regards prosperity and development. Without any reference to Jameson, Capitalism is a market system that promises rising prosperity through a free market competi-

tion[14, 21]. Seen either in the early ages of the steam engine technology, electricity, and internal combustion economy or information technology (I.T.) industry, it is a non-negligible truth that somewhere, somehow, the free-market economy is being dictated by someone. Of course, this someone, either individual or collective, always possesses the "means" and "modes" of production. Simply put, there is an unfair play in a freely-moving-economy[22].

Pierce Inverarity ultimately manifests that idea in the Novel, as reflected from the present modern reality. The "grand narrative" of Capitalism is the eradication of poverty and the continuous rising prosperity among producers with less tariffs/taxes. The promise of Inverarity to Oedipa, upon the abduction, is a better life, though seen discursively. The point is, none of the claims of Capitalism and Inverarity came true (yet?). In fact, the claims or the myths of modern development in a Capitalistic society is badly hampered by the principles it follows: that the entire industry becomes a competition between and among the ones who have the means and the modes for competition[6]. What happens now is, like Oedipa, from a developing society/country, Mexico, people from the lower strata are drawn to believe the make believe "grand narratives" and drowned in so much promises of Capitalism as the modern economic trend. The question still remains... what is the "true" essence of development? Where is the "true" progress? Sadly though, but the implication is Oedipa herself: the people—those hopeful poor, seem to be getting lost in the middle of the transaction and only see the continuous dwindling down of their projected self, thus the continuous division of the "true" idea of the "self". On the one hand, the people see themselves as those with hope and living aspiration; on the other, they see themselves as those whom are continuously sucked out by the murk.

Finally, as an absent character himself, Inverarity truly depicts being an idea of Capitalism. That despite its invisibility, everyone could fully feel its invincibility. Now, as Postmodernism scathes Capitalism with its modern, empty promises, it, then-again, lauds it for Capitalism is but another fragment of truth that the self has to face, and surmounting it is another truth to take. In whatever essence, Capitalism stands as one of the effects of the systematic, prescriptive Sociology and Social Philosophy of the modern (world) economy. Its full effect? Yet to be felt.

Dr. Hilarius: The Failed Modern Psychology

It is really hilarious to see the turn of events between Dr. Hilarius, the therapist and Oedipa, the patient. In the middle of her exploits, Oedipa was at the brink of insanity due to her, assumable maladjustment to her present experience of reality. Being a modern woman she is, she could not seem to identify her situation. Thus, she consulted the shrink, Hilarius. But in this incident, readers see the concrete manifestation of Freud's concept of transference:

> Helga Blamm (Dr. Hilarius' secretary): Hurry!
> Oedipa: What's happening?
> Helga: He's gone crazy. I tried to call the police, but he took a chair and smashed the switch board with it.[23]

Although Flax[5] attributed psychoanalysis and Freud as one of the facets of Postmodernism, it is undeniable that Psychoanalysis has its tendency to becoming teleological, meaning, aiming for the absolute end and explanation of the phenomena in human behaviour. At this point, the 8th of the eight-point summary of Flax[23] can be seen again. As a precursor to Postmodernism, Psychoanalysis could be successful in stating the tendency of the Self to discover its ability to explore the multiple truths within the personality; that one's self is a tripartite, multiple personalities with id, ego and superego that work 'separately connected' with each other.

Conversely, though, when Psychoanalysis starts speaking of the dividing line between the therapist and the patient, the Field becomes an anathema to the Movement. Although this internal phenomenon within Psychology seems to be a self-contradiction, the point is, the "scientific" and "clinical" aspect of it becomes as a deterrent to the presentation of the more reliable truth apart from its being descriptive, but purely prescriptive. At one point, Psychology becomes a science that serves as the exemplar of the right use of reason and the paradigm of all true knowledge and this idea is what is hilarious with Dr. Hilarius. He has become too much filled with the science of his craft, notwithstanding the fact that he himself is prone to being a fragmented, decentered psyche, marking the failure of Psychology as a modern science. The deconstructive question now to Psychology is: How could it treat psychological illnesses if in itself, it is ill?

Wendell "Mucho" Maas: The Failed Modern Media

Still under the 8th point of the thesis of Flax, (1990), in the influence of both Foucault and Lyotard[24], Pynchon seems to have fully deconstructed the aims and purposes of media in a modern society through Wendell "Mucho" Maas, the ex(?)-husband of Oedipa. Pertierra[25] defined the function of media in a modern world: "to universalise and globalise information and experiences". Of course, such an aim is still under what Lyotard posits as within the realms of the 19th century grand narratives: cosmopolitanism is the uttermost manifestation of interaction, democracy, and participation. From this, Foucault[5] takes this issue ontologically in saying that this kind of a grand narrative falsely defines what human essentials are, thus necessitates an eradication from within. This surfaces as when Foucault (1980), Lyotard (1984) and Pertierra (2000) contextualised, it follows that modern media spreads a notion of equality and the essence of democracy from the fallible essentialist human nature of equality. The problem? Since the essential need for equal access to information is grounded in a deterministic stance, the function of media twice deters humanity. As Mucho Maas let himself to be a medium of Inverarity to spread the hoax of Trystero System, the equal access to information led Oedipa to losing herself continuously in the wave of loosely connected hints as the music that her ex (?)-husband plays in the KCUF radio station provides more clues leading nowhere. On this, the Postmodernism sees media as the tool for propagation of the unqualified truths, which defeat its "original" purpose corollary to the "grand narrative" of equality and democracy. Now because of media's failure to comply with its presupposed function, it is now a hailed failure in the modern age, as it becomes a medium for disparagement, bickering, loss, if not, disappearance of history, and oblivion. This instance is best illustrated when Oedipa seemed to have simply forgotten the possibility that her detective stuff could be a hoax after hearing the music KCUF played that adds up to her hype to continue the "investigation", since the song mentioned something about the Trystero. All of these numerous, (hence "mucho") facets over the shoulder of media paved the way for the multi-framed representation of what is once true. Media has lost its true identity as numerous fragments of truth pass through it and been transmitted to the different parts of the town, the country, and the world. Sadly though, what the media shows is not the "real" truth but its "own" truth alone(Cf. the contemporary/most recent issue of "Post-truth".

4. Conclusions

Modernity: Mood? Mode? Moment?

Trystero System: The One that Saddens or the Trickster?—The Aporia of Modernity

At the end of the novel, the Trystero System mystery is never solved. In fact, it is even reintroduced in a more interesting light as Oedipa waits for the content and the crying of lot 49 in bidding. The implication of this event is seen aporiac i.e., once and for all, very postmodern. Taken from its Latin/Spanish etymology, trystero could mean something (or someone) that saddens. Literally, TCL-49 saddens the conventional readers as they expect and wait for the complete unraveling of events, when there is none. Technically, the Novel is bombarded with climactic incidences that would set the expectation of the readers for a blasting, satisfying ending. The [problem] is, it did not turn out that way. With the entire connect-the-dots incidents that Oedipa underwent, the story ended (?) anticlimactic and she's still hopeful to find some more clues. This cathartic impact to the audience exacerbates the realisation that life is indeed a series of surfaces, without any depth whatsoever. To a modern man, this concept is truly saddening, but for a postmodern one, it is a time to enjoy such a hide-and-seek game... only that the excitement is driven by the knowledge that there is nothing to find.

The other strand of analytic bent for the Trystero is that it is the characterised, systematized, and institutionalised trick when it comes to "truth", "metaphysics" and "essence" of life. Philosophically, the search for the true meaning of the Trystero System is but an endless, senseless, and pointless myth that promises to give the truth, but the truth there is nil... ergo it is a joke! A trick! An unruly game. Life itself. By and large, such a thesis is but an antithesis to what the Modern Age claimed to give with its prescriptions, theorising, explanations, 'ontologisations', 'teleologisations', and scientific assumptions. Terminally, the system of meanings shown are proven systematically unsystematic so to imply

that the relationship among sign, symbols, signifiers, and signifieds in/through characters and plots vary and thus, truly non-deterministic. For it is with the non- deterministic manner of giving signification can one finally see what truth, not means... but looks[19] (Cf. Servaña, 2022). As long as the definition is not deterministic, one's definition is always as good as the others'.

As a modern man approaches Postmodern thoughts laid bare, s/he finds out that the claim of the Movement's presentation of the disorder follows a certain order. It thus defeats it purpose to deconstruct, for it still establishes certain truths about what is perceived and experienced. As seen in the analyses of TCL-49 above, it is true that the basis for criticism is the subject of the perception, observation, systematised projection, and rational organization. Simply? Science. The Postmodern approach in this critique exposes indeterminate factors of economy, science, philosophy, and literature. But it is equally undeniable too that the method used in presenting the analytical approach is with sequence and logic, thus scientific. Then, does Postmodern exist? The answer? Plain and simple: the presentation of the analysis is neither a problem nor a question in Postmodernism. For as long as the status quo is challenged, uprooted, and debunked, Postmodern insists. The modes of thoughts in the mentioned fields are not to be treated as sacred or essential disciplines, as Foucault[12] asserts. Postmodernists are deconstuctive readers. Deconstructive readers are "disrespectful" of "authorities", attentive to suppressed tensions or conflicts within the text, and suspicious of all "natural" categories, essentialist oppositions, and representational claims[5]. Therefore, whether the idea presented is strong or weak, it is not something to be accounted for as the idea's strength or weakness, for Postmodernism does not account for the strong-weak dichotomy, lest it be 'essentialistically' representational, which Postmodernism is not (or is it?). It simply presents and accepts that its stance is either strong or weak; a fragmented presentation of the whole, where each fragmented idea is the "truth" without further, in-depth justification for life. It proves, therefore, that despite the initially uncomfortable language and layers of thoughts in this very brief, playfully dense novel, the readers are still able to extract, without reducing the content of what Pynchon has to say about a culture and its apparent loss of grounding—fore, back, under. Thus, Lang[3] and Nussbaum[4], when properly meshed bring about the light from the language and thought of a rather semiotically and epistemically elusive, but not shady novelistic discourse like that of Pynchon's—and that is its "postmodern truth", at leas as far as the contemporary quandary on the matter is concerned. But what is postmodern truth but a layer of confounding simplicity of being, nothingness, meaning, sense, life, death, existence, presence, here, now, things, objects, subjects... ... ...

Funding

Not applicable.

Institutional Review Board Statement

Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement

All ideas and subsequent data can be culled out from the references.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my mentress from both the UG and MA, Ma. Antoinette C. Montealegre. She opened my critical eyes leading me to my lifelong love of both Literary Criticism and Philosophy. I also thank my wife, Kendra Servaña—just for everything. Ultimately, Soli Deo Gloria!

Conflicts of Interest

There are no conflicts of interest in this paper.

References

[1] Castro, B.A., 1997. Plotting the structure of a conspiracy: An analysis of the signs in Thomas Pynchon's the crying of Lot 49. College of Arts and Letters, UP Diliman: Quezon City, Philippines.

[2] Pynchon, T., 1972. The crying of Lot 49. Bantam Books Inc.: New York, NY, USA.

[3] Lang, B., 1990. The anatomy of philosophical style: literary philosophy and the philosophy of literature. Blackwell: Oxford, UK.
[4] Nussbaum, M.C., 1990. Loves knowledge: Essays on philosophy and literature. Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK.
[5] Flax, J., 1990. Thinking fragments: Psychoanalysis, feminism and postmodernism in the contemporary west. University of California Press: Oakland, CA, USA.
[6] Shklovsky, V., 1905. Art as technique. In Richter, D.T., 1989. The critical tradition: Classic texts and contemporary trends. Bedford and St. Martin's: New York, NY, USA.
[7] Richter, D.T., 1989. The critical tradition: Classic texts and contemporary trends. Bedford and St. Martin's: New York, NY, USA.
[8] Kristeva, J., 1980. The bounded text. Translated by Roudiez, L.S. Bedford and St. Martin's: New York, NY, USA.
[9] Eco, U., 1972. The role of the reader. Indiana University Press: Bloomington, Indiana.
[10] Jakobson, R., 1952. Preliminaries to speech analysis: The distinctive features and their correlates. Available from: https://hdl.handle.net/11858/00-001M-0000-002B-AD6A-3 (cited 7 August 2025).
[11] Horkheimer, M., Adorno, T.W., 2002. Dialectic of enlightenment: Philosophical fragments. Translated by Cumming, J. Stanford University Press: Redwood City, CA, USA. (Original work published 1947)
[12] Foucault, M., 1980. Truth and power. Edited by Gordon, C. Pantheon: New York, NY, USA.
[13] Habermas, J., 1984. The theory of communicative action: Volume 1. Reason and the rationalization of society. Translated by McCarthy, T. Beacon Press: Boston, MA, USA. (Original work published 1981)
[14] Jameson, F., 1981. The political unconscious: Narrative as a socially symbolic act. Cornell University Press: Ithaca, NY, USA.
[15] Harvey, D., 1990. The condition of postmodernity: An enquiry into the origins of cultural change. Blackwell: Oxford, UK.
[16] Derrida, J., 1967. Writing and difference. Chicago University Press: Chicago University Press, IL, USA.
[17] Ricœur, P., 1981. Phenomenology and hermeneutics. In Hermeneutics and the human sciences: Essays on language action and interpretation. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK.
[18] Guerin, W., et al., 2005. A handbook of critical approaches to literature, 5th ed. Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK.
[19] Servaña, A., 2022. Grounding morality: Judæo-Christianity's explanatory power for moral realism. The URSP Research Journal. VIII(1). Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/356749141_Grounding_MoralityJudaeo-Christianity's_Explanatory_Power_for_Moral_Realism (cited 7 August 2025).
[20] Pynchon, T., 1972. The crying of Lot 49. Bantam Books Inc.: New York, NY, USA. p. 127.
[21] Goldwag, A., 2007. Isms and ologies: 453 difficult doctrines you've always pretended to understand. Quercus Pub.: Great Britain, UK.
[22] Servaña, A., 2024. Report on culture towards critical rapport: basis for cautious, conscious and careful contemporary cultural studies and literacy. International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/384531735_Report_on_culture_towards_critical_rapport_basis_for_cautious_conscious_and_careful_contemporary_cultural_studies_and_literacy (cited 7 August 2025).
[23] Pynchon, T., 1972. The crying of Lot 49. Bantam Books Inc.: New York, NY, USA. p. 98.
[24] Lyotard, J.F., 1984. The postmodern condition: A report on knowledge. Manchester University Press: Manchester, UK.
[25] Pertierra, R., 2002. The work of culture. De La Salle University Press: Manila, Philippines.