

Postmodernism and Today's Conspiracy Paranoia —A Comparative Study of *The Crying of Lot 49* and *A Wild Sheep Chase*—

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1. Conspiracy Paranoia in Today's Postmodern World

On September 11, 2001, four airplanes hijacked by terrorists crashed into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. In the U.S. in many public places, the terrorist attack has been compared with the Pearl Harbor attack. There is even a book titled *The New Pearl Harbor: Disturbing Questions about the Bush Administration and 9/11*. Obviously the terrorist attack is compared with the Pearl Harbor attack because both were surprise attacks. However, there is a clear point of difference; while Pearl Harbor was an attack by a foreign enemy, 9/11 was from within. Concerning the Pearl Harbor attack, it was easy for the U.S. to identify the cause of the threat; there was a clear distinction between the U.S. and the enemy. On the other hand, the terrorist network which is considered the cause of the 9/11 attack cannot be fully identified, since the members can lie hidden anywhere in ordinary society. The U.S. attacked Taliban Afghanistan as if that particular country had been responsible for the threat to the U.S. like Japan, Germany, or the Soviet Union used to be. However, while the surrender of Japan or Germany, or the collapse of the Soviet Union terminated the threat, victory in the war against Taliban Afghanistan never did. As some American media say, war against terrorists is a war without a frontline. Since there is no clear boundary between enemy and friend, people can also become paranoid. The threat can be anywhere, so there is no completely safe place on the earth. The threat of terrorism is, therefore, very postmodern since it is due to the collapse of clear boundaries. The change in the type of threat, from foreign enemy to undetectable terrorist, is reflected by a corresponding shift in the trend of literature, from realism to postmodernism.

Peter Knight's idea of the paranoia due to the recent shift of threat is worth reviewing. Referring to the recent paranoid rhetoric under the threat of AIDS or computer virus in contrast to that of the Cold War period, Knight says:

The real lesson, however, was that the safe distinction between imperiled self and undesirable other had began collapse. Unlike the sudden invasion by demonized monsters in the horror films of the 1950s, the nightmares of turn-of-the-millennium America – urban crime, random violence, economic insecurity, drugs, pollution and viral contamination – create an omnipresent and quite visible environment of risk which is centered less on the nation than on the vulnerable individual body. (18)

In this quotation, the most remarkable points are the omnipresent risk and the collapse of the distinction between the threatening and the threatened. These two points are closely

connected each other; since the collapse of the distinction makes it difficult to identify the threat, people come to feel the threat can be omnipresent. Knight goes on:

The superpower face-off has given way to a policy of 'low intensity conflict', producing a continuous but often unspecific sense of threat that is now located everywhere but nowhere in particular, just the kind of diffused, decentered notion of power for which the Internet provide the perfect example and model. The secure paranoia of the tense yet clear geopolitical division between self and other has given way to the troubling confusions that have emerged since the late 1960s, with uncertainty about the distinction between friend and foe. (18)

Unlike the threats during the Cold War or World War I and II, the threat of today's more complicated world can be located anywhere and anytime, as typified by those breaking out repeatedly in Israel or Iraq. A terrorist attack is hard to predict since it is difficult to differentiate the people who would attack from normal people; the distinction between friend and foe collapses. Therefore, the idea of the contemporary threat can cause conspiracy paranoia. Two novels written in the Cold War era describes the uneasiness caused by the possible omnipresence of conspiracy, as if predicting today's situation.

2. Conspiracy Paranoia in *The Crying of Lot 49* and *A Wild Sheep Chase*

Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* and Haruki Murakami's *A Wild Sheep Chase* deal with the conspiracy paranoia caused by the ambiguousness of cabal or conspiracy. Both of them perfectly describe Knight's idea of conspiracy theory. In other words, both Oedipa Maas's and the anonymous protagonist's uneasiness can be explained with reference to Knight; both of them suffer from the collapse of the distinction between friend and foe; they become unable to tell the people who are co-opted into the conspiracy from those who are not. Let us look into their suffering.

Oedipa Maas gradually comes to think that many people in society might have been co-opted into a world wide conspiracy epitomized by Tristero or Trysterio. In the stockholders' meeting of Yoyodyne, one of whose keys is Pierce Inverarity, she sees Stanley Koteks doodling the same post horn symbol which she sees on the latrine wall of the bar. Koteks explains that WASTE, which is included in the message written above the sign on the latrine wall, is an acronym. Mr. Thoath tells her that this acronym is also sculptured on the ring which his grandfather cut from the finger of an American Indian he killed. Genghis Cohen, the most eminent philatelist in the L.A. area, informs Oedipa that WASTE's symbol is quite similar to that of Trysterio, which has been the underground mail system in Europe for a long time. Then, he insists that the underground mail system is still quite active in the U.S. On the way to the airport, or at the airport, she sees the post horn symbols. And the conversation between a boy and his mother definitely seems to prove Cohen's idea of WASTE to be true:

Catching a TWA flight to Miami was an uncoordinated boy who planned to slip at night into aquariums and open negotiations with the dolphins, who would succeed

man. He was kissing his mother passionately goodbye, using his tongue. "I'll write, ma," he kept saying. "Write by WASTE," she said, "remember. The government will open it if you use the other. The dolphins will be mad." "I love you, ma," he said. "Love the dolphins," she advised him. "Write by WASTE." (99-100)

At that night, she sees so many post horns that she becomes paranoid: "she grew so to expect it that perhaps she did not see it quite as often as she later was to remember seeing it" (101). It is described clearly that engulfed in the flood of post horns, Oedipa becomes obsessed by the fear of omnipresent WASTE:

This night's profusion of post horns, this malignant, deliberate replication, was their way of beating up. They knew her pressure points, and the ganglia of her optimism, and one by one, pinch by precision pinch, they were immobilizing her. Last night, she might have wondered what undergrounds apart from the couple she knew of communicated by WASTE system. By sunrise she could legitimately ask what undergrounds didn't. (101)

Knowing that she has become unable to expect Dr. Hilarious, Mucho, Metzger, and Driblette to help her to explain the mystery away, she suspects that Tristero has got rid of them (133). However, the existence of Tristero continues to be a supposition: "Suppose, God, there really was a Tristero then and that she *had* come on it by accident" (148). Moreover, while having been obsessed by the fear that Tristero might be omnipresent, Oedipa still wonders how many people have really co-opted into Tristero: "How many shared Tristero's secret, as well as its exile? What would the probate judge have to say about spreading some kind of a legacy among them all, all those nameless, maybe as a first installment" (149-50). Her uneasiness is closely connected, not only to the fear of Tristero, but also to the collapse of the distinction between Tristero and non-Tristero. While there are plenty of symptoms of Tristero's spread in her society, none of them are definite evidence. The uncertainty causes Tristero paranoia.

In *A Wild Sheep Chase* a conspiracy, carried out by a cabal represented by the black-suited secretary, seems to dominate the entire society. Everything might be co-opted into the conspiracy without anyone noticing, as described well in the secretary's explanation of the cabal:

"We built a kingdom," the man began again. "A powerful underground kingdom. We pulled everything into the picture. Politics, finance, mass communications, the bureaucracy, culture, all sorts of things you would never dream of. We even subsumed elements that were hostile to us. From the establishment to the anti-establishment, everything. Very few if any of them even noticed they had been co-opted." (98)

The secretary also reveals their ability to watch every corner of the society. However, there seem to be some things which even the cabal do not know. One of those things is how the narrator-protagonist got the picture of a very special sheep with a star on its back.

The narrator-protagonist refuses to provide the information about how he got the picture, insisting that he is afraid to get the Rat, its provider, into trouble. Though the narrator-protagonist goes to search for the special sheep instead, as ordered, he seems to be even the last hope for the cabal since the discovery of the sheep is evidently the solution to their imminent problem: the collapse of the cabal caused by the death of the Boss, in whose body the sheep had been for more than forty years. The following conversation between the secretary and the narrator-protagonist supports the idea that the cabal must appeal to the protagonist for mercy:

“It is special sheep. A v-e-r-y special sheep. I want to find it and for that I will need your help.” “And what do you do plan to do with it once you find it?”

“Nothing at all. There is probably nothing I could do. The scale of things is far too vast for me to do much of anything. My only wish is to see it all out at least with my own eyes. And if that sheep should wish anything, I shall do all in my power to comply. Once the boss dies, my life will have lost almost all meaning anyway.” (102)

The secretary is petitioning rather than ordering. However, it turns out that the secretary and the Rat know much more than he thinks they know. The following is his monologue of despair which follows his becoming aware of these things:

So he (the secretary) already knew everything. That was indisputable. And yet, he had gone to great lengths to convince me, or rather to blackmail me, in order to get me up here. Why? If it was something that needed doing, surely he was in a better position to do it and to do a crack job of it. And if I were for some reason to be a pawn, why wouldn't he have told me the name of the place from the beginning? As I sorted through my confusion, I started to get mad How much did the Rat know? And while we're at it, how much did the man in the black suit know? Here I was, smack in the center of everything without a clue. . . . All the same, what gave them the right to treat me like this? I'd been used, I'd been beaten, I'd been wrung dry. (235-36)

He accuses not *him* but *them* for using, beating, and wringing him dry. Since he mentions the Rat and the black-suited secretary just before accusing *them*, it is obvious that *them* refers to those two. The protagonist comes to have a suspicion that even the Rat might have a hand in the conspiracy to trap him. He becomes paranoid. He must have become unable to tell friends from enemies, or non-conspiracy from conspiracy. I have mentioned that he refuses to tell about the Rat since he does not want to involve the Rat. However, it turns out that the Rat had known about the conspiracy and the Boss. Moreover, it is natural to imagine that the Rat's sending the photograph has something to do with the conspiracy. At least the narrator-protagonist thinks so, as he says, “How much did the Rat know.” At this point, the Rat seems to be his enemy. However, talking to the narrator-protagonist later, the dead Rat suggests that all that he did is controlled by the sheep. Moreover, the dead Rat implies that he fought with the sheep over his control: “I

died with the sheep in me. I waited until the sheep was fast asleep, then I tied a rope over the beam in the kitchen and hanged myself. There wasn't enough time for the sucker to escape. . . . If I waited, the sheep would have controlled me absolutely" (248). Therefore, it is ambiguous whether the Rat is the friend or enemy. The Rat might be both friend and enemy since the distinction itself has become meaningless. It is not difficult to imagine that whenever he sees people after the wild sheep chase, the narrator-protagonist comes to suspect that they can be co-opted into the conspiracy. To make matters worse, there are many phenomena which reinforce his suspicion. For example, the dead Rat explains that the reason he decided to come to the place, where he would run into the sheep which would enter his body, is because he happened upon a picture of the special sheep and heard the Sheep Professor's story at the Dolphin Hotel. Therefore, the Rat seems to have been controlled by the sheep even before being *sheeped*. The narrator-protagonist also happens to stay at the Dolphin Hotel and hear the Sheep Professor's story because the woman with fascinating ears insists on their staying at the hotel. It is natural to come to suspect that the Sheep Professor and the woman are also co-opted into the conspiracy. Everybody and every activity can be co-opted into it. The narrator-protagonist becomes a victim of conspiracy paranoia.

3. Agency Panic

There is no guarantee that the paranoid people themselves, who are anxious about the conspiracy, are free from it. In both of these novels, it is suggested that people can have been co-opted into the conspiracy without their notice. In *The Crying of Lot 49*, talking about Tristero, Mike Fallopian says to Oedipa: "Maybe we haven't found them yet Or maybe they haven't approached us. Or maybe we are using W.A.S.T.E., only it's a secret" (138). Concerning *A Wild Sheep Chase*, it has already been seen that the black-suited secretary says that many things, even those which are hostile to the cabal, have been co-opted without anyone noticing. And the narrator-protagonist comes to know that he ended up carrying out the plan programmed by the secretary without intending to do so. As if making doubly sure, the black-suited secretary explains to the narrator-protagonist that the entire wild sheep chase is nothing more than his program:

"Lay out the seeds and everything is simple. Constructing the program was the hard part. Computers can't account for human error, after all. So much for handiwork. Ah, but it is a pleasure second to none, seeing one's painstakingly constructed program move along exactly according to plan." (258)

On the other hand, it continues to be ambiguous whether Oedipa has been co-opted into Tristero or not. To begin with, it continues to be uncertain how many people have been co-opted and whether Tristero really exists or not. In other words, Oedipa has not worked out answers to these questions. This novel ends just before the results of the auction, which might hold the clue to Tristero, become clear. Unlike *A Wild Sheep Chase*, it does not actually reveal the conclusion.

How will people feel if it turns out that they have been enmeshed in a world wide conspiracy without their noticing? It is easy to imagine that they will become unsure of what they are doing, since it turns out that they have not been aware of their real situations. Then, suspecting that the conspiracy controls themselves, they suffer from agency panic. Timothy Melley studies the agency panic caused by conspiracy paranoia. Melley defines agency panic as follows:

By agency panic, I mean intense anxiety about an apparent loss of autonomy or self-control—the conviction that one’s actions are being controlled by someone else, that one has been “constructed” by powerful extreme agents. . . . In most cases, agency panic has two features. The first is a nervousness or uncertainty about the causes of individual action. This fear sometimes manifests itself in a belief that the world is full of “programmed” or “brainwashed” subjects, addicts, automatons, or “mass produced” persons. (12)

In the modern world, people have taken their individual actions to be the result of their own volition without any doubt. Agency panic is based on a bankruptcy of causality: the suspicion that their free will is not the cause of their actions. Therefore, agency panic can be connected to the threat of terrorism discussed previously, since the cause of terrorism is difficult to identify, unlike that of war. In *A Wild Sheep Chase*, the narrator-protagonist expresses his disgust at being told what to do: “I don’t like being ordered and threatened and pushed around” (113), and that is one of the reasons why he does not want to search for the sheep as ordered by the secretary. Therefore, when he makes a phone call to the secretary to agree to search for the sheep, he says, “I can only see myself doing it at my own pace And I don’t like having my every move watched and being pushed around by nameless people” (116). What can be deduced from his actions is his attachment to spontaneity. Viewed from another angle, he is anxious that his agency is being engulfed by a conspiracy of nameless people; thus he pays close attention to make sure that he is acting spontaneously. He is trying to avoid agency panic by preventing the conspiracy from manipulating him. After knowing that he has been tossed about by the black-suited secretary, the narrator-protagonist expresses his becoming unsure of his free will as the cause of his actions:

I brought my right hand up in front of my face and wiped my mouth. The me through the looking glass went through the same motions. But maybe it was only me copying what the me in the mirror had done. I couldn’t be certain I’d wiped my mouth out of my free will. I filed the word “free will” away in my head and pinched my ear with my left hand. (238)

His suffering matches Melley’s conception of agency panic and conspiracy paranoia. Telling him that all he has done has only served to help them carry out their plot, the black-suited secretary says to him: “I wanted you to come all this way spontaneously of your own free will” (257). After all, even spontaneity or free will is part of their program. Though he believes that he is acting according to his own free will, he might be just

carrying out a program which is part of the conspiracy. Everything, even his mind, might have been programmed and controlled by the cabal and co-opted into the conspiracy. Of course, it might not be so. However, it is easy to imagine that he becomes obsessed with agency panic or conspiracy paranoia all the more because everything remains ambiguous. Doubting his own free will as the cause of what he does, he cannot ascertain that he acts as programmed by anything external either. Everything remains uncertain. He cannot be sure of the cause of his own actions, nor can he be certain whether his actions are part of the conspiracy or not. He suffers from agency panic in a double meaning; he not only is unsure of his own spontaneity but also cannot attribute his actions to anything else.

Threatened by the shadow of Tristero, Oedipa also has doubts about herself as the agency of her actions:

Oedipa sat on the earth, ass getting cold, wondering whether, as Driblette had suggested that night from the shower, some version of herself hadn't vanished with him. Perhaps her mind would go on flexing psychic muscles that no longer existed; would be betrayed and mocked by a phantom self as the amputee is by a phantom limb. (133)

Moreover, to explain away the mysteries of Tristero, she tries to prove that she has just been hallucinating:

She had decided on route, with time to think about the day preceding, to go see Dr. Hilarius her shrink, and tell him all. . . . Yet she wanted it all to be fantasy—some clear result of her several wounds, needs, dark doubles. She wanted Hilarius to tell her she was some kind of a nut and needed a rest, and that there was no Trysterero. (107)

By attributing the mysterious conspiracy to her own mental illness, Oedipa tries to justify both causality and the status of her mind. In this way, in both of these novels, conspiracy paranoia and agency panic are closely connected.

4. Postmodern Death of Author

In *The Postmodern Turn* Steven Best and Douglas Kellner talk about the author's loss of the status of absolute decider as one of the characteristics of postmodernism: "For postmodernists . . . the concept of the author as an expressive unitary consciousness was dismantled to place the writing subject within a dense, socially constructed, intertextual discursive field" (131). This idea can be connected to the concepts of conspiracy paranoia and agency panic. Once the writing subject is placed within the intertextual discursive field, both agency panic and conspiracy paranoia can be aroused. The shift of writing subject from author to "intertextual discursive field" means that the author is not the pure creator of what he writes but the vessel through which a number of ideas including his own come and go. Therefore, it becomes difficult to identify the agency of writing. This is an agency panic-like symptom caused by the death of the author. Though someone literally writes in the physical sense, it does not assure that he is writing completely out of his own

spontaneity. Thus, it becomes uncertain who is responsible for the writing, who is to blame. This uncertainty blurs the distinction between “I” and “others.” Therefore, it leads not only to agency panic but also to conspiracy paranoia. As it becomes almost impossible to know whether one’s writing really originates in his own free will, it becomes quite difficult to detect invasions into his *original* writing. Peter Knight discusses the chain reaction of agency panic and conspiracy paranoia in the postmodern age particularly:

Whereas everyday paranoia about enemy invasion has in the past functioned paradoxically to conserve a secure sense of Them and Us, now the increasing awareness of being immersed in a permeable environment of risk produces what might be termed *insecure paranoia*. (28)

In this way, the death of the author as the absolute writing subject is closely connected with agency panic and conspiracy paranoia under the name of postmodernism. Roland Barthes digs into the theme of the author’s loss of the status of absolute decider in his article, “The Death of the Author.” He makes a comment which agrees with Best and Kellner’s idea quite well:

We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single ‘theological’ meaning (the ‘message’ of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture. (146)

Discussing the postmodern death of the author, Best and Kellner mention the shift from work to text:

Against modernism and the avant-garde, however, postmodernism declares both the death of the author and of the work, replacing the former with the decentered self or *bricoleur* and the latter with the “text.” The shift from “work” to “text” is meant both to broaden the category of objects for critical interpretation and decoding and to suggest that the meanings of the text are usually multiple and conflicting, requiring new methods of interpretation that are multiperspectival and that decenter the “authorial voice” (135)

Barthes also digs into this conception of the postmodern shift from “work” to “text.” In “From Work to the Text,” he defines “text” as an intertextual being composed of information whose origin is untraceable:

The intertextual in which every text is held, it itself being the text-between of another text, is not to be confused with some origin of the text: to try to find the ‘sources’, the ‘influences’ of a work, is to fall in with the myth of filiation; the citations which go to make up a text are anonymous, untraceable, and yet *already read*, they are quotations without inverted commas. (160)

Since the origin of the “text” is untraceable, there is no way to make sure that the “text” is not involved by any conspiracy. Since the narrator-protagonist is also the author of his story which can be equated with the novel, his loss of authority can be equated with the postmodern death of the author.

The relationship between people's appetite and the mass media, especially TV, in postmodern society is a good example of the death of the author, though it does not concern writing directly. Thinking of the "author" not only as a writer literally but also as an ultimate decider of what he does, we can apply this example to the death of the author. And "text" is not only literary work but also anything created by the "author," as Best and Kellner say: "In the poststructuralist lexicon, 'text' refers to any artistic or social creation that signifies and can be conceptually interpreted. Thus, not only are artworks like novels and paintings 'texts' but so too are buildings, landscapes, and cities" (135). In the postmodern society, most people are immersed in a flood of mass media. As a result, they tend to be influenced by the media without noticing it. Human agency as a spontaneous subject becomes insecure since one might have been controlled by anything other than his own free will while believing in his spontaneity. Moreover, the impossibility of ascertaining one's own spontaneity also leads to the sense of insecurity that he might be controlled unconsciously by someone else with a particular intention. In fact, mass media or advertising agencies work to control consumers by manipulating those consumers' state of mind. Consumers are almost always unaware that they are being controlled. Subliminal advertising is the most remarkable example. After all, in our information-oriented postmodern society, it is quite difficult to establish one's own individuality which is not controlled by anything other than one's own free will. Therefore, thinking about how their likes and dislikes are formed, even average people could come to suffer from agency panic and conspiracy paranoia in postmodern society. Just like the fear of unpredictable terrorism, there is a fear of omnipresent threat which is caused by the collapse of boundaries.

5. The Status of Narration and Conspiracy

The narrator-protagonist of *A Wild Sheep Chase* doubts that what he does is governed by his own free will, realizing his chasing the sheep has been programmed by the cabal. His act of narrating the story, his role as the author, could have been also co-opted into the conspiracy, while seeming to be his spontaneous act. He might be merely a vessel whose actions originate in anything but himself; the conspiracy might exercise power through him while he is not aware at all. In this way, the narrator-protagonist's losing authority can be compared with the postmodern death of the author. However, neither the secretary nor his conspiracy can become the absolute controller in the story as long as they are described by the narrator-protagonist. Therefore, in the world of the story, there is no absolute authority anywhere. That is in beautiful agreement with the death of the author in Best and Kellner's terms: "The concept of the author as an expressive unitary consciousness was dismantled to place the writing subject within a dense, socially constructed, intertextual discursive field" (131). Though the author, the narrator-protagonist, loses the status of the act's subject, it does not mean that the status is given to anybody else. There is no such a status of unitary consciousness in the novel. In this

way, the concept of the postmodern death of the author can be read into the status of the narrator-protagonist. The novel embodies that conception.

On the other hand, it seems difficult to read this postmodern symptom into *The Crying of Lot 49*. First, the narrator is supposed to be omniscient. We cannot deduce those indications of the death of the author, agency panic and conspiracy theory, from him. To begin with, since he does not appear as a character, such kinds of uneasiness cannot be described directly in the form of his own monologue. Next, though Oedipa suffers from agency panic and conspiracy paranoia, she is not an author in any sense; she is just described, never describes. Therefore, she is not the author of the entire story; though the conception of author is broadened, she is nothing more than "the author" of what the omniscient narrator describes that she does. Even if discussing her agency panic and conspiracy paranoia the symptoms of the postmodern "dead" author, we cannot apply them to the entire story. The entire novel is supposed to have been created, not by the dead author, but by the omniscient narrator who is still the "unitary consciousness" of the novel.

What is remarkable about *A Wild Sheep Chase* in this aspect is that the death of the author is caused by its content, the narrator-protagonist's uneasiness, which is subordinated to the structure since it is described by him. The novel might really be narrated by the dead author in postmodern terms, not by his spontaneity but by the conspiracy's program without the author's notice. However, it is also certain that the conspiracy is described by the author. So, ultimately, the conspiracy itself and the fear of having been controlled by it are given birth by the narrator-protagonist. Therefore, they are also controlled by him. However, his narrating, which gives birth to a conspiracy or the fear of a conspiracy, might also be controlled by that conspiracy. However, the conspiracy or the fear is In this way, within its own context, it is impossible to reach the center of the novel which just controls, but is never controlled. That characteristic is exactly the death of the author. Barthes also says the death of the author makes the text lose its center; discussing the "text" which is written by the "dead author," he refers to the lack of a center:

Thus is the Text restored to language, it is structured but off-centred, without closure (note, in reply to the contemptuous suspicion of the 'fashionable' sometimes directed at structuralism, that the epistemological privilege currently accorded to language stems precisely from the discovery there of a paradoxical idea of structure: a system with neither close nor centre). (159)

A Wild Sheep Chase embodies the death of the author within its context. On the other hand, in *A Crying of Lot 49* there is a center, the omniscient narrator. The narration is located outside of the novel's context, while that of *A Wild Sheep Chase* is within. As long as a conspiracy is also the content of the novel, its dominance is effective just within the context of the novel. Therefore, the omniscient narrator can be the center of the novel; what he says is free from Tristero. The narration controls Tristero one-sidedly; the former is never controlled by the latter. The boundary between *describing* and *described*

dissolves in *A Wild Sheep Chase*, both the narrator-protagonist and the conspiracy might be both describing and described. On the other hand, the boundary is still solid in *The Crying of Lot 49*.

6. The Unsolvable Conspiracy

The difference in the status of the narrator or of the text also influences the ending of these novels. Since what is narrated in *A Wild Sheep Chase*, in other words what the reader can know in the novel, might be controlled by the cabal, its conspiracy is kept mysterious despite the black-suited secretary's revealing the secret; though the narrator-protagonist says that he recognizes the full picture of the conspiracy. The reader might not be able to see the conspiracy from outside. He might be. However, there is no way to be sure. On the other hand, required to present the facts, the narrator of *The Crying of Lot 49* cannot help but to finish the story before the full picture of Tristero is made clear in order to keep the story of a possible conspiracy mysterious. He sometimes narrates from Oedipa's viewpoint; although being omniscient, he sometimes pretends not to know what Oedipa does not know. As an omniscient narrator, he must know what Tristero is, whether people have been co-opted into it or not, or who bids for the stamp. However, identifying his eyes with Oedipa's, the omniscient narrator sometimes poses questions which remain unanswered. Narrating the story that way, the narrator seems to be a character who is on the outside, watching Oedipa and the society. On the other hand, he sometimes describes what Oedipa is thinking in a decisive tone. He must be omniscient, or the descriptions of Oedipa's thoughts are nothing more than his imagination. There might be an argument over the status of the narrator; whether he is an omniscient narrator or a character. It is appropriate to consider him as omniscient, since describing Oedipa's encounter with the word Tristero in the early stage, he analyzes her reaction in relation to how the word affects her later in the novel: "The word hung in the air as the act ended and all lights were for a moment cut; hung in the dark to puzzle Oedipa Maas, but not yet to exert the power over her it was to" (58). To sum up, the narrator analyzes the word's impact on her at that time in reference to the big power the word ends up exerting over her after that time. Therefore, it makes sense to think that the omniscient narrator, who can see the entire story, sometimes dares to limit his viewpoint to a character's. Alternating omniscient viewpoint and personal viewpoint, the omniscient narrator sees the entire story objectively in the context of the novel. As a result, the conspiracy remains mysterious in both of these novels; both of them contribute to making the reader feel mounting conspiracy paranoia. If the omniscient narrator explained Tristero, the boundary between enemy and friend would be established.

In *The Crying of Lot 49* and *A Wild Sheep Chase*, threatened by the shadow of grand conspiracy, the protagonist suffers from conspiracy paranoia and agency panic. Their suffering is due not only to the fear of a powerful conspiracy but to its ambiguity: the collapse of the boundary between conspiracy and non-conspiracy. They suffer from the

idea of risk which can be omnipresent even in themselves. By choosing appropriate narration styles, each of these novels succeeds in making not only the protagonist but also the reader unable to tell conspiracy from non-conspiracy. Written in the Cold War era, these two novels embody today's universal fear caused by the collapse of boundaries which heretofore have been the bases of the modern world, in advance of the real world.

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