

“How’s Your Quest?”

Translating Thomas Pynchon’s *The Crying of Lot 49*



BA Thesis English Language and Culture
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Vertaling & Vertaalreflectie 1
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American English
February 2012

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Introduction

This thesis evolves around an annotated translation of two fragments from Thomas Pynchon's postmodern classic *The Crying of Lot 49*. The first fragment represents the first three pages of the novel, while the second fragment constitutes approximately four pages taken from the final chapter. Having taken a liking to the novel during the earlier course "The Cultures Of Technology", the translation is a direct result of my curiosity to see how the intriguing plot and deliberately confusing style of the novel could be maintained when transferred into Dutch. Before arriving at the actual translation, there will be a focus on the author and a general analysis of the novel, followed by an in depth translation oriented text analysis based on the four categories as established by Christiane Nord. Any quotes from her article, as well as a variety of others, will be taken from *Denken over Vertalen*, and will therefore be translated back into English by myself. In the interest of conciseness, the novel will mostly be referred to as *Lot 49*.

Thomas Ruggles Pynchon, Jr.

"Somewhere I had come up with the notion that one's personal life had nothing to do with fiction, when the truth, as everyone knows, is nearly the direct opposite" (Pynchon, qtd. in "Straight").

Thomas Ruggles Pynchon, Jr. was born on May 8, 1937 in Glen Cove, New York. The family, furthermore consisting of parents Thomas Ruggles Pynchon, Sr. and Katherine Frances Bennett, and Pynchon's older siblings Judith and John, moved to East Norwich, where he attended Oyster Bay High School. It was during these years that Pynchon's affinity for the English language first came to the surface, as he graduated not only valedictorian, but as "the senior attaining the highest average in the study of English" ("Straight"). Despite this

recognition, Pynchon used his scholarship to Cornell University to enroll into a degree in Engineering Physics, which he then abandoned in his sophomore year to serve two years in the United States Navy. When he returned to the University in 1957, he pursued a degree in English after all, for which he received his BA in 1959.

Pynchon has written a collection of short stories, most of which were published in school magazines or in 1984 under the name of *Slow Learner*. The novels Pynchon is better known for include but are not limited to *V.* (1963), *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973), *Vineland* (1990) and *Mason & Dixon* (1997). The focus of this BA Thesis is his 1966 novel *The Crying of Lot 49*, which I will elaborate on in a further section.

His novels have won several awards, including the National Book Award and the William Faulkner Foundation Award, but most notable is the award he didn't win: the 1974 Pulitzer Prize in literature. The panel of judges unanimously selected his *Gravity's Rainbow*, only to be overruled by the advisory board, whose members described the novel as "unreadable" and "obscene" ("Straight"). The prize was consequently not awarded at all that year. In 1975, Pynchon declined the William Dean Howells Medal, informing the American Academy of Arts and Letters that: "I don't want it. Please don't impose on me something I don't want" (Pynchon, qtd. in Winston 286). Besides his fictional work, Pynchon has written articles and reviews for several mainstream American media, and introductions for works by Donald Barthelme, George Orwell, and Richard Fariña. He has also appeared as a vocal actor for a character representing him in three episodes of *The Simpsons*, and for a promotional video for his latest novel.

Pynchon has avoided contact with the press for over forty years, resulting in a general lack of information about his personal life. Mass media have compared him to recluse author J.D. Salinger, which Pynchon himself disputed in a statement to CNN which read: "my belief is that recluse is a code word generated by journalists . . . meaning, 'doesn't like to talk to

reporters” (Feldman). What is known is that Pynchon is currently 74 years old, and resides in New York City with his wife and literary agent, Melanie Jackson, and their son Jackson. His latest novel, *Inherent Vice*, was published in August 2009, and is described by publisher Penguin Group USA as “Part noir, part psychedelic romp, all Thomas Pynchon” (“Inherent”).

The Crying of Lot 49

Plot

Lot 49 starts out as a story about a simple American housewife who is made co-executor of her deceased ex-boyfriend’s estate. Everything simple about the novel ends here, though, as the story soon develops into a detective-like plot as main character Oedipa Maas attempts to solve a mystery triggered by a symbol she comes across on the door of a ladies room at a bar. The rest of the novel has surprisingly little to do with executing a will, and all the more with trying to make sense of the different signs Oedipa comes across after learning of underground post service Tristero. Everything is connected, yet the more Oedipa discovers the more questions arise. The novel does not exclude the possibility that everything is all a practical joke by her ex, Pierce Inverarity, nor does it confirm or deny that Oedipa has been hallucinating. Hallucination, often in combination with drug use, is a frequent topic in the novel. This leads to a lot of the information being untrustworthy, because it is unclear whether the characters are giving genuine information, or imagining things while under the influence. All of this reflects on the reader, who, just like Oedipa, is trying to make sense out of all the information, yet cannot be certain of anything. Patrick O’Donnell accurately sums up,

the novel is filled with information, codes, messages, secret languages, historical and literary allusions, puns, parodies, figures of all sorts – and yet, [. . .] we are left with the possibility that all these ‘clues’ will reveal only the presence of our own desire to impose meaning on a meaningless universe. (13)

Tone

The two main methods of narration used in *Lot 49* are free indirect discourse and direct dialog. The direct dialog forms the biggest source of reliable information in the novel, being nothing more than a third person description of a conversation, not affected by the assumptions and paranoia that carry the largest part of the plot. Even though the information brought forward by the conversation does not have to be accurate, the dialogs themselves are always real and clear. It is evident which character says which sentences through the use of dialog tags such as ‘she said’.

“I knew you’d be different,” she said, “Mike, because everybody’s been changing on me. But it hadn’t gone as far as hating me.”

“Hating you.” He shook his head and laughed. “If you need any armbands or more weapons, do try Winthrop Tremaine, over by the freeway. Tremaine’s Swastika Shoppe. Mention my name”. (Pynchon 116)

This is not the case for most of the free indirect discourse. In free indirect discourse, “character text and narrator text are mixed, but in such a way that characteristics of both are still visible in the result” (Wurth 190). In *Lot 49*, more often than not, this narration method is used in the form of free indirect thought, where the reader is confronted with Oedipa’s direct thoughts, yet as told by a third person narrator.

Was that how he’d died, she wondered, among dreams, crushed by the only icon in the house? That only made her laugh, out loud and helpless: You’re so sick, Oedipa, she told herself, or the room, which knew. (Pynchon 5)

The portions of the text written with this narration are recognized by a lack of quotation marks to indicate the beginning and end of the utterance, and the shift in tense from past ‘made her laugh’ to present ‘you’re so sick’. By using this method of narration, Pynchon

makes Oedipa an interfering narrator. Her thoughts influence the descriptions of the narrator and create “the illusion that the reader can think along with a character” (Wurth 190). This type of construction requires proper interpretation, as it is not always clear which clauses are linked, and whether a specific part of the utterance belongs to the character or the narrator.

Postmodernism

Pynchon is a household name in many lists of postmodern authors. In broad terms, postmodernism in literature applies to works produced after World War II. It is seen as both a prolongation of modernism, which was dominant after World War I, as well as a separation from it. The predominant characteristic of postmodernism is to “so blend literary genres, cultural and stylistic levels, the serious and the playful, that they resist classification according to traditional literary rubrics” (Abrams 203). The desire to be unconventional and blend so-called ‘high culture’ with ‘mass culture’ clearly stands out from Pynchon’s work, *Lot 49* not being an exception. In the section of the novel this thesis focuses on, Pynchon references to high culture in the form of a classical composition by Bartók and the (albeit imaginary) Jacobean revenge play *The Courier’s Tragedy*. In terms of mass culture, the use of *The Huntley and Brinkley Report*, the pulp fiction character *The Shadow* and a kazoo concert stand out.

The concept of meaningless signs, as mentioned earlier, can also be contributed to postmodern influences. Taking away security and certainties is what drives the plot of *Lot 49* forward, which leads to Oedipa eventually coming to terms with her empty life and her empty search, “For this, oh God, was the void” (Pynchon 118). The main goal of the postmodern is to make people reevaluate the things they think they know and accept, making Oedipa the perfect postmodern protagonist.

***The Crying of Lot 49* in Translation**

In 1991, Christiane Nord published her visions on translation and text analysis in both German and English. She highlighted the need for a translation-oriented text analysis, to guarantee not merely a “thorough comprehension of the text” (Nord 145), but also to “determine the direction of the translation process” (Nord 145). To ensure the use of well-informed decisions in the translation of *Lot 49* which will be produced later on in this thesis, this section will focus on a translation oriented text analysis of this novel based on Nord’s four categories of translation problems: extratextual or pragmatic problems, intra-textual or linguistic problems, cultural problems and finally text-specific problems.

EXTRATEXTUAL PROBLEMS

Nord describes extratextual factors as “factors of the communicative situation in which the source text is used” (Nord 41). They focus on seven questions about the text recollective of but not equal to the Five Ws known in journalism:

[T]he author or sender of the text (who?), the sender’s intention (what for?), the audience the text is directed at (to whom?), the medium or channel the text is communicated by (by which medium?), the place (where?) and time (when?) of text production and text reception, and the motive (why?) for communication (Nord 42).

The author has been introduced earlier in this thesis under ‘biography’ and will therefore not be elaborated upon again in this section. The remaining relevant questions will be answered below.

Medium, time and place

Lot 49 is a novel, although Pynchon himself considered it “a short story, but with gland trouble” (Gussow). It was first published by Philadelphia-based publisher J.B. Lippencott & Co. in 1966 in both a hardback and a paperback version of 183 pages. During the year before its publication, sections from the novel were released in magazines *Esquire* and *Cavalier*, with the most likely motive being a need for funds (Winston 285).

While several major historic events took place during the years Pynchon worked on *Lot 49*, Patrick O’Donnell argues, “it would be a mistake to assume that there is any definitive connection to be made between ‘fiction’ and ‘history’” (1). Pynchon is widely regarded as a postmodernistic writer, and indeed *Lot 49* does contain quite a few characteristics often ascribed to this movement, such as irony, intertextuality, questionable narrators and paranoia. “Chaos or totalitarian order; meaninglessness or paranoia; void or dark design – these are the polarities of Thomas Pynchon’s oeuvre” (O’Donnell 2).

Audience and reception

As Pynchon’s second novel, *Lot 49* was significantly shorter and more comprehensible than his debut *V*. This made it a firm favorite with both publishers (there are translations of the novel in at least fourteen languages, including Japanese) and literary curricula in universities (O’Donnell 6). Donald Brown emphasizes, “a large segment of Pynchon’s audience is academic” (101). This is a logical statement considering the style of the text, which will be more closely examined further on in this thesis. The novel was well received, yet not as well as its predecessor or its successor *Gravity’s Rainbow*. Literary critics deemed *Lot 49* “a step backwards” (O’Donnell 7), however the general public seemed more at ease with the text as it was “considerable easier to follow, and [. . .] just as funny” (O’Donnell 7). Most essays on the novel focus on the unanswered questions the novel leaves the reader with. In the collection

New Essays on The Crying of Lot 49, four out of six essays consider the uncertainty of the information brought forward by the novel for the reader “to approach the enigmas of Pynchon’s most concentrated text” (O’Donnell 16) with. Answering any of these questions in a definite manner seems an impossible task given the fact that the novel does not give the long-awaited resolutions, and Pynchon’s inconspicuousness means he will not, either. The ongoing search for logic and significance by contemporary critics therefore mirrors the novel in being “a quest without end, an inquiry into and dramatization of our incessant desire for meaning” (O’Donnell 13).

LINGUISTIC PROBLEMS

Present Participles

One of the most common difficulties that arise when translating any English text into Dutch is the use of present participle clauses. The present participle, or ‘-ing vorm’ as it is frequently referred to in Dutch, is a verb form used to create continuous tense. It exists in both languages, yet is far more frequent in English sentences than it is in Dutch. At times, the present participle clause can be maintained in a Dutch translation without any problems. More often than not, however, present participle forms in Dutch seem far too formal or outdated in comparison to the tone the verb has in the original English text. Shifting to an alternative verb form is in those cases the sensible solution, but this is not a straightforward process. Jan-Jaap Spies points out, “while an English text with a high frequency of present participle constructions does not automatically become monotonous, Dutch texts tend to display more variety in grammatical constructions” (16). The question is how to pick the ‘correct’ Dutch verb form to maintain, as much as possible, the style of Pynchon’s writing. There is no

standard Dutch verb form to replace all occurrences of the present participle in an English source text.

To illustrate, “This is the Scott Specialized, you see, for American stamps, a catalogue I don’t generally keep up on. My field **being** European and colonial.” (Pynchon 117 [my emphasis]), uses a present participle to link back to the previous sentence in a causative manner. In a strictly literal translation, the Dutch equivalent would be, “Dit is de gespecialiseerde catalogus, zie je, voor Amerikaanse postzegels, een catalogus die ik normaal gesproken niet bijhoud. Mijn vakgebied **zijnde** Europees en koloniaal”. However, no native speaker of Dutch is likely to ever utter this sentence. A more realistic option would be to replace the present participle with the verb ‘is’, and add a pragmatic participle to hint at the causative connection instead: “Dit is de gespecialiseerde catalogus, zie je, voor Amerikaanse postzegels, een catalogus die ik normaal gesproken niet bijhoud. Mijn vakgebied **is immers** Europees en koloniaal.”

In another example, “One day Genghis Cohen called, **sounding** excited” (Pynchon 116 [my emphasis]), also warrants multiple solutions. Again, a literal translation would not sound natural, leaving the translator with a few other options. The sentence could be split up into two, turning the sub clause with the present participle into a main clause of its own: “Op een dag belde Genghis Cohen. **Hij klonk** opgewonden”. Yet breaking the sentence up comes with the consequence of breaking up the flow of the story, as well as straying from Pynchon’s trademark style. Alternatively, the present participle can be omitted completely, leaving just the emotion: “Op een dag belde Genghis Cohen, opgewonden”. The key to picking the ideal option is a proper interpretation of the text, and sorting through all the possible alternatives until one stands out as the most natural solution.

‘It’

Another linguistic difference between English and Dutch is the reference point of the pronoun ‘it’. In Dutch, ‘it’ translates to ‘het’, however ‘it’ has a broader range of use in English than ‘het’ has in Dutch, which provides other options instead. This way, while “**It** was true, anyway” (Pynchon 7 [my emphasis]) can indeed be translated with “**Het** was hoe dan ook waar”, “Of had hij **het** later beslist” is not the most natural translation for “Or had he decided on **it** later” (Pynchon 7 [my emphasis]). Instead, “Of had hij **daar** later over beslist” is closer to something a native speaker of Dutch would say.

This is a consequence of the fact that, in Dutch, nouns are more often referred to with their gender, ‘hij’ or ‘zij’, than with ‘het’. Therefore, when translating an occurrence of ‘it’, it is often necessary to discover the gender of the noun ‘it’ refers to. In the following sentence, the second ‘it’ refers to the bust, “a whitewashed bust of Jay Gould that Pierce kept over the bed on a shelf so narrow for it she’d always had the hovering fear **it** would someday topple on them” (Pynchon 5 [my emphasis]). Yet when translated with ‘het’ in Dutch, this reference becomes unclear, and therefore a specific use of gender is needed for clarification: “een witte buste van Jay Gould die bij Pierce boven het bed op een plank stond die zo smal was dat er altijd de angst boven haar had gehangen dat hij op een dag op hen zou kieperen”.

In some cases, it is necessary to shift more than one thing in a sentence to accurately translate ‘it’. To turn the following sentence, “So much that, by 1795, **it** is even suggested that Tristero has staged the entire French Revolution” (Pynchon 114 [my emphasis]), into a natural flowing Dutch sentence, the translator needs to change not only the form of ‘it’, but also the structure and verb form: “Zo veel, dat **er** tegen 1795 zelfs gesuggereerd wordt dat Tristero de complete Franse Revolutie in scène heeft gezet”.

CULTURAL PROBLEMS

Closely related to the linguistic problems is the issue of culture-specific elements in the source text that need to be translated into the target language. Being set in California, the United States, *Lot 49* is no exception to the phenomenon. Add to this Pynchon's postmodern tendency to make excessive use of allusions to popular culture, and the translator has an abundance of these culture-specific elements to deal with. Javier Franco Aixelá identifies two universal kinds of realia, namely proper names and idiom (198).

Proper names

In general, translating proper names seems to happen almost exclusively in children's fiction. Zohar Shavit explains this concept by referring to its position in the polysystem. Translating children's literature comes with more freedom than translating adult literature, as it must be accustomed "to the child's level of comprehension and his reading abilities" (Shavit 172). This then includes naturalizing proper names, as they might confuse the child when left in their original form.

For adults, the concept of exotic languages and therefore exotic names is nowadays an accepted phenomenon, especially within two close-contact languages such as English and Dutch. These names will therefore not likely distract the reader. In *Lot 49*, then, there are no problems with the names of existing persons used in the novel, such as Jay Gould and Jack Lemmon, or with the names of characters which are taken from fictional work 'The Shadow'. Not translating Pynchon's fictional names, however, does come with a certain consequence. Nearly if not all names used in *Lot 49* are loaded names. Main character Oedipa's surname – Maas –, for example, is often seen as a reference to the Dutch meaning of 'maas': a net or mesh, therefore matching her state of being stuck in a web of information and uncertainty

(Cooper 143). Likewise, the combination with her husband's nickname, 'Mucho Maas', alludes to 'mucho más', Spanish for 'much more' ("Chapter 1")

Not translating these names may cause an element of allusion to be overlooked by the target reader. With 'Maas' being a Dutch word, this element of the name is perhaps not completely lost. The Spanish reference is however less likely to be picked up on, as a Dutch audience in general will not necessarily be familiar with Spanish, which is not as close a contact language to Dutch as, for example, English. Yet the question remains whether the American public will really be more familiar with the references than the Dutch audience will. In addition, the novel also contains a lot of German references, such as the name of co-executor Metzger, German for 'butcher' ("Chapter 1"). Given the proximity of the Netherlands to Germany as well as Dutch to German, the Dutch reader would perhaps be more likely to pick up on this reference than the English reader.

Idiom

Idiom is a broad term, taken by Aixelá to indicate "objects, institutions, habits and conceptions that are specific to a certain culture" (199). The fact that the novel is set in the United States, and will not be moved to the Netherlands in the translation, already determines the strategy for most of the country-specific realia issues that arise. Geographically, most American place names have an equivalent in Dutch. "California" simply becomes "Californië", and "San Francisco" remains exactly the same when translated. The fictional names Pynchon used, such as "Kinneret-Among-The-Pines" and "San Narciso", are maintained in a similar way. Concepts of currency, such as "two million dollar" could perhaps be translated to "twee miljoen euro", but this would cause confusion if the place names were maintained.

The TV show Oedipa is watching in chapter one, “Huntley and Brinkley”, was an NBC evening news program named after its presenters. This will not be known to a Dutch audience, which gives the translator two broad options: maintaining or replacing (Aixelá 200). If a translator uses maintaining, the names are left in without further explanation. In this particular example, however, this will alienate the reader from the text, as just the names “Huntley and Brinkley” are very unlikely to be familiar to a Dutch audience. Alternatively, the names can be taken out and replaced with a description, such as ‘het late journaal’. If the target audience were unfamiliar with the names, this solution, while in theory more explicit, would not be recognized as such. With knowledge of the source text, however, this option strays quite far from Pynchon’s original. A third option, therefore, is to leave the names in the text, while adding a small explanation for Dutch readers, such as ‘Huntley en Brinkley’s Late Journaal’.

Courtesy of the ancient post service Oedipa is investigating, historical concepts are littered throughout the novel. Luckily, they are mostly known worldwide, and have their own names in another language. “Holy Roman Empire” therefore becomes “Heilige Roomse Rijk” in the same way “French Revolution” is simply called “Franse Revolutie” in Dutch.

The cultural-specific elements that provide the biggest challenge when translating are figures of speech. It is rare for an English expression to have an identical equivalent in Dutch, which causes the need for the translator to find a Dutch expression closest in meaning to the original English one. To illustrate, the expression: “It is their time’s ghost, out to **put the Thurn and Taxis ass in a sling**” (Pynchon 114 [my emphasis]), means something like ‘to get them into serious trouble’. Staying true to the meaning of the expression while using a Dutch one can in this case be achieved with: “Het is hun tijdsgeest, erop uit Thurn en Taxis de strop om de hals te doen”, which contains the same connotation of causing serious trouble for the other party.

TEXT-SPECIFIC PROBLEMS

The unique style of any author is one of the hardest aspects to get across in a translation. The style of a text is closely related to its linguistic construction, which as discussed above provides the translator with certain language-specific problems. Having to change the grammatical structure of a sentence therefore has an effect on the style as well, and there is a fine line between attempting to stay true to the author's style and creating a natural-sounding translated text, as "shifts in expression which may seem trivial at first sight have an impact on the text world" (Spies 6).

Andrew Chesterman described this translating dilemma as a change in visibility of the translator (171). If a translator decides to sacrifice an aspect of style in favor of a natural sentence in the target language, he or she deliberately positions herself between the author and the target reader (171). Whether or not the translator opts for this strategy depends largely on whether the translation is desired to be source text oriented or target language oriented. That is to say, "a translator can subject himself to the original text, to the norms that are realized in that text, or to the norms that are used in the target culture" (Toury 324). In the case of the former, a translator will attempt to stay as close to the original author's words as possible, therefore choosing style over the best possible construction in the target language. If the latter, however, a translator will ensure the text reads like it was written in the target language to begin with, sometimes straying from the author's style in the process.

The most prominent style aspect in *Lot 49* is the use of absurdly complex sentences. The first sentence of the novel alone contains 87 words, introducing the reader to a phenomenon that will continue throughout most of the text:

ONE summer afternoon Mrs Oedipa Maas came home from a Tupperware party whose hostess had put perhaps too much kirsch in the fondue to find that

she, Oedipa, had been named executor, or she supposed executrix, of the estate of one Pierce Inverarity, a California real estate mogul who had once lost two million dollars in his spare time but still had assets numerous and tangled enough to make the job of sorting it all out more than honorary. (Pynchon 5)

Pynchon clearly has a lot to tell, or rather, Oedipa has a lot on her mind, as these long sentences often represent a train of thought. The novel is heavy on information, characters and plot twists, different types of discourse and references to popular culture. As the novel proceeds, however, long sentences like these become less frequent. This is true to the plot, as Oedipa begins to run out of answers, and therefore has less to discuss. The long sentences are then almost exclusively used when Oedipa is rambling to herself.

Long, complex sentences are more naturally constructed in English than in Dutch. As a result of the languages' characteristics, a Dutch translation of an English sentence is usually longer to begin with. While English can easily string a sequence of subordinate clauses together, Dutch often needs multiple sentences to get the same amount of information across in a natural way. Translating English sentences with a high density of information can therefore easily cause the Dutch equivalent to become too long to sound natural to a Dutch reader. In practice, most translators lean towards a target language oriented translation as the preferred option. With Pynchon, then, it would mean that splitting a sentence into two is the likely action:

OP een zomerse middag kwam mevrouw Oedipa Maas thuis van een Tupperware party waarvan de gastvrouw misschien iets te veel kirsch in de fondue had gestopt en ontdekte dat zij, Oedipa, benoemd was tot executeur – of ze nam aan executrice – van de nalatenschap van ene Pierce Inverarity. Hij was een Californische vastgoedmagnaat die ooit in zijn vrije tijd twee miljoen

dollar verloren had maar alsnog een groot en vertakt genoeg vermogen bezat om de taak alles uit te zoeken meer dan honorair te maken.

However, Pynchon could have used two sentences in the English original as well. The fact that he did not indicates that the long sentence serves a purpose, and as can be seen from the comparison with the novel's plot, it does. To maintain the connection between the style and the plot, the translator would be best off leaving the sentence long, even when this might not be his first instinct as a native speaker of Dutch,

OP een zomerse middag kwam mevrouw Oedipa Maas thuis van een Tupperware party waarvan de gastvrouw misschien iets te veel kirsch in de fondue had gestopt en ontdekte dat zij, Oedipa, benoemd was tot executeur – of ze nam aan executrice – van de nalatenschap van ene Pierce Inverarity, een Californische vastgoedmagnaat die ooit in zijn vrije tijd twee miljoen dollar verloren had maar alsnog een groot en vertakt genoeg vermogen bezat om de taak alles uit te zoeken meer dan honorair te maken.

This solution creates a sentence that, although long, is still comprehensible in Dutch. At the same time, it maintains Pynchon's style and the idea of Oedipa's rambling train of thought. The semicolon provides the reader with a natural pause point, essentially still breaking the sentence up into two, only without an actual halt.

Concluding remarks

To summarize the results of both the general and the translation oriented source text analysis, *Lot 49* is a complex novel in plot, structure and style, providing the translator with a wide variety of challenges and dilemmas. Aside from the natural differences between the English and Dutch languages and their accompanying cultures, Pynchon's complex sentences will need some form of adaptation to come across naturally in a Dutch translation. However, their

connection to the plot, and the connection to postmodern influences, will force the translator to find a healthy balance between staying true to Pynchon's unique style on one side, and making sure the target audience will read a nicely-flowing Dutch text on the other. As Thomas Pynchon himself noted about the ideas for *Lot 49* at the time of writing: “[i]f they come out on paper anything like they are inside my head then it will be the literary event of the millennium” (Pynchon, qtd. in Gussow).

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Appendix A: Translation

OP een zomerse middag kwam mevrouw Oedipa Maas thuis van een Tupperware party waarvan de gastvrouw misschien iets te veel kirsch in de fondue had gestopt en ontdekte dat zij, Oedipa, benoemd was tot executeur – of ze nam aan executrice –¹ van de nalatenschap van ene Pierce Inverarity, een Californische vastgoedmagnaat die ooit in zijn vrije tijd twee miljoen dollar verloren had maar alsnog een groot en vertakt genoeg vermogen bezat om de taak alles uit te zoeken meer dan honorair te maken. Oedipa stond in de woonkamer, aangestaard door het groenige dode oog van de tv, sprak Gods naam hardop uit, probeerde zich zo dronken mogelijk te voelen. Maar dat werkte niet. Ze dacht aan een hotelkamer in Mazatlán waarvan de deur net was dichtgegooid, het leek voor altijd, waardoor tweehonderd vogels wakker gemaakt werden in de lobby; een zonsopkomst over de *Libe* helling van de universiteit van Cornell die niemand daar had gezien omdat de helling op het westen ligt; een eentonige, treurige melodie uit het vierde deel van het *Concert voor orkest* van Bartók; een witte buste van Jay Gould die bij Pierce boven het bed op een plank stond die zo smal was dat er altijd de angst boven haar had gehangen² dat hij op een dag op hen zou kieperen. Was dat hoe hij was gestorven, vroeg ze zich af, al dromend geplet door het enige icoon in het huis? Daar moest ze alleen maar om lachen, hardop en hulpeloos; Je bent echt ziek, Oedipa, zei ze tegen zichzelf, of de kamer, wie weet.

¹ This novel contains a lot of very long sentences, especially in the first half of it. Although long, these sentences flow perfectly in English. Translating them to Dutch, however, usually disrupts the flow of the sentence. To improve the readability of these sentences, semi colons or em dashes have been inserted instead of copying the punctuation of the original text to offer a logical pause point to the reader,

² The phrase ‘hovering fear’ is a play on the fact that the bust on the shelf is slightly hovering over the edge. Dutch does not offer a direct equivalent, yet I wanted to maintain the little pun. The concept of fear hanging over
² The phrase ‘hovering fear’ is a play on the fact that the bust on the shelf is slightly hovering over the edge. Dutch does not offer a direct equivalent, yet I wanted to maintain the little pun. The concept of fear hanging over a person that I’ve used instead refers to the sword of Damocles, and as long as the reader picks up on this they might overlook the fact that the sentence is not as grammatically correct as it could be.

De brief kwam van advocatenkantoor Warpe, Wistfull, Kubitschek en McMingus in Los Angeles en was ondertekend door iemand genaamd Metzger. Er stond in dat Pierce vorig voorjaar was overleden en dat ze nu pas het testament hadden gevonden. Metzger zou optreden als co-executeur en raadsman in het geval van eventuele rechtszaken. Oedipa werd tot testamentexecuteur benoemd in een bijlage van een jaar geleden. Ze probeerde te bedenken of er rond die tijd iets ongewoons was gebeurd. De rest van de middag, tijdens haar uitje naar de markt in het winkelcentrum van Kinneret-Among-The-Pines om ricotta te kopen en naar de muzak te luisteren (vandaag kwam ze door de ingang met het kraalgordijn binnen rond de vierde maat van de variorumeditie van het Vivaldi Kazoo Concert door het Fort Wayne Settecento Ensemble, Boyd Beaver, solist); daarna tijdens het in de zon verzamelen van marjoraan en zoete basilicum uit haar kruidentuin, het lezen van boekrecensies in de laatste *Scientific American*, toen tijdens het stapelen van een lasagne, het maken van een knoflookbrood, het scheuren van eikenbladsla, en uiteindelijk tijdens het aanzetten van de oven, toen het mengen van de vroege whisky sours rond de terugkomst van haar man, Wendell (“Mucho”) Maas van zijn werk, dacht ze na, dacht na, terugbladerend door een dik pak dagen die (ze gaf het meteen toe) min of meer identiek waren, of allemaal subtiel dezelfde kant op wezen zoals het pak kaarten van een goochelaar, een uitspringende meteen duidelijk voor het getrainde oog.

Het duurde tot halverwege *Huntley en Brinkley’s Late Journaal*³ voordat ze zich herinnerde dat er vorig jaar een keer rond drie uur ‘s ochtends een lange-afstandstelefoontje was gekomen, waarvandaan zou ze nooit weten (tenzij hij nu een dagboek had achtergelaten), van een stem beginnend in zware Slavische tonen als tweede secretaris bij het

³ The Huntley and Brinkley Report, as mentioned in the theoretical part of this thesis, was an American late-night news program in Pynchon’s time. For the Dutch translation, putting just the names in would cause confusion, as no Dutch reader is likely to have heard of the program before. I considered replacing it with just ‘het late journaal’, but thought this would make it too implicit in comparison to the original. Therefore, I have left the names in, but added ‘Late Journaal’ to make it clear to the Dutch reader what exactly it is Oedipa is watching.

Transylvanische Consulaat, op zoek naar een ontsnapte vleermuis; modulerend naar komisch Negroïde, toen door naar een vijandig Pachucaans dialect, vol met *chingas* en *maricones*; toen een Gestapo officier die haar schreeuwend vroeg of ze familie in Duitsland had en tenslotte zijn Lamont Cranston stem, degene waarmee hij de hele weg naar Mazatlán gepraat had.

“Pierce, alsjeblieft,” kreeg ze ertussen, “ik dacht dat we—”

“Maar Margo,” ernstig, “ik kom net van Commissaris Weston, en die oude man in de Cake Walk is vermoord door dezelfde blaaspijp die ook Professor Quackenbush doodde,” of zoiets.

“In Godsnaam,” zei ze. Mucho was omgerold en keek naar haar.

“Waarom hang je niet gewoon op,” stelde Mucho verstandig voor.

“Dat hoorde ik,” zei Pierce. “Ik denk dat het tijd wordt dat Wendell Maas een bezoekje krijgt van De Schaduw.” Er viel een stilte, positief en doordringend. En dat was het laatste dat ze ooit van zijn stemmen gehoord had. Lamont Cranston. Die telefoonlijn had elke kant op kunnen wijzen, elke lengte kunnen zijn. Haar stille ambiguïteit verschoof in de maanden na het telefoontje naar dat wat nieuw leven werd ingeblazen: herinneringen aan zijn gezicht, lichaam, dingen die hij haar gegeven had, dingen waarvan ze nu en dan gedaan had alsof ze het hem niet had horen zeggen. Het nam hem over, en naar het randje van de vergetelheid. De schaduw wachtte een jaar voor hij langskwam. Maar nu was daar Metzgers brief. Had Pierce dan vorig jaar gebeld om haar te vertellen over zijn codicil? Of had hij daar later over beslist, vanwege haar irritatie en Muchos onverschilligheid? Ze voelde zich blootgesteld, teer, vernederd. Ze had nog nooit in haar leven een testament uitgevoerd, wist niet waar ze moest beginnen, wist niet hoe ze het advocatenbureau in L.A. moest vertellen dat ze niet wist waar ze moest beginnen.

“Mucho, schatje,” riep ze, in een vlaag van hulpeloosheid.

Mucho Maas, thuis, banjerde door de hordeur.

“Vandaag was weer een nederlaag,” begon hij.

“Vertel mij wat,” begon ook zij. Maar liet Mucho eerst gaan.

Hij was een diskjockey die verderop op het schiereiland werkte en regelmatig last had van gewetenswroeging over zijn werk. “Ik geloof er helemaal niets van, Oed,” kon hij gewoonlijk uitbrengen. “Ik probeer het, ik kan het echt niet,” daar ver beneden, verder beneden dan zij misschien kon reiken, zodat zulke momenten haar meestal op het randje van paniek brachten. Misschien was het dat beeld van haar, op het punt haar controle te verliezen, dat hem weer naar boven leek te brengen.

“Je bent te gevoelig.” Ja, er was zoveel meer dat ze ook zou moeten zeggen, maar dit was wat eruit kwam. Het was hoe dan ook waar. Hij was een paar jaar verkoper van tweedehands auto’s geweest en zo hyperbewust van wat dat beroep was komen te betekenen dat arbeidsuren volmaakte marteling voor hem waren geworden. Mucho scheerde zijn bovenlip elke ochtend drie keer met de richting mee en drie keer tegen de richting in om elke glimp van een snor te verwijderen, nieuwe mesjes dus hij bloedde constant maar bleef doorgaan; kocht pakken zonder schoudervulling en ging daarmee naar een kleermaker om de revers nog abnormaal smaller te laten maken, gebruikte alleen water in zijn haar, kamde het als Jack Lemmon om ze verder om de tuin te leiden⁴. De aanblik van zaagsel, zelfs puntenslijpsel, deed hem huiveren, omdat ‘zijn soort’ dat vaak gebruikte om versleten versnellingsbakken stil te houden; en hoewel hij op dieet was kon hij nog steeds niet net als Oedipa honing gebruiken om zijn koffie zoeter te maken, want net als alles dat viskeus was kwelde het hem, maar al te goed herinnerend wat er vaak met motorolie wordt gemengd om stiekem in de gaten tussen zuiger en cilinderwand te sijpelen. Hij was ooit weggelopen bij een

⁴ At first, I translated ‘to throw them off further’ with ‘om ze verder in de war te brengen’. After having re-analyzed the section, I realized my first impression of Mucho trying to confuse them was not completely accurate. He is trying to look as little like a car salesman as he possibly can so no one will know he once was one; he is trying to deceive them. Hence, ‘om de tuin te leiden’.

feestje omdat iemand het woord “kadetje”⁵ gebruikte; in zijn oren leek het kwaadwillig. De man was een gevluchte Hongaarse bakker die het over zijn werk had, maar dat was Mucho: overgevoelig.

Maar hij had ten minste in de auto's geloofd.

⁵ The word ‘creampuff’ is ambiguous in that it has a baking-related as well as a car-related meaning. The Dutch word ‘kadetje’ has the same connotations, although using ‘kadetje’ shifts the Hungarian man’s job from a pastry chef to a baker.

(For the sake of clarity: the following section of the novel takes place near the end, when Oedipa and Emory Bortz attempt to discover more about Turn and Taxis and Tristero. Most of it is pure speculation, as Oedipa cannot find any official information at the library.)

En met het einde van het Heilige Roomse Rijk gaat⁶ de bron van Thurn en Taxis' legitimiteit voor altijd verloren tussen de andere prachtige waanideeën. Mogelijkheden voor paranoia te over⁷. Als Tristero ook maar een gedeeltelijke geheimhoudingsplicht in stand heeft weten te houden, als Thurn en Taxis geen duidelijk idee hebben wie hun tegenstander is, of hoe ver diens invloed reikt, dan moeten velen van hen zijn gaan geloven in iets dat gelijk staat aan de blinde, automatische anti-God van de Scurvhamieten⁸. Wat het ook is, het heeft de macht om hun ruiters te vermoorden, aardverschuivingen onder hun wegen te laten donderen, en in het verlengde daarvan nieuwe lokale competitie en op dit moment zelfs staatspostmonopolies tot stand brengen; hun Rijk te desintegreren. Het is hun tijdsgeest, erop uit Thurn en Taxis de strop om de hals te doen⁹.

Maar gedurende de volgende anderhalve eeuw, als ze de wereldlijke Tristero ontdekken, neemt de paranoia af. Macht, alwetendheid, meedogenloze kwaadaardigheid; attributen van iets dat ze als een historisch principe zagen, een Zeitgeist, worden overgedragen naar de nu menselijke vijand. Zo sterk, dat er tegen 1795 zelfs gesuggereerd wordt dat Tristero de complete Franse Revolutie in scène heeft gezet, alleen om een excuus te

⁶ In the novel, the verb combination used here is 'is lost'. While this is possible in Dutch, it is not very common, and sounded off to me. The expression in Dutch is 'gaat verloren', which is what I opted for here.

⁷ 'Become abundant' is translated into Dutch in the form 'overvloedig worden', but doesn't sound natural. I thought about rearranging the sentence to use the word 'overdaad', until I thought of the expression 'te over'. This way, I can maintain a similar sentence construction and meaning. The 'become' element disappears, but in this case I didn't think it was troublesome.

⁸ The 'Scurvhamites' is a fictional sect that Pynchon invented. For the translation I have mostly left it as close to the original name as possible, only changing the word ending to sound like it could be a Dutch word.

⁹ 'Get one's ass in a sling' is an American English expression meaning to be in serious trouble. Because of the element of eliminating the competition, I opted for 'de strop om de hals doen', which has a similar meaning, with the hostility perhaps even more strongly emphasized in this Dutch version.

hebben om de Verklaring van de 9^{de} Frimaire An III¹⁰ uit te brengen; die het einde van de Thurn en Taxis postmonopolie in Frankrijk en de Lage Landen bekrachtigde.

“Maar gesuggereerd door wie,” zei Oedipa. “Heb je dat ergens gelezen?”

“Zou iemand het niet genoemd hebben?” zei Bortz. “Misschien niet.”

Ze ging niet op het argument in. Ze was begonnen tegenzin te voelen om waar dan ook op in te gaan. Ze had Genghis Cohen bijvoorbeeld niet gevraagd of zijn comité van deskundigen ooit verslag had uitgebracht over de postzegels die hij hen gestuurd had. Ze wist dat als ze terug zou gaan naar *Vesperhaven House* om nog eens met de oude meneer Thoth over zijn grootvader te praten, ze zou ontdekken dat ook hij was gestorven. Ze wist dat ze K. Da Chingado, uitgever van de onvindbare paperback *Tragedie van de Koerier* zou moeten schrijven, maar dat deed ze niet, en vroeg Bortz ook nooit of hij dat wel had gedaan. Het ergste van alles was dat ze merkte dat ze absurd veel moeite deed om maar niet over Randolph Driblette te hoeven praten. Elke keer als het meisje opdook, zij die bij de avondwake was geweest, vond Oedipa smoesjes om de bijeenkomst te verlaten. Het voelde alsof ze Driblette en haarzelf verraadde. Maar liet het gaan, uit vrees dat haar ontdekking zich verder dan een bepaald punt zou uitbreiden; dat het mogelijk groter dan haar zou groeien en haar op zou slokken.¹¹ Toen Bortz haar op een avond vroeg of hij D’Amico, die op de Universiteit van New York zat, erbij mocht halen, wees Oedipa hem af; te snel, te nerveus. Hij had het er niet meer over gehad, en zij, uiteraard, ook niet.

Ze ging wel terug naar The Scope, op een avond, rusteloos, alleen, beducht voor wat ze zou vinden. Ze vond Mike Fallopien, die een baard van een paar weken had laten staan, en een olijfkleurig shirt met een paar open knopen droeg, een gekreukte wijde broek zonder

¹⁰ ‘Frimaire’ was the last month of the fall season in the French Revolutionary Calendar. An III stands for the third year it was in use. As this calendar was in fact in use during the French Revolution, I have refrained from translating the date into modern concepts.

¹¹ This sentence in the original text contains the word ‘lest’. As this is a difficult word to translate properly into Dutch, I have made some changes to the sentence structure to be able to express a similar sentiment, but in a way that is more natural in Dutch. The semicolon binds the two sentences together, allowing for a better flow than I could achieve in Dutch had I maintained two separate sentences.

boorden en riemlussen en een twee-knopig wijf jasje; geen hoed. Hij werd omringd door meisjes, dronk champagnecoocktails en bulderde lage liedjes. Toen hij Oedipa spotte grijnsde hij breed naar haar en zwaaide.

“Je ziet eruit,” zei ze, “wow. Alsof je steeds onderweg bent. Rebellen trainen boven in de bergen.” Vijandige blikken van de meisjes die om de toegankelijke delen van Fallopian heen kronkelden.

“Het is een revolutionair geheim,” lachte hij, terwijl hij zijn armen opgooidde en een paar meiden wegslingerde. “Ga nu, jullie allemaal. Ik wil met deze praten.” Toen ze buiten gehoorsafstand waren gaf hij haar een sympathieke, geërgerde en misschien ook wel een beetje erotische blik. “Hoe gaat het met je zoektocht?”

Ze gaf hem een snelle update. Hij bleef stil terwijl ze praatte, zijn uitdrukking langzaam veranderend in iets dat ze niet herkende. Ze vond het vervelend. Om hem een beetje te sarren zei ze, “Het verbaast me dat jullie het systeem niet ook gebruiken.”

“Zijn wij ondergronds?” kwam hij terug, redelijk mild. “Zijn wij uitschot?”

“Ik bedoelde niet—”

“Misschien hebben we ze nog niet gevonden,” zei Fallopian. “Of misschien hebben ze ons nog niet benaderd. Of misschien gebruiken we W.A.S.T.E wel, maar is het een geheim.” Daarna, terwijl elektronische muziek de kamer begon door te dringen, “Maar er is ook nog een andere invalshoek.” Ze voelde aan wat hij ging zeggen en begon, in een reflex, met haar achterste kiezen te knarsen. Een zenuwtrekje dat ze in de laatste paar dagen ontwikkeld had. “Is het ooit bij je opgekomen, Oedipa, dat iemand je voor de gek houdt? Dat dit allemaal oplichterij is, misschien iets wat Inverarity opgezet heeft voor hij stierf?”

Het was bij haar opgekomen. Maar net als de gedachte dat ze op een dag zou moeten sterven had Oedipa standvastig geweigerd bewust aan die mogelijkheid te denken; enkel in toevallige gedachtenflitsen. “Nee,” zei ze, “dat is belachelijk.”

Fallopian keek haar met niets dan mededogen aan. “Dat zou je wel moeten,” zachtjes, “echt, je zou er eens over na moeten denken. Schrijf op wat je niet kunt ontkennen. Je harde feiten. Maar schrijf dan eens op wat je alleen gespeculeerd hebt, aangenomen hebt. Kijk wat je hebt. Ten minste dat.”

“Ga door,” zei ze, ijzig. “ten minste dat. Wat nog meer, daarna?”

Hij glimlachte, probeerde misschien te redden wat er dan ook geluidloos ging breken. Het net van onzichtbare scheuren verspreidde zich met gemak door de lucht tussen hen in. “Wees alsjeblieft niet boos.”

“Mijn bronnen controleren, neem ik aan,” ging Oedipa aangenaam door. “Toch?”

Hij zei niets meer.

Ze stond op, zich afvragend of haar haar goed zat, of ze afgewezen of hysterisch leek, of ze een scène hadden gemaakt. “Ik wist dat jij anders zou zijn,” zei ze, “Mike, want iedereen om me heen is veranderd. Maar het was nog niet zo ver gegaan dat ze me haatten.”

“Jou haten.” Hij schudde zijn hoofd en lachte.

“Als je nog een mouwband of meer wapens nodig hebt, probeer dan Winthrop Tremaine eens, naast de snelweg. Tremaines Swastika Shoppe. Noem mijn naam.”

“We hebben al contact gehad, dank je.” Ze liet hem achter in zijn geïmproviseerde Cubaanse ensemble, naar de dansvloer kijkend, wachtend tot zijn meiden terug kwamen.

Dus, over haar bronnen. Ze had de vraag ontweken, ja. Op een dag belde Genghis Cohen, opgewonden, en vroeg haar te komen kijken naar iets wat hij net per post had binnen gekregen, de Amerikaanse Post. Het bleek een oude Amerikaanse postzegel te zijn, voorzien

van het wapen van de gedempte posthoorn, op z'n rug liggende das, en het motto: *WE AWAIT SILENT TRISTERO'S EMPIRE*.¹²

“Dus daar staat het voor,” zei Oedipa. “Hoe kom je hieraan?”

“Van een vriend,” zei Cohen, bladerend door een gehavende postzegelcatalogus¹³, “in San Francisco.” Zoals gewoonlijk vroeg ze niet door naar een naam of adres. “Vreemd. Hij zei dat hij de postzegel niet vermeld had zien staan. Maar hier is ‘ie. Een toevoeging, kijk.” In de kaft van het boek was een briefje vastgelijmd. De postzegel, genaamd 16311,1, was gereproduceerd onder de naam “Tristero Snelle Post, San Francisco, Californië,” en zou tussen lokale vermelding 139 (het *Third Avenue* Postkantoor, in New York) en 140 (*Union Post*, ook in New York) moeten staan. Oedipa, in een soort intuïtieve waas, ging meteen naar de achterflap en vond de sticker van Zapfs Tweedehands Boeken.

“Tuurlijk,” protesteerde Cohen. “Ik ben er een keer naartoe gereden om meneer Metzger te zien toen jij in het noorden zat. Dit is de gespecialiseerde catalogus, zie je, voor Amerikaanse postzegels, een catalogus die ik normaal gesproken niet bijhoud. Mijn vakgebied is immers Europees en koloniaal. Maar mijn nieuwsgierigheid was gewekt, dus—”

“Tuurlijk,” zei Oedipa. Iedereen kon een toevoeging inplakken.

Ze reed terug naar San Narciso om nog eens naar de lijst met het vermogen van Inverarity te kijken. En uiteraard, het hele winkelcentrum waarin Zapfs Tweedehands Boeken

¹² The Motto “We Await Silent Tristero’s Empire” could be fairly easily translated to Dutch. Doing this would however change the anagram WASTE, which appears in the section of text I’m translating here a number of times. Changing the motto while making sure the anagram is still comprehensible in Dutch yet also related to the plot would most likely be a tedious if not impossible task. This is why I have decided to leave the anagram, and therefore the motto, in English.

¹³ The ‘Scott catalogue’ is an American stamp catalogue that is not generally known to the intended Dutch audience. Instead of leaving the official name in, I chose to replace it by ‘postzegelcatalogus’, which is far more implicit than the original, but will be clearer to the reader.

en Tremaines legerdump¹⁴ in gevestigd waren was van Pierce geweest. Niet alleen dat, maar het Tank Theater ook.

Oké, zei Oedipa tegen zichzelf, terwijl ze met holle ingewanden door de kamer sloop en wachtte op iets afgrijselijks, oké. Het is dus onvermijdelijk? Elke toegangsweg naar Tristero kon worden teruggeleid naar de nalatenschap van Inverarity. Zelfs Emory Bortz, met zijn exemplaar van Blobbs Zwerftochten (gekocht, zou hij haar ongetwijfeld vertellen als ze het zou vragen, bij Zapf), gaf nu les op de universiteit van San Narciso, grotendeels gesubsidieerd door de dode man.

En dat betekende? Dat Bortz, samen met Metzger, Cohen, Driblette, Koteks, de getatoeëerde matroos in San Francisco, de W.A.S.T.E koeriers die ze had gezien – dat ze allemaal mannen van Pierce Inverarity waren? Ingehuurd? Of loyaal, voor niets, voor de lol, aan één of andere grandioze practical joke die hij bekokstoofd had, allemaal om haar voor gek te zetten, of te terroriseren, of haar moraliteit te verhogen?

Verander je naam in Miles, Dean, Serge en/of Leonard, schat, adviseerde ze haar reflectie in het schemerlicht van de kaspiegel van die middag. Ze zullen het hoe dan ook paranoia noemen. Zij. Of je bent echt, zonder de hulp van LSD of andere indol-alkaloïden, als in een droom op een geheime diepgang en verborgen stompzinnigheid gestuit; op een netwerk waarmee een X aantal Amerikanen echt communiceren terwijl ze hun leugens, declamaties van routine, hun dorre verraad van spirituele armoede verborgen houden voor het officiële overheidspostsysteem; misschien zelfs wel op een echt alternatief voor de uitgangsleloosheid, voor de afwezigheid van verrassingen in het leven, dat in het hoofd van elke Amerikaan die je kent omgaat, dat van jou ook, schat. Of je hallucineert het. Of er is een complot tegen je gesmeed dat zo duur en uitgebreid is, inclusief het vervalsen van postzegels en eeuwenoude

¹⁴ Originally, I was not sure what kind of shop ‘Tremaine’s surplus place’ was supposed to be. Initially, the word ‘surplus’ made me decide on ‘kringloopwinkel’. However, with the references to armbands and weapons, in addition to the ‘Swastika’ that is mentioned, I later opted for ‘legerdump’, as it seemed to fit better with the context.

boeken, constant toezicht op je doen en laten, het plaatsnemen van posthoornplaatjes door heel San Francisco, het omkopen van bibliothecarissen, inhuren van professionele acteurs en Pierce Inverarity mag het weten¹⁵ wat nog meer; allemaal gefinancierd met de nalatenschap op een manier die te geheim of te exclusief is voor jouw niet-juridische brein om er zelfs als co-executeur vanaf te weten; zo doolhofachtig dat het wel een betekenis moet hebben behalve een practical joke. Of je fantaseert zo'n soort plot, en in dat geval ben je een idioot, Oedipa, zo gek als een deur¹⁶.

Dit, nu ze er zo naar keek, zag ze als de alternatieven. Die symmetrische vier. Geen van allen stond haar aan, maar ze hoopte dat ze geestesziek was; dat dat het enige was. Die nacht zat ze urenlang, te verdoofd om zelfs maar te drinken, en leerde zichzelf te ademen in een vacuüm. Want dit, oh God, was de leegte. Er was niemand die haar kon helpen. Niemand op de wereld. Ze waren allemaal onder invloed¹⁷, gestoord, mogelijke vijanden, dood.

¹⁵ The exclamation “Pierce Inverarity only knows what-all besides” seems to be based on the English expression “God only knows”, with God replaced by Pierce Inverarity to show his superior status. Trying to think of a similar expression in Dutch, I came up with “Joost mag het weten”, which fits this particular sentence and its context. Replacing Joost with Pierce Inverarity doesn't have quite the impact that it does in the English variety, but overall it seems a suitable replacement.

¹⁶ The expression ‘out of your skull’ is a slightly more aggressive version of ‘out of your mind’. At first, I intended to translate it with the Dutch expression ‘gek in je hoofd’, to maintain the reference to the head. However, ‘gek in je hoofd’ sounds immature compared with ‘out of your skull’. Therefore I went with the more widely accepted expression ‘gek als een deur’, as it seems a more likely candidate for Oedipa to exclaim.

¹⁷ The term “on something” in the original English sentence “they were all on something” refers to the frequently present drug use in the novel. I wanted to keep the implicit nature of the term, but an equivalent in Dutch doesn't really exist. My first solution was ‘ze hadden allemaal iets geslikt’. ‘Geslikt’ would have worked because the main drug in the novel is LSD, which is delivered orally. However the use of ‘hadden’ would break the flow in the sentence, because the next few words needed the verb ‘waren’. Therefore I settled for ‘ze waren allemaal onder invloed’, which is still reasonably implicit, and goes with the verb ‘waren’.

Appendix B: Source Text

ONE summer afternoon Mrs Oedipa Maas came home from a Tupperware party whose hostess had put perhaps too much kirsch in the fondue to find that she, Oedipa, had been named executor, or she supposed executrix, of the estate of one Pierce Inverarity, a California real estate mogul who had once lost two million dollars in his spare time but still had assets numerous and tangled enough to make the job of sorting it all out more than honorary. Oedipa stood in the living room, stared at by the greenish dead eye of the TV tube, spoke the name of God, tried to feel as drunk as possible. But this did not work. She thought of a hotel room in Mazatlan whose door had just been slammed, it seemed forever, waking up two hundred birds down in the lobby; a sunrise over the library slope at Cornell University that nobody out on it had seen because the slope faces west; a dry, disconsolate tune from the fourth movement of the Bartok Concerto for Orchestra; a whitewashed bust of Jay Gould that Pierce kept over the bed on a shelf so narrow for it she'd always had the hovering fear it would someday topple on them. Was that how he'd died, she wondered, among dreams, crushed by the only icon in the house? That only made her laugh, out loud and helpless: You're so sick, Oedipa, she told herself, or the room, which knew.

The letter was from the law firm of Warpe, Wistfull, Kubitschek and McMingus, of Los Angeles, and signed by somebody named Metzger. It said Pierce had died back in the spring, and they'd only just now found the will. Metzger was to act as co-executor and special counsel in the event of any involved litigation. Oedipa had been named also to execute the will in a codicil dated a year ago. She tried to think back to whether anything unusual had happened around then. Through the rest of the afternoon, through her trip to the market in downtown Kinneret-Among-The-Pines to buy ricotta and listen to the Muzak (today she came through the bead-curtained entrance around bar 4 of the Fort Wayne Settecento Ensemble's

variorum recording of the Vivaldi Kazoo Concerto, Boyd Beaver, soloist); then through the sunned gathering of her marjoram and sweet basil from the herb garden, reading of book reviews in the latest Scientific American, into the layering of a lasagna, garlicking of a bread, tearing up of romaine leaves, eventually, oven on, into the mixing of the twilight's whiskey sours against the arrival of her husband, Wendell ("Mucho") Maas from work, she wondered, 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. It took her till the middle of Huntley and Brinkley to remember that last year at three or so one morning there had come this long-distance call, from where she would never know (unless now he'd left a diary) by a voice beginning in heavy Slavic tones as second secretary at the Transylvanian Consulate, looking for an escaped bat; modulated to comic-Negro, then on into hostile Pachuco dialect, full of chingas and maricones; then a Gestapo officer asking her in shrieks did she have relatives in Germany and finally his Lamont Cranston voice, the one he'd talked in all the way down to Mazatlan. "Pierce, please," she'd managed to get in, "I thought we had--"

"But Margo," earnestly, "I've just come from Commissioner Weston, and that old man in the fun house was murdered by the same blowgun that killed Professor Quackenbush," or something.

"For God's sake," she said. Mucho had rolled over and was looking at her.

"Why don't you hang up on him," Mucho suggested, sensibly.

"I heard that," Pierce said. "I think it's time Wendell Maas had a little visit from The Shadow." Silence, positive and thorough, fell. So it was the last of his voices she ever heard. Lamont Cranston. That phone line could have pointed any direction, been any length. Its quiet ambiguity shifted over, in the months after the call, to what had been revived: memories of his face, body, things he'd given her, things she had now and then pretended not to've heard

him say. It took him over, and to the verge of being forgotten. The shadow waited a year before visiting. But now there was Metzger's letter. Had Pierce called last year then to tell her about this codicil? Or had he decided on it later, somehow because of her annoyance and Mucho's indifference? She felt exposed, finessed, put down. She had never executed a will in her life, didn't know where to begin, didn't know how to tell the law firm in L. A. that she didn't know where to begin.

"Mucho, baby," she cried, in an access of helplessness.

Mucho Maas, home, bounded through the screen door.

"Today was another defeat," he began.

"Let me tell you," she also began. But let Mucho go first.

He was a disk jockey who worked further along the Peninsula and suffered regular crises of conscience out his profession. "I don't believe in any of it, Oed," he could usually get out. "I try, I truly can't," way down there, further down perhaps than she could reach, so that such times often brought her near panic. It might have been the sight of her so about to lose control that seemed to bring him back up.

"You're too sensitive." Yeah, there was so much else she ought to be saying also, but this was what came out. It was true, anyway. For a couple years he'd been a used car salesman and so hyperaware of what that profession had come to mean that working hours were exquisite torture to him. Mucho shaved his upper lip every morning three times with, three times against the grain to remove any remotest breath of a moustache, new blades he drew blood invariably but kept at it; bought all natural-shoulder suits, then went to a tailor to have the lapels made yet more abnormally narrow, on his hair used only water, combing it like Jack Lemmon to throw them further off. The sight of sawdust, even pencil shavings, made him wince, his own kind being known to use it for hushing sick transmissions, and though he dieted he could still not as Oedipa did use honey to sweeten his coffee for like all

things viscous it distressed him, recalling too poignantly what is often mixed with motor oil to ooze dishonest into gaps between piston and cylinder wall. He walked out of a party one night because somebody used the word “creampuff,” it seemed maliciously, in his hearing. The man was a refugee Hungarian pastry cook talking shop, but there was your Mucho: thin-skinned.

Yet at least he had believed in the cars.

And with the end of the Holy Roman Empire, the fountainhead of Thurn and Taxis legitimacy is lost forever among the other splendid delusions. Possibilities for paranoia become abundant. If Tristero has managed to maintain even partial secrecy, if Thurn and Taxis have no clear idea who their adversary is, or how far its influence extends, then many of them must come to believe in something very like the Scurvhamite's blind, automatic anti-God. Whatever it is, it has the power to murder their riders, send landslides thundering across their roads, by extension bring into being new local competition and presently even state postal monopolies; disintegrate their Empire. It is their time's ghost, out to put the Thurn and Taxis ass in a sling.

But over the next century and a half the paranoia recedes, as they come to discover the secular Tristero. Power, omniscience, implacable malice, attributes of what they'd thought to be a historical principle, a *Zeitgeist*, are carried over to the now human enemy. So much that, by 1795, it is even suggested that Tristero has staged the entire French Revolution, just for an excuse to issue the Proclamation of 9th Frimaire, An III, ratifying the end of the Thurn and Taxis postal monopoly in France and the Lowlands.

"Suggested by who, though," said Oedipa. "Did you read that someplace?"

"Wouldn't somebody have brought it up?" Bortz said. "Maybe not."

She didn't press the argument. Having begun to feel reluctant about following up anything. She hadn't asked Genghis Cohen, for example, if his Expert Committee had ever reported back on the stamps he'd sent them. She knew that if she went back to Vesperhaven House to talk again to old Mr Thoth about his grandfather, she would find that he too had died. She knew she ought to write to K. da Chingado, publisher of the unaccountable paperback *Courier's Tragedy*, but she didn't, and never asked Bortz if he had, either. Worst of all, she found herself going often to absurd lengths to avoid talking about Randolph Driblette. Whenever the girl showed up, the one who'd been at the wakes, Oedipa found excuses to

leave the gathering. She felt she was betraying Driblette and herself. But left it alone, anxious that her revelation not expand beyond a certain point. Lest, possibly, it grow larger than she and assume her to itself. When Bortz asked her one evening if he could bring in D'Amico, who was at NYU, Oedipa told him no, too fast, too nervous. He didn't mention it again and neither, of course, did she.

She did go back to The Scope, though, one night, restless, alone, leery of what she might find. She found Mike Fallopian, a couple weeks into raising a beard, wearing button-down olive shirt, creased fatigue pants minus cuffs and belt loops, two-button fatigue jacket, no hat. He was surrounded by broads, drinking champagne cocktails, and bellowing low songs. When he spotted Oedipa he gave her the wide grin and waved her over.

"You look," she said, "wow. Like you're all on the move. Training rebels up in the mountains." Hostile looks from the girls twined around what parts of Fallopian were accessible.

"It's a revolutionary secret," he laughed, throwing up his arms and flinging off a couple of camp-followers. "Go on, now, all of you. I want to talk to this one." When they were out of earshot he swiveled on her a look sympathetic, annoyed, perhaps also a little erotic. "How's your quest?"

She gave him a quick status report. He kept quiet while she talked, his expression slowly changing to something she couldn't recognize. It bothered her. To jog him a little, she said, "I'm surprised you people aren't using the system too."

"Are we an underground?" he came back, mild enough. "Are we rejects?"

"I didn't mean--"

"Maybe we haven't found them yet," said Fallopian. "Or maybe they haven't approached us. Or maybe we are using W.A.S.T.E., only it's a secret." Then, as electronic music began to percolate into the room, "But there's another angle too." She sensed what he

was going to say and began, reflexively, to grind together her back molars. A nervous habit she'd developed in the last few days. "Has it ever occurred to you, Oedipa, that somebody's putting you on? That this is all a hoax, maybe something Inverarity set up before he died?"

It had occurred to her. But like the thought that someday she would have to die, Oedipa had been steadfastly refusing to look at that possibility directly, or in any but the most accidental of lights. "No," she said, "that's ridiculous."

Fallopian watched her, nothing if not compassionate. "You ought," quietly, "really, you ought to think about it. Write down what you can't deny. Your hard intelligence. But then write down what you've only speculated, assumed. See what you've got. At least that."

"Go ahead," she said, cold, "at least that. What else, after that?"

He smiled, perhaps now trying to salvage whatever was going soundlessly smash, its net of invisible cracks propagating leisurely though the air between them. "Please don't be mad."

"Verify my sources, I suppose," Oedipa kept on, pleasantly. "Right?"

He didn't say any more.

She stood up, wondering if her hair was in place, if she looked rejected or hysterical, if they'd been causing a scene. "I knew you'd be different," she said, "Mike, because everybody's been changing on me. But it hadn't gone as far as hating me."

"Hating you." He shook his head and laughed.

"If you need any armbands or more weapons, do try Winthrop Tremaine, over by the freeway. Tremaine's Swastika Shoppe. Mention my name."

"We're already in touch, thanks." She left him, in his modified Cuban ensemble, watching the floor, waiting for his broads to come back.

Well, what about her sources? She was avoiding the question, yes. One day Genghis Cohen called, sounding excited, and asked her to come see something he'd just got in the

mail, the U. S. Mail. It turned out to be an old American stamp, bearing the device of the muted post horn, belly-up badger, and the motto: WE AWAIT SILENT TRISTERO'S EMPIRE.

“So that's what it stands for,” said Oedipa. “Where did you get this?”

“A friend,” Cohen said, leafing through a battered Scott catalogue, “in San Francisco.” As usual she did not go on to ask for any name or address. “Odd. He said he couldn't find the stamp listed. But here it is. An addendum, look.” In the front of the book a slip of paper had been pasted in. The stamp, designated 16311,1, was reproduced, under the title “Tristero Rapid Post, San Francisco, California,” and should have been inserted between Local listings 139 (the Third Avenue Post Office, of New York) and 140 (Union Post, also of New York). Oedipa, off on a kind of intuitive high, went immediately to the end-paper in back and found the sticker of Zapf's Used Books.

“Sure,” Cohen protested. “I drove out there one day to see Mr. Metzger, while you were up north. This is the Scott Specialized, you see, for American stamps, a catalogue I don't generally keep up on. My field being European and colonial. But my curiosity had been aroused, so—”

“Sure,” Oedipa said. Anybody could paste in an addendum. She drove back to San Narciso to have another look at the list of Inverarity's assets. Sure enough, the whole shopping center that housed Zapf's Used Books and Tremaine's surplus place had been owned by Pierce. Not only that, but the Tank Theatre, also.

OK, Oedipa told herself, stalking around the room, her viscera hollow, waiting on something truly terrible, OK. It's unavoidable, isn't it? Every access route to the Tristero could be traced also back to the Inverarity estate. Even Emory Bortz, with his copy of Blobb's Peregrinations (bought, she had no doubt he'd tell her in the event she asked, also at Zapf's), taught now at San Narciso College, heavily endowed by the dead man.

Meaning what? That Bortz, along with Metzger, Cohen, Driblette, Koteks, the tattooed sailor in San Francisco, the W.A.S.T.E. carriers she'd seen that all of them were Pierce Inverarity's men? Bought? Or loyal, for free, for fun, to some grandiose practical joke he'd cooked up, all for her embarrassment, or terrorizing, or moral improvement?

Change your name to Miles, Dean, Serge, and /or Leonard, baby, she advised her reflection in the half-light of that afternoon's vanity mirror. Either way, they'll call it paranoia. They. Either you have stumbled indeed, without the aid of LSD or other insole alkaloids, on to a secret richness and concealed density of dream; on to a network by which X number of Americans are truly communicating whilst reserving their lies, recitations of routine, arid betrayals of spiritual poverty, for the official government delivery system; 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, and you too, sweetie. Or you are hallucinating it. Or a plot has been mounted against you, so expensive and elaborate, involving items like the forging of stamps and ancient books, constant surveillance of your movements, planting of post horn images all over San Francisco, bribing of librarians, hiring of professional actors and Pierce Inverarity only knows what-all besides, all financed out of the estate in a way either too secret or too involved for your non-legal mind to know about even though you are co-executor, so labyrinthine that it must have meaning beyond just a practical joke. Or you are fantasizing some such plot, in which case you are a nut, Oedipa, out of your skull.

Those, now that she was looking at them, she saw to be the alternatives. Those symmetrical four. She didn't like any of them, but hoped she was mentally ill; that that's all it was. That night she sat for hours, too numb even to drink, teaching herself to breathe in a vacuum. For this, oh God, was the void. There was nobody who could help her. Nobody in the world. They were all on something, mad, possible enemies, dead.