



**HELEN VANNI**—The American Mezzo-soprano will sing the role of Rosina in the forthcoming Edmonton Opera Association production of "The Barber of Seville. The opera, sung in English, will be performed on November 22, 24, and 25.

## A subtle weave of humour and pornography: not to mention philately, paleography ---

**THE CRYING OF LOT 49**, by Thomas Pynchon. Bantam, 175 pp., \$.75.

*The Crying of Lot 49* is a very clever and funny book.

The creator of *V.* must have conceived the plot for his latest effort while researching the more obscure details for an English or History thesis. Not that the book is academically inclined in the strictest sense, but the search for clues takes the 'heroine' on a crazy round of obscure manuscripts and even crazier scholars, and to crown it all the mystery is never wholly solved.

The fun begins when hysterical but sexy Oedipa Maas is chosen as one of the executors of the last will and testicle of the late Pierce Inverarity. Her husband, California radio station KCUF D. J., Mucho Maas, refuses to get himself involved in the hare brained business and when her psychiatrist cashes in his marbles, dear Oedipa decides to get it alone.

After a harrowing drive along the freeway Oedipa finds herself in San Narciso, home of the Yoyodyne Corporation and its late owner Inverarity. There she meets young lawyer and rake-about-town, Mike Metzger, who fills her in on some of the details of Inverarity's estate.

The way it turns out, he owned half the U.S.A., people and products. Some of the not-so-scrupulous transactions of the deceased tycoon turn up as the plot thickens.

Mike Metzger accomplishes his immediate goal with Oedipa when the power is suddenly put off in the motel. The "Paranoids" blow a fuse, mainly because they are playing their electronic instruments on the diving board of the motel swimming pool. Something has to give when electric guitars end up on the bottom.

Later, in a night club frequented by heteros, homos, and an ambidextrous lot, mostly employees of the Yoyodyne Corp., Oedipa finds the first evidence of the Tristero system.

Tristero is the name of an old and firmly rooted underground postage system, the symbol of which is a muted post horn. I suppose if there is a binding thread in the novel to keep Pynchon more or less on the straight and narrow, the search for the background of the Tristero provides it, but it really provides a temporary focal point which is woven in and out of the almost psychedelic tapestry upon which the story is told.

Pynchon's wild imagination

takes the reader from the Lago di Pieta in Italy to the late Renaissance in Germany. The Tristero started there, and any philatelist can tell you that Thurn and Taxis, two German provinces, actually did issue stamps long ago and that there were rival companies vying for the mail franchise.

Even though the Tristero system lost out there it tried to compete with the pony express in America according to the novel. It is the remnants of the system which Oedipa discovers and tries to trace.

She finds the post horn and another symbol, W.A.S.T.E., everywhere she goes. She begins to discover forgeries which she has never noticed before, and as she scrutinizes stamps, she finds the inevitable symbol of the post horn or else a dark figure where there shouldn't be one.

At the production of an old play in San Narciso, Oedipa again comes across the word Tristero in a particularly significant scene and away she goes trying to hunt down the original manuscript. That's how she meets some of the crazy scholars and their students.

Pynchon's book is a latter day allegory, filled with the symbols of an age. His characters reflect the society he is satirizing. Mike Fallopian, Manni Di Presso, Oedipa Maas, Pierce Inverarity, The Paranoids—that's the way it goes. Sometimes it seems like the nuts in the underground are the closest creatures to sanity in the whole insane social collage.

*Lot 49* is a masterpiece of inductive which reaches its critical

ultimate when it is discovered that the Yoyodyne Corporation is making the most effective cigarette filters and fertilizers from human bones.

That in itself might not be so bad, particularly if the bones had belonged to some other race, but as it turns out the bones come from the bottom of the Lago di Pieta where an entire company of American soldiers had been wiped out and thrown into the lake. Naturally Inverarity had not been eager to make this public knowledge and he had therefore bought the bones from another illegal power structure which smacks suspiciously of *la cosa nostra*. That's how Manni di Presso gets into the picture.

Lot 49? Well, that happens to be the collection of forged stamps owned by Inverarity. Since they are not mentioned in the will they have to be auctioned off or 'cried'. The last few pages of the book mention a rich bidder who will come to the auction and Oedipa waits in anticipation.

That's where Pynchon says quits and leaves the whole thing open-ended. In this case he probably has little choice other than to go on to an absurd (even more so than the rest of the novel) conclusion.

Pynchon's novel has the flavor of academic and the added special effect of a pornography that is so obscure that it will survive the censors. It also has the extra advantage of remaining a book. There probably is no director with the guts to film this one.

—John Green

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Open readings for casting:  
Saturday, October 14, 1-5 p.m.  
Sunday, October 15, 1-5 p.m.  
Monday, October 16, 7:30-10:30 p.m.

EAST END GYMNASIUM, ST. JOSEPH'S COLLEGE

*This play is under the direction of Gerry Thurston, and is a production of the Newman Center.*

For information, phone 439-0729, evenings

## leftovers

"Where are all the fighters?" asked a former Gateway editor who visited the office the other day. There was a time, it seems, when there were those who cared about what happens to the students on this campus: cared about crummy teachers, crummy administrators, and crummy buildings. There were those who were willing to stand up and say: "This is how it should be done".

We find it hard to believe that this breed has died out completely. Admittedly, nobody squealed when residence rates were raised, or when Students' Union fees were upped a dollar, or when no explanation was made of what happened to the CUS fees we all paid. Perhaps this silence can all be explained away in terms of lack of leadership.

But experience has shown that once some initiative is shown, people will begin to think and begin to talk; and some are eventually going to take action.

Last year Casserole was conceived as a supplement section to the Gateway designed primarily to offer a forum for ideas. It was to offer students a chance to exercise the power of the press.

Somewhere on this campus lurk students who have ideas, complaints, constructive criticism. Somehow, it seems, we never hear from them anymore.

If you're mad about something, or have an idea about what needs to be done to make the University of Alberta an interesting and rewarding place, come up to the Gateway office. We'll be happy to show you to a typewriter.

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Stupid things to do Dept.: A pox upon the gentleman who introduced last Saturday's Edmonton Symphony concert. Not content with letting the audience greet conductor Brian Priestman of its own accord, he asked for a standing ovation. Is there any value, we venture to ask, in an ovation which is not spontaneous?