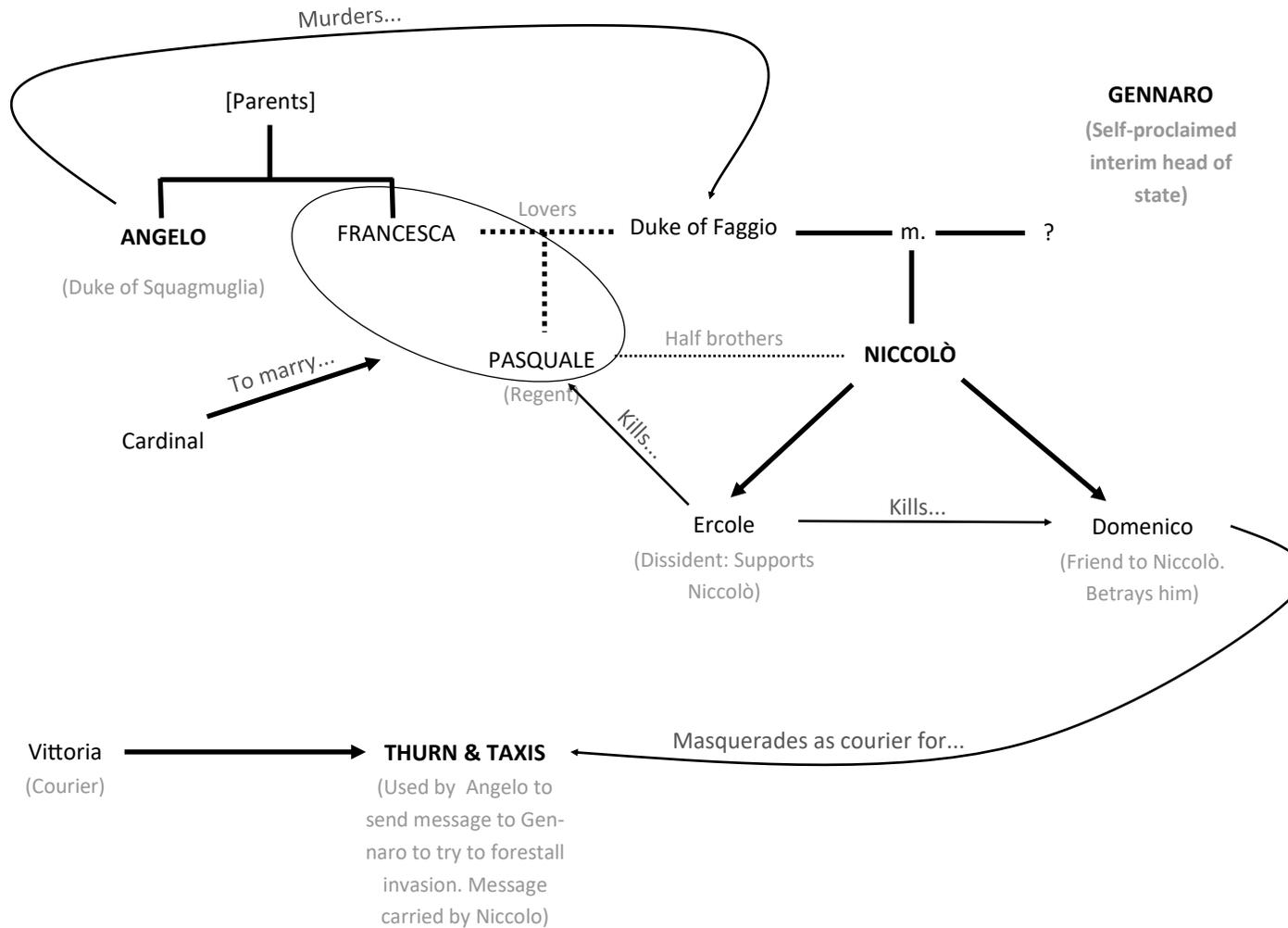


Character Map for *The Courier's Tragedy* by Richard Wharfinger

The Courier's Tragedy is a fictitious play in *The Crying of Lot 49* attended by Oedipa Maas and the lawyer Metzger. It is central to the conspiracy Oedipa comes to believe in, involving the historical mail service conducted by the house of Thurn and Taxis, and their fictitious competition, Tristero (or Trystero). The play is described in detail in Chapter 3.



***The Courier's Tragedy* by Richard Wharfinger - Summary**

Act I

Prior to the play's beginning Angelo, the Duke of Squagmuglia, has killed the Duke of Faggio and helped install his illegitimate son, Pasquale as regent for his younger half-brother, Niccolò. The Duke wants to amalgamate the two duchies by marrying his sister to Pasquale, who happens to also be her illegitimate son. Pasquale attempts to kill Niccolò but he is saved by a dissident, Ercole, who intends Niccolò will one day rule legitimately. Meanwhile, Niccolò is posing as a courier for Thurn and Taxis, a postal service, to undermine the messenger service used exclusively between Angelo and Faggio. Niccolò tells Domenico of his plans.

Domenico plans to betray Niccolò but unfortunately for him he is intercepted by Ercole who tortures, mutilates and then kills him.

Act II

The cardinal engaged to marry Francesca and Pasquale is tortured by Angelo because he refuses to sanction the marriage. Meanwhile, Nicola, speaking to another courier, Vittoria, is told the story of fifty knights who disappeared while on manoeuvres near the frontiers of Squagmuglia, just before the old Duke was murdered. Niccolò expresses a belief that Angelo is behind it all and Vittoria promises to report his treasonable accusation.

Act III

Pasquale is murdered during an orgy by a group of Ercole's dissidents, including a man dressed as an ape.

Gennaro ("a complete nonentity") declares himself interim head of state.

Act IV

Angelo, fearing invasion by Gennaro, finally summons Thurn and Taxis to deliver a message to Gennaro, assuring him of his good intentions, hoping to stop the invasion. Niccolò, disguised as a courier, takes the message.

Vittoria reports Niccolò's treasonous talk and Domenico's body is discovered. In his shoe is a message revealing Niccolò's true identity.

Ercole's role in the death of Domenico is revealed and he is stabbed to death.

Gennaro receives word that Niccolò is approaching his army as a Thurn and Taxis courier, but when he tells his army of this the cheering stops and there is an ominous mood.

Niccolò stops by the shores of the lake where the Faggio knights disappeared and reads Angelo's note to Gennaro, saying that Pasquale is dead. Niccolò realises he is riding towards his own restoration. But he is accosted by a group of men clad in black (clothing associated in the book with Trystero) and is killed. The implication is they are associated with men from Gennaro's army. When Gennaro's force reaches the lake Niccolò's body is discovered. Except the note he now carries is a confession by Angelo to all his crimes, including the killing of the fifty knights, whose bodies were dumped in the lake, their bones later fished out and turned into charcoal and ink. The Trystero force that assailed Niccolò have swapped the two messages.

Act V

Gennaro carries out a vengeful bloodbath on the court of Squagmuglia.

***The Crying of Lot 49* – Characters**

Pierce Inverarity – Doesn't appear in the novel except in flashbacks, since he is dead. He has named Oedipa Maas as the executor of his will. He was very rich, owning a lot of property, including the Yoyodyne Enterprises.

Dr Hilarius – Oedipa's psychiatrist who is running a study on suburban housewives with LSD. He later becomes unhinged and disillusioned with psychiatry. He reveals he worked in the Nazi concentration camps trying to develop a facial expression that could turn Jews mad

Metzger – Lawyer tasked with helping Oedipa execute Pierce Inverarity's will. He claims to have been a former child actor known as Baby Igor. He seduces Oedipa while watching what he claims is one of his films.

Mike Fallopian – At The Scope, a bar where Yoyodyne employees receive their mail. Fallopian is writing a book attempting to link the Civil War with the postal reform movement. 1861, the beginning of the war, is the year the federal government tried to suppress independent mail routes

Manny Di Presso – Former lawyer, turned actor (turned lawyer again). Representing Tony Jaguar who is suing Pierce Inverarity's estate. He retrieved the bones of American soldiers killed in WWII from an Italian lake and sold them for fertilizer. Eventually a company, Beaconsfield buys them. Miles (a minor character connected to a band 'The Paranoids' who accompany Metzger, makes a link between this story and *The Courier's Tragedy*.

Randolph Driblette – Director and actor in *The Courier's Tragedy*. He refuses to believe the play has any significant meaning, but tells Oedipa of bookshop where she can get a copy, Zapf's Used Books.

Stanley Koteks – An engineer at Yoyodyne. He is a believer in the individual genius (Edison/Bell/Morse) and believes Oedipa may have power to restore patent rights to employees working for the company. He tells her of two geniuses, John Nefastis and James Clerk Maxwell, and their machines, which need 'sensitives' to operate. He also confirms W.A.S.T.E. is real by correcting Oedipa.

Mr Thoth – a resident of a senior citizens home established by Pierce Inverarity. His grandfather rode the Pony Express during the gold rush. Describes how his grandfather had to fight off men dressed in black who used bones to darken feathers and look like Indians. He says they had a Spanish name. Mr Thoth has a WASTE symbol on his ring.

Genghis Cohen – an eminent philatelist tasked with evaluating Pierce Inverarity's stamp collection. Identifies several stamps with the WASTE symbol and explains the horn was part of Thurn and Taxis Coat of arms. He reveals that many of Inverarity's stamps are forgeries with a long heritage.

Professor Bortz – Editor of an edition of Jacobean Plays featuring *The Courier's Tragedy*. He refuses to accept that there is a definitive version of the play and respects Driblette's decision to impose his own interpretation. There is no definitive historical version of anything or anyone because all that is left is words. (116) He shows Oedipa a version of the play from the Vatican with pornographic wood cuts. , the Scurvhamite version which changed words to suggest the Other, the world of soulless automatism that derailed the holy from God's path (as Robert Scurvham's group were)

John Nefastis – explains to Oedipa James Clerk Maxwell's Demon: a machine that could be worked by 'sensitives' – people with a kind of psychic ability – to help sort hot and cold molecules, which in turn has potential to be applied to physically move objects, thereby overcoming entropy without physical force. Like her husband, he is also attracted to underage girls. Given that she first learned of Trystero through toilet graffiti advertising for group sex, she speculates that followers of Trystero are of an "unorthodox sexual persuasion"

Unnamed man in Gay Bar – tells Oedipa, despite her theory of unorthodox sexual practises, that Trystero and the mute horn are connected to a group who eschew sex: isolates. He tells the story of a Yoyodyne executive who formed the movement after being cuckolded by his wife