



## Analogizing Jean Baudrillard's America and Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*\*: Entropy Imagery of the Puzzled

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**Abstract:** The Crying's sole protagonist, Oedipa, is loaded by a chaotic information overflow that yields anarchy and uncertainty. She also cannot find convincing answers to the mysterious yet realistic questions; hence, she gets alienated in the hyperreal puzzling world of uncorrelated information. Oedipa becomes mentally disoriented and indifferent as a result of the dominant hyperreality in the postmodern world. To trace this novel's confusing symbols and allusions, which trap Oedipa as the most significant hyperreal source of this paper argument. There is a significant themato- the intertextual analogy between Baudrillard's America, with the notions of sign-based hyperreality and postmodernism and Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*, for the latter portrays a modern society full of codified signs and simulation. This paper aims to explore the suggestive analogies between Pynchon's *The Crying* and Baudrillard America. The researcher only focuses on the kinds of images and allusions of entropy from modern to postmodern times. This study used the qualitative research method to trace and explain the various analogies and commonalities between the two authors and their postmodernist texts. The Cryings Oedipa is trapped by cultural information of puzzling symbols and images. Oedipa strives against the postmodern symbol-filled society to find the truth and satisfy her interpretive information and knowledge needs. In this light, there is a bad need for further papers in the future to shed more light on the various issues mentioned in the current paper in the light of the emergents of multilayered chaos and alienation in the postmodern world.

**Keywords:** *Postmodernism, Thomas Pynchon, The Crying of Lot 49, Jean Baudrillard, America, hyper-reality, paranoia, entropy, imagery*

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### INTRODUCTION

A close reading of Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying* and Baudrillard's postmodern concepts allows us to get the meaning of postmodernism and its manifestations. Bedard (2020) defines postmodernism as "a philosophical movement that impacted the arts and critical thinking throughout the latter half of the 20th century," in which its works have a tendency of rejection or devaluation of modern narratives. Generally, Pynchon employs certain symbol-based aesthetics of postmodern narrative such as introspection, introversion, narcissism, self-consciousness, self-reflexivity, anti-fiction, fabulation, and auto-representation. Significantly, symbols are an aesthetic way to convey and receive information on the American continent in particular and the whole world in general. It appears that *The Cryings* deciphered allusions generate both paranoia and confusion to Oedipa in her path to find out the truth of these elements and significations. The paper adopts the library research tool to explore the themato-technical analogy between the Pynchon's *The Crying* and

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Jean Baudrillard's America based on a multilayered approach of culture, literature, aesthetics, and thematic implications of the images and symbols used. The paper also explores the predominance of the hyperreal in Pynchon's *The Crying* whose dynamic female character, Oedipa, is trapped in striking chaotic confusion. Thus, the paper examines the impact hyperreality and its manifestations on the lives of its major characters in the light of modern to postmodern daily life practices and experiences.

*The Crying of Lot 49* relates the story of a woman named Oedipa who is chosen by her ex-lover Pierce Inverarity to execute his will. Neither her husband Mucho nor her psychiatrist Dr. Hilarius can help her carry out the assignment. Thus she tries to gather information about Pierceness business and possessions by the help of his attorney Metzger. In doing so, she undergoes several adventures, and encounters loads of fragmented information about different postal systems such as Tristero, Turn & Taxis, and WAST. These apparently seem to be related to Pierceness occupation, while finally such a thing is not proved. Oedipa comes across several signs of these systems in different places with various significations that are irrelevant to each other, and thus she reaches to no conclusions either about Pierceness occupation or about those systems. Consequently she gets desperately confused about the borderline between the real and the imaginary, and presumes that all those things might have been a mere hallucination engendered by her perplexed mind. Pynchon's novel ends abruptly by eventually reaching the crying of lot 49 of the title which does not, however, signify anything for Oedipa or the readers of the novel.

### ***Research Objectives***

The objective of this paper is exploring the suggestive analogies between Pynchon's *The Crying* and Baudrillard America. The researcher only focuses on the kinds of images and allusions of entropy from modern to postmodern times.

### ***Research Approach***

For [Abrams \(2017\)](#), literary approaches comprise four types: pragmatic, mimetic, expressive, and objective approach. These approaches are purposefully distinguished and are used for explicating and appreciating literary works, they essentially link the text, to the outer world, to the reader, or to the author, treating the text as a unique entity. The approach that supports the paper's objectives is the pragmatic that better suits its aims and methodology. Pragmatic approach considers the text a product that is constructed to achieve certain thematic and artistic impacts on the public audience. It also judges the value of the text based on its success in achieving that aim ([Abrams, 2017](#)).

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research methods adopted in this paper to analogize Pynchon's *The Crying* and Baudrillard America include data collection and data analysis by the virtue of intertextuality and analogy. The paper uses the qualitative research to present the data in words instead of numeric analysis, a thing that better suits literary criticism and appreciation. [Patton \(2019\)](#) states that qualitative research with sound objectives to find the themato-artistic language used in both texts. The researcher addresses entropy images of the human puzzled according on the supporting theoretical method in form of semantic words.

### ***Data Collection***

In this paper, the researcher collected the data from articles, internet, journals related to the mentioned two texts of Pynchon and Baudrillard and the hyperreality caused by the symbols and allusions of entropy and puzzlement in modern era. The data were collected through three stages: first, reading and perceiving the two texts of Pynchon and Baudrillard, second, understanding each text's intertextual ideas and themes and analogies, third, tracing the common due features of entropy and hyperreality in our modernist age.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

The steps used to analyze data above as follows:

1. Identifying the commonalities and verisimilitudes of hyperreal human life and its symbols and allusions of entropy and puzzlement.
2. Classifying the symbols of entropy and puzzlement mentioned by Pynchon and Baudrillard.

3. Analogically, interpreting the meaning of every symbol and allusion.
4. Drawing conclusions based on the data analysis.

### **Limitations**

- The current paper is limited to two major writers in the postmodern era.
- It is also limited to only two texts.
- It is limited to symbols of entropy and analogies between Pynchon and Baudrillard.
- It is mainly concerned with modern to postmodern era

### **PYNCHON'S HYPERREAL CRYING AND BAUDRILLARD'S HYPERREALITY**

Throughout *The Crying*, Oedipa is trapped by the misleading entropic information she collected through chaotic forms of communication resulting in an inability to find a balance between order and anarchy where truth is lost. Oedipa is also trapped in the multiple interpretations of the puzzling allusions of entropy, based on the context of postmodernism in which her psyche produces pseudo-interpretations. Meanwhile, Baudrillard enters the fiction of America, [and] America as fiction caught in hyperreality (Swindon, 2013). On his part, Pynchon traces America and its cities as crucibles of fiction full of symbols and images of entropy, which puzzle readers and scholars. Here, through immense symbols and signs, Pynchon presents immensely significant forms of symbolism in *The Crying* to show the links between the events of current life and the cosmic external events of human life. It seems that *The Crying* strolls in multiple plots of different times and places, puzzling its readers and characters. Robert E. Kohn argues that *The Crying* is fused with the ethos or guiding beliefs of postmodernism based on visualization and hyperreal symbols and signs. Correspondingly, Baudrillard's postmodernist reality is not authentic and is generated by encoded or hypersymbolic models, acquiring the structure of puzzling symbolism. Thus, various models of a real phenomenon without authenticity or past trap postmodern world; it is then a hyperreal world or a hyper-modernist microcosm. Likewise, hyperreality implies that signs do not refer to real references; they are puzzle-like simulators. In this light, America's hyperreality arises from successive hyperreal codes of American ideology and American myths of freedom, efficiency, and fun (de Menezes Linardi, 2003). Thus, Pynchon transforms reality into hyperreality through his use of the confusing entropic symbols scattered in *The Crying*, not to make fun or amusement for Oedipa but to overwhelm and trap her in the postmodern world of symbol-fused information and knowledge. Oedipa is lost among those who monopoly the crucible of knowledge and information and their authorities and sources. She is physically and intellectually exhausted and puzzled by a web of American puzzling images and codes.

Above all, Pynchon tries to dissociate the nexuses between reality in society and puzzling symbols. For example, Oedipa's reality is constructed to search for definite meanings for symbols, codes, and signs such as the mirrors which stand for identity of self, with which Oedipa has several significant encounters in the novel. For instance, after a fierce dark night, Oedipa wakes up "staring into the mirror at her own exhausted face" (Pynchon, 1991). This event shows the manner she investigates the Tristero that breaks down her view of human self. Moreover, Oedipa encounters the symbolic image of darkness refers to the underground sets, like the Tristero, whose members wear black to symbolize this darkness of secrecy. Also, the symbol of mail may be a mysterious feature of modern human life; it signifies the social bonds that Oedipa is looking for. The complex web of signs that draws Oedipa into the Tristero conspiracy in this novel centers on letters and postal systems. Then, Pynchon's society, depicted in *The Crying*, has inverted meanings of its symbols and signs. Accordingly, both Pynchon and Baudrillard describe America in terms of postmodernized far-fetched symbols and signs of its confusing setting of place that bear hyperreality. In the course of cultural codes the modernist attitudes, produce a web of new thoughts and beliefs that Oedipa in *The Crying* encounters in her search for objective truths and universal values (Nye, 2011). Meanwhile, postmodernism "criticizes long-held beliefs regarding objective reality, value systems, human nature, and social progress" (Bedard, 2020). Moreover, in his book *America*, Baudrillard offers crucial views that renewed deconstructive postmodernism, based on radical thought, arts, and world violence. First, simulation as a self-explosion of signs comes prior. Baudrillard (1999) views simulations as self-regenerating powers that make things and signs emulate and coincide with simulated puzzling models that engulf implicit clues, living in perpetual simulation, in a perpetual present of signs.

Meanwhile, Pynchon's further symbolism in *The Crying* suggests the eradication of original, authentic self in the American society (Nye, 2011). For instance, the muted post horn is referential symbol of a withdrawal from recognized society in America, because a mute prohibits a horn from being heard. This confusing symbol is created by the Tristero

and later adopted by the underground "We Await Silent Trystero Empire" (WASTE) mail delivery system. Oedipa comes across the "hieroglyph" in the bathroom of a bar, the scope, along with a WASTE address, yet, she does not realize what it signifies. The muted post horn is made up of "a loop, triangle and trapezoid" (Pynchon, 1991). She gets haunted by Mr. Thoth's signet ring and catches Stanley Kotecks. At the end her semiotic pursuit, Oedipa is trapped by mysterious clues and indications as to the true existence the symbols of the Trystero, such as the muted post-horn or the WASTE system. Accordingly, Pynchon depicts a world of entropy, in which eccentricities predominate human life in modern America. Therefore, de Menezes Linardi (2003) interprets more symbolic signifiers like the bones, for bones refer to the valuable remains left by past people, their transformation into goods in *The Crying* stands for the way materialism depreciate human experience. More, the Nefastis's machine is viewed as a metaphor that signifies alienation and entrapment that dominate modern American society. Linardi describes these symbols as powers that simulate an autonomous realm in everyday life, a thing that *The Crying* presents through its simulated puzzling symbols and images that confront Oedipa. Seemingly, *The Crying* and America equally imply the central notion of intellectual and cultural exhaustion of symbol-based information and knowledge; the parody of this exhaustion is embodied in both *The Crying* and America. Besides, Pynchon's symbols and signs are viewed as substantial technological symbols and virtual signs of postmodernism to create his hyperreality that causes this sort of parody (Shacher, 2014). Nye supports this view saying that Oedipa's loss of the authentic self is attributed to the electronic transmissions of these entropic confusing symbols. These views prove that modern man is alienated and fragmented and trapped by a web of puzzling codified images and symbols. Mendoza (2020) argues that Pynchon's narrative exposes the "alienation of individuals by placing them in a chaotic modern society."

Besides, Baudrillard (1999) argues that art lost its traditional position as a symbolic demand of the culture, in which it has become a sort of literal truth in hyperreality, which, as it is, displays all the characteristics of fiction. In this sense, Pynchon creates Oedipa to confront with various characters regarding the truth and meanings of different entropic and fragmented signs, symbols, and codes. In the postmodernist world, there is no core worldly structure and there is no truth, in which Oedipa loses control over her quest for both structure and truth (Nye, 2011). For example, Oedipa confronts with Driblette who tells her You can put together clues, develop a thesis, or several, about why characters reacted to the Trystero possibility the way they did.... You could waste your life that way and never touch the truth (Pynchon, 1991). Thus, Oedipa confronts Driblette about the puzzling Trystero but finds no definite answers except his vague words of everybody's discourse. And, Oedipa gets completely puzzled and discovers that she gets hyperreal evidence of her quests.

## INTERPRETING MULTILAYERED PUZZLING SYMBOLS AND IMAGES

As a postmodern text, *The Crying* makes a discrepancy between the good and the evil manifested in the overwhelming symbol of the Trystero that consequently causes a hundred alienations for both Oedipa and readers (Kohn, 2009). It seems that signs bombard Oedipa and symbols originated from the major code of the Trystero. In a world full of signs, codes and symbols, people lost their means of true fruitful communication. Again, Shacher (2014) argues that people in light of the symbolic postmodernism lost the capability to decode meaning and express the authentic truth. This is why Oedipa keeps attempting unraveling the labyrinthine scheme of the Trystero (Ying, 2006). Accordingly, *The Crying* is a rambling narrative that expresses complex issues associated with people's inner world and the outside world, symbolically reflecting a model of the postwar American fiction. Oedipa desperately tries to find out their mysteries as well as their signification in Pierce's life and business, but fails to do so, and hence Pynchon's novel becomes a travesty of detective stories. In this light, Bedard adds that postmodernism alters "the way people perceive themselves and nature, and determines it as an object of consumption" (Bedard, 2020).

Similarly, Baudrillard (1999) postmodern world, manifested in his America, is the world of puzzling and simulated information and signs that dissolve the meaning and the social into a fuzzy state that leads to entropy, in which the subversion of meaning, the destruction of reason and the end of representation prevail. Therefore, chaotic symbols in *The Crying* suggest that the concept of entropy signifies both order and disorder, this is the reason I used the word symbolism of entropy in this paper (Ying, 2006). In this sense, Baudrillard asserts that information destroys meaning and signification or simply neutralizes them. *The Crying* also manifests the death of meaning, for Oedipa, fails to get the full convincing meanings of the puzzling ciphers or codes and acronymic words. Oedipa experiences subversive traps where she cannot find answers or definite solutions to her endless questions. In this case, Pynchon's symbolic language is significant in the Trystero case for it is a human reality as a construction, dependent upon language and

the use of signs and signifiers (Kincade, 2012). Therefore, such language, pregnant with symbols and signs, is what motivates Oedipas cognitive nerves in searching for the truth about the external and internal reality of America. Shacher (2014) also notices that Pynchons language is an intrinsic trope to link human experiences to the entropic signs and symbols of their medium and answer the question of the way word and symbols interpose human actual realities.

In Pynchons novel, since Oedipas efforts to find the truth behind the signs she faces reaches to no conclusions, a nostalgic feeling for the past and returning to it is observed in her near the end of the novel. Thinking about what she has gone through, she wonders if some version of herself hadnt vanished (The Crying of Lot 49 111) in the attempt to decipher the mysteries she has encountered. Thus she knows that something is lost she cannot gain again. Furthermore, with Oedipa's case, Pynchon makes her experience different major objects, concepts, and symbols. They include the Trystero symbol, the horn, WASTE, and the Demon that Mr. Nefastis created. The confusing symbol of Maxwells Demon constitutes a major entropy for Oedipa who cannot precisely differentiate between truth and untruth. Kincade (2012) argues that both symbols of the muted post-horn and the WASTE system are but clues that never get linked to anything tangible and conclusive. Thus, Oedipas quest for the Trystero postal system manifests the entropic process of communication that confuses Oedipa and destroys any chance to find the truth but causes her sense of alienation, diversity, and indeterminacy. For Li-xia (2013), the symbolic image of the Trystero suggests the marginalized social groups that rebel against the authority, suggesting that this image reflects the hyperreal America. Obviously, Oedipa's life transformed into immense chaos and frustration. Consequently, every time she seeks to find definite answers to the puzzling questions, she gets lost in the confusing web of inconsistent information. Suffering from uncertainty and confusion, Oedipa becomes mentally disordered and socially indifferent; this implies one of the main impacts of the hegemonic hyperreality in the modern human societies.

In all cases, Oedipa shows signs of loss of faith in any means of communication. Pynchon dramatizes this loss for Oedipa is tired to cultivate faith in the literal truth of everything (Pynchon, 1991). Oedipa suffers serious isolation that promotes her loss of faith in the deteriorated communicative human or machine-based media. She faces indeterminacy due to the immense entropic symbols and puns that make narrative puzzling symbolism difficult to explore. In a point, The Crying traces Oedipas close investigations that dramatically end in that information that is irrelevant. This failure is a hyperreal basic feature and dilemma in postmodern human discourses and relationships. In this respect, Lento (2011) argues that this hyperreality joint with symbolism-based hyper-ambiguity results in textual violence... a collision between what is real and the distortion of reality. Thus, we get much information but less meaning, as what happens to Oedipa who is trapped in the space of this dilemma in The Crying. As a result, Oedipa gets lost in the proliferation of signs and loss of referentiality that characterize hyperreality and gains nothing to interpret whatever signs, symbols, and acronyms she encounters (Läügt, 2012). Baudrillard introduces a fresh approach to analyze modern societies in America, which offers Baudrillards belief of the unreality of world cultures, exemplified in America. For Baudrillard, America is a continent of wilderness, culturally empty without differentiations between the real and its opposite.

For one thing, Baudrillard views America as empty of real mores and mentalities and as a landscape that is covered with hyperreal simulations due to the entropic overwhelming symbolic allusions and signs that are scattered all over America. These hallucinated symbols and fragmented signs are the metaphorical inevitable result of Americas fractured and exposed identity after wars (Kohn, 2009). Furthermore, Baudrillard criticizes American multicultural spheres as being filled with void signifiers. Like Pynchon, Baudrillard offers an impactful criticism of America and its institutional bodies; both criticize America in terms of hyperreality, legitimacy, and identity, postmodernism. Moreover, Baudrillard, through postmodern concepts and perspectives, seems to anatomize America; its landscape, culture, architecture, sociality, sexuality, and politics. For instance, Oedipa cruises San Narciso searching for meanings and interpretations of the major entropic symbols which culminate in an unvarying gray mass of cultural entropy and that dominate the microcosm of America (Ying, 2006). Baudrillard (1999) depicts America as a crucible full of diverse people, habits, landscapes, cities decorated with puzzling symbols and signs, against a known face, a familiar landscape, or some decipherable message. In this respect, Oedipa falls victim of these hyperrealistic symbols and clues that constitute an impediment to understand postmodern reality and life; she gets immensely exhausted due to a vertiginous labyrinthine structure built around presumed hidden meanings, recurring symbols and dead end leads (Lam, 2006). Thus, modern man suffers a lot of ambiguities, fantasies, fragmentation, and loss.

## ENTROPIC CHAOS OF NARRATIVE CENTERS

In their cultural and postmodernist reflections, both Pynchon's *The Crying* and Baudrillard's *America* anticipate more dilemmas of confusion, chaos, lack of knowledge in the next decades due to more scientific, technological, and cultural puzzling emergents. Whatever images or codes Oedipa encounters manifest the strategy of codified or symbolic self-referentiality. Further, both Baudrillard and Pynchon examine the symbolic system in which symbol-based invisible networks of information surround contemporary America and produce a postmodern breakdown of the barrier between text and world [which] leads to paranoia in which everything seems connected (Lento, 2011). Thus, Pynchon's evocation of paranoia is a common cultural theme, in which postmodernism views such paranoia as a defense mechanism against the meaningless absurd readings of his novel. In *America*, Baudrillard argues that postmodern societies, like America, "everything is simulation, everything is hyperreality" adding that American landscapes is a mere photography... thoughts as writing, and terrorism as fashion. Things seem only to exist by virtue of this strange destiny Baudrillard (1999). In general, Baudrillard's *America* is a product of modern-postmodern history. This point leads us to the realm of Pynchon's novel, *The Crying*, since it ends with a sense that Oedipa is a character of postmodern characteristics in terms of being an object of a subject. Then, the focal center is Oedipa for she enacts all the possible features of postmodernism. In this respect, Li-xia (2013) states that *The Crying* suggests Oedipa's silent weep for her beloved country, her forlorn America. This means that Pynchon paradoxically wishes to save the world in disorder and anarchy by publicizing such entropic symbols that refer to this chaos and confusion or absurdity. In this light, Oedipa, along with the many characters, tries to develop a sense of self through communication and interaction with others depending on symbolic structures and signifiers of the postmodern social world. Accordingly, Oedipa's questing experience of the postmodern life is viewed as a stream of mediated information and endless signifiers and symbols without clear meanings grounded in an authentic reality (Nye, 2011).

By all means, Oedipa is vulnerable to insanity, madness, seduction, rape, and death. Each one of them is manifested in a set of codes, behaviors, and signs that Oedipa cannot decipher or uncover. It seems that the whole dilemma of Oedipa is implied in the miscommunication and the hyperreal. Seemingly, Pynchon's hyperreal world offers authenticity to the symbol-like facts and events of the current world that witnesses supremacy of codes and signs in the realm of hyperreality. Consequently, Oedipa experiences such things without uniqueness in their meanings or interpretations that mislead the truth she seeks. Oedipa's world is full of mysteries and hidden truths. These hard-to-interpret symbols and signs make Oedipa believe that the world is just a visible surface of modern mysterious puzzling reality that she tries to discover. Being trapped by symbols and signs, which throw her in a pool of serious paranoid skepticism, Oedipa cannot find the curative and informative meanings of these symbols and signs. These aspects are the main features of the postmodern techniques employed in *The Crying*. Then, Maxwell's Demon is an entropic personification of Oedipa's confusion in the hyperreal world and Oedipa's dynamic movement in the novel; from place to another and from character to another. Pynchon uses the entropic symbol of Maxwell's Demon, with which Entropy is a figure of speech, then, a metaphor. It connects the world of thermodynamics to the world of information flow. The Demon makes the metaphor not only verbally graceful but also objectively true (Pynchon, 1991). Oedipa keeps chasing puzzling symbols she finds along the way and questioning the authenticity of these symbols and signs. Such a question suggests Oedipa's state of confusion and alienation in an absurd world. Here, Oedipa starts a deeper quest for self-knowledge; the work inspires her to initiate a journey of controlling the magic that has constantly confused her. Meanwhile, the entropic symbol of the WASTE system is another mystery that Oedipa tries to decipher to get its necessary informative meaning.

## REALITY SYMBOLS OF ENTROPY OF INFORMATION

Ostensibly, Pynchon employs the puzzling symbol of WASTE as a secret code to mean "We Await Silent Trystero Empire" (Pynchon, 1991). In this respect, Oedipa aspires to get the meanings of such entropic symbols that puzzle her: the muted horn, the W.A.S.T.E system, and the Trystero as a whole. *The Crying*, Pynchon exposes "the detachment or loss of values and the struggle to find answers to the sociopolitical situation, by creating a secret or underground society called W.A.S.T.E (Mendoza, 2020). Seeking definite meanings for such codes, Oedipa gets different meanings for different frames of such referents leading to more ambiguity, uncertainty, and chaos. As a result, Oedipa's quest for the Trystero is a quest for the real meaning behind the symbolism she is confronted with. Under those circumstances, Ying (2006) argues that Oedipa fails to find curative answers to her questions and inquiries about the Trystero that pushes forward her predicament and reinforces the dilemma of information entropy within a closed system. This mobility manifests Baudrillard's concepts of the implosion of meaning, hyperreality, entropy, and miscommunication.

Baudrillard admits, America is neither dream nor reality. It is a hyperreality. Then, America manifests these concepts in its signs and symbols, and there is no critical discourse that defies hyperreality as a dogma, in which the multiplication of appearances and the profusion of signs that it generates are rife in the postmodern fiction like Pynchon (Lüdt, 2012). Moreover, the Tristero symbol is also viewed as a serious conspiracy and as a figure, which controls Oedipal experiences.

Based on the above, Pynchon engulfs his readers with such information and its anarchy to quest for diverse meanings or interpretative assumptions. The Tristero symbol, manifested in the WASTE, becomes a leading code that hones the criticism of Pynchon's fictional postal system. For Baudrillard, all cognitive concepts and signs become a sort of continuous auto-exit as an alternative in which humorous explanations overlap the effective metaphor inherent in the initial cognitive identity. Baudrillard's America offers a philosophical view that fuses national identity with virtual truth or authenticity, similar to that of Pynchon through Oedipa. Both writers suggest a notion of hyperreality that questions America's authentic identity that has no real sense of truth. As a cognitive rule, Pynchon evokes such symbols of entropy to explore the insistent questions of truth and reality. In this light, de Menezes Linardi (2003) argues that the postmodern world communities suffer from signs not grounded in reality, but signs [that] are manipulated metonymically. One can believe that Pynchon delivers a message that a majority of people in any given society in the world is like Oedipa in having encountered many confusing and entropy allusions that characterize the postmodern man's subjective reality. Thematically, Pynchon's signs are voluble, entropic, and resistant to interpretive communities.

Ultimately, *The Crying* offers a reasonable cause of postmodern mystery about every symbol it contains; its world reminds us of Baudrillard's hyperreality and simulation. Thus, *The Crying* is a reflection of the postmodern literature, in which Pynchon evokes a confusing set of codes, symbols, scientific terms, historical allusions, secret languages, and various metaphors making the text mysterious (Li-xia, 2013). In all cases, *The Crying* is also a mixture of excitement, paranoia, anxiety, and existential quest in an overwhelming way that results in nothingness or absurdity. In a word, Oedipa encounters a world of symbols and signs that draw a sort of true reality of events out of the quasi-reality that eventually results in hyper-ambiguity in hyperreality. In this respect, "the more information she finds about W.A.S.T.E and The Tristero, the more she realizes that there isn't one universal truth" (Mendoza, 2020). Pynchon tries to link several separate events or objects to let them bear new meanings and interpretations. Surprisingly, *The Crying*, like America, tries to contextualize the postmodern process of self-awareness and self-interrogation. Such an arsenal of symbols and codes that overstate unusual events encloses Oedipa; she seems both an insider and an outsider. She also attempts to understand the secrets behind such an arsenal of symbols in the landscape of postmodern America. It is then the semiotics of *The Crying* that plays a major role in confusing Oedipa and readers. Oedipa follows the quest for the truth, words, symbols, and signs, but without definite findings or answers. Again, *The Crying* presents the idea that the social and cultural truth itself suffers fakeness and distortion out of hyperreality that loses the balance of the binaries of order and disorder or chaos and entropy. Hence, readers, like Oedipa, try to create meanings out of chaos and entropy. Furthermore, *The Crying* creates an endless controversy about the postmodern human hyperreality for it presents suggestive symbols and codes not only in America but all over the world as well. All the symbols presented in *The Crying* seem to reveal Pynchon's desire to let Oedipa get the meaning of the meaningless, a technique that is culturally common in the postmodernist literature. In this regard, *The Crying* discusses the matters of authenticity, authority, and intellectuality that arise from using such entropic signs and symbols that deter Oedipa's capacity to interpret them the way that enables her to solve their secrets. Both Pynchon and Baudrillard play with the principles of semiotics focusing on the central metaphor for the entropic closed society.

Again, *The Crying* evokes entropic symbols to refer to the social degradation, people's blind pursuit for power and money, their confusion, depression, and pains. In this sense, such entropic symbols result in less information and communication, human loss, and absurdity. Additionally, putting Oedipa under Baudrillard's microscope, we find her playing two roles in the novel. First, she is Nefastis' sensitive who must receive and feedback information to keep the machine cycling. Second, she is the demon of Inverarity's estate and then of Baudrillard's America. She also receives information greater than the decrease in entropy. Hence, Oedipa tries to maintain order, but in vain since chaos emerges and dominates through such signs and clues. At this point, Baudrillard claims that the distinctions between reality and simulacra dissolve. Shacher (2014) argues that Pynchon struggles to express an authentic reality in place of distortive symbolism. The result is no more value, no longer reality: a hyperreality that overwhelms the modern public. Pynchon tries to say that we are the signs in this world and that understanding our existence is embodied in these signs and their byproducts. Accordingly, Pynchon presents an entropic world of symbols and codes that puzzles not only Oedipa but

also the readers all over the world, who might encounter a similar world of entropic symbols and signs that cause great chaos, confusion, and paranoia. Pynchon involves both Oedipa and readers in the process of a precarious reading of modern hyperreality, using Oedipa as his sole captive character. In this sense, entropy is based on both the ambiguity and obscurity of symbols and clues within which Oedipa fails to locate meaning, for she cannot manipulate both the entropy of the world and the entropy of the information (Kincade, 2012). Hence, entropy characterizes most of the symbols and codes that Pynchon's *The Crying* mentions.

Moreover, Baudrillard's America plays with the linguistic binary oppositions; Pynchon's *The Crying* is a good example of this maneuver. We read order vs. disorder and chaos in Inverarity's case; sanity in Fallopian; truth vs. fiction and thermodynamics vs. information theory in Maxwell's demon. The latter is another source of entropic symbolism that implies the narcissistic enclosure abundant in the capitalist society of Oedipa in America (Ying, 2006). Also, there are laws vs. conspiracy in Trystero's mystery, and meaning vs. unmeaning in both Trystero and Oedipa. Then, this Trystero is the ultimate culmination of hyperreality that becomes an alternative body for modern communication. For Baudrillard, hyperreality is modeled by signs, in which the Trystero symbol is a new version of hyperreality without origin or reality. Yet, for Oedipa, the Trystero represents a symbol with a hidden entity that threatens her with puzzling ambiguity that she must overcome in searching for enough knowledge and meaning of the puzzling symbols she encounters. In addition, *The Crying* is stuffed with the said dubious symbols and signs that codify lots of meanings and hints that puzzle the readers. Here, Oedipa sinks in symbols and signs that bear a lot of ambiguities and symbolic gaps in the quest for truth and authenticity; symbols and signs that are ambiguities with no curative or convincing meanings. As a result, *The Crying's* settings and techniques are complicated and include chaotic evocation of ambiguous symbols and codes that puzzle Oedipa and readers alike and result in their paranoia and a state of exaggerated reality: hyperreality. This hyperreality with these symbols and signs are uniquely mysterious and deface the truth. For example, Oedipa suffers from a lack of knowledge that makes her believe that America possesses outward patterns a hieroglyphic sense of concealed meaning, of intent to communicate (Pynchon, 1991). All of which reminds us of Baudrillard's perspectives of the postmodern semiotic system and communicative mechanisms. In this sense, America transforms into a huge communication system that puzzles Oedipa and defies order with its hyperreal meaning that lies beyond human reach.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Eventually, Oedipa's quest for answers and meanings to the symbols of entropy ends with puzzling possibilities that add more confusion in the path of finding the truth of such overwhelming symbolic codes. As can be seen, symbols and signs may have a variety of meaningful possibilities that in *The Crying* Oedipa tries hard to find such relevant possibilities. In this regard, Kincade (2012) argues that such symbols constitute a differential communication system in which signifiers can be identified, and subsequently linked to signifieds, constituting a sign, based purely on what they are not. Amidst this web of symbols and codes, Oedipa misses the meaning of the muted post horn sign. Oedipa is cognitively and culturally fragmented and puzzled. Pynchon draws a postmodern mural that tells the story of Oedipa trapped by lots of symbols and signs. In *The Crying*, Pynchon traces this plight with these very ambiguous signifiers, constant references to psychoses, and preoccupation with exegesis and hermeneutics (Swindon, 2013).

Furthermore, symbols of entropy in *The Crying* make Oedipa anticipate a big conspiracy, so she starts an endless puzzling search for bases of such dilemma in reality and illusion. O'Donnell (1991) argues that *The Crying* offers us a labyrinthine assemblage of puzzles, plots, and counterplots manifested in the crucible of confusing entropic symbols. Oedipa strives in this labyrinthine world of immense symbols to deconstruct the threads of such conspiracy. Meantime, signs and symbols such as the Trystero are ciphers of a plot through which Oedipa embarks to form her identity as an American citizen who keeps questioning for the full truth about things that puzzle and confuse her. In *The Crying* Oedipa strives to locate her self identity and find certain meanings of life as she "circumnavigates San Narciso, California as the executor of the state of Pierce Inverarity" (Mendoza, 2020). In this sense, *The Crying* world has no definite center or meaning, which constitutes a major feature of the postmodern texts. Pynchon's *The Crying* provides readers with a space to imagine and interpret such entropic symbols, where he uses clear the postmodern narrative devices to keep his public readers with eagerness to find meaning out of the meaningless and to free their repressed personalities as human beings. *The Crying* is confusing and puzzling for it is immersed with misleading symbols, codes, messages, and allusions, which seduce the reader (as they seduce Oedipa) into expecting that the cry of revelation is at hand and that the world is filled with multiple significances (O'Donnell, 1991). Thus, *The Crying* is a postmodernist text not only



about symbolism and meaning but also about confusing the two. The Crying embodies another spirit of postmodernism that exists in the chaos of information and symbols that dominate it and misguide character and readers alike.

Moreover, signs such as the Trystero and the muted horn, among others, constitute a puzzling symbolic representation of the link between order and chaos, between surface rationality and hidden depths of paranoia, in which the symbols become the murder of authentic and real things. The tracks of searching for truth and knowledge are impregnated with various trapping symbols and signs that make such tracks misleading and distracting, manifested in Oedipus quests. In choosing such symbols that bring up other intensifying images and ideas, Pynchon tries to make us, along with Oedipa, believe in these symbols as an authentic web of insight and thematic values. Yet, like Oedipa herself, we get trapped and lost in the ocean of such symbols and signs. Amidst such confusing and entropic symbols and signs, Oedipa is deeply disconnected from the hyperreal society in America with a bewildering curiosity to discover the meaning and information related to such symbols and signs. Significantly, Pynchon plays upon such postmodern themes as conspiracy theories, paranoia, chaos, absurdity, and confusing decay in America. He does so through mixing metaphors, signs, symbols, and postmodern codes such as the muted horn, Tristero, Maxwells Demon, letters, among others. Forced by the confusing symbols and signs, Oedipa weaves her relationships with various characters to help her reveal qualities of her personality and express features of the communicative dysfunction that Pynchon views as characteristics of the culture of America. Pynchon evokes such symbols and signs to communicate the postmodern American cultural anxieties and fragmentations.

Similarly, Baudrillard (1999) argues that readers of such symbols and signs cannot easily realize the nature of the meaning of these symbols, and we go in the extermination of meaning. Therefore, readers should consider how these clues unite as a system of signs, which overwhelm Oedipa and readers alike. Most of the time, The Crying symbolizes culture with certain elements of communication, in which Oedipa is surrounded by puzzling symbols with different aspects of meaning and information. The Cryings Oedipa is trapped by cultural information of puzzling symbols and images. Oedipa strives against the postmodern symbol-filled society to find the truth and to satisfy her needs of interpretive information and knowledge. For Mendoza (2020), Oedipa signifies the dilemma that human societies face in modern era, for she "questions the ability of humans to achieve happiness by exploring ideas of belonging to or being a part of society, being trapped or feeling trapped in the current circumstances."

## CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In conclusion, The Crying can be viewed as a symbolic cultural satire of the postmodern era and its characteristics. Pynchon dramatizes Oedipa whose every quest is pregnant with puzzling symbols, signs, codes, and encoded images that mislead her destination of finding the truth and the curative answers to her questions and intensify her dilemma of a lack of information. Oedipa, symbolically and culturally, represents common people, a majority, in not only America but in the postmodern societies also. In the postmodern symbolic epoch, many cultural shadows that manipulate hyperreality which in turn challenges the function of meaning in a distorted reality to reframe the truth of human existence and functionality.

In the same manner, Baudrillard states in America intertextualizes with what The Crying hyperrealistically fictionalizes in terms of dramatizing the states of confusion, predicaments, and disorientation as witnesses of the current postmodern era. Moreover, His concept of hyperreality is shadowed in The Crying through the proliferation of signs and symbols that result in misleading and confusing communities of interpretations, meanings, and information. In this sense, Baudrillard describes America as an authentic text of postmodernism. Also, like Pynchon, Baudrillard takes us to the cultural centers, based on his understandings of those entropic symbols and signs that dwell in America. Importantly, his vision of simulations is narrated in The Crying through the dramatic character of Oedipa, who, being trapped by symbols and signs, experiences symptoms of chaos, isolation, alienation, and information entropy. In general, Baudrillard views America as a crucible of hyperreality, hyperreality of codes, signs, and symbols, in which the postmodern individual exploits his world with meanings through devising and controlling such signs and symbols, which burn and consume themselves. In this light, there is a bad need for further papers in the future to shed more lights on the various issues mentioned in the current paper in the light of the emergents of multilayered chaos and alienation in the postmodern world.

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