

JEAN BAUDRILLARD'S AMERICA AND THOMAS PYNCHON'S *THE CRYING OF LOT 49*: ENTROPIC SYMBOLISM OF PUZZLING THE PUZZLED

Abdullah H. Kurraz

Al-Azhar University-Gaza, Remal – Gaza. Palestine , abdhk99@yahoo.com

Abstract

In The Crying of Lot 49, Thomas Pynchon presents a postmodern society of a huge replication of puzzling, yet, entropic symbols and ciphers, which result in an immense number of interpretations and meanings. So, the authentic interpretative communities are both indefinite and chaotic. Crying's sole protagonist, Oedipa, is loaded by information overflow, yielding to much anarchy and uncertainty. She also cannot find convincing answers to the mysterious yet realistic questions, hence, she gets hopeless 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 simulations, Oedipa is the significant hyperreal source of this paper discussion and argument. These issues are intertextually examined with Baudrillard's America under the scope of notions of sign-based hyperreality and postmodernism.

Keywords: Postmodernism, Thomas Pynchon, The Crying of Lot 49, Jean Baudrillard, America, Hyperreality, Paranoia, Entropy, Symbolism.

-

A close reading of Thomas Pynchon's *Crying* and Baudrillard's postmodern concepts and visions allows us to grasp the meaning of postmodernism and its manifestations. In fact, *Crying's* allusions and symbols generate both paranoia and confusion to Oedipa in her path to find out the truth of these elements and significations. 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 in the American continent. Throughout *Crying*, Oedipa is tapped 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 hyperreality lost. Being trapped in such "contextual clues," Oedipa is also trapped in the multiple interpretations based on the context of postmodernism in which her psyche produces pseudo-interpretations (Swindon, 2013, p. 30). Meanwhile, Baudrillard (1999) enters "the fiction of America, [and] America as fiction" caught in hyperreality (p. 29). On his part, Pynchon (1999) traces America and its cities as crucibles of fiction full of entropic symbolism and significations, "To run into me by accident, and tell me your story about the post horn" (p. 8). Here, through immense symbols and signs, Pynchon presents "significant patterns" of symbolism in *Crying* to see the links between the events of current life and "the larger, external events of that unfolding story we call history" (O'Donnell, 1991, p. 1).

As a matter of fact, *Crying* strolls in multiple plots of different times and places, puzzling its readers and characters. Robert E. Kohn (2009) argues that *Crying* is fused with "the ethos or guiding beliefs of postmodernism" based on visualization and hyperreal symbols and signs (p. 194). Correspondingly, Baudrillard's postmodernist reality is "without origin or reality," generated by encoded or hypersymbolic models, acquiring "the status of symbolic organization" (1999, p. 54). Thus, postmodern world is trapped by various models of a real phenomenon without authenticity or past; 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 hyperreality arises from successive hyperreal "codes of American ideology" and "American myths of freedom, efficiency and fun" (Linardi, 2003, p. 234). Thus, Pynchon transforms reality into hyperreality through his use of the confusing entropic symbols scattered in *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 symbols. For example, Oedipa's reality is constructed to search for definite meaning for symbols, codes, and signs which are viewed as "copies without true original sources" in Pynchon's society of inverted meaning of its symbols and signs (Abigail, 2014, p.79). Accordingly, Both Pynchon and Baudrillard describe America in terms of postmodernized far-fetched symbols and signs of its "places an exaggeration of the slogans" (Laugt, 2012, p. 351). In the course of "cultural codes . . . the modernist attitudes" produced a web of new thoughts and beliefs that Oedipa in *Crying* encounters in her search for objective truths and universal values (Nye, 2011, p.2).

Moreover, Baudrillard offers crucial views which 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” (p. 77). Meanwhile, Pynchon’s symbolism suggests “the eradication of original, authentic self” in the American society (Nye, 2011, p.12). Therefore, Linardi (2003) interprets these signs and codes as powers that “simulate an autonomous realm in everyday life,” a thing that *Crying* presents through its simulated puzzling symbols and images that confront Oedipa (p.241). Seemingly, *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 *Crying* and *America*. Besides, Pynchon’s symbols and signs are viewed as substantial “technological symbols and virtual signs” of postmodernism to create his own hyperreality that causes this sort of parody (Abigail, 2014, p.81). Nye supports this view saying that Oedipa’s loss of the authentic self is attributed to the “electronic transmissions” of these entropic confusing symbols (2011, p.16).

In addition, 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” (p. 98). in this sense, Pynchon creates his own Oedipa to confront with various characters regarding the truth and meanings of different entropic and fragmented signs, symbols and codes. In 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, p. 3). 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, 1999, p.80). Thus, Oedipa confronts Driblette about the puzzling Trystero but finds no definite answers except his vague words “Why is everybody so interested in texts?” (Pynchon, 1999, p. 61). Here, Oedipa gets completely puzzled and discovers that she gets hyperreal evidence of her quests.

As a postmodern text, *Crying* makes a discrepancy between the good and the evil manifested in the overwhelming symbol of the Trystero that consequently causes “hundred alienations” for both Oedipa and readers (Kohn, 2009, p.205). Clearly, Oedipa is bombarded by signs 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, Abigail (2014) argues that people in light of “the symbolic postmodernism” lost the capability to decode meaning and express the authentic truth (p. 82). This is why Oedipa keeps attempting unraveling “the labyrinthine scheme of the Trystero” (Ying, 2006, p. 67). Accordingly, *Crying* is “a labyrinthine plot” which expresses complex issues associated with people’s inner world and the outside world, symbolically reflecting a model of the postwar American fiction (Li-xia, 2013, p. 412).

Similarly, Baudrillard's postmodern world 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 (1999, p. 100). So, chaotic symbols in *Crying* suggest that the “concept of entropy signifies both order and disorder,” this is why I used the word entropic symbolism in this paper (Ying, 2006, p. 7). In this sense, Baudrillard asserts that information destroys meaning and signification or simply neutralizes them. *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, p. 5).

So, such language, pregnant with symbols and signs, is what motivates Oedipa's cognitive nerves in searching for the truth about external and internal reality of America. Abigail (2014) also notices that Pynchon's 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 (p. 83).

Furthermore, with Oedipa's case, Pynchon makes her experience different major objects, concepts, and symbols. They include Trystero symbol, the horn, WASTE, and the Demon that Mr. Nefastis created. The confusing symbol of Maxwell's 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" (p.18). Obviously, Oedipa's quest for Trystero postal system manifests the entropic process of communication which 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 Trystero suggests "the marginalized social groups which rebel against the authority" suggesting that this image reflects the hyperreal America (p. 413).

In all cases, Oedipa shows signs of loss of faith in any means of communication. Pynchon (1999) dramatizes this loss for Oedipa is tired "to cultivate a faith in the literal truth of everything" (p.109). 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, *Crying* traces Oedipa's close investigations which dramatically end in information that is overwhelmingly 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" (p. 65). Thus, we get much information but less meaning, as what happens to Oedipa who is trapped in the space of this dilemma in *Crying*. As a result, Oedipa gets lost in "the proliferation of signs and loss of referentiality which characterize hyperreality" and gains nothing to interpret whatever signs, symbols and acronyms she encounters (Laugt, 2012, p. 338).

For one thing, Baudrillard (1999) views America as empty of real "mores and mentalities" and as a landscape that is covered with hyperreal simulations due to the entropic overwhelming symbols, images and signs that are scattered all over America (1999, p. 6). These hallucinated symbols and fragmented signs are the "metaphorical" inevitable result of "America's fractured and exposed identity" after wars (Kohn, 2009, p.203). Furthermore, Baudrillard criticizes American multicultural spheres as being filled with void signifiers. Like Pynchon, Baudrillard offers "a punchy critique" of America; both criticize America in terms of hyperreality, legitimacy, identity, postmodernism (Laugt, 2012, p. 339). 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 which dominate the microcosm of America (Ying, 2006, p. 8). 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" (p. 12). 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 and stays "emphatically

out of place,” following “a vertiginous labyrinthine structure built around presumed hidden meanings, recurring symbols and dead end leads” (Lam, 2006, p. 82).

In their cultural and postmodernist reflections, both Pynchon’s *Crying* and Baudrillard’s *America* anticipate more dilemmas of confusion, chaos, lack of information and knowledge in 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 a paranoia in which everything seems connected” (Lento, 2011, p.168). Critics argue that Pynchon’s evocation of paranoia is a common cultural theme, in which postmodernism views paranoia “as a defense against the enforced hierarchies of modernist reading” (Rose, 2005, p. 344).

In general, Baudrillard's America is a product of modern-postmodern history. This point leads us to the realm of Pynchon's novel, *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 *Crying* suggests “Oedipa’s silent weep for her beloved country, her forlorn America” (p. 413). This means that Pynchon paradoxically wishes saving the world in disorder and anarchy by publicizing such entropic symbols that refer to this chaos and confusion or absurdity. In this light, Oedipa, alone with the many characters, tries to develop a sense of self through communication and interaction with others depending on symbolic structures and signifiers of postmodern social world. Accordingly, Oedipa’s questing experience of 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, p.13).

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 which 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 which witnesses a supremacy of codes and signs in the realm of hyperreality. Consequently, Oedipa experiences such things without uniqueness in their meanings or interpretations that misleads 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 “only the visible surface of a hidden reality” that she tries to discover (Lento, 2011, p. 27).

Being trapped by symbols and signs that 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 main features of postmodern techniques employed in *Crying*. Then, Maxwell’s Demon is an entropic personification of Oedipa’s confusion in the hyperreal world and of Oedipa’s dynamic movement in the novel; from place to another and from character to another. Pynchon (1999) uses the entropic symbol of Maxwell’s Demon, with which “Entropy is a figure of speech, then, a metaphor. It connects the world of thermo-dynamics to the world of information flow . . . The Demon makes the metaphor not only verbally graceful, but also objectively true” (p.106). Oedipa keeps chasing puzzling symbols she finds along the way and questioning the authenticity of these symbols and signs; she says to Kotek “Shall I project a world?” (p.64). 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 WASTE system is another mystery that Oedipa tries to decipher to get its necessary informative meaning.

Ostensibly, Pynchon (1999) employs the puzzling symbol of WASTE as a secret code to mean “We Await Silent Trystero Empire” (p.169). In this respect, Oedipa aspires to get the meanings of such entropic symbols that awfully puzzle her: the muted horn, the W.A.S.T.E system, and the Trystero as a whole. 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 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 which “pushes forward her own predicament and reinforces the dilemma of information entropy within a closed system” (p. 65). This mobility manifests Baudrillard’s concepts of the implosion of meaning, hyperreality, entropy, and miscommunication. Baudrillard (1999) admits that “America is neither dream nor reality. It is a hyperreality” (p. 28). 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 postmodern fiction like Pynchon’s (Laugt, 2012, p. 344). Moreover, the Trystero symbol is also viewed as either “an actual conspiracy or just Oedipa’s hallucination” and as a figure that controls Oedipa’s experiences (Lento, 2011, p. 27).

Based on the above, Pynchon engulfs his readers with such information and its anarchy to quest for diverse meanings or interpretative assumptions. The Trystero symbol, manifested in the WASTE, becomes “the starting point for a critique of Pynchon’s fictional postal system (Kincade, 2012, p. 15). 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. Laugt (2012) argues that Baudrillard’s America offers a philosophical view which “links the notion of identity with that of truth or authenticity,” similar to that of Pynchon through Oedipa (p. 342). Both writers suggest a notion of hyperreality which questions America’s authentic identity that has no real sense of truth. As a cognitive rule, Pynchon evokes such entropic symbols and signs to explore the insistent questions of truth and reality. In this light, Linardi (2003) argues that postmodern world communities suffer from signs not grounded in reality, but “signs [that] are manipulated” metonymically (p. 236). 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 a lot of confusing and entropic symbols and signs that characterize postmodern man’s subjective reality. Rose (2005) also notices that Pynchon’s signs are “fluid, entropic, simultaneously demanding and resisting paranoia’s attempts at fixing” (p.357).

Ultimately, *Crying* offers a reasonable cause of postmodern mystery about every symbol it contains; its world reminds us of Baudrillard’s hyperreality and simulation. Thus, *Crying* is a reflection of postmodern literature, in which Pynchon evokes a confusing set of “codes, symbols, scientific terms, historical allusions, secret languages, and various metaphors” making the text “very obscure” (Li-xia, 2013, p. 412). In all cases, *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. Pynchon tries to link several separate events or objects to let them bear new meanings and interpretations. Surprisingly, *Crying*, like *America*, tries to contextualize the postmodern process of self-awareness and self-interrogation.

Oedipa is enclosed by such an arsenal of symbols and codes that overstate unusual events; she seems both an insider and an outsider. She also attempts to understand the secrets behind such arsenal of symbols in the landscape of postmodern America. It's then the semiotics of *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, *Crying* presents the idea that the social and cultural truth itself suffers fakeness and distortion out of hyperreality which 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, *Crying* creates an endless controversy about 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 *Crying* seem to reveal Pynchon's desire to let Oedipa get the meaning of the meaningless, a technique that is culturally common in postmodernist literature. In this regard, O'Donnell (1991) asserts that *Crying* discusses the matters of authenticity, authority and intellectuality which arise from using such entropic signs and symbols which deter Oedipa's capacity to interpret them the way that enables her solve their secrets (p, 15). Both Pynchon and Baudrillard play with the principles of semiotics focusing on the central metaphor for the entropic closed society.

Again, *Crying* evokes entropic symbols to refer to the social degradation, people's blind pursuit for power and money, their confusion, depression, pain, and void" (Li-xia, 2013, p. 414). 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. In this point, Baudrillard claims that the distinctions between reality and simulacra dissolve. Abigail (2014) argues that Pynchon struggles to "express an authentic reality in lieu of distortive symbolism" (p.80). The result is no more value, no longer reality: a hyperreality which overwhelms 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 a totally entropic world of symbols and codes that puzzles not only Oedipa but also the readers all over the world, who might encounter similar world of entropic symbols and signs that cause great chaos, confusion and paranoia. Pynchon involves both Oedipa and readers in the process of "paranoid reading of a constructed world" using Oedipa as his sole captive character (Lam, 2006, p. 68). 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, p. 19). Hence, entropy characterizes most of the symbols and codes that Pynchon's *Crying* mentions.

Moreover, Baudrillard's *America* plays with the linguistic binary oppositions; Pynchon's *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 which implies the "narcissistic enclosure abundant in the capitalist society" of Oedipa in America (Ying, 2006, p. 9). Also, there are laws vs. conspiracy in Trystero's mystery, and meaning vs. unmeaning in both Trystero and Oedipa. For Ying, the Tristero is the ultimate culmination of hyperreality which becomes "the alternative network of

communication and information (2010, p. 20). For Baudrillard, hyperreality is “modeled by signs,” in which the Tristero symbol is a new version of hyperreality “without origin or reality” (1999, p 119). Yet, for Oedipa, the Tristero represents a symbol with 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, *Crying* is stuffed with the said dubious symbols and signs in which “a meaning is an order which suddenly emerges” (Lacan, 2006, p.232). Here, Oedipa sinks in symbols and signs that bear a lot of ambiguities and symbolic gaps in the quest for truth and authenticity; the symbols and signs that are “necessary in order for a signal to be meaningful” and the ambiguities and symbolic gaps that are of no curative or convincing meanings (Lento, 2011, p 175). As a result, *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 in a state of exaggerated reality: hyperreality. This hyperreality with these symbols and signs are “indistinguishable from each other” and deface the truth (Abigail, 2014, p.78). For example, Oedipa suffers from lack of knowledge which makes her believe that America possesses “outward patterns a hieroglyphic sense of concealed meaning, of an intent to communicate” (Pynchon, 1999, p. 14). All of which remind us of Baudrillard’s perspectives of the postmodern semiotic system and communicative mechanisms. In this sense, America transforms into a huge communication system which puzzles Oedipa and defies order with its hyperreal meaning which lies beyond human reach.

Eventually, Oedipa’s quest for answers and meanings to the entropic symbols 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 *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” (p. 6). 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 *Crying*, Pynchon traces this plight with these very “ambiguous signifiers, constant references to psychoses, and preoccupation with exegesis and hermeneutics” (Swindon, 2013, p. 4).

Furthermore, entropic symbols in *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 *Crying* offers us a “labyrinthine assemblage of puzzles, plots, and counterplots” manifested in the crucible of confusing entropic symbols (p.2). Oedipa strives in this labyrinthine world of immense symbols to deconstruct the threads of such conspiracy. Basically, signs and symbols such as the Tristero are ciphers of a plot through which Oedipa embarks to form her own identity as an American citizen who keeps questing for the full truth about things that puzzle and confuse her. In this sense, *Crying* world has no definite center or meaning, which constitutes a major feature of postmodern texts. Pynchon’s *Crying* provides readers with a space to imagine and interpret such entropic symbols, where he uses clear 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. *Crying* is totally 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, p. 13). Thus, *Crying* is a postmodernist text not only about symbolism and meaning but also

about confusing the two. In fact, *Crying* embodies another spirit of postmodernism which exists in the chaos of information and symbols that dominate it and misguide character and readers alike.

Definitely, 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 Oedipa's 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 an 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, Maxwell's 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 own 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 symbol, and "we go in the extermination of meaning" (p. 12). So, readers should consider how these clues unite as a system of signs, which overwhelm Oedipa and readers alike. Most of the time, *Crying* symbolizes culture with certain elements of communication, in which Oedipa is surrounded by puzzling symbols with different aspects of meaning and information. *Crying's* Oedipa is trapped by "the information culture" of chronic symbols and images (Nye, 2011, p.7). Oedipa strives against the postmodern symbol-filled society to find the real truth and to satisfy her needs of interpretive information and knowledge.

In conclusion, *Crying* can be viewed as a symbolic cultural satire of postmodern era and its characteristics. Pynchon dramatizes Oedipa whose confusion, predicaments and disorientation are witnesses of her postmodern age. For her, 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 wonders and intensify her dilemma of lack of information and knowledge. Oedipa, symbolically and culturally, represents common people, a majority, in not only America but in postmodern societies also. In postmodern symbolic epoch, there are a lot of 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 *Crying* hyperrealistically fictionalizes in terms of dramatizing the states of confusion, predicaments and disorientation as witnesses of current postmodern era. Moreover, His concept of hyperreality is shadowed in *Crying* through the proliferation of signs and symbols which result in misleading and confusing communities of interpretations, meanings and information. In this Baudrillard describes America as an authentic text of postmodernism. Also, like Pynchon, Baudrillard takes us to the cultural centers, based on his own understandings of those entropic symbols and signs that dwell in

America. Importantly, his own vision of simulations is narrated in *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 own world with meanings through devising and controlling such signs and symbols, which burn and consume themselves.

References

- Baudrillard, Jean (1999). *America*, trans. by Chris Turner New York: Verso.
- Kincade, Jonathan (2012). "The Tower is Everywhere: Symbolic Exchange and Discovery of Meaning in Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*." M.A. Thesis, Georgia State University. Retrieved from http://scholarworks.gsu.edu/english_hontheses/6
- Kohn, Robert E. (2009). "Pynchon's Transition from Ethos-based Postmodernism to Late-Postmodern Stylistics." *Style*, 43(2), 194-214.
- Lacan, Jacques (2006). *Ecrits*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Lam, Melissa Karmen (2006). "The Pure Products of America Go Crazy' Defamiliarizing American Language and Culture in *Lolita* and *The Crying of Lot 49*." M.A Thesis. University of Canterbury.
- Laugt, Elodie (2012). "America in Time: Aphoristic Writing in Jean Baudrillard's America." *Paragraph*, 35(3), 338-354
- Lento, Stephen C. (2011). "Cyberspatial Paradigms in Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* and Don DeLillo's *White Noise*." Dissertation. Loyola University Maryland. USA.
- Linardi, Silvia Menezes (2003). "All the World is A Screen: The Power of Media Simulacra in the Novels of Don DeLillo." *Belo Horizonte*, 6, 233-243.
- Li-xia, KONG (2013). "Symbolism in *The Crying of Lot 49*." *US-China Foreign Language*. 11(5), 412-416.
- Nye, Bret (2011). "Searching for the Center: Intimations of Identity and the Authentic Self in DeLillo's *White Noise* and Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*." Thesis. Wittenberg University.
- O'Donnell, Patrick Ed. (1991). *New Essays on The Crying of Lot 49*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pynchon, Thomas (1991). *The Crying of Lot 49*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.
- Rose, Aaron S. (2005). "The Scanty Plot: Orwell, Pynchon, and the Poetics of Paranoia." *Twentieth-Century Literature*, 50 (4), 337-367.

Shachar, Abigail (2014). "At Home in Babel: The Language of Hyperreality in the Immigrant Narrative." *Digital Literature Review*, 1, 77-87.

Swindon, Amy Jade (2013). "Schizophrenia and the feminine sublime in Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*," M.A Thesis, The University of Melbourne.

Ying, Huang Ting (2006). "The Poetics of Transgression: Schizophrenia, Paranoia, Narcissism, and Hyperreality in Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*." M.A. Thesis, National Sun Yat-sen University. China-Taiwan. Retrieved from etd.lib.nsysu.edu.tw/ETD-db/ETD.../getfile?URN