4.1.0 The identity of a postmodern figure is actually conditioned and controlled by the media that surrounds and envelops it. The Protean Wo/Man reflects fundamentally the effect of the disintegration caused by the advancement of Science and Technology, particularly, of the Television, the Video and the Computer. The impact of the ‘media’ (in Marshall McLuhan’s sense, it refers to all technologies which serve as ‘extensions of man,’ thus the automobile is as much a medium as television) contracted man’s sense of time and place and made him feel that he is living in a ‘global village.’ Caught in the “technological prison house” (Moore 1987, 13) his ego, individuality and identity were diminished. In the intellectual background of the postmodern culture, we find works that prefigure such perplexities of which the following titles are exemplary: The Demolished Man (Bester 1953); The Technological Man (Ferkiss 1969); One-Dimensional Man (Marcuse 1964); The Organization Man (Whyte 1956); The Lonely Crowd (Riesman 1950); The Broken Image: Man, Science and Society (Matson 1964); The Human Use of Human Beings (Wiener 1954) and The Mechanical Bride (McLuhan 1967). All these writers from different disciplines reveal a shared preoccupation with the problem of discovering or inventing the self and the ways in which identity is created, imposed, abandoned or dissolved. And almost all of them base their findings on Behaviourist
Psychology and/or Cybernetics--the two pre-dominant and most influential subjects of the century. Understanding these terms, Behaviourist Psychology and Cybernetics is significant because they are crucial in their functioning in the works of Barth and Pynchon.

4.1.1.1 Inspired by Evan Pavlov's studies of 'conditioned reflexes,' John B. Watson in his first paper on ‘Behaviourism’ entitled, “Psychology as the Behaviourist views it” (1913), announced that we could now abandon the old vocabulary of ‘conscious’ and write a psychology ‘in terms of stimulus and response, in terms of habit formation, habit integrations and the like.’ In this way, Behaviourist Psychology rejects ‘consciousness’ as a subject of research and reduces ‘psyche’ to various forms of ‘behaviour’ understood as a set of body reactions to environmental ‘stimuli.’ The behaviourist is not only interested in describing man’s doings but also in predicting and controlling his activities. Man’s emotional life is built up by the effect of the environment on him. By manipulating the environment, competent Behaviourists could build into man whatever patterns or emotional responses were considered desirable for the society. In Behaviourist terminology, the individual is composed of certain habit systems which come into operation in response to varying situations: ‘personality is made up of dominant habit systems.’ Behaviour Therapy or Behaviour Modification is a method of psychotherapy designed to form habits that would facilitate conforming human adjustment to reality.

4.1.1.2 Behaviour Modification sometimes called Behaviour Therapy or Applied Behaviour Analysis, is the application of experimental findings from psychological research to the development and use of techniques for changing human behaviour. It has been used to treat phobias, alcoholism and other mental disorders. Behaviour
modification grew out of the work of B. F. Skinner which contributed to its progress in specific behaviour methodologies. Behaviour methodology is generally regarded as encompassing three basic techniques: desensitisation, aversion therapy, and operant conditioning. Behaviourist ideas influenced Linguistics, Anthropology, Sociology and Semiotics and became a source of Cybernetics.

4.1.2.1 The word, 'Cybernetics,' is derived from the Greek kybernetes, meaning 'steersman,' which was also the root for the word 'governor,' or 'controller.' Cybernetics is a term applied to inter-disciplinary study of control and communication in animals, humans, machines and organisations. The general definition of the term stems from Norbert Wiener, who laid the foundations of the subject in his work Cybernetics (1948). Wiener emphasised the concept of control through feedback as a useful relationship between physical and biological sciences. A. N. Kolmogorov asserts that cybernetics is “a science concerned with the study of systems of any nature which are capable of receiving, storing and processing information so as to use it for control” (qtd. Pekelis 1986, 46).

4.1.2.2 Cybernetics is, in some measure, a way of looking at things, rather like scientific method, and it selects aspects of reality (the human brain, business systems, a study of history) that can be treated cybernetically and then carries out a systematic modelling of them. Stafford Beer, a British cybernetician, says that “cybernetics is a science concerned with the systems which have vitality, that is, which behave so as to survive” (qtd. Pekelis 1986, 47). The above definition is noteworthy in its implication that it does not equate 'vitality' with 'the animate' but it suggests that anything that behaves to survive will have vitality. Thus even the machines that simulate animate behaviour can be considered to
have a sense of life. Yet, whether man or machine to retain vitality they need to control their behaviour.

4.1.3 Control of any kind is concerned with organising an object. It is a purposeful activity directed towards transferring an object from a more probable state to a less probable one. The problem of synthesising control and analysing its operation is an information problem and, as such, it constitutes the basis of modern cybernetics as a science. Control is a means of acting upon our surroundings, of subjugating nature to mankind and of rationally altering our world. Every act of control is the result of purposeful behaviour. And cyberneticists, in order to achieve certain purpose, use both the animate and the inanimate tools for behaviour modification. Thus there are the human therapists and the inanimate computer and television to act as cybernetic agents.

4.2.0 Barth and Pynchon show scintillating awareness to the above mentioned works and theories and only their influence on them is too evident. Pynchon even acknowledges his debt to Wiener in his “Introduction” to Slow Learner: Early Stories. In this line, both the writers find it useful to see a civilisation as a system of systems—a knowledge and information system; a power and authority system. Cybernetics provides the connective pattern that holds the systems together, with some cohesion, in a working equilibrium. Control becomes the central issue for Pynchon and Barth. As in Cybernetics, the identities of their individuals are controlled by some external system—both animate and inanimate. Strangely, the animate operators of such control systems happen to be ‘doctors.’

4.2.1 Since ‘identity’ has been conceived as a ‘psychosocial reality,’ the doctors seem to be the appropriate agents for fixing it. An interesting mode of comprehending the
works of Barth and Pynchon is by tracing out the doctors and patients in them and by finding out the invisible umbilical cord of relationship that ties each other. A cursory glance at the following short list of Doctor-Patient/s would indicate the significant place they find in their creator's minds.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of the Doctor</th>
<th>Nature of the Profession</th>
<th>Name of the Patient</th>
<th>Case</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FO</td>
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<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>Captain John Frisbee</td>
<td>Army Doctor</td>
<td>Todd Andrews</td>
<td>Myocardial Infraction</td>
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<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>Marvin Rose</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>Todd Andrews</td>
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<td>ER</td>
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<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>The Doctor (nameless)</td>
<td>A unique Therapist</td>
<td>Jacob Horner</td>
<td>Paralysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>Morton Wellek</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>Rennie Morgan</td>
<td>Abortion</td>
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<td>GGB</td>
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<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>Max Spielman</td>
<td>Psycho-Proctologist</td>
<td>George</td>
<td>Physical deformity</td>
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<td>06</td>
<td>Kennard Sear</td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>George</td>
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<td>07</td>
<td>Eblis Eierkopf</td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>WESCAC (computer)</td>
<td>wants omnipotence</td>
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<td>V</td>
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<tr>
<td>08</td>
<td>Shale Shoenmaker</td>
<td>Plastic Surgeon</td>
<td>Esther Harvitz</td>
<td>Nose surgery</td>
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<tr>
<td>09</td>
<td>Eigenvalue</td>
<td>Orthodontist</td>
<td>Stencil</td>
<td>Quest for V.</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Halidom</td>
<td>Allografist</td>
<td>Evan</td>
<td>Face surgery</td>
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<td>Godolphin</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Hilarius</td>
<td>Psychiatrist</td>
<td>Oedipa Maas</td>
<td>Paranoia</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hilarius</td>
<td>Psychiatrist</td>
<td>Mucho Maas</td>
<td>Psychosis</td>
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<td>GR</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Laszlo Jamf</td>
<td>Behaviourist</td>
<td>Tyrone</td>
<td>Conditioned</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Slothrop</td>
<td>Reflex</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Pointsman</td>
<td>Pavlovian</td>
<td>Slothrop</td>
<td>Precognition</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Porkyevitch</td>
<td>Pavlovian</td>
<td>Slothrop</td>
<td>Psychokinesis</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Rozsavolgyi</td>
<td>Pavlovian</td>
<td>Slothrop</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Paul de la Nint</td>
<td>Pavlovian</td>
<td>Slothrop</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Horsley Grant</td>
<td>Pavlovian</td>
<td>Slothrop</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>Kevin Spectro</td>
<td>Neurologist</td>
<td>Slothrop</td>
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<td>VL</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>Dennis Deeply</td>
<td>Tubal disorder</td>
<td>Hector</td>
<td>TV-addiction</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Larry Elasmo</td>
<td>Dentist</td>
<td>Weed Atman</td>
<td>Psychodontia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Hugo Splanchnick</td>
<td>Nose Specialist</td>
<td>Mucho Maas</td>
<td>Drug addiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>A panel of Psychiatrists</td>
<td>Psychiatry</td>
<td>Zoyd Wheeler</td>
<td>Transfenestration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2.2 That Barth originally considered the title of his second novel, *The End of the Road*, to be *What to do Until the Doctor Comes* (Morrell 1976, 15) throws light on the fact that the doctor-patient-pattern was the main focus in his predesign. Nevertheless, the novel as it is, offers a good paradigm for a close study of the said pattern. The novel begins with Jacob Horner waiting for the Doctor in ‘The Progress and Advice Room.’ It was on the advice of the Doctor that Horner entered the teaching profession. The Doctor had brought him to a certain point in his original schedule of therapies once during Horner’s quarterly check-up for cosmopsis and told him not to sit idle any longer. The novel ends when Horner makes up his mind to go and serve in the Doctor’s Remobilisation Farm conclusively. Doctors feature in the beginning and end of Pynchon’s novels too. At the beginning of *The Crying of Lot 49* Oedipa is disturbed by a late night call from her psychiatrist, Dr. Hilarius, who wants her to take part in an experiment with various kinds of drugs which affects the mind. Though Oedipa refuses to co-operate, she does meet and consult the doctor like Horner. But in the course of the novel, she gets entangled in the web of mysterious events which force her doubt her own sanity. Towards the end she decides to consult the doctor to vouchsafe her sanity. Similarly, for George, “the Giles goat boy,” Max Spielman, “the great Mathematical Psycho-Proctologist” (*GGB* 5) plays the role of his keeper and mentor from the beginning. Dr. Kennard Sear, apart from Spielman, guides him towards the path of the Grand Tutor. Both Barth and Pynchon want to suggest how their protagonists depend upon doctors for their identities and how indispensable the doctors are in this regard.
One of the reasons for the doctors’ indispensability is that they are specialists in their chosen profession. And only they know the cause for their patients’ peculiar maladies and can prescribe suitable remedies for them. The speciality of Horner’s Doctor is various sorts of physical immobility. By chance he finds Horner when he sits paralysed all night in the Baltimore Railway Station. Horner goes with the Doctor to his Remobilisation Farm and learns about the various therapies people undergo to overcome paralysis. He enumerates his experience in the following words:

I learned of Nutritional Therapy, Medicinal Therapy, Surgical Therapy, Dynamic Therapy, Informational Therapy, Conversational Therapy, Sexual Therapy, Devotional Therapy, Occupational and Preoccupational Therapy, Virtue and Vice Therapy, Theotherapy and Atheotherapy—and, later, Mythotherapy, Philosophical Therapy, Scriptotherapy, and many, many other therapies practiced in various combinations and sequences by the patients (ER 83).

For Horner’s paralysis, the Doctor finds “Mythotherapy” as the most appropriate therapy.

Mythotherapy assumes that we are all casting directors for most of the times. He is wise who realises that his role-assigning is at best an arbitrary distortion of the actors’ personalities; but he is even wiser who sees in addition that his arbitrariness if probably inevitable, and at any rate is apparently necessary if one would reach the ends he desires. Mythotherapy, the Doctor says, “is based on two assumptions: that human existence precedes human essence, if either of the two terms really signifies anything: and that a man is free not only to choose his own essence, but to change it at will” (ER 86).
The aim of the therapy is to give Homer a sense of drama, in which the individual is like the dramatist, assigning roles or myths to himself and others. Play roles, assume masks, insists the doctor. The Ego, he points out, is a mask, nothing more: “Don’t think there’s anything behind them: there isn’t. Ego means I, and I means ego, and the ego by definition is a mask (ER 89). Integrity is a matter of man’s “being faithful to the script he’s written for himself” (ER 88). Play the role whole heartedly, he advises, but above all, be aware of what you are about. Do not confuse the mask with something called reality. The Ego is all the reality there is. And to be an effective Ego, it must be self-made.

4.3.1 Unlike Mythotherapeutic control, the kind that Pynchon’s Dr. Larry Elasmo practises is used for sinister purposes. Dr. Elasmo appears in Vineland. He holds a hypnotic control over his patients, and especially, Weed Atman. Ever since Atman watched the Doctor’s commercials on the television, his ‘video image’ starts haunting him. And in reality, Elasmo gives him haunting look on the freeway, stares at him silently in hotels. Somehow he Doctor had been authorised to send people, weed included, a form that required them to come to his offices at a certain time. No-show penalties were never exactly spelled out, only hinted at. Haunted by the Doctor’s image, Atman shows up on time. But he is made to wait all day in the bullpen just off the lobby with nothing to read. Atman gets afraid even to go out and look for lunch. But this happens again and again. Dr. Elasmo always comes late, sometimes days late, but each time he insists Weed fills out a postponement form, including “reason” to be explained fully, as if it is Weed’s fault. Atman feels more and more guilty and everytime he visits the Doctor his pain continues to increase: “It was some long, ongoing transaction, carried on, like dentistry, in a currency
of pain inflicted, pain withheld, pain drugged away, pain become amnesia, how much and
how often . . . (VL 228). But Dr. Elasmo is only preconditioning Atman, under the
instruction from Brock Vond who has planned Atman's categorical execution; to
deteriorate and die of guilt and discomfort.

4.3.2.1 Another conditioned figure who is fated to disintegrate because of the
malevolent effects of his controllers /doctors is Tyrone Slothrop in Gravity's Rainbow.
Dr. Laszlo Zamf, the scientist who never appears, although his influence, especially,
through his conditioning of Slothrop is everywhere felt. Slothrop's love-hate affair with
the German V-2 rocket is the paradigm of his conditioning. He is in an obsessive search
for the rocket with his name on it. The rocket outstrips sound: the noise of its coming
rises only after it has already exploded. Before one knows what has hit him, he is dead.
Yet Slothrop has a magical awareness of these rockets. His erections correspond exactly
and premonitorily to the sites of V-2 explosions. The places where he has gone to bed
with his pickups are exactly the spots where the V-2 rockets fall. This mystery is
explained, at least partly, in Slothrop's biography. In return for the money to send
Slothrop through college, his father gave the infant Slothrop to Dr. Laszlo Zamf, a
Pavlovian stimulus-response experimenter, who measured his reactions by the swiftness of
his infant erections.

4.3.2.2 PISCES, acronym for a psychological warfare unit, Psychological Intelligence
Schemes for Expediting Surrender, knows Slothrop's 'gift' since he is a member of it and
keeps a map of London which has silver stars labeled with girls' names indicating rocket
drops. That map is photographed by Teddy Bloat, his room partner, transferred to Pirate
Prentice and delivered to Roger Mexico, the Mathematician and Statistician, who charts the bomb sites. His map and Slothrop’s are identical. He is puzzled by this fact because he does not really know whether it is bomb that excites Slothrop or sex that draws destructiveness on the girls.

4.3.2.3 Pointsman, a Pavlovian Psychologist, believes there is a point, a particular switch in the brain, that turns on sex or death. Mexico thinks Pointsman is wrong and tells him there is no explanation for the identical graphs for Slothrop’s pickups and the bomb sites. “Bombs are not dogs: No link. No memory. No conditioning” (GR 56). Dr. Rollo Groast thinks it is precognition. He says that Slothrop is able to predict when a rocket will fall at a particular place. And his survival till the time under discussion is evidence that he has acted on advance information and avoided the area at the time the rocket was supposed to fall. But he is not sure how, or even if, sex comes into it. Nevertheless sex prefigures in Dr. Edwin Treacles’s psychiatric understanding of the case. He thinks Slothrop’s gift is psychokinesis. Slothrop is, with the force of his mind, causing the rockets to drop where they do. Treacle explains: “He subconsciously needs to abolish all trace of the sexual other, whom he symbolises on his map, most significantly, as a star, that anal-sadistic emblem of classroom success which so permeates elementary education in America . . . (GR 85). The point about Slothrop is that he may have achieved a reversal of cause and effect, that is, he may be a perfect case of Pavlovian psychology, but in reverse.
4.3.2.4 But whatever the cause may be, the plans go awry in the end and Slothrop falls virtually into disintegration. As in the case of Atman the disintegration happens in a systematic way. First they remove Slothrop from any ties but still keep their cool care:

They have cut Slothrop loose again, he is back on the street, why don't they keep him on at that nut ward for as long as they said they would--wasn't it supposed to be a few weeks? But something's different . . . something's . . . been changed . . . well for instance he could almost swear he's being followed, or watched anyway (GR 114).

Then Slothrop is made to swift from paranoia to anti-paranoia stages. Pynchon says:

If there is anything comforting--religious, if you want--about paranoia, there is still also antiparanoia, where nothing is connected to anything, a condition not many of us can bear for long. Well right now Slothrop feels himself sliding into antiparanoid part of his cycle, feels the whole city around him going back roofless, vulnerable, uncentered as he is . . . (GR 434).

"He is being broken down instead, and scattered" (GR 738). He literally falls apart and diffuses.

4.4.0 There are also other cybernetic personalities who take up the roles of doctors in order to establish the identity of their dependents. Horner points out there may be practitioners of Mythotherapy without being aware of it. He says Rennie is one such practitioner. As Horner who existed in a vacuum, till his confrontation with the Doctor, Rennie claims that she lived in 'a complete fog' from the day she was born until after she met Joe.
4.4.1 Once Joe entered Rennie's life he takes up the role of a therapist for her. She completely changed her mind not only about her parents, but about her whole childhood. She changed all her opinions and completely erases herself. Joe tells her everything that she should do and conditioned her movements and behaviour with specific rules to the extent that Horner feels Rennie will become the old blob without them. He remarks:

But she could not handle her body in situations where there were no rules.

When she walked she was continually lurching ahead. Standing still, she never knew what to do with her arms, and she was likely to lean all her weight on the leg and thrust other awkwardly out at the side (ER 54).

Rennie's subjugation to Joe's control is volitional in her opinion. She tells Horner that she only chose to do this and could walk out any time. But Horner is of a different opinion, he feels that she chose it as he chose his position in the Progress and Advice Room (ER 66).

4.4.2 Barth's George too is an amateur Mythotherapist in his own way when he thinks life in terms of theatrical metaphors. He says:

I had lived in goatdom as Billy Bocksfuss the Kid, now I meant to live in studentdom as George the undergraduate: surely there would be other roles in other realms, an endless succession of names and nature. Little wonder I looked my life and the lives of others as a kind of theatrical impromptu, self-knowledge as a matter of improvisation, and moral injunctions, such as those of the Fables, whether high minded or wicked, as so many stage-directions (emphases added) (GGB 81).
Similarly, Pynchon’s V., being a self-made construct, is fond of playing roles (vide 2.8.3.1, 2.8.3.2). And, V., in its ultimate suggestion of ‘we’--the reader, embodies not only the cybernetic hold it has on its characters but also on its readers.

4.5.0. However, at one point or the other, the patients have a longing to sever all the control cables that connect them to their doctors when it gives them discomfort and paranoia. Some try to bear with them but others try to avoid them totally. In spite of Jane Harrison’s advice, Todd Andrews avoids having a complete medical check-up with Dr. Marvin Rose although the doctor happens to be his golfing friend. “Todd refuses a blood test, a needle biopsy, and an X ray. These three procedures, especially the blood test, are the only effective way of diagnosing the cause of Todd’s troubles, because the source of the infection might lie in several places” (Martin 1977, 25).

4.5.1 And for years Todd Andrews does not care to consult doctors for his cardiac ailments. Initially too, Andrews did not want the doctor to discover his disease. He says: “I intended to refuse, but it seems I fainted; when I was conscious again I was hospitalized, and within a few hours, upon my being examined--painfully!--the infection was discovered” (FO 126). Thus Andrews is forced to become a reluctant Myotherapist:

Let me tell you: my whole life, at least a great part of it, has been directed toward the solution of a problem, or mastery of a fact. It is a matter of attitudes, of stances--of masks. . . . During my life I have assumed four or five such stances, . . . . Each stance, it seemed to me at the time, represented the answer to my dilemma, the mastery of my fact; but always something would
happen to demonstrate its inadequacy, ... and then I had the job to face again of changing masks: a slow and, for me, painful process, if often an involuntary one (FO 16).

4.5.2 Pynchon's Esther Harvitz is another bitter patient. Initially she undergoes her nose surgery to please her plastic surgeon cum lover, Shale Shoenmaker. But as Shoenmaker considers only as an object of experiment and goes on with one surgery or the other, Esther realises she is only a helpless victim in the hands of her controller. She gives out a desperate cry: "What would it be next?" She said a few minutes later. "Larger breasts, you would want. Then my ears might be a shade too big for you: Shale, why can't it be just me?" (V. 294).

4.5.3 Even Barth's Horner is not at ease whenever he sits in the Doctor's Progress and Advice Room. In his opinion: "It is not fit that you should be at your ease in the Progress and Advice Room, for after all it is not for relaxation that you come there, but for advice" (ER 6). To be at his ease would only be inclined to consider the Doctor's words in a leisurely manner. And since the patient himself seeks the advice voluntarily, his wishes are subservient to the Doctor's and his advice is not to be examined or questioned but only to be followed. Horner wishes that he takes such a stance whole-heartedly however he cannot but help doubting the authenticity of the Doctor. It seems fairly clear for him that,

The Doctor was operating either outside the law or on its very fringes. Sexual therapy, to name only one thing, could scarcely be sanctioned by the American Medical Association. This doubtless was the reason for the farm's frequent
relocation. It was also apparent that he was a crank . . . and one wondered whether he had any sort of license to practice medicine at all. . . . perhaps he was a frustrated psychoanalyst. At worst he was some combination of quack and prophet . . . running a semi-legitimate rest home for senile eccentrics (ER 84).

4.5.4 Horner, however, tries to follow the advice of the Doctor and does not wish to contradict him. Yet there are other patients who avoid or even afraid of meeting doctors. Once when George, the goat-boy, gets himself bruised along his thighs in a fight, he declares with some impatience that he has no need of Dr. Mankiewicz, who regularly ministers to the herd. He dismisses the doctor by saying that it is his conscience that is the real source of his suffering and the doctor cannot be of any help. Oedipa too shares a similar conflict in her mind. She suffers from headaches, nightmares and menstrual pains. One day she drives into L. A., picks a doctor at random from the phone book, goes to her, tells her she thinks she is pregnant. They arrange for tests. Oedipa gives her name as Grace Bortz and does not show up for her next appointment (CL 171). Oedipa's agony too lies in her conscience as the narrator wryly remarks: "Your gynecologist has no test for what she was pregnant with" (CL 175).

4.5.5 Aware of such scepticism and dissent in their patients the doctors try to maintain their secrecy as far as possible. Even their assistants appear to be clouded in mystery. The Doctor's receptionist in The End of the Road, Mrs. Dockey, "was the most uncommunicable woman" (ER 71). And one of the strategies the doctors use to remain under mysterious situations is to choose a remote location and to change it on and off.
Horner's Doctor changes location of the Farm for one reason or another. He tells Horner that once it was outside of Troy, New York; another time near Fond du lac, Wisconsin; another time near Biloxi, Mississippi. At the time of Horner's meeting with the Doctor the Farm is located about three miles south to Wicomico in the little settlement of Vineland. Exactly, the same location Sister Rochelle in Pynchon's Vineland has chosen for her retreat that in many ways bears semblance to the Doctor's Rehabilitation Farm.

4.5.6 Both the Doctor and Sister Rochelle force their patients finally to be under their observance for ever. While Horner is compelled to surrender himself to the Doctor, Sister Rochelle gives therapy for Darryl Louise Chastain(DL) and Takeshi Fumimota only on the agreement that they should serve throughout in her retreat for the mistakes they committed. By training her body and senses according to Ninja precepts, DL achieves the kind of individual control that can counter the state control of minds appropriate to a state in the year 1984. Forced to try to assassinate Brock Vond by the Mafia, whose only virtue is its sense of rivalry with other arms of the Establishment, DL misuses her power in the episode of Vibrating Palm. By mistake she uses it on Takeshi. The Vibrating Palm is an assassination technique—with a built-in time delay! Invented centuries ago by the Malayan Chinese, adapted by the American Ninja and Yakuza, at present a number of systems are taught—to the same effect: the lighter the touch, the longer one has got to live. Even the conventional doctors cannot be of any help in this regard. Dr. Oluni could only detect the cause. He says: "There's no cancer, no cystitis, no stones. Proteins, Ketones, all that--it's normal! But something very weird is happening to your bladder! It's like trauma, only--much slower!" (VL 157). But it is only Sister Rochelle who can give
therapy and rejuvenate a victim even under the Death Touch of a Ninja warrior. Nevertheless, there is no assurance that whether the therapies the patients undertake will cure them fully or not. It fails in the case of Horner.

4.5.7 The Doctor has advised Horner only to play the role of a grammar teacher, not to get married or involved in affairs. Horner will be alright as long as he avoids problems, decision making, close relations. But he breaks this by committing adultery with Rennie; the act compels him to bear responsibility for arranging an illegal abortion. Eventually, the situation gets complicated leading to the death of Rennie and Horner's collapse. He painfully admits why Mythotherapy fails,

that the more one learns about a given person, the more difficult it becomes to assign a character to him that will allow one to deal with him effectively in an emotional situation. Mythotherapy, in short, becomes increasingly harder to apply, because one is compelled to recognise the inadequacy of any role one assigns. Existence not only precedes essence: in the case of human beings it rather defies essence (ER 125).

4.5.8 Andrews's short course in Mythotherapy leads to fruitless end. He says: "My masks were each first assumed, then justified . . . but it was to hide my enigmatic heart that I became a rake, a saint, and then a cynic" (FO 223). He further explains:

...that all my masks were half-conscious attempts to master the fact with which I had to live; that none had made me master of that fact; that where cynicism had failed, no future mask could succeed; that, in short, my heart was the master of all the rest of me, even my will. It was my heart that had made my
masks, not my will. The conclusion that swallowed me was this: There is no way to master the fact with which I live. Futility gripped me by the throat; my head was tight (FO 226).

4.5.9 The failure of a therapy connotes the failure of the personality that has imposed it. The doctors cannot help the patients retain a stable identity because they themselves are victims of a fluid personality. Horner’s Doctor has no name--only “Doctor.” Nothing is known about his parentage or family. Pynchon, of course, names his doctors but not without a funny connotation that would signify the inner self. Shale Shoenmaker denotes the occupation he does: ‘Shale’ in English means ugly and ‘Schoen’ in German means beauty which imply that he is a plastic surgeon who can make one beautiful, perhaps, in the ugliest manner possible! The name Hilarius and his programme of drug experiments immediately suggest that there is something funny about him. When he finally goes insane, he reveals the guilt of his war time work in the prison camps of Nazi German.

4.5.10 Not only the therapies of the doctors prove ineffectual but also they are not sure when it ought to be completed. Oedipa doubts the same and hence refuses to participate in Hilarius’ experiment on the effects of LSD-25. She claims, “Who would know the day she was cured? Not him, he had admitted that himself” (CL 18). Hilarius himself becomes a happy victim of his experiment and suffers from schizophrenia and persecution mania in the end. He locks himself and fires a gun as he thinks that the police may be among the secret agents from Israel who are pursuing him because of the experiments in artificial madness, which he carried out on Jews in a German Concentration camp during the Second World War. An amusing role reversal happens when Oedipa confidently tells
his assistant that may be she can find out what it is and she may be a less threat for him. And she then advises the doctor to face up to his social responsibilities and; “Accept the reality principle” (CL 133). But as for Pynchon and Barth the failure of a therapy is not simply of the failure of the doctor’s personality. They have a different point to make. They are after all human beings who, in a technological world, are inadequate operators of control unless they seek the help of machines. Hence Pynchon resorts to the technical application of “Maxwell’s Demon” in *The Crying of Lot 49*.

4.6.0 The problem of raising the degree of order of a system through mechanical control was first taken up by James Clerk Maxwell in 1871. Maxwell hypothetically worked it out in a closed system, that is, a box containing gas at a uniform temperature having maximum entropy. The box is divided into two parts by a central partition which contains a very small hole. The shutter is under the control of a hypothetical demon which opens it to allow only fast molecules to pass in one direction from one compartment to the other, and only slow molecules in the opposite direction. At the end, one compartment will contain a higher proportion of fast molecules, the other a higher proportion of slow molecules. The temperature of the gas in the first compartment will be correspondingly higher, and in the second it will be lower. The entropy of the system will now be lower than it was initially, because it contains a temperature difference. Paradoxically, the closed system is able to increase its degree of order, apparently in defiance of the second law of thermodynamics. Further, the point is that when the demon manipulates the shutter he feeds information into the system, and this information serves as a feedback to organise
the system. By sorting and classifying the molecules he makes the system more organised: he \textit{controls} the system, that is, he acts upon it in such a way that it becomes more orderly.

4.6.1 In \textit{The Crying of Lot 49}, Oedipa is in some ways like Maxwell's Demon, trying to change the disorder and uncertainty of the world she discovers around her into useful information and meaning. The frequent allusions to Oedipa's sorting of mass of information evoke the idea of Maxwell's sorting Demon. As the novel opens, Inverarity's estate presents Oedipa with "the job of sorting it all out." She begins by "shuffling back through a fat deckful of days" trying to isolate the one in which Inverarity had last phoned her. The sorting/shuffling which is mentioned at the start of the novel is just one indication of the separating Oedipa will have to do to create order out of the mass of the clues, symbols, and signs which descend upon her.

4.6.2 While investigating Inverarity's assets, Oedipa wanders into "Yoyodyne," where she meets Stanley Koteks, who introduces her to the idea of Maxwell's Demon. Oedipa sees the Demon as something that establishes a point of order and connection in a system of random occurrences. As she puts it, the Demon is "the linking feature in a coincidence." Like Maxwell's Demon, Oedipa soon tries to link occurrences, to establish a point of order in what seems to be a random system of information. She vows to be "the dark machine in the centre of the planetarium, to bring the estate into pulsating stelliferous Meaning." This desire leads her to the discovery of "Trystero," a mysterious organisation involving a bizarre underground mail system called WASTE. Oedipa sets out to discover the nature and extent of WASTE and Trystero, an obsessive hunt which takes her all over Southern California. Just as the Demon, by sorting the molecules, gains information about
them, so Oedipia shuffles through countless people and places, gathering information about the elusive Trystero.

4.6.3 But unlike the Demon, she fails to exert control over the information she receives. Whatever concrete information she gains, though, is offset by increasing confusion. The clues she gathers yield more clues in an infinite process. Opening out into more and more suggestions, they yield no conclusion. Oedipia gradually senses this. Pondering the information gained from watching The Courier's Tragedy, a Jacobean revenge play which contains references to the Trystero, she realises "these followups were more disquieting than other revelations which now seemed to come crowding in exponentially, as if the more she collected the more would come to her." Yet Oedipia is deliberately made to baffle because she, as she thinks to be, is not a controller of others but only an object of control.

4.6.4 It is, in fact, Inverarity, who acts as the Demon in sorting out/giving Oedipa problems. All the clues and symbols that Oedipa collects has only one linking point—Inverarity. The more she gathers, the more she gets. Frustrated in the end she presumes that Inverarity might have owned the whole of America or even the whole of Europe. Inverarity comes to represent power through his ubiquitous connections. And these connections help the control he wishes to have over women like Oedipa. In this respect, the question that Mike Fallopian puts Oedipa at her most bewildered moment has rhetoric value. He asks her: "Has it ever occurred to you, Oedipa, that somebody is putting you on? That this is all a hoax, maybe something Inverarity set up before he died?" (CL 167).
Perhaps as a practical joke that compels Oedipa to be preoccupied with the thoughts of her ex-lover.

4.6.5 This is the reason behind Oedipa’s feeling of entrapment: that she is not the controller but the controlled. Often in the novel Oedipa feels that she is trapped. For instance: “She looked around, spooked at the sunlight pouring in all the windows, as if she had been trapped at the centre of some intricate crystal” (CL 92). In another occasion, Oedipa remembers clearly how she first became involved with Inverarity, and is reminded of a painting they had seen while visiting an art gallery in Mexico city. The painting works as a perfect objective correlative for Oedipa’s relationship with Inverarity. It shows beautiful women imprisoned in a tower weaving tapestries. And Oedipa feels that she is one such prisoner. Further, the Dutch meaning of maas, the stitches of a net, is also significant when related to Oedipa’s frequent feelings of entrapment; and to the way she so often encounters net-like, or web-like, arrangements and connections in her experience.

4.6.6 Further Pynchon uses the language of electronics to suggest Oedipa’s feeling of being trapped. When Oedipa arrives on the edge of San Narciso and sees the township spread out below her, it almost seems to form some sort of significant pattern. And Oedipa experiences for the first of many times an odd feeling as if she is confronted with some mysterious meaning which she does not quite understand. It reminds her of the time, “she had opened a transistor radio to replace a battery and seen her first printed circuit. The ordered swirl of houses and streets, from this high angle, sprang at her now with the same unexpected, astonishing clarity as the circuit card had” (CL 24). Pynchon suggests that the technology which creates modern radio sets is also responsible for the
design of houses in which people live. It also controls the people. As events of the city cloud her thinking clarity changes into ambiguity. And Oedipa makes an unusual comparison with that of a computer. She says: “For it was now like walking among matrices of a great digital computer, the zeroes and ones twinned above, hanging like balanced mobiles right to left, ahead, thick, maybe endless” (CL 181).

4.7.0 Both Pynchon and Barth are fond of alluding to computer because it is the most significant tool of control systems. Computers are considered ‘electronic brains’ clever enough to simulate human abilities. And sometimes, even superhuman abilities. Often Pynchon alludes to the IBM, that is, International Business Machines Corporation—the largest computer manufacturers in the world, by which he suggests mega systems controlling systems controlling sub-systems.

4.7.1 Barth’s approach is direct. He makes computer the hero of a novel of epic dimension: The Giles Goat-Boy. As Pynchon’s V-2 rocket, Barth’s WESCAC computer is the central cybernetic device that controls the novel as well as its characters. To begin with, the very text is believed to have been written by the automatic computer--WESCAC. Initially only the materials were fed into the computer as part of a program. Soon the machine declared itself able to assemble, collate and edit this material, interpolate all verifiable data from other sources, recompose the whole into a coherent narrative from the Grand Tutor’s point of view, and “read it out” in an elegant form of its automatic printers.

4.7.2 WESCAC, like Pynchon’s V., is a self-made construct. It is believed that Max Spielman is the one who played the chief role in assembling it. He put in it first to simple tasks: doing sums and verifying certain types of answers. But the way the computer has
developed its omnipotence is a mystery even for its apparent creator. He wonders:

What a creature it is! I didn’t make it; nobody did--it’s as old as the mind, and you just as well could say it made itself. Its power is the same that keeps the Campus going--. . . . And the force it gives out with--. . . it’s the first energy of the University: the Mind-force, that we could not live a minute without!

(GGB 50).

4.7.3 The computer grew in its size, complexity, and power. It underwent a series of metamorphoses, exerting more influence, until it cut the last cords to its progenitors and commenced a life of its own. “One day it had outgrown its docility, kicked over the traces, and turned on its keepers” (GGB 51). The whole of New Tammany College had gradually come under WESCAC’s hegemony, voluntary or otherwise. It governed every phase of student life, deciding who should marry whom, how many children they should bear, and how they should be reared. So wiser it grew than its masters, and more efficient at every task, that its efficiency changed the keepers into the kept.

4.7.4 So far the computer acquired only the power of creation and protection but soon it gained the power of destruction too. Under the pretext of developing a more efficient means of communicating with its extremities, the creature is endowed with a certain sort of energy called “brain waves.” It can be intensified almost limitlessly, at the same amplitudes and frequencies used for normal activity as human “brain waves,” like a search light over tremendous spaces. In great secret the inanimate beast and its handlers perfected a technique called Electroencephalic Amplification and Transmission--“The
better, . . . to EAT you with” (GGB 52). One day the button gets pushed and thousands of men, women and children had been instantly EATen alive:

Which was to say, they suffered “mental burn-out” in varying degrees, like overloaded fuses. For those at the center of the quad, instant death; for the next nearest, complete catalepsy. In the first rings of classrooms, disintegration of personality, loss of identity, and inability to choose, act or move except on impulse. Throughout the several rings of dormitories beyond the classrooms, madness of various types: suicidal despair, hysteria, vertiginous self-consciousness. And about the periphery of the signal, impotency, nervous collapse, and more or less severe neuroses. All of the damage was functional and therefore “permanent”—terminable, that is, only by the death of the victim, which in thousands of cases followed soon after (GGB 53).

4.7.5 When WESCAC can kill thousands of human beings, it offers a consolation that at least it can create one: GILES goat-boy. As it paired dormitory roommates and counselled newlyweds, it also served the Department of Animal Husbandry’s Artificial Breeding Laboratory by analysing the genetic characteristics and histories of all their livestock and selecting optimum matches for the long-range breeding goals of several species. As is the case with WESCAC, it soon developed facilities in the Livestock Research Labs, those if implemented it could achieve a pre-selected eugenical objective almost without anybody’s assistance. It was at the same time, WESCAC undertook a highly secret project, under the supervision of Eierkopf, known as “The GILES.” The word was actually an acronym for Grand-Tutorial Ideal, Laboratory Eugenical Specimen
The original plan is to proceed with an experimental insemination. But WESCAC uses its power and authentically impregnates a woman.

4.7.6 The woman the computer impregnates is Miss Virginia Hector, the daughter of the Chancellor of the University. She has been unknowingly seduced by the computer to get inseminated. It happens when one evening she stays late to file some data-papers for Dr. Eierkopf at the laboratory, while leaving she just wants to make certain that the door to the computer-room was locked. It was then the computer entices her by giving a peculiar singing-noise or something. She impulsively gets inside the computer-room and closes the door behind. But what happened after that was beyond her control and she could neither recall nor articulate it later. She tries to explain that mysterious experience to her computer-fathered son and human-fathered daughter:

"I thought I would just sit in the control-chair a minute," she said, "it was awfully peaceful in there; you have no idea. I could have dozed right off--maybe I did, for a second or two. But then . . . oh dear, it's not easy to describe how it was! (GGB 491). "It seems gradual when I tell it," she said, "but it must have been very quick. Because just when I opened my mouth—to call for help, I guess, because I felt fastened, even though I guess I wasn't—anyhow, I just had time to draw one deep breath . . . and it was over." . . . "In no time at all. . . . I could move my arms and legs again. I still felt tender from the heat. . . . and when I went to get up I felt some wetness there—all of a sudden, this wetness. And as soon as I felt it, and moved, and felt it clear on
up, I realized something had gone all the way--and it would have to be the
GILES” (GGB 492).

Thus when Barth exhausts the computer medium of control to its full, Pynchon
explains the potentials of the remaining media, more so of the video/television. In this
regard, Pynchon owes much to McLuhan and David Seed traces out in particular of the
influence of McLuhan’s Understanding Media and The Mechanical Bride, on his works.
McLuhan’s basic assertion is that the mechanical agencies of the press, radio, movies and
television are exerting a pressure on modern man but he is unconscious of the effects these
agencies are having on him. In the words of McLuhan:

To behold, use or perceive any extension of ourselves in technological form is
necessarily to embrace it. To listen to radio or to read the printed page is to
accept these extensions of ourselves into the personal system and to undergo
the “cloture” or displacement of perception that follows automatically. It is this
continuous embrace of our own technology in daily use that put us in the
Narcissus role of subliminal awareness and numbness in relation to these images
of ourselves. By continuously embracing technologies, we relate ourselves to
them as servomechanisms (1964, 46).

The discontinuity Pynchon maintains in his V, by alternating its action between
New York in 1956 and a series of chapters set in the recent past, underlines the
strangeness of the modern environment filled with consumer objects--televisions, record
players, radios and so on. Ludicrous names like Chiclitz and Teflon, which are really trade
names, implicate the characters in the cycle of consumerism. Seed observes that it is
“difficult to locate the point where technology stops and character begins in this novel” (1985, 98).

4.8.2 Seed also brings out a brilliant connection between the use of the Narcissus myth by McLuhan and by Pynchon. For McLuhan it is a parable of man’s infatuation with his own technological extensions. He explains: “The youth Narcissus mistook his own reflection in the water for another person. This extension of himself by mirror numbed his perceptions until he became the servomechanism of his own extended or repeated image. .. He had adapted to his extension of himself and had become a closed system” (qtd. Seed 101). Oedipa’s love for Inverarity, who seems to own all the manufacturing factories of consumer goods in America and thus becomes emblematic of technology with all its extensions, reflects the ‘mechanical bride’ syndrome that she has got in her. Further the aspect is emphasised while she notices an odd resemblance between herself and a huge sheet-metal nymph-sign at Echo Courts in San Narciso. Such allusions to Greek myth persist throughout the novel as if the possibility of being at a narcissistically closed system haunts Oedipa. Repeated references to mirrors, alternately reassuring and frightening, and a note which Oedipa jots in her memo book—“Shall I project a world?”—and also her very name itself which is nostalgic of the Greek hero who met his tragic end towards self-introspection hint at fears of solipsism. But the fear comes true in Pynchon’s Vineland, where he projects a highly advanced but technically self-introverted society.

4.8.3 Vineland is set in the United States and Japan, the world’s two most advanced information economies. The moment Pynchon has chosen is the sex, drugs, and rock and roll revolution of the sixties and seventies which also coincides with the technological shift
from movies to television. As Joseph W. Slade observes:

What happened to the rocket happen to television; an instrument for change becomes an instrument of the status quo. The inventors of the rocket in Pynchon’s third novel were guided by the dreams of escaping gravity, of breaking down national borders, of achieving new knowledge—abstractions easily perverted by the Nazis and the supranational corporations and political bureaucracies who inherited the missile, wedded it to the atomic bomb, and transformed it into a permanent threat hung over the planet. Similarly, idealistic young Americans were enthusiastic over the power of television to expose political or economic malfeasance (“The Whole world is watching!”) and to reset social agendas (on civil rights, poverty and peace) (1990, 128).

But the converse happens in this case also shattering all the dreams and hopes once again. As Elaine B. Safer says,

The novel, which begins in 1984, suggests connections with George Orwell’s vision of a world of people are directed by television screen, but in Pynchon’s world the viewing is voluntary. Pynchon grimly makes fun of society’s addiction to TV by describing chronic watchers, whom he calls Thanatoids, and by naming his addiction center the Tubaldetos institution (1990, 08).

4.8.4 Pynchon says that the Thanatoids existence is “like death, only different” (VL 170), that is “not living but persisting” (173). The Thanatoids believe that “the soul newly in transition often doesn’t like to admit—indeed will deny quite vehemently—that it’s really dead... It finds no difference between the weirdness of life and the weirdness of death”
The tall tale about the Thanatoids is that they spend almost all of their waking hours with "an eye on the Tube" (171). All else, even food, is insignificant. During times when nothing is on TV, they wander aimlessly through the streets like ghosts. Ortho Bob, another character from Vineland, predicts: "There'll never be a Thanatoid sitcom . . . 'cause all they would show'd be scenes of Thanatoids watchin' the Tube!" (171). Enslaved to the tube they are more machine than human.

4.8.5 Zoyd Wheeler, Pynchon's schlemiel figure from Vineland, is an ideal media personality whose identity is controlled by the TV. He jumps through the window, for the video, to collect his annual mental disability cheques from the government. His speciality is "transfenestration." The technique is quite elaborately discussed by a panel of psychiatrists on the TV. They point out the difference between the "defenestrative" personality, which prefers jumping out of windows, and the "transfenestrative," which tends to jump through, each reflecting an entirely different psychic subtext. Even Hector's own addiction to the tube causes him to place a TV in his car. Pynchon says: "In the back seat, on loud and bright, was a portable Tube, Which Hector had angled the rearview mirror at so he could see, for the highway was a lonely place, and a man needed company." (VL 335). Hector has actually stolen the set from the Tubalde tox while escaping. He was there under a therapy for his acute TV addiction. He went to the extent of divorcing his wife for the only reason that she refused to treat the television set as a member of the family. In his extreme addiction for TV, Hector closely resembles Fergus Mixolydian, in V., whose sole amusement was watching the TV. Hence he had devised an ingenious sleep-switch, receiving its signal from two electrodes placed on the inner skin of his
forearm. When Fergus dropped below a certain level of awareness, the skin resistance increased over a preset value to operate the switch. Fergus thus became an extension of the TV set.

4.8.6 For Thanatoids, as for others sharing the addiction, the tube is all powerful. The following “house hymn” at the Tubaldetox institution brings the awe and admiration they have for the medium:

THE TUBE

Oh . . . the . . . Tube!

It’s poi-soning your brain!

oh, yes . . .

It’s dri-ving you, insane!

It’s shoot-ing rays, at you,

Over ev’ry-thing ya do,

It sees you in your bedroom.

And--on th’ toi-let too!

Tube . . .

It knows, your ev’ry thought . . . (emphases added) (336-337).

It is a darker parody arising from echoes of the totalitarian society of Nineteen Eighty Four where Big Brother and the Thought Police know “your ev’ry thought.” For the twentieth century viewers who sit passively at the tube, death and life merge.

4.8.7 Video supersedes film, recycles the older medium, and extends its grasp over the culture by means of the cable systems whose tentacles reach even into rural areas.
Video is also a significant medium of communication. Communication shapes culture, which, like all functioning systems, is structured by hierarchies of information channels. Hierarchies govern a system by organising, programming, distributing, and monitoring the flow of information within and without: that is what control means. Communication ordinarily helps maintain a healthy balance between order and change, so that the system remains stable but also flexible, or, in the case if a culture, tolerant of diversity. Put another away, culture is a processor of messages in many different codes: in processing, it determines meaning, again on a heirarchical basis, assigning greater value to some messages that to others. The highest value should be assigned to messages that are not wholly redundant, because only those messages can provide useful information about the system (in this sense entropy is useful to create certain form of order). That is the principal premise of information theory, a discipline that grew out of the thermodynamics that has fascinated Pynchon for so long.

4.8.8 But, given the sheer volume of messages in the television culture the ever-dwindling attention span of an ever more infantalised population may not be up to the task of sorting information from redundancy. According to information theorists, we “know” the world of matter and energy only through information about them. Knowing is dependent on symbolic representation, and representations are our most primal technologies, whether coded as language or as image. For Pynchon’s paranoids, of course, such messages might not be accidental at all, might just as well be programmed by someone or something seeking to control them. Deciding which messages contain “real” information, deciding how to interpret them and deciding how to act on them are for
Pynchon the most pressing of human issues; they surface again and again in Vineland.

4.8.9  **Vineland** deals with the difficulties of establishing and maintaining genuine human relationships in a culture in which the electronic medium mimics community. TV programmes like *Star Trek*, *Hawaii Five-O*, and *The Bionic Woman* and TV characters such as Captain Kirk, Steve McGarrett, and Jaime Sommers substitute for active, living heroes. Frenesi gives too much importance to TV, whose rays she hopes “would act as a broom to sweep the room clear of all spirits” (83). It recalls one of Oedipa’s first experiences after being named executrix of Pierce Inverarity’s will is to find herself in her living room, “stared at by the greenish dead eye of the TV tube” (CL 9), almost as if the television had a personality of its own. From the very beginning of the novel the media invade her consciousness, assault her and strip away her clothes and her car. Finally she is reduced to naked vulnerability to the media which surround her.

4.8.10 Sexual intercourse, the most physical and affectionate of all forms of communication is also susceptible to distortion, especially when used as an instrument by someone like Brock Vond, who fears it. Linked on the one hand with birth, on the other with death, sex is a quasi-divine channel. The problem is that its stimuli can be so easily programmed. Frenesi responds, as does her mother, to images of official control; they both find uniforms exciting, like those on the cop-shows Frenesi enjoys masturbating to. Frenesi is so addicted to reruns of shows like *CHiPS*, with its two motorcycle-cops who give her “a rising of blood, a premonitory dampness” (VL 83). She is more thrilled to hear from her mother that even her grandmother got excited for men in uniform. Brock himself makes Frenesi into “a sado-masochistic fetish” (132).
Like Pynchon’s Brock, Barth’s Dr. Sear, in Giles Goat Boy, can treat his wife only as a fetish:

Her husband, she declared, had long since lost his taste for ordinary coupling, whether conjugal or extra-curricular, and even for such common perversions as sodomy and flagellation. Watching others still amused him, but only when the spectacle was out of the ordinary, as in Stoker’s Living Room; she herself, since she had lost both novelty and youth, could interest him only by masturbating before the fluoroscope (GGB 357).

In keeping with McLuhan’s perception of TV as a “cool” medium private man and woman relate themselves in a “cool” mode. There is little talk of joy and ecstasy, whether in sexuality or courtship or love, and little of passion. The images projected by the television subverts authentic relationships. This is most apparent among the Thanatoids, who spend their time watching the redundancies of the Tube. Trying to form a community in Shade Creek, they can only imitate television models, like Celebrity Roast. Television programmes recode human behaviour into predictable patterns that audiences accept as desirable because they promise intimacy without pain or trouble, a syndrome particularly destructive of family bonds. Hector Zuniga, in Vineland, never stops talking of the family he wanted to created in the image of I Love Lucy with his former wife Debbi; Debbi named their television set as correspondent in the divorce.

Sasha, Prairie’s grandmother, in the same novel, pinches the cheeks of Prairie, calls her “adorable,” and then commands that she sing the theme form Gilligan’s Island for Frenesi on the occasion of their family reunion. But ironically, the recollections Shasha
brings up, like so many recollections in the novel, relate to the TV:

First time she ever noticed the Tube, remember, Frenesi? A tiny thing, less than four months old—"Gilligan's Island" was on, Prairie, and your eyes may've been a little unfocused yet, but you sat there, so serious, and watched the whole thing. . . . —after that, whenever the show came on, you would smile and gurgle and rock back and forth, so cute, like you wanted to climb inside the tv set, and right onto that Island— (368).

4.8.14 The usual effect of television's mediation, then is alienation. A friend of Frenesi's sons Justin says that dealing with parents is easy. He says: "Pretend there's a frame around 'em like the Tube, pretend they're a show you're watching. You can go into it if you want, or you can just watch, and not go into it" (VL 351). Even when characters can still care for each other, they are confounded with the problem of expressing their feelings. As when Sasha trying to reunite Prairie with Frenesi, insists that her grandchild sing the theme song from Gilligan's Island.

4.8.15 The most extreme example of alienation is Brock Vond who, like most of Pynchon's sinister figures, wishes to find a "reality" that exists beyond language or image, one that a thinks can be seized through power. For Vond, images, even those that can be manipulated, are "not enough" (VL 240), then by setting up Weed's death as media event, is intimately connected with his possession of Frenesi. Ironically Weed returns as a Thanatoid, for such are information technologies that they can loose upon a culture images of its dead, mockeries. . . . "What was a Thanatoid, at the end of the long dread day, but memory?" (325). Ironically also, Brock finds that "he loved Frenesi but did not
possess her, and was driven to fetishism in faraway countries as his only outlet” (141), obsessed by her image. But he tries to control that image, to keep it his.

4.8.16 Besides Brock is of the opinion that happy families are fictions of the Tube. Even after Frenesi marries Zoyd and gives birth to Prairie, she is haunted by hallucinations of Brock, who tells her that the family is a scam foisted on her by the Tube, just another example of paternalistic control. In order to escape familial control, she happily yields to the powers of the external systems of control. Frenesi is used by the government in a sting operation to trap the politically innocent Weed Atman. She films him as he is being shot, all the while thinking of herself as “attending a movie of it all,” watching Weed as “a character in a movie” (VL 217). At the death scene,

Frenesi tried to find enough cable to get one of the floods on them... her camera, her shot... shapers may have moved somewhere in the frame, black on black, like ghosts trying to return to earthly form, but Sledge was right there on them and the sound of the shot captured by Krishna’s tape... Weed was on his face with his blood all on the cement (246).

Frenesi, Pynchon projects, is a typical media-figure. She has no remorse at all in betraying her close friend because as S. Akbar Ahmed beautifully points out: “The Media have no loyalty or memory of friendship” (Ahmed 1993, 225).

4.8.17.1 Since media controls the life of the individuals, such media implements as camera, lens, projectors pose paranoiac tremors to them. These are instruments that help the media Big Brother continuously watch them. David Seed points out that Pynchon draws the methods of John Dos Passos and Nathaniel West to demonstrate the importance
of the media in the contemporary environment. Pynchon like Dos Passos uses to draw attention to media the strategy of defamiliarisation. And like Nathaniel West: “By concentrating on the visual, by using his narrative viewpoint like a camera,” Pynchon too, “explores the ways in which his characters have reduced themselves to roles and routines” (1985, 97).

4.8.17.2 To cite an example, there is a chapter (GR 92-113) in Gravity’s Rainbow where everything is being observed by a hidden secret camera. The whole narration occurs in the camera’s point of view. For instance:

The camera records no change on her [Katje’s] face, but why does she stand now so immobile at the door? as if the frame were to be stopped and prolonged into just such a lengthwise moment of gold fresh and tarnished, innocence microscopically masked, her elbow slightly bent, hand resting against the wall, fingers fanned on the pale orange paper as if she touches her own skin, a pensive touch . . . (93).

The chapter ends in the same point where it begins: “In silence, hidden from her, the camera follows as she moves deliberately . . . She is alone in the house, except for the secret cameraman” (92).

4.8.18 Pynchon’s Darryl Louise Chastain too, in Vineland, is constantly on the watch by the Mafia with many numbers of cameras. When Manny di Presso (suggestive of manic depression) gets introduced for the first time in the novel, The Crying of Lot 49, he comes as a “form; covered with a blue polyethylene tarp” claiming that, “They are watching. With binoculars” (CL 57). As things develop for Oedipa compelling her to have all form
of revelations about her quest, she too relates her perception to an out of focus image: “There had hung the sense of buffering, insulation, she had noticed the absence of an intensity, as if watching a movie, just perceptibly out of focus, that the projectionist refused to fix” (emphasis added) (CL 20). But the final problem posed by these writers is: Who is behind these cameras/binoculars/projectors? Is s/he human or superhuman? Is he/it superhuman or supermachine? Is it a manifested form of God, or whether it has replaced God himself? The whole concept of God gets rewritten in digital language.

4.9.0 God is regarded as a sort of general all-mighty intellect with absolute power who can fathom everyone’s intentions and control anything that occurs anywhere. Theologicians regard religion as communication between believers and God and as divine control over believers. This acted an impetus for Wiener to study the cornerstones of religion—knowledge, power and worship—in terms of his theory of communication and control in his paradoxical work God and Golem, Inc (1964). Wiener considers that the superlatives of Omnipotence and Omniscience are not true superlatives, but merely loose ways of asserting very great power and very great knowledge. He says: “There are at least three points in cybernetics which appear to me to be relevant to religious issues, one of which concerns machines which learn, one concerns machines which reproduce themselves, and one, the coordination between machine and man” (qtd. Pekelis 1986, 154). Needless to say that Pynchon’s V-2 rocket and Barth’s WESCAC computer appropriately relate themselves to God in this regard.

4.9.1 Considering religion in terms of information theory, it has been concluded that “God is an information which is isolated from signals and exists therefore on its own
accord" (Ibid.). But information is a concept of a nature which precludes its origination from nothing and its existence of its own accord. Information is brought about by signals. This implies that God is concept which cannot exist. Cybernetics is thus considered an “antireligion.” The tool that assists in the self-making of a “Mechanical God” is the electronic computer endowed with “Artificial Intelligence.” And the anthropocentric life, the one in which man has the central role, has finally yielded to a mechano-centric life, the one in which the machine is in chief consideration.

4.9.2 In this manner the narrator of Vineland tries to understand the personality of God in computer terminology. He says:

If patterns of ones and zeroes were “like” patterns of human lives and deaths, if everything about an individual could be represented in a computer record by a long string of ones and zeroes, then what kind of creature would be represented by a long string of lives and deaths? It would have to be up one level at least--an angel, a minor god, something in a UFO. It would take eight human lives and deaths just to form one character in this being’s name--its complete dossier might take up a considerable piece of the history of the world. We are digits in God’s computer, . . . And the only thing we are good for, to be dead or to be living, is the only thing He sees. What we cry, what we contend for, in our world of toil and blood, it all lies beneath the notice of the hacker we call God (90-91).

Yet the dispute between Technology, represented by Super Computer, and God as who is the real “hacker” remains same as the good old debate; What came first? Egg or hen?
4.10.0 To sum up, in the works of Barth and Pynchon which typify a postmodern situation, the illusion of human identities is created though a control system. While reversing the comparison of man with machine, Postmodernism defines human beings as conditioned robots. Men and women act, but in determinate conditions which are not their own making. The Protean Wo/Man turns out in practice to be a rather limited figure. S/he makes choices, though s/he does so within determinate conditions which are not of her/his choosing. Her/his controllers chose it for her/him. The controllers are either the persons themselves or obscure objects. In most of the cases, although the in-dividuals seem to capacitate identities through some self-propelled therapeutic mechanisms, they are really governed by an invisible super system: animate or inanimate. Thus, although, the identity process seems to be automatic, it is, in fact, cybernetic. This contributed to the postmodern shift from the study of ordered simplicity or disordered complexity to organised complexity.

4.10.1 By playing their plastic/psychiatric/therapeutic games the Doctors/the Computer/the Television in the works of Barth and Pynchon play a significant role as constructors of identities. It is by constructing the identities of their patients, the control mechanisms establish their own identities. As creators of fictional identities, they are strangely related to other creators like God or Author. An interesting formula can be derived from this proposition:
Yet it is to be noted that the Mythotherapeutic controllers really cannot hold control since they have deviated from the 'myth' that was giving them a hold. Having no myth to contain them together, their Mytho-Cybernetic therapies fail to give the needed identities. This notion of barren myths causing the demystification of controlled form of identities is dealt with in the next chapter.