

The “Societies of Control” in *Vineland*: A Study of Image Politics and Fragmented Dividual in the Reagan Administration

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Abstract

Thomas Pynchon’s novel *Vineland* spans the 1960s to 1980s in the United States and presents the changes in the way national power operates from the Nixon administration to the Reagan administration. This article will apply Deleuze’s theoretical framework on “societies of control,” focusing on analyzing the transformation of the power mechanism in American society and its profound impact on subjects from two aspects: Visual technology and subject changes. With the development of mass media, television and films are no longer merely tools for information dissemination and entertainment, but rather serve as modulatory tools, consolidating the official ideology by manipulating perception and thought patterns, reshaping reality and history, and eliminating rebel forces. Under this control mechanism, combined with Deleuze and Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, the paper infers that the subject is no longer a complete and unified individual, but transformed into a dividual that can be digitized, monitored and manipulated. Nevertheless, the novel still shows a faint possibility of resistance, especially through the critical viewing and moral discernment of the new generation. This article points out that it is precisely in the midst of fragmentation and manipulation that *Vineland* still retains the hope for freedom and the awakening of the subject, reflecting the possible paths to counter repressive power in the contemporary technological society.

Keywords: Thomas Pynchon; *Vineland*; “societies of control”; visual media; dividual; resistance

1. Introduction

Vineland, published in 1990, is a full-length novel written by Thomas Pynchon. Set in American society amid the prevailing Reaganomics, the novel responds to the multiple social realities of the 1980s, including the conservatization of politics, the rapid expansion of media technology, and the ebbing of the counterculture movement. *Vineland* focuses on the life of ex-hippie Zoyd Wheeler and his daughter Prairie. As Prairie tries to understand the past of her mother, Frenesi Gates, the novel constantly shuttles between the reality of the 1980s and the memories of the 1960s, showing the hippie movement and underground political organizations at that time. A core theme *Vineland* reflects is how the mechanism of state power is reconfigured through new technology. The depiction of the mass media such as television and films makes it one of the most important cultural texts for understanding what Gilles Deleuze calls “societies of control.”

This article will use Deleuze’s “societies of control” as a theoretical basis to analyze the pervasive control in *Vineland*. In 1992, Deleuze published an essay named “Postscript on the Societies of Control,” arguing that people are transitioning from the disciplinary societies defined by Foucault to a new type of “societies of control.” The period from the 19th century to the mid-20th century was dominated by disciplinary institutions such as schools, factories, prisons, hospitals, and the military, which shaped human behavior through enclosed spaces and disciplinary mechanisms. However, in the late 20th century, these institutions began to disintegrate or undergo qualitative changes. The new form of society no longer relies on enclosed-space institutions to impose discipline but instead employs more flexible, open, and fluid mechanisms to achieve control. “Enclosures are molds, distinct castings, but controls are a modulation, like a self-deforming cast that will continuously change from one moment to the other, or like a sieve whose mesh will transmute from point to point” (Deleuze 140). The words “modulation” and “deform” here are the keywords to understand the changing and unstable control, with which “power never remains localized in a recognizable form and can move constantly, through its many iterations, away from the threat of resistant action” (McDonald 104).

This paper will mainly utilize two of Deleuze’s supporting arguments. One is that people are no longer individuals in a disciplined society but become “dividuals.” Humans are not recognized by “either a signature or a number, but a code: the code is a password, while...disciplinary societies are regulated by watchwords” (Deleuze 141). People no longer have subjectivity but are merely a set of behavioral data, consumption preferences and credit values in certain databases. Another point is about the use of technology. Deleuze identified that “the societies of control operate with

machines of...computers” (141), shifting attention to new technological media and emphasizing the core role of information technology represented by computers, which have made control more covert, immediate and extensive.

1. Literature Review

At present, the academic research on *Vineland* mainly focuses on three aspects: Utopia, media and history. First, Pynchon explores the historical, cultural and social issues through the ideal of utopia: Berger linked the past cultural trauma in the 1960s with present utopian idea, thus pointing out that “Pynchon’s nostalgia is a nostalgia for the future, for possibilities of social harmony glimpsed at crucial moments in the past, but not ever yet realized” (3). Kolbuszewska explored the “utopian desire that gives rise to the flawed and contingent solidarity of those victimized and hurt by American history” (197). Moreover, *Vineland* in Northern California is an important utopian space in the novel, an ideal society in Pynchon’s mind, and a refuge away from social persecution (Bumas 150). Besides, many scholars have paid attention to the role played by the media, such as how film represented by 24fps’s filmmaking can impact past, present and future (Gazi 50) and how does television influence the behaviors of characters, as well as their understanding and perception of the world (Horstman 336; Meinel 455). The research addresses the combination of memory and media is also a key point of study, because media can weaken, destroy and even tamper with memory, thereby serving national politics (Möckel-Rieke 51; Li 13). As for history, Hinds discussed that Pynchon presents a non-linear view of history in *Vineland*: “What it does display is a transmission of the past to a historian by way of dehistoricizing that past” (101). Willman studied the loss of historical sense in American society and pointed out that “the novel presents an alternative to official history in the form of what Walter Benjamin calls ‘revolutionary nostalgia’ that counters the loss of historical sense that cripples the radical tradition” (199).

The above researches and studies compose a sound foundation for the present paper. However, few scholars in academia have used Deleuze’s “societies of control” to systematically analyze the infiltrative and flexible control in *Vineland*. By analyzing the technical media for achieving “societies of control” and the dividualization of the subjects, this paper will fill this research gap and present how American society shifted from disciplinary control by the Nixon administration to “societies of control” by the Reagan administration. However, Pynchon’s utopian ideal is never completely destroyed. Through the young characters, *Vineland* contains the hope of resisting, conveying Pynchon’s aspiration for social development.

3. Screens of Power: Power Shift, Image Politics and Dividual Subject in *Vineland*

3.1 From Discipline to Modulation: The Shift in Governmental Control

During the young years of Zoyd, Frenesi, and Brock Vond, Pynchon depicts the height of the left-wing anti-war movements and civil rights movements under the Nixon administration of the 1960s. College campuses and underground film clubs such as 24fps became hotbeds of political activism, symbolizing the cracks in a disciplined society that was about to spiral out of control: Youths who were supposed to be trained to be submissive citizens rebelled against the system, questioned the authority, and rejected the coercive norms of the state. The state's response to this was to intensify disciplinary measures and to introduce violent repressive mechanisms. Vond, the FBI prosecutor, is clearly a literary portrait of real FBI operations under the Nixon administration, particularly the COINTELPRO, which employed extremely covert and diverse tactics to discredit targeted individuals and organizations. Thus, *Vineland* demonstrates the U.S. government's disciplinary efforts to suppress rebellious forces.

However, the efficiency of the discipline society is limited, which requires a high level of personnel and institutional support. When faced with the economic crisis, technological revolution, and global capitalist expansion of the late 1970s, the logic of the discipline society gradually revealed its counterproductive nature. In the 1980s, "societies of control" was established in the United States. In the timeline of *Vineland*, 1984 is a year that cannot be ignored, which not only echoes George Orwell's dystopian fable, but also overlaps with the realpolitik of Reagan's reelection to the presidency. Just as Möckel-Rieke pointed out that Reagan represents a brand new time of power that operates "not primarily through prohibitive repression, but rather through excess, seduction, and a new stage of alienation" (54), while the Nixon government is associated with "a violent, restrictive police apparatus and secret service in *Vineland*" (Möckel-Rieke 54). As a result, the shift in power of the government can be seen, presenting the historical changes in American society.

The Reagan administration's promotion of market freedom and consumerism appeared to reduce government intervention, but in reality, the freedom masked a more insidious and extensive form of control, primarily through mass media. Therefore, control is no longer reliant on visible tools of repression, but is computerized through a complex device consisting of "ideology+technology." National databases and quantitative ratings have become the norm. In this context, while the visibility of power is diminished, the effectiveness of control is more far-reaching. Pynchon's description in *Vineland* reveals how this cultural control permeates people's daily lives, where individual choices are limited, and personal identities are fragmented.

3.2 Mediated Perception and Image Politics: Visual Technologies as Control Apparatuses

In *Vineland*, Pynchon reveals the technological mechanisms in “societies of control,” focusing on the role of video media—especially film and television—in the manipulation of consciousness, the reshaping of reality and history, and the dissolution of resistance. Pynchon not only criticizes the erosion of individual freedom by technology, but also points out how the image is transformed from a revealer of truth to a tool of power. In Deleuze’s theoretical framework, these media are the key mechanisms of social control: Instead of deterring individuals with violence, they induce individuals to internalize the logic of control by watching and entertaining.

3.2.1 Manipulating Consciousness: How the Visual Medium Shapes Perception and Thought Patterns

“*Vineland*, in other words, is television’s story” (Horstman 331). The daily life of the Zoyd’s family, depicted at the beginning of the novel, practically revolves around television. Thus, Meinel commented that “the world of *Vineland* is populated by viewers rather than readers and filmmakers instead of writers” (453). Television programs constantly instill emotional templates, value standards and behavioral paradigms in their viewers, and their messages are passively accepted and repeatedly internalized. As a result, the way the public perceives and thinks is altered by image technology. Gazi also identified that television is “a source of sustenance to which the viewer becomes dependent, as an all-pervasive force, as a medium that manipulates one’s mode of perception” (32). Pynchon gave vivid expression in *Vineland* such as “many who woke with eye more than stomach hunger stayed as long as they could in sleeping bags or back in camper shells with portable TV sets bootlegged onto the cable out on the highway...” (305), showing how dependent people’s lives are on television.

Besides, Li wrote that the “political manipulation of images is most centralized in Frenesi’s fascination with men in uniform. *Vineland* uses the seduction of women by the image of male authority as a metaphor for the manipulation of the public by the politics of image” (16). Moreover, “a generation before, Frenesi’s own mother, Sasha, has been likewise motivated by attractions to men in uniform” (Hinds 97). The government keeps on portraying the image of charming uniformed men through films and TV to make women fall for them. Therefore, in front of Vond’s sex appeal, Frenesi forgets the real political purpose hidden behind. Frenesi is then used by Vond and betrays her companion as a consequence, which reflects how people’s independent perception and thinking are dissolved and reshaped by image technology

so that people accept everything conveyed by it without any discernment. Thus, visual medium is no longer a tool for the dissemination of information, but a factory of consciousness that trains people to work with the system.

This is also Pynchon's allusion to the visual culture of the Reagan administration. Reagan was a professional actor before becoming president, which made him adept at using the media to create a charismatic image. Movies and television became political propaganda tools for the president's media persona. His presidency is often referred to as the "screen presidency," under which news became entertaining, and politics and propaganda gradually merged seamlessly. The ideas of justice, freedom and anti-communism were built up through the visual media. "One legacy of the Reagan administration is the lesson that acting, stragecraft, and mediated images can enhance statecraft" (Erickson 138).

Through the viewing of television shows and movies, individuals internalize the dominant ideas of society and, in turn, exhibit patterns of behavior that conform to societal expectations, testifying that the visual medium "affects our mode of perception for the purpose of social control" (Gazi 34). As *Vineland* shows, television trains people's default consciousness so that they no longer reflect on the existence of control, but simply accept and collaborate with it naturally.

3.2.2 Reinventing Reality: How Images Replace the Real and Rewrite History

Another powerful function of film and television is their ability to create a sense of reality. "The danger of the visual, then, is that a force or power is manipulating the frame, controlling what is seen" (McDonald 108). For example, Vond used Frenesi to make a pseudo-documentary against radicals such as Weed Atman, thus completing state repression. Therefore, the medium not only records reality, but also creates it, which precisely illustrates how the State participates in the construction of reality through visual medium.

In addition to influencing the presentation of reality, the state would step in to control historical video records that are inconsistent with the official ideology. In *Vineland*, 24fps is a radical filmmaking group that showcases shots that are different from the official narrative. "They went looking for trouble, they found it, they filmed it, and then quickly got the record of their witness someplace safe. They particularly believed in the ability of close-ups to reveal and devastate" (Pynchon 185). McDonald concluded that "24fps's fundamental belief is that, with enough illumination, the machinations of those who dominate can be brought to consciousness" (107). Under such a creed, they record the activities of PR³, a radical, autonomous and alternative community, whose members are mostly former radicals, hippies, and artists, thus

“dissent from official reality” (Pynchon 194). Therefore, 24fps video recording is a threat to the official historical control. “In response to this threat, the films are first corrupted by agents of the state and then eventually destroyed, so that the ‘government-defined history’ (Pynchon 333) is the only history, the only reality, that survives and that has ever been” (Gazi 47).

Li further argued that “history and memory have also been reinterpreted and defined in accordance with the official ideology” (18). From the 1970s to the 1980s, the United States experienced a series of geopolitical and ideological blows on a global scale. The challenges not only weakened the superpower myth of the United States, but also triggered the counterattack of its conservatism and new militarism, ultimately contributing to the tough diplomatic and cultural propaganda strategies of the Reagan administration. During this period, the defeat in the Vietnam War in 1975 dealt a heavy blow to the global authority of the United States. The Iran hostage crisis strongly stimulated the nationalist sentiment, which led to the collapse of the Carter administration and became a political turning point for Reagan’s victory in the election, pushing the politics of the 1980s to shift to a tough right. The Reagan administration rationalized conservatism and neo-militarism through visualized state violence and the narrative of a benign empire. For example, Rambo (played by Sylvester Stallone) in the films *First Blood* (1982) and *Rambo: First Blood Part II* (1985) is a traumatized Vietnam War veteran who fights back against the enemy after being betrayed by his country. The films place emphasis on individual heroism, military revenge and anti-communist sentiment, rewriting the defeat of the Vietnam War as a victory that can be won back by force and shaping American soldiers into morally indestructible freedom fighters. From this, it can be seen how image technology serves the official ideology and aligns the public’s thoughts with the official ones by redefining history.

As Gazi illustrates: “By filming one is taking control of the present, and therefore control of the past, and, in turn, the future” (47). A kind of re-reality that can be manipulated, edited, and disciplined penetrates the society. Thus, through the indoctrination of official ideology into people through image technology, the comprehensive, flexible and permeable control in Deleuze’s theory is here realized.

3.2.3 Dissolving Resistance: How the Video Medium Deconstructs Rebellion

What is most disturbing in *Vineland* is not the violent repression itself, but the fact that “societies of control” achieve a higher level of domination—Deconstructing rebellion and eliminating the forces of resistance through the medium of images.

Pynchon demonstrates in the novel how entertainment dissolves political consciousness. Through omnipresent entertainment, television programs make political issues that might have originally aroused social resistance easy and harmless. For example, Zoyd removes any emotion of his social discontent through the comedy programs he constantly watches. Besides, Li referred to “Harleyite Order” (Pynchon 337), a motorcycle club composed of rebellious young people who despise the system. Sid originally hoped that the club could help him retrieve the house confiscated by the FBI. However, they appeared on TV programs and tasted the sweetness of popular culture: “With development deals for movies and miniseries, plus T-shirts, collector dolls, lunch boxes, and so forth, the membership had to a nun all been finding themselves too big and busy for anything as small-time as helping Zoyd get his place back anymore” (Pynchon 351). This kind of entertainment diverts people’s attention from social rebellion, causing them to gradually lose their ability to criticize reality. Just like Li pointed out that “the case of the Harleyite Order reveals that once anti-establishment is exploited by the mass media and turned into a consumable image of youthful rebellion” (17), “not only is its political connotation emptied, but anti-establishment individuals also become cultural industry stars who busy themselves maintaining a rebellious image and forgetting the true meaning of rebellion” (Li 17).

Besides, Thanatoids in *Vineland*, as in an intermediate state that is neither alive nor dead, hold some kind of resentment or unfinished business towards reality. As victims of social injustice, they should have sought revenge. In contrast, “Thanatoids spent at least part of every waking hour with an eye on the Tube” (Pynchon 163). Under the influence of television, they gradually lost their determination to rebel, which is the most prominent characteristic of them. Li inferred that “due to the distraction of their attention, the anger within them and the demand for revenge were gradually numbed and dormant. In the soothing provided by the mass media, the desire for compensation and seeking fair enforcement became less intense” (16). Through this, Pynchon demonstrates how modern society pacifies resistance and completely dismantles the possibility of rebellion through the culture industry.

As Pynchon described: “Easy. They just let us forget. Give us too much to process, fill up every minute, keep us distracted, it’s what the Tube is for...” (295). Therefore, the most powerful thing about the technological medium is that it makes resistance boring, powerless and even ridiculous. This is the key logic of “societies of control”: It is not to prohibit people from opposing, but to make it impossible for them to do so, or to desire to do so.

3.3 Fragmentation and Assemblage: The Dividual Subject in the “Societies of Control”

In “societies of control,” “we no longer find ourselves dealing with the mass/individual pair. Individuals have become ‘dividuals,’ and masses, samples, data, markets, or ‘banks.’” (Deleuze 140), which are infinitely encoded, tracked, and distributed. In *Vineland*, Pynchon vividly depicts this, which is manifested in the fragmentation of the individual’s consciousness and memories, the layering and floating of identities, and the loss of self-centeredness.

Frenesi used to be a radical filmmaker, a conscious being at the level of the individual. However, after entering government institutions, she was recast as an instrument of the state, not only dismantling her original ideology, but also codifying and functionalizing her actions and moral judgments. Her identity changes according to her position: Daughter, mother, revolutionary, collaborator, traitor, fugitive, lover However, she is never able to integrate these identities into a continuous and stable self. Her ex-husband, Zoyd, though he retains the shell of the countercultural movement of the 1960s, has long been a functional unit rather than a full-fledged political subject. His life is now completely subject to the government’s digital system through welfare payments. Deleuze’s statement that “societies of control” use passwords instead of watchwords as the code (140) is reflected in Zoyd’s case—He must enter the correct “passwords” (window jumping) to gain “access” (the cost of living). This deprives the subject of the freedom of choice. Besides, Zoyd also loses the ability to integrate his self-memory. His residual feelings about his past relationship with Frenesi and the ideals of the sixties are washed away as impotent nostalgia by the trivial mechanisms of everyday control.

The transformation of Frenesi and Zoyd is in line with the opinion of individual fracture in *Anti-Oedipus* written by Deleuze and Guattari. They criticized Freud’s “Oedipus complex” (that is, the Oedipal and patricidal structure), arguing that the Oedipus model is a suppression mechanism that domesticates and standardizes individual desires. It simplifies human social desires into family myths, obscuring the more complex relationships between the individual and capitalism, as well as the state apparatus. Deleuze and Guattari opposed regarding the subject as a closed self-awareness system, proposing that the subject is essentially composed of a constantly operating desire machine and is a fractured entity flowing among social structures, media, capital and the unconscious. They pointed out: “It is certain that neither men nor women are clearly defined personalities, but rather vibrations, flows, schizzes, and ‘knots’ (Deleuze & Guattari 352). Therefore, Frenesi’s multiple identities are a manifestation of how subjects are truncated and reconfigured by different forces: The image, the state, sexuality, and the family, a typical example of the Deleuzian dividual.

“There is no such thing as either man or nature now, only a process that produces the one within the other and couples the machines together” (Deleuze & Guattari 2). Labeled a mental patient by the mechanisms of social control, Zoyd’s annual performance of the absurd jumping out of the window not only marks his participation in the machinery of state control, but also demonstrates his own protest and self-parody of normal society. He is no longer a uniform and stable father identity, but a particular dissected person under the state classification system—a dividual controlled by the data and welfare system. Pynchon’s description that “we are digits in God’s computer” (89) further reinforces the digitalization and encoding of the subject.

Not only that, an interesting point that deserves to be probed into is Pynchon’s mention of “a copy of the indispensable *Italian Wedding Fake Book*, by Deleuze & Guattari” (Pynchon 95). When the daughter of Ralph Wayvone (the head of a mob family) gets married, the band in charge of the show cannot find an orthodox score of Italian wedding music, so they use a “fake book” to get the job done. In addition, the “fake book” was written by two famous French post-structuralist philosophers—A humorous, fictional setup that implies an overturning of the normative, predictable structures. In what appears to be a traditional structure (the wedding), subjects are left to imitate order by assembling it at random. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari proposed the notion of assemblage, which coincides with improvisation here: The action of the subject does not start from a central logic, but is improvised, dynamic, and fluid. Gazi also discussed that 24fps’s “method of film production is improvisation” (7), showing how improvised assemblage becomes a prominent feature. Thus, the logic of dividual is clearly presented: The subject, under the control of technology, is forced to exist and act in an improvised, temporary, and localized manner. The dividual can only rely on fragmented experiences, fractured memories, and image mixtures to play his or her own identity. Just as Frenesi’s and Zoyd’s identities are no longer self-consistent, they are subject to the cutting and arranging of multiple forces such as image systems, political technologies, and institutional logics.

The narrative structure of the novel also echoes this logic of dividual fragmentation, as Pynchon rejects linear narrative and jumps between different timelines and character perspectives, presenting a schizophrenic collage aesthetic. In doing so, *Vineland* illustrates how individuals in “societies of control” become dividuals who can be cut up, manipulated, and reprogrammed. They are no longer selves with integrated identities, unified morals, and complete memories, but rather temporary products of cross-coded systems. However, Pynchon is not entirely in despair. Through the new generation’s critique of information and reconstruction of the past, he suggests the possibility of generating a sense of resistance within the dividual.

4. Glimmers of Hope: The Possibility of Resistance in *Vineland*

In *Vineland*, Pynchon's portrayal of "societies of control" is grim and comprehensive: From the transformation of governmental control, readers can observe the manipulation of visual technology, and the degradation from the individual to the dividual. However, Pynchon does not completely erase the possibility of resistance. Booker illustrated that "though *Vineland* argues that genuine political change is difficult, it finally suggests that positive action is possible, provided that the participants have sufficient theoretical awareness to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past" (88). Pynchon mainly places his hope in the next generation, who present a capacity for skepticism, inquiry, and recoding of control mechanisms.

Prairie represents the generation that has grown up in "societies of control" and has been brought up to accept a reality constructed by mass culture. However, she is not a passive recipient, but an awakened person who develops a sense of self and tries to understand and question the mechanisms of the control system. She initially knows almost nothing about her mother Frenesi's past and cannot understand her father Zoyd's marginalized life. Nevertheless, as she comes into contact with the video footage of her mother and oral memories from Frenesi's old companions such as DL, she begins to construct a fragmented but truthful picture of history that is different from that of the dominant ideology. In the underground, "16mm film all over the place, some on reels or cores, some in pieces lying around loose, and some in cans inside steel footlockers, which turned out to be the archives of 24fps, the old guerrilla movie outfit" (Pynchon 185). After viewing these videos, "Prairie comes to a further understanding of medium, time, and control. We are told of how revelatory the footage is to Prairie, not just for what she learns of her mother but for the era itself" (Gazi 57). Just as what Pynchon wrote: "Night and movies whirled on, reel after reel went turning, carrying Prairie back to and through an America of the olden days she'd mostly never seen..." (189). Pynchon enables Prairie to obtain anti-mainstream 24fps video data and oral narration, which is a promising presentation against mainstream ideology. Prairie is no longer a controlled audience of images, but an active decoder.

In addition to gaining the "opposite" history, Prairie also searches for a structure of emotional and collective identity to counteract the dehumanizing order imposed by the control systems. At the end of the novel, Prairie is reunited with her grandmother and mother, a female familial connection that spans three generations and is not based on a political program, but rather on memories and emotions. Prairie's ending suggests that true resistance is not just about destroying control, but about re-generating new networks of relationships that are not governed by control structures.

The younger generation in *Vineland* is very clear about the illusory nature of visual medium and its influence. Apart from Prairie, Isaiah Two Four is the role who also reflects on the power of image technology and points out why the hippie movement failed in the 1960s:

“Whole problem ’th you folks’s generation,” Isaiah opined, “nothing personal, is you believed in your Revolution, put your lives right out there for it—but you sure didn’t understand much about the Tube. Minute the Tube got hold of you folks that was it, that whole alternative America, eldeado meato, just like th’ Indians, sold it all to your real enemies, and even in 1970 dollars—it was way too cheap...” (Pynchon 351)

“Though Zoyd hopes Isaiah is wrong, it is clear that *Vineland*’s characters are able to diagnose the problems caused by television” (Horstman 340). Isaiah Two Four has a distinct understanding that television can change society and dissolve opposing forces. Although the resistance of the younger generation who grew up in popular culture is fragmented and uncertain, it is precisely through the insight and questioning of the logic of television control that they can find a way out.

5. Conclusion

In *Vineland*, Pynchon reveals the transition from the overtly repressive mechanisms during the Nixon era to the moderate forms of control underpinned by technological media and cultural illusions during the Reagan administration, presenting the increasingly decentralized, technological, and permeated aspects of “societies of control.”

Drawing on Deleuze’s theoretical framework, this paper analyzes how technological mediums of images, such as television and film, become key instruments of ideological manipulation in *Vineland*. These media not only change the way people think and reconfigure reality and history, but also dissolve the individual’s critical faculties, so that resistance is no longer violently suppressed, but absorbed and neutralized before it is even formed. Under this mechanism, the form of the subject is transformed. People are no longer individuals with complete cognitive and moral judgment, but individuals who are cut up, coded, and reorganizable. Combining Deleuze and Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, the logic of individual can be shown: The subject is no longer constructed as the will of the whole, but as a fragmented unit of information that can be adjusted and controlled.

Nevertheless, Pynchon has not given up hope. Through the new generation such as Prairie and Isaiah Two Four, he shows how the young have a critical understanding

of images, memories and narratives. In addition, through Prairie's reconnection to her family history, the novel depicts a network of resistance that transcends state control and is linked by emotions. What *Vineland* conveys is that in the midst of fragmentation and manipulation, there still remains the hope for freedom and the awakening of the subject, reflecting the possible paths to counter repressive power in the contemporary technological society.

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