

PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA
MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF MOHAMED BOUDIAF - M'SILA

FACULTY OF LETTERS AND LANGUAGES

DEPARTMENT OF LETTERS AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE

N°:.....



DOMAIN: FOREIGN LANGUAGES

STREAM: ENGLISH LANGUAGE

OPTION: LITERATURE & CIVILIZATION

**Posthuman Identity: The crisis of Individuality and
Critical Thinking in M.T. Anderson's *Feed***

Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Letters and English Language in
Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Master's Degree in

Literature and Civilization

Candidates:

Ms. ALLAMI Marwa and Ms. KHALFALLAH Marwa

Board of Examiners

Dr. HAMOUDI	University of M'sila	Chairperson
Dr. Mohammed SENOUSSI	University of M'sila	Supervisor
Dr. SAHED	University of M'sila	Examiner

DECLARATION

We Marwa ALLAMI and Marwa KHALFALLAH hereby declare that this dissertation entitled: *Posthuman Identity: The Crisis of Individuality and Critical Thinking in M.T. Anderson's Feed* is our own work and have not been submitted before to any other institution or university for a degree.

We assert that we have acknowledged all the used materials that are not original to this work by means of references. Besides, this work is conducted and completed at Mohammed Boudiaf university of M'sila, Algeria.

Signatures



Dedication

I dedicate this work to my mother, whose unwavering love and support have been my anchor that kept me steady through every storm, to my father who believed in me even when I doubted myself.

To my brother Ahmed and my sisters Amira and Imane who have filled my days with warmth and joy.

To Marwa, who started as a classmate, became a best friend, then a partner in research, and remains my closest confidant. And whose genuine and honest friendship made my life enjoyable.

To my friends, Samah, Bouchra, and Nouha whose wisdom has sparked and ignited my curiosity. To Aya, whose companionship has been a constant from the innocence of childhood.

To me, for daring to believe I could when it seemed impossible, and for proving to myself that I am capable of more than I ever imagined.

To all those who nurtured me, who loved me, and who helped shape the person I've become, I offer this work as a humble tribute.

Marwa ALLAMI

To the souls of Palestine who once dreamed of this moment, and to those who left this world with dreams unfulfilled may they rest in peace.

To my father, whose love and support inspire me to achieve and make him proud.

To my mother, whose strength, belief, and sacrifices shaped the woman I am today.

To my siblings Aya, Anfal, Mouna, Oussama, and Youcef who bring joy and color to my life.

To my best friend Marwa, my companion through every step of this university journey.

To Bouchra, Samah, and Meriem my dearest friends life wouldn't be the same without you.

And lastly, to myself, for never giving up and always striving for more

Marwa KHALFALLAH

Acknowledgements

Above all, our deepest gratitude goes to Allah the Almighty for His endless guidance, strength, and blessings.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to our supervisor, Dr. Mohammed SENOUSSE, whose invaluable guidance, thoughtful feedback, and continuous encouragement have shaped this dissertation from its earliest stages. We are honored to have had the chance to learn under his insightful supervision and mentorship.

Additionally, our deepest appreciations go to the board of examiners who took the time to read, evaluate, and examine our work.

We are equally grateful to all the teachers in the Department of Letters and English Language of Mohammed Boudiaf university of M'sila, who accompanied us throughout our five-year academic journey. Each one of you has contributed to our intellectual growth.

Abstract

In a world of technological innovations where the boundaries between human and machine are fading bit by bit, literature through its interrogation of the consequences of this technological integration into human life has become a tool of great significance, a route of salvation, and a call for wisdom. This dissertation investigates the loss of individuality and critical thought in a posthuman context as portrayed by M.T. Anderson in his dystopian novel *Feed*. This research is conducted based on posthumanism theory, mainly drawing on N. Katherine Hayles's concept of the "posthuman subject", Rosi Braidotti's "nomadic subjectivity", and Shoshana Zuboff's "surveillance capitalism"; as it analyzes how technological integration, corporate control, and digital consumerism reshape and redefine human identity. In addition, it interrogates the Feed's transformation of consciousness, language, and autonomy. the analysis reveals that critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and individual agency are systematically diminished. As it links contemporary realities such as algorithmic governance, surveillance capitalism, and educational commodification to the *Feed*'s society.

Key words: Posthumanism, Individuality, Critical Thinking, Technological Integration, Identity.

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INTRODUCTION

General Introduction:

In the midst of the 5th industrial revolution, technology has reached remarkable advancement regarding blurring the boundaries between human beings and AI. Neutralink's Blindsight, a brain chip that can be used to eliminate blindness, eventually following transhumanist ideas that celebrate technology as a tool for human augmentation, as in *New Bottles for New Wine*, Julian Huxley thinks that “[t]he scientific and technical explorations have given the Common Man all over the world a notion of physical possibilities” (15). Whereas, posthumanism interrogates how these technologies fundamentally redefine what it means to be human, M.T. Anderson’s *Feed* (2002) intervenes as a dystopian novel showing the consequences when transhumanist dreams of neural enhancement collide with posthumanist realities of corporate control.

This study investigates how *Feed*’s brain implant embodies the tension between these major theories. The feed initially appears to serve transhumanist goals of cognitive enhancement –instant knowledge access, smooth communication...-, yet ultimately confirms what Braidotti identifies as posthumanism’s central concern “it adds a political dimension by setting the framework of recompositing of bodily materiality in directions diametrically opposed to the spurious efficiency and ruthless opportunism of advanced capitalism” (92).

Anderson portrays how neural integration becomes neural exploitation by showing how feed initially marketed as an enhancement integrating the brain with the digital world in ways that seem to improve cognitive abilities and communication; however, as the novel progresses, it becomes clear that the feed does not simply serve as a tool for personal enhancement; instead, it

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begins to function as a mechanism of neural exploitation. The feed constantly bombards the characters with advertisements, consumerist messages, and corporate interests. It becomes a tool for controlling their behavior, steering them toward consumption and conformity, leading to the erosion of their ability to think critically or independently.

The distinction between transhumanism and posthumanism ideologies becomes urgent as real-world technologies catch up to *Feed's* speculation. TikTok's dopamine algorithms, Meta's emotion-detecting AI, and Instagram's Feeds demonstrate how these supposed enhancements can affect human autonomy precisely as the dynamic Feed anticipated.

“Now we are always selling ourselves” (“A FEED Thought” 11:41). Anderson shows a futuristic world where it is filled with people who are bombarded by ads inside their heads even in sleep; the feed turns humans into extreme consumers rather than free-thinking individuals. The feed's influence is apparent through the loss of privacy and lack of free will; even emotions are influenced and shaped by the feed, and the language itself is transformed to a high extent slang-heavy way which leads to surface level conversation and the decline of meaningful communication.

Statement of the Problem

With the development of technology and the rise of AI alongside algorithmic control human identity is being redefined and their emotions and actions are being manipulated through AI. In *Feed*, Anderson presents a disturbing vision of the posthuman; he critiques the overdependence on technology and the danger it poses on human exceptionalism. While several researchers have explored consumerism and commodification of identity in *Feed*, there remains a lack of focused

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analysis on how the novel dramatizes posthuman subjectivity as a crisis of individuality and consciousness which this research seeks to analyze through posthumanist lens.

Research Questions

This dissertation seeks to answer the following main question: How does M.T. Anderson portray the crisis of individuality and critical thinking in a posthuman world in *Feed*?

To answer this question, the following sub questions shall be answered: how does corporate consumerism shape people's identity in the story? How do *Feed*'s themes relate to today's worries about digital technology? And what roles do entertainment and media play in shaping the individual's identity?

Aim and Objectives

The aim of this study is to develop an understanding about the dangers posed by technological development in a posthuman world where AI seems to hold a tremendous power over human ability to think for themselves. We intend that the research findings will provide an insight into the corporate control influence upon human free will and decision-making by investigating the novel's portrayal of such world and examining the posthuman identity and its erosion following Anderson's vision. In order to attain these aims, objectives should be met, the major objective is to apply the posthumanist theory to analyze the text's depiction of identity loss. Furthermore, it is significant to illustrate the novel's themes with real-world technological developments.

Motivation

This study is driven by the growing concerns over digital consumerism and corporate influence over human behavior. The novel's dystopian vision serves as a critical reflection on

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contemporary anxieties about technology and capitalism which pushes our curiosity to go through this research and motivates us to uncover the impact of a culture that favors ease and materialism over critical thinking.

Literature review:

Contemporary literature has increasingly engaged with posthumanist themes questioning what it means to be human in technologically saturated futures. Works like Anderson's *Feed* has tackled this futuristic vision of a world that contrasts with the humanist perspective where the human is no longer central and superior where individual agency, rationality and autonomy are deeply undermined by corporate power and technological integration. Scholars such as N Katherine Hayles and Donna Haraway have significantly contributed to the foundation of posthuman theory, exploring the convergence of humanity and technology. Hayles, in *How We Became Posthuman*, she argues that "the posthuman does not really mean the end of humanity. It signals instead the end of certain conception of the human, a conception that may have applied, at best, to that fraction of humanity who had the wealth, power, and leisure to conceptualize themselves as autonomous being exercising their will through individual agency and choice" (286). She clarifies that posthumanism is not about the extinction of humanity but rather a shift in what it means to be human challenging the traditional enlightenment of the human –traditional privileged people- while Hayles remains cautiously optimistic about the transformative potential of posthuman subjectivity, Anderson's *Feed* presents more dystopian perspective. In this sense, Anderson is narratively dystopian and Hayles is theoretically optimistic.

The posthuman identity has gathered extensive discourse among scholars and researchers who investigate such contemporary ideas where the human is directly involved with technology. Biology itself is meddled with; and it is in a constant change because of the contributions of

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scientists who try to follow transhumanist's perspectives agreeing with the evolution of biotechnology such as Neuralink's blindsight. Therefore, researchers have shown interests in M.T. Anderson's *Feed* in which he interrogates the reduction of human subjectivity under neoliberal capitalism where individuals are enterprises as Foucault argues in *The Birth of Biopolitics* "American neo-liberalism still involves generalizing it throughout the social body and including the whole of the social system not usually conducted through or sanctioned by monetary exchanges" (243). Meaning that economic reasoning applies on all aspects of human behavior where in *Feed* it changes how they talk and behave not just buying.

Feed's satirical portrayal of a consumer-driven society has accumulated attention among researchers. Richard Gooding in "Our Posthuman Adolescence" analyzes *Feed* as a "critical dystopia" that reflects anxieties about technology and consumerism. He suggests that the novel blends young adults (YA) tropes with dystopian themes, ultimately offering a nuanced on identity formation in a technologically mediated world; Gooding argues that the *Feed* technology, a brain implant connecting individuals to a consumerist network, raises concerns about autonomy and subjectivity.

Another research that has similar ideas, Indra Priyadharshini M, Dr. C. Leena examine posthumanism and AI in *Feed*. "No importance is given to the emotions or feelings of the people" (108); meaning that the novel depicts a world where technology minimizes the role of human beings and suppresses emotions and critical thinking. Their analyses emphasize the environmental degradation and the lack of importance given to nature, they said: "When environmentalism is considered the author depicts the earth in a distinctive way where machines, skyscrapers and flying cars take the major role where no much description or importance for nature is given" (108). Reflecting a broader critique of posthumanism's potential consequences.

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The pervasive influence of technology and consumer culture erases individuality and critical thought. Dystopian visions of Global Capitalism explore this aspect, arguing that the characters' thoughts are connected to the feed leading them to express their experiences through capitalist logic and language as in "Dystopian Visions of Global Capitalism: Philip Reeve's *Mortal Engines* and M.T Anderson's *Feed*", "the disembedding of the main characters is again a gesture which interrogates global capitalism" (132).

Some scholars identify glimmers of resistance and agency within the novel as Mathew Yap in his *The Hum of its Parts: Locating Posthuman Subjectivity, Identity and Agency through Power and Technology*, he focuses on Violet's attempt to resist the feed and reclaim her individuality through acts of resistance. While these acts lead to tragic ending, yet they show the importance of critical thought and the individual's potential to challenge and resist dominant ideologies. Furthermore, in her dissertation: *Technology and the Logic of Consumption in M.T. Anderson's Feed (2021)*, BENMERZOUG Dounia critiques *Feed* through consumerism and capitalist alienation drawing on Adorno, Horkheimer, and Baudrillard, this dissertation adopts posthumanist theory to investigate how Anderson's *Feed* dissolves the boundaries among human-machine, biology-tech, and choice-programming. Prior works focus on commodification; this study follows a deeper rupture the ontological collapse where the Feed doesn't just shape desire, it rewires thought and embodiment. Characters become posthuman hybrids: data-fed, code-entangled, stripped of clear autonomy. Drawing on thinkers like Braidotti, Hayles, and Zuboff, we argue that *Feed* enacts a crisis of posthuman subjectivity; where control no longer relies on buying power, but on the fusion of flesh and code. This reframing focus on a new form of dystopian domination: algorithmic governance embedded in the body itself.

Theoretical Framework:

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The dissertation is conducted through the lens of posthumanist theory. We used primarily the theoretical contributions of N. Katherine Hayles, Rosi Braidotti, and Shoshana Zuboff. Secondary sources from digital theory and critical posthumanism are used to situate Anderson's speculative narrative in relation to current technological developments.

The work is divided into two main chapters. The first chapter is devoted to the theoretical framework and the socio-technical context. The first section tackles the Posthumanism theory and the erosion of the human subject along with its main concepts. The second section explores consumerism, surveillance, and the manufactured mind. The third section is devoted to education, language, and the decline of critical literacy.

The second chapter entitled; "Posthuman identity in M.T. Anderson's *Feed*", is devoted to the analysis of the novel through posthumanist perspective. While the first section examines the deconstruction of individuality in a mediated world, the second section tackles the decline of language and critical thinking. The third section is devoted to posthuman identity under corporate domination.

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Theoretical Framework and Socio-technological Context.

1. Introduction

In an age of rapid technological advancement and deep digital integration, technology is connecting human beings with machines. This connection is building a question of what it means to be a human. Chapter one considers with theoretical framework of posthumanism and transhumanism. It shows how today's technology is changing the understanding of identity, autonomy, and agency. These changes are not theoretical; they deeply affect how people see themselves and live their everyday life. Drawing on the works of N. Katherine Hayles, Rosi Braidotti, and Shoshana Zuboff, this chapter investigates how algorithmic systems, surveillance capitalism, and distributed cognition are transforming the human subject.

2. Posthumanism and the Erosion of the Human Subject:

2.1. Defining the Posthuman: Beyond Humanism.

Defining the posthuman means going beyond the old idea of a fixed human identity and accepting that who we are is shaped by technology, nature, and other nonhuman forces. It is a philosophical and cultural response to the limitations of humanist thought. Rooted in Enlightenment ideals, classical humanism which positions the human as a rational, autonomous, and exceptional being, standing apart from nature, animals, and machines. Rosi Braidotti, in *The Posthuman*, (2013) argues that “The posthumanist perspective rests on the assumption of the historical decline of a Humanism but it goes further in exploring alternatives” (37). In a world defined by technological integration, ecological crisis, and biopolitical systems,

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posthuman theorists argue that the framework of humanism is no longer suitable for understanding subjectivity.

“I think, therefore I am” said Descartes, asserting that the act of thinking is proof of one’s existence, following the classical humanism ideology that sets the belief in human’s unique capacity for reason, self-reflection, and moral agency. This worldview inherently anthropocentric; it draws clear boundaries between human and non-human, mind and body, self and system. Whereas posthumanism is somehow the opposite, it blurs those boundaries. Ihab Hassan argues that “We need to understand that five hundred years of humanism may be coming to an end as humanism transforms itself into something that we must helplessly call post-humanism” (qtd. In Hayles 1). Meaning that humanism which has shaped our ideas for five hundred years, might be ending. As humans and their desire change deeply, we need to rethink what it means to be human. This change is leading us into something called Posthumanism.

Posthumanists argue that human identity and thoughts are no longer purely individual or biological. With digital technologies like AI or brain-implants, our cognitive processes become part of a larger system that includes machines as Hayles suggests “In the posthuman, there are no essential differences or absolute demarcations between bodily existence and computer simulation, cybernetic mechanism and biological organism, robot technology and human goals” (3). She further explains that in the posthuman view, information is no longer tied to the physical body, she writes, “Because information had lost its body, this construction implied that embodiment is not essential to human being” (Hayles 4). This idea is vivid in today's world, where information is no longer associated with only human beings; real-world advancements in brain-computer interfaces suggest a future where thought and intention could be uploaded, shared, or even manipulated by external systems. In parallel, AI models and tools like ChatGPT and DeepSeek illustrate a broader

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shift in the role of information itself. These systems do not merely store data, but they engage in dialogue, generate responses, and simulate human-like reasoning.

In the posthuman era, identity is no longer seen as fixed, singular, or exclusively human. It becomes hybrid, fluid, and co-constructed through interactions with technology, nature, and other nonhuman agents. This hybridity challenges the classical humanist notion of self-contained, rational individual. Instead, identity is distributed across biological, technological, and informational networks. In *The Posthuman*, Rosi Braidotti extends these ideas by discussing posthumanism within ethical and ecological context; she clarifies the shift by describing “the new knowing subject” as “a complex assemblage of human and non-human, planetary and cosmic, given and manufactured, which requires major re-adjustments in our ways of thinking” (159).

In defining the posthuman, one does not abandon the human but opens the door to transformation. Theories of posthumanism provide the critical and necessary tools to investigate how identity is constructed, maintained, and destabilized in technology-driven societies. This shift sets the stage for understanding how literature engages with and critiques the erosion of the human subject. Authors often critique theories by portraying the consequences that may occur from such inventions, mainly to warn of its dangers on human species, particularly human’s individuality and critical thought. Braidotti says that “A second significant posthuman development comes from science and technology studies. This contemporary interdisciplinary field raises crucial ethical and conceptual questions about the status of the human but is generally reluctant to undertake a full study of their implications for a theory of subjectivity (39).

2.2. Technological Integration and Identity Dissolution

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Technological integration into human life and even themselves has transformed the perception of life making it a stage for a performance of various technological inventions. It changes not only how individuals interact with each other but how they understand themselves. In posthumanism, the self is no longer an autonomous entity but rather it is entangled with digital systems; cognition, memory, identity, and desire are mediated by such systems. In addition to that, the integration of human subjectivity with technological innovations marks the dissolution of identity where it is unstable and in a constant change accordingly with the constant evolution of technology. Basically, in a world where surveillance systems, machine use, neural networks, and algorithmic personalization, the self becomes fragmented and manipulated.

The posthuman theorist N. Katherine Hayles argues that the posthuman does not mean to be a cyborg, "...it is important to recognize that the construction of the posthuman does not require the subject to be literal cyborg" (4). In our world, where technology is overwhelming, we are considered posthuman according to Hayles even though our bodies are not altered; leading to a new kind of subjectivity. It challenges the ideas of humanism where human thoughts are internal. Hayles presents Donna Haraway's thoughts in her book, she says:

In "A Manifesto for Cyborgs," Donna Haraway wrote about the potential of the cyborg to disrupt traditional categories.² Fusing cybernetic device and biological organism, the cyborg violates the human/machine distinction; replacing cognition with neural feedback, it challenges the human-animal difference; explaining the behavior of thermostats and people through theories of feedback, hierarchical structure, and control, it erases the animate/inanimate distinction. (Hayles 84)

Technological integration has multiple implications on how we understand cognition, agency, and identity; one is the concept of distributed cognition, which challenges the notion that

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thinking occurs solely within the individual mind. As in *the extended mind*, R.A Wilson argues that “..., so too with cognitive resources: not all of these are neural, and some of those that are not are located beyond the head of the individual” (Richard 174). This suggests that cognition is a collaborative process, shaped by interactions between human beings and the technologies they use. In this framework, smartphones, search engines, and social media platforms become part of our cognitive system, extending memory, problem-solving, and decision-making capacities.

As cognition becomes distributed, the boundaries of oneself begin to blur. Braidotti has given her thoughts on subjectivity, she argues that “The focus shifted accordingly from unitary to nomadic subjectivity” (49). Meaning that the traditional humanist’s view of the self has ended, and a new posthumanist’s view of the self has occurred as a response to the continuous integration of technology in our world. Furthermore, the increasing integration of technology into everyday life has led to what scholars describe as identity dissolution. Individuals no longer function as isolated agents but are constantly shaped by their interactions with networked systems, algorithms, and artificial intelligence; platforms like Facebook, where users construct and perform multiple versions of the self across digital networks. As individuals interact with algorithmic feeds, targeted advertisements, and personalized content; their identities become shaped by external data rather than internal reflection which align with the previous thoughts of Hayles and Braidotti.

2.3. The Collapse of Individual Autonomy in Digital Culture

The digital technology affects humans’ ability to think and act freely, basically restricting personal autonomy to the point of collapse. Social media, algorithms, and data mining influence choices, shape opinions, and make it harder to stay independent. In her book, *The Posthuman*, Braidotti mentions that “Technological intervention upon all living matter creates a negative unity

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and mutual dependence among humans and other species” (40). In other words, digital systems control human aspects of life. The concept of the human has been fundamentally transformed by such technologies; even language is affected, as Hayles presents:

carrying the instabilities implicit in Lacanian floating signifiers one step further, information technologies create what I will call flickering signifiers, characterized by their tendency toward unexpected metamorphoses, attenuation, and dispersions. Flickering signifiers signal an important shift in the plate tectonics of language. (30)

In digital culture human is no longer seen as a unique autonomous being but rather as a node in a network, entangled with machines, this transformation undermines traditional ideas of agency and autonomy, replacing them with forms of distributed consciousness and machinic interdependence. As such, autonomy collapses not through force, but through the dissolution of boundaries between human and machine. Nowadays, people think through AI tools and digital assistants and not through their own minds; thinking that it is easier to just adapt and go with the flow of technology evolution which leads to the loss of individual autonomy. Hayles uses Moravec’s thoughts on human/machine future “*In Mind Children: The Future of Robot and Human Intelligence*, Moravec argues the age of carbon-based life is drawing to a close, Humans are about to be replaced by intelligent machines as the dominant life-form on the planet” (235).

Digital culture does not simply assist human decision-making; it preconditions and predicts it through algorithms. These algorithms shape our social interactions and our emotional responses and even our consumption habits. It appears as a choice that people take but in fact it is just the result of such predictive modeling; in other words, it manipulates and influences the ones actions by prior gathered data. In her book *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at The New Frontier of Power*, Shoshana Zuboff describes this as a system that “unilaterally

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claims human experience as free raw material for translation into behavioral data” (III. What Is Surveillance Capitalism?). Platforms like TikTok, Netflix, and Instagram do not simply mirror user preferences; instead, they play an active role in shaping those preferences through algorithmically driven feedback mechanisms that Zuboff presents it as “*behavioral futures markets*”. Therefore, Autonomy is no longer foundational but rather it is systematically engineered, commodified and often illusory.

The idea of personal freedom has changed in today's digital world. As posthuman theorists explain, people are no longer fully in control of their own thoughts and actions. Instead, technology, systems, and algorithms now play a major role in shaping how we think, feel, and make decisions. These systems are not neutral; they are embedded in a broader logic of consumerism and surveillance, where user behavior is monitored and sold as predictive data. The result is manufactured mind; a subjectivity shaped by invisible mechanisms of influence that serve corporate interests more than individual autonomy. This leads to the end of the autonomous humanist subject and the beginning of the posthuman consumer shaped by data capitalism.

3. Consumerism, Surveillance, and the Manufactured Mind:

3.1. Corporate Power and Datafication of the Self

In posthumanism, corporate power and datafication of the self are major factors in understanding the loss of individuality and critical thought. The continuous evolution of digital technologies gives corporations the chance to further control, reshape, and construct human identity. It sets the stage for the datafication of the self; it is a form of transformation of humans' behavior, emotions, and interactions into data, which can be used later as a source of profits. With the rise of data-driven technologies, individuals are increasingly viewed not as autonomous beings

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but rather as sources of data to be analyzed and extracted from. Large corporations have become powerful forces that shape how people see themselves and the world. This change challenges the previous ideas of the self as a rational being who is in control. This dynamic is further emphasized by Sahana Udupa and Ethiraj Gabriel Dattatreyan, in *Digital Unsettling: Decoloniality and Dispossession in the Age of Social Media*: “A critical mobilization of montage as method requires an attention to the ways in which algorithms organize what becomes visible, audible, and sensible on social media, as algorithmic systems work to monetize attention and extract value from collectively generated data” (16).

In today’s world, the human is treated as a product by the big tech companies through devices like smartphones, online platforms, and fitness trackers. Corporations collect this data to make profits. This concept turns the individuals’ personal life into something that can be meddled with. As Zuboff discusses “although some of these data are applied to product or service improvement, the rest are declared as proprietary behavioral surplus, fed into advanced manufacturing processes known as “machine intelligence,” and fabricated into prediction product that anticipate what you will do now, soon, and later” (III. What Is Surveillance Capitalism?).

When the system of algorithmic capitalism is deeply embedded in society and in the individuals’ daily practices, it becomes hard to fight back or even resist. It goes beyond the human capacity to withdraw from such practices. Even if people try to resist, whether by taking breaks from technology or by using private navigators and private apps, these measurements can still be transformed into data, which can later be used to deliver certain ideas and suggestions that serve these corporations and their benefactors.

In a digital world controlled by powerful corporations, hackers often emerged as figures who challenge and disrupt that control. The data that is gathered by the interactions that happen

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when people shop online can be accessed by hackers who show that even the most powerful digital systems controlled by big companies like Google or Meta are not as secure as they seem. In *The Black Box Society: The Secret Algorithms That Control Money and Information*, Frank Pasquale cited an incident: “Target suffered a data breach one of the largest in retail history. It affected an estimated 110 million people. Hackers stole “mailing and email addresses, phone numbers or names, [and] the kind of data routinely collected from customers during interactions like shopping online” (29). These systems are designed to collect data. Facebook was fined £500,000 in October 2018 by the UK's data protection watchdog for its involvement in the Cambridge Analytica scandal (<https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-50234141>).

3.2. The Commodification of Thought

In posthumanism, the process of thinking is no longer perceived as a natural practice or done privately but as a measured entity that can be purchased by certain powers. Posthumanists, like Hayles and Rosi, suggest that human consciousness is now deeply connected to technology and information systems where human thoughts are shaped by digital media, algorithms, and online platforms that collect and use individuals' data according to their interests. Online activities, such as clicking, searching, and even reacting are tracked, recorded, and analyzed by algorithmic systems that operate invisibly beneath the surface of user interfaces. Frank Pasquale further elaborates “Cell phones track our movements; programs log our keystrokes. New hardware and new software prom use to make “quantified selves” of all of us, whether we like it or not” (4).

According to N. Katherine Hayles, thinking is no longer something that happens in the human brain, especially in the posthuman age. It is distributed across human and non-human systems. Such as machines and networks, which participate in the thinking process. This means

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“thinking” is involved with algorithms. In this view, algorithms are not just tools; they are part of the human thinking process. Rosi Braidotti adds that in advanced capitalist societies, the sense of self is increasingly shaped by economic forces; she states that “In substance, advanced capitalism both invests and profits from the scientific and economic control and the commodification of all that lives” (59). Moreover, in her book *Weapons of Math Destruction*, Cathy O’Neil advocates that “We’re modeled as shoppers and couch potatoes” (31). Where humans are seen as lazy consumers and not valued for who they are but for their capacity to generate data and predict behavior.

Shoshana Zuboff goes even further, explaining how digital platforms follow every action and thought-related trace, such as clicking, searching, or even ignoring, turning these actions into products to be sold without the individuals’ awareness. This method creates a form of intellectual conformity, as people are constantly shoved toward popular opinions, trends, and consumer choices by the algorithms that anticipate their desires. Zuboff notes that “[s]urveillance capitalism’s products and services are not the objects of a value exchange. They do not establish constructive producer-consumer reciprocities. Instead, they are the “hooks” that lure users into their extractive operations in which our personal experiences are scraped and packaged as the means to others' ends” (III. What Is Surveillance Capitalism?). In this quote, she insists that users are not traditional customers because the services and products are not exchanged for value, but rather, they are designed to attract users to harvest their behavioral data and sell it to third parties for profits.

In *The Algorithmic Society: An Introduction*, Rik Peeters and Marc Schuilenburg mentioned that “Artificial intelligence, databases, websites, and automated procedures are replacing human agency from actual decision-making” (qtd. in Peeters and Schuilenburg 2). Which

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aligns with the previous theorists' ideas on the commodification of thought and the implications of AI tools on humans' ability to generate and make decisions. Meta uses AI tools in apps like Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp for content recommendations by analyzing the user's behaviors, as it suggests captions, emojis, and tone adjustments using Natural Processing Language (NPL). Facebook uses AI to prioritize posts based on what the user interacts with using the Deep Learning Recommendation Model (DLRM). Instagram AI assistant suggests captions; edit them and correct any mistakes as it suggests other phrases depending on the user's posts. AI tools facilitate the user's life, yet they affect the very process of thinking for oneself. They are designed to maximize engagement by showing users content they are most likely to interact with, which creates dopamine loops, addiction, social media anxiety, and even identity confusion.

3.3. Critical Consciousness and Algorithmic Governance

The rise of algorithmic governance challenges the cultivation of critical consciousness in contemporary societies where digital technologies are all over them. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire refers to critical consciousness or “*conscientização*” as “learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (35). However, data-driven governance, such as surveillance capitalism, algorithmic systems, and prediction engines work through deliberate and inaccessible processes. In her book *Weapons of Math Destruction*, Cathy O’Neil terms these systems as “Weapons of Math Destruction”; she suggests that “these mathematical models were opaque, their workings invisible to all but the highest priests in their domain” (14). Not only they are opaque, but they are unaccountable as well, she mentions, “They’re opaque, unquestioned, and unaccountable, and they operate at a scale to sort, target, or “optimize” millions of people” (20).

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In the digital age, individuals are no longer forced into surrendering their privacy, but rather they voluntarily engage in self-surveillance and control. In *The Transparency Society*, Byung-Chul Han uncovers the way that digital capitalism along with algorithmic governance operate; emphasizing that they work by tempting people into using freedom in ways that can be used to serve power and not by restricting it. He states that:

The digital society of control makes intensive use of freedom. It is only possible thanks to voluntary self-illumination and self-exposure. It exploits freedom. The society of control achieves perfection when its inhabitants do not communicate because of external constraint but out of inner need—that is, when the fear of giving up a private and intimate sphere yields to the need to put oneself on display shamelessly. (viii)

What appears as autonomous self-expression is, in fact, shaped by hidden systems that diminish critical consciousness because of this normalization and internalization of these mechanisms of control.

Algorithmic governance exemplifies what Michel Foucault advocates in *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, where he notes that “it is utterly incongruous with the new methods of power whose operation is not ensured by right but by technique, not by law but by normalization, not by punishment but by control, methods that are employed on all levels and in forms that go beyond the state and its apparatus” (89). In this framework, power operates through the regulation of life itself by normalization and control and not by coercion; this aligns with algorithmic governance, where they control human life and behavior. People normalize these operations of surveillance and algorithmic control as they become integrated into daily life,

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which ultimately erodes the possibility of developing critical consciousness where individuals comply rather than reflect and resist.

4. Education, Language, and The Decline of Critical Literacy

In today's educational systems, where AI tools are integrated, the process of teaching and learning has shifted immensely from liberation to tools of market efficiency. Education focuses on economically valuable individuals instead of critically aware individuals; Freire claims that:

It is not surprising that the banking concept of education regards men as adaptable, manageable beings. The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness that would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world. The more completely they accept the passive role imposed on them, the more they tend simply to adapt to the world as it is and to the fragmented view of reality deposited in them. (Freire 74)

This quote shows the consequences of such educational systems on one's critical consciousness where individuals are controllable and manageable subjects. Many educational institutions across the world use AI tools for monitoring students. Echo Xie, in her article "AI is watching China's students, but how well can it really see?" discusses the integration of AI in Chinese schools and the ways it monitors student attention, facial expressions, and classroom behavior; she states that "the surveillance of students has raised privacy issues for educators and parents, as well as big questions over the effectiveness of the technology" (<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/3027349/artificial-intelligence-watching-chinas-students-how-well-can>). This presents how educational systems rely on surveillance

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technologies to monitor students constantly, which not only invades students' privacy but also hinders their ability to develop independent critical thinking and autonomy.

With the rise of technology, life becomes faster and more connected as it is dependent on digital systems. Tasks that take hours and days can now be completed in seconds. This change helps people to gain time, yet it affects individuals in many ways, such as prioritizing speed and encouraging users to consume and produce content rapidly. This creates a habit of wanting instant information, where deep information is often made too simple. Users are trapped in a bubble of similar opinions because the algorithms show them what they already like, which stops them from thinking deeply or seeing other points of view. In *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World*, Paulo Freire and Donaldo Macedo state that “Reading the world always precedes reading the word, and reading the word implies continually reading the world. As I suggested earlier, this movement from the word to the world is always present; even the spoken word flows from our reading of the world” (23). This points out that individuals need to engage critically with their surroundings to understand and question the world and its aspects and prevent the decline of critical literacy.

In the digital world, language is no longer used to challenge or question ideas; instead, it mostly supports agreement and avoids deep debates or disagreement, which leads to weak conversations and critical thinking. The generation Z (Gen Z), born into the digital age, creates a new language, slang, and internet-specific vocabulary that reflect their unique mode of expression and cultured identity. Terms like “sus” (suspicious), “cap” (lie), “rizz” (charisma), and abbreviations such as “POV” (point of view) or IRL (in real life) are now widely used across platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter. This language boosts a sense of community and shared identity among young users; it also contributes to the simplification of communication.

5. Conclusion

The posthuman theory challenges the old idea that humans are fully logical and in control of themselves. The sense of the human is shaped by technology and algorithms and systems that are guiding the human. Thinkers like Hayles, Braidotti, and Zuboff proved that human thoughts and feelings are no longer stable or fully personal; instead, they are mixed with technology and machines such as the phone and social media. The novel *Feed* takes the reader into an experience of how humans lose their identity.

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Posthuman Identity in M.T. Anderson's Feed

1. Introduction

This chapter applies posthumanism theory along with its concepts to M.T. Anderson's *Feed*, which is a dystopian novel that envisions the consequences of posthuman identity that are shaped by corporate control, building upon the theoretical framework that has been discussed in the first chapter. It further analyzes how the Feed functions as an extension of consciousness resulting the erosion of individuality, and critical thought in favor of consumer conformity. It analyzes how characters reflect diverse extents of assimilation and resistance to the feed's influence. The chapter positions *Feed* as a speculative critique of real-world trends in surveillance capitalism and digital dependency.

2. Deconstructing Individuality in a Mediated World

2.1. The Feed as an Extension of Consciousness

Anderson creates a society where consciousness is not fully a human process but rather an extended one bound by technology. The people of this society are cyborgs; they have chips implanted in their brains. These implants, which are linked to corporate networks, feed them information, desires, and sensations. Anderson exemplifies the concept of “distributed cognition” of N. Katherine Hayles and her definition of the posthuman, where “there are no essential differences or absolute demarcations between bodily existence and computer simulation” (3). It is evident in the society's practices that Anderson portrays in his novel; cognition is shared between the characters and their feeds, which erodes the traditional notion of an autonomous thinker. Titus and his peers, who are exposed from a young age to the Feed's constant advertisements and the

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easy access to information, entertainment, and communication, develop a sense of dependence rather than enhancing critical thinking. This is evident after the hacking incident and the disconnection from the feed. Titus admits that they didn't know what to do without the feed (Anderson 31) and says that "our heads felt real empty" (Anderson 33). This dependency hinders the characters' ability to think for themselves, which exemplifies the posthuman subject.

The feed is not a mere tool of convenience but goes beyond that into a part of the human identity where it blurs whatever boundaries between humans and machines; there is hardly any differences between human consciousness and machine input, they are indistinguishable to the characters themselves, and it becomes part of them that they can never get rid of. Violet addresses the inability of shutting off the feed, when Titus asked whether they could turn it off thinking that they did before; she replies to his question "No, they didn't. They disconnected us. They shut down most of the functions. The feed was still on. It's part of the brain" (Anderson 115). Titus affirms this in a different scene where he is explaining Violet's feed's malfunction to Quendy, he says "the whole brain is tied in the feed. The whole brain, like the memory and the part that makes you move and the part for your emotions" (145). This shows the inseparable connection between the feed and the human brain which further aligns with the previous idea of Hayles "the distributed consciousness".

The characters' lives are bound by the feed, everything goes through it; it influences their choices, emotions, and thoughts. Anderson tries to provide a solid ground for understanding the severity and seriousness of such technology by addressing the issue of individual's autonomy and agency over ones' body and mind. The characters on different occasions show their dependence on the feed as it manipulates their decision-making. When Titus wants to test-drive upcars, he thinks of two different brands "the Swarp" and "Dodge Gryphon", in an instant the feed starts envisioning

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each upcar to him with images and scenes that can be experienced in them; one romantic the other much more a family upcar (84). This shows how the feed influences the one's decision-making. The feed further suggests words to use "I didn't know the word. Her spine was like . . . ? The feed suggested 'supple'" (11). This lets the characters depend more on it while communicating or thinking with oneself which is exactly what is happening in our evolving world with AI typing suggestions when using our phones to communicate or write in general.

The feed affects how characters use some parts of their bodies or behaviors, and it appears in different occasions; characters move some parts of their body without even realizing it. Loga when she is m-chatting the news of the characters who have been hacked to their friends in earth, "occasionally, she'd forget and she'd say out loud to no one, 'Omigod! Yes! Right here!' or 'Hello . . . ?'" (37), even though she is chatting through the feed, yet she doesn't notice that she is using her mouth to talk in the air. In a different scene, Titus loses his self-awareness, like he is disconnected from his own consciousness, he claps his hands again in the hospital's waiting room and when Violet's father asks him to stop, he realizes that he'd like been clapping again (141). Instead of being emotionally present for Violet, he drifts to an automated behavior, likely due to the feed's involvement with one's consciousness.

The deep integration of the feed in the characters' brains results in the erosion of the traditional humanist's ideology on the individuals' autonomy which perceives the human at the center as an exceptional being. The individuals become fragmented entities that the external input, the feed, shape their identities instead of internal reflection. Characters rely on the feed for an emotional, euphoric, and altered state; they intentionally make their feeds malfunction to go in mal and feel that excessive and overwhelming sensation which is similar to being high in our twenty-

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first century dictionary which is far from using integrated technological devices as drugs. Titus observes the state his peers is in when they go in mal:

They spread out their arms and closed their eyes, and you could see when it hit them. They got the shudder first, and then their heads rocked, and they were big stumbling, and they went backward, and there were all these people back there on the bed and a chair and the floor, blinded, doing the quiver. Link's tongue came out. It was purple from candy. (62)

This kind of use of the intentional feed malfunction further explains the extension consciousness to the feed whether it is properly working as mentioned in previous incidents or malfunctioning intentionally.

2.2. Violet's Resistance and the Myth of Agency

In *Feed*, Violet attempts to assert her agency; she resists the algorithmic control of the feed, deliberately inputting random preferences to disturb the system's ability to categorize and market to her. Violet's rebellion shows that in a world run by powerful technology and big corporations. In *Feed*, real freedom does not exist, even when it looks like people are free, they are being influenced and controlled by systems which are built to make profits from humans. "Mind-boggling amounts of data are generated regarding our daily actions with algorithms processing and acting upon these data to make decisions that manage, control, and nudge our behavior in everyday life" (Peeters and Schuilenburg 1). Violet is not like the other characters who passively accept the algorithmic manipulation of their desires and behaviors; she intentionally feeds the system with false information to confuse and disturb the feed. "She's always looking for stuff about the decline of civilization, and everything's a mess, da da da" (Anderson 147). As she likes to have deep

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conversations and talk about serious topics, in the chapter “The Real Thing” Violet tries to have a conversation about the first experience drinking Coke; she says:

Sometimes I try to think back to the first time I ever had Coke. Because it must have hurt, but I can't remember. How could we even have started to enjoy it? If something's an acquired taste, like, how do you start to acquire it? For that matter, who gave me Coke the first time? My father? I don't think so. Who would hand a kid a Coke and think, 'Her first one. I'm so proud.' How do we even start? (Anderson 109)

Violet clearly tries to have a deep conversation with Titus and their peers, but “there was a long, silent part” (Anderson109); they ignore her and change the subject. Marty breaks the silence. “Yeah. That may have cost us a few. Hey, how about the great foaming capabilities of Coke?” (109).

“While we flew to the party, she told me about weird things she'd read on the feed while she was resisting it or whatev. She told me about the scales on butterflies and the way animals lived in ducts, sometimes whole herds” (153). Violet's usage of feed is different from the others; she uses feed to gain knowledge, especially about nature, because she found beauty in it. Titus does not really care about Violet's ideas; the phrase “while she was resisting or whatev” shows Titus's attitude toward Violet, and his tone underscores the lack of understanding or appreciation for her curiosity, as it shows that he is emotionally detached. In the end, Violet's condition worsens because she is living in a system that controls everything, so it was difficult for her to be free. She was disturbing the feed with false information yet still using it—the system she is fighting against.

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Violet slowly loses control of her body, eventually becoming unable to move or function independently. The system refuses to help her because she is not “a reliable investment.” However, other characters continue their lives without concern, even Titus, the one she thinks he loves her. Titus didn’t care about her feelings even though she needed him. Titus showed Marty and Link the message from Violet with the list of the things she wanted to achieve before she died. When he shows his friends he was upset that she’s texting him, Marty asked him why he was not talking to her, he replied “I was texting her, I just hadn’t” (190).

The system shapes Violet’s identity; she wants to be free in a world that refuses freedom, a world that treats humans like machines and products as they try to make profits off them.

“Violet, I think I can help you come up with products that really say, "You." They'll shout, "You! You! You!" as if it was always Saturday! Oh, I know! You're almost a woman, and you want things that are totally big Violet! That's where I can help! All right, chatted Violet. No, thanks. Thanks. I’m done. Sometimes choices are hard to make” (125).

In *Feed*, freedom is compromised by consumerism, technology, and corporate control. The characters think they are free because they buy everything they want; as they go anywhere, they even go to the moon: “We went to the moon to have fun, but the moon turned out to completely suck” (5). Going to the moon is something normal to them. But the reality is different from what they think. Their choices are controlled by the feed, which customizes advertisements based on their desires; desires that are manipulated by corporations. “Okay. All right. Everything we do gets thrown into a big calculation. Like they're watching us right now. They can tell where you're looking. They want to know what you want” (68). Freedom in *Feed*’s society is identified as a false freedom; it is freedom with buying power; the more they consume, the more “freedom”

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they supposedly have. Violet is different from most of the characters; she is homeschooled, she is smarter than her friends, and she questions the world around her as she reads books and is always curious about nature and animals. She wants to think independently rather than waiting for the feed to tell her what to do or what to feel; she wants to be free. She tries to trick the feed by making random purchases that do not reflect her real personality; she hopes to confuse the system and become unpredictable. “They try to figure out who you are and to make you conform to one of their types for easy marketing” (68).

Violet's body becomes a symbol of her lack of freedom. Her feed implant starts to malfunction, and she begins to lose physical and mental control; she lost a year from her memory “I lost a year. During the seizure. I can't remember anything from the year before I got the feed. When I was six. The information is just gone. There's nothing there” (145). Her body is no longer her own; it's connected by a malfunctioning piece of technology that she cannot fix herself. She cannot get medical help because she is not profitable; the feed corporation refuses to help her because her data profile is not useful for advertising.

We're sorry, Violet Durm. Unfortunately, FeedTech and other investors reviewed your purchasing history, and we don't feel that you would be a reliable investment at this time. No one could get what we call a "handle" on your shopping habits, like for example you asking for information about all those wow and brag products and then never buying anything. (165).

Violet's value as a human being is measured by how well she fits into the consumer system. The individual's worth in Feed's society is tied to consumer behavior. As Violet's experience shows, the dehumanization begins when a person cannot be easily categorized or exploited by the system. Her malfunctioning feed, loss of memory, and ultimate rejection by FeedTech highlight how personal

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identity and even basic human dignity are disregarded when someone fails to conform to consumer expectations.

2.3. Titus and the Fragmented self

In *Feed*, M.T. Anderson presents a dystopian future ruled by consumer culture and embedded technological control, where people are constantly connected to the feed, an advanced form of the internet through brain implants, as it controls their choices and thoughts. In *Feed*, the protagonist, Titus, represents the fragmented self, which is the lack of self-control, the loss of identity, and the absence of clear thoughts and deep emotions. Titus is shaped by technology, corporate control, and consumer culture, which deeply affected him as a human being. Theorists such as Katherine Hayles and Donna Haraway explain that modern humans are no longer stable. Instead, they are shaped by technology, social media, and advertising. the person's identity is faded and broken into pieces as it becomes a product in a consumer world. As Hayles mentioned in *How We Became Posthuman (1999)*, “The posthuman subject is an amalgam, a collection of heterogeneous components, a material-informational entity whose boundaries undergo continuous construction and reconstruction” (3). Hayles clarifies that the humans in the posthuman era are being reshaped, such as Titus; his thoughts, feelings, and even his desires are influenced by the feed. He does not fully control who he is; instead, his identity is built through trends, ads, and technology, which shows that he is not a complete and natural person with a strong sense of self.

The main reason why Titus’s identity is fragmented and weak is the feed. It gives him information and controls the way he thinks, feels, and lives. He has never learned how to think in a deep way because he has been connected to the feed from a very young age. The feed suggests words when he tries to talk, as it tells him what to buy and what to like. “The feed was still on. It's

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part of the brain.” (15). The feed was doing the job of the brain, and as a result, it caused a brain dysfunction. The feed takes away his freedom to choose and fills his mind with constant noise, leaving no real thoughts; everything is artificial. As it is one of the reasons that make Titus uncomfortable with Violet, because he thinks that she is too curious, she questions a lot and talks about how the feed is dangerous; he does not want to think critically.

In her work *How We Became Posthuman* (1999), Katherine Hayles introduces the concept of the posthuman subject as ““an amalgam, a collection of heterogeneous components, a material-informational entity whose boundaries undergo continuous construction and reconstruction” (3). This new way of thinking about the self goes against the old humanist idea that identity is stable and unified. In the posthuman era, identity is malleable and influenced by external systems such as the internet, media, and digital technology. Titus, the main character in M.T. Anderson's *Feed*, is a clear example of this change. He doesn't just use the feed; it affects the way he thinks, talks, feels, and interacts with other people. He doesn't control it; it shapes his mind from the inside out. This has broken his sense of self and made it vulnerable to outside forces, which is a clear example of what Katherine Hayles calls the posthuman subject. Meanwhile, Donna Haraway's *A Cyborg Manifesto* (1985) challenges the idea of humans having stable, independent identities.

3. Language and Critical Thought in Decline

3.1. Dumbed Down Newspeak, Slang, and the Erosion of Meaning

Anderson presents a dystopian futuristic linguistic choice of words in his novel *Feed*; he constructs a landscape for verbal change showing societal decay. Characters speak in heavy slang and abbreviated expressions that reflect the superficiality and commodification of the society's

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culture. They use words such as “null”, “meg”, “brag”, and “unit” which replace more complex and rich vocabulary, this flattens emotional nuance among them. Titus and his friends use such words throughout the novel; Titus says “Link Arwaker was like, ‘I’m so null,’ and Marty was all, ‘I’m null too, unit,’ but I mean we were all pretty null” (5), meaning that they are bored and emotionally empty, they often use filler words such as “like” when communicating; Titus says what Marty said to Link ““Linkwhacker! Shit! You’re like doing all this damage to my knees and my face!”” (7). This meaningless pause and fast-shallow language reduce and weaken the clarity and impact of their speech. The use of this kind of linguistic shorthand leads to a deeper societal erosion of rich and expressive language and the replacement of it with an empty shallow language for speed and conformity.

George Orwell’s concept of Newspeak in *1984*, presents a language deliberately engineered to suppress dissent which is what Orwell terms as “thoughtcrime”. Newspeak is a new language that uses short words; Syme asks Winston “Do you know that Newspeak is the only language in the world whose vocabulary gets smaller every year?” (36). He further admits that the aim of it is to narrow the range of human thought and emotion he says, “Don't you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought?” (36). Similarly, in *Feed*, Anderson’s use of slang functions as a social and cognitive constraint which prevents characters from experiencing complex emotions or engaging in critical reflection. Characters routinely use reductive terms such as “null” to describe emotional emptiness, “meg” to exaggerate feelings, and “unit” as a depersonalized way of addressing each other.

In *Feed*, the disappearance of a formal and a complex language is similar to Orwell’s vision in *1984* that linguistic decay would one day diminish meaningful conversation making them impossible to be understood. Orwell warns of this very future through Syme’s foresight when he

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says to Winston, “Has it ever occurred to you, Winston, that by the year 2050, at the very latest, not a single human being will be alive who could understand such a conversation as we are having now?” (36). Anderson shares the same idea, he presents it through Titus’s struggle to comprehend Violet’s Father who speaks in a formal, intellectual register reminiscent of pre-feed linguistic standards. Titus says, “I didn’t understand a single thing he said” (95), revealing how far Titus and his peers have drifted from a rich linguistic heritage. They have a concept of dead languages which Violet explains that “they’re languages that they were once important but that nobody uses anymore” (47). Violet’s father, a former professor of dead languages, serves as a symbolic remnant of a lost era. The gap between his speech and Titus’s understanding demonstrates the generational and ideological divide shaped by the feed’s influence.

Titus admits and says, “I didn’t know how to say what I wanted” (38), when Violet is crying after the hack incident; without the feed and because of it he is unable to engage in thoughtful and emotional conversations. The reliance on the feed has eroded his capacity for self-reflection and meaningful discourse; throughout *Feed*, his replies are shallow, fragmented, and full of slang, which are highly generated by the feed, instead of original thoughts. When Violet tries to discuss complex topics—like the consequences of consumerism or the loss of personal autonomy—Titus either changes the subject, becomes uncomfortable, or fails to understand her entirely. In her book *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*, Sherry Turkle writes:

Today’s adolescents have no less need than those of previous generations to learn empathic skills, to think about their values and identity, and to manage and express feelings. They need time to discover themselves, time to think. But technology, put in

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the service of always-on communication and telegraphic speed and brevity, has changed the rules of engagement with all of this. (172)

Turkle's insight reinforces how Feed reflects the loss of emotional depth and identity in a technology mediated world.

3.2. Education and Entertainment: The Collapse of Inquiry

In *Feed*, the educational system, which is referred to as "School™" is a large business that longs for profits by turning students into devoted customers rather than individuals who crave inquiry and intellectual growth. Before that, it was run by the government, which Titus comments:

School™ is not so bad now, not like back when my grandparents were kids, when the schools were run by the government, which sounds completely like, Nazi, to have the government running the schools? Back then, it was big boring, and all the kids were meg null, because they didn't learn anything useful, it was all like, da da da da, this happened in fourteen ninety-two, da da da da, when you mix like, chalk and water, it makes nitroglycerin, and that kind of shit? And nothing was useful? (76)

Titus despises the previous one that was led by the government he even exaggerates and compares it to the Nazi. While the new educational system which is led by corporations is cool, he says "[n]ow that School™ is run by the corporations, it's pretty brag, because it teaches us how the world can be used, like mainly how to use our feeds (76). The commodification and privatization of education is a reflection of a culture that prioritizes immediate gratification and profitability over complexity and comprehension.

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This collapse of inquiry reflects Sherry Turkle's warning about how technology redefines not only how we learn but what we value. She writes, "It is easy to become so immersed in technology that we ignore what we know about life" (101). Anderson shows how deeply young people in *Feed* are immersed in technology by creating a world where they're taught to trust the feed more than their own minds. Education isn't about learning or growing, it is about turning students into reliable consumers. Instead of reading books, asking questions, or thinking for themselves, Titus and his friends rely on the feed to give them quick, entertaining bits of information. When Violet tries to talk deeply about any matter like the scene where she talks about the coke and trying to have a deep conversation she was ignored; or when she uses words such as "riot" and "incited" they mock her choice of words. Titus doesn't know how to respond. He often zones out or calls her "weird." He says things like, "Like the way you do sometimes. Using weird words" (113). It's a small moment, but it shows how far he's drifted from any kind of thoughtful conversation. The feed not only shapes how they talk but it shapes what they're capable of understanding. The feed's takeover of education reflects a broader societal trend in which thinking is outsourced, and entertainment becomes a substitute for engagement. The youth in *Feed* are no longer taught to think but they're taught to consume. Anderson shows us a society where real education has collapsed, and with it, the ability to resist, question, or even care.

3.3. Collective Apathy and the Death of Dissent

In the novel *Feed*, people are not aware of what is happening around them; they lack interest, and this apathy is created by the feed, the implant that fills people's minds with ads, entertainment, and constant distractions. This caused a lot of issues like poverty, pollution, and even death, which is something very normal to them. People in *Feed* do not question anything

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around them; they only follow trends and buy stuff that the feed suggests. There is no real resistance because people are too busy or too numb to notice what is wrong.

What Orwell feared were those who would ban books. What Huxley feared was that there would be no reason to ban a book, for there would be no one who wanted to read one. Orwell feared those who would deprive us of information. Huxley feared those who would give us so much that we would be reduced to passivity and egoism. Orwell feared that the truth would be concealed from us. (qtd. Neil Postman)

The biggest danger to society is distraction and disinterest. In the novel, people become so consumed that they stop caring about the truth, and this apathy is leading them to the loss of humanity, identity, and reality. The feed works as a powerful tool that keeps people distracted. It fills their minds with ads, shows, and silly information that keep them avoiding deep thinking. The feed can be a good tool to let people understand the world more, but its own goal is treating humans as a product, and those who refuse to use it are not welcomed in that world. Like Violet, she ends up dying, and no one cares about her, not even the tech company. This leads us to the lack of concern, while characters in *Feed* do not react to serious events. Such as the death of Violet, Titus distanced himself, deleted her messages, and avoided her while she needed him.

“I went to the kitchen to get a drink of water. I filled a glass. I looked at the window over the sink. I deleted everything she had sent me. I went into the living room and sat on the sofa. I didn't feel good. I sat on the sofa. I looked at the fireplace. I had deleted all her memories.” (169). This fits with Neil Postman's warning in *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, where he says, “People will come to adore the technologies that undo their capacities to think”. In *Feed*, most people would rather stay comfortable and entertained than face the truth or fight back. The feed protects them from anything upsetting, but it also stops them from caring, questioning, or acting.

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The clearest example of emotional numbness is how Titus reacts to Violet's sickness and death. Violet does not fit the profile; she does not buy too much stuff from ads, as she always tries to resist the feed, and people who do not follow the system must die. As Michel Foucault introduces biopower, which is a power that does not use violence to control people, it manages their lives through policies and systems of control. "This bio-power was without question an indispensable element in the development of capitalism; the latter would not have been possible without the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production" (141). We see this clearly in *Feed* especially when Violet's feed starts to fail. The companies decide to ignore her instead of helping her because she does not match the idea of a good consumer. In the end, *Feed* goes deeply with the idea of how apathy becomes the strongest tool of control. People are too distracted to notice anything wrong. The feed keeps people focused on what to buy or what trend to follow instead of thinking deeply and questioning things. Violence is not the danger in this world, but it is the quiet loss of meaning, memory, and the will to fight back.

4. Posthuman Identity Under Corporate Domination

4.1. Branding the Body: Consumer Identity and the Feed

In *Feed*, identity is no longer discovered or developed; it is downloaded, bought, and sold. The feed, a neural implant connecting individuals directly to a corporate network of advertisements and data, turns people into walking consumer profiles. From birth, characters are taught not to ask, "Who am I?" but "What should I buy?" As Violet points out bitterly,

I mean, they do these demographic studies that divide everyone up into a few personality types, and then you get ads based on what you're supposedly like. They try to figure out who you are, and to make you conform to one of their types for easy

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marketing. It's like a spiral: They keep making everything more basic so it will appeal to everyone. And gradually, everyone gets used to everything being basic, so we get less and less varied as people, more simple. So the corps make everything even simpler. And it goes on and on. (68)

In *Feed* identity is something sold to people instead of being like a normal human and create their own identity, the characters' identity is based on trends, ads, and constant updates from the feed, they change the way they talk, wear, and even their body looks. People start getting lesions; open wounds on their skin because it becomes a fashion. “So now people were thinking better about lesions, and lesions even looked kind of cool” (67). What starts as medical problem becomes a sign of beauty and trendy to them, because people can be easily controlled when companies create and sell identities. The lesions are not truly beautiful, but the feed makes them seem cool.

We had the lesions that people were getting, and ours right then were kind of red and wet-looking. Link had a lesion on his jaw, and I had lesions on my arm and on my side. Quendy had a lesion on her forehead. In the lights of the hallway you could see them real good. There are different kinds of lesions, I mean, there are lesions and lesions, but somehow our lesions, in this case, seemed like kid stuff. (9)

This is not just a world of mass consumption; it is a world where the body becomes a market, and personality is just another product to be branded and updated. For most characters, this reality is not troubling; it is comforting. Even Titus, who briefly loves her, drifts away. When she needs him most, he cannot cope with the discomfort of her unraveling. “I deleted everything she had sent me” (169). His detachment is not cruel in the traditional sense, it is learned. He has been trained to prioritize ease over pain. He has been taught, like everyone else, that problems are things you scroll past.

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People in *Feed* call each other “Unit” instead of their names or “friend” or “buddy” and this shows how humans are treated like machines instead of human beings and how the loss of humanity is the main theme in the novel. "Unit," said Link, punching me on the arm", "Come on, unit.", "Oh, come on, unit, she'll never know" "What did we just go through? Unit?" (61). In a world that treats humans like data, Violet tries her best to keep the people thinking and acting like humans instead of letting consumerism and technology define who they are. Her death proves that there is no place for non-profitable people.

4.2. Surveillance, Control, and the Illusion of Freedom

In *Feed*, Anderson portrays a world where surveillance is deeply emerged in people’s daily life to the point where it becomes invisible. The feed is not merely a tool for consumption, but a mechanism of control practiced on the characters; it monitors everything they, from thoughts, behaviors, desires, and even physical responses instantly and none stop. Through the feed, corporations mine the characters’ private data and customize their experiences in order to manipulate their consumption behavior. While Titus and his peers believe that they are free to choose what they want but in reality, their desires are shaped before they can even form them. Violet sees through the system in a way most others don’t. She says, “They’re also waiting to make you want things... it’s all streamlining our personalities so we’re easier to sell to” (68). It’s a moment of painful clarity—she realizes the feed isn’t just giving people what they want; it’s teaching them what to want. Instead of helping people figure out who they are, it molds them into perfect consumers, flattening any real sense of individuality along the way.

Titus shows how the feed isn’t just collecting—they’re creating identities to sell back to users, he says:

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Everything we think and feel is taken in by the corporations, mainly by data ones like Feedlink and OnFeed and American Feedware, and they make a special profile, one that's keyed just to you, and then they give it to their branch companies, or other companies buy them, and they can get to know what it is we need, so all you have to do is want something and there's a chance it will be yours. (Anderson 34)

In *Feed*, what seems like invisible, personalized service is actually a full-scale extraction operation. Their lives are constantly logged, calculated, and monetized, shaping not just what they do but who they become. What Violet describes sounds eerily close to the way real-world data systems function—where personal desires are monitored, calculated, and sold as market predictions. The corporations in *Feed* don't just observe behavior—they mold it. This mirrors what Shoshana Zuboff describes as surveillance capitalism:

Surveillance capitalism unilaterally claims human experience as free raw material for translation into behavioral data. Although some of these data are applied to product or service improvement, the rest are declared as a proprietary behavioral surplus, fed into advanced manufacturing processes known as “machine intelligence,” and fabricated into prediction products that anticipate what you will do now, soon, and later. Finally, these prediction products are traded in a new kind of marketplace for behavioral predictions that I call behavioral futures markets. Surveillance capitalists have grown immensely wealthy from these trading operations, for many companies are eager to lay bets. (III. What Is Surveillance Capitalism?)

The characters in *Feed* know that they are being controlled by these corporations, yet no one dares to defy them or go against the norm which is acceptance and reliance; they are comfortable the way things are. Titus admits:

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[E]veryone is like, da da da, evil corporations, oh they're so bad, we all say that, and we all know they control everything. I mean, it's not great, because who knows what evil shit they're up to. Everyone feels bad about that. But they're the only way to get all this stuff, and it's no good getting pissy about it, because they're still going to control everything whether you like it or not. (35)

His tone is dismissive, almost resigned, which reflects how deeply the characters have internalized the illusion of freedom while living under total corporate control. Their control goes far beyond into controlling air by building air factories; Titus's father says "'Yeah. Jefferson Park? Yeah. That was knocked down to make an air factory.'" (86). When Violet points out that "'Trees make air'" (86), he says "'Yeah. Sure. Do you know how inefficient trees are, next to an air factory?'" (86). This reveals the absurdity of a world where even oxygen is commodified. Not only that, but everything can also be owned, branded and controlled under trade markets by corporations. Titus says "We were sitting side by side, with our legs swinging on the wall of the tower, and the Clouds™ were all turning pink in front of us. We could see all these miles of filet mignon from where we were sitting" (99).

The phrase "Clouds™" shows that even the clouds, a symbol of the untouched natural world, have been commodified. What once belonged to no one now carries a trademark, signaling corporate ownership and artificial construction that even meat is artificially constructed

4.3. Resistance and Futility in Posthuman Futures

In *Feed*, acts of resistance against the feed and the corporate control are minimal, fragile, and heartbreaking. The earliest moment of resistance comes from the hacker who tries to disrupt and reveal the reality of the feed with a chaotic and an apocalyptic vision. He says when he hacked

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Titus and his peers and the people in the moon, ““We enter a time of calamity. Blood on the tarmac. Fingers in the juicer. Towers of air frozen in the lunar wastes. Models dead on the runways, with their legs facing backward. Children with smiles that can't be undone. Chicken shall rot in the aisles. See the pillars fall” (Anderson 28). Through his speech, the hacker paints a surreal portrait of decay, dehumanization, and the eventual downfall of their world which is dominated by corporate power and technological integration. He tries to warn people of such a world and its consequences in which bodies are mutilated, children are programmed to smile, and beauty becomes monstrous. His actions represent a rare moment of genuine dissent within the novel's world, a desperate call to wake people. However, the system responds brutally; he dies due to concussions because the police ““beat him over the head”” (85). His death underscores the futility of rebellion in a posthuman landscape where even acts of truth-telling are met with erasure. In this way, Anderson exemplifies how the feed neutralizes resistance not through argument or dialogue, but through elimination.

When Violet declares, “it's not a democracy” (Anderson 77), Titus is reminded of “the girls in School™ who sit underground and dress all in black with ribbing and get an iron fixture for their jaws and they're like, "Capitalist fool—propaganda tool," holding up both their hands, etc” (77). These girls are dismissed and seen as dramatic or absurd, their voices drowned out by the feed's endless distractions. The fact that Violet's comment triggers this association in Titus's mind assist that any critique of the system is automatically associated with resistance; and becomes something people mock or ignore and not taken seriously. Anderson uses this imagery to expose the difficulty of true resistance in a society where even protest is commodified, and real dissent is either erased, like the hacker, or reduced to a meme. This echos Shoshana Zuboff's observation, she says “it has become difficult to escape this bold market project” (III. What Is Surveillance Capitalism?).

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Violet is different from other characters; she tries to resist the feed by faking her interests and messing up with algorithms. But she suffered the consequences. Because of her behavior, she is not a perfect consumer; she is deemed unworthy of help. Her body is not profitable, and so it is ignored. This is where Michel Foucault's concept of biopower becomes chillingly relevant. In modern societies, Foucault explains that control does not come from brute force; it comes from the management of life itself. The system decides who is worthy of care, who gets to live well, and who is left to deteriorate. Violet's body is treated as an unworthy living because she always ignores the ads. Her personhood is erased by an algorithm that no longer finds value in her.

When Violet's feed begins to fail, she doesn't get sympathy. She gets silence. The companies look at her profile and decide she's not worth living. She doesn't spend enough, doesn't follow trends, and doesn't behave "correctly." So they turn their backs on her. Her body, her life. None of it matters to them because she isn't profitable. And as her mind begins to fall apart, she is forced to watch herself disappear. Not because she did anything wrong, but because she tried to be different.

5. Conclusion

Conclusively, the posthuman condition shown in *Feed* reveals a world where technology reshapes identity through corporate logic and algorithmic manipulation. It further illustrates a subtler form of domination and governance—where language is eroded, thought is outsourced, and value is measured by consumer potential. As it has unraveled the fragmentation, commodification, and surveillance of the posthuman subjects in ways that undermine the foundation of human autonomy. M.T. Anderson's vision of such world and such individuals serves as a warning,

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urging for reconsideration of the cost of trading critical consciousness for convenience and seamless connectivity.

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General Conclusion

This research has aimed to investigate the erosion of individuality and critical thought in M.T. Anderson's *Feed*, it has examined the novel's reflection of the conditions of posthuman life under corporate control and technological integration. As well as investigating how human subjectivity is reshaped and systemically diminished in a digitally mediated world, by using a posthumanist lens, and drawing on the theoretical frameworks of thinkers such as N. Katherine Hayles, Rosi Braidotti, Michel Foucault, and Shoshana Zuboff. Furthermore, it has explored the implications of a society where consciousness is colonized by algorithms, autonomy is replaced by corporate suggestion, and even language is degraded into market-driven slang.

The first chapter has laid the theoretical foundation of posthumanism and contains the ideas of theorists such as Hayles, Zuboff, Braidotti, and Foucault. To explore how humans are shaped by technology and critique the loss of humanity and the overuse of machines. It also connected posthumanism with surveillance capitalism and consumer identity. It focused on how the human body and mind are turned into data that can be measured and controlled and then sold. These ideas pointed on how *Feed* is not only a novel about the future but a reality of the world we live in today.

The second chapter has analyzed *Feed* using these theories; it focused on the story, characters, and symbols to show how the novel reflects posthuman ideas. The main focus was how characters are controlled by the feed, the use of simplified language and slang, and the lack of deep thinking and communication. As the novel showed short moments of resistance, characters like Violet and the hackers, however, these characters are quickly ignored and shut down, proving how hard it is to be different and fight back in a world where even rebellion is turned into a product.

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In a technological era, humans and machines are connected where the human cannot live without the use of machines: phones, PCs, and other technological tools that make human life easier. But the overuse of these machines can lead to the loss of humanity. M.T. Anderson's *Feed* is a dystopian novel where people have lost their identities, their way of thinking, and even the way they live. Characters relate to an implant in the brain called the Feed; it tells them everything they must do and sends them ads so they can buy. This dissertation has explored the crisis of identity in the *Feed*, where Anderson introduces how the people and the machine are connected to create a new version of the human that is treated like a product created by the machine, without identity. The characters have lost their language, their way of thinking, and a lot of natural actions of the human being.

This study has concluded that the posthuman condition which is tackled in *Feed* reveals a world where technology reshapes identity through corporate power and algorithmic manipulation, and this dystopian world suppresses critical thinking and meaningful engagements. It portrays a world where human agency is undermined, and conformity is the norm regardless of any sort of resistance though committed by few characters like Violet or symbolic moments of disruption. In this way, *Feed* serves as a powerful literary medium for critiquing the sociotechnical structures that govern our own increasingly digitized and corporatized lives.

This research has faced several limitations. Firstly, it has been built upon a textual approach rather than measured data or real-life user's experiences with algorithms or systems driven by AI despite the novel similarities with many real-world technological innovations. Secondly, the analysis has focused primarily on a Western, American context, as represented in *Feed*, and did not address the possibility that posthuman conditions might differ across cultures. Moreover,

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interpretations of literature are inevitably subjective; another reader might find hope where this study finds despair.

Future research might consider a comparative study applies on *Feed* and other posthuman narratives in order to expend and address broader themes and trends regarding the way posthuman identities are being represented in literature or media. Another recommendation would be to include interdisciplinary methods from cognitive science, digital humanities, or sociology to investigate the effects of algorithmic suggestion, surveillance, and the commodification of identity in the real-world.

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المُلخَص

أصبح الأدب وسيلة ذات أهمية بالغة ونداء يدعو الى الحكمة وذلك لتطرقه لنتائج توغل التكنولوجيا في حياة الانسان وهذا في عالم الابتكارات التكنولوجية حيث تتلاشى الحدود بين الانسان والالة شيئا فشيئا يسعى هذا البحث للتحقيق في مسألة فقدان الانفرادية والتفكير النقدي في نطاق ما بعد الانسان التي قام ام تي اندرسون بالتطرق اليها في روايته الديستوبية فييد. كما ان البحث يعتمد على نظرية ما بعد الانسان مع التركيز على مفهوم "الذات ما بعد الانسان" عند ان كاثرين هايلز و "الذاتية البدوية" عند روزي برايدوتي و "الرأسمالية المراقبة" عند شوشانا زوبوف كما انه يحلل كيفية اعادة تشكيل الهوية الانسانية من خلال الادمج التكنولوجي و الهيمنة الشركاتية و الاستهلاك الرقمي بالإضافة إلى التحول الذي تحدثه الفييد في الوعي واللغة و الاستقلالية.يكشف هذا التحليل ان التفكير النقدي و الذكاء العاطفي و الوكالة الفردية تتعرض للتقويض بشكل منهجي كما انه يربط الواقع المعاصر من الحكومة الخوارزمية و الرأسمالية المراقبة و تسليع التعليم بمجتمع الفييد.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ما بعد الانسان، الفردية، التفكير النقدي، الادمج التكنولوجي، الهوية.