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**Technology and the Logic of Consumption in M.T.**

***Anderson's Feed.***

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## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that the dissertation entitled; "Technology and The Logic of Consumption in M.T. Anderson's *Feed*" is my own work and all the sources I have quoted have been acknowledged by means of references.

Signature

Date

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Rest assured, we students know even in the best of times how difficult it can be to cross this finish line, the fact that we did it despite all the challenges we faced this year is not to be undervalued or downplayed. I appreciate what we have learned through these unknown times, and I remind you to never underestimate your part in the collective “we.” we have learned this year just how precious life is and how vulnerable we can be yet in the face of adversity we witnessed how resilient we are.

Finally, I would not have gotten through the last few years without my family's support through this entire process, thank you.

And I promise you, despite the insanity and uncertainty we have endured, I will cherish you all and these years for the rest of my life.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to myself, to the soul of my grandmother Rahma, who despite her lack of knowledge was always keen on my studies under the pandemic circumstances, to my parents who spent their lives teaching and upbringing us and in teaching and raising generations for thirty years, to all my family, to my loved one, and to all the people we have lost this year, to the unexpected changes, to the youth of our society who wake up with good intentions, but the day stays too long for them, to their shaped behavior by forces, to the leaders around the world who do not speak for the big corporations but who speak for all the humanity for the people, for the underprivileged people, the most affected, and for people whose voices have been drowned out by the politics of greed.

## Abstract

Consumerism is a scourge that has afflicted both the individual and society, especially in the Western industrial countries that control the global economy as those who produce technology. Here lies the dangerous and cunning function of advertising, the situation that produces, manipulates, enslaves human beings, subject to the new methods of capitalism. Using the conceptual apparatus offered by the Frankfurt school critical theorists Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, in addition to Althusser's theory of ideology as well as the work of the French sociologist, and cultural theorist Jean Baudrillard on the social logic that controls consumer societies, this dissertation examines M.T. Anderson's young adult novel, *Feed 2002*, Through its vision of a fictional future. The narrative explores the hazards created by contemporary technology progress, predatory global politics and capitalist exercises of consumption associated with the culture such a system creates.

**Key words:** Consumerism, Technology, Society, Culture, Ideology, Corporate power.

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## Introduction

The process of consumption and gratification is natural human traits that certainly precede the emergence of the capitalist industrial economy, modern technology, and huge markets. Yet, today, it draws our attention to a new phenomenon in human history in general, which was not characterized by human consumption inclination before, and it is the phenomenon of the society of consumers. While analyzing the growth of consumerism in most modern societies in recent decades, the prominent Polish sociologist Zygmunt Baumann in his book *Consuming Life* (2007) begins by starting from an axiomatic fact, which is that all human beings are instinctively consuming, and over time have been consuming in order to satisfy their needs and desires, our interest in consumption is nothing new. Consumer society, in the words of the French philosopher Althusser, is “a society that interpellates its members” (2). The most important indication is linking the emergence of this consumer culture to the global spread of an old political and economic ideology, but in a new guise, it has been known to be called “Neoliberalism.”

Eddie Bernays is considered the father of modern advertising most famous for turning the largely Abbe horde word propaganda into the fluffy warm euphemism public relations. Bernays in his book *Propaganda 1928*, haphazardly, took popular ideas from Freudian psychoanalysis and began to apply them to advertising campaigns. The idea was simple: link and exploit the very primitive social urges common to most humans such as sexuality and status to a product. Some model goods were to become less relevant in their utility and more of a symbol representing one's identity or individualism effectively turning mere wants into emotional needs. Bernay's was a response to a growing call by industrial leaders to reprogram society and create a new consumer culture Charles Kettering director of General Motors in 1929 wrote an article titled “Keep the Consumer Dissatisfied”. Wall Street banker Paul Mazur in the Harvard Business Review of 1927

wrote: “we must shift America from a needs to a desires culture people must be trained to desire to want things even before the old have been entirely consumed we must shape a new mentality in America”. Technological innovation and radio and television helped further this end by a saturation campaign throughout American society which quickly spread across the world, advertising no longer was about describing say the function of a good and its inherent integrity it was now about social manipulation creating inferiority shame guilt and false problems that could only be resolved by submission to purchase.

Some mistakenly thought that the media of the information age is nothing but the tyranny of the electronic medium over the rest of the other means of communication. But in fact, it is much more dangerous than that. What is more important is the nature of the messages that flow through this new communication medium, the speed of their flow, and the ways they are distributed and received. This has resulted in fundamental changes in the role of the media, which have made it an essential axis in the community system. What confirms the centrality of the media in our contemporary life is the intense interest it receives in its issues in philosophical thought and contemporary cultural theorizing, whether revolutionary, modern, or postmodern, whether capitalist or with a Marxist orientation. The media and its modern electronic means have dominated the arena of culture, to the extent that some may use terms such as: media culture, technology culture, and multimedia culture. Just as Aristotle is called “the first teacher,” Walt Disney in Fortune Magazine 1942 won the title of “the greatest teacher.” After culture, media, and entertainment became industrialized, not theorized.

Belief in the power of the media to control direction, build attitudes, and shape public opinion, began through exhibitionism, according to Guy Debord, and excessive consumption, according to Jean Baudrillard, which the media contribute to perpetuate through Advertising. The

developments that took place, as well as the mass production of video equipment, large and wide screen television, fax machines, mobile phones, and everything that happened during the last two decades of the twentieth century and beyond, seems like a boom in dealing with the world of the image. This is what the advertising discourse focuses on, which pushes people to immerse themselves in consumption within a world that they believe meets their basic needs. In this context, television plays an important role, as it is the media tool that is closest to the audience, and is able to hit the target. It is a more realistic world than reality: streets, cars, America, the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre, China, Russia, etc. You can feel that the world has become a “Global Village” as coined by Marshall McLuhan in his book *The Global Village* 1964.

The industrial society has been able to achieve control over nature thanks to technology and to citizen at the same time by turning him/her into a mere consumer of his products, struggling for survival only. It also increases the productivity of economic projects that are inevitably reflected on the political and cultural level, to exploit it by subjecting it to a kind of social control of a disguised, oppressive nature (24). The world of industrial progress, according to the contemporary German philosopher, Herbert Marcuse in his best-work *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (1964), created a society of oppression and domination when he suppressed human talents and prevented their free unfolding, where the production apparatus controls everything on the material and intellectual level alike (16). It is a “one-dimensional” society that pours man into a shell from which there is no way out and makes him live within a kind of stereotyping, thus stripping him of all desire or ambition for change or liberation.

Technology has become the tool of control instead of violence in the past, and at a time when it improves the conditions of life and the possibilities of existence, it absorbs the forces of change and opposition, thus nullifying the feasibility of every protest or change, transforming the

production apparatus into a totalitarian system. Technology is a hollow slogan, a tyrannical reality created by economics before politics by controlling needs. According to Marcuse in his book *The Individual in The Great Society in: Alternatives* 1966, If individualism constitutes a danger in the individual society, then the reality in which man lives has suppressed every individuality by reducing his freedom to the ability to choose between a variety of goods. From the individual is the most precious thing he owns, and to transform it, thanks to the instrumental mind, into a mere consumer (1). He identifies himself through what he possesses, and has come to live under an absolute conformism, which is the result of a kind of doctrinal and ideological conditioning practiced by social institutions (3).

In the same context, the consumer society worked to falsify the consciousness of the individual when it replaced the external control that was imposed from above, with a kind of internal control, and thus the industrial society did not fake human needs only, but also faked his/her intellectual needs, since free thought does not help them to control. In addition, technology has played a progressive role as the science of transforming man into tamed and controlled tools, with the aim of exploiting them for social and civil purposes to become the global form and the overall force determining the life and culture, and instead of technology being a liberating force, it became a force to more control over people.

*Feed* is a young adult dystopian novel of the cyberpunk subgenre written by M. T. Anderson about corporate power, consumerism, technology, data mining, capitalist regime and environmental decay. In this novel the dystopian regime utilizes technology to maintain power over socioeconomic order and behavior. By examining the concept of “the culture industry” of the Frankfurt school, mainly Adorno and Horkheimer, the concept of discipline, punishment, and resistance through the critical lens of the Althusser’s theory of ideology as well as the work of the Jean Baudrillard’s “the

consumer society,” this dissertation examines how technology is shaping culture, society, and consumer behavior. It further seeks to provide a contemporary discussion of technology and consumption and how they are used by corporate power to control socioeconomic conditions. This will be done on the basis that a complete understanding of the dystopian genre creates the comprehension that dystopian works should be regarded as both a cautionary tale and a warning of contemporary real-world problems.

By doing so, it attempts to answer the following main question: How does technological development shape culture, society, and new consumer behaviors and take over social life as seen in Anderson’s *Feed*? Additionally, it looks into the following sub questions: To which extent do dystopian contemporary novels make apparent the power structures controlling our lives? Does technology contribute to the government’s manipulation of socioeconomic conditions and control over the character’s lives? How is popular culture designed to satisfy growing needs and desires of mass capitalistic consumer societies and its social and cultural implications?

The choice of M.T. Anderson’s *Feed* is motivated by the fact that it is today considered a classic example of young adult dystopian fiction. It embodies the control exerted by corporate power over individuals’ lives and consumer behaviors shaped through the use of technology. Therefore, this literary work is deemed a fine example that helps achieve the purposes of this research. What stood out to me about *Feed*, is that advertisement functions as tools to exercise state power and control the masses through technology ÷The novel also fits within the theoretical framework of dystopian fiction and illuminates their disparate approaches to the power struggles associated with the culture industry.The novel clearly reflects the theory of Adorno and Horkheimer in the homogeneity between the discourse of consumer culture and fascist propaganda techniques,

especially since the novel is a clear indication of the dangers of the return of the fascist style of thinking in the consumer society.

Once upon a time the human race had a dream of a future where we had evolved beyond our petty military conflicts, where every human was guaranteed equal rights, where we had time to spend with friends and family and to do meaningful work that we enjoyed not because we had to but because tedious unpleasant labor had been handed off to automated systems. As we approach the year 2022, it is safe to say that vision is no closer today than it was a hundred years ago; in fact, the consensus seems to have shifted away from this utopian vision of the unknown future towards something much less pleasant.

[This](#) study, considered using a sci-fi dystopian literary work as we creep ever closer to a techno dystopia. From 2020 leading up to 2021, some explosive events have brought life as we know it to a screeching halt: the eruption of the deadly covid -19 pandemic, protests against the system and police brutality, extreme weather events, world's water crisis, in addition to some of the deadliest wildfires in history. People today are afraid and more unsure about the future than at perhaps any point in modern history. Towards the end of her book *Twilight of Democracy*, Anne Applebaum writes: "maybe fear of disease will create fear of freedom or maybe the coronavirus will inspire a new sense of global solidarity we have to accept that both futures are possible"(188).

When [the](#) searching for young adult dystopia that would be in line with my research topic [began](#), several titles recommended include the two most famous dystopias of history; George Orwell's *1984* and Huxley's *Brave New World*. The first depicts a world dominated by an invasive surveillance system. Where your every move is monitored, anyone who expresses a hint of dissent is routinely arrested and killed. Everyone worships the "Big Brother," their fictional dictator, and historical records are constantly changed. The second is about a society consumed by meaningless

distractions: sports, pornography, casual sex, and when all of that doesn't work: drugs. The difference is memorably summarized by Neil Postman in the foreword to his book, *Amusing Ourselves to Death* "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 information that we would be reduced to passivity and egoism. In 1984, people were controlled by inflicting pain. In Brave New World, they are controlled by inflicting pleasure" (11). What interests me about all of this is that while these two fictional societies are very different, the means by which they are created and maintained is the same. It's through the control of the media and by extension, art.

While search [continued](#) online on more young adult fiction dystopias, [we](#) I came across, *Leaving Simplicity* (2007) by Canadian author Claire Carmichael. The story takes place in a near future where advertising corporations and politics are one and the same, creating a dystopian world where citizens are constantly bombarded by advertisements. An "Ads-4-Life Council" directly involved with the government is responsible for invasive advertisements appearing absolutely everywhere. The young adult protagonists resist the influence of these advertisements when they discover a government murder scandal that would incriminate the Council, and struggle to reveal the truth about the corruption of the government.

### **Literature Review:**

When Anderson's *Feed* was published in 2002, it generated considerable critical interest in the field of young-adult literature. Clare Bradford notes in her study entitled "Everything must go!": Consumerism and Reader Positioning in M. T. Anderson's *Feed*" (2010): "this novel is one of many contemporary texts that invite a critical and participatory style of reading. It encourages readers to

reflect on the consumerism and the neo-liberal politics of their own time and to imagine the “what-if” implications of a world in which these tendencies dominate political and economic life” (136). She continues; “In doing so it functions as a critical dystopia, implying through its imagination of a dysfunctional future how human subjects might make ethical choices” (136).

Some critics have focused on the effects of consumerism on the culture and youth, for example, in reviewing another Anderson title in the New York Times Books Review, Jenny Davison refers to *Feed* as “a surprisingly affecting commodity-culture satire.” Likewise, Paula Rohrlick, in a review appearing in *Kliatt*, comments that *Feed* portrays “consumerism carried to its logical extreme.” A review appearing in *Publishers Weekly* concludes that *Feed* “offers thought-provoking and scathing indictments that may prod to readers examine the more sinister probabilities of corporate and media- denominated culture.” Other reviews have highlighted Anderson’s detailed creative portrayal of a near-future Earth. One such critic, Lauren Adams, applauds Anderson's conception of the future world, in a review appearing in *Home Book* magazines: “the world of the novel is wholly and convincingly realized. ... intricate details help evoke a world that is chillingly plausible.” Adams concludes, “the reflections the novel shows may be ugly and distorted, but they are undeniable ourselves.”

Not all reviews were so positive. Betsy, the manager of *Redeemed Reader* for example, in an article about the novel writes: “*Feed* is incredibly thought provoking book, but a depressing one as well. There is no hero in this dystopia, Good people die. Bad people live. And the ramifications of technology mixed our corporate society are scary.” In New York Times Books Review, Elizabeth Devereaux notes “the mixture of comedy and tragedy, *Feed* subversive, vigorously conceived, painfully situated at the juncture when funny crosses into tragic.” Others refused and criticized the language used in the novel, from parents and teachers reviews in the common sense media website

“Inappropriate for any school reading program. foul language throughout the book which is not needed to get the message across.” Later on, it became clear that the use of that language has dimensions. In a positive appearance in the New York Times Books Review, Elizabeth Devereaux notes “with a great wit, Anderson uses the mechanics or narrative vocabulary to advance both premise and the story line.” Although some found *Feed* to be disturbing, many Critics found much to applaud in the novel.

### **Theoretical Framework:**

In the analysis of the novel, postmodern theories and insights are used, Frederick Jameson’s critique of postmodern capitalism, the theory of ideology for the French Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser, and Jean Baudrillard’s work on the social logic behind consumerism.-In addition to that, Adorno’s criticism of what he calls “the culture industry” is referred to in order to explore the cultural aspects of consumerism.

The dissertation is divided into two main chapters. The first one entitled: “Technology, Corporate Power, Consumerism and the Culture Industry,” begins with Heidegger's analysis of technology and the definition of corporate power. [The study](#) will represent then Althusser’s concept Of ideology and the manifestation posed by the concept, taking into consideration Pater Holland's 1988 essay on ideology in children's and young literature, and the usage of the term in the analysis of children's and young adult texts. Furthermore, it touches on Jameson critique of Postmodern capitalism in addition to Consumer behavior through the critical lens of Jean Baudrillard in his work consumer society, as well as Adorno and Horkheimer The culture industry.

The second chapter is entitled: “The Role of Technology, Ideology, and Corporate Power in Shaping Consumer Behavior and the Culture Industry in M.T. Anderson’s *Feed*.” Referring to the theories and concepts presented in the first chapter, this second chapter explores the representation

of totalitarian societies in the dystopian novel *Feed* by examining how corporations strengthen their forces through technology to sustain the capitalist mode of production, contributing to change in society and further for government to maintain power.

## **CHAPTER ONE:**

### **Technology, Corporate power, and the Culture Industry in Consumer Societies.**

#### **Introduction:**

The early twentieth century saw the spread of new forms of mass communication, and the emergence of a massive cultural industry aimed at making profit through the production and distribution of cultural products. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer were among the first scholars to theorize these new cultural conditions, and they called it the “cultural industry.” They claimed that in the modern capitalist society, the commodification of culture had transformed culture itself, becoming an important medium for ideological control, and a vital means of maintaining the capitalist system. This theoretical chapter presents the concepts and theories that were used in the analysis of the novel including the Frankfurt School concepts of Culture Industry, Althusser’s theories on Ideology and State Apparatuses, in addition to Baudrillard’s insights on consumer society. It further examines the role of technology in giving corporate powers the tools to control and deceive the masses.

#### **1- Technology and Heidegger**

Technology, if we think about it, is a broad term with a difficult definition. Oxford defines it as "the application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes especially in industry". The German philosopher Martin Heidegger had always been interested in technology at its simplest (the hammer, the nail...), but in 1954 he published an essay attempted to peel back the layers of what technology is; he set out his ideas on "The Question Concerning Technology." He starts off by telling us that the essence of technology is by no means anything technical “technology is not equivalent to the essence

of technology. When we are seeking the essence of ‘tree,’ we have to become aware that what pervades every tree, as a tree, is not itself a tree that can be encountered among all the other trees” (4). This indicates that Heidegger, in his lecture on technology, has taken the path of thinking to reach its essence through language, and is preparing us for the experience of entering into a free relationship with technology. As long as we are unable to know our true relationship with technology, he believes, we will continue to suffer from these imitations, as long as we have not yet learned to think about what is different from technology and what is technical, as different from what is man-made.

Social media, like any technology, as a human activity is a means to an end, an instrument. In regards to technology’s instrumentality, Heidegger states:

According to ancient doctrine, the essence of a thing is considered to be what the thing is. We ask the question concerning technology when we ask what it is. Everyone knows the two statements that answer our question. One says: Technology is a means to an end. The other says: Technology is a human activity. (1)

What’s an instrument for, instrumentality and means to end imply causality. and if we borrow from Aristotle, all physical objects have four causes, he claims that the Chalice has its cause if “materialis”, the material, the silver of which the Chalice is made; the cause of “formalis,” the shape of the Chalice; the cause of “finalis,” the end to make the Chalice to drink from; and the cause of “efficiens,” the agent who makes the Chalice, the silversmith (2). The cause of materialism in the case of social media is the hardware, the servers, but it's also the user-generated content and the profiles, the links to articles and news, it's both raw material and raw data; the cause of formalis is the code of social networking service and presents, the cause of finalis, the different reasons users want to connect with each other, but ultimately it's about human connections, the desire to connect with each other, and the

cause of efficiency is the owner or the creator of the platform but it's also the user defining what we want to see. (“What is a server?” definition from WhatIs.com).

It's already possible to see the difference between industrial technology and social media, the latter becoming a joint enterprise, users taking a direct part in defining the shape it takes. In fact, there are only two causes that we don't shape in any way, the hardware and the algorithm, but Heidegger would have exactly the same concern about social media and 21<sup>st</sup> Century technology as he did about early 20th century technology and it's the same problem Heidegger had with two thousand years of western philosophy; it was obsessed with those causes, with Aristotle, with measuring, quantifying and surveying, forms and materials. For Heidegger these four causes reveal something more mysterious about being itself, each cause belongs together, each is connected and corresponsable and draws something out from each of the other. The silversmith or the coder brings forth the four causes but all four are uniting.

Heidegger writes “the causes bring something into appearance. they let it come forth into the present” (4). Bringing something from concealment into the unconscious is named Veritas, truth, a revelation. What has the essence of technology, of social media got to do with revealing, the answer of Heidegger is “everything', for every bringing forth is grounded in revealing, we reveal something new and mysterious by us and the earth around us. What it can provide, what we can draw from it, the craftsman brings forth the Chalice and the engineer brings forth the jet engine, like a flower blooming (12). the Greeks called this physics, bringing something previously hidden it's in this way that technology is deeply connected with our own psychology, it comes from deep within us, from our desires and needs which varied and good and bad, constructive and destructive. Technology brings forth and uncovers something that connects us to materials, forms, ideas, the world, it brings forth mysteries revelation of being, reveals our connection to nature, to each other.

For Heidegger, technology can be beautiful but modern technology, also stores something new, that's uncovered truth, and stockpiles it, collects it. Modern technology challenges the physical world to supply and store energy, coal is stockpiled ready to be used, an airliner sits on runway ready to be flown. Modern technology is what he calls "standing reserved"(13), on the internet, data information and connections are standing re-served in the same way, they're connected, quantified, organized, the challenge of unconcealed. Regarding this Heidegger writes that man is gathered into a specific ordering. This gathering concentrates man upon ordering the real as standing reserved. Heidegger calls this (Ge-stell) or inframing technology reveals stands reserved and frames, when we begin a pursuit collect coal, cars, phones and stuff online, it quickly seems natural, the thing we do gets ahead of us, rounds us, calls upon us to see it, continue it, because, like nature, it's suddenly there in clicking. It's our own data and our own personalities; us that stored up standing reserved and it's presented back to us (8).

The essence of technology is nothing technical but it is a way of revealing and reframing, but that's inframing gets ahead of us when it's presented back to us, we see it for what it is rather than what it could be or how it started. It presents itself as a status quo and it's not. Heidegger writes: "there's danger in the highest sense's" (5), Heidegger predicted the problem of modern technology, of globalization, of problems that seem too big to comprehend, to challenge, but he also suggests simple answers to these questions: how do we want to stockpile in store? do we need to? who makes the decisions that can frame us? do we want to opaque corporations during the standing reserved, the inflaming of something as important as human connectivity? And who controls the algorithm, the order you see things?

## **2- Corporate Power, Ideology, and State Apparatuses:**

In his discussion of corporate power and dominance, Noam Chomsky explains that corporation is just a “tyrannical system that humans have ever devised” (The Hart House Debates Committee, Near East Cultural and Educational Foundation (NECEF)). He argues that corporations have been given extra ordinary rights by the courts and by legislation early in this century. They're like the multilateral agreement world, and they've been given actually the rights of status, they're basically uncountable to the public. When they've the been given the rights of persons that means the right to propagandize, it is like they've been given the rights of free speech, and they've been given the rights to advertise in fact that you expense, as Chomsky says: “you pay for privilege of having your minds be destroyed” (The Hart House Debates Committee, Near East Cultural and Educational Foundation (NECEF)). They own the information system and they control it, the media, huge corporations, part of bigger corporations that sets the framework of discussion, the major decisions that effect what happens in the economy and social life. It's gotten to the point where some international economists call it “a new system”, or “alliance capitalism” (The Hart House Debates Committee, Near East Cultural and Educational Foundation (NECEF)). This means that big networks of tyrannical institutions are basically running the world, and the economy is run by a network of command economies called corporations.

Often, people use ideology to define a political position such as a neon corn or a socialist and the beliefs that identify these groups in discourse of theory. However, ideology has a more specific use and it is helpful to separate these. Ideology is defined as the integrated assertions, theories and aims that constitute a sociopolitical program” (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*). According to Althusser, “Ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions

of existence” (qtd. in Lenin 109). Althusser contends that ideology has a material existence because "an ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices" (112). Ideology is an important concept for social critique. The question ideology seeks to answer is why people seemingly opted not to act in their best interest. If we're free, why do we act like we aren't? The reason is school. School is lauded as this necessary, productive time of personal growth and development, you're not learning to read, write and add in school, you're also learning to obey and internalize ideology.

The underlying reason 20th century critics like Althusser have been interested in this question, is that they want to understand why when presented with the option people were drawn to fascism when their conditions are not good, and what makes people act against their interests? In his critique of Althusser's theory, [Butler](#) argues that “There's one particularly easy answer to this 'fear', fear of violence or the threat of violence” (qtd. in Lampert 2). This is the premise by which Hobbes and Locke established the social contract. If you want people to fall in line you need police, courts and prisons sponsored by the state. But that doesn't cover all cases, people in general seem to be willing to accept or even support political corruption, inequality, and systems that just don't make their lives better. So the question is, if fear is not compelling people to support bad systems, then what is? The concept of ideology is meant to answer just that question.

Ideology was first a Marxist idea Karl Marx himself discussed ideology in Feudal economies. In these economies, ideology reflects the interest of the ruling class and justifies the status quo that keeps them in power. Obviously for any status quo revolution and rebellion is a bad thing. Those of the lower classes internalize the ruling ideology because they're not self-conscious. So [in the Feudal](#) system, you as a serf should not rebel against your Lord because the Bible says “the meek shall inherit the earth.” (Matthew 5:5) This means that serfs had to remain in the same predetermined position and not complain in order not to disrupt the divine order on earth and be rewarded in heaven.

This is what some priests and kings thought up to control everybody. Everybody in Feudal society believes in Divine including those who benefit from it and those who don't. Christianity helps the ruling class keep things as. In this way, religion was made into an ideology that controls people.

Ideology always gives reasons why the status quo need not to be changed, the idea here is that ideology is internalized by [everyone, it's](#)not a secret conspiracy made up by those who benefit from it. It emerges from the conditions of labour and ownership and then is justified after the fact using religion, racism, popular mythology or whatever beliefs. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the concept of ideology changes and takes on slightly different [meanings](#). Ideology still means accepting beliefs that believe without consciously knowing you believe them, but here they are reinforced through expected and approved behaviors to make you a good subject, a future cog in a capitalist economy, so this would be then capitalist ideology. Often, these ideologies are created and maintained through state apparatuses.

Louis Althusser defines two types of apparatuses that control behavior. The first is called the repressive apparatus which you throw through the threat of violence including police, court and prisons (96). But fear is not the primary motivator in most of our lives as it turns out being normal, being accepted, and belonging to a group are just strong motivators. Here is where ideological apparatuses do most of the work so that the police and courts only need to step in when these fail to put people in their place. The second one is Ideological apparatus, which prevent change to the status quo and include schools, politics, and the mass media (96). Politics maintain the status quo by giving you a choice so you feel like you have some responsibility towards the society you live in, but in today's democracies you have a choice between barely distinguishable parties. This Choice is a choice between status quo and status quo, not a choice that is going to change much of anything. Advertising in the mass media offers a similarly illusory choice between basically distinguishable commodities,

but having that illusion of choice generally settles down people's revolutionary impulses. The point of ideological apparatus is that you do not think about inequality and most importantly that you don't do anything to change it except by approved channels.

Schools are, the most powerful ideological state apparatus because they're mandatory and "no other ideological apparatus has the obligatory audience of the totality of the children in the capitalist social formation, right hours a day for five or six days" (Althusser 7). Schools now serve the ideological purpose that the medieval catholic church did in the feudal system. Schools on the surface teach you to read, write, and add. But this mission veils its more pertinent lesson, one that transcends all subjects 'discipline'. In school you are taught to follow a strictly regimented schedule, seven or eight hours of lessons broken up by an hour of leisure, always the same every day, you are taught to submit to authority, to obey, not to speak out of turn, to raise your hand if you wish to speak, every authority is governed by the authority of the teacher, and what happen if you don't follow all of these instructions? Well, that is when the threat of violence steps in: you will be forcibly removed from class if you disrupt it, your parents will be called if you are late, you will get detention if your assignments are late.

Violence in this context does not mean getting beaten (usually), but your corporeal freedom is restricted by force. All of this behavioral reinforcement is priming you to be a non-confrontational, submissive, obedient individual in a capitalist system; you are taught to respect authority, to not interfere with your peers, complete your tasks on time, and most importantly not to rebel—Althusser is clear that the teachers are not to blame here they are merely placeholders in the structure of the ideology of discipline, if they do not teach discipline properly and their classrooms are not organized, quiet, and submissive they themselves will be disciplined by their superiors. They have two choices: they can accept authority and discipline, or, if they don't accept it that's when the repressive apparatus

begins to take away their corporeal freedoms: detention or prison, of course this is not a real choice but this lesson is preparing them for the rest of their lives in which they will continue to have no real choice. Althusser in *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* argues that “The school, today, is just as natural, indispensable, useful, and even beneficial as the church was for ancestors a few centuries ago” (57).

Perhaps the reason then the people accept bad leadership, is because the notion that authority is good, justified, and must be heeded, has been ingrained in us before we ever had a say in the matter. Answering the call of ideology, responding to it, is what dooms you from the outset. Althusser calls this “Interpellation.” We are individuals within the roles of punctuality, politeness and obedience to authority. Breaking these rules doesn't mean you are outside of the ideology, because being punished is also a position within it. Ideology is total and its purpose is to keep things how they are, every subject needs to internalize the ideology to keep it working. As the system is meant to support the production and exchange of capital, capital also provides some people with exceptions.

### **3- Capitalism and Data Mining:**

Althusser's pioneering concept of “ideological state apparatuses” is extended to the unique role of consumerism as a particular ideology enabling and supporting capitalism, in other words ideologies are practices to sustain capitalism. Frederick Jameson proceeds from an epistemological reference with Marxist and Hegelian roots, despite his early influence on Feuerbach's philosophy, in his understanding of history and civilizational and cultural development. Jameson builds on the work of previous theorists in his understanding of ideology, he adopts dialectical materialism in his valuable studies of the transformations and changes of Western societies since the end of World War II and its impact on literary, artistic and cultural works. Jameson therefore finds a close dialectical relationship between the comprehensive radical transformations that occurred in industrial or

competitive capitalism in the second half of the last century, and the emergence and development of the state of postmodernism (Jameson 51). He classifies this stage as a journey of late capitalism, in a kind of simulation of Lenin's characterization of capitalism in the early part of the last century as imperialist capitalism. In his most important book *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, published in 1991, Jameson asserts that postmodernism is a transitional stage between two historical stages of capitalism. He argues that all the social, economic, political and cultural forces opposed to late capitalism and its hegemony have become neutral and inactive, floundering in a kind of chaos in terms of ideology and practice (54). Capitalism has finally succeeded in neutralizing and eliminating every possible opposition to it.

Jameson links modernity with the steam machine and the engine, the scientific pursuit of control over nature and over man, the large factories and the nature of the population distribution centered around them, and the structure of society with the classical division between the working class and the bourgeoisie rising to positions of cultural, economic and political domination. He also links postmodernism and consumer society, the atrophy of industrial activity in contrast to the growth of the service and communications sector, the spread of radio and television, the violation of individual privacy, and the spread of popular culture and magazines. Jameson considers that postmodernism is a kind of cultural hegemony simultaneous with multinational capitalism and the unprecedented expansion of the global market, and the penetration of the media into all aspects and levels of human existence (Dino 2).

He monitors a number of variables that occurred in the structure of Western societies in the second half of the twentieth century, perhaps the most important of which is the transition to a post-industrial society based on the activity of large multinational companies, and the control of the image over reality due to the media and commercial advertising strategies that rely on visual dazzle.

Technology makes corporations factory farms for human beings, make their money by tracking everything that individual do by profiling him and then monetizing that by manipulating his behavior with this intimate insight using data mining. Data mining enables that intelligence, decodes complex data sets and delivers a cleaner version for them, in addition, it can be used by e-commerce companies and even political companies to deliver hyper personalized advertising to a target audience in order to sell their products or deliver key messaging. Palantir is a data analytics company co-founded by Peter Thiel back in 2003 and visionary Alex carp; its mission is providing software that customers use to integrate volumes of data from images to spreadsheets, into a central platform where it can be securely analyzed and interpreted. It has contacts with corporations and governments across the globe to make sense of massive amounts of data. In a 2012 CNBC Interview with Palantir CEO Alex Karp at Davos about their new funding, getting government contracts, and trying to raise funding, Karp states that "The lurking forward of Palantir here on revenue margins, is because we built our product five years before it was needed" (Karp). Palantir's gotham and software powers the US army, navy, department of homeland security, its projects works with an upfront capital outset. Steve Blank on "Don't Waste A Good Crisis" (The NFX Podcast) says:"The Valley has basically sold its soul to an advertising model where it's okay to sell your data. They didn't want to be part of that ecosystem and didn't feel that ecosystem was aligned by their values".

#### **4- Jean Baudrillard and Consumer Societies**

The works of the contemporary French philosopher Jean Baudrillard are among the most important and famous studies in the field of humanities and culture at the present time. He has occupied the forefront of the intellectual theater in France and the world since the late sixties until now. A large part of these works deal with criticism of the consumer society. In addition to his book titled *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures (1970)*, there is another set of studies spread across his other books that deal with the same subject, such as *For a Critique of the Political Economy*

of the Sign (1972) *The Mirror of Production* (1973), and *Symbolic Exchange And Death* (1976). Today the most ordinary activities can be turned into labor and produce value such as workout routines, cooking, parenting, buying stuff wearing stuff and commodifying the body as an object of desire. These commodities are as much spiritual today as they are material.

Jean Baudrillard paved the way for us to understand signs and symbols as hyper real commodities in older theories of political economy including both capitalism and communism. The commodity was an object with labour invested into it. Things that are hard to find or extract like gold are worth more, not work things that take a lot of skill to make like art are worth more because craftsmanship is a laborious skill to acquire. All these factors make up a commodities exchange value which is the basis of a classical market because there's something relatively tangible and objective. Here, branding makes exchange value a lot more complicated suddenly artificial associations and meanings can affect the value of a commodity. One is no longer simply purchasing materials infused with labor but one is also purchasing the lifestyle associated with the product. we call this the brand which by the way used to be this, now athletic brands have done this for a long time you'll pay more for the apparel that the best athletes are paid to the athletes imaged a strange word that denotes the opinion of a mass television audience becomes an inseparable part of the value of a commodity.

For Baudrillard this shows that consumption influences the value of commodities more than production which is, the opposite of what both Marx and classical capitalists believed, it's not enough to explain the value of a commodity in terms of its production and labor. He writes that our ideas of labour and production are as he demonstrates in *Mirror Of Production* "reduction in the relation to the richness of the symbolic exchange" (73). We can't any longer think of commodities as parts of a rational exchange we also have to think of them as mythical signs that render consumption irrational advertisers offer a spiritual goods like justice inside of material goods like running shoes and political

campaigns. Similarly, they can sell hope or greatness and people will become consumers of these spiritual products. Symbolic exchange is more real than real, the material conditions of the sweatshop can be transcended by a symbol of social justice and everybody wins except them.

Baudrillard's criticism of the consumer society can be seen as belonging to a large intellectual heritage that focuses on the criticism of contemporary Western society.–this heritage includes the works of the Hungarian Marxist philosopher György Lukács and the philosophers of the Frankfurt School, in addition to some structuralists such as Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault, in addition to a long heritage of the nineteenth Century that includes the names of Marx, Nietzsche and Veblen. In fact, Baudrillard's study of the consumer society shows us how to shift from liberalism, as the image on which the capitalist West sees itself, to the consumer society, which is the current reality and the final end that this West has reached. Through all Baudrillard's studies, he shows us how bourgeois values and ideals and liberal ideology were transformed into consumer values and standards controlled by major institutions and the media, and into a system of symbols and signs that have their own logic and their own life that nullifies the real life of human beings. Additionally, he addresses the issue of media and communication becoming an industrial world that represents a reality that is created and becomes its own reality.

The consumer society is changing the traditional definitions of all the basic values and standards of liberalism to its advantage. The individual becomes a participant in his society, not by social or political action, but by consuming goods and merchandise produced by this society. Participation has become a participation in a type of consumption, and belonging to a certain consumer segment is a sign of status or social level. The altruistic moral values that govern the behavior of the individual with others are no longer able to achieve cohesion and social integration – those values whose source was due to Christianity and the religious reform movement, especially

Puritanism (34). And only the individual values that the consumer society is keen to produce more of are left. The consumption society has completely changed the meaning of individuality. The individual no longer seeks to achieve himself, but rather seeks the approval of others and gains their approval and identification with them. Individuality is no longer an absolute value, but merely functional compatibility. And instead of striving for achievements by which a person changes his conditions and transcends his condition towards another, he is striving towards mere satisfaction of people.

The consumer believes that his behavior is free, based on the fact that he is free to choose between all that the consumer society offers him. He believes that he seeks to differ and distinguish from others, and no one forces him to be like that, because it stems from within him. A certain rule or obligation compels him to be different and distinct. This is the authentic sign of uniqueness. However, as Paulo Freire on his work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* states, “this freedom is illusory and his quest for difference is false, because the plurality of consumer issues and the plurality of attitudes, opinions, and cultural patterns that he chooses are nothing but the product of the society that surrounds him and reveal only one logic, which is the individual's adherence to the only way he can live” (32). It is in the community and is for more consumption. Pluralism is false because it is nothing but a diversity of consumer subjects, whether they are commodities, opinions or cultural patterns. The consumption society also changes the meaning of the practice and social activity of the individual. According to Heidegger's “The Question Concerning Technology” it transforms the social and political practice of Praxis into a mere concern for the affairs of everyday life, that is, a false existence” (13). The political, cultural and social fields disappear to make room for private life and for everything that is private: work, family, free time, leisure and entertainment, the circle of friends and acquaintances.

In this way, the means of mass communication can interfere in people's private lives, by controlling entertainment, leisure and commercial mobilization of tastes. But does this situation not lead to a kind of remorse and guilt resulting from a contradiction between the negativity resulting from being away from everything that is political and social, and the positivity inherent in the Western democratic heritage and its political history? Baudrillard answers that “the consumer society also works to eliminate this feeling of guilt and negligence, by making people feel safe in their distance from the so-called jungle of life and its dangers” (200). The more the media broadcasts a miserable, brutal and dangerous image of the world, the more people feel safe in their distance and isolation from it. Their false sense of security eliminates any sense of guilt or negligence. It is also one of the factors in accepting the status quo, as it makes them neutral and passive in front of all social and political issues and problems since “The consumer's relationship with the real world, with politics, history and culture is not one of committed interest or responsibility... It is one of curiosity” (221). Singularity is no longer the goal of the individual who seeks it through difference from others. The elements that society provides to the individual in order to have a sense of exclusivity make him entangled in the traps of the ideology of consumption.

Singularity is now transformed into stereotyping and standardization. Liberalism prevailed in a discourse about needs and about the means by which one seeks to satisfy these needs. This discourse was based on a conception of human nature and of man as a *Homo Oeconomicus*. This discourse appeared in the science of political economy and in some intellectual doctrines and philosophies such as the English empirical philosophy, and Western political thought prevailed for a long time, and now it is one of the mainstays of the consumer society (*Science and Ideology in Economic, Political, and Social Thought*, Munich Discussion Paper 35). Baudrillard's work contains a sharp and profound critique of this concept of need. The needs that the discourse supporting the consumer society talks about are not human needs that emanate from human nature, but rather they are needs made by the

consumer society itself. They are not primary needs. The human need for food, for example, is satiated by a specific amount of food, but food in the consumer society takes many other forms and turns into a symbolic field.

Although the basic human needs are specific, we find a huge diversity in the goods that satisfy these needs. This diversity is due to the consumption society, which creates other secondary needs by producing a huge amount of goods that satisfy one need. Man has a minimum level that he is satisfied with and through which he can satisfy his primary needs, but the consumer society creates other recreational and symbolic needs that cannot be satisfied, because once the individual is satisfied with them, they lead him to other needs and to infinity. The reason for this is that they are not satisfied by use-values, but rather through exchange-values. The satisfaction of these needs does not come by having a use-value of something but a symbolic value. Goods are consumed because of what they give a person of status, social status or value in society and a certain image of others, not by what satiates him of his primary needs. In reality, needs are not the needs of individuals, but rather the needs of a system, the needs of growth. It is the increasing growth of society that imposes certain needs that disguise themselves as the needs of individuals.

If the current era is a post-industrial era whose main production is services, consumer goods, soft industries, media and information industries, then it is natural that the prevailing value in it is the exchange and symbolic value, not the use value, and it is also natural for him to work. Baudrillard maintains that This society must create the needs that its production satisfies, and since its production is consumptive, service, service and media, the needs it creates must be secondary symbolic. Constantly creating new needs was one of the necessities of the capitalist system's survival. This system is in constant need of markets for its production (230). Imperialism was necessary for this system in order to open more markets across all continents of the world. If capitalism does not find

markets, it will die. As for the independence of the colonies, capitalism had to create new commodities that would satisfy new needs. Thus, new markets were opened to compensate for the markets that were lost in the independence movements. Consumer, media and service markets appeared that pumped new blood into the regime.

The consumer society also changes the nature of capital circulation and the reproduction of the system. It was the production relations of a class system and private ownership and the accompanying laws and legislation that worked to reproduce, preserve and maintain the capitalist system and its cohesion in the era of industrial capitalism, but now, in the era of post-industrial capitalism, consumption has become Waste and waste is what works to reproduce the system and maintain its cohesion (Baudrillard 15). The system is no longer based on the transformation of excess value into new capital that accumulates and expands constantly, but rather depends on the production of soft industries that must be wasted and perish in order for others to be constantly reproduced, and this is how the circulation of capital takes place now. Needs have ceased to have independence and a special status. They are no longer characterized as being primary, natural, and peculiar to the human subject. Rather, they have become a creation of the system. Therefore, they are no longer suitable for criticizing capitalism, as Marx, Lukacz, the Frankfurt School philosophers and many current left-wing. The need has become socially conditional and turned into one of the products of the system, and therefore this system cannot be criticized for what it produces.

In fact, we find in Hegel a similar diagnosis to the concept of need, especially in his book *The Origins of the Philosophy of Right* in which he put his social and political theories. He claims “His needs multiply as civilization advances, and the individual cannot satisfy all of them, and they turn more to be luxury needs” (54). But while Hegel moves from his diagnosis of the system of needs to the category of work and takes into account the analysis of political economy as starting from the

concepts of need and work, Baudrillard is satisfied with critiquing the consumer society and the ideology that supports it and does not take the step taken by Hegel and after him by Marx, which is the criticism of economics. Equality is a myth, which liberal ideology has always used to justify the capitalist mode of production and the preservation of the status quo. All the flaws and vices of this ideology are now transformed into the concept of happiness. Happiness has become the sign and measure of equality. And in order for happiness to bear the myth of equality, it must be subject to measurement, that is, it can be measured in the form of objects and signs, and it must be transformed into luxury (Hegel 39).

The welfare state in the West inherited the liberal political heritage with all its values and standards, and considered itself the realization of these values and standards and their natural development. It was logical to translate equality into the terms of the consumption society, which is the product of the welfare state, and happiness becomes a sign of luxury and luxury is a sign of equality. Baudrillard explains “genuine happiness, which is an internal feeling of one and independent of any external matter and which is satisfaction and conviction, that happiness that does not need physical evidence, is isolated and removed, in order to give up its place for happiness as a luxury that must be measured and searched for” (46). In terms of meaning, Happiness is not considered the joy of the group in holidays and celebrations, it is not considered spiritual and embodied in the common collective life, but rather it becomes an individual criterion.

Baudrillard also goes further and sees that the legacy of liberalism from its inception translates equality into this narrow concept of happiness. The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen recognizes and calls for the right of every individual to happiness, that is, it transfers happiness from its general collective, moral and supportive meaning to its individual meaning, which turns into luxury and enjoyment with consumer issues. He explains,

The principle of democracy has shifted from real equality of competencies, responsibilities, and equal opportunities... to equality in front of the issues of ownership and material symbols of social success and happiness... and it appears that it is concrete equality, but it is a formality that hides and conceals the absence of real democracy and the disappearance of equality. (58)

And if the contemporary society achieves something of equality in salaries, living conditions and the satisfaction of needs, then this is a by-product of the original function of the system, which is to increase the material privileges of the privileged holders, i.e. those who already have privileges. Inequality is the goal of growth, and inequality is nothing but an overproduction of chance. While liberalism believed that increased growth would eliminate scarcity and consequently the misery and misery of the lower classes and thus eliminate the possibilities of revolution and social unrest and reduce the intensity of class contradictions and wide differences between standards of living.

Baudrillard argues that “since the eighteenth century, and especially since the French Revolution, the field of politics has become a field of representation, that is, what is social began to find expression in what is political, and citizens began to find expression in the political field. Representative and representative democracy and on public opinion and the idea of the general will” (4). He translates this into the terms structuralism and post-structuralism. He sees that the field of politics has since become a field of significance and meaning. What happens in politics is the signifier of a fundamental signifier, which is the general will. Now, the social is no longer an independent field and is no longer a source of energies and forces that provide the political with significance and meaning. With the transformation of the Civil Society into a mass society, it has become a future for everything that politics imposes on it, and it no longer has the active and influential role it used to have. It is no longer the meaning to which it refers and ends with political connotations. Any basic

social reality that lies under the meaning of the political process has disappeared, and politics has become more and more isolated from the masses and has become independent and self-managing, that is, it has come to refer only to itself and has no significance except in relation to its field only.

If Marx held that commodities and the relations between them have supplanted social relations, Baudrillard now holds that signs and symbols have supplanted reality itself, thus the signifier became independent of the signified and ideology was generalized. Commodities are consumed not because of the needs they fill, but because of their symbolic value, that is, they are consumed as signs. In addition, the media no longer transmits to us only signs and symbols, and thus created a second reality, an alternative to the real one. The signifier no longer refers to a specific signifier, and the sign is no longer a sign of something realistic, but rather a sign of another sign, and reality has been removed from this new relationship. Exchange value no longer refers to a use value, a need, a goal or an end, but to other exchange value and other signs and symbols. If the ideology is to replace reality with a sign and consider the signifier as having priority over the signified, Baudrillard's analyzes reveal. The consumer society not only does this process of substitution, but it also replaces signs with each other and replaces symbols with symbols in the absence of reality or the real thing. It is true that Baudrillard views this new process as the end of ideology, but it is the end of a certain type of ideology, that which replaces the mark with reality, and the emergence of a new type, which is to remove reality itself from the game of signs and symbols.

##### **5- THE CULTURE INDUSTRY: Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer**

The term culture industry was introduced into the critical theory of the Frankfurt school by Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer in the 1940s it refers primarily to the entertainment Industry in the draft notes for their dialectic of enlightenment. Horkheimer and Adorno initially used the term “Mass Culture,” but that term was subsequently rejected on the grounds that it might seem

synonymous with a contemporary form of popular art or a culture that is spontaneously created by the masses the traditional and enlightenment notion of culture implies a critical attitude towards the status quo (Waldman 22).

It can be said that any of the terms and concepts operating in the postmodern era did not witness what the concept of (culture) witnessed in terms of prosperity and widespread circulation and employment for various cognitive purposes, social, political, scientific, ideological, etc.—Despite the diversity and richness in the meaning of “culture,” all of these definitions can be reduced to two clear directions that express all meanings. Perhaps this last meaning of culture is the closest and most relevant to the nature of the topic that dedicates this research to explaining its relations. This concept “the Culture Industry” is an event closely related to postmodern societies, on the one hand, and this concept itself refers, on the other hand, to a profound transformation in its structure and the concept of culture itself; it is a transformation that does not occur based on the spontaneous growth of societies and their historical conditions. Working as it should be, it is an imposed, innovative transformation led and supervised by a group of mechanisms associated with power, or the ideological cultural type of power, and the different historical circumstances of some of them as well (Gunster 30).

Through this introduction, it becomes clear to us the importance of intellectual-cultural-political work, which The Frankfurt School began - in general, and Adorno in particular. This raised the problem of the ‘cultural industry,’ as expressed by Herbert Schiller, in his famous book *Culture Inc.: The Corporation Takeover Of Public Expression (1991)*, in which he carefully traces the technological, economic, political and legal factors that has transformed the cultural information system into a corporation controlled business, as he says: “transforming information into a salable good, available to those with the ability to pay for it, changes the goal of information access from

egalitarian to a privileged condition. The consequences of this is that the essential underpinning of a democratic order is seriously, if not fatally, damaged”(75).

The second definition, which is based on the first, presents the formation of the consciousness of the masses, towards their adoption of the ideological choices of commodities, and their defense against all the original creative cultural elements. These are elements that members of society are supposed to produce automatically based on their freedom of choice alone. It is no secret here, the great technological revolution in the world of communications has a very important impact in shaping the concept of “the culture industry”, as the relationship between media and culture is a structural one, to the extent that they often overlap.

The media can be seen as a direct applied aspect that implements the prevailing or approved cultural thought, which is what the Frankfurt School noticed early by Adorno and Max Horkheimer, the founders of the Frankfurt School. For them, the modern media institution is nothing but a tool for social control and the reproduction of society with its prevailing patterns (3). In the mid-1940s, a joint book by Adorno and Horkheimer was published, entitled *The Dialectics of Enlightenment*. The book included two important chapters that deal directly with the concept of “The Culture Industry,” the first of which bore the title “Industrial Production of Cultural Commodities,” and the second came under the title “Culture Industry – Enlightenment as a Deception of the Masses.”

The aforementioned two chapters are a critical study of the industrial production of cultural materials, as a comprehensive phenomenon that aims to transform cultural production into a commodity. Cultural products, films, radio programs and magazines refer to the same technical rationality, the same organizational formulas and administrative planning used in the industrial production of cars or urban projects (11). Recognizing the deep dimension that this technical totalitarian tendency assumes, its danger can be realized through the following explanatory statement:

“what might be called use value in the reception of cultural commodities is replaced by exchange value” (158). Therefore, it is a world that is not within the reach of capital owners and producers of commodities first, and in order to control it to ensure that it does not impede the flow of consumer goods, another cultural world must be created that is an extension of the commodity itself, a manufactured world that humiliates the essential differences and sharp qualitative separation between the material - the commodity on the one hand, and between the mind and desires on the other hand. In other words, describing the capitalist conception of culture, another cultural world should be created, deriving its values from the commodity itself, from its beauty and seduction and from the media-advertising perception of its importance and necessity. The commodity and the world of culture - from unification, within a comprehensive ideology, a commodity manufactured in its space does not find much difficulty in entering society and the pattern of its cultural formations (167), in order to form it on its example.

The cultural industry delivers its identical goods to every place, satisfying the needs that are diverse, and based on uniform production standards in satisfying these demands. And through an industrial mode of production, we get a mass culture made up of a series of things that bear, of course, the imprint of cultural industry, mass production, normative uniformity, division of labor. Adorno and Horkheimer Write “culture today is infecting everything with sameness”(20). film, radio, and magazines from a system. Each branch of culture is unanimous with itself and all are unanimous together. Even the aesthetic manifestations of political opposites proclaim the same infallible rhythm. The individual lives in a world dominated by concentrated capital. The culture Industry is no exception, “all mass culture under monopoly is identical”(1). They say that the defenders of the culture Industry argue that they are driven by the demand of their costumes. They demand cheap reproduced products that can be accessed easily and everywhere. The effect though is mass standardization: something is provided for everyone so that no one can escape; differences are

hammer home and propagation (19) . They assert that “The details become interchangeable” (32), “like all the details, ready-made cliches, to be used here and there as desired and always completely defined by the purpose they serve within the schema” (34). This adherence to the status quo, the conforming with the majority is of course inherently conservative.

Adorno and Horkheimer (Adork, henceforth), diagnose the culture industry as a mechanism of psychosocial control, and in American capitalism it plays the role of dictator over taste and opinion. They write “Real life is becoming indistinguishable from the movies” (141), and “Hollywood films are responsible for "the stunting of the mass media consumer's power of imagination”141), “the culture industry as a whole has molded man as a type unfailingly reproduced in every product... not nuanced in any way” (148). The culture industry stimulates the desire for pleasure, for entertainment, only to defer it to the next thing; to reboot, sequel, sequel, crossover, spin-off. Habituation and repetition that resigns subjects to the status quo, lulled to sleep, as it were, in a flow of products. And it's not just film.

In the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adork sought to explore why the inequality of Capitalism does not spur revolution in America. Capitalist society pumps out repetitive, unsurprising forms of entertainment to stimulate desire and make money. It's not concerned with the creation of intellectual or revolutionary art. Walter Benjamin, Adorno's mentor, articulated this idea in *the Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1935) which argued that mechanical, factory-like reproduction of art objects reduces its perceived aesthetic intimacy with the artist, its "aura", that's what made it special (32). Advertising replaces the aura and tries to associate what we now call a brand with the product. The purpose of art is, or at least could be, according to Adorno, shaking people away from their Walmart dreamworld. If you know anything about art these days it has become its own cultural industry where the super-rich can park their money as an investment. Owning the present isn't enough

for them so they buy the past as well. Everything produced by the culture industry takes on this polished veneer: bright colors, plastic, and costume, such that any trace of the real human is erased from art, from music, and from artificially constructed political personae. For these Marxist humanists you need something really human to inspire action and you could say that the entire purpose of the culture industry is to alienate the activity of consumption from every other part of life. It becomes a frictionless process that then just endlessly reboots itself (111).

Adorno and Horkheimer came to see the culture industry as a powerful agent in perpetuating capitalism. They write, Culture today is infecting everything with sameness. Film, radio, and magazines form a system. Each branch of culture is unanimous within itself and all are unanimous together. Even the aesthetic manifestations of political opposites proclaim the same inflexible rhythm. Films and radio no longer need to present themselves as art. The truth is that they are no longer anything but business used as an ideology. To legitimize the trash they intentionally produce (22). So besides the obvious examples of advertising and product placement, the culture industry has another function in the capitalist economy: psychological control. Picture this: after a long day of alienated wage labor you're tired; not looking for art to challenge you. Instead, you want to chill to the drone of sports or to the comfortable formulae of sitcoms or reality TV. These two realms of life, the active producer and the passive consumer, complement each other perfectly in the maintenance of this particular status quo.

## Conclusion:

In essence the culture industry takes legitimate sentiments regarding social justice causes or protests and inserts them into the pop culture products, then sells it back to us! In turn, we once more feel the cathartic release of having participated in spontaneous action all the way maintaining the domination of that exact same culture industry. You cannot resolve the injustice inherent to a capitalist economy by consuming more. Film and advertising legitimate social justice issues as a way to stimulate an emotional connection in order to sell your movie tickets, shoes, and corn. Adorno states “the triumph of advertising in the culture industry is that consumers feel compelled to buy and use its products even though they see through them” (12). Anything human in us: the desire for change or social justice, our heroes, our villains, even our fears and anxieties are sold back to us. As the cultural critic Terry Eagleton put it in his book *Liberalism and Socialism*, “Nothing is more generously inclusive than the commodity, which in its disdain for distinctions of rank, class, race, and gender will nestle up to anyone at all provided they have the wherewithal to pay for it”(32). Social justice is important. Causes are important. But if you buy this thesis than any cause, call for justice, or campaign that does not advocate for a change in ownership, you can do something, or you can do nothing. Most likely nothing will change either way.

## **CHAPTER TWO:**

### **The Role of Technology, Ideology, and Corporate Power in Shaping Consumer Behavior and the Culture Industry in M.T. Anderson's *Feed*.**

#### **Introduction:**

Dystopian fiction is written with the intention of stories showing people the existing problems of society, creating a possible fearful future. The notion of consumer societies as well as totalitarian and authoritarian states-is most often relegated to the realms of science fiction and dystopian novels. This chapter analyses how *Feed* by M.T. Anderson, as dystopian novel, assumes the role of cautionary warnings of future societies, and therefore, the novel and its highlighted themes play a dominant role when it comes to understanding the pros and cons of consumer societies as we know them today. An analysis of the novel aims to demonstrate how technology, controlled by corporate powers, is shaping the cultural and social aspects of a society plagued with excess consumerism.

#### **1- About the author and the Novel:**

M.T Anderson (Mathieu Robin Anderson) is an accomplished American writer who has written a variety of books that range from children to young adult fiction literature, he was educated in English Literature at Harvard university and went on to receive his M F A in creative writing from Syracuse university. His novels include *Thirsty* (1997), *Burger Wuss* (1999), *feed* (2002), *Symphony for the city of the Dead: Dimitri Shostakovich and Siege of lingered* (2015), *Landscape with invisible hand* (2017), *The Assassination Of Bringing Spurge* (2018). His writing ranges between novels, sciences novels, graphics, short fiction, and picture books. He is the recipient of major awards that recognize the other significant and lasting contribution to young adult literature; he was nominated

for the national book Award for young people's literature, he is the winner of the Los Angeles Times Book Prize in 2006, and Margaret Edwards Award in 2019.

His novel *Feed* is the Winner of the 2002 National Book Award for Young People's Literature, Honor 2003 Boston Globe-Horn Book Award for Fiction, 2003 Golden Duck Awards Hal Clement Award for Young Adults, and finally, Nominee 2005–2006 Green Mountain Book Award. In 2020, *Feed* landed the 68th spot on the American Library Association's list of most commonly banned and challenged books in the United States between 2010 and 2019. The novel approaches important themes like the theme of corporate power, consumerism, information technology, data mining, environmental decay, consumerism, and positions of readers to address questions about human agency in a world where individuals are bombarded with information about products and services, but denied knowledge of political and ideological contexts.

*Feed* takes place in a futuristic version of the USA where the majority of the population uses "Feed"- a surgically implanted device that enables the user to electronically communicate with others, access to information and most importantly, unlimited hours of entertainment, and countless advertisements for products. Titus, the narrator, is a teenager from an upper-class family, who and his friend spend time going to corporation controlled school TM, buying stuff and going on expensive vacations, causing environmental and social decay. Meanwhile President of the United States, as *Feed* reports, refuses to exercise any control over the corporations and oppressed rebels who resist the feed such as Violet Durn, and hacker groups.

This dystopia is characterized by corporate power, ruined environment to the point where whales have to wear a special plastic coating to be able to survive the ocean, and people getting horrible lesions all over their bodies because of pollution. This instills in the minds of the reader a fear of a possible dystopian future. This portrayal reflects a wider tendency with YA dystopian

writing, as Bradford (author of introduction and notes) has argued: “many texts about the notion and directions it has taken, manifested in dystopian visions of environmental decay, social disorder and the imitation of anarchic and totalitarian regimes” (Booker 4). Anderson’s dystopian future situate the young person and his environment as victim of the encroachment of technology. However, this encroachment in each text is also inextricably linked with survival. the environment exists in an uneasy yet inextricable relationship in many young adult fictions dealing with dystopian futures. Nature is frequently depicted as destroyed that the young person must negotiate or resist in order to survive and preserve the future. and the artificial. While the artificial is conflated with the destruction or replacement of essential natural system The task at hand for the implied reader then becomes one of determining how this might continue for further loss.

## **2- Science Fiction, Cyberpunk, and Dystopias:**

Science fiction is a genre where science and technology conflict with society. It's usually set in the future, in a world similar to ours with technology that could exist in our world with some rational explanation that technology drives the story. There's hard science fiction where the science is King and the writer includes lots of accurate details about how the technology works, and soft science fiction where the story and characters are more important than the technology and the writer can take some creative liberties in exchange for going easy on the scientific details.

Generally speaking, *Feed* is part of the larger genre of Science Fiction; but it is more specifically a Cyberpunk novel. Cyberpunk is an offshoot of science fiction, according to John Clute in *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* the term originated as the title of a short story by Bruce Bethker in the November, 1983 issue of *Amazing*. Gardner Dozois then used the title to describe near-future focuses on heavily-computerized global economic culture with a strong popular-culture ambience. The most-quoted description of cyberpunk is found in Bruce Sterling's *Preface* to

*Mirrorshades 1986*: “For the cyberpunks, by stark contrast, technology is visceral. It is not the bottled genie of remote Big Science boffins; it is pervasive, utterly intimate. Not outside us, but next to us. Under our skin; often, inside our minds”(7).

The genre embraces the punk and early hacker subcultures, though it explores a starkly different vision of the future than its forebears. Characters in cyberpunk fiction adopt the surface attributes associated with the popular culture movement known as punk, but its characters are accommodationists. According to Inge Erickson in her *Foundation* article, “The Aesthetics of Cyberpunk,” information is the lifeblood of cyberpunk (40); one might add that information is simply a commodity to be traded, preferably outside official channels. This worldview paralleled the growing pessimism in the late 1960’s and 70’s. After the moral unshackling of the Free Love era and the emergence of modern drug culture, America was torn apart politically by the tumultuous Vietnam War, a controversial president ending in resignation, and a festering mistrust of authority.

The conflict between the haves and have-nots also feeds into another major theme of cyberpunk. Often depicting future dystopias where mega corporations wield more power than governments, and rule the world from lofty skyscrapers, overlooking the streets where cyberpunk heroes try to make ends meet doing illicit jobs, either for these corporations, or against them (Haval 4). Some may be able to afford cybernetic augmentations, swapping organic body parts with machine replacements that make them stronger, faster, or more in-tune with the endless expanse of cyberspace at their fingertips (-4) . But are these cybernetically-enhanced people still human? Or are they the next phase of human evolution? At what point does the line between man and machine blur? These are the questions and themes that drive cyberpunk.

Unlike its more optimistic science fiction predecessors, cyberpunk showed us the dark side, revealing the dangerous side effects of the drug of futurism. The world was sweeping up the still-

warm ashes of World War II, when mathematicians and philosophers noted the rise of cybernetic technology in modern living. New inventions became more prominent in day-to-day life, and the embrace of these new mechanical marvels inspired visions of the future, and what such a life would hold for mankind (Ultimate Cyberpunk X). This mode of thinking inspired a new wave of writers and artists, many of whom used these advancements to predict what our lives would be like in the far future. One such author was the influential sci-fi icon, Philip K. Dick, who made a startling discovery while researching his post-World War II alternate history novel, *Man in the High Castle*. Philip read a German officer's journal, in which the soldier complained that the screams of starving children kept him awake at night, not out of guilt, but more as a nuisance. These startling revelations inspired PKD's concept of the "android," a machine that resembled a real person, but with one critical difference: the absence of empathy (Lawrence 37).

Among a myriad of inspiring works by Philip, his most famous was 1968's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* In it, he explores the question of what it truly means to be an authentic human being, and not an unfeeling, uncaring machine devoid of emotions and empathy. In the novel's setting, entire subcultures emerged, where citizens would prove their humanity by caring for animals, and the presence of dangerous androids would be sniffed out through rigorous empathy testing, and enforced through state-funded bounty hunters.

By the end of the 80s, Cyberpunk had stepped out from the shadows. While the genre debuted with cult classic movies seen by few, pen and paper games played in basements, and edgy novels whispered about in book clubs — it had eventually taken the world by storm, due in no small part to the explosion of personal computing (McCaffery Interview 278). Just like those pages that described a world where computers would consume our day-to-day lives, reality began to resemble science fiction, and it took the prophetic genre of cyberpunk along for the ride. Before the 90's rolled around,

only hyper-enthusiasts, schools and businesses used computers. But as the turn of the millennium approached, Microsoft and Apple battled over desktops world-wide with the emergence of their consumer-oriented operating systems, far surpassing the capability and accessibility of anything previously available. Soon, these two humble companies conquered massive amounts of the PC market share, mirroring the megacorps common in cyberpunk literature. This fresh wave of interest in cyberspace and electronics helped drive the mystique and possibility of cyberpunk, and mainstream movie and television studios took notice.

Cyberpunk, as envisioned by classic authors like Dick, Gibson and Williams, had taken a backseat to these more accessible, visual mediums. This unconquered frontier would help seal the genre into the psyche of a more mainstream Audience (T.C). Starting 1990 off with a bang, Hollywood took another stab at adapting the fiction of Philip K. Dick. “RoboCop” director Paul Verhoeven helmed the project, alongside writer Dan O’Bannon—known for his work on “The Long Tomorrow” and Ridley Scott’s “Alien”. “Total Recall” is a sci-fi action thriller, loosely based on the 1966 PKD short story, ‘The original short story is a high-concept thought experiment written during the height of Soviet espionage. It’s a simple story about artificial memories, brainwashing and the effects that they have on your personality. While it hints at a larger universe than was explored in its pages, it never even leaves Earth’s atmosphere.

The film was pumped full of adrenaline, reinterpreted as an action-packed Arnold Schwarzenegger bonanza. The plot revolves around one Douglas Quaid, a construction worker who yearns for something more, and has a strange obsession with going to the off-world colonies on Mars, despite never having left Earth. It’s all Quaid ever talks about, even though Mars is the war-torn scab of the solar system. The red planet's natural atmosphere is an unlivable hellscape, and the only thing between the colonists and a horrific death are glass domes, built by private mining corporations. Mars

is under constant conflict between the rebels fighting for freedom and oxygen, and the Mars security forces, overseen by the tyrannical Chancellor Coahaagen. He's a corrupt executive who extorts the common people with ever-inflating prices of breathable air. Ignoring the stern advice of his wife and friends and frustrated at his inability to visit the Red Planet, Quaid does the next-best thing and visits Rekall, a memory implant service with a checkered reputation. There, he can order a tailor-made memory that feels as lifelike and inspiring as the real thing, without ever leaving their offices. He customizes his trip to be a Martian adventure to uncover a clandestine plot, casting him as a secret agent with a spirited love interest.

Things take a turn for the worse when the everyday Quaid has a psychotic break during the memory implant procedure. He wails about how he's actually a real secret agent, and that his cover is blown. Deadly assassins hunt him down, and friends and family he once trusted all seem to be in on the conspiracy — eerily similar to the vacation he custom-ordered back at the memory clinic. Quaid embarks to Mars, with the burning desire to find out who he really is, all the while evading his pursuers, who will stop at nothing to prevent him from learning this secret. “Total Recall” subtly toys with your expectations throughout its runtime. It repeatedly makes you question whether this larger-than-life Martian espionage is actually happening to Quaid, or if his brain is frying back at Rekall — stuck in a fantasy prison of his own design. At one point, a Rekall rep even offers Quaid a red pill, as a token of his willingness to wake up from his supposed dream — a symbol later popularized by The Matrix as a synonym for “awakening”. Underneath its Hollywood shell, “Total Recall” is cyberpunk at its core — high-tech memory implants, corporate mercenaries, and a low-life, mutant populace, crushed under the heel of a greedy and dangerous authority.

Dystopian genre is cyberpunk subgenre that has a sci-fi connotation to it and most dystopian media that was written describes a futuristic world where mankind's own creations be a technological

or sociological have turned against him. Most dystopian representations describe a world long time in the future in the land far away. But the truth is that dystopia transcends all the time, it has occurred in the past, they will occur in the future and they are occurring right now (kulthar).

Dystopia originated from utopia, a perfect world for mankind. As the world evolved, many people realized that what follows is almost always Dystopian, as H. L. Mencken put it “The urge to save humanity is almost always only a false-face for the urge to rule it. Power is what all messiahs really seek: not the chance to serve” (69). To achieve a perfect world with an unnatural amount of order, behavior change, and conformity can only happen with either an oppressive “Big Brother” watching every move, or by an unnatural alteration of the human mind. This futuristic, imagined universe necessarily implicates oppressive societal control and the illusion of a perfect society that are maintained through corporate, bureaucratic, technological, moral, or totalitarian control.

Dystopias, through an exaggerated worst-case scenario, make a criticism about a current trend, societal norm, or political system. In Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) he describes a society that is perfect in every way: every person follows their social roles correctly as all humans have been genetically and mentally engineered to do so. In George Orwell's *1984*, propaganda and surveillance control the population making the people obedient through fear. The outlook for society is usually pretty bleak, and, perhaps, more than most science fiction genres, dystopian sci-fi hits home because it feels like it could be real. This sub-genre has some of the most thought-provoking novels that science fiction has to offer. To name a few: *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury, *1984* by George Orwell, and *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood. young adult dystopian fiction has become one of the most popular genres of the last decade; in fact the percent of books classified as dystopian is at its highest point since the 1960s , it has become so popular that many have been made into movies: *The*

*Giver 1993, The Hunger Games 2008, The Maze Runner 2009, and Divergent 2011* are all young adult novels that have recently been made into films.

One of the reasons Dystopian fiction has become so popular among different categories of people is that is weirdly comforting; we can watch or read a dystopian work and say well at least my life isn't that bad. Another reason is that it offers us a way to engage with modern problems in a way that feels less traumatic, we can recognize the problems that mirror those in our own time. It is a more pleasant experience than watching a documentary about collapsing ecosystems but it brings those same issues to mind since people like to relate to what they're reading even if the subject matter is unpleasant. In a way, dystopian fiction performs a useful service in this regard, people who would otherwise ignore the news and the challenges we face are forced to see the similarities between these fictional worlds and the one we inhabit.

The global pandemic and *Contagion 2011*, The film praised by scientists alike for its accuracy, depicts the fictional MEV1 virus contains numerous frightening similarities to today's COVID-19 epidemic. Much like the coronavirus we face today, the MEV1 originated from a patient zero returning from China. And the film's cast soon discovers that the virus is made up of elements that originated from pigs and much like COVID-19-- bats! On top of that, the MEV1 virus spread only slightly faster in the film than COVID-19 in real life. The film also deals with the ensuing panic after the nation's cities are quarantined. And it takes an in-depth look at the effect of conspiracy theories by one of the characters in the film, Alan Krumwiede. Alan fakes having the infection in order to sell a phony cure. Now compare that to the real situation. We saw President Trump attempt something similar with hydroxy-chloroquine. And other world leaders, competing to sell what they call it a cure.

The movie “Blade Runner 2049” (2017)’s scenario shares stark similarities with the wildfires in some countries of the world (2020/2021), some countries have been burning for over a week, and the fire is showing no signs of stopping. thousands of people have had to evacuate under red skies blistering heat and suffocating smoke. Film buffs and pop culture aficionados were quick to point out the similarity between the apocalyptic orange sky above these countries and the striking visuals from the 2017 sci-fi spectacular Blade Runner 2049.

Dystopian fiction often focuses on smaller scale human-centric problems. one of the most quintessential of these is the issue of rampant inequality where the wealthy are looking down on the unwashed masses from their glittering towers. In the movie “Altered Carbon” (2018), the rich have found a way to essentially become immortal the final hurdle for the elite while the poor are left to suffer and die. Far below the cloud top utopias of society's upper crust the quest for immortality, is something that world billionaires are absolutely pursuing, there's one startup which offers plasma transfusions from the blood of young people in an effort to slow the aging process. In this regard, real life figures bare so much similarity with dystopian features. Some of the more dedicated elite like Paypal founder Peter Thiel routinely spend 40 000 per quarter for blood transfusions from 18 year olds, we also have the absurdly wealthy going on little joy rides to space just because they feel like it, Jeff Bezos spent 5.5 billion dollars to spend 11 minutes as far above the poor people as he could possibly get meanwhile his workers who do the actual labor that produces Amazon's profits face some of the most inhumane conditions in the country.

The final trope in our dystopia comparison is the ever-present hand of the technocrats and the giant corporations. It goes without saying that this world is run by mega corporations like Amazon, Google, and Disney that are slowly consuming all other media companies. So-called industry leaders like Bill Gates enjoy essentially limitless positive press for even their most alarming projects. For

example, Gates wants to shoot dust into the atmosphere to block the sun. Then there's every internet dweeb's favorite oligarch, Elon Musk, CEO of Tesla Motors, who is establishing Neuralink, the company determined to put a computer chip in your brain to connect human brains with computers. It will be starting human trials in the very near future and Musk has just announced that SpaceX will launch a satellite into space with the purpose of displaying advertisements; any interested parties will be able to buy ad space with crypto soon even the night sky will not offer an escape from the intrusion of capital. Politicians are put there to tell you that you have freedom of choice while you do not.

### **3- Technology and Corporate Power in *Feed*:**

Lyons argues that in *Feed* “the evolution of technology ensures that corporations are no longer forced to rely on closed-circuit television cameras to surveil people. Instead, people's connectedness to the feed affords corporations uninterrupted access to their dreams, longings, and desires. As is the case in our contemporary surveillance society” (94). In order to address power, the novel addresses the rise of an electronic media system. In the novel *Feed*, The most important technological advancement is the “feed,” which is a computer network created by the corporations, and that is connected to the brains of the majority of the population.

This network’s main goal is to advertise different goods and services and encourage consumerism directly to the characters’ brains. As Elizabeth Parsons and Elizabeth Ballen suggest, “the technology is called ‘the feed,’ a name that collapses corporate feeding of consumers (with products to fulfill their desires) and corporations feeding on the consumers in their relentless pursuit of wealth” (qtd. in L. Denatale 34). Corporations have replaced the government as the most powerful societal institution, and people have stopped utilizing technology, and have started to let corporations use them through technology. Titus narrates that corporations are responsible for implanting feeds in

their brains when they're born and they grow up with the feed, they become almost completely dependent on it for information and entertainment. He explains

But the braggist thing about the feed, the thing that made it really big, is that it knows everything you want and hope for, sometimes before you even know what those things are. It can tell you how to get them, and help you make buying decisions that are hard. 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. (*Feed* 48)

To Titus, the best thing about the feed is that it creates demographic profiles and make people buying decisions. "Despite being clearly a constructed piece of technology, the feed operates to blur the boundaries between organic and technological, and between self and the external force of advertising. As Violet, the "dissenting voice" (Bullen & Parsons: 134) to the values of the society dominated by the feed. Titus explains: "the feed is tied in to everything. Your body control, your emotions, your memory" (*Feed* 170). It is worth mentioning that it is the advertising and information projected through technology, not the technology itself that poses the greatest threat to the characters' minds. This is much in line with Heidegger's insight on technology's essence and how its use is what creates its danger not technology in itself. but corporations who provide the feed content, use technology to monitor and control the people.

#### **4- Ideology and State Apparatus in *Feed*:**

The book represents brainwashed rampant consumers, victims of feed corporations, whose government ignores evidence of degradation while claiming support to the feed. *Feed* corporations

have control also over the school system, which is now known as School™. In the novel, Titus narrates that “School™ is not so bad now, 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?”(4). Titus claims that School™ is better than it was when it was controlled by the government . Now that School™ is run by corporations, students learn useful lessons about products. Corporations run schools, he claims, because “it’s an investment in tomorrow” (5). Corporations use education as an opportunity to brainwash students into becoming eager consumers for the rest of their lives. As explained previously, educational systems are subject to ideological indoctrination. As Althusser argues, “the educational system is the dominant ideological apparatus in capitalist social formations” (26). The school takes children of all classes at the youngest age, and stays with them for years or at the age of sixteen, a huge number of children go out to production.

The feed is the primary mode of education and entertainment in the society, and to a great extent there is no escaping it. Violet counters that it's definitely not a democracy. She explains that if America really were a democracy, then the people would decide how things work. Titus points that people could just all vote from their feeds. There's one big problem with that, which Violet points out: only about 73% of the American public have feeds. So, that would leave out a pretty big chunk of the populace. Violet points out that people who have had the feed since birth are unaware of a lot of things, and that basically America is “raising a nation of idiots”(23). She figures nothing can change with the American political system being the way it is. the only thing about which the people in the world of *Feed* can be sure is that “Everything must go” (299–300).

While *Feed* characters seem to passively accept the feed system rule, there are others who are aware and actively resist corporate expansion. First, Titus notes that there are activist group (computer hackers) who wanted to destroy the feed. However, Anderson hints that this form of

resistance is unlikely achievable, as the novel ends, the chances of winning their battle are slim. One of the hackers was eventually, as Titus narrates, “beaten to death at the club. We saw it. The police, remember? They beat him over the head” (3). There are also people who resist corporate expansion “from the inside.” Violet Durn is one of the few characters who express strong dissatisfaction with the feed, by creating an unintelligible “consumer profile” so that it won't know how to advertise to her. she dislikes the feed profile because it implies that she is predictable and conforms to what others conform to. She wants to express and live her uniqueness and humanity, and thinks that she will be able to by battling her own “Feed.” She explains to Titus what she is trying to do: “What I've been doing over the feed for the last two days, is trying to create a customer profile that's so screwed, no one can market to it. I'm not going to let them catalog me. I'm going to become invisible” (98). However, Violet’s act of resistance achieves the most minimal success; it backfires when her feed shuts off, and the corporation refuses to pay for upkeep since she is an “unpredictable” customer.

This suggests that the feed system can't be sabotaged, As Violet’s father explains, there is no real choice in whether or not to get a feed, for not to have one makes it almost impossible to live in this world, as he found when lack of the feed cost him a job (288). Violet’s breakdown demonstrates feed's control over society. Just like Violet, her father, who is a college professor of dead languages, deliberately criticizes and resists joining the mass communication of the novel’s society The father’s strategy of using words to avoid being dumbed down is similar to Violet's own desire to be invisible to the feed, but like anyone else who resists the feed system, he went through a pressure to be excluded from work.

##### **5- The “Feed” and Systemic Consumerism:**

The characters in the book are not sorted by their intelligence and identities, instead they're sorted by their feed profiles. The *Feed's* society is so carefully classified and sorted according to their

consumption habits. In other words, they are classified by their economic class and their ability to consume. This depiction of such a society implies that this economic activity is a cause and effect of both that environmental and societal decay. Throughout the novel, the characters' immersion in an ideology of capitalism and consumerism blinds them to the toxicity of corporate culture in much the same way that they are ignorant of the pestilence that swarms the outside of the domes they inhabit.

The teenagers in the novel are surrounded by wealth and entitlement, and are oblivious to the way of life of the non-wealthy. The characters seem to spend so much time on pleasure (yet aren't satisfied): Titus and his friends come from wealthy families that their parents afford to send them on a spring break vacation to the moon. Titus narrates, "We went to the moon to have fun, but the moon turned out to completely suck" (3). The moon continues to "suck," because it's been commodified to the point where it has turned into another boring mall. Teenagers in *Feed* keep buying things they don't need and going to exotic destinations and expensive vacations, and they live in a world of unlimited entertainment. They are constantly told by their implanted feed and ads that they should pursue pleasure, expensive unrewarding pleasure. Titus and his friends spend so much time shopping and have no time to associate with people who can't keep up with their spending habits, and in this way the norms of feed's society virtually preclude them from meeting new people outside their class bubble, that make them unaware of the starving, dying working-class as a result of their consumerist habits that enable corporate expansion. However, Titus and his friends (people of the same class bubble) surround each other only to zone out on the feed." I looked around me. Everyone was nodding their heads to the music, or had their eyes just blank with the feedcast. It was just a party. Nothing but a party" (Feed 83) reader is given the image of a party happening, in which people normally converse or sing along to music together, yet no one in this situation is socializing with one another.

characters surrounded by objects, people, and interactive scenes in their real environment yet what they pay attention to is this constant flow of information thrown at them by some form of digital overlay, whether through something like contacts or due to a chip implanted in the brain. This transition from the real environment into an augmented reality takes away personal interaction, true emotion, and awareness of physical surroundings. Without these three things present, nothing is left but the shell of a body with the person inhabiting it living in a dreamlike world. Baudrillard states that “we have seen the degradation of shared living space” (40). Baudrillard sees this general degradation of “shared space” as evidence of as a lack of logic to the consumer society.

Part 3 of the novel is entitled “A Question of Moral,” where the author raises moral questions about what is happening in the story. Titus asks his father about the hacker, and his father confirms that he died, adding, “There wasn’t any reason for you to know.” While they are arguing, a song was playing by his feed. This is one of the few times in the book when Titus has an actual, face-to-face conversation with his father. Meanwhile, his feed sings a song which is highly sexual in order to distract him from further pursuing the argument about the hacker with his father. In this regard, Adorno and Horkheimer have been interested in the family, the authority of the father, and the position of the individual in modern society which does not provide the conditions for “personalization.” This is because the individual did not mean to them the presence of a human element in a specific place and time, but rather it is the awareness of individuality as a human being and recognizes his own identity. The isolated individual in general is an illusion, because the most considered personal values such as independence, free will, and justice are all social and individual virtues at the same time. Therefore, in their writings, sometimes a look at the mother appears as if she is best able to be a good role model for the child, but the mother is also robbed of the will in the advanced capitalist society, and it seems that there is a great difficulty that these theorists face when trying to imagine an alternative to the current family situation.

In correspondence to Baudrillard's argument, consumerism is not only an economic system, it is the way the society now functions. At a time when individuals consume under the temptations of advertising a particular product, they also consume values and culture accompanying the product, which are the values of consumption. When we buy a particular product, we also buy the values of that product. Wasteful and extravagant behavior of expenditures results in many risks and threats that affect humans and the environment due to the revival of industry, such as cultural pollution and water and air pollution.

It is the general context that eliminates and reduces the field of exclusivity, individuality and distinction, so that the individual falls into the trap of identification with the group and be part of the herd representing what society defines as standards. This is clearly shown in Titus' attempt to imitate celebrities to be aligned with a pattern decided by society, that profiling and stereotyping. As Violet explains, it is that corporations are able to mold people's identities in ways that serve the corporations' own selfish ends. She tells Titus: "They try to figure out who you are, and to make you conform to one of their types for easy 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" (97). This lack of individuality is also seen in the act of genetically editing individuals. Titus the main character of the novel, was genetically designed to look like an actor who his parents like "so after the movie we went right to the conceptionarium and told them, we want the most beautiful boy you've ever made. We want him with my nose and his dad's eyes, and for the rest, we have this picture of DelGlacey Murdoch"(3). These pursued genetic modifications, end up making things like 'identity' and individuality meaningless.

Baudrillard clarifies that excessive consumerism leads to a sense of loss, as there's no real identity. he explains that we are what purchase and consumption create who we are. In the novel,

there's no such thing as individual identity everyone is told what choose, what to buy, what to listen to, how to talk and what to do with their bodies, etc. so that individuality becomes meaningless, with the exception of Violet. She is the character most socially aware probably because her feed was implanted in her later in life. She recognizes that individuality does not exist, she explains to Titus the protagonist: "we get less and less varied as people, more 'simple'" (*Feed* 97); she is the symbol of resistance in a society that desires sameness. For the rest of characters, there's no difference being constantly bombarded by the media, their identities are constructed for them so that everyone is essentially the same.

Modern society has exhausted itself and exhausted all its creative energies in consumption, rather in the consumption of trivial and useless goods, and this is because people forgot themselves and forgot the true conditions and essence of their existence. This is why Horkheimer and Adorno repeat in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* "All Reification Is a Forgetting" (287). Both philosophers show the influence of culture on everyday life. Entertainment helps enforce social practices and stereotypes. This "culture industry" is not only a harmless situation, but rather conditions for a form of passivity and an artificial manifestation of human existence.

## **6 - Popular Culture and the Culture Industry in *Feed*:**

The culture industry is undoubtedly a major site of ideological production for young adults. As Horkheimer and Adorno's concept initially imply, the novel presents passive teenage consumers of popular culture. Because Titus and his friends have unlimited access to information and are constantly bombarded by corporate marketing, they lose the ability to think critically for themselves. *Feed*, the novel, marshals a scratching critique of a hyped up commercialized culture produced by the culture industry that was constructed to manipulate. "The feed" limits the characters knowledge in language and communication, due to the reason of the school system and corporatization of

education. Other languages are now called “dead languages” as Violet explains to Titus: “He’s a college professor. He teaches the dead languages” (2). In the novel, feed corporation runs the school, the system, and makes sure all children learn how to use the feed; “that’s one of the greatest things, you can be super smart without every working, you can look things up automatic, like science and history” (46). While Titus may say that the feed makes everyone supersmart, he isn’t informed among world events and use the feed primarily to buy stuff, and to mind chat and communicate. The world of feed of the consumer society, in which whatever is part of the financial system, is acknowledged through technology. This is reflected in the language used by the characters and in the commodification of all orders of discourse by transferring the vocabulary and wording of a market economy. The effect is to structure the apprehension of reality and of practice of education on a market model where everything is for sale and liable to be measured, quantified, mass produced and mass consumed.

Anderson illustrates the language of “banner” advertisements that he strategically places through the text. This commercial language largely determines the language patterns of the characters in the novel, mainly Titus and his teenager friends. The characters are subject to constant advertisements that function like internet banners or pop-up advertisements. Such corporately sponsored commercials, programs, songs, shape, and make everyone implanted with feed language that is profane, vague and nonsensical; it also shapes, manipulates, and deceives them as well. Anderson mocks the deception of advertising of luxury cars, that assault the teenagers in the novel under the guise of comfort and class with words such: “class,” “quality”, “comfort.”

Expression for Adorno function to bring reality into the illusory sphere of art, the reality of aesthetic images does not lie in their representational value, in their direct presentation of an image from history or from the experiences of the artist. Instead of entering the work of art as representation,

reality enters the work of art through its inner form. For both, the structure of conflicting forces within the work of art creates a specific type of “imitation” that is to be distinguished from direct representation. “[Art’s] expression is the antithesis of expressing something” (112). Rather than representing pathos, art imitates it through a mimetic process. Adorno differentiates a communicative from a mimetic aspect of language and relates expression to mimetic language: “The new art tries to bring about the transformation of communicative into mimetic language” (112). While communicative language is representational and depends on the relation between sign and referent, mimetic language emphasizes the constellation of signs in which the referent of each sign is less important than how the constellation as a whole creates a familiar experience for the recipient.

*Feed* characters communicate through the feed chat system, they m-chat (“mental chat”), which functions like a sort of technologically-enabled telepathy. They lack dialogue, and verbal communication. Violet’s father underwent an import interview where he reports “I needed work, I was at a job interview. I was an excellent candidate. Two men were interviewing me. Talking about this and that. Then they were silent, just looking at me... I realized that they had chatted me, and that I had not responded. They found this funny” (*Feed* 248). Violet’s dad was denied a job because he was unable to communicate through the feed. The interviewers did not stop at a verbal interview, but continued the interview by chatting Mr. Durn, who, of course, does not reply. In the interview and throughout the novel, characters sit in silence as they chat over the feed. In one of the episodes where the teenagers were together, Violet “smirked. “Oh, mmm-hm,” she said. “You put the ‘supper’ back in ‘suppuration.’ Link thought that was hilarious. Of course, he didn't have any idea what the hell she was talking about either, but he started laughing while the rest of us were still looking up “suppuration” on the feed English-to-English wordbook” (33). She uses a 4-syllables word which

Titus and his friends have to look up in the “English-to-English wordbook”. -This is ironic, because now they have to translate from English to English because they don’t even recognize English words other than what the “Feed” has implanted in them.

The most striking example of the absence of reason, the withdrawal of the individual, and the interdependence of power and knowledge is the so-called "culture of the masses". High culture has descended into a mass culture, especially after technology experts solve all problems. According to Horkheimer and Adorno, this consumption, which requires no effort, because the individual does not think, and as a result of mass production, art today no longer provides a real message, it is only produced “out of profit”(136).For Adorno’s and Horkheimer’s critical theory, “the cultural object is pure exchange value, with no use value whatsoever” (108–109). And this demise is the most prominent feature of the decline of culture.

Anderson criticizes contemporary based art or music, as it distributes "music" in the novel. Such a song “Bad Me. Bad You”, is tended pointless in the sense of the word. However, it is akin to 1996 Hit song “If You Want To Be Good Girl, Get Yourself a Bad Boy”, by the corporately produced and sponsored band, The Backstreet Boys. This standardization is concealed by the culture industry of sorts in which consumers forget the music they are listening to is already pre-digested. This ideology, sameness, passive consumption of such pre-digested art promotes passive masses. This corresponds with Adorno and Horkheimer’s analysis of the culture industry of American culture discussing how media generates homogeneity that is the same bleak sameness in every product, they write “culture today is infecting everything with sameness” (42).

The “culture industry” used robots in production and distribution lines, which is evident by the increase in technology because the current technology has become directed to the largest number of people, and therefore it requires production methods that provide similar and standardized goods

in order to meet similar demand. It is assumed that production levels focus on the needs of consumers, but in reality, technical rationality is the rationality of control and is thus a coercive feature of society. The increase in technology has led to mass production and the production of the "culture industry" does not mean anything more than goods.

They argue that the current capitalist society has only one goal, which is to increase profit. These on Horkheimer and Adorno say joint theory, is based on Freeing the world from its ancient charms in favor of knowledge. This project, which has been transformed into an idea to control and dominate both nature and man where it was associated with the concept of power. Its primary goal became to achieve control. This position views nature as a field of control through technical and scientific employment, "nature is no longer that beautiful decoration that brings joy Rather, man's relationship with nature has become a utilitarian, utilitarian, and instrumental relationship that has transformed all the beauties of nature into things that can be used and benefited"(97).

In the novel, the Feed system has control over the weather, and nature in general: " There were some weather blimps in front of us. They were all yellow in the sunset that was spreading over the Clouds TM" (*Feed* 29); the clouds aren't even real. They are fake, trademarked clouds and to a great extent involved in regulating bodily processes (which is a significant contributor to Violet's death). Violet's death is particularly poignant given her links to the natural and her placement in opposition to the artificial across the entirety of the text. In her first appearance Violet is even wearing wool, a natural fiber (rather than plastic), which is mocked by the other young people around her (21). By contrast, Titus, the narrator who has grown up with the feed and who is "unlikeable, selfish and often demonstrably stupid, but also depicted as the everyman of his generation" (Bullen & Parsons 134), cannot see the irony in liking "the way the synthetic breeze was on [Violet's] hair" (91), nor

can his father see the irony in his statement that “It’s about people”, having just extolled to Violet the virtues of an air factory in comparison to trees (125).

Once before her death, Violet suggests to go driving in the forests near Jefferson Park, but her father says that the forest has been removed to make way for an air factory. Dad smiled condescendingly and says, “I remember when I was like you ... but remember. People need a lot of air” (38). Her father, like almost every other adult in the book, is controlled by the feed, rationalizing it as the only way to produce air, when, in reality, corporations are the reason there isn’t enough air in the first place. The irony of the passage is that forests which are nature’s air factories in the sense that they produce oxygen are being destroyed to make way for industrial air factories. Violet highlights the contrast between nature and technology even in her very name, with its resonance of the flower. And in one of the text’s many constructed ironies, as she lies dying from her malfunctioning feed, her father works outside in the garden to keep the flowers free from grass, his feedpack (an older form of technology) “glitter[ing] in the sun” (297).

Feed’s characters are clearly constrained in the artificial. Realising that his dying daughter is as much a consumed product as the more obviously manufactured items that Titus and those like him compulsively buy, Violet’s father says, “We Americans [...] are interested only in the consumption of our products. We have no interest in how they were produced, or what happens to them [...] once we discard them” (290). This control exercised by knowledge, over nature, was not spared man in itself, as this instrumental model was also generalized to it to become a subject of control, as a part of nature or one of its phenomena, which in turn is subject to regulation, regulation and direction. This knowledge made him a tool rather than liberating him.

## Conclusion:

Conclusively, ideologies are adopted for achieving conformity and sameness by encouraging mass consumption. In the field of dystopian fiction, mass consumption is an ideology for achieving social and political conformity, therefore writers of dystopian science fiction use technology as a major ideology for control in order to achieve conformity where all cultural practices, [including music](#), and literature, have been completely erased. Jean Baudrillard sees that the American society is “organized around consumption and display of commodities through which individuals gain prestige, identity, and standing” (Baudrillard 71). Technology of the *Feed* world encourages and supports the culture of mass consumption, and characters are influenced by American capitalist society and material culture where they tend to form their identities through consumption.

## Conclusion

M.T. Anderson's *Feed* can be read as a cautionary tale for further study of endless production and sameness supported by the mechanism of the government and the economic system. Consumption is produced to sustain the capitalist system through technology. Ultimately, consumerism and technology join together unyielding social control attribution to the capitalist regime. Thus, this study traced the representation of a consumer society in the Dystopian novel *Feed*. It explored how technology contributes to the change in society and further for the government to maintain power over the population. This has been done in the light of the Frankfurt School critical theories of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, in addition to Althusser's insights on ideology and state apparatuses, as well as of Jean Baudrillard's exploration of consumer society.

Critics and writers of dystopian science fiction state that one of the possible aims of dystopian literature is that it often serves as a warning of problems that can possibly happen in the future. Anderson sets his dystopia in the future, and he designs his fictional society to be very advanced technologically. This advancement allows the authority to manipulate humans completely by adopting certain ideologies to oblige people to behave in certain ways. We have seen how these ideologies translated into reality since the expansion of capitalist expansion demands that the entire globe becomes a market. Thus, Anderson depicts in a society in which everyone and everything is bound in the exchange of commodities.

Throughout the course of *Feed*, Anderson shows us, through extremely relatable dystopia, that technology has a grip on modern society, and one that we must figure out how to moderate before we become literally inseparable. Anderson's selection of science fiction genre marshals his critique of capitalism. In his narrative there's a concern with the role technology has in shaping perception of reality and of the self and the commercial culture dominated by technology and values

of advertising. Although consumption is perceived as a route to fulfillment, Anderson suggests that fulfillment is not sustainable or even attainable, and that the consumer culture is just another failed metanarrative.

The exposition of the dystopian genre produced an empirical standpoint which assists in foregrounding the literary characteristics for the dystopian genre during the analysis of the narrative. Anderson uses the realm of dystopian science fiction to narrate the wanton consumption of a culture created by a global electronic and print media system. The notion of consumer society, presents itself in the dystopian novel *Feed*, as a measure of which the regimes assert their ideologies and power over citizens. For this reason and more, this study examined the technology in novel developed by the feed system, and how this process is carried out to sustain the capitalist regime, by identifying the social classes represented ~~in the on the~~ novel. This is achieved within the analysis of the correlation between the protagonist and the other characters belief system and perception of the world. Furthermore, represented in the consumer society and the enhancement of technological device that prioritizes community and sacrifice any notion and individuality.

The study further examined how totalitarian regimes both physically and internally control and regulate the behavior and thought process of people under power. Ultimately, it examined how technology is utilized to create a sustainable society that allows for the regimes and corporations in power to enforce their ideology, sustained by the feed system presented within the novel.

*Feed* offers a glimpse into a potential future and the consequences that will inevitably follow the changes that technology can produce on society through the exchange of commodities, which serves as a large part of capitalism. The narrative provides a space where readers come to recognize the injustice rampant in consumer culture. In contemporary society, it is extremely difficult to construct a stable society, and as a result this causes several crises. Consumerism permeates every

aspect of life, dissolving one's culture through popular practices for attaining short-term satisfaction such as the consumption of products, food, relationships, and TV programs. In any case, such satisfaction is [supposed to be instant](#), and if something does not bring satisfaction, there's always a next purchase. Education, art, critical thinking and nature and all aspects of culture and identity are largely absent in contemporary Western society. Thus, the issues described in this paper coincide with the emergence of technology that generated precariousness of consumption and modern society.

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## مُلخَّص:

تعد النزعة الاستهلاكية آفة أصيب بها الفرد والمجتمع على حد سواء، وخاصة في الدول الصناعية الغربية التي تتحكم بالاقتصاد العالمي باعتبارها من تنتج التكنولوجيا. هنا تكمن الوظيفة الخطيرة و الماكرة للإعلان أو الإشهار، الوضع الذي أفرز انسانا متشينا، مستلبا، خاضعا للأساليب الجديدة للرأسمالية. بإستخدام الجهاز المفاهيمي الذي قدمه المنظرون النقديون في مدرسة فرانكفورت تيودور أدورنو و ماكس هوركايمر، بالإضافة إلى نظرية التوسير في الإيديولوجيا وكذلك عمل عالم الاجتماع الفرنسي و المنظر الثقافي جان بودريار حول المنطق الاجتماعي الذي يتحكم في المجتمعات الاستهلاكية، تفحص الأطروحة رواية إم.تي أندرسون، *Feed* 2002، من خلال رؤيتها لمستقبل خيالي، يستكشف سرد الرواية المخاطر الناتجة عن التقدم التكنولوجي المعاصر و السياسات العالمية المقترسة و ممارسة الاستهلاك الرأسمالي المرتبط بالثقافة التي يخلقها هذا النظام.

الكلمات المفتاحية: استهلاك، [تكنولوجيا](#)، ايديولوجيا، سلطة الشركات.