

Techno-Human Fusion and Disciplinary Control: A Posthuman Interpretation of M.T. Anderson's *Feed*

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Abstract

This study examines human–technology relations and the operation of disciplined power in M.T. Anderson's *Feed*, using the theory of posthumanism as its main framework. It explores how Anderson's dystopian narrative critiques the entanglement of technology, consumerism, and biopolitical control, showing how disciplinary forces reshape identity, autonomy, and ecological values. The analysis draws on posthumanist theory along with the concepts of the cyborg, transhumanism, and biopower to argue that the feed operates both as a system of digital augmentation and as a mechanism of control that erodes critical thinking, emotional depth, and independence. Through qualitative textual analysis, the study reveals how Violet's resistance and eventual decline expose the human cost of technological dependency, while the conceptionarium's genetic engineering practices highlight the commodification of the body and the blurring of boundaries between the human, nonhuman, natural, and artificial. Moreover, the father's corporate logic regarding environmental degradation reflects how neoliberal rationality normalizes ecological harm. Overall, the findings position *Feed* as a cautionary posthuman narrative that warns against uncritical acceptance of technological progress.

Keywords: (cyborg, human transformation, biopower, technology).

الاندماج التقني البشري والتحكم التأديبي: تفسير ما بعد بشرى لنظرية م. ت. أندرسون

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الملخص

تتناول هذه الدراسة علاقة الإنسان بالเทคโนโลยيا وأليات السلطة المنضبطة في رواية فيد للكاتب إم. تي. أندرسون مستخدمة نظرية ما بعد الإنسانية كإطارها الأساسي. وتستكشف كيف أن السرد الديستوبي لأندرسون يوجه نقداً لتشابك التكنولوجيا والاستهلاك والضبط الحيوي، مبرزاً كيف تعيد القوى الانضباطية تشكيل الهوية والاستقلالية والقيم البيئية. يستند التحليل إلى نظرية ما بعد الإنسانية إلى جانب مفاهيم السايبورغ والتحول الإنساني والسلطة الحيوية ليجادل بأن الفيد يعمل في آن واحد كنظام تعزيز رقمي وآلية ضبط تقوض التفكير النقدي والعمق العاطفي والاستقلالية. ومن خلال التحليل النصي النوعي تكشف الدراسة كيف أن مقاومة فايلت وانحدارها التدريجي يفضحان الثمن الإنساني للاعتماد على التكنولوجيا، في حين تبرز ممارسات الهندسة الجينية في غرفة التكوين تسليع الجسد وتلاشي الحدود بين الإنساني وغير الإنساني والطبيعي والمصطنع. علاوة على ذلك فإن منطق الأب القائم على التفكير التجاري فيما يتعلق بتدحرج البيئة يعكس كيف تطبع العقلانية النيليرالية الضرر البيئي. وبشكل عام تضع النتائج رواية فيد في موقع السرد التحذيري لما بعد الإنسانية الذي يحذر من القبول غير النقدي للتقدم التكنولوجي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: (السايبورغ، التحول الإنساني، السلطة الحيوية، التكنولوجيا).

Introduction

In the late 1970s, posthumanism emerged as a new idea supporting the decentralization of the human being. As a critical framework, it critiques anthropocentrism, the belief in humans' superiority, and instead views humans as part of an interrelated system with equal significance for technology, animals, and non-human creatures. According to Rosi Braidotti, posthumanism challenges the definition of what it is to be human in a rapidly advancing technological landscape where the distinction between the

biological and the synthetic is increasingly blurred. Braidotti (2013) defines posthumanism as follows:

Postman theory is a generative tool to help us re-think the basic unit of reference for the human in the bio-ge-getic age known as anthropocene, the historical moment when the Human has become a geological force capable of affecting all life on this planet. By extension, it can also help us re-think the basic tenets of our interaction with both human and non-human agents on a planetary scale" (pp. 5-6).

This critique of human centrality, like humanism itself, originates in the rhetorical traditions of Ancient Greece, where shared philosophical foundations inform both perspectives. The prefix "post" in posthumanism, meaning "after," does not mean it came after humanism but that it conflicts with humanist perspectives. Their histories are not linear, as Hayles (1999) stated, "we have always been posthuman" (p. 291). The term posthumanism arose in current humanities to criticise perceived flaws in humanism, though the ideas are not new, and scholars sometimes use the two to criticise each other.

Despite its ancient philosophical roots, the term "posthumanism" entered critical discourse when literary theorist Ihab Hassan declared the end of 500 years of humanism, leading to what "we must helplessly call posthumanism" (Hassan, 1977, p. 843). By the 1990s, the terms "posthuman" and "posthumanism" became widely accepted (Herbrechter, 2013, p. 36). A significant work in this area is Hayles' *How We Became Posthuman* (1999), where she argues that both "posthuman" and "human" are contingent and historically specific terms (Hayles, 2006, p. 160). Before Hayles, Donna Haraway's Cyborg Manifesto and Bruno Latour's writings were key contributions to posthumanist thought (Wolfe, 2010, p. xiii).

The origins of posthumanism can also be traced back to the 1970s, with thinkers like Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, and Félix Guattari

influencing its development. Rosi Braidotti links posthumanism to antihumanism, where critiques of humanism emerged, especially from postcolonial and feminist perspectives, which highlighted its Eurocentric, imperialist, and male biases (Braidotti, 2013, pp. 24-26). Cary Wolfe traces posthumanism further to post-structuralist thinkers like Foucault and Jacques Derrida. In *The Order of Things* (1966), Foucault famously stated, “man is an invention of recent date. And one perhaps nearing its end” (as cited in Wolfe, 2010, p. xii), suggesting that humanity might be erased like “a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea” (p. xii).

Among the early contributions in posthumanism, Donna Haraway’s *Cyborg Manifesto* stands out as a pivotal work that crystallized many core ideas of posthumanism. Haraway, a cultural theorist associated with the field, published *Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century*, asserting that “we are all chimeras... in short, we are cyborgs” (Haraway, 2016, p. 7), a statement that captures the essence of posthumanist thought. Although she employs the cyborg in a science fiction context, Haraway frames it as a social phenomenon: “A cyborg is a cybernetic organism... a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction” (p. 5). For Haraway, everyone is a cyborg, representing the collapse of conceptual barriers in the late twentieth century and blurring the boundaries between human and animal, organism and machine, and physical and non-physical. The first of these dualisms shows that boundaries between humans and animals have been totally infringed, placing the cyborg in mythology where such limits are destroyed (p. 10). The second difference is between machines before and after cybernetics. Pre-cybernetic machines are incapable of autonomy, self-design, or realisation, only imitating humans and reflecting the male human’s need for reproduction. Post-cybernetic machines blur boundaries between natural/artificial and organic/mechanical, evolving into autonomous entities (p.11). The third differentiation is the blurring of the physical and non-

physical, with microelectronic equipment becoming miniaturised and invisible (p.12). Haraway's postgender cyborg world merges racial and sexual identities, replaces representation with simulation, bourgeois literature with science fiction, realism with postmodernism, organism with biotic component, and depth with surfaces. Cyborgs, as biological data carriers, interact via prostheses with intelligent surroundings and humans, challenging human phenomena and reconsidering gender, race, embodiment, and diversity. Their emergence undermines humanist authority, leading to a potential post-dualistic state.

While Haraway's cyborg dismantles humanist binaries, transhumanism, emerging with analytic posthumanism in the late 1980s and early 1990s, advances these ideas by seeking to surpass human biology and its natural limitations through technological interventions aimed at achieving immortality, cognitive augmentation, and enhanced physical abilities. While posthumanism broadens the concept of agency by including nonhuman entities and eliminating the binary opposition of human vs. Nonhuman, culture against nature, and humanism vs. Antihumanism (Kriman, 2019), the concept of transhumanism was popularized by British philosopher Julian Huxley in his 1957 article of the same title, where he asserted that social institutions could replace human evolution in enhancing the species. Transhumanists often lack engagement with history, philosophy, or culture, operating as utilitarian technologists rather than philosophers: "It is indeed the case that many transhumanists do not have a humanities background. They are more closely related to a linear way of thinking, the reliance on scientific data and a utilitarian ethics" (Sorgner, 2022, p. 23). The movement challenges the contemporary conception of humanity not only by reflecting on its legacies but also by exploring the potential of biological and technological advancements, with human enhancement seen as central and science and technology recognized as the primary means to achieve these goals.

Building on the notion of power as decentralized and pervasive, Michel Foucault defines biopower as “an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and the control of populations” (Foucault, 1978, p. 140), comprising two poles: the “anatomo-politics of the human body” and the “bio-politics of the population” (p. 139). Bio-politics focuses on regulating, monitoring, and managing populations as collective biological entities through tools like statistical analysis, demographic studies, health policies, and strategies controlling birth and mortality rates, public health, and life expectancy, aiming at “the species body, the body imbued with the mechanics of life” (Foucault, 1978, p. 139). Anatomo-politics, also referred to as disciplinary power, targets the individual human body through institutions and techniques such as education, military training, medicine, and surveillance to optimize, discipline, and control it, enhancing productivity, docility, and obedience, being “centered on the body as a machine: its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces” (Foucault, 1978, p. 139).

Methodology

The study employs a qualitative approach, centered on closely reading the novels. Its path is argumentative, illustrative, and analytical. The thesis follows the guidelines set forth by the American Psychological Association (APA) for Research documentation. The study adopts a detailed examination of dialogues, monologues, and narrative descriptions that reveal the relationship between human and the technological force..

Literature Review

The relationship between humans and non-humans has been a topic of much scholarly interest, particularly from a posthumanist perspective that deconstructs traditional humanist binaries and examines how technology shapes human's lives.

A study by Miah entitled “A Critical History of posthumanism” (2009) examined the history of posthumanity and how it appeals through

which a number of contemporary ideas about ethics can be framed. For instance, posthumanism is a consistent with perspectives in animal ethics that seek to diminish the meaning and value of claims that species boundaries should have any bearing on our moral commitment to other life forms. This broad understanding also offers insights onto how contemporary visions of posthumanism are informed by conversations on cyborg or automata, which have often involved a reflective stance on humanity distinct and special place in the world.

Mandeel (2022) in his thesis entitled Exploring posthumanism in Children's Narratives: A Study of Natalie Babbitt's *Tuck Everlasting* and S.P. Somtow's *Another Avatar*, argued that there is a close connection between posthumanism and children's literature due to the fact that a child's imagination can provide a free space for the posthuman world to exist. The study signified some incorrect notions about what it means to be a human and the nature of interactions between humans and other animals, the natural world and the science.

A dissertation by Leung, Cham Sum Jason (2019), entitled Posthumanism, singularity, and the anthropocene: a thematic perspective on posthuman science fiction, explores how science fiction engages with posthumanist theory, technological transformation, and humanity's relationship with the nonhuman world. The study examines the evolution of posthuman discourses from cyborg theories to contemporary views of human-technology integration, analyzing works such as *Frankenstein*, *Blade Runner*, *Neuromancer*, and *A.I. Artificial Intelligence*. It identifies four central themes of posthuman imagination: technologically-created beings, artificial intelligence in organic bodies, human immersion into digital realms, and the embodiment of the nonhuman. The dissertation further investigates visions of the technological singularity, emphasizing shifts from anthropocentric values toward symbiosis and coevolution, and addresses the Anthropocene by discussing ecological and climate narratives in speculative

fiction. Ultimately, the work argues that posthuman science fiction plays a crucial role in reimagining human futures and shaping ethical perspectives at the intersection of science, technology, and the humanities.

A study by Wennerscheid (2019) entitled Posthuman Desire in Robotics and Science Fiction explores how intimate relationships between humans and posthumans are represented in robotics, science fiction films, literature, and robotic art. The article contrasts the optimistic visions of engineers and computer scientists developing anthropomorphic robots for companionship, emotional support, and sexual pleasure with more nuanced and critical depictions in fictional and artistic works. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "becoming-other" and theories of critical posthumanism, Wennerscheid proposes the idea of "new networks of desire," in which man-machine entanglements are seen as transformative encounters that challenge human self-centeredness and dualistic paradigms such as male-female or self-other. By analyzing works like *Ex Machina*, *Be Right Back*, *Real Humans*, and various posthumanist novels and robotic artworks, the paper argues that desire is not only a force of intimacy but also a means of rethinking identity, subjectivity, and ethical relations in the posthuman age.

An article by Marlina (2014), entitled "Dystopian World and Young Adults in M. T. Anderson's Feed Science Fiction", published in the IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science, analyzes M.T. Anderson's *Feed* as a young adult science fiction work set in a dystopian future. It explores how the novel employs narrative strategies such as first-person narration and focalisation to construct its protagonists and position readers to critique consumerism, environmental degradation, and technological domination.

A thesis by Baker, K. E. (2015), entitled *Media as a Social Institution: The Power Dynamics of Media in the Young Adult Dystopian Fiction of M.T. Anderson and Suzanne Collins*, explores how media functions as a social institution in the novels *Feed* and *The Hunger Games* trilogy. Using

Michel Foucault's theories of surveillance, discipline, and punishment, along with Roberta Trites's work on adolescent literature, Baker examines how dystopian regimes use media to control and disempower youth, and how protagonists develop critical awareness and resist these power structures to reclaim agency.

Discussion

M.T. Anderson's *Feed* (2002) presents a dystopian future in which human autonomy collapses under corporate-controlled technological integration, centering on a brain-implanted device called the “feed” that delivers a constant stream of media, advertising, entertainment, and social interaction, shaping thought and behavior. The story follows Titus, a teenager immersed in this system, whose worldview is challenged when he meets Violet Durn, a perceptive and resistant girl who did not receive the feed at birth and recognizes its manipulative effects on independence, reality perception, and emotional depth. Their relationship is disrupted when a hacker attack damages their feeds during a trip to the moon, leaving Violet's malfunctioning device beyond repair due to her unpredictable consumer profile, which makes her unprofitable to fix. As Violet's health deteriorates, she resists the feed's influence while Titus retreats into its comforts, unable to fully confront the truth she sees. The novel closes with Violet's decline and Titus's subdued awareness of the profound losses caused by the feed—not only Violet herself, but also the erosion of free thought, genuine feeling, and unmediated memory—serving as a darkly satirical warning about technology, consumerism, and the commodification of human life.

M. T. Anderson's *Feed* was inspired by his concern that technology and advertising infiltrate human thought and identity, likening constant marketing messages to having a “chip in [his] head” (Highlander News, 2019, para. 8). He linked this to real-world developments, such as Intel's 2010 prediction of human chip implants by 2020, warning about the loss of privacy, the blurring of reality, and dependence on devices like GPS that

erode spatial awareness. These ideas shape the novel's vision of a future where the boundaries between mind and machine dissolve.

The novel portrays “the feed” as a system of digital augmentation that enhances human capabilities by integrating technology into the brain, automating cognitive functions like information access and communication, and transforming individuals into cyborg-like entities. While it extends human abilities, it diminishes critical thinking, emotional depth, and autonomy, reflecting the paradox of technological enhancement, where greater intelligence and convenience come at the expense of personal agency and self-determination. Titus describes it as making everyone supersmart without effort, turning knowledge acquisition into an automatic process:

People were really excited when they first came out with feeds. It was all da da da, this big educational thing, da da da, your child will have the advantage, encyclopedias at their fingertips, closer than their fingertips, etc. That's one of the great things about the feed that you can be supersmart without ever working. Everyone is supersmart now. You can look things up automatic, like science and history, like if you want to know which battles of the Civil War George Washington fought in and shit. (Anderson, 2002, p.36)

Titus's stream of consciousness shows how the “feed” has become fully integrated into his thoughts, reflecting the posthuman condition where human and technological elements merge. His mistaken claim that George Washington fought in the Civil War highlights the irony of relying on digital feeds for knowledge, a dependence that weakens accuracy and critical thinking. This reflects the idea of cyborgism in *The Cyborg Handbook*, where the fusion of human and machine enhances abilities but threatens autonomy and identity. In this way, the feed acts as a technological extension of the self, boosting cognition while diminishing independent judgment (Gray, 1995).

As the novel progresses, the concept of transhumanism emerges, advocating the use of advanced technologies to transcend biological limitations and shape human development. In the novel, people use genetic engineering at the conceptionarium, a place where parents design their children's physical features with the aim of creating an ideal based on societal standards of beauty. Titus's parents, for instance, remind him of his designing as a movie actor, reflecting how subjectivity itself becomes something constructed through technology and shaped by external cultural norms. This idea is exemplified when Titus narrates his parents' conversation with him:

My mom winked. "What's his name again?" "DelGlacey Murdoch," I said. "That's right. And we thought he was the most beautiful man we'd ever seen. 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.' (Anderson, 2002, p.81)

The vivid imagery of designing a child with the mother's nose and the dad's eyes underscores the artificial and constructed nature of physical traits in a world where technological advancements shape human identity. Furthermore, the casual tone and description of desires for "the most beautiful boy" carry an underlying irony, exposing the superficiality and ethical concerns associated with society's obsession with physical perfection, ultimately critiquing the dehumanizing effects of the technology. As Ferrando (2019) states in her book, *Philosophical Posthumanism*, "According to Transhumanism, some may become posthuman; for instance, in the close future, the speculative technology of mind uploading may manifest in hybrid co-emergences of human consciousness and machinic assemblages which could not be considered 'human' anymore" (p.28). Ferrando sees transhumanism as challenging humanity, which Anderson

reflects through genetic engineering that blurs the boundaries between the human, nonhuman, natural, and artificial.

Titus's father demonstrates the discourse of biopower in a tense conversation with Violet, holding a condescending, corporate mindset that downplays environmental concerns and prioritizes economic efficiency. He argues that trees are inefficient compared to air factories and questions real estate prices, reflecting a biopolitical logic that treats natural environments as obstacles to profit and growth. When Violet insists on the need for trees, he dismisses her concerns, revealing how power mechanisms allow profit to override ecology and illustrating how biopower functions through institutions and everyday discourse, shaping how individuals value or devalue life and nature.

Said Dad, shrugging. "You got to have air." Violet pointed out, "Trees make air," which kind of worried me because I knew Dad would think it was snotty. My father stared at her for a long time. Then he said, "Yeah. Sure. Do you know how inefficient trees are, next to an air factory?" "But we need trees! "For what?" he said. "I mean, they're nice, and it's too bad, but like. Do you know how much real estate costs?" "I can't believe they cut it down!" [.....] They cut down Jefferson Park? That is so like corporate- "My father nodded and smiled at her with this meg condescending smile on his face, and was like, "Dude, I remember when I was like you. You should grow up to be a, you know. Clean-air worker or something. Don't lose that. But remember. It's about people. People need lot of air." (Anderson, 2002, p.88-89).

The father employs sarcasm and mockery to belittle the girl's concerns. His condescending smile and casual, dismissive tone mock her naivety, implying that her environmental worries are childish or trivial. This scene reflects what Rose (1999) outlines in his book *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought*, where he argues that under advanced liberal

governmentality, social life is increasingly shaped by economic rationality. According to Rose, individual and collective behaviors are reinterpreted as market-based decisions, driven by efficiency and choice rather than ethical or communal responsibility(p. 88). The father's view reflects how environmental harm is normalized and justified as an economic necessity rather than a moral or political concern.

Conclusion

This study reveals that M. T. Anderson's *Feed* serves as a critical posthuman narrative that interrogates the intersection of technology, consumerism, and power, portraying a future where human autonomy and identity are subsumed under corporate-driven technological integration. Through the lens of posthumanism, cyborgism, transhumanism, and Foucault's biopower, the analysis demonstrates how the "feed" functions both as a tool of cognitive augmentation and a mechanism of control, enhancing efficiency while eroding critical thinking, emotional depth, and self-determination. Violet's resistance and ultimate decline highlight the human cost of technological dependency, while the depiction of genetic engineering in the conceptionarium exposes the commodification of human bodies and the blurring of boundaries between the human, nonhuman, natural, and artificial. Moreover, the conversation between Violet and Titus's father illustrates how advanced liberal governmentality reframes environmental degradation as an economic necessity, normalizing exploitation through market logic. Overall, the novel's dystopian vision warns against uncritical acceptance of technological progress, revealing how pervasive disciplinary and biopolitical forces shape values, identities, and relationships in ways that privilege profit and convenience over autonomy, ethics, and ecological responsibility.

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