

The Hum of its Parts
Locating Posthuman Subjectivity, Identity and
Agency through Power and Technology

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This thesis is presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Research in English Literature at Macquarie University. I certify that this thesis is entirely my own work and that I have given fully documented reference to the work of others. The thesis has not previously, in part or in whole, been submitted for assessment in any formal course of study.

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Summary of Thesis

This thesis seeks to investigate two issues regarding posthumanism. Firstly, it examines how the posthuman subject's identity development is influenced by social forces, primarily Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs). Posthuman technology offers numerous avenues for ISAs to insert and encode their ideologies into the posthuman subject, shaping the range and freedom of identities that posthumans can enjoy. Often, these subject positions are narrow and disempowered, driving posthumans to search for methods to disrupt the ISAs' power and ideologies over their identities. Therefore, the second aim of this thesis is to discuss the capacity for posthumans to redefine and reclaim their identities as their own through strategic acts of resignification which resist the limited subject positions the ISAs expect them to occupy. The two primary texts analyzed in this thesis are M.T. Anderson's *Feed* and Debra Driza's *Mila 2.0*. In both texts, posthuman technology is seemingly presented as having the capacity to enhance and elevate the posthuman experience. However, the ISAs that dominate technology actually use it to interpellate and control their posthuman subjects. Nevertheless, by resignifying their performances and their use of their technological abilities, the posthumans in both texts empower and liberate their identities by defying the ISAs' power.

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Introduction

The Nuts and Volts: Identifying the Systems of Posthuman Identity Formation.

“We are entering a “posthuman” age, in which what it means to be human has never been more flexible, manipulated, or in question.” -Ostry, in *Is He Still Human? Are You?*

The rapid advancement of science and technology has precipitated the arrival of the posthuman era. Faced with the potential unification of the human body and mind with sophisticated machines, combined with the power that technology entails, humankind may soon experience the posthuman challenges that Science-Fiction texts foresee. Broadly defined, posthumans are individuals who have been “modifi[ed] and enhance[d] beyond...natural and cultural limits” through and with technology (Sharon 4). The posthuman figure raises crucial questions regarding how exactly to situate and secure the status of one’s identity when technology dissolves, extends and morphs traditional understandings of humans and machines, where subjects are no longer seemingly agentic, but are subjected to the pressures of society through technology (Ostry 222). Novels that feature posthumans extrapolate and examine the impact that incredible technology has on the subject’s capacity to understand and express its identity. Since posthuman bodies are partly or wholly technological, their subject positions are particularly vulnerable to being encoded with the ideologies and power of Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs). Having to exist in societies where the ISAs’ power is nearly absolute, the primary mission for posthuman subjects, then, is not how to avoid the influence of power, which is inevitable and pervasive, but how to use the inner power their technologically hybridic bodies possess to resignify and reclaim their identities. The posthuman struggle to determine and defend their own identities within societies that cannot readily accept their power may redefine what it means to be human.

The two primary texts that will be analyzed in this thesis are *Feed*, by M.T. Anderson and *Mila 2.0*, by Debra Driza. Briefly, in *Feed*, most Americans are implanted with the feed, a chip that links users online. Titus and his peers are largely unconcerned that their identities are monitored and manipulated by business corporations which use the feed to dispense capitalist ideologies and advertising to interpellate feed-users as prodigious purchasers of consumer products. Feed-users' are so over-dependent on the feed to mediate their intersubjective relationships and speech acts that their identities are severely compromised. Titus comes to love Violet, a girl who resents the feed's intrusive presence in her life. Violet is acutely aware that every act of consumerism she performs via the feed participates in and perpetuates the "big congloms'" capitalist power, which limits her own identity and power (Anderson 109). She decides to resist the feed's power by refusing to engage in her society's hedonistic consumer culture. While Violet's acts of consumer resistance against the feed ultimately backfires and she is left to die by the big congloms, she ignites Titus's understanding of how social institutions dominate their identities and he begins his journey to liberate their selfhoods from the feed.

In *Mila 2.0*, Mila, or Mobile Intel Lifelike Android is a super-advanced military spy robot designed by the American government to appear and act like a teenage girl. Mila begins unexpectedly evolving a human identity that defies her original defence programming. Recognizing Mila's humanity, her creator Nicole frees Mila from the military. To facilitate Mila's humanization and to provide her a human life and home, Nicole enrolls Mila in school, wipes Mila's memory bank and implants Mila with a series of uploaded family memories. Mila comes to believe she is a human girl and Nicole's daughter. Meanwhile, they must run from the military, headed by General Holland, who intends to capture Mila and eradicate her newfound humanity in order to reinstate her original programming. Like Violet, Mila is sharply cognizant of how social forces dictate her identity by manipulating her programming and performances. Presented with radically contradictory concepts of what identity truly means, Mila struggles to

understand and accept herself as a hybridic girl who incorporates the best and sometimes worst of humanity and posthumanity.

The primary aim of this thesis is two-fold. Firstly, rather than attempting to offer commentaries on posthumanism as an intellectual paradigm, (a feat too vast for the thesis's scope), this thesis investigates how Anderson's and Driza's posthuman characters' identities are affected by the power of ISAs. Secondly, it discusses how these posthuman characters can resist the ISAs' power and reassert their own subjectivities through acts of resignification. A major understanding that posthumans like Violet, Titus and Mila must arrive at is how ISAs use power to construct and constrict their freedom of identity. Althusser's theory of ISAs usefully illuminates the motivations and methods of the ISAs in *Feed* and *Mila 2.0* to disseminate and naturalize their version of ideal posthuman identity across society. Among the ISAs that are aggressively active in *Feed* are the family, school, businesses and the media while in *Mila 2.0* it is the family and school which have a powerful influence over Mila's identity. Within these primary texts, these ISAs have become increasingly enmeshed with each other and with capitalism and technology, thus exerting a powerful influence over posthuman identity.

While certain quarters of scholarship, like dystopic posthumanism, hold that the "ontological divide" (Sharon 4) between mankind and machines means that individual subjectivity is often perceived as incompatible or impossible for posthumans to possess, this thesis operates from the perspective that subjectivity, while heavily susceptible to social and technological forces, is nevertheless an attainable goal for posthuman characters in *Feed* and *Mila 2.0*. Simply stated, subjectivity (used interchangeable throughout the thesis with 'identity') is the subject's awareness of its own individuality and personhood. To establish a stable identity, subjects require intersubjective recognition and acceptance from others (Mansfield 2). Therefore, the subject's identity is open to being largely defined by its dialectic interactions and relationships with the other (Meulen 69). As *Feed* and *Mila 2.0* demonstrate, the other is frequently a representative or agent of an ISA and is responsible, intentionally or not, in

exerting the ISAs' ideologies, power and agendas to ensure that posthumans perform the behaviors and identities that will maintain the ISAs' hegemonic power and position (Althusser, in Leitch et al. 1336).

The socio-political power ISAs wield over posthumans can be traced to the Greek origin of the word 'cybernetics', which is 'kubernetes'. Meaning both 'governor' and 'steersman', 'kubernetes' indicates the capacity for technology to be used by those in power to dominate and manipulate (post)/human society and identity (Dinello 61). Power, which is "the possibility of imposing one's will upon another", is used rampantly in various forms by the ISAs in both texts (Trites 3). These ISAs have a self-perpetuating interest in exercising their power to ensure that posthumans submit "to the rules of the established order" and its "ruling ideology", hence turning posthumans into upholders and performers of the hegemony's ideologies (Althusser 1337). For instance, Titus is conditioned by the feed to enjoy being a fashionable consumer while Mila is encouraged by Nicole to desire a normal human life. To shape these posthuman subjects as willingly obedient members of society, ISAs utilize a variety of techniques, which will be the pivotal focus of chapters One and Two.

Anderson and Driza demonstrate how the ISAs have the capacity to launch a targeted invasion of important markers of identity with their ideologies; by hijacking posthuman intersubjectivity, performativity, language and the mirror stage with their hegemonic ideologies, the ISAs can affect the forms of identity posthumans experience. Among the more prominent sites that ISAs insert their ideologies into is language. Since the subject is 'defined by the discourse of the other', discourses have immense power to enact a subject's identity through hailing, or interpellating the subject (Mansfield 43). When hailed, an "individual" is called by an other and becomes identified and conferred with a certain subjecthood (Althusser, in Leitch et al. 1356). As all aspects of society are "constituted by discourse", it is almost impossible for posthumans to avoid encountering the ISAs' ideologies which pervade society (Trites 18). Titus, Violet and Mila are ceaselessly hailed by the ISAs which encourage the teenagers to alter their identities. For instance, in *Feed*, the feed corps market hyperreal, idealized

images and messages in advertising and entertainment to encourage a sense of hyper-vigilant consumerism in Titus's society, where fashion and shopping constitute one's identity. Meanwhile, in *Mila 2.0*, General Holland draws on the power of science to verbally interpellate and prove Mila's status as a machine.

Considering the ISAs' capacity to affect the languages and images posthumans are exposed to, chapters One and Two discuss how Violet's and Mila's experiences with their own posthuman identity formation, from their intersubjective relationships to their encounters with the mirror stage are fraught with the ISAs' power and ideologies and are affected by the girls' posthuman bodies. Chapter One focuses on Anderson's *Feed* and chapter Two will analyse Driza's *Mila 2.0*. Both chapters explore the directions power takes in inculcating identity while discussing the effects such modes of power have on posthuman identity. The notable difference between the texts is the types of posthumans depicted; Violet and Titus are organic humans implanted with technology while Mila is a humanoid and humanlike machine. While *Feed* and *Mila 2.0* share similar viewpoints regarding power, their representation of the deployment of power and its effects on identity are subtly different. *Feed* delves into the mechanization of the human while *Mila 2.0* looks into the humanization of the machine. While Titus's people are mostly indifferent and even enthusiastic about losing themselves through the feed, Mila anxiously safeguards her humanity against her mechanical origins. Bearing in mind these distinctions, chapter One determines how posthuman identity is *lost* amidst the onslaught of advertising, commodification and mediation from the feed. Meanwhile, Chapter Two explores how identity becomes *fragmented* as, caught between the warring ideologies expounded by the ISAs, Mila's identity is torn. Due to the different forms of posthuman technology involved in *Feed* and *Mila 2.0*, the ISAs' methods for colonizing posthuman identity depart slightly yet their end-goal is the same: to dominate and manipulate posthuman identity and behaviour to their advantage.

Violet and Mila observe how their peers allow themselves to become mouthpieces for the ISAs, willing agents who encourage others to embrace the hegemony's ideologies. As Althusser noted, individuals "submit freely" to the ISAs, performing the "gestures and actions of [their] subjection 'all by [themselves]'" (in Leitch et al. 1360). Marty's Nike speech tattoo verbally markets the feed corps' capitalism to Violet while Three's fervent declaration of the virtues of posthumanity champions Holland's ideologies to Mila. When Marty and Three use the ISAs' discourses, they inevitably interpellate themselves into the social order by expressing and performing their identities in the terms and conditions the ISAs have decreed as desirable (Trites 18). Since intersubjectivity is essential to identity and as the dialectic between subjects naturally draws on the discourses embedded with the ISAs' ideologies, these posthuman subjects thus reproduce the ISAs' power through their intersubjective bonds and speech acts with each other. Unlike their peers, Violet and Mila are unwilling to internalize the ISAs' discourses and ideologies into their identities, preferring to be themselves instead. Anxious to avoid being complicit agents of the ISAs' power, Violet and Mila search for avenues to "dis-identify" with and disrupt the ISAs' suffocating hold over their identities (Weedon 7).

Hence, chapter Three thus explores the second aim of this thesis: investigating posthuman strategies for resistance against the ISAs' power offered by the texts. The girls are particularly adept at observing and interrogating the structures of power that ISAs utilize to insinuate their ideologies into posthuman identity. Violet and Mila begin using their own internal power to "enact and enable themselves into being" to secure their identities (Trites 6-7). They surmise that the best course of action to resist is through acts of resignification that allow the girls to forge new performances and identities for themselves. Violet and Mila begin self-reflexively taking the very discourses, performances and identities that the ISAs expect them to use and, by resignifying these signifiers of posthuman identity in diverse and unpredictable ways, they aim to achieve instances of identity liberation. Such resistance exposes the ISAs' hand in deciding identity, revealing how nothing is natural, especially for posthumans.

Through their use of heteroglossia as verbal resistance, the girls reveal how posthuman ‘bodies [and identities] are socially constituted in material and discursive practices’ (Mitchell 109).

In summary, *Feed* and *Mila 2.0* envision futures where advanced technology extends social control and authority. Those with power over technology, from the feed corps to Holland, use technology as a tool that will seemingly enhance human life but only in ways that are “amenable” and beneficial to the representatives of social institutions (Thacker 76). As technological progress becomes more indispensable to humanity it is increasingly difficult to separate man from machine (Gane 433). Faced with the possibility of losing their identities to the overwhelming might of technology, the posthumans in *Feed* and *Mila 2.0* struggle to define themselves as people. Their attempts to activate and actualize their true potential are often presented as incomplete and of intense and immediate importance, demonstrating how deeply entrenched the limitations placed upon posthumans truly are. To the ISAs, agentic posthumans like Violet and Mila are dangerous because their liminal power is capable of undermining the hegemonic norms and categories of identity that preserve the ISAs’ power. By using their power to ‘enable themselves into being’, Violet and Mila channel the charge of power from the ISAs’ hands into their own (Trites 6). As Violet shares her power with Titus, Mila extends hers to her double, in the hopes of sparking a flame of understanding within these posthuman others and, through that understanding, resistance and power. Whether Violet and Mila succeed in achieving their dreamt-of human identities is left deliberately vague by Anderson and Driza. Nevertheless, it is their unstoppable desire to be human despite the potential power of being mechanical and the promised punishment for resistance which makes these posthumans undeniably human after all.

Chapter One

Sparks and Disconnection: Technology's Effacing Effect on Posthuman Identity in Feed.

"Everything must go" –the feed, in *Feed*.

Given to almost two-thirds of the American population at birth, the feed is an overwhelming yet integral device to the inhabitants of Anderson's futuristic *Feed*. Installed into the neural cortex, the possession of the ultra-sophisticated feed allows users to connect mentally online, taking communication, communion and consumerism to unprecedented levels. One key aspect within the spectrum of identity formation is intersubjectivity; a subject's capacity to establish its own individuality is largely reliant upon the subject's intersubjective relationships with others who provide the subject with necessary recognition and validation (Markova 251). The feed corps promote the feed as the ultimate tool to facilitate the pursuit of identity, intersubjectivity and belonging, which makes the feed appear essential to posthuman identity for Titus and his friends. Titus believes in the power of the feed to define their identities by bringing people together, saying that "you need the noise of your friends" and that it is "good to have someone to download [feed content] with" on the feed (Anderson 4 & 5). Ironically, the chasm between people in *Feed* is extreme. The feed corps' ideological, capitalistic goal is that "everything must go"; everything that defines the posthuman subject's individuality, intersubjective ties and agency must be removed and then replaced with an almost predatory consumer hunger (Anderson 299).

Chapter One investigates how Anderson represents posthuman identity as first seemingly enhanced, then externalized and ultimately effaced by the subject's interactions with advanced technology and the social forces that control such technology. Supplemented with a combined reading of Robyn McCallum's theoretical framework on identity (which employs Bakhtinian and Lacanian elements) and Roberta Trites's meta-analysis on power dynamics, the chapter explores the role that Althusser's Ideological State

Apparatuses (ISAs) play in using the feed to produce and promote a limited range of disempowered identities for feed-users. To maintain their power and position, the ISAs of school, media and business in *Feed* work individually and in conjunction to naturalize and disperse their ideologies of capitalism and greed into the population via the feed, thus commodifying Titus's identity as a child, consumer and citizen. Judith Butler's theory on performativity will enhance Althusser's claim that subjects perform "the gestures and actions of [their] subjection" (in Leitch et al. 1360). Butler theorized that when the subject performs specific activities and speech acts regularly, these actions "socially produce our identities" and even desires (Butler, in Leitch et al. 2536-7). Feed-users are thus encouraged to embrace the consumer identities the feed has marketed to them, reinforcing these identities with capitalist behaviours, language and material acquisitions.

Every angle of Titus's life, from the commercials and products he encounters on the feed to School™, which has been commodified and trademarked by the feed corps, are all engineered by the ISAs to encourage him to define and perform his identity through constant consumerism. The feed corps have even commodified language to further their domination over society. As language is both "a marker for power" and a crucial medium through which a subject engages in intersubjectivity and by which it expresses its identity through performative speech acts, language is an integral aspect in identity formation (Trites 4). The feed corps have purchased, appropriated and mediated all the discourses of society, imbuing language with the hegemony's ideologies to further their capitalist agendas (Trites 4). When subjects utilize the discourses of the ISAs, they therefore become "open to power's control", however unwittingly (Trites 4). The feed corps use the discourses of advertising, entertainment and commercialism to hail feed-users with glamorous identities to purchase, knowing that with every utterance and verbal exchange feed-users experience with each other, they are drawing on the linguistic materials of the hegemony's ideologies.

The feed corps and "big congloms" (Anderson 110) in *Feed* express their power to construct, constrain and commodify posthuman identity by

inundating feed-users with advertising and social media messages. The feed corps can dispense their ideologies through other ISAs and also broadcast their ideologies instantly into their feed-users' minds. In *Feed*, the children's program *Top Quark* demonstrates the power the ISAs have to condition their citizens' identities. In *Top Quark*, the characters talk about how "that planet is so sad, they'll need a whole lot of good thoughts" (Anderson 76). Similarly, by banding together, the ISAs are literally able to broadcast their ideologies of consumerism directly into their posthuman citizens worldwide via the feed. Titus is inundated daily with the feed's messages which use the discourses of advertising to hail him. With commercials and "prices speaking to me in my head" (Anderson 293), the feed hails Titus, telling him "*this is what's new. Listen*" (Anderson 5). Titus is interpellated into his society with the commands to listen to the feed and he subsequently performs these commercial commands into his posthuman identity.

The feed corps have created a world wherein a citizen's identity only has worth when expressed economically through the feed. Therefore, the feed gains enormous importance to identity because only those with the feed have the capacity to interact with others online and to participate in the acquisition of the appropriate cultural and consumer capital to mark one's identity as a trendy member of society. Titus's entire posthuman civilization has built its identities around the feed and everything it represents; capitalism, entertainment and a paradoxically shocking antipathy towards others despite the feed's pretentious promotion of its role in intersubjective relationships. The multiple networks of power in Titus's society thus converge through the feed, producing an intricate web of interconnections between the feed, its users and the ISAs of the media, businesses and schools. Caught in this web of power is the feed-user, whose identity is parasitically consumed by the feed corps.

A pivotal part of identity development is the mirror stage, which Lacan described as the phase where the subject first recognizes itself via its mirror image/reflection (Leitch et al. 1159). As the child's image is external to it, the child's sense of subjectivity is vulnerable to being defined by an

external source (Mansfield 42). In *Feed*, the ISAs seek to become that external other in order to encode feed-users' mirror stage experience with their economic agendas. While Lacan's mirror stage is normally associated with infancy, it is abnormally prolonged to all age groups in *Feed*. Violet asserts that the feed corps "make everything even simpler", "we get less and less varied as people, more simple" (Anderson 97). As the feed corps work to prolong, dominate and commodify feed-users' experiences with the mirror stage, keeping them insatiably hungry for consumerism, posthuman identity development is severely stunted.

To maintain their power, the big congloms and ISAs' use the discourses and images of advertising to generate an unquenchable hunger for buying in feed-users. Through advertising, the ISAs converge to present posthuman teenagers with "portraits of their culture and generation that...advance capitalism" (Guerra 276). Violet comments that "everything we've grown up with-the stories on the feed, the games..." reflects perfect consumer lifestyles that encourage posthuman subjects to buy (Anderson 97). By controlling the images and discourses of entertainment and advertisements, the ISAs immerse and trap feed-users in the mirror stage with fictive metanarratives that champion the consumer as the ideal subject position (Bullen 502). The ISAs engineer certain "dramatized" identities that their citizens will wish to incorporate and perform in their daily lives (Mansfield 49). Using the feed, the feed corps extend their power over the mirror stage by literally incorporating their customers into the very advertisements they view.

For instance, when Titus considers buying an upcar, he is bannered with images of himself "driving, and all these people stuffed into the car with me" (Anderson 121). He perceives the feed's advertised commercials of himself and Violet driving upcars as "pretty much right", even though "they made her with bigger boobs" (Anderson 122). The feed corps use the discourse and images of business and advertising to embellish and sexualized hyperreal 'reflections' that depict and define Titus's identity to himself as a sporty teenage consumer who, with the right consumer choices, can have friends, popularity and sex appeal. Titus and his friends become

particularly enamoured by these hyperreal and advertised ‘reflections’. Unfortunately, by taking these commercials as the ideal standard of reality they must hold themselves to, these posthuman teenagers cannot separate their advertised consumer selves from their real selves.

Despite her heightened awareness of the feed’s true purpose, Violet is not immune against identifying with the feed’s seductive power either. Mostly home-schooled, Violet had little opportunity to experience regular activities like other teenagers. Nevertheless, Violet “watched all the shows about how other people lived” via the feed and “really wanted to live like the rest” (Anderson 107). Through Violet, Anderson demonstrates how the young posthuman subject can perceive the hyperreal images and commercials on the media as authentic and desirable representations/reflections of teenage identity and relationships that they should perform (Giles 328). As Titus is thoroughly trained with the ISAs’ ideologies, Violet initially sees Titus and his friends as desirable doubles whose performances are indexes of normality which she can emulate. As the subject’s individuality is reliant upon its understanding of its “similarities and differences” with others”, Titus and his friends are doubles from whom Violet can “internalize” an aspect of otherness (McCallum 81).

Excited to “be going to a real party”, Violet asks Titus if it “will [be] like it is on the feed?” (Anderson 79). Titus’s reply that a real party is “dumber” (Anderson 79) hints that the behaviours and intersubjective relationships Titus and his friends perform during (and after) the party continue to be based on the feed corps’ idealized images and concepts of teenage identity, which are beyond real experiences and identities. During the party, Titus observes that little meaningful interaction or dialogue is occurring, with his fellow partiers preferring to have “their eyes just blank with the feed cast” (Anderson 83). Titus attributes their preoccupation with the feed’s hailing and discourses at the expense of genuine intersubjectivity and communication as normal and “nothing but a party” (Anderson 83). The party highlights the feed’s power to isolate and separate posthumans from each other while keeping posthumans obsessed with the feed. *Mila 2.0* provides a useful insight into the risks of Violet’s early fascination with

observing and following Titus's behaviours. Like Violet, one of Mila's primary resources for understanding normal human behaviour comes from her classmate Kaylee. However, Mila astutely perceives that Kaylee's deep-seated idolization of fairy-tale based romantic intersubjective connections with the other as both a "fantasy" and "delusion", which Violet only comes to realize later regarding Titus's friends (Driza 110). Therefore, if Violet copies Titus, she will perform a hollow identity based on the other's emulation of hyperreal, mediated and inauthentic identities and intersubjectivities derived from the ISAs.

While the feed offers to enhance Titus's relationships and identity, his compulsive reliance on the feed and the feed's ceaseless commercial intrusions into his mind mediates and commodifies his identity so intensely that his ability to establish genuine relationships and dialogues with the other is jeopardized, thus stunting his own identity formation. For instance, when Titus tries talking to Link, he "couldn't because [he] was getting bannered so hard" by the feed's advertising. Like his fellow partiers, Titus is overloaded with the feed's hails which silences him and disrupts his speech acts. Furthermore, when Titus struggles for words during his conversations with Violet, the feed instantly attempts to capitalize on his linguistic confusion by offering him "a fistful of pickups tailored extra-specially" for him which he can purchase at low rates on the feed (Anderson 174). The intense bombardment of the discourses of advertising and advertised discourses from the feed are heavily infused with the ISAs' capitalist ideologies and are one root cause of the spiralling loss of selfhood suffered by Titus's people (Mansfield 2). Through language, posthuman identity, in effect, becomes the property of the ISAs. Feed-users are unaware and indifferent that their performative speech acts participate in the market forces of capitalism and perform hyper-consumer identities, validating and sustaining the ISAs' power over them.

Thus mediated by the feed, posthuman subjectivity and intersubjectivity becomes tenuous, inauthentic and commercialized. Cunningly, the feed corps capitalize on feed-users' diminishing identities, of which they are the cause of, by promising to restore and even enhance the subject's reduced

identity if the subject continues to ‘buy into’ their capitalist ideologies. The Lacanian theory of desire and demand elucidates why Titus eagerly embraces consumerism as part of his identity. Lacan posited that the subject will perpetually desire to regain its feeling of internal subjective wholeness through consumer/economic gratifications and acquisitions called demands (Mansfield 46). The *Top Quark* quote about the population needing happy thoughts because they are sad is again revealing. In *Feed*, the population is sad because they have incomplete identities/subjectivities. The ‘happy thoughts’ Titus receives from the feed is that “the feed knows everything you want” and “can tell you how to get them” (Anderson 48). The feed corps encourage feed-users to equate “the act of purchasing” with identity (Mansfield 169). When Titus browses for upcars, the feed presents him with diverse subject positions that he will occupy based on his purchases. Buying the sleek Swarp will make him “more sporty” while the larger Dodge Gryphon would present him as “more family” (Anderson 122). Through purchasing the “commodities” and signifiers of consumerism, Titus believes he can materially “construct” ideal identities for himself (Bullen 502).

As the ISAs dominate the marketplace and operate the social network of images, discourses and advertising, they control the identities that feed-users can choose from and express. Mansfield’s comments that “subjectivity is invented by social organizations” which leads to the “division of the human population into fixed categories” to better rule society takes new light in *Feed* (10). Violet highlights the feed corps’ capitalist agenda to “stream[line] our personalities”, conducting “demographic studies that divide everyone up” (Anderson 97). By separating feed-users, the feed corps can isolate posthumans and tailor specific advertisements and discourses for them, making posthumans easier to dominate. Violet rightly identifies the cyclical pattern of identity-loss→renewal-by-purchasing→identity-loss-from-purchasing as “a spiral”; as the feed corps simplify their customers so that they can simplify their products, subjects become “less and less varied as people” (Anderson 97). As the feed corps “make you conform to one of their types”, the widespread

technological dependency and fervour for consumerism has collapsed feed-users' capacity to establish their personal identity beyond the feed (Anderson 97). The spiral of identity loss is perpetuated by feed-users' activities on the feed. Uneasy with their tenuous and narrow identities and unaware that the feed and ISAs' are to blame, Titus and his people hope to regain their self-identity by continuing to ground their subjectivity with consumer products which only renders their identities more unstable, incomplete and dominated by the hegemony.

By enticing feed-users with the promise of perfect identities, the feed corps can keep the population "running for a long time" (Anderson 279), thus ensuring that citizens repeatedly perform behaviours that support the existing structures of capitalist power (Leitch et al. 1336). The natural place to begin conditioning posthuman identity into a "workroom for power" is School™ (Mansfield 10). When the school system began declining, the feed corps literally capitalized on the opportunity. The "big media congloms got together and bought the schools" (Anderson 110). As an ISA, school is a social site that teaches children to accept and replicate the proper performances and identities expected from them as citizens (Leitch et al. 1337). *Feed*, to a frightening degree, demonstrates the ISAs' power; the congloms understand that "all roads eventually lead to (and from) the schools" (Guerra 277). Titus is so successfully indoctrinated by his corporate education that he approves of the conglom's privatization of his education; "Now that School™ is run by the corporations, it's pretty brag" (Anderson 109) because it means that "taking care of children, they take care of tomorrow" (Anderson 110). The population is taught to accept the subjectivities the ISAs have created for them and to accept the ISAs as necessary for the continued organization of society (Mansfield 10).

In School™, students are taught "how the world can be used", learning "to work technology" and to "find bargains" (Anderson 110). Given the training, tools and discourses of the hegemony, students grow into adults who know how to perform the appropriate consumer behaviours that sustain the capitalist system. As a well-trained consumer, Marty regularly demonstrates how the repeated performance and utterance of consumer

activities and speech acts can construct and enact a consumer identity. Furthermore, as language signifies and perform a subject's interiority and power, Marty's typically circuitous speech patterns like "ok-just-lets-ok" and "kay kay kay kay" demonstrate how his posthuman identity has been severely starved of originality by the ISAs (Anderson 201 & 159). Anderson's use of iterated and hyphenated language for Marty, which Violet likens to a sestina, textually represents his speech acts and thereby identity as internally fragmented by his heavy dependence on the feed to mediate his intersubjective experiences and thoughts for him. His speech acts are further crippled when Marty gets a Nike speech tattoo which ensures that with "every sentence, he automatically says 'Nike'" (Anderson 277). By tattooing his skin with an advertising gimmick, Marty physically incorporates a signifier of consumerism onto his posthuman body.

Since society's discourses are laden with the hegemony's ideologies, the subject's speech acts will inevitably "participate in the modes of production that enact capitalist institutions" and power (Trites 17). If, as Butler theorized, performative speech acts can consummate identity, then Marty has allowed, even "paid a lot" (Anderson 277) to turn himself into a mouthpiece for the ISAs, empowering the ISAs with each utterance of "Nike!". The tattoo's constant interruptions of "Nike!" interferes with Marty's own speech acts; his utterances and identity have been commoditized by the discourses of capitalism, becoming product-placement advertising. In Lacanian terms, as Marty willingly interpellates and hails himself as an obedient consumer, he presents himself to his friends as a reflective image of their generation, which prizes purchasing as part of their personhood. Seeing Marty as an other who gleefully partakes in the discourses and performances of capitalism, his friends are impressed by the tattoo, with Titus declaring it "was pretty brag" (Anderson 277).

Even before Marty's tattoo, Titus and his friends were already deriving and performing their identities based on feed content. One prominent example that combines Lacan's desire and demand theory with Butler's performativity within the process of posthuman intersubjective/subjective formation is when Titus and his friends play the Coke game. When the

Coke company promises a six pack of Coke to feed-users who “talked about the great taste of Coca-Cola to your friends like a thousand times”, the friends “went on and on and on” about Coke (Anderson 158 & 162). The sheer volume of the word Coke spoken and performed by the teenagers inundates them with the brand’s name, effectively replacing the teenagers’ identities with hyperreal subjectivities that can only be complete(d) with the “refreshing flavour” of Coke (Anderson 160). The Lacanian theory of desire and demand, which posited that subjects seek to fulfil their desire for a complete selfhood by acquiring material demands (consumer products) is here inverted; these posthuman teenagers seek demands (a six-pack of Coke), so they fabricate identities of themselves as Coke-lovers. The big congloms have succeeded in turning these subjects into bearers and promoters of capitalism. While they are usually ‘bannered’ by feed commercials, in the Coke game, the teenagers now ‘banner’ themselves using the discourses of capitalism to perform and articulate product-placement reflections of themselves as Coke consumers.

Interestingly, while Coke’s explicit aim is to encourage people to discuss Coke “to your friends”, the teenagers are self-consciously silent before they begin “rattling on” about Coke (Anderson 163). “We all sat there for a minute...Each of us looked at everyone else’s face” (Anderson 160). The teenagers’ early silence might presumably indicate Butler’s notion that ‘nothing is natural’, especially consumer identity in *Feed* (Leitch et al. 2536). However, these teenagers are no strangers to mediating and commodifying their identities and intersubjectivities. Their early silence and the fact that they look uncomfortably at one another’s faces is actually indicative of how, as posthuman subjects who rely so deeply on the feed to communicate, engaging in face-to-face, verbal intersubjective relationships is too herculean a task. True intersubjectivity has been impaired. Notably, Violet is initially original in articulating her Coke experiences. When her expression of individuality is met with “a long, silent part” in the game, she becomes “all clammy” (Anderson 161-162). Titus worries that Violet’s reticence will result in intersubjective exclusion so he begins “yelling all these carbonation things, trying to bring her back in” (Anderson 162).

Titus's forced performance exaggerates his identity loss; by fuelling his performance in the game, he heightens his participation in the discourses and structures of capitalism (Trites 17).

Similarly, Quendy depicts the dark consequences of a posthuman commodifying their identities to find intersubjective acceptance. Quendy takes her culture's consumerist ideologies to extremes by purchasing surgically grafted cuts, or lesions, onto herself to impress Link. The actual lesions are caused by the chemically saturated consumer products that flood Titus's world and are popularised by celebrities on the feed. Quendy's purchased lesions literally encode and embed her flesh and identity materially with the signified representations of her society's hedonism, paralleling Marty's tattoo. The lesions are demands that Quendy purchased to strengthen her group acceptance. Ironically, her lesions have the reverse effect. When Quendy first appears at a party with the lesions, Titus describes the friends' collective shock as “-*silence...wwwwwwwww (wind)...wwwwwwwww...ping (pin dropping)*” (Anderson 191). Later, when Calista insults Quendy's lesions, it causes another “quiet part” in the party (Anderson 201). Titus attributes Quendy's lesions as the direct cause of the awkward silences and arguments that arise. Rather than promoting closeness between Quendy and her friends, her lesions cause a serious disruption in her social group both by collapsing dialogic exchanges among the friends and by generating arguments. In Lacanian terms, Anderson portrays Quendy, with “her whole skin cut...all over”, as a suffering split-self (Anderson 191). Her cuts externally symbolize both her shattered subjectivity thanks to her mania for consumer demands and her broken intersubjectivity caused by her inability to integrate properly with others.

Quendy's lesions prompt Violet to proclaim that they “...are feed! You're being eaten!” (Anderson 202), exposing the consumptive nature of consumerism. Feed-users, once the economic consumers, are now devoured by multinational-companies, symbolized by Quendy's lesions which look like mouths eating her body. As their bodies and identities are devoured by hungry ISAs and by the posthuman subject's own hunger for commercial products, the posthumans in *Feed* experience increasing deterioration to

their physical and subjective integrities. Titus reveals that “our hair fell out” and “we had less and less skin” (Anderson 278). Titus’s mother loses “so much skin you could see her teeth” (Anderson 284); disturbingly, her inner mouth remains untouched, symbolically signifying that while her body is eaten away by consumerism, her capacity to keep consuming the ISAs’ capitalist ideologies is preserved. Like the lesions, the hair and skin loss are caused by excessive consumption of consumer products and their attached capitalist ideologies. While the lesions and Marty’s tattoo engrave the posthuman body with the signifiers of capitalism, the falling skin and hair herald the shedding of the authentic human. Anderson depicts how the feed can cause actual effacement to a posthuman user by physically integrating the processes of purchasing into feed-users’ bodies, slowly and steadily removing what is human from the posthuman.

One insidious aspect of the feed aggressively overwhelming and obliterating the posthuman’s identity and body with consumer ideologies is the emergency of the feed trend Nostalgia Feedback. As the feed steadily advances its control over feed-users, it progresses beyond merely presenting feed-users with capitalist enticements. The feed can now directly and bodily interpellate feed-users’ physical selves with consumerism. With Nostalgia Feedback, the feed begins inducing an intense desire for fashion trends that is so strong, “people were just stopping in their tracks frozen” (Anderson 278). As the feed exaggerates the “commodity fetishism” feed-users experience, subjects are paralysed and forced to fixate on consumer goods, providing the ISAs that sell them more power over subjects (Roberts 150). Excessively hailed and overloaded with capitalist cravings, feed-users are imprisoned in immobile bodies that become sites for consumer exploitation. Nostalgia Feedback marks an accelerated deterioration in posthuman freedom, choice and power. After losing their hair and skin, Titus’s people now lose their mobility and free will. Furthermore, Nostalgia Feedback ‘victims’ are unable to speak. The feed begins systematically isolating its posthuman users, silencing them with an overwhelming deluge of consumer desire which entirely eradicates its users’ ability to connect intersubjectively and dialogically with others.

Growing aware of their deteriorating social and subjective situation, Violet now perceives the potential of actually becoming her doubles as a distressing threat of her humanity dissolving into mechanicality. Unfortunately, Violet's wish to live like the others is ultimately fulfilled when she and her peers become true doubles of each other as her malfunctioning feed destroys her body, intersubjectivity and selfhood as the rest of her society experiences a similar decline. No longer trying to mimic the others but aware that she is quickly and irrevocably becoming them, Violet recognizes herself as a double of/to wider society, declaring that "we're playing games, and our hair is falling off. We're losing it-" (Anderson 201). As Violet dies, "her hair had been shaved off" and "there were scars on her scalp", which mimics the physical shattering of selfhood her peers experience (Anderson 286). Like the lesions, Violet's head scars signify her inner split-self. However, unlike Quendy, whose embrace of consumerism tears her body, Violet's scars signify her attempts to surgically remove her feed and resist her posthuman side. Unfortunately, because the feed "is tied in to everything" inside Violet's brain, the feed has become a true and undeniable part of her body and identity and her attempts to reject it are futile (Anderson 262).

Violet's physical deterioration accelerates the deterioration of her relationship with Titus, which then cyclically accelerates her demise. Within intersubjectivity, "individual consciousness is impossible outside a relation with an other" (McCallum 70). When Violet first began dating Titus, their intersubjective bond completed her selfhood. Violet rejoiced that "I have someone with me. I'm not alone. I'm living" (Anderson 270). Her words demonstrate that the self requires intersubjective recognition from an other to truly live and exist (Markova 254). Afraid that her malfunctioning feed robs her of her selfhood and interior consciousness, Violet tells Titus that "I wanted someone to know me", so she uploads Titus's mind with massive files about her life and thoughts. Violet's actions are a stark contrast to Mila who fears that if she and her double, Mila 3.0, share "the exact same thoughts" (Driza 272) and can read each other's minds, then their interior indistinguishability will extinguish Mila's

individuality. Conversely, Violet actively seeks to survive through the other. For Violet, Titus is “the most important person”, a beloved other who can contain her selfhood so that he might “tell it back to [her]” and re-complete her waning subjectivity (Anderson 253).

Increasingly repulsed by Violet’s slow death, Titus severs their relationship. When Titus deletes “all her memories” (Anderson 254), he betrays their intersubjective bond and quite nearly erases much of Violet’s identity. Without her memories and intersubjectivity, Violet again doubles her peers; as her body and intersubjective relationship crumbles, she becomes as hollow inside and out as the feed-users who lose their skin and subjectivities. Recognizing that the demise of their intersubjective bond fuels the demise of her identity more than even death can, Violet ruefully says “I came into the world alone. I didn’t want to go out of it alone” (Anderson 260). Similarly, when Nicole dies, Mila despairs that “it had always been Mom and me...yet now, I was alone in a world...that looked stark” (Driza 453). Losing their beloved other nearly extinguishes Violet’s and Mila’s selfhoods. Just like Mila’s worries that “if I lose all contact with the people I care about” (Driza 464), she will become a true machine, Violet’s decaying feed materially mechanizes her by shutting down her selfhood and intersubjective ties with others.

Forsaken by her lover and society, Violet’s posthuman body, identity and intersubjectivity collapse completely. When Violet’s feed freezes her permanently, “she was imprisoned. In a statue” (Anderson 287). Violet’s condition uncannily resembles the paralysing effects of Nostalgia Feedback. Her feed-induced death-state is a hyperbolic yet frighteningly accurate foreshadow of the total ruination of identity that awaits her society. Unlike even Nostalgia Feedback victims, who unfreeze eventually, Violet is permanently silenced, trapped and intersubjectively isolated by the feed. Her father laments that Violet’s speech acts “became increasingly slurred”, demonstrating the feed’s success in silencing its most agentic resistor (Anderson 287). With her language and utterances stolen from her, Violet begins to fade away. Violet’s death-state parallels Nicole’s death in *Mila 2.0*. Mila realizes that “in death, Mom was more like me than in life” (Driza

454). Holland considers Mila “an inanimate object. As good as dead” (Driza 264). Similarly, Titus describes frozen-Violet as a “zombie” and prop”, which signifies that to him, the authentic, real Violet has been effaced, rendered an inanimate non-entity (Anderson 269 & 286). To ISAs like the feed corps and Holland, misbehaving posthumans like Violet and Mila can only ever be equated with humanity when compared with the dead or worse, made dead.

On the final page of *Feed*, Anderson presents one last advertisement: the feed offers a hot warehouse sale, declaring that “Everything must go!” (299). Replicating Marty’s sestina-like qualities of speech, the expression “Everything must go” is repeated throughout the final page in increasingly smaller print. Within that single line, in its repetition and reduction of size, Anderson captures the spirit of the feed corps’s agenda: everything that makes their customers human must go. As the feed corps seek to feed upon their customers’ purchasing power, feed-users are drained of their individuality, becoming a shadow of their true selves. Violet is a victim of the feed corps’ merciless profit priorities: in their logic, to simplify their products they must simplify the people. Human life, identity and uniqueness, which Violet possessed in such vitality, must go. In her impending death, Violet becomes small in body and in identity. As the very text of the narrative in *Feed* shrinks, the reader is forced to share Violet’s sense of despair, dread and death as the feed textually erases the narrative itself into oblivion.

Chapter Two

The Circuitry Inside Me: High-Tech Identity Fragmentation and Confusion in Mila 2.0.

“Part living cells, mostly hardware. All freak.” –Mila, in *Mila 2.0*

In Debra Driza’s *Mila 2.0*, Mila is a military robot who passionately considers herself a human girl. As she evolves, Mila grows acutely aware of the social forces and ideologies that dictate both human and posthuman identity. While in *Feed*, the Ideological State Apparatuses shared the same agenda of effacing posthuman identity to replace it with consumer roles, in *Mila 2.0*, the representatives of the ISA of family have drastically different opinions regarding proper human/posthuman identity which they force upon Mila. From the family, Mila learns to idealize humanity while she demonises her mechanical side. Mila suffers an intense identity crisis because she perceives “technology as both self and not self” (Thacker 75). For much of the narrative, Mila vigorously considers her posthumanity a monstrous impediment to her humanity which causes a painful divide within her. Unlike feed-users, whose uncritical acceptance of their consumer identities erases their true identities, Mila’s sharp discomfort and awareness of her hybridity accentuates her inability to accept the totality of herself. The only way for Mila to repair her broken subjectivity is to overcome the hegemony’s ideological binary that divides her human and posthuman halves and to realize that she can remain human while being a machine.

The combined utilization of McCallum’s meta-analysis on identity formation with Trites’s meta-analysis on power will again be useful in examining how the posthuman subject’s identity is shaped by the power of social forces which seek to impose their ideologies of identity onto posthumans. Like *Feed*, *Mila 2.0* demonstrates how posthuman subjectivity requires the establishment of intersubjective relationships and recognition from others to complete its selfhood. Posthuman identity in Driza’s text is

therefore also vulnerable to being defined and constructed by others, especially those that embody ISAs. The chief ISA from which Mila derives her understanding of her identity is the family, represented by her creators/‘parents’, Nicole and General Holland. The family defines Mila’s identity in numerous ways; as human, controllable, other or transgressive. Mila’s ‘parents’ manipulate Mila’s identity by taking advantage of her posthuman programming to impose and even download their conflicting ideologies of identity onto Mila. Like the ISAs in *Feed*, Nicole and Holland target specific aspects of identity formation to shape Mila, including discourses, intersubjectivity, the mirror stage and the double. Buffeted from all sides and forced to comply with the family’s multiple and apparently irreconcilable ideas about posthuman/human identity, Mila’s sense of self is routinely reaffirmed only to be destabilized again and she laments that “at the rate I was going, I’d never figure out my true identity” (Driza 168).

The family is a notably powerful ISA because within a family’s “specific ideological configuration”, the child’s subjectivity and identity is pre-established and will continuously be reinforced through the family’s dispensation of its ideologies (Althusser, in Leitch et al. 1357). As agents of the family, Nicole and Holland possess radically antagonistic viewpoints but each exerts similar power in constructing Mila’s identity according to their respective ideologies. Her creators employ different tactics to figuratively and literally program Mila with the ideologies, performances and speech acts they deem appropriate for either a person or a piece of military property to possess. Attempting to liberate Mila from her militaristic identity, Nicole imbues Mila with “humanlike programs” that guide Mila’s performance of normality which Nicole reinforces by sending Mila to the ISA of school. Meanwhile, Holland presumes to possess the hegemony’s prerogative to privilege real humans with socially normative identities while posthumans are to be treated as mere tools for human agents to use (Thacker 76). Holland vigilantly polices the binary between human/posthuman and uses Mila’s twin, Three, as a destabilizing double to remind Mila of her otherness. As Mila’s body becomes a liminal space where Nicole and Holland fight to preserve and perpetuate their concepts of

true humanity versus pure posthumanity, Mila's identity becomes increasingly shattered.

As Mila's mother, Nicole wants Mila "to live" and "have everything" (Driza 117) a normal girl would, so Nicole modifies Mila's mind with fabricated family memories including a recently deceased father figure and their supposed family life prior to his 'death' so that Mila believes she is human. Since the number of memories Nicole could program into Mila were limited, Mila believes she suffers partial amnesia, attributing it to the trauma of her father's 'demise'. Believing she has lost her father and much of her own past, Mila's condition parallels Violet's concerns of "who are we, if we don't have a past?" and are without a beloved other to know and anchor the subject's identity (Anderson 253). For Mila, her uploaded memories become important mirrors that reflect her 'past' self/identity, providing her a template of her 'lost' identity to draw on (McCallum 71). As she seeks to regain her sense of identity, Mila's memories allow her to experience the mirror stage but with a posthuman slant. The mirror stage usually presents the subject an external image of themselves which, in contrast to the subject's incomplete interiority, is stable and whole. Like Titus, who feeds off advertisements that mirror hyperreal depictions of himself to himself, Mila lives off the memories of her family life to restore her identity and intersubjectivity. When Mila "summon[s] more memories" of "Mom and Dad...of all three of us", "in memory, I'd felt love, a sense of belonging" (Driza 22 & 13).

Nevertheless, as the memories are counterfeit they reflect images of an identity Mila never had and the temporary modicum of intersubjective belonging and self-stability Mila obtains from them is just as false. Besides that, within her own memories, Mila becomes an other to herself. Her memories reflect a constructed 'past' self that is so intersubjectively complete with familial bonds that Mila, currently struggling to find acceptance after her father's death, feels alienated and inferior to her 'past' self, causing serious splintering within her identity. Furthermore, while her motivations to humanize Mila were noble, Nicole's actions bear an unfortunate resemblance to the ISAs and *Top Quark* program in *Feed*,

which can broadcast “happy thoughts” directly into their posthuman subjects’ minds to make Titus amenable to capitalism. As “selfhood is never spontaneous and always derivative”, Mila derives a biased ideology of normal girlhood from her memories which were scripted with the ideologies and performances that Nicole as mother, other and ISA believes she is privileged to shape Mila with (Mansfield 49).

Importantly, while Nicole frees Mila from Holland’s masculine and militaristic ideologies that defined her as a machine, Nicole herself, as an ISA, is unwittingly complicit in perpetuating patriarchy’s power over Mila. Notably, Nicole models Mila’s human identity and memories on the discourses and ideologies of patriarchy itself, primarily by presenting Mila a portrait of their lives as a (formerly) traditional family. Knowing that the social order prizes intersubjective completion, symbolized by traditional families headed by the father, Nicole felt it necessary to insert a “big, manly father” into Mila’s memories to “add authenticity to [their] cover” as they eluded Holland (Driza 50 & 90). Having conjured this nameless father, Nicole must falsify his death to explain his absence. Unfortunately, by scripting his “death”, Nicole unintentionally risks Mila suffering the “irremediable loss and alienation” that can arise within the subject when it loses an invaluable other (McCallum 70). Furthermore, Nicole also jeopardizes Mila’s selfhood because her father’s simulated death causes a severe disruption in Mila’s intersubjective ties with others, creating a chasm that prevents Mila from fully integrating with the rest of society, especially within her new school.

Mila’s classmates, raised on the hegemonic ideologies that associate intersubjective and subjective completion with the all-American nuclear family paradigm that prompted Nicole to program Mila’s father in the first place, project onto Mila the Lacanian belief that the subject will suffer an “ontological split” when a pivotal intersubjective connection is severed (McCallum 70). Mila’s new friends fear her father’s death will “crack her like a broken mirror”. For them, Mila is an uncomfortable cautionary tale, a subject who reflects the debilitating and shattering effects of losing one’s intersubjective connections. Due to people’s reactions to her loss, Mila

finds it difficult to converse with others. She notices that “whenever people found out about dad”, they made “hasty excuses to leave”, causing “awkward silences” (Driza 16 & 32). When they do talk, Mila’ describes her conversations with Kaylee’s gang as a “whole hour of lunch-table babble” (Driza 38). The shallow intersubjectivity Mila has with Kaylee cannot satisfy Mila’s ailing subjectivity. Rather, as people withdraw from Mila emotionally and verbally with awkward silences and banal chatter, Mila’s chances of establishing meaningful dialogues with others to regenerate her intersubjectivity and rebuild her weakened subjectivity become increasingly difficult. Mila’s inability to integrate with others in school only worsens the fragmentation of identity and intersubjectivity she endures as she discovers her posthumanity.

The school continues to be a crucial site that solidifies Mila’s concept of traditional normality. Nicole reinforces her power by allowing the school, as a fellow ISA with its own set of discourses to collaborate with the family to indoctrinate Mila with the social performances that signify normal human identities. The school is a location where “teens are repressed...and liberated by socializing” with “authority figures and peers” (Trites 35). To Mila, school is an important ISA that affirms her human identity especially after she learns of her mechanicality, as “to go to school” is “to be normal” (Driza 118). Despite the unsatisfactory intersubjective bond Kaylee offers, Kaylee is a model agent for the school-as-ISA, with “all her good grades” (Driza 30). Mila’s friendship with Kaylee is important as Kaylee is influential in offering Mila’s fledgling human identity the appropriate performances and speech acts expected from human girls. For Kaylee, intersubjective ties with the other is essential to one’s identity and her identity can only be completed by centring her selfhood on the most important of others: eligible boys. Kaylee centres her concept of the ideal identity based on the ideologies of the hegemonic fairy-tale metanarrative, hoping for a “prince and the magic kiss” to complete her selfhood (Driza 14). Kaylee subsequently tailors her utterances and performances into an identity of hyperreal femininity to attract males, a tendency she unconsciously models for Mila who observes how “Kaylee could really act

dumb-witted around boys” and has a penchant for “fake swoon[s]” (Driza 30 & 22).

Like Violet, Mila’s experience with normal human behaviour is limited, and she derives her concept of normality from Kaylee as Violet does with Titus and his friends. Mila considers Kaylee’s ideologically laden performances and utterances to be socially approved signifiers of humanity. Therefore, ever anxious to defend her own ontological status as human, Mila finds herself “follow[ing] in [Kaylee’s] ogling footsteps” (Driza 25). Mila believes that “if I could feel that same breathless hope...over a boy...then surely I was more teen girl” than posthuman (Driza 112). Mila therefore yearns for her classmate Hunter, believing that by centring her intersubjectivity on him, she can effectively perform and achieve a human identity. She longs for “one kiss, to prove I was normal” and “to give me a real story to tell” (Driza 108). As Titus uses the feed’s metanarratives and discourses of romantic comedy entertainment to tell “the story” (Anderson 297) of his relationship with Violet, Mila constantly refers to her capacity to emulate Kaylee’s performances and discourses, particularly the fairy-tale metanarrative with Hunter, as definitive proof of her humanity.

As an other, Hunter does provide Mila an essential intersubjective connection, keeping her “anchored to the world of the living” (Driza 104-5). As Titus is to Violet, for Mila, Hunter is “the one person who made me feel the most human”, with whom she “could talk to” (Driza 106 & 39). When they meet, Mila recognizes the power the other has in shaping the subject’s subjectivity and intersubjectivity, especially through the discourse of the other. Hunter’s speech acts with Mila prove highly humanizing for her. “The way he drew out my name gave it a mellifluous quality” and Mila has “a sudden craving to hear him say my name again” (Driza 38). Furthermore, in contrast to Kaylee’s meaningless babble, Hunter’s economy with words “spoke volumes” and “hinted at more understanding” (Driza 33 & 38). Just as Violet becomes reserved during the Coke game to resist the big congloms’ power, Hunter’s linguistic restraint resists perpetuating the narrative of Mila as a damaged “charity case” whose father has died (Driza 38). Through their verbal exchange, Hunter becomes a vital

other through whom Mila can develop, experience and articulate her human identity.

Meanwhile, General Holland continues the family-as-ISA's power, but his ideological understanding regarding Mila's identity is markedly antagonistic to Nicole's. Holland is a "man in control" of the hegemony's institutions and ideologies, which he feels are threatened by Mila's evolving human identity (Driza 262). Holland persistently attempts to "extinguish any remaining spark" (Driza 267) of humanity Mila has developed by defining her as a posthuman other through his presumed power over discourses. As the subject "only gets a sense of its own definition from the outside", "the subject is defined by the discourse of the other" (Mansfield 43). Holland appears aware of the power discourses have and adroitly uses the discourses of power to inscribe his ideologies onto Mila while undermining Nicole's ideologies that have shaped Mila's humanity. Holland grounds his power in his words, promising Mila that "unlike Nicole, I would never lie to you. You have my word" (Driza 268). Holland is fond of using the discourses of science and family to assert Mila's mechanicality as an undeniable fact while denying her individuality.

Throughout their verbal interactions, Holland becomes an antagonistic other with the power to verbally and aggressively tear apart Mila's sense of humanity as he interpellates her with his scientific, militaristic and familial discourses. Crucially, Mila first learns of her military and mechanical background by listening to a recording of Holland explaining the MILA project. Watching the recording, she is immediately interpellated as a posthuman other by Holland through his patriarchal discourse. Holland names and hails Mila as "MILA", eclipsing her humanity with her designated machine acronym and constructing her "as an object, a thing", "something you owned" (Driza 87 & 263). In dramatic contrast to Hunter's capacity as an other who verbally reaffirms Mila's humanity by lovingly uttering her name, Mila feels that Holland's words "hurt like hell" and "made my world shatter" as they "burrow[ed] under my expertly manufactured skin" (Driza 86-267). Similar to the lesions in *Feed* which inscribe the hegemony's consumer ideologies onto posthuman bodies, Mila

fears that Holland is using his hegemonic discourses to inscribe his view of her status as a machine onto her body and identity.

As the family is a particularly powerful ISA, Holland presents himself as a socially complete family-man with genuine familial intersubjective bonds in order to gain access to the family's power which Holland then uses as leverage to mount his attack against Mila's human identity. Holland tells Mila that he has his own family with a wife and "girls, like you" (Driza 323), implicitly foreshadowing his role as 'father' to Mila and her double, Mila 3.0, or Three. Holland has a penchant for invoking the family-as-ISA by using familial language to link himself and the two MILAs as an extended family. He mockingly insists that since Mila calls Nicole "'Mom', surely that makes me Dad?" (Driza 265). Mila eventually admits that Holland has "more claim on the title of father than the programmed version" Nicole created (Driza 265). Thus validated as a father and other, Holland is invested with great power over Mila's identity and he uses Three as his greatest weapon to attack Mila's human identity by reminding Mila of her original purpose as a military weapon.

Holland deliberately introduces Three to Mila as her "sister", whom even Mila begins to regard uncomfortably as "my twin", thus making their connection indisputable. Three is Mila's double, a seemingly indistinguishable yet superior version of Mila who adheres closely to her military programming (Driza 272). Initially, Mila subscribed to the traditional humanist idea that the subject, even if posthuman, is still "unique" and "original", which she undoubtedly absorbed from Nicole-as-family's humanist worldview (Driza 273). However, such humanist ideals still originate from the hegemony and are fiercely upheld by agents like Holland who refuses to privilege posthumans with the same ontological status as humans. Holland exposes Mila to Three knowing that Three's existence will make it "much harder for [Mila] to cling to the hope that [she] was real". Their identical features interfere with Mila's ability to claim that she is her own unique subject, "more than just a mass-manufactured machine" (Driza 272-3). Three forces her to "question her individuality" (Driza 272). The MILAs' similarity poses a posthuman

problem to the concept of identity and intersubjectivity. Mila fears that as Three was created with the same programming, they might share the same thought processes. Since identity depends on perceived “similarities and differences from others”, Mila fears losing her individuality and identity to Three by being so identical to her double (McCallum 70).

McCallum explains that the double often “adds only to replace” by presenting the subject new and supplementary identities which are often adversely contradictory to the subject’s current identity (81). These alternative identities cause tensions and distance not only between the subject and their double but causes alienation within the subject itself (McCallum 81 & 77). Holland proudly considers Three a supplementing double, an improved version of Mila without her “overactive emotional garbage”. As a supplementing double, Three has great power to severely disrupt Mila’s selfhood. Holland uses Three as an embodied mirror to reflect to Mila the proper posthuman traits she should perform. As Mila’s double, Three functions to undermine the humanizing effect of the family memories Nicole uploaded into Mila. Three enacts for Mila the performances and identities expected from her as a military machine. As Three’s emotional detachment epitomizes posthuman perfection for Holland, Three reflects and articulates how Mila’s cherished emotions are unnatural to posthumanity. Mila is particularly disturbed by her dialogic interactions with Three as Three persistently vocalizes their mechanical similarities. Three even wishes that Mila can be “fixed” to be just like her and encourages Mila to relinquish her individuality and embrace her posthumanity (Driza 291).

Understandably, Mila considers Three “a gruesome thing” because Three is an other who bears Mila’s image and voice, externally embodying and articulating the aspects of Mila’s self that she finds most alienating. Trites’s examination of dialogics is useful for illuminating Mila’s situation. Trites states that the dialogic of difference is the “discourse that occurs between self and other” (47). Mila is markedly disturbed when conversing with her double, as “her voice was mine, too” (Driza 272). Three’s words constantly “ripped at the thin fabric holding [Mila] together”, indicating the tearing

effect Three has on Mila's identity whenever she attempts to hijack and override Mila's utterances. Mila is particularly troubled each time Three verbally declares their similarities, particularly when Three confidently insists that "you are me" (Driza 286). Three's dialogic of difference with Mila is a dialogue that persistently aims to disregard their differences and emphasize their similarities, which causes a painful "monological effacement" from the other/double for Mila (McCallum 70). Mila is concerned that Three's verbal denial of Mila's humanity will become an irrefutable fact and "turn me into a true clone" for having been uttered in Mila's own voice (Driza 286).

Mila's extreme confusion regarding her identity is exacerbated not just by Holland's heartless tactics but also by Nicole's haphazard manipulations of her programmed identity in reaction to Holland's power. For instance, when Nicole reactivates Mila's defence mode to protect them from Holland, Mila perceives her mother's tampering as a violation of her identity, accusing Nicole of "turn[ing] me into a psycho killer without telling me" (Driza 157-8). Mila realizes the extent of her mother's power when she discovers how easily Nicole can alter her personality as if she were just "a new version of Windows" (Driza 99). Consequently, Mila often struggles to determine her real self from her programmed posthuman self, especially in terms of her performance and articulation of human normality. For example, Mila wonders if her jokes that her mother's taste is "lame", which draws on teenage discourse and articulates a teenage identity, is a verbal reflection of her genuine identity. "Was that the real me who'd come up with the term, or the programmed me?" (Driza 114). As a direct result of Nicole's power and well-meant manipulations, Mila is often hesitant to accept herself wholly, feeling that she must always monitor and separate her human and posthuman halves, which only fuels the shattering of selfhood she suffers.

Once again, discourse becomes a site for the hegemony's power to fragment the posthuman subject's identity. Furthering Mila's uncertainty regarding her expression of identity, Mila is markedly troubled by the emergence of her internal voiceover defence guide which is recorded in a "heartless, digitized version" of her own voice, accompanied by internal

instructions (Driza 50). Mila experiences a dialectic of identity, which Trites explains is a “dialogue that occurs internally” within the subject (48). As language signifies the subject’s power, Mila finds these verbal and written instructions, such as “Visual Scan Activated” as disempowering, especially since they intrude into her consciousness “without permission” (Driza 150). Mila also knows that these instructions originate from and are embedded deeply with Holland’s militaristic ideologies (Driza 149). As her programmed voice is intended to guide her offensive/defensive performances, Mila fears that by heeding these instructions to enact fighting manoeuvres like “a carefully choreographed dance”, she is potentially reinforcing Holland’s hegemonic “reality” that she is solely “a fighting machine” (Driza 154). Consequently, Mila rejects her internal dialectic of identity, commanding the words to “get out of my head” (Driza 142). Her refusal to listen to the hail of her military programming is reminiscent of Violet and Titus refusing to allow the feed to keep bannerizing them. By ignoring the hail of the ISAs, these posthuman teenagers resist being interpellated as obedient and disempowered subjects. However, Mila is also rejecting and silencing a voice that is part of her, which actually fragments her identity further.

Understandably, Mila perceives her emerging posthuman abilities such as her martial-arts skills as an alienating loss of agency over her performances which closes the gap between her and her double, potentially making her a “true clone” of Three (Driza 286). Mila worries that each time she engages with her posthuman power, she instantiates the posthuman half of her identity. “With every new [posthuman] ability, I was losing me” (Driza 162). Aware of Mila’s ontological and performative anxieties, Holland creates a torture scenario, forcing Mila to torture Lucas Webb for intel to remind her of her original military purpose. The aspect of performativity is most notable when Mila describes the scene where she tortures Lucas as “some kind of macabre play”, demonstrating Mila’s awareness that certain aspects of her identity are more programmed and performed than natural, and can be manipulated and reinforced according to the ISAs’ power (Driza 345). The capacity for performativity to instantiate and inscribe identity

onto the performer is not lost on Mila; “with every punch [against Lucas] I became less of [a] girl...and more of the monster Holland desperately hoped for” (Driza 374). While performing the role of torturer, Mila despairs at losing her power over her identity by having to incorporate her speech acts with torture threats. She wonders “who was saying these terrible things? It couldn’t be me” (Driza 348). Having to inflect her utterances and performances with violence in accordance to Holland’s demands, Mila’s torture test highlights how vulnerable posthumans are to the power of ISAs.

Mila’s belief that her military half is completely incompatible with her human side contributes to the internal fracturing of her identity, which is epitomized by her reaction to discovering her posthumanity. When Mila first discovers her true origins, her sense of identity, already so vulnerable from her prolonged intersubjective isolation and the manipulations to her programming from the ISAs, is violently shredded. When Mila cuts her arm, she is confronted with her mechanical interiority for the first time since Nicole wiped her memories. Examining her wound, she sees “a gaping tear in my skin...Inside the cut, inside *me*, was this...tube” (Driza 76). Mila’s cut triggers the splitting of her subjectivity. From a Lacanian perspective, before Mila re-discovers her posthumanity, she lived in the pre-mirror stage of infancy, which gains credibility when remembering that Mila has only existed for several months and was made to forget her posthuman nature. Like the pre-mirror stage infant, Mila conceived of her supposedly human body as a “continuous, limitless” surface where her interiority and identity should logically correspond with her humanoid exteriority (Mansfield 41). Mila’s cut is a literally open signifier of her alterity that reinforces for her the divisions between organic/mechanic, posthuman/human. Her injury shatters the illusion of her physical and subjective wholeness, breaking the ‘limitless’ surface of her body and exposing her as artificial. In the pre-mirror stage, the child is unaware of the self as “a separate entity” (Mansfield 41), which takes particular posthuman significance with Mila; her cut removes her beyond the pre-mirror stage, forcefully separating Mila from the human collective and positioning her irrevocably as other. Mila’s obsessive fixation with her technological

insides begins with her wound, which is an early focalizing site for the identity confusion that plagues her.

Mila's renewed awareness of her posthumanity presents her with further confrontations with the mirror stage, which becomes increasingly distressing to Mila's identity. Upon discovering her posthumanity, Mila experiences an urge to observe her reflection, to subject her posthuman self and identity to scrutiny. Gazing at her reflection in a mirror, Mila reacts by thinking "my familiar face...Not. Real" (Driza 95). As with her double, the mirror externalizes Mila's posthumanity, confronting Mila with the apparent artificiality and constructed nature of her human identity. Mila despairs that "everything I knew about myself was completely false" (Driza 95). Distraught, she is overcome with "the urge to destroy that phony reflection". Her act of smashing the mirror is a desperate attempt to efface and deny her unwanted posthuman image and self. However, the broken mirror "only reinforces [her] otherness"; Mila is confronted by the jagged shards that lie like "glittering lies....a reminder of everything I'd lost...[and] never had" (Driza 95). Her shattered image reflects to Mila her broken state, from her cut arm to her crumbling faith in the integrity and authenticity of her intersubjective ties with others and in her own identity.

In conclusion, Mila's confrontation with her reflection and her subsequent smashing of the mirror encapsulates all of her struggles to understand herself. That Mila considers her reflection "Not. Real" is highly significant and a key indicator of how the ISAs' conflicting ideologies have induced her split-self (Driza 95). Driza's technique of dividing the words "Not" from "Real" recalls the tense hegemonic binary between real/artificial that defines the division between the human and the posthuman. This binary is mutually exclusive, privileging the human as 'real', which, by corollary, indicates and dictates that the posthuman subject is 'not-real'. As a patriarch, Holland is determined to protect the integrity of this binary to maintain the hegemony's power by ensuring that posthumans are not privileged with equal status as humans. Mila too, unfortunately, seems to subscribe to this ideology for much of the narrative, which she doubtless acquired from Nicole's ideological concept of humanity. The irreconcilable

binary between human/posthuman is a critical basis for why Mila often cannot reconcile her two sides, and it is one that she must overcome if she is to resist the ISAs' power and salvage her selfhood.

Mila's self-loathing reveals the weakness in Nicole's methods to humanize her. That Nicole sought to suppress Mila's posthuman identity so that Mila could lead Nicole's ideal version of a normal life seems to validate the fact that posthumanity is to be considered an undesirable and diminished state, while humanity is the prized ontology that all subjects should aspire to. Rather, Nicole should have helped Mila nurture her understanding and acceptance of herself as a girl who, because of her hybridity, occupies a special position that allows her to observe the constructedness of identity. Nevertheless, Mila's comes to this realization herself through her at times liberating and often difficult experiences with Nicole, Hunter, Holland and Three. From each, she learns how to love, to belong, to defy and to fight for her own identity. Struggling to emerge from the hegemony's currents of power and ideology, Mila is finally able to declare her true wish: "I just wanted to be a girl" (Driza 443). To fulfil her wish, Mila works to understand, accept and finally integrate both of her sides to enjoy the power that comes from being human and posthuman.

By the end of *Mila 2.0*, although Mila and Nicole have escaped Holland, Nicole dies and Mila must face an uncertain future while experiencing the pain of losing a beloved parent/other for real this time. But rather than wallowing in sadness as she did when her 'father' died, Mila draws on her hybridity to strengthen herself. In Nicole's death, Mila comes into her own. No longer constrained by Holland or coddled by Nicole, Mila is temporarily removed from the power and ideologies of the family-as-ISA. In that brief respite from external power, Mila empowers herself using her mother's sacrifice and vows to have the "freedom" Nicole dreamt for her (Driza 466). While she wants to be a normal girl, Mila has learnt enough not to entirely dismiss her posthuman self. The freedom she wants is not just freedom from the hegemony's power but also freedom from having to separate her two halves. Mila realizes how her posthuman body and identity transcends and redefines the narrow scope of identity she has

previously witnessed or experienced and by tapping into and bridging both sides, she can generate a more durable and fluid identity for herself that incorporates the best of her hybridic nature.

Chapter Three

Challenging the Motherboard: Resignification as Resistance for Posthuman Identity Liberation.

“These agents...possess a divided subjectivity that implies a standing potential for deviation from regulatory norms.” -BOUCHER, *THE POLITICS OF PERFORMATIVITY*

“So I opened my eyes.” -TITUS, in *FEED*

“...you’re growing, evolving...just like a human.” –Nicole, in *Mila 2.0*

As posthuman subjects like Violet and Mila witness daily, identity, be it human or posthuman, is largely at the mercy of being shaped by the ideologies and power of social institutions. The ISAs in *Feed* and *Mila 2.0*, from the big congloms to Holland and Nicole, demonstrate that power is the “possibility of imposing one’s will upon the behaviour of others” (Trites 4). Violet and Mila are routinely subjected to the ISAs’ power; the big congloms and feed corps attempt to erase and replace Violet’s identity with a hyper-consumer identity while Nicole and Holland’s warring ideologies rip apart Mila’s identity. Violet critiques how the feed corps’ use the feed to cause a “spiral” effect that makes people “more simple” (Anderson 97). Meanwhile, Mila rages at her “lack of power” against Holland and the sadistic tests he administers to test her programming (Driza 451). Nevertheless, a major awareness the girls attain is that ‘power is everywhere’ (Trites 4). Power is not the sole privilege of the ISAs, though their influence appears insurmountably ubiquitous. Power can also originate from within the posthuman subject (Trites 3). By examining and confronting the complex interplay of power that runs throughout their societies, these empowered posthumans begin testing the degree of power they have. Through subversive acts of resignification that play against the ISAs’ expectations, the girls expose how the hegemony’s dominant ideologies of identity are ‘cultural fictions’ and illusions which Violet and Mila attempt to reclaim their identities from (Boucher 112).

By closely observing the ISAs’ methods of power, the girls uncover that ISAs widely promote certain posthuman performances and discourses which are imbued heavily with the ISAs’ ideologies. As demonstrated by

the Coke game in *Feed* and Mila's tendency to imagine Holland's words "burrowing into [her] skin" (Driza 267), each time posthumans draw on or are affected by the ISAs' discourses and ideologies, it instantiates the hegemony's power by inscribing and performing the ISAs' markers of oppression and obedience onto their posthuman identities and even bodies. Since the ISAs pervade society and because "all signification (of identity) takes place within the compulsion to repeat", a viable solution for resistance is through Butler's call for resignification. Resisting subjects should consider not simply avoiding performance in the fear of performing disempowered identities, but rather should actively select from and re-appropriate the performances and discourses that perpetuate the ISAs' oppression. By playing with the markers and materials that have defined their identities as feed-users or fighting machines, Violet and Mila are able to generate new, powerful and versatile performances, speech acts and identities that disrupt the ISAs' power over them (Boucher 118-119).

Anderson and Driza offer dynamic strategies for resistance and resignification which play upon and against the hegemony's power. These strategies mock and expose how the hegemonic notion that posthuman subjectivity is naturally and essentially subservient is actually a construction embedded with the ISAs' ideologies, images and discourses to produce subjects who will willingly and unwittingly serve the hegemony. As reflexive and resisting posthuman subjects, Violet and Mila use their resistance as deliberate attempts to "enact themselves into being" and to assert their identities as their own (Trites 7). The girls boldly take the ISAs' power and use that very power to energize their resistance. Violet plays with the power of consumerism in creative ways to frustrate the feed corps' capitalist agendas whilst Mila infuses her military programming with human ingenuity, awareness and compassion to upset the violent behaviours Holland and Three demand from a military machine. Violet and Mila resignify their speech acts, performances and intersubjective bonds to find potential liberation for, and sometimes from, their posthuman identities.

Since language is essential to establishing posthuman subjectivity via speech acts and intersubjective interactions, language has always been a site of power for the ISAs. Marty's Nike speech tattoo and Three's constant references to her own mechanicality demonstrate how the ISAs have commodified and controlled posthuman speech acts; without realizing it, Marty and Three verbally perform identities that lack authentic selfhoods. Therefore, heteroglossia is particularly suitable for posthuman subjects who wish to reassert their power through the resignification of language. Heteroglossia, which can involve a multiplicity of speech acts and subject positions, achieves a linguistic "resignification of action" which will lead to a "proliferation" of agentic, authentic posthuman utterances and identities (Butler, in Leitch et al. 2537). By taking the ISAs' discourses and using them to generate a multiplicity of unique utterances, especially through Violet's and Mila's fondness for metaphor and sarcasm, posthumans can disrupt the ISAs' power over the language they use. Through heteroglossia, Violet and Mila disarm, discredit and "displace the norms [and] repetition[s]" that verbally enact the ISAs' domination over their identities (Boucher 119).

In *Feed*, Violet envisions an identity free from the feed corps' overbearing hold on her posthuman subjectivity. She has "this dream that I'll be able to learn to live without the feed" (Anderson 262). Violet understands that her posthuman society is selling their subjectivities to the feed corps, allowing themselves to be interpellated as voracious, solipsistic consumers. She also perceives that their apparent consumer power actually hides the insidious fact that "market forces repress the individual's power" (Trites 5). Tempted by glamorous tailor-made advertisements, feed-users believe that they can buy happiness, so they engage in hyper-consumerism on the feed which only empowers the feed corps (Trites 4). Violet is highly aware that as every dimension of posthuman life in *Feed* is dominated by the dynamics of capitalism, the way to achieve resistance is through resignifying the expected modes, codes, performances and discourses of consumerism itself. Having identified the feed as the arena where posthuman identity is lost,

Violet begins “[c]omplicating. Resisting”. She actively searches for methods to dismantle the feed corps’ capitalist power over her identity.

Knowing that consumer power exists only in the action of purchasing, Violet begins wielding her power to purchase by withholding it, resisting the feed corps’ power to interpellate her as a simplified and mindless consumer. Violet empowers herself through critically self-conscious consumer choices that expose the domination of the feed corps’ power over posthuman identity, language and choice. Butler recommends drag, with its inversion and misappropriation of external signifiers and performances to disassemble hegemonic ideas about essential identities. Violet gives Butler’s drag a posthuman update to interrupt and confuse the feed corps’ mission to categorize and limit proper consumer behaviour. Violet crafts a unique selfhood for herself by “creat[ing] a customer profile that’s so screwed, no one can market to it” (Anderson 98). In the spirit of playful posthuman identity resignification and ‘drag’, Violet begins misappropriating the performance of purchasing and scrambles the signifiers of shopping. When Violet brings Titus shopping, they go “from place to place, asking for weird shit we didn’t buy” (Anderson 100). Violet mounts a searchlight “on [her] belly”, gets Titus to try on chemises and asks him to “resist the feed. Look into ox carts” when choosing Titus’s upcar (Anderson 99, 191, 121). Her kaleidoscope of consumer choices causes “serious decision flux” for the feed, which is unable to “catalogue” Violet’s identity and she (temporarily) achieves her goal of “becom[ing] invisible” to the big congloms (Anderson 98 & 121).

Violet’s father, Mr. Durn, claims that “Americans are interested only in consumption...” and have “no interest in how [products] are produced”, which explains the population’s widespread indifference to the big congloms’ power, despite the common joke that the “evil corporations...control everything” (Anderson 290 & 48) Unlike her peers, Violet is socially hyper-aware of her consumer power/disempowerment. Whenever Violet buys anything via the feed, she engages in a thoughtful process of resignification, critically examining each step of production and material acquisition to understand the feed corps’ pervasive presence and

power. While Titus immediately immerses himself into the process of purchasing and relinquishes his identity and power to the feed, Violet formulates an identity centred on “the importance of self-control” (Anderson 143). Whenever Violet wants anything, she “wouldn’t let herself order it for a long time” (Anderson 143). Violet then orders her clothes at a “slow, slow rate” and once she has her clothes, she would “not even really [let] herself touch it completely” and “would wait for days” before wearing it, which is a dramatic contrast to Titus’s lifestyle of instant gratification that he has learned to perform from the ISAs (Anderson 143). By exaggeratedly delaying the shopping process, Violet plays the role of the ‘bad’ consumer who manages to manipulate the system and still buy her products. Her delayed purchasing style dilutes and fragments the feed’s power over her, allowing Violet to be herself as she shops.

After his experiences with Violet, Titus grows in his awareness of the feed and its role in controlling him. Once Mr. Durn confronts Titus about his consumer solipsism, Titus engages in a destructive and ritualistic burst of purchasing to express his resistance against the feed. Raging against the system, Titus orders “pair after pair” of slate coloured pants through the feed (Anderson 293). Crucially, Titus attaches his address to his orders so he can “track each one” and “feel the packing, the shipment, the distribution” (Anderson 293). As he orders his pants, he rips off his clothes and sits naked. Titus zeroes his credit and “had nothing left in [his] account”, continuing his performance of purchasing until dawn (Anderson 293). Certain conclusions can be surmised from Titus’s actions. By tearing off his clothes, he forcefully sheds the external signifiers of consumerism that have defined him as a fashionable teenager. Paralleling Violet’s self-aware shopping style, Titus aims to achieve a greater awareness of his consumer performances. He takes Mr. Durn’s words to heart, defying his previous consumer ignorance by directly monitoring his purchases through the feed rather than passively letting the feed monitor him. Furthermore, through his mass buying, Titus achieves a state of *tabula rasa*, symbolically reinforced by ordering all his pants in slate. His new slate-coloured clothes bear the mark of a new beginning, a blank slate. Also, zeroing his credit is a

performance of extreme resignification; Titus renders himself (temporarily) unable to participate in consumerism by eliminating his monetary mode of purchasing. Clothe-less and credit-less, Titus is a new man, awakening to a new day and awareness.

As a lecturer, Violet's father believes that "language is dying" and that "words are being debased" by the feed's domination of discourse (Anderson 137). Knowing the importance of language to identity, Violet recognizes that the ISAs' widespread commodification and mediation of language invades posthuman identity, intersubjectivity and speech acts with the ideologies of capitalism. For instance, most posthumans prefer using the feed's m-chat function to communicate online rather than to interact verbally. Titus "hate[s] these kinds of [spoken] conversations" and bites his lip when asked to communicate aloud, demonstrating discomfort at non-mediated forms of intersubjective engagements (Anderson 169). Therefore, the Durns attempt to preserve their identities through their refusal to allow the feed and ISAs from mediating and owning their utterances. Violet encourages Titus to "talk to me. In the air" (Anderson 169). By relocating their utterances in the air, a theoretically neutral and natural space not owned by the ISAs, Violet hopes to prevent their articulations from being monitored and manipulated by the feed corps. When Titus watches Violet's father verbally delivering a lecture, he is struck by Mr. Durn's use of language. As Mr. Durn spoke, he "looked all his students in the eye, like he was challenging them to a fight" (Anderson 140). Here, Mr. Durn hails his students with the spoken word, challenging them to emerge from the comfort of feed-mediated conversations and to embrace authentic intersubjective relationships which can then lead to them developing genuine and liberated identities.

Continuing their use of free speech acts, Violet and her father enjoy using heteroglossia; both have a predilection towards using elaborate metaphors and personal expressions in their conversations. Heteroglossia provides them a linguistic means to protect their speech acts and identities by reworking language in their own way to avoid the debasement that the ISAs' ideologies of capitalism inflict on discourses and identities. By trying

to “speak entirely in weird words and irony”, Violet’s father hopes to prevent anyone from “simplify[ing] anything he says”, frustrating the feed corps’ goal of simplifying the population’s personalities by limiting the utterances available to them to express themselves (Anderson 137). Listening to the esoteric language of Mr. Durn’s lecture, Titus remarks that “suddenly, he seemed kind of powerful” even though “who the hell knew what he meant” (Anderson 140). Similarly, Violet uses heteroglossia to verbally remind her peers to examine the feed’s commodification of language. During the Coke game, Violet dives into a lengthy, personalized introspection with colourful adjectives that self-reflexively examines her consumer experiences with Coke. She describes the carbonation of Coke as “itsy-bitsy commuters...in my windpipe”, wondering how anyone would “even start” consuming Coke and, by extension the capitalist ideologies attached to brands (Anderson 161). Aware that the Coke company is observing their discussions, Marty laments that Violet’s critical analysis of Coke “cost us a few” points with the company, indicating Violet’s success in linguistically defying Coke’s mission to have her interpellate herself as a mindless Coke consumer.

As previously discussed, the subject’s identity is formed through its intersubjective relationship with an other who provides the subject recognition and validation. As Titus begins to realize the full value of intersubjectivity, identity and language, he also realizes the severity of his intersubjective betrayal by abandoning Violet and deleting her memories. Titus intends to rehabilitate their intersubjective bond and reclaim their identities by returning to the now catatonic Violet and willingly assuming the position of beloved other. He tells Violet that “we’re all crossing [a] bridge of dreams” together, revealing his acceptance of intersubjectivity’s importance (Anderson 297). As an other, Titus believes he has the power to rejuvenate Violet’s identity against its erosion by the feed. He promises Violet that “You’re still here, as long as I can remember you” and he will “keep telling” her life story to her to keep her identity alive (Anderson 297). Crucially, Titus begins speaking verbally to Violet, embracing Violet’s encouragement to liberate their utterances away from the feed’s mediation.

By talking to her, Titus hopes to open a verbal, if one-sided dialogue in the hope of potentially regenerating their intersubjective tie. Furthermore, he resists the feed's ceaseless attempts to hail him with the alluring discourses of advertisements. "I tried to talk just to her. I tried not to listen to the noise on the feed" (Anderson 296). Knowing that they can attain real identities by being intersubjectively connected, Titus refuses to allow the feed's merciless bannerling to continue disrupting his utterances and intersubjective bond with Violet.

Titus also begins engaging in heteroglossia via storytelling. As Violet had used erratic yet selective shopping strategies to disrupt the feed corps' capitalist power, now Titus resignifies his discourse by "shopping" for news and stories via the feed to tell Violet. Titus admits that his stories are "only a sentence long" because "that's all I knew how to find" (Anderson 296). While his splintered storytelling indicates the fragmenting effect the feed has always had on posthuman language and identity, nevertheless, Titus experiences Violet's revelation that by self-reflexively examining each aspect of their consumer world, "this obscure stuff...is like a whole world", thereby overcoming his previous consumer solipsism (Anderson 102). By immersing himself in heteroglossia, Titus collects knowledge from a diverse range of stories and articles to overcome the feed's consumer imperialism and his consumer solipsism. He learns more about the world, which defies the ISAs' goal of keeping feed-users ignorant. His bricolage of resignified speech acts creates a linguistic shield for himself and Violet to deflect the feed corps' capitalist power.

In *Mila 2.0*, Mila is heavily enmeshed in hegemonic power because her posthuman programming and upbringing have inscribed her with the conflicting ideologies and power of the ISAs. Mila ceaselessly attempts to differentiate which of her performances and identities are authentically her own and which are the products of her built-in military programming, tampered by Nicole and reinforced by Holland. Mila constantly fears that by engaging with her posthuman power she will instantiate and irrevocably confirm Holland's belief that she is just a soulless fighting machine. Furthermore, Mila is acutely aware that in her mother's attempt to

humanize her by hacking her programming and sending her to school, Nicole has also imposed her ideal version of human normality onto Mila. Consequently, Mila understands that her attempts to be human are also always slightly suspect, as she has been programmed by Nicole, to some extent, to want humanity. Nevertheless, both her posthuman programming and her human background offers her much potential for acting out her resistance against hegemonic power if used in strategic and combined ways. It is in finding a middle ground where Mila can embrace, integrate and resignify both her human and posthuman performances and utterances that she will find her true power and be able to express her real identity as a hybridic girl.

As Mila's double, Three's wholehearted acceptance of their military programming sets the standard baseline for posthumanity, making Three an ideal foil to measure Mila's methods of resignification and resistance against Holland's militaristic expectations of posthuman behaviour. Considering how the relationship between subjects and their doubles is "grounded in power", subjects tend to fear an effacement of their identities from the supplementing double (McCallum 78). Holland forces Mila to undergo several game-like tests against Three in the hopes of reconnecting Mila to her posthuman programming by forcing her to interact with her double. Mila is placed in a precarious position that tears at her identity: tempted to perform her military functions to please Holland and secure her mother's safety, she nonetheless recognizes that to use her abilities too readily against Three would be to perform an identity of militaristic mechanicality which would cause Mila to resemble Three.

Ironically, by forcing Mila to confront her double and the alienating posthumanity Three signifies, Holland presents Mila an excellent if painful counterpoint against which to consolidate her identity and situate her resistance. Mila knows that as they are "uploaded with the same training programs", it would be "impossible not to predict each other's moves" (Driza 293). Mila understands that it would be futile and even dangerous to draw completely and solely on her posthuman power when fighting Three, as their identical programming would cause Mila to replicate Three's

performances, thus closing the performative gap between them. Determined not to lose her privilege to deny any resemblance to her double, Mila realizes that she should perform her behaviours and utterances in new and humanized ways that Three will not anticipate nor perform in order for Mila to frustrate Holland's expectations of her performances and identity. Resembling the spirit of Violet's mission to complicate and resist the feed corps' power by playing with her shopping style, Mila begins actively "playing up our differences. If I couldn't win on her terms, I'd have to win on mine" (Driza 293).

One key way that Mila differentiates herself from her double and departs from her status as a machine is through Mila's use of heteroglossia. Knowing how Mila's utterances were originally scripted with limited discourses suffused with the ISAs' power, Lucas and Nicole marvel at the changes in Mila's speech patterns and its implications for her growing selfhood. Like Violet and Mr. Durn, Mila regularly uses figures-of-speech as linguistic bumps to disrupt others' expectations of her posthuman identity. Mila develops her humanity and power by using her speech acts to self-consciously refer to and then reject her disempowered posthuman subject position. When Lucas suggests she undergo "repairs", Mila asserts her humanity, resistance and power through her utterances. By telling Lucas that "I'm not a bike", she refuses to allow herself to be defined as an object and tool by his militaristic discourse (Driza 302). Lucas is understandably startled by her "miniscule stab at [linguistic] defiance" and asks if she "always talk[s] in metaphors?" (Driza 301). Similarly, Nicole is delighted by Mila's flippant utterances, saying that "the government didn't really program you to have a subversive sense of humor. Neither did I" (Driza 209). Driza's choice of words to describe Mila's utterances as "defiance" and "subversive" reinforces the idea that Mila is engaging in a process of verbal resignification which transcends the limited range and freedom of expression Mila was originally designed to possess.

Furthermore, Lucas reveals that unlike Mila, Three never uses metaphor, indicating that Mila's heteroglossia is an unmistakable departure from her programmed speech acts which her double represents. Nicole concurs,

saying that Mila's unique re-appropriation of language proves she is "evolving...just like a human would" (Driza 209). In terms of language, because the double can be positioned "oppositionally" from the subject, this can exclude the "possibility for dialogue" (McCallum 76). As Mila's supplementing double, Three considers Mila a deviant subject whose free use of speech reflects and performs her aberrant human nature. Thus far, the MILAs' interactions have consisted mainly of Three monologically effacing Mila verbally by denying and downplaying Mila's humanity (McCallum 70). As a supplementing double, Three tirelessly encourages Mila to abandon her bid for individuality and to embrace their posthumanity instead. Three urges Mila to remember that as machines, "our wants are irrelevant" (Driza 286). Ironically, Three's words spur Mila to resistance. Mila vows not to "let them make me into her" and she begins using language as a site to differentiate and separate their identities (Driza 286).

When Mila is forced to participate in Holland's combat tests against Three, Mila is aware that she must create tensions and dissonance in their dialogic of differences, which is the "discourses between self and other" (Trites 48). As she did with Lucas, Mila begins resisting her double's ideologies through empowered speech acts that verbalizes her rejection of her posthumanity. Before the combat test, Mila verbally resists Holland's power, declaring that "I don't want to fight" (Driza 285). She also asserts her difference from her double, expressing that "I don't want them to make me...something I'm not", which Three correctly understands to mean that Mila does not wish to become like her (Driza 286). Mila hinders Three's monological effacement of her identity by using her speech acts to open a dialogue with Three; Mila broaches the possibility of peace between her and Three, rather than confrontation. Besides that, like Titus's use of storytelling as a heteroglossic break from the feed corps' power, Mila uses song to differentiate herself from Three and to interrupt Three's power. As they fight, Mila draws on her human exposure to Kaylee-as-ISA and "sing[s]...my friend's favourite song" (Driza 294). By launching "into a semi-tuneful rendition of "Brown Eyed Girl"", Mila is able to linguistically confuse Three (Driza 294). Finding Mila's resignification of language

baffling, Three comments that the song “isn’t even appropriate” (Driza 294), revealing how Mila has succeeded in redirecting a discourse from the ISA of school and resignified it in a new context to empower herself over her double.

Throughout the combat test, Mila continues strategically selecting and deploying certain resignified manoeuvres to baffle Three’s rigid fight patterns, allowing Mila to perform in ways that are authentically her own. While singing her “inappropriate” song to disrupt Three’s power, Mila also ignores the “potential list of moves [that] paraded through my head” that her programming suggests for her to use. Just as Titus ignores the feed’s capitalist hailing to prevent its continued monopoly over his identity, Mila regularly and selectively disregards the combat instructions that whisper in her head when she fights with Three, refusing to allow her programming to completely interpellate her as a fighting machine. As the girls fight, Mila chooses to resignify her combat manoeuvres. In one prominent example, she decides to dive at Three’s feet because the move’s “lack of logic” is exactly why “the android part of me would never consider” it (Driza 295). Regularly catching Three off guard by doing “do such an illogical thing” (Driza 387), Mila is often able to defy Three’s expectations, separating their performances and allowing Mila to win a sense of confidence in her unique identity.

Similarly, when Holland forces Mila to test her torture skills on Lucas, Mila uses the opportunity to resignify others’ expectations of her in-built capacity to inflict harm by using that power to cause injuries in new contexts. Appalled at having to injure Lucas, Mila takes control of the situation by using her power against Holland instead. Instead of striking Lucas, she hits Holland who is overseeing the test. “All at once, the fire...consumed me, whipped down my arm” (Driza 349). Mila is overcome by a blaze of agency that flows through her body; she resists Holland’s power to control her by actively taking charge of how she uses her own lethal power. Mila’s actions resemble Titus’s heated burst of excessive shopping near the end of *Feed*; by engaging directly in the structures of capitalism, Titus used the feed corps’ power against them. Likewise, Mila

problematizes her performance as a torturer by withholding her ability to cause serious physical harm to Lucas and applying that power to harm the ISAs' overbearing representative instead. Holland is hurt but not entirely surprised by Mila's reaction, admitting that "I knew she'd snap" (Driza 351). Holland reveals his understanding that as a resisting subject, Mila would naturally use such a resignification of her abilities on him to defend her identity and performances against his ideological beliefs, indicating that Mila's action was a successful instance of resistance.

When Lucas helps Mila escape, he asks her to pretend to take him hostage again. More confident in resignification and performance by now, Mila performs her role of torturer again but does so with a combination of mechanical prowess, awareness and human compassion. To fool Holland's guards, Mila taps into her military and torture programming, using its discourses by promising that she will "fry" Lucas (Driza 427). To enhance her verbal threats, Mila draws on her double's example to enact a performance of deadly and determined posthumanity. She summons "a Three-like smile...to my lips" and is successful in making Holland's guards "*believe*" that she will exercise her posthuman powers against Lucas (Driza 428). Where earlier Mila was anxious not to behave like Three to avoid the possibility of becoming her, she understands now that to achieve resistance and agency, it is sometimes necessary to self-reflexively tap into one's power in ways that confuse and disrupt the hegemony's domination. Mila defeats Holland's men with a self-conscious performance of her posthumanity, yet she is careful to internally guard against fully becoming Three by using her mechanical powers sparingly and selectively. Throughout her performance of deadliness, Mila vows to herself that she will "never, ever let anyone force me to...torture someone again-I wouldn't become Holland" (Driza 428).

As the posthumans in *Feed* and *Mila 2.0* become aware of the ISAs' systems of domination, they begin deploying their own power to create personal identities of their own whilst avoiding the limited and disempowered range of identities the ISAs have decreed as acceptable for posthumans to possess. For instance, Violet's heteroglossic speech acts and

her critical examination, misappropriation and delayed-gratification of her purchasing style frustrate the hegemony's capitalist power over her identity. While Violet still participates in the structures of capitalism, her decision to locate her rebellion in original and modified acts of consumerism demonstrates how the posthuman subject can break away from the ISAs by subverting the performances the ISAs expect from them. Violet indeed becomes a consumer as socially expected from her but she turns the tables on the feed corps, transforming her consumer activities into performances so diverse that they challenge the feed corps' mission to make feed-users' "less and less varied as people" (Anderson 97). Cunningly formulating a pattern of random consumerism, Violet engages in a self-controlled production of a new consumer identity that defies the big congloms' ability to get a "handle on [her] shopping habits" (Anderson 247).

Meanwhile, while Mila has always considered her robotic functions alienating, she cannot deny that these functions are invaluable, especially when used self-reflexively during Holland's tests. Mila eventually acknowledges that despite her insistence otherwise, "I was a machine, and a powerful one" (Driza 421). Knowing the immense power that using her abilities can afford her, Mila still uses them with restraint and caution to prevent herself performing too much like Three. Nevertheless, she does begin tapping into her posthumanity more willingly to liberate herself and defend her humanity. Mila engages in a selective resignification of her offensive and defensive skills when she participates in Holland's tests. She actively chooses from and merges the most useful elements offered by her military programming and human upbringing to produce an identity of hybridity with performances of creativity, compassion, awareness and ingenuity that transcend and problematize Holland's, Three's and even Nicole's expectations of her.

In conclusion, by critically examining the ISAs' motivation for domination and their modes of power, Violet and Mila ascertain the major areas in their identity development that have been targeted by the ISAs' power. The girls begin a systematic though often playful and always self-reflexive attack against the ISAs' power to redefine their posthuman

identity. Anderson and Driza depict how resignification for posthumans must be a conscious endeavour to disrupt the ISAs' power through a self-conscious engagement with and alteration of their posthuman performances and discourses in original and unexpected ways. Violet manages to temporarily staunch the further loss of her identity to the feed's consumer ideologies by teasing the feed corps' profit goals through her bizarre purchases while Mila manages to overcome the tearing of her identity by incorporating both her human and posthuman sides in her performances, rather than letting one identity rule at the expense of the other. The dynamic, daring and ingenious forms of resignification that Violet, Mila and Titus use allows them to break the circuits of power that charges through their societies and subjectivities, thereby achieving identities that are truly their own.

Conclusion

Unplugged: Free to be a Technological You and Me?

“Posthumans will find themselves hailed by the languages they speak, the affinities they create and the exclusions that they confront.” –KILGORE, *Difference Engine*.

“I’m trying to resist, but they’re close to winning.” –VIOLET, in *Feed*.

“I planned on having that kind of freedom.” –MILA, in *Mila 2.0*

As Science-Fiction texts that engage directly with posthumanism, M.T. Anderson’s *Feed* and Debra Driza’s *Mila 2.0* extrapolate, explore and express anxieties regarding the increasing sophistication of technology and its impact on post/human life and identity. Anderson presents the potential for technology to dehumanize and efface posthuman identity when used to standardize members of society. In Titus’s world, individuality is devoured by the feed in the big congloms’ mission to expand their profit margins. Meanwhile, Driza explores how when power is exerted haphazardly and indifferently over posthumans, the ISAs can confuse and shatter posthuman identity. Bombarded by the family’s conflicting ideologies, Mila struggles to stabilize her ontological orientation beyond the human/machine divide. As young posthumans, Violet, Titus and Mila desire for and fight to express coherent identities. Their efforts are markedly problematized by the power of the other, especially Ideological State Apparatuses which adroitly manipulate the very technologies and social materials that surround and constitute posthumans bodies. By understanding how the ISAs interpellate, manipulate and manoeuvre their relationships with others and with themselves, posthumans can begin initiating strategies of resistance that frustrate and expose the ISAs’ power while allowing them to reclaim their identities. As modern technology modifies humanity, posthumanism is arguably the next phase in human evolution. The current security of one’s status as human will become increasingly changed and challenged. Therefore, the posthuman fight to be human is one that all of humanity may soon have to embrace.

As they learn to navigate the complicated minefield of ideologically loaded systems of power within their societies, the posthumans in *Feed* and *Mila 2.0* arrive at similar realizations. Firstly, as Violet and Mila observe throughout their respective narratives, because identity is strongly reliant upon the subject's relationships with the other, identity formation is a constant and volatile "production" that is always "socially, culturally and institutionally assigned" with the hegemony's reigning ideologies (Weedon 5-6). Secondly, when technology is utilized by social forces, it allows the ISAs to expand their power over the established social order while introducing new modes of domination. *Feed* and *Mila 2.0* showcase how the posthuman body's hybridic combination of the biological and the technological present "nodes where bodies, bodies of discourse" and ideologies converge (Gane 432). These nodes, from Titus's feed chip to Mila's internal military programs provide the perfect outlet for the hegemony's power and ideologies to enter the posthuman subject. In *Feed*, the feed promotes heady hedonism and crass consumerism as the worldwide trend; in *Mila 2.0*, Mila's programming becomes a battleground where Nicole's domestic and familial virtues compete against Holland's scientific and militaristic ideals to decide Mila's identity. By encoding their capitalistic, militaristic or familial ideologies into key stages of identity formation, the ISAs can condition posthumans to perform docile and subservient identities that will maintain the hegemony's authority.

Among the foundational materials of identity formation that the ISAs have seized are social discourses, posthuman intersubjectivity and the mirror stage. Through these areas, the feed corps, Holland and Nicole can disperse, naturalize and justify their power over posthuman identity. For instance, language is an especially potent medium in which the ISAs can take root in and branch out their power into multiple layers of society. Through the discourses of advertising, the feed corps in *Feed* commodify every aspect of feed-users' experiences with the world. The feed tirelessly interpellates feed-users with tailor-made advertisements that commodifies the posthuman subject's encounters with the mirror stage by enthusiastically painting hyperreal and unrealistic lifestyles for feed-users. Understandably,

feed-users are trained to link the attainment of these fantastically enhanced selfhoods with material acquisition. As the feed is the greatest resource for achieving material and cultural capital, the feed becomes a supreme necessity to Titus for defining and embellishing his identity. Heavily dependent upon the feed to interact with others and to express themselves, feed-users inevitably allow the feed to mediate, commodify and manipulate their speech acts, performances and intersubjective relationships.

As utterances and intersubjectivity are two major features that express and enact posthuman identity, Titus and his friends are unable to have functional identities without the feed. The feed, then, effectively erases posthuman identity in order to fill the void with consumer identities. Lonely and lost without genuine subjectivities and intersubjectivities to give their lives meaning, feed-users ironically and naively return to the feed in the hopes that it will restore and enhance their ailing identities. Marty's Nike speech tattoo and Quendy's surgical lesions are not only desperate attempts to heighten their identities, they exemplify how posthumans in *Feed* are so trained with capitalism that they linguistically and materially inscribe the markers of oppression onto themselves. Marty's tattoo and Quendy's lesions disrupt their identities on multiple levels. Marty is unable to express himself as his speech acts now perform and reinforce the big congloms' authority over him every time he has a Nike product-placement outburst. Meanwhile, Quendy's lesions incite a fight among her friends, negating her attempts to achieve intersubjective closeness with her peers. Furthermore, her lesions externally embody her split subjectivity which arose thanks to her excessive consumption of consumer ideologies and products which have eroded her real identity and intersubjective bonds.

Similarly, in *Mila 2.0*, Driza presents discourse as an equally pivotal aspect of posthuman identity that the ISAs have hijacked in order to naturalize their version of ideal posthuman identity. Nicole works implicitly over Mila's identity by tampering with her software's codes and programs. By uploading Mila with false memories of a family life and behavioural subroutines, Nicole hoped these alterations will guide Mila in performing and articulating a normal teenage girl's identity. Meanwhile, Holland

favours a more external and direct approach. Drawing on the powers of the discourses of science and patriotism, Holland hopes to frame his reality that Mila is a mere tool for the army as an indisputable fact. Using Three as a supplementing double, Holland comes close to capsizing Mila's faith in her own humanity. Throughout their interactions, the dialogic of difference between the MILAs is a dialogic of similarities, as Three both verbally denies Mila's humanity while insisting upon their mechanical similarities. That Three bears her image and voice only serves to enhance the seeming veracity of her claims that Mila is not human. Furthermore, as Mila's military abilities emerge, she is distressed by her voice-over combat commands. Mila fears that this new function means she will never escape being hailed by Holland's militaristic ideologies each time her program's voice encourages her to perform a specific combat manoeuvre. Uneasy with these confrontations with her own voice and by the other's discourses, Mila is caught between and confused by the contradictory forms of identity the ISA of family insists she should occupy. Mila's compulsion to separate her human and bionic halves only accentuates the shattering of identity she suffers.

Frustrated by their subjection to the ISAs, Violet and Mila long to be their own free agents. The girls actively attempt to empower themselves beyond being helpless tools of the ISAs. Althusser's conception of the subject carries a second meaning which provides a useful starting point for posthuman identity reclamation and resistance. For Althusser, the subject can also be a being that is "author of and responsible for its actions" (in Leitch et al. 1360). While the word cybernetics carries the meaning of "governor" and "steersman", the girls discover that they are not helpless victims of the ISAs' power and their machinations to mechanize posthumans. Rather, posthuman subjects have their own inner power. The pressure from the ISAs' power generates a surge of agency in Violet and Mila; both girls decide to liberate themselves over the forces of social oppression that surround them. Violet and Mila decide to tap into their technological bodies and abilities to activate their internal power in order to govern themselves and steer their own futures. The girls begin expressing

their power by manipulating the materials and discourses that once consigned them to disempowered subject positions. By carrying out strategic forms of resignification, they break out of the ISAs' narrow expectation of their identities.

As discussed, the ISAs abuse their power over language to control posthuman identity. Therefore, the manipulation of discourses is an ideal starting point for posthumans interested in salvaging their identities. Through their love of word-play, Violet and Mila engage in heteroglossic acts of subversion that mock the ISAs while verbally performing unique identities of their own. Violet's poetic and descriptive conversations forcefully expose her peers to new and creative forms of self-expression. Violet also shows Titus that he can emerge from the looming shadow of standardization and mediation the ISAs cast on them if he has the courage to literally begin speaking out. Titus's awe at Mr Durn's commanding aura during his lecture demonstrates the electrifying power words possess to empower posthumans. Meanwhile, Mila's sharp tongue cuts the linguistic chains that bind her to her mechanicality. It is in her unique brand of flippant self-expression that Mila proves the depth of her individuality, something she was never meant to do. As Mila jokes and insults her way through Holland's tests, she effectively deflects his power to make her a true copy of Three.

However, the degree of successful resistance that Violet, Titus and Mila achieve against the ISAs must be examined as posthuman resistance is a complex and often uncertain process that moves on a spectrum between limitation and liberation. The ISAs in *Feed* seem able to limit and counteract feed-users' long-term dissidence by commodifying all forms of resistance. For instance, when Titus begins fighting the feed, his methods of linguistic resistance are still enmeshed in the ISAs' power. When he begins narrating "the story" of how he and Violet "learn to resist the feed", Titus unfortunately frames their resistance in the banal language of entertainment which he derives directly from television programs on the feed (Anderson 297). Titus calls Violet a "dissident with a heart of gold", using the popular catchphrase from feed shows like *Snowblind* (Anderson 297). When Titus

jokes that their story is “rated PG-13. For language”, he exposes a deep flaw in his verbal rejection of the feed’s power (Anderson 298). Despite his new resolution to ignore the feed, Titus innocently draws on the feed’s discourses, registers and ideologies. He unintentionally transforms the true tragedy of Violet’s resilience into a hyperreal romantic comedy using television terminology. Rather than liberating their identities from the feed’s mediation, Titus is complicit in verbally representing his and Violet’s identities as television stock characters. Titus is so indoctrinated with the ISAs’ ideologies that even in his resistance he still reduces his identity by interpellating himself as a consumer.

Meanwhile, despite successfully evading Holland, Mila also pays a heavy price for her resistance as she loses Nicole in the process. Without her beloved mother/other, Mila must survive through consolidating her fragmented identity. Mila is aware that she must now unite both her posthuman/human sides and she begins to overcome her fear of the posthuman/human binary that has always divided her subjectivity. By asserting that she wants “to be a girl”, Mila envisions a stable identity to work towards (Driza 443). Mila therefore revels in her triumphs over Three during the tests because her playfully disruptive resignifications prove that Mila “was a girl capable of ingenuity”, one who can break out of Holland’s suffocating ontological mould (Driza 443). Mila also reinforces her human identity by drawing on the lessons in humanity she received from Nicole and Kaylee. As these representatives from the ISAs of family and school stress the importance of the other, Mila contacts Hunter in the hopes that he will strengthen and complete her humanity. Since Mila has a keen instinct for power, she acknowledges that Kaylee’s fairy-tale metanarrative of romance is a “fantasy” embedded with the hegemony’s power (Driza 111). Therefore, rather than being a passive princess-like subject who waits for the heroic other to save her, Mila decides to empower herself by actively requesting that Hunter-as-other join her mission to discover who she truly is.

As the speed and ubiquity of technology races on, power flows through machines and supercharges all those who control technology. *Feed* and

Mila 2.0 present only a glimpse of the full range of incredible sophisticated technology that may soon exist along with its consequences for human freedom. As genetic modification techniques, militaristic super-surveillance, cloning and Artificial Intelligence programs are perfected and evolve from being fiction to fact, the posthuman era promises the advent of technocratic societies. Those with the position and privilege to dominate technology will have undeniable power to affect and manipulate their increasingly technological subjects literally at the touch of a button. Able to breed, alter, augment, modify and condition certain subsets of people to be less-than or more-than human, the ISAs can elevate domination, slavery, exploitation and discrimination to terrible levels. In light of the posthuman condition, the desire to preserve one's humanity gains new significance for if the futures that Anderson and Driza imagine come to pass, human identity is in danger of being lost, replaced and torn by the mediating, homogenising and commodifying might of technology. The posthuman body, then, will become the future grounds over which the right live as human and to enjoy the advantages of technological advancements without sacrificing one's humanity will be fought over.

Nevertheless, a technologically centred future is not necessarily entirely bleak for humanity. While technology may bring, and indeed may already have brought heightened forms of oppression, Violet, Titus and Mila all demonstrate how technology can function to empower the individual as well. Despite the ominous weight of the ISAs' hand, there is a sense of lightness and fun in these posthuman youths' discovery of their inner power. Tapping into the abilities their technological bodies grant them, Violet, Titus and Mila play a game of sorts. Their resistance of power through resignification incorporates elements of theatricality and parody. These posthumans self-reflexively challenge the seeming naturalness of posthuman identity, exposing how identity is positioned at a confluence of societal pressures and ideologies. Posthuman resistance also mocks the ISAs' presumption that posthuman identity is theirs to command and commodify. These posthuman youths also show how the very technologies that once oppressed them can also liberate them. Doubtless, throughout

their resistance they inevitably make unintentional mistakes and suffer losses, but if to err is human, then their follies and flaws make them human after all. From the lessons they have learnt and the promises they make to their loved ones to keep prevailing, Titus and Mila gain an electrifying spark of enlightenment and confidence in themselves. It is their capacity to love, mourn, dream and struggle which is the greatest testament to their humanity.

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