Exploring Utopia: The Utopias of Blithedale Romance and Feed

Dominic M. Palmeroni
The College at Brockport

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/eng_theses

Part of the Literature in English, North America Commons

Repository Citation
https://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/eng_theses/24

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the English at Digital Commons @Brockport. It has been accepted for inclusion in English Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @Brockport. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@brockport.edu.
Exploring Utopia:
The Utopias of *Blithedale Romance* and *Feed*

By

Dominic M. Palmeroni

A thesis submitted to the TOC of the State University of New York College at Brockport, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts

January 20, 2011
Exploring Utopia: The Utopias of *Blithedale Romance* and *Feed*

By

Dominic M. Palmeroni

APPROVED BY: [Signature]

Advisor: [Signature] 1/23/11

Reader: [Signature] 1/23/11

Reader: [Signature] 2/4/11

Chair, Graduate Committee: [Signature] 1/20/11

Chair, Department of English: [Signature] 2/17/11
Table of Contents

Introduction: Historical Utopia 1

Chapter 1: Building Utopia: Blithedale, 26
Brook Farm and the Utopian Experiments of the 19th Century

Chapter 2: Feed[ing] Utopia: Feed and the fictional Future of Failed Utopia 65

Conclusion: Concluding Utopia: 101

Works Cited 109
Abstract

Since the earliest recorded settlements, there has been the desire to build a functioning world where everyone is happy and there is eternal peace and harmony. By the nineteenth century, many people had tried to create the perfect society and all failed in their attempts. As with many modes of life utopia and its’ darker sibling dystopia were woven into the fabric of literature. Here the duality could thrive with examples of successful utopias but at the same time there are stories that about utopias that fail, one being *The Blithedale Romance* written by Nathaniel Hawthorne. The latter becomes a focal point of the paper in its view of utopia and the inability for one to exist, either because of the people who construct it, or perhaps even the idea itself. The failure of the fictitious *Blithedale* and its real-world counterparts lead into a possible future given life by M.T. Anderson in his futuristic dystopia of *Feed*. *Feed* describes a world where people are physically connected to the internet through an implanted computer. Even though the people living in this world see it as a perfect utopia, the elements of dystopia are only thinly veiled. The conclusion comes to this in regards to utopia and its viability, the fact that all utopian experiments have failed cannot be solely blamed on the idea of utopia. The reason for of the failures are the people themselves. The failure of utopia is that the people who live in the “utopia” are not first utopians themselves, rather they expect the constructed utopian space to make them utopians afterwards. In this way *The Blithedale Romance* and *Feed* work in concert to show the faulty logic in how utopia has been viewed in the past and to give hope for the resurrection of the belief that utopia can exist.
Introduction:
Historical Utopia

People in general are always trying to better themselves in one way or another, sometimes through social reform and at other times through technological achievement. Both styles of life can lead to a utopic setting, if used in the proper manners. It is when the ideas are misused that the meaning of these movements and life styles begin to break down and harm the people that they originally tried to help. This is the case in two novels, Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Blithedale Romance* (1852) and M.T. Anderson’s *Feed* (2002). They have an odd kinship to one another that may not be visible upon the first look at the novels together. Yet they do share a bond between one another by a sense of skepticism for utopic settings and the dangers of a technological mindset and one of a materialistic society. One of the most important ideas linking the two is that the failure to create a utopia either in the fictional setting of *The Blithedale Romance* or in its real life counterparts lead to the world of *Feed*. *Feed* exemplifies the outcome of the materialistic tendencies and complete disregard for Nature and the needs of the natural world versus the wants and desires of the human world of men and material goods that began at the end of *The Blithedale Romance*. These two novels work together to overtly show the futility of utopia, either socially or technologically, and that materialism is the main issue as to why the world is heading into a negative state.

With this idea in mind both the Authors and their novels raise two important questions: what is a utopia and what is a utopian? This is the main issue in *Blithedale*,
since these people are supposed utopians and fail miserably to create their utopia, whereas in *Feed* the people are what they considered utopians in a way, but are only that way because of a blocked sense of being and a distorted sense of self and reality. The most important requirement for utopia is utopian character. The people building the utopia must already have within them the ideas and beliefs necessary to make the experiment successful. They must embody or represent brotherhood, Nature, and benevolence. In effect, both Hawthorne and Anderson hold that utopia must pre-exist place by existing in the spirit of the individuals who make up the community. If, for instance, a community would come together and expect to become utopians by the fact that they are in what they consider utopic conditions, as with the people in *The Blithedale Romance*, their created utopia will fail because there is not a utopian character to uphold the values that are necessary for a functional utopic society. Therefore both novels work together to show a view of utopia and utopians in the contexts of their novels and the difficulties for either to exist in a world that is hostile to their existences.

Before discussing the novels in further detail, the historical ideas of what utopia is must first be discussed. The concept and possible existence of utopia is not a recent invention of the human imagination. In fact, it is most likely one of the oldest myths in human history and a description of a utopia is in the Holy Bible, one of the oldest books in human history. It is a place that for many people existed at one time and may still exist somewhere on earth to the present day. This idea has caused people to try to create or recreate these utopic places on earth, with varying degrees of
success, but none have been completely successful in their ventures. The idea that humans can construct a perfect society has in the past century and a half broken down and lost its place as the desired result for human civilization. This sentiment of anti-utopian thinking comes from the almost nihilistic late nineteenth, twentieth and early twenty-first century mentality that was expressed in the dystopian novels throughout these eras. Nevertheless, for millennia people discussed and dreamed about what a utopia would be and how it would work and benefit the people living within it. Before defining what a utopia is, one must look at the history of utopias and how the perceptions of it have changed from the first inception of the idea in written form, some time before the birth of Christ, and how it is viewed through literature in the modern day.

The idea of the Garden of Eden is one of the earliest constructions of utopia. Versions of the Garden of Eden are found in Christianity, Judaism and Islam. However, one important difference between Eden and the later utopias is that Eden was divinely created, whereas all others are man-made. It was only through the failure of man to adhere to God’s laws that caused the expulsion from the original paradise/utopia (Genesis 3:8-24). Whether this is fact or fiction is up to each person to decide; the underlying theme remains the same however. This theme is humankind’s inability to accept paradise in its entirety and its continuing desire to modify its existence. Yet it is also this expulsion from paradise that gives people the yearning to recreate and rebuild a working utopia, as described in the Judeo-Christian-Muslim texts.
Utopian thoughts and experimentation far predate the modern era and are traced back to much older civilizations. An early attempt at recreating a utopia and paradise on earth comes from the story of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9). Shortly after civilization springs up east of the Garden of Eden, the humans of the narrative felt that they could restore paradise on earth if they could build a tower to heaven and create a physical bridge between the divine and mortal. For this action, God decides to destroy the tower and cause every person there to speak different languages, thus destroying the unity that was ubiquitous up until that time (Genesis 11:1-9). In this instance, when humans decide to try to create their own utopia they fail miserably and through their misjudging of their own abilities they destroyed what they set out to create by trying to do what they were told specifically not to do. The story of Eden and Babel served as a warning to the people of the ancient Middle East not to strive for utopia, but live well and work with what one is given.

Many of the most influential philosophers in history have tried to imagine the perfect society. Great thinkers in history such as Plato voiced their opinions of how to create the perfect utopic paradise as exemplified in Plato’s Republic(380 b.c.). According to Lyman Tower Sargent, the term “utopia” was coined and popularized by Sir Thomas Moore’s novel titled Utopia(1516). Sargent says that Moore was doing something very interesting when he created this term, which is now synonymous with the perfect society. One definition coming from ancient Greek means literally “no-place” (u-topos), while at the same time it can be translated into “the good place” (eu-topos) (565). It is almost exclusively the second term that people
think of when the term is stated. Yet it is important to recognize the duality that exists within it. A utopia may be a good place, but it exists no-place. Although there have been many attempts and philosophical candor about how, where and when a utopia will or has taken place, none have been sustainable and all have faltered or failed in one way or another, to the point of either implosion, or explosion but ultimately extinction.

Authors on utopia as a concept and place, Philippe Couton and Jose Julian Lopez, state in their article “Movement as Utopia” that Utopia is a place that must be travelled to in order that people can find it and live there (Couton and Lopez 101). In their article, they state that during the age of exploration, explorers searched not just for new lands but also for a utopia or even the location of the Garden of Eden. Explorers looked for these places because all of the known world had been settled and a utopia had not been found there or created in these known places. Thus, when people travelled to the new world like Columbus, Cortez, Magellan and other European explorers they were constantly searching for it, or at the very least sought out an area that could be cultivated into the perfect place to live. This is likely part of why the age of exploration was funded and supported when Western European explorers found the New World. “In this way, utopia became available to symbolize the potential associated with the intersection of opening spaces and newly defined places” meaning that because these places were new and unpopulated and undeveloped by European standards, a utopia could in fact exist there, or be created (Couton, Lopez 95).
As Couton and Lopez quote Marin, utopia is a place that must be travelled to, and most often, it is travelled to by means of the seas as in Moore’s *Utopia* (101):

“From the time of [Moore’s] book and for centuries later, utopians tend to begin with travel, a departure and a journey, most of the time by sea, most of the time interrupted by a storm, a catastrophe that is the sublime way to open neutral space” (Couton, Lopez 101-102).

When the landmasses of North, Central and South America were discovered by Europeans, whole regions were opened up which brought an extensive amount of new material and ideas to Europe that had never existed there. Part of these new and exciting ideas were those of utopic or perfected societies that existed or could exist in these new untapped lands. What was odd with this, was that it seemed the intent of the Europeans was not to spread these harmonious societies back to their motherland by positive means, but by destroying the civilizations they came into contact with in the new world and taking the knowledge back to Europe to recreate the society. This idea is found in the accounts of Bernal Diaz Del Castillo as he gave his account of the Conquistadors in South America (Castillo 58). Castillo’s account covers the time from when they set foot on Aztec soil until they brought down the civilization and made them subject to the Spanish Conquistadors and Spanish crown.

A utopia could have existed outside of the realm of European utopic thought, but would have been destroyed by the Europeans because they did not understand or agree with the point of view of the native populations. This is evident in the voyages of Hernando Cortez, who with a small force destroyed and subjugated the Aztec society of Mexico as chronicled by Castillo (Castillo 50-58). Yet with the idea that
places like El Dorado or the fountain of youth could exist in the New World, the Americas became the ideal place to start the perfect society.

Continuing this motif of the idea that the perfect society could be constructed or discovered over the horizon was undoubtedly part of the reason why the Mayflower Pilgrims came to the Americas in search of freedom and the chance to create a God fearing society that would be perfect, based on their theology and European governing standards. Indeed, they more than likely believed, as did many settlers and explorers that, “somewhere over the horizon existed a society free of evils of poverty, ignorance and war” (Couton, Lopez 102). The statement means, that the explorers felt that in the new world, over the literal horizon, a utopia could exist, or at the very least be created. Yet, with their original intent in mind, less than a century passed when it was quite evident that a utopia would not emerge from European settlements in the new world and the dystopic events of the Salem witch trial took place, killing many innocent people in the name of a religious orthodoxy.

One-hundred fifty years after the settlement at Plymouth Rock, a new country and governing style arose in the New World. Although it did not promise to be utopic, its ideology implied utopic goals. After the United States government came into full being in 1789, it was set up based upon democratic ideals. Every citizen (eventually women and non-Caucasians) would have a vote in what the government does, and who would represent and lead the country. The basic principles of the U.S. Constitution have the potential to move closer and closer to a prefect society. The amendment process to the U.S. Constitution is designed to inch the society toward
higher standards of “perfection.” The Preamble of the Constitution states, “We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.” The ideas in the first few lines of the American Constitution are similar to the ideas of the perfect utopic societies.

The United States in its conception as a nation continued the impulse towards utopian ideals by including the idea of a perfected society in the Constitution of the United States partly because of this potential. During the nineteenth century the idea that a utopia could exist or be created was not as fanciful as it is thought of today. In fact, according to Maren Lockwood, utopia was thought to be “imminent” and a very attainable goal (401). Lockwood gives the impression that during this period of American history, people believed very strongly that through human hands and ingenuity and in some cases, religious faith, that they could recreate Paradise on earth for themselves and eventually all people. Lockwood’s discussion of the utopias of the nineteenth century revolves around their basic make up and what made them similar and what made them distinct. One of these beliefs is that hard work and labor could help build a stronger foundation for society than the one on which the world was resting (402). Because of this idea the utopias would have to have an abundance of land to build the farms necessary to sustain them. At that time the United States was mostly unsettled and there were vast areas unpopulated where the reformers could go
and create these idealized towns that would grow and become small utopias within America.

One of these ideas that was largely followed was Fourier’s idea of the “Phalanx” which caught on with many nineteenth century would-be utopians, and the North American Phalanxes grew up, mostly around the New England area (402). Most other places in the world that had these ideals of the Romantics presented to them either did not understand or desire to work with them. Whereas according to Lockwood, instead of shunning these ideas, the Americans with their “Yankee practicality” made it their own and branched off of it, and created new ideas with Fourier and Owen as a base (402).

However, these societies did not always agree with each other about the ideologies that fueled the experiments such as “communalism, celibacy, free love, greater reward for least attractive labor, intellectual exercise combined with physical toil, religious devotion, the free expression of natural passion, industry, education, intellectual isolationism” (Lockwood 402-403). As one can tell, some of these beliefs create competing ideas of how utopia should be established.

A number of these utopian experiments garnered attention because these socially prominent people claimed to be committed to the ideas the experiment represented. People were attracted to some of the more well-known communities because the community either had important people attached to its name and/or the ideas of social reform they claimed to represent. One of the places that had a good many names attached to it was the Brook Farm experiment in Roxbury,
Massachusetts. This experiment will be discussed in greater detail later, when discussing the book *The Blithedale Romance* which was inspired by Brook Farm. Names like Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Margaret Fuller were some of the names attached to the place, and thus drew a generous amount of attention to their undertaking, as well as some funding.

During the nineteenth century there were many social experiments attempting a utopic lifestyle that would revolutionize the world. One of these most famous social experiments was Brook Farm. Brook Farm was a much more successful venture than the ill fated and short lived Fruitlands experiment, headed by Amos Bronson Alcott. Another relatively successful community was the Oneida community built in New York. It was founded in 1848 by John Humphrey Noyes, and based their original ideals on religious worship, labor/agricultural lifestyle and getting back in touch with Nature, as opposed to the industrial revolution (Guarneri 465). The community did not stop functioning as a utopia in some ways until the 1940’s when the endeavor to make it a utopic town finally died away as it was once again assimilated into the rest of society (Lockwood 415). Guarneri however makes the distinction between Oneida and the other mentioned utopic experiments because it was the only one that embraced technology and industry almost from the beginning, rather than strictly following the Fourierist ideals (Guarneri 465). “Oneida, unlike so many experiments that have since become footnotes in history, looked to new industrial ideas to create a firm economic base” (Lockwood 404). Perhaps it is because Oneida embraced technology and sought to become an industry in and of itself that it survived so long.
Lockwood alludes to this, due to the fact that the author spent so much more time on it than on other experiments, because this one was the one that lasted the longest.

The Oneida experiment was one out of many of the social reforms that perhaps was the closest to becoming a functional utopia. This is true because unlike its competitors, it was not a society that held to one idea with rigidity, but allowed a freedom of movement between ideas and thoughts as to how to make the society better. The people there were allowed freedoms that would raise eyebrows and ire in normal society; most of these were sexual in nature. And yet, Oneida did not become the utopian beacon of light for the rest of the world to follow. Why would this be? It is from a lack of utopian character and conviction. J.H. Noyes and later his son P.B. Noyes ran a successful society for nearly a hundred years, but it never became what it was supposed to be, and instead became an industrial town giving way to the ideas that it once argued against. This is due to the leaders of the community, and the members as well, not being utopians themselves. They went to Oneida expecting to move from caterpillar to butterfly by some magical/spiritual change that never happened. They had a fundamental flaw within their way of seeing the world; they expected to become utopians overnight by some special means, instead of seeking out what it meant to be utopian, before attempting to build a utopia. Oneida and societies like it failed because it was a nearly functional utopia populated by non-utopians.

Both the Oneida Community and Brook Farm were societies that believed strongly in the Holy Bible and that God wanted mankind to live in harmony with Nature and with living things. Both of these societies praised practicality over desires,
and despised materialism in any form. As with most of the utopic movements in the nineteenth century the reformers desired to move back to a more naturalized existence that did not seem to be as complicated and dehumanizing as the factory lifestyle. During the mid to late nineteenth century, the factory lifestyle gained strength in the industrializing Cities in the United States after the beginning of the industrial revolution (Lockwood 404). The reformers felt that if their societies could prove that there was no need for the materialism industry created and that they would help people see the errors of the materialistic lifestyle and go back to a more self-controlled era. Brook Farm failed due to many problems, whereas Oneida ironically became the very type of factory town that it fought to get away from (405). To make money for the Oneida project, Noyes opened up factories that made clothing and apparel to take to market to help fund the project, bringing in machinery and using some of the dehumanizing practices he argued against a few years before. Years later in 1879, the town became incorporated and the citizens became stockholders in the running of the town (Lockwood 411). The town moved from the desire to be a naturalist utopia, to a capitalistic and free-market based society. Eventually the town became the very monster it tried to defeat, and proved that materialism is a much stronger force than they had previously thought it to be.

Materialism and commercialism and how to deflect or defeat these trends were of a major concern amongst the New England Transcendentalists. Some of the Transcendentalists took part in some of the more prominent experiments at the time (Lockwood 404). Two of the more memorable voices from that era, Ralph Waldo
Emerson and Henry David Thoreau wrote a great deal about the subject of materialism. Thoreau actually spent two years outside of society at Walden Pond to prove that one can be happy and survive in the world with few material possessions. Thoreau kept close accounts of how much he spent on materials needed for survival, nothing superfluous is found therein, as one would expect. As with Thoreau, Emerson also had disdain for materialism in much of his works, as well as technological achievements of the time. Emerson commented in his work “Self-Reliance” that when one gains a new piece of technology, one loses the ability to do without the technology (Emerson 112). Partly with ideas of being against the misuse of technology and anti-materialism in mind as well as other sentiments about society, the Transcendentalists would attempt to create their own utopias. Their idea of a utopia, was to first build the place, like Brook Farm or Fruitlands, after which utopia would begin. The idea was that if a place was built as a utopia, that it would make those that lived their utopians. This was not the case, and none of the people there ever became utopians, for one reason or another. It seems that not one of the people who joined these experiments were willing to give up themselves to utopia, but instead tried to bring utopia to themselves, which is why the experiments failed. One of these being the short lived Fruitlands experiment, which was entirely non-materialistic to the point of not wanting to get new clothes for fear of harming the environment or animals (L.M. Alcott 2576, 2578). It seems that because of this stubbornness and some ill-perceived notion of nature as provider ended after only six
months (Francis 202). Brook Farm, lasted much longer, yet it ultimately failed, due to inner struggles about the direction the project should move and a lack of financing.

These failures and flawed ideals of the nineteenth century led directly into utopia’s dark twin, dystopia. Dystopia meaning, “bad-place,” is the failed utopia in which everything that had been set up to run perfectly crumbles into a shell of its former glory and destroys the freedoms it was supposed to represent. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries dystopia has been a consistent topic of literary interest. Two novels that help exemplify this point are Huxley’s *A Brave New World* (1932) and Orwell’s *1984* (1949). The public read a glimpse of what the world would be like under a failed utopia. Guy Beaten states that it only makes sense that the Dystopic notions arose amid a world in conflict politically, socially and economically (143). *A Brave New World* was published post World War I and during the Great Depression that engulfed the world societies during the early 1930’s. With Huxley’s novel came the fear of a government that would control everything and turn people into automatons. Trust in government was challenged after WWII and the fascist regimes that led their people into another world war between 1939-1945. These ideas are exemplified in *1984*. After such events as WWII in western society, people began to see a link between utopia and evil men doing very evil things. Hitler had his idea of a millennial reign of the Nazi party and the Aryan race, and Lenin and Stalin had their dreams of creating a communist utopia based on Marx and Engels. Couton and Lopez quote Jacoby in stating “Conventional and scholarly wisdom associates utopian ideas with violence and dictatorship” (96). As with both of these attempts at the perfect
society, millions of people that were supposed to be helped by these utopian ideals had their lives stripped away in the name of the “perfect” society. “By the end of the 20th century, utopia had come to be reviled as illusory, dangerous and against human nature” (Couton, Lopez 93). Because of the failures to create a utopic society on the large scale, where the worlds’ public could see what was going on, utopia started looking like a dangerous place to live in.

The article that Couton and Lopez wrote, “Movement as Utopia” discusses the view of utopia as being a problematic idea for people to entertain. Both in A Brave New World and 1984 the world in which the characters inhabit is controlled by a totalitarian state, and an overpowering use of technology. However, at one time these societies may have been utopias that degenerated into the state where the stories are played out. Couton and Lopez write that, “this overdetermination, however, is structured by a restrictive view of utopia as simply an unrealistic yearning for centrally imposed, systematic social perfection that inevitably descends into despotism” (94). This meaning that the dystopian novels aforementioned focus on the aspect of utopian societies where they will, in the views of the author, fail if ever implemented in a real life scenario. Within this statement is the feeling that people want a more structured and regulated society, yet when implemented their ideals become more destructive to society than constructive.

Because of this supposed consensus, Couton and Lopez write that that need for utopian thought in the modern era has been overcome and found to be no longer necessary for society (98). Although this is probably not completely true, the world
events of the past decade alone makes it difficult to see how such a society could actually be implemented in today’s volatile social climate. Instead, utopianism has been replaced by, “Political complacency, or downright cynicism and mass consumption” (Couton, Lopez100). The question then becomes, is this a safe transition to make for society? When aiming for the perfected world of utopia, people have always failed at creating it. Yet in their failure they have found ways to make the world better through their experimentation. Likewise, they also found pitfalls to avoid as well through experimentation, as with the social reformers of the nineteenth and twentieth century.

However, because of the cynicism pointed towards utopia and the idea of a perfected society it raises the question, if people begin to aim not at utopia but at the status quo and miss, will the whole of society eventually be brought down lower and lower as expectations for societal growth ceases to be a motivating force? Nevertheless, Couton and Lopez give society a way out of this mess of lowering societies’ standards by referencing the future utopia (101). In literature, utopia can exist in the world of today, if only the place in which it exists happens to be temporally in the future. Their argument states that utopia will happen, but in the future and must be travelled to by breaking this barrier and escaping the now. This raises the question of how to begin this growth towards utopia so that the future utopia can exist?

With all of the horrific and terrible events that took place during the twentieth century one may understand why people would feel this way about utopic thought
and attempts to create utopia. Returning to the present, Sicher and Skradol agree with Couton and Lopez’s view of the impossibility of a utopic now when discussing the, “intrusion of the real into fiction” (151). In this part of their argument, Sicher and Skradol state that because the events that usually take place in fiction, now take place in the real world, a surrealistic effect has happened in which safety is always a concern and the thought of a peaceful society seems out of reach. It is this idea they believe that has caused the people of the twentieth century to tend towards skittishness in regards to accepting the possibility of a utopic life in the future (151). The violent actions of the past carry into the twenty-first century with second successful attack on American soil by a foreign regime. This more recent event brought again the “intrusion of the real into fiction” (151). When human created disasters happen, like suicide bombing or more horrific attacks, the idea that society can become utopic at all starts to break down. Events like Pearl Harbor or the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were not things that should have happened in the real world because that is too tragic for most people to deal with. But, these types of events can happen in fictional works, outside of a real world where real people cannot be harmed by the fictitious events. These events are so violent that they shake up the way that people view the real world and how it functions and finally their place in it. With these new fears of the current society, how can utopia survive as an idea? With the constant fear of being annihilated by some people who are out for their own idea of glory, the notion that somehow people can build a perfect society seems a foolish and even childish by comparison.
However, what has happened to utopia is a type of facelift given to it by corporations and media, giving utopia a different spin, not based upon helping each other out but helping one’s self out, breaking the principle of brotherhood. If asked, it is assumed that most people want a class-less society, and one that is free from injustices like racial or gender discrimination as Guy Baeten writes in his article, “Western Utopianism/Dystopianism And The Political Mediocrity of Critical Urban Research” (143). In this utopic view, everyone is treated equally and is an individual within the collective of human experience. He feels that these utopic ideals helped create and fuel the Feminist movement, as well as the Civil Rights movements and for other countries in the world outside of the United States, a move towards socialism and a greater equality amongst the people in those countries (143). The new forms of social unrest and a desire to change the state in which people live is a continuation of the ways in which people of the past tried creating their utopias through social reform. However, feminism and civil rights did win out, but not entirely, and thus leads into the dystopic world of appearing equal but still not being equal.

Baeten believes that, although the dystopic view of attempted utopic living has become popular, the idea of an existent utopia has not entirely fled the scene. He feels that utopia has ceased being a geographical place in the minds of people, rather it has moved to temporality, “The dominance of the utopia of special form has gradually been replaced by the dominance of temporal process” (144). What does that mean exactly for utopia? It has become as Baeten says, prevalent that utopias can be
travelled to, but only through breaking through the time/space barrier and going into the future and seeing future societies in their utopian state (144). This however, does not seem very difficult to understand, since utopia or dystopia does not just happen overnight, but over a long period of time. Thus, the time-traveler defeats the fates and sees a future of his own kind as they discover perfection long after he or she would have died. Yet this type of utopic fiction does not help humanity in how one should go about creating and managing a working utopia.

With the utopic experiments of the past, one major ideal of technology arose regarding how people should deal with and use technology. The first view is the one that Emerson and other Transcendentalists ascribed to in which technology threatens the human soul as well as nature and can ultimately pollute both if they lead into a world of laziness and materialism (Emerson 112). The Transcendentalists point of view agrees closely with that of Beauchamp in that technology is a tool and should only be viewed as such (Beauchamp 54). However, it should not become a crutch and make life too easy, for fear of a lethargic lifestyle growing from an over-indulgence of technological achievement. In either view of technology, the main enemy is materialism and wanting to gain too much for oneself and not desiring to share with others in the community.

The last essential part of building a utopia is to have utopian people building it. This is perhaps the most important thing that can go into the building of a utopia. The people building this place must already have within them the ideas and beliefs necessary to make the experiment run and become self-sustaining. If, for instance, a
community would come together and expect to become utopians by the very fact that they are in what they consider utopic conditions, as with the people in *The Blithedale Romance*, their created utopia will fail because there is not a utopian character to uphold the values that are necessary for a functional utopic society. Likewise, without the hope of the elements of a utopia coming together, a true utopian, someone who can embody brotherhood, nature, benevolence in leadership and learning, there can be no utopia. The utopic character is one that is very fragile and extremely rare. Thus the people who claim to be utopians must be scrutinized for their ability to fulfill these necessary requirements of a utopian, just as much as the environment that surround the possible utopians must be analyzed in relation to the possibility of utopia.

A dystopia is therefore the opposite of these things, as it is a failed utopia. Although at one point the utopia may have been removed from society, it has rejoined it, either by taking it over by force, or having its views adopted and assimilated into the governing bodies already existent around it. Brotherhood is almost always abolished and a sense of distrust is placed between every one of the citizens of the country in which these stories take place. No one can be trusted and no one person can be friendly for fear of governmental repercussions as with Winston in *1984*. The government ceases to be democratic or even republican in nature, but begins to be a totalitarian state, in which the people are completely exploited then discarded when their usefulness has ended. Education, if it exists, is sparse and a shadow of knowledge, more indoctrination than anything else. The children learn about the state and the rules of the state, but are not encouraged to think for themselves or of others,
but only for the good of the state. Technology is held in control by the state, in some
instances, as in *Feed* the populace is allowed technology, but it is under the control of
shadowy masters, that pull the hidden strings behind closed doors.

To aid in this discussion of dystopia, Gorman Beauchamp’s essay
“Technology In The Dystopian Novel” becomes very useful. Beauchamp begins his
article with the very insightful quotation from George Gissing, a late Victorian era
novelist who wrote:

> I hate science because of my conviction that for a longtime to come if not
forever, it will be the remorseless enemy of mankind. I see it destroying all
simplicity and gentleness of life, all beauty of the world; I see it restoring
barbarism under the mask of civilization; I see it darkening men’s minds and
hardening their hearts. (53)

This outlook might look like a very harsh statement against technology, but perhaps it
is not all that harsh, when looked at through the examples that Beauchamp uses.
Beauchamp writes a little later that people both fear utopia and they fear technology
(53). Both are to be feared because they have a totalizing effect and in both cases the
humans involved can in some instances become nothing but automatons to either a
regime or a machine. This has perhaps never actually happened, but the possibility is
still there, keeping these fears of technology and its pitfalls alive for each generation.

Although, in the article Beauchamp does discuss people he terms
“technophiles” as people who love technology or only see it as positive in nature and
only destructive in the wrong hands (54). On the other hand, there are the people that
are technophobes, people that view technology as nothing more than a Frankenstein’s Monster eventually ripping itself from the controls of its creator(s) (54). Thus, the modern industrialized world has two views of technology as either helpful or destructive to the world and people. The latter of these views takes up the most space in the essay and is of significance to this argument of utopia/dystopia as well.

Beauchamp demonstrates the overwhelming antipathy toward technology expressed by authors like H.G. Wells, E.M. Forster, D.F. Jones, and many others who wrote of dystopic futures that are that way because of technology. But why would so many authors decry technology in such a way, because of technology their works can be mass produced and reach millions of people? Perhaps it is as Beauchamp states, “The typical view of dystopias…holds technology to be an autonomous force that dictates the ideology of the future” (57). These futures, whether shown as positive or negative, are deemed technotopia. One of these instances Beauchamp illuminates in E.M. Forster’s short story “The Machine Stops” in which a futuristic utopia is a push button society that has an automated machine at its heart. When this machine breaks down, the people it served had been so weakened by its existence that they could not repair it and fell victim to the sudden loss of utopia and sudden unveiling of the true dystopia underneath (67). The motif of becoming too reliant on technology is one that resonated across the twentieth century and into the next as in M.T. Anderson’s *Feed* which deals directly with the same points as did E.M. Forster in the previous century.

With these ideas of utopia in mind, discussion of the fictional application of the stated views will be tested against two novels, Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The
Blithedale Romance (1852) and M.T. Anderson’s Feed (2003). The discussion of the two novels will carry on in the light of the five principles set forth by the consensus ideas of theorists on utopia/dystopia, as well as other ideals discussed by literary and social critics. Hawthorne’s novel was written in response to a movement he was a part of for a short time, but also about the society that surrounded it. Although Hawthorne does not show any strong affection for the utopic movement in his novel, he shows angst against the individuals in society that work against the ideals of brotherhood/sisterhood, utility, and social reforms. It is a world that is starting to move toward a society that does not respect the individual but instead looks to exploit it in various ways. The pressures of society and its direction that motivated Hawthorne to pen The Blithedale Romance are similar to those that lead M.T. Anderson to write Feed. In a fictional universe in which both Blithedale Farm and the future Feed society exist, it is because of the failures of the nineteenth century utopias to fight off materialism that America, and to an extent the world began slipping toward a consumer based society and one of desires, wants and materialism. M.T. Anderson’s Feed when looking through this lens is the great-grandchild of this society of failed utopias. From the mid-nineteenth century to the futuristic time of Feed, much has changed; technology and the corporation have become one, which uses their influence against the very people they claim to help. Although they come from different times, both novels reflect a similar motif of materialism that is or becomes overpowering, as well as the power of technology and issues that come along with it. The novels show worlds that are kin in the fact that because Blithedale
Farm was a failure it lead to *Feed*, because utopia failed, the entities of materialism (Westervelt) and technology (Hollingsworth) were set free and allowed to do as they pleased and thus were detrimental to society and caused the destruction of Nature and the chance at utopia.

The fictional experiment of Blithedale is an attempt at utopia. The protagonist and narrator of *The Blithedale Romance*, Miles Coverdale, tells a tale of the beginning of the experiment and how it fell out of existence. Initially, the people that participated in this experiment followed the criteria for utopia very well, and it worked strongly for the first half of the novel. However, it is when one of the members begins trying to reshape the project into his image and take advantage of the people that the utopic experiment unravels and the plan falls apart.

With the novel *Feed* a slightly different approach is needed because of how the novel is structured. In a way the world that the main character Titus lives in is utopic, in the sense that the people in this future most of those living in America do not have to worry about money, or social codes as much as they did in the twentieth and early twenty-first century, although Violet is a counter-weight to a society with an overabundance of money, since she is relatively poor in the world of the novel. Knowledge is plentiful and technology is seen as the servant of the people who use it. However, it proves itself a thorough dystopia in its make-up when viewed against the criteria aforementioned. The world that Titus lives in is one based entirely on consumerism and materialism. It stands to reason that the world of *Feed* exists because of the failure of the past attempts at creating utopia and stemming the tide of
materialism and the over-indulgence of technology. Thus, perhaps when viewing these two books as a cautionary narrative of failed utopia and its consequence the narrative would serve as a warning for the people in the real world.
Chapter 1
Building Utopia:
Blithedale, Brook Farm and the Utopia Experiments of the 19th Century

At the time that Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote The Blithedale Romance it was becoming increasingly clear that the aim of the United States was to become an industrial and commercial nation, which could compete with foreign markets. Because of this movement in American society, some individuals in the country began to look unfavorably on industry and technology and felt it was a step in the wrong direction. These individuals, like Emerson, Fuller, Ripley, Hawthorne, Thoreau and more, began to band together and eventually began their own utopic experiments, which almost always fought against the tendency to industrialize and become materialistic. Dozens if not hundreds of communities sprang up in the nineteenth century all across the country. Hawthorne was both attracted to this idea and at the same time skeptical of how these experiments would work and if they would actually succeed. Therefore, in The Blithedale Romance Hawthorne writes of a utopic experiment that fails due to issues emanating not from the ideas that created the utopia, but from the people who attempted the implementation of these ideals.

This chapter will cover Nathaniel Hawthorne’s novel The Blithedale Romance (1852) and its place amongst utopic ideologies of the mid-nineteenth century. As an aid to this topic and discussion of the novel, other enterprises of the age will be discussed so that a broader image of the attempts and ultimate failures of the association movement can be looked at fully. In addition, what are the possible effects of these failures on the future of the United States in which most took place?
The Blithedale Romance and Blithedale Farm, the fictional place, will be measured against the utopian principles stated in the introduction. Likewise, the people of Blithedale will be looked at as potential utopias but do not measure up to being “utopians” themselves. This latter part has become very important to the argument as a whole. One cannot have a utopia without utopians, that much is certain.

Therefore, the chapter will focus both on utopia and on utopian personality. In the discussion of these ideas I will explore both the successes and the ultimate failure of the association movement presented in The Blithedale Romance and in real world experiments like Brook Farm and Oneida.

Into the Unknown

Lauren Berlant states in her article “Fantasies of Utopia in The Blithedale Romance” that as with all utopias, “The subject is always in exile from whatever privileged space and time he desires” (31). This is what Hawthorne has the supposed utopians of Blithedale Farm try to do in placing their utopia on uninhabited land outside of the major city in which they live. On the spot where the Blithedaler’s settle, generations of Native Americans had lived before they were driven out and killed by the European settlers or other tribes (Hawthorne 118). Berlant states that their views of being the first people to till the soil at Blithedale makes the Blithedalers think that they are the first people to ever attempt to create a utopia, she states, “Coverdale notes that his fellow workers act as if they are the land’s first tillers, and by association, the nation’s first utopians” (31). This is not true in the least, but it is this type of thinking that leads to an amnesia of previous failed utopic experiments
(32). This is true in Blithedale, since no other experiments are mentioned in the novel at all. Considering the fact that Carl Guarneri says that these experimental utopias, like Blithedale, “visited, corresponded, and in other ways influenced each other; and their communities attracted a host of idealists who migrated interchangeable between groups” it is odd that at Blithedale, they seem to view themselves as the only community that has the ability to create a true utopic society at all (463). Berlant goes on to state that, “until someone like Coverdale (or Hawthorne) “fathoms” the lost material beneath the fantasy, we will be shocked by each failure of the collective utopian project and compelled to repeat the repression of its existence” (32). Perhaps this is the goal Hawthorne had in mind when writing *Blithedale*, and is a warning against forgetting the experiments in the past and why and how they failed and how they succeeded in ways as well. Thus when using this point of view on *The Blithedale Romance* it is important to look at why it was successful and why it failed as an attempted utopia.

All of the groups that tried to create a Paradise on earth have had the same problems at the outset, their journey into the unknown. Oddly enough most of these groups that chose to attempt to reform society through social experimentation do so by going out into the unknown wilderness to create what is in their eyes going to be a better society through a mutually agreed upon system. This is exactly what happens in the novel *The Blithedale Romance* as the people in the story decide to move to a farm far enough outside of the city so that it would not be influenced by urban life. Yet Blithedale Farm was at the same time close enough as to not be an inconvenience to
return to the city (Hawthorne 12). Hawthorne does not actually give any specifics in his novel about the said location of fictitious Blithedale Farm and even what city it is near. Though it is possible that since Blithedale is thought to be an analog for Brook Farm, which Hawthorne was a part of, that Blithedale is perhaps five to twenty miles outside the city of Boston, Massachusetts most likely. Although the placement is not of central importance, it is the ambiguity that leaves the reader puzzled as to where it may have been, even fictitiously, and how far removed from conventional society it was. The closer it is the more corrupted that it can become in the long run, thus the location is of importance as it had been in other experiments like Brook Farm of West Roxbury and the Oneida Colony of Oneida, New York.

Through close reading of the novel, one may ascertain that its distance must not be that foreboding to visitors or outsiders since both Old Moodie and Westervelt both make a short trip to the farm to find out information about the same individuals at Blithedale Farm (82, 90). Were it not for its proximity to the closest city, perhaps these men would not have been able to go to Blithedale and stir up the agitations that they end up causing, either unintentionally as in the case with old Moodie and quite intentionally with Westervelt. It must also be noted that neither man rode a horse to the farm, thus it must be close enough to walk to and from the farm without much trouble to themselves. Likewise, towards the latter half of the novel Coverdale decided to take a vacation from the farm, for reasons discussed later (137). Nevertheless, he also walks From Blithedale back to the unnamed city without much thought of it being too far to attempt considering he decided to take his leave at
dinnertime, nor does it cause him anxiety about how long the walking would in fact take him to get to the city before nightfall (137). One must take into account that Coverdale is a poet and does enjoy being in Nature, as described in the chapter on his Hermitage (98-99). Even with his love of Nature though, a trip during the setting sun would not be wise, and he would have had to take that into account before he left for the city. Blithedale Farm is at a distance from the city, but it is more than likely not more than ten miles, making the walking trip as short as two hours of, perhaps even less. Thus, in Hawthorne situating Blithedale Farm on the outskirts of a major city, in doing so he places it in a precarious position of being too close to the old social orders to actually affect a change amongst themselves that cannot be revered by infiltration of the city-dwellers who have not adopted the utopian ethics of the community.

**Brotherhood**

Most if not all of the experiments of the nineteenth century claimed that they desired and harbored universal brotherhood/sisterhood. However, in reality or in fictitious account such as *The Blithedale Romance* and not on paper or oratory, this may not always be the case. *Blithedale* for the first half of the novel exhibited a great amount of brotherhood and companionship that any society would desire. On the other hand, it is a brotherhood, whether real or imagined that is not always built as equal among the participants in the experiment. At first the narrator of *The Blithedale Romance* states that when he arrived at Blithedale Farm, "We shook hands affectionately, all around, and congratulated ourselves that the blessed state of
brotherhood and sisterhood, at which we aimed, might fairly be dated from this moment” (Hawthorne 13). But the inequality was almost immediate in their brotherhood when shortly thereafter, the sisterhood took control of “their domestic avocations” and turned down any male help in the kitchen (18). This is not to say that the one of this pre-utopia threaten the utopia because they refuse the help of men, it just means that they are keeping with the ways of the world in which they came from. When looking at the reaction of the women at the beginning of the story most people would see it as harmless. However, the idea of blindly keeping to the traditional ways just for the moment is akin to the dangerous idea that a utopia creates utopian and not the other way around. Perhaps this is a realization that Hawthorne saw through his own experiences at Brook Farm, and in writing The Blithedale Romance expressed his annoyance at keeping with traditional standards rather than becoming utopic and moving away from the patterns that were seen as foolish and outdated.

Even before that though, one of the arriving members of the community that had traveled with Coverdale asked Zenobia if their roles had been assigned, Zenobia responds that the women will do the housework “As a matter of course” and the men will work in the field (Hawthorne 16). It is strange that a community of social reformers would immediately keep with the ways they are trying to abolish. However, she does say that in the future that some women “will go afield, and leave some of the weaker brethren to take our places in the kitchen!”(16) This later part never comes to pass as Zenobia had predicted as far as Coverdale’s narration goes or what Hawthorne allows his readers to see at Blithedale. Nevertheless, the idea of inequality
from the outset, and the resuming of the male/female roles is significant, since if people are going to start a new society why should it be a “matter of course” that women should take up the broom and men take up the plow?(16). Yet, the importance of the people at Blithedale continuing gender roles unabated misses the mark with the individuals at Blithedale Farm since Coverdale states that the ideas about equality and a better way of life was already coming to fruition (24). Although it was mentioned in the novel early on that the domestic chores and the farming would not be gendered but become unisex, nowhere in the novel does this actually happen (16). As a matter of fact at the end of the novel just before Zenobia commits suicide, she states “Blithedale must find another woman to superintend the laundry, and you Mr. Coverdale, another nurse to make your gruel, the next time you fall ill” (227). None of the ideals and concepts that Hawthorne wrote about the people of Blithedale Farm feels that is part of their utopia, work or happen, as with gender equality and brotherhood.

This brotherhood, however, stands for more than just platonic friendships but those of a more intimate one as well. Coverdale states that in this society no one would really bat an eyelash at a relationship that would seem unwise and perhaps out of class norms to pursue (72). This is the case between Zenobia and Hollingsworth and at the same time Hollingsworth and Priscilla. This interesting love triangle is part of the reason why Blithedale ceased to be a Paradise and utopic society and became a failed enterprise. Hawthorne turns the idea of free love, unhindered by class and social restrictions, into romantic rivalry and darker emotions before it could truly
become useful. The people in Blithedale were too used to the systems set up outside of Blithedale Farm that their sense of being wronged by a relationship that is not monogamous was too strong to overcome. As a real world parallel, this was actually one of the many instances in which the Oneida experiment almost failed, because of their free love ideals and the fact that they did not match up with the morals that were instilled in its inhabitants from the outside world (Guarneri 466). However, where there are instances of actual relationships becoming intimate at Oneida, nothing ever actually happens at Blithedale. Although people do pair up, as with Hollingsworth and Zenobia, then Hollingsworth and Priscilla as far as Hawthorne wrote, none of these relationships is consummated with a sexual act. Blithedale, according to Coverdale, is supposed to be set upon the ideals of free love and free intimacy, but the latter half is never taken advantage of in the story at all. Perhaps it is because this is never taken advantage of instead of Blithedale having a birth to start their experiment off, they have a funeral (Hawthorne 130). This meaning that, instead of birthing new life into the experiment, creating a new generation to continue their experiment, the society dies with the generation that tried to construct it in the first place. There is now growth in the novel Hawthorne writes, there is only failure and ultimately death.

Brotherhood and the lack thereof becomes a large part of the novel and perhaps what Hawthorne was trying to say about the ideology of utopia as a whole. It becomes clear in the narrative that the people at Blithedale are there for their own personal reasons, rather than for those utopic ideals they claim to follow. Instead of mingling together their ideas the people at Blithedale, or its real world counterparts
argue as to which ideal will prevail and how it should work. Everyone in the novel who started out with a friendly demeanor towards one another, by the end of the novel and the fictional experiment, are on uncertain and unfriendly terms, as exemplified by the final meeting between Hollingsworth and Coverdale (Hawthorne 242-243). This lack of brotherhood and willingness to be selfish rather than selfless led to the failure of Hawthorne’s fictional experiment, as well a some of the real world counterparts of which *The Blithedale Romance* derived some of its existence.

**Ruling Utopia**

One of the more interesting things about *Blithedale* is that even though Silas Foster is the person “in charge” of the farm and community, it seemed to be a leaderless democracy. When deciding on naming the place they put the name to a vote after some suggested names were given out, Zenobia seemed to be the one person whom everyone considered of authority, but no one really controlled the setting (Hawthorne 36-37). The closest person to this description would be Silas Foster the old man who was the main farmer, and perhaps owned the farm. Although he seemed to be the most stable person, and perhaps believed to be the most influential person in the experiment, though he might not understand it entirely. He does nothing to lead the people, just gives out mere suggestions. An example of this would be after the first dinner, when everyone was talking by the fireside, he tells the men that they should get to bed because they had to get up early in the morning (37). Yet he does not command that they do this, he suggests it and then follows his own decree without really doing anything more about it. Perhaps it was that he was trying
to lead by example, but no one really followed his example at first, or so it seemed in the novel.

Perhaps it is because of the lack of leadership, or the perceived weaknesses in the leadership of Blithedale Farm that Hollingsworth recognizes a chance to take over the whole enterprise and make it part of his own scheme to better the world. This of course is at the expense of the experiment that he helped begin, even without believing in it. It was this lack of people who were willing to follow Foster’s vision of utopia that lead to events that brought down the experiment as a whole.

A similar possibility could be said for Brook Farm, since it was George Ripley, like Silas Foster who started the farm and was the chief person in charge of the experiment, (Wilson 320). Even though many people still looked at other more prominent members of the Transcendental movement, like Ralph Waldo Emerson, as having the true power of direction amongst the Brook Farm Socialists, Ripley ultimately had the reins of the experiment, although he was not as publicized as those who participated in the experiment. However, George Ripley’s strong belief in Fourierism, as translated by Albert Brisbane drove the movement from a socialist experiment to a Fourierist phalanx after the first year of operation at Brook Farm (Myerson 253). Because of George Ripley’s feelings of dissatisfaction with the present religious communities and, “now after a few months of intensive reading about Albert Brisbane and associationism, Ripley was ready to take another step towards demonstrating his dissent” (253). Because of the situations in America at the time, the founder of the farm thought he could build a better platform for building a
superior society that took Brook Farm away from the original socialist experiment that it was to one of Fourierism as warned against in *Blithedale* by Hawthorne through Coverdale (Hawthorne 246). Perhaps this was Hawthorne speaking through Coverdale, lamenting about what had happened to Brook Farm not too long before the book was published.

Of the three main experiments mentioned in this section, the only one that actually had a distinct leader was the one at Oneida, New York. Perhaps this would be why the society did not fully break down and move back to the standards of the surrounding culture for almost a century (Lockwood 411). The society had a strong leader named John Humphrey Noyes who enacted the rules and regulations of the community, and moved the people through hard times when in other experiments, the people that tired of their part in the reformation movements would leave, weary of their work, as Coverdale does in *Blithedale*. One of the main differences between the groups mentioned is that Oneida was based upon a religious foundation, where Brook Farm, though led by a onetime Unitarian preacher, was mostly filled with secular individualists. Perhaps this was one of the reasons why Hawthorne also wrote of a secular experiment in *The Blithedale Romance*. The distinction between the secular and religious experiments although perhaps trivial, proved to be a big difference in how the communities functioned. Perhaps it was the religious ideals that Oneida was based on gave a stronger foundation for brotherhood and equality of possessions and work that made it last longer than Brook Farm, which was not entirely filled with the same sentiments. Hawthorne in writing *Blithedale* never actually mentioned anyone
that was in the experiment as part of any religious group at all and thus fully secular. However, it is important to note that Brook Farm and *The Blithedale Romance* are two separate entities, and that Hawthorne writes that Brook Farm was an influence upon *Blithedale* but was not meant to be an actual history of the experiment (1-3).

Thus the text and the actual place will be viewed as similar, but separate in function and design. According to Noyes and fellow Oneida Perfectionists, the community would bring about a Kingdom of Heaven on Earth (Guarneri 465). As stated in the introduction, one of the principal parts of the attempted utopian society is that the people that want to build it are trying to bring heaven back to earth as was stated in historical texts like the bible in the story of Eden, or the Golden Age of man before the creation of Pandora.

One of the main differences between Brook Farm and Oneida was that Oneida believed in Free Love association or “complex marriage” (Guarneri 475). The idea of complex marriage is indeed complex. It means that people can pair up for a while and then decide to move on to another partner, with no true monogamy. According to Guarneri, Noyes felt that monogamy drained the soul, and that changing partners invigorated it (475). This, however, caused a great deal of disturbance amongst the people in the stuffy Victorian society around the country and the world at the time. Fourier had this type of free love idea in his writings but even his own French countrymen took it out because they felt it to be too provocative for the public to read and possibly perform (Guarneri 467). Noyes even went so far as to plan out the working groups to be as even as possible between men and women so that there
would be a greater chance that people would match up and have stirpicult children within the community (Guarneri 482). The term “stirpicult” is unique to Guarneri’s essay, and seems to mean children born in a community like Oneida’s in which the child does not come from a monogamous relationship, but through a free love environment (482). This would give the community children, but those children would belong to the community itself and to the “family” as a whole, without the normal parental structure. Their family structure was set up like a web interconnecting the community, rather than the proto-nuclear family of the Victorian era. In his mind, this structure would build a stronger and more lasting brotherhood among the coming generations, which the founders would not have enjoyed. At the same time, there would be the danger of mixing genes that were too close together. Noyes would not have known this fact, but it is important nonetheless. The idea of “complex marriage” and the ability to choose whom one is with plays into the idea of power structures in these communities that allowed it. In Oneida, it was not just the men that could choose partners but also the women as well, something not allowed in proper and polite Victorian society. The women in Oneida had just as many rights as the men did and shared tasks that most considered work for men only (Guarneri 481-82). It is thus conceivable that when J.H. Noyes left his utopic enterprise a woman could have taken his place as matriarch of the community instead of his stirpicult son P.B. Noyes. The degrees of freedom, both sexually and socially played into the power structures of Oneida and how it was run as a community.
This of course did not always work, therefore Noyes set up a committee that would chose the best fit for individuals in the community for the best chance at having offspring; the people in the community would have to sign an agreement that they would abide by the decisions of the committee without hesitation (Lockwood 409-410). This however took some of the freedom away from this supposed utopic community and made it into more of an autocratic society with a mostly benevolent dictator and sometime despot in charge of the people at the Oneida Community. Eventually however, this idea of complex marriage died away and into the usual monogamy that most of the rest of the world demanded of civilized people (417).

This idea of free love was something rather similar in Hawthornes’ *The Blithedale Romance*, and how the people in that community were supposed to relate to one another. According to Coverdale in the story the people there were supposed to treat everyone else as equals and that, anyone could love anyone else no matter who they were outside of the community (Hawthorne 72). The freedom to love anyone one chooses in the novel as well as in the Oneida Community, did not work out the way that the people within the experiment thought it would. Nevertheless, similar sentiment against such freedom of relationships must have been there to bring complex marriage to a halt in Oneida, as it must have done with the similar loose system of love written into Blithedale.

It is the love triangles between Zenobia, Hollingsworth, Priscilla and possibly Westervelt that took its toll upon the characters in the story. It is not apparent as to whether Zenobia and Westervelt had a romantic past and perhaps had been married,
or just shared some of their lives together. Coverdale comments on the idea in his delirium that Zenobia is not this virginal goddess but, "Zenobia has lived, and loved! There is no folded petal, no latent dew-drop, in this perfectly developed rose" (47). At this point perhaps Coverdale begins to lose romantic feelings for Zenobia because of the idea that she has been with another man or even men, and that she has lived a life that she had been able to hide away. During one of the last scenes in the novel the reader finds Priscilla, Hollingsworth and Zenobia after a rather large argument about what had been going on between all of them (Hawthorne 214-221). Here Hawthorne writes proof that the idea of the ability to move from one relationship to another, without cause for recourse is disproven entirely. In fact, it is directly because of this shift in love from one sister to the other, which causes Zenobia to commit suicide. It was this romantic rivalry that seemed to bring down the more powerful members of Blithedale and almost brought an end to the Oneida community had Noyes not abolished it in 1879 (Lockwood 411).

The leadership of these communities depended largely upon the relationships between its members, either romantically or platonically. In the fictional case of Hollingsworth and Zenobia, the failure of Blithedale came about because of an uninhibited romantic lifestyle that was agreed upon by the people who inhabited Blithedale, including its founder Silas Foster. Had Foster foreseen the troubles that this would have caused the community, perhaps he would have changed the ways in which the genders comingled, as happened in Oneida. The leadership of these real or imagined communities allow for these love triangles and romantic rivalries to exist
within their utopias. Thus, what happens in the arena of love and lust falls into the realm of leadership of these communities. Because it is the leaders who have to decide what is best for their utopia it is their decisions especially those dealing with romantic entanglements that will show what will make the community survive, and what will make it falter and die.

**Bringing Down Utopia**

Thus far, the communities have been exhibited for how they fit into the criteria for a working utopia and some immediate flaws on the surface. However, as alluded to in sections above, their idealisms did not always work and when one faltered they all collapsed upon one another, until finally the communities fell and died out. So what caused these utopian attempts to falter and ultimately die? In the real world it is much harder than the one presented in *Blithedale*. Since *The Blithedale Romance* was based partly upon Hawthorne’s experiences at Brook Farm, perhaps the novel shares some of the reasoning for the fall, as will be expressed, but for the most part it seems that the communities in a way become the very thing that they were fighting to destroy in the first place. The most common of these failures was becoming materialistic in nature rather than utilitarian in design. John Humphrey Noyes leader of the utopian experiment Oneida stated that it was, “their failure to heed [Fourier’s] warnings about materialism [which] helped to doom the phalanxes” (Guarneri 470). For both Brook Farm and *Blithedale*, one of the main components of
their downfall was their inability to move away from their materialistic tendencies. However, there are other reasons that weigh upon the failure at Blithedale more so than materialism.

The main reason I believe that Hawthorne allows his created utopia of Blithedale Farm to fall was a lack of brotherhood. At the end of the story, two men who were at one time the greatest of friends and confidants can barely even make eye contact with one another (Hawthorne 242-243). This is not the work of a perfected society that allows its people to live the best that they can with love and friendship for all. Blithedale as a community was an amalgamation of individuals brought together because they did not like the society that they had been living in, none of them really shared the same views of what Blithedale Farm should be. Thus when they came together in the community the participants were all pulling in different directions instead of a common one (Hawthorne 8). This is exemplified by Miller’s statement that the ideology and main points Blithedaler’s were trying to make are muddied because, “the community’s participants have issued no manifesto, and each has a different motive for having joined the utopian enterprise” (2). Without a main goal, how can people hope to accomplish anything meaningful? Not even Coverdale can answer this question. As a matter of fact, Coverdale himself does not really give the reader much information as to why he is going to try this experiment out, other than he wants to see if it will work and perhaps get some good stories out of it that he may be able to use in the future. “[I]n truth, [I was] not so very confident as at some former periods, that this final step, which would mix me up irrevocably in the
Blithedale affair, was the wisest that could possibly be taken”(8). Although many people have apprehensions about the future of any enterprise that they are about to set out to do, this sentence is very off key. Assuming that the connotation of the word “affair” would have the same meaning a hundred fifty years ago, it puts a very negative spin on how Coverdale sees the whole movement even before he sets foot upon the soil of Blithedale Farm.

By the first night Hawthorne writes that Coverdale was already noticing that their little community was not as strong in a friendly way as people made it appear, in fact he states that, “But to own the truth, I very soon became sensible, that, as regarded society at large, we stood in a position of new hostility, rather than new brotherhood”(Hawthorne 20). Perhaps it is because Coverdale is a poet and such a fluid person, with little rigidity that he is able to see this at the outset or it is rationalizing the past, since the story is told after twelve years since the events in the book. But, the idea of discord in the group does not dissipate as the story progresses, instead it festered and grows all the worse in the story. By page 63 Coverdale came to the conclusions that Blithedale, “[o]n the whole…was a society such as has seldom met together; nor, perhaps, could it reasonably expect to hold together for long (63). Within the same paragraph Coverdale also states that,

We were all of creeds and opinions, and generally tolerant of all, on every imaginable subject. Our bond, it seemed to me, was not affirmative, but negative. We had individually found one thing or another to quarrel with, in our past life, and were pretty well agreed as to the expediency of lumbering
along with the old system any farther. As to what should be substituted, there was much less unanimity (63).

This feeling of antagonism rather than brotherhood and a sense of non-unanimity is exemplified in the scene where they are trying to name the place that they will be living in, so that it one day will be remembered fondly. Names like “Oasis, Sahara, and Sunny Glimpse” were thrown out with and discussed, Coverdale’s suggestion of “Utopia” was ridiculed by everyone there (37). This is an odd turn of events and a very strange reaction to the suggestion, since they are trying to create the very thing that Coverdale suggested. Thus, without the name of Utopia or Paradise, even though they are used in the novel to refer to Blithedale Farm, they are never taken as the main name for the farm. If these people cannot agree on the name of the place where they are to live, how could they possibly decide on anything else? This is the sentiment that rises from the pages of the novel.

With these superficial arguments of failed brotherhood aside, it is the deeper lack of connection and in fighting that destroyed the experiment. There are a few major ideas that cause the rifts in the farm; the first is the fight of Nature versus spirit, embodied in Zenobia and Priscilla respectively (Stanton 529). It is also the fluidity and lack of purpose versus an iron resolve, exhibited in the characters of Coverdale and Hollingsworth; the argument of equality versus domination, of Zenobia, Hollingsworth and Priscilla; true nature and Blithedale Farm versus materialism and technology. These problems are among only four of the people at Blithedale Farm
and one outsider are what seemed to bring the whole experiment to a grinding halt less than a year into its life.

The first argument that arises in the novel is between Nature and the spirit. According to Transcendentalist thought, the reason why the world is so off kilter is because of the fact that Nature and spirit are no longer as one (Stanton 530). At Blithedale Farm, there is the chance for Nature and spirit to reunite and work together once more. However, it is Nature in the story that rejects the spirit and refuses to let it be on the same level as itself (533). In many scenes in the novel, Priscilla, the younger sister of Zenobia, is usually kneeling or below her older sister in a subservient position. Zenobia does very little to correct this however, even when she takes Priscilla under her wing, she still has ulterior motives. The very first time Zenobia sees Priscilla, instead of welcoming the young woman, who does not say anything Zenobia states, “What does the girl mean? Is she crazy? Has she no tongue?” (28). Maybe Zenobia acted this way because Priscilla was staring only at her (28). Yet for someone who had just warmly greeted Coverdale and his traveling companions this is an odd scene, perhaps it is the Nature evident in Zenobia that immediately rejects the spirit inside Priscilla (Stanton 530). In either case, Zenobia does not treat Priscilla as an equal member of their group, and does not do so in the entirety of the novel. The most Priscilla ever seemed to be to Zenobia was a handmaiden.

Kent Bales states in his article that the Blithedalers in their leaving of civilization behind and embracing Nature, neglect the spirit that is supposed to
accompany them (48). This sentiment ends up becoming very true in the novel since Coverdale states, “The yeoman and the scholar...are two distinct individuals and can never be melded or welded into one substance” (Hawthorne 66). This shows that the yeoman, the person who works with Nature cannot have intellectual studies, which would fall into the realm of spirit. Thus, the lifestyle that was supposed to help people like Coverdale become better writers and thinkers through hard work and physical toil are left wanting for a more spiritual and intellectual life they cannot otherwise find because of their daily labors in the fields (Stanton 532).

The people themselves are struggling with the fight between wanting to please Nature and at the same time the spirit. However, it is interesting to note that in the novel Coverdale states that it seemed Priscilla was being shaped by Nature, this is shortly after Zenobia decides to take care of her and tell her about womanly duties (72). There is also a part in the story that Zenobia was deck ing out Priscilla as if she were a May-Queen (59). In this scene, Zenobia who is putting a flowery crown in Priscilla’s hair places a weed in it that causes it not to be what it should be (59). It must be noted that there are a few sections in the book that when referring to Zenobia talk of weeds in her nature, either intellectually or socially, even after her death she has only weeds growing out of her gravesite (45, 59, 244). She is not a pure Nature or even one of much use, Hawthorne symbolically makes her Nature one of weeds. To understand what this would mean for the story one must look at the definition of what a weed is. According to the Oxford English Dictionary the word weed means, “A herbaceous plant not valued for use or beauty, growing wild and rank, and regarded
as cumbering the ground or hindering the growth of superior vegetation” (OED “weed”). Zenobia does have beauty, but at the same time so do some weeds as well, but she is wild and does hinder Blithedale from becoming superior and utopian because of her influence. With her death and the removal of her weedy nature the others could not survive because she had starved them of what they needed to become true utopians. With her putting the weed in Pricilla’s hair it is possibly symbolic of Zenobia passing on some of her weedy nature to the spirited Priscilla, either willingly or unconsciously. Nevertheless, Hollingsworth is among the people who are trying to figure out whether they should chose either Nature or the spirit, since it becomes quite obvious in the novel that they would never be melded together, just like the yeoman and the scholar. This is accented by Kent Bales’ argument about Zenobia’s downfall and the downfall of the experiment because of how Zenobia treats Priscilla, especially in the latter half of the novel. Bales states, “Since by supposed conviction and radical rhetoric all blithedalers are brothers and sisters, Zenobia’s deliberate cruelty to Priscilla violates the community ethic, a violation worse because Priscilla is a blood sister” (45). Bales is correct in the statement that Zenobia broke away from their unsaid rules of sisterhood at Blithedale, most likely at the end from personal attachment to Hollingsworth and the fear of Priscilla supplanting her in Hollingsworth’s “heart”. This shows the difficulties of true sisterhood in such a community whether between blood relatives or chosen relatives. The stresses and strains of past relationships and associations as well as prospective ones always play a role in life, as at Blithedale Farm, which can cause both positive emotions and
negative actions. John Miller affirms this sentiment in stating that, “Hawthorne’s career-long preoccupation with the human heart, both as conventional symbol an ideology of empathy, compassion, and universal brotherhood/sisterhood and as the seat of passion, jealousy, guilt, secrecy and self-torture” (Miller 1). Thus the human heart, even in utopia, can create either instances of good or evil. In Blithedale it proves to be the latter, and because of the human condition the enterprise fails because of, “passion, jealousy, guilt, secrecy and self-torture” (1).

Hawthorne writes a change in Zenobia during the second half of the novel, which raises an interesting point about Zenobia and her Nature. After Zenobia leave Blithedale Farm, the living flower that always adorns her hair is replaced by a fake and jeweled flower (Hawthorne 164). Therefore, even the Nature that Zenobia once imbued is no longer true and she becomes the false and materialistic nature that leads into the world of industry and materialism of Hollingsworth and Westervelt. It is not the jeweled flower that is the fault since inanimate objects cannot make such a shift in personality, but they can signify the change. The change in Zenobia is one that moves her away from true nature and her true self and more towards the darker side of technology and industry through her association with Westervelt and Hollingsworth. When Zenobia is in her apartment in the city once more, it is not meager by any means, on the contrary it is extravagant and excessive working counter to her utopian goals of only days before. In this world according to Hawthorne, a person cannot achieve utopian character for it when purses and pants become more important than people and social problems as happens with Zenobia at the end of the novel.
In the novel Hollingsworth at first chooses Zenobia/Nature because of the fact that she has the material necessary for his singular pursuits and is useful to him (Stanton 533). However, it becomes obvious later on in the story, that Zenobia’s wealth is not her own, and that her long-lost father has claim to her fortune, and will be quite willing to take it away and give it to his other child Priscilla. Hollingsworth initially chooses Zenobia to be with, and thus neglects Priscilla, and chooses a weedy Nature over spirit. It is only when he realizes that Zenobia can no longer afford to help him and that her Nature has fled away, that he chooses to be with Priscilla (Hawthorne 216-217). This action sends Zenobia away from Blithedale Farm, and causes her to commit suicide, and thus taking her Nature and strength out of their experiment. Stanton states in his essay on Nature in *The Blithedale Romance* that for the experiment to work it had, “to show that Nature and the spirit can be reunited and that Nature will benefit the spirit, as exemplified by Zenobia and Priscilla respectively” (Stanton 531). This does work for a while, and the spirit and Nature are reunited and are a functional pair, but they are eventually driven apart by Hollingsworth and his iron resolve. The experiment ultimately failed however because Nature and the spirit could not coexist in the environment of this utopic design (532). Because of this failed relationship between the siblings of Zenobia/Nature and Priscilla/spirit, Hollingsworth ends up with the money that he had desired to get from Zenobia, through Priscilla, but does nothing with it, because his drive to build his edifice is destroyed along with the life of Zenobia. He ends up with Priscilla/spirit, but because there is no Zenobia/Nature to help him make his
plans concrete, both literally and physically, he does not build his long desired edifice and commences to self-loathe because he had forsaken one for the other.

Continuing with the idea of Hollingsworth in a fight against someone, the middle chapter in the book “A Crisis” is the one in which the iron will of Hollingsworth goes up against Coverdale’s fluidity. Many points in the story lead to the idea that Hollingsworth is less a man than a machine, in fact Zenobia says as much at the end of the book stating that Hollingsworth is “[a] cold, heartless, self-beginning and self-ending piece of mechanism!” (Hawthorne 218). Zenobia’s description is a very apt one, and does much to reveal the true person under the mask that Hollingsworth puts on in the story. As Zenobia also says, he is self-deceiving in his endeavors and does as much as he can to gain what he wants and discard what he finds to be useless to him (218). However, it is not just at the end of the novel, but throughout the whole of it where Hollingsworth is compared to iron and unnatural substances, and acts. He is by trade a blacksmith, and though he works with natural materials, his job is to pound and deform the naturally occurring mineral into something that is useful to someone else (94). Even Westervelt, a creature to be discussed momentarily mentions that Hollingsworth is “a man of iron, in more sense than one” (94).

On the other hand, Coverdale is for the most part a fluid individual, this meaning that he does not stay within one thought process, as the iron willed Hollingsworth, but he moves around rarely agreeing with a point of view he may have held moments prior. Frederick Crews comments that, “Whenever [Coverdale]
rejoices in the ambitious spirit of Blithedale, he immediately adds a note of satire. Whenever he begins to praise a friend, he finishes by criticizing him” (150). Crews points out in agreement with the assessment that Coverdale is not a rigid person in the least, even his ideas have a duplicity that is uncommon for a narrator to have. Coverdale even acknowledges this possibility at the end of the novel when he reminisces that Hollingsworth once told him that he “lack[ed] a purpose” (Hawthorne 246). Likewise, when in the chapter “A Crisis” where Hollingsworth is imploring Coverdale to join him in his quest to take over Blithedale he states that “you shall never again feel the languor and vague wretchedness of an indolent or half-occupied man!” (133). It is very clear here that Hollingsworth does not put a great deal of faith in what Coverdale chose for a living prior to living at Blithedale Farm. But in this section the reader sees the fluidity versus the iron and that Coverdale is able to pass around and through Hollingsworth’s threats and demands, not with the greatest of desire to hurt his friend, but with enough of his own force to carry on without his good friend. The tyranny that Hollingsworth wishes to impose on the community is evident in his requesting Coverdale to join him, “You can greatly benefit mankind. Your peculiar faculties, as I shall direct them, are capable of being so wrought into this enterprise, that not one of them need lie idle (Italics added 133). His statement, “as I shall direct them” betrays his desire to control every aspect of this utopia (133). Indeed, in his philanthropic vision of utopia, he is in charge and everyone must perform as automatons to his every whim. He cannot stand that the people at
Blithedale Farm are willing to live in a different more free world than he is able to conceive and therefore wants to destroy it as soon as he can.

Coverdale believes in freedoms that Hollingsworth cannot imagine, especially ones regarding gender equality. Coverdale even admits to women’s superiority in intellect, but feels they do not do anything about it unless they are personally affected by something (120). Quite the opposite Hollingsworth takes the traditional biblical approach in stating that the place of the woman is “at man’s side” (122). Zuckert comments on this section and Hollingsworth’s inability to see women for more than he feels they are. She states that for Hollingsworth, “Priscilla fulfills this roles of absolutely unquestioning admirer to the very end” unlike Zenobia who is the opposite type of female and one that does not fit into the traditional view of women, which for Hollingsworth Priscilla does (175). To this point Zuckert stats that this is why, “Hollingsworth proves unable to find faith in himself in her affections” (175). Once Hollingsworth decides that he loves Priscilla the idea of actualizing his edifice cease because it would be only with Zenobia and her natural driving force that would have helped Hollingsworth fulfill his own utopian goals. The failure of becoming a utopian runs deep in Hollingsworth because he is a man who is blinded by ambitions and then self-loathing. He is a man that needs followers to have power, instead of having power by himself. After Hollingsworth makes his statement about his ideal woman he comments that in his mind if a woman is unhappy with her domestic station of caregiver, mother and wife that something is wrong with her that “Nature made them really neither man nor woman” (123). This is an odd statement
Hollingsworth makes about Zenobia; with her being such a powerful figure without a powerful man, leading her around, she is somehow wrong in her nature.

Nevertheless, it is the differences in the fluidity versus the rigidity of the men that causes them to fall apart as friends and never again piece their friendship back together. At the end of the novel when Coverdale reflects upon this he realizes that perhaps had he had more conviction and less fluidity perhaps he would have been a little bit happier. Coverdale is shiftless as a “frosty bachelor” and has never really settled down as much as he would have liked to earlier on in the story. By the same token, he saw what too much conviction did to Hollingsworth and how it destroyed him when he realized that his ideal was just as flawed as the one he detested at Blithedale. As with Nature and spirit the two forces would not be put together, this time because one refuses to break and one refuses to solidify.

These ideals lead into another reason why Blithedale never made it to utopia and decayed “into Fourierism, and dying, as it well deserved, for this infidelity to its own higher spirit” (Hawthorne 246). As aforementioned Hollingsworth had a rather tyrannical way of seeing how events should play out at Blithedale and desired that they should move according to his own plans. His iron will and strength of character somehow engrosses Zenobia, and they begin planning for his edifice and how he may be able to take over Blithedale using her wealth and his strengths to create his idea of reformation of society. Hollingsworth stifled Zenobia’s Nature and forced her to give into his view of women. This fact is highlighted when Coverdale asks if he should announce that she would be speaking about the rights of women she states, “Women
possess no rights...or, at all events, only little girls and grandmothers would have the force to exercise them (141). It was only two chapters before at “Eliot’s Pulpit” that Zenobia cried for women’s equality and decried the ways in which they are subjugated and stifled by men much like Hollingsworth (120). Why then would Zenobia the harbinger of Nature herself at Blithedale Farm give into such a man? Perhaps this question is answered earlier on in the novel when Coverdale states that Hollingsworth, “in his gentler moods, there was a tenderness in his voice, in his gesture, and in every indescribable manifestation, which few men could resist and no woman (28). Perhaps then, Zenobia could not pull free from the attractive and magnetic forces that surrounded the blacksmith. No matter the cause of this fall from grace that Zenobia went through, she ate of the fruit that Hollingsworth produced and could never regain her state as the naturally strong and powerful woman that she once was before Hollingsworth entered her life. Their existence in the novel and what they symbolize as people becomes very important through their relationship in the novel. Hawthorne shows that when Nature and technology meet that their relationship is tenuous at best, and that technology, or in this case Hollingsworth will only use Nature towards its own ends and once done, will throw away Nature or leave it to its own destruction, as happens in the novel. Hawthorne warns people, through the events in his novel to be mindful of the technological and more importantly materialistic tendencies of people who would build their edifices and reform society without regard for others.
However, it is not until Westervelt enters the picture that Zenobia finally loses all that is natural and Nature about her and becomes materialistic and manufactured rather than natural. Westervelt himself may in fact be the devil or at the very least not entirely human, since it is alluded to in some of his appearances in the novel (Hawthorne 94, 158). His influence was one that Zenobia obviously did not care for, and yet she allowed him near her person, and talked with him pleasantly enough. Westervelt himself is less of a real person than anyone else, with the golden fake teeth and all his gold and manufactured attire it is hard to see anything natural or earthly about him (92, 95). To add to this negative view of Westervelt as a character, it is important to note that the head of his cane was a serpent’s head, which is a less than positive personal symbol in Western civilizations (92). Everything about this man screams that he should not be trusted and should be left to his own devices outside of Blithedale Farm, and yet Coverdale allows him the chance to speak with Zenobia, and thus gain access not only to her life but to Priscilla’s and Hollingsworth’s as well. This single act by Coverdale possibly doomed the whole enterprise Hawthorne created for his novel, and yet Hawthorne would more than likely have let the event happen whether Coverdale had told Westervelt where Zenobia was, or if someone else had done it.

When Zenobia leaves Blithedale Farm for the city and joins Westervelt, as he prepares Priscilla to once again become the Veiled Lady, she loses the last vestiges of what made her a part of Nature. She wore clothes that were modern and made through industrial work, her apartment was lavishly decorated and not as mean as it had been
at Blithedale Farm, but most importantly of all the flower that was in her hair at all times ceased being real (Hawthorne 164). Instead of being a real it was a jeweled and false flower, one that would indeed last forever, but made a mockery of Nature by its very existence (Hawthorne 164). From this point on in the story, which is at the very least two months Zenobia keeps the jeweled flower in her hair, and never returns to her true natural self.

By the end of the story, Zenobia becomes the Eve and Pandora of Blithedale Farm as alluded to earlier in the text, because her actions cause the promise of a new Paradise to collapse (Hawthorne 10, 17, 24). Zenobia was the one woman in the community that everyone looked to for strength and direction when they gathered together. To the people at Blithedale, Zenobia was their ideal utopian and from her example they took their cues. With her death, the community ceased to be what it once was, because instead of looking for the utopian within themselves, the characters looked for utopia outside of themselves. Although, it was never a heaven on earth, Hawthorne’s Blithedale Farm had a strong beginning but because of some of the people within the folds of the experiment, it had a tragic end.

Should Zenobia then get the blame for the fall of herself and Blithedale the way that history has blamed Eve and Pandora? Perhaps when looking through the events of the story she is not totally to blame for this turn of events. As stated before Hollingsworth fed her ideas and promised her so much from the fruits of his ideas. But after she partook of these ideas, she realized the folly of her ways and when he no longer desired her because of her fallen Nature, she could not bear her mortality. In
this way Hollingsworth is not truly the serpent in this situation as much as he is the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and perhaps the bottom half of Pandora’s box. Westervelt is also to blame for his shining example of materialism and inner evil. He is a humbug of a man and does little to change any of that throughout the story. He is a man of contracts and of means, it becomes obvious that Priscilla had been contracted to him by Old Moodie her father and must be used as a spiritual prostitute upon the stage so that Westervelt could make money (Bales 48). He is nothing but a sham and takes advantage of the ways in which people thought at the time. He is the type of man that a hundred years prior would have sold cure-alls to old ladies with dying husbands, and a hundred years after his time would be selling miracle cancer beating drugs. As Coverdale points out, there is nothing real about the man and at any moment might pull off his human mask and take his true form of a wizard or elf (95). It is the coupling of both Hollingsworth and Westervelt that convinced Zenobia into giving up her Nature and giving into their sterile regimented, materialistic and industrial ways of life.

However, it is the last act that Hollingsworth performs on Zenobia that shows the nature of their relationship and of what has happened in the fictitious community and in real ones like it. Hollingsworth pierces Zenobia’s breast and possibly heart with his iron rod, thus raping Nature/Zenobia with a manufactured and unnatural object (Hawthorne 235). It is industry that killed Nature and the true beginnings of the reform movement at Blithedale Farm and its real world counterparts. The same can be said for other experiments like Brook Farm and Oneida, although nothing as
dramatic as the symbolism behind Zenobia’s death, but meaningful in the same ways. To be utopian there needs to be a balance between Nature and technology, as well as Nature and spirit. Nature is what a utopia is built around, and thus what a utopian must build themselves around as well. Without a grasp of true Nature, and not the manufactured or created Nature as in the jeweled flower Zenobia wore at the end of the novel. The need for a utopian is strong in a utopia, just as much as there is a need for a utopia once there is in fact a utopian present in the world. The utopian individual must also stick to their main objective, not blindly and without thought as to how one should change their situation in a utopia if it proves not to be viable, as with Oneida, but with an eye towards the future and the goals to which the utopia was constructed in the first place.

Brook Farm’s end came rather quickly, lapsing into Fourierism after only one year of trying it’s own socialist agenda. It died of this decision only five years later (White 83). Oneida on the other hand lasted for many years before it became a corporation and an industry, which it had actually tried to fight against in the first place (Lockwood 405). Brook Farm began itself as a joint stock company, which is possibly why it failed so quickly (Wilson 320). The people put in money expecting a turn around and profit from their time spend in the community hoping to bring about a new and purer world. In this way the contributors seem to be more interested in the financial gains they could make, if they succeed, rather than the actual success of their enterprise. The people at Brook Farm still retained personal possessions instead of shared material. It seems that Brook Farm and Hawthornes’ Blithedale became
materialistic at roughly the same time in their lives as an experiment. It took Oneida over thirty years to devolve to that state and even then it lasted for another sixty years before it finally relented to the influence of the rest of society (Lockwood 411). The Oneida community, to make money for its operations, began canning fruits and vegetables from their farm, they also opened a saw mill and a flower mill and then branched out into other industrial ventures (405). Because Noyes and the community members felt they needed to turn a profit from their time spent at Oneida, they began to walk the fine line between materialism and industrialization, and their original aims to make the world a better place without such advances. Noyes however got around this by making sure that everyone switched jobs now and again so that no one became the automaton that they railed against for so many years (Guarneri 480-481). It took thirty years but finally Oneida became a joint-stock company, Oneida Community Limited. Yet, the people in the Oneida Community still shared their possessions as opposed to having strict personal possessions as in other communities such as Brook Farm (Lockwood 411). Shortly after J.H. Noyes retired and a Board of Directors took control of the community (411). According to Lockwood, the only reason why their attempt at utopia was saved was due to P.B. Noyes one of J.H. Noyes’ stirpicult children (411). After this take over, the community prospered for many years before his influence died down in the 1940’s (411). It was these men who were strong leaders of this community that gave it, longevity over the years. It failed to reach their utopic ideals, but it also lasted long enough to take note of its design,
since most of the other communities that shared Oneida’s intent lasted less than a decade.

**No Utopians**

Why then do these communities bent on helping out mankind not produce a utopia? It cannot be entirely blamed on the failed logic of a few men with good intentions. The major part of why these utopias fall into dystopia is because true utopians are hard to find. Yes, the participants in both the real and imagined experiments claim to be utopians because they are part of an experiment that attempts to make the world a better place through their efforts, but it is themselves that hold the world back from utopia, just as much as the layperson does.

*The Blithedale Romance* as a work of fiction is a perfect analog for this idea, and is done in miniature among the four principal characters with some smaller but significant players around them. The novel works as an amalgamation of failed utopic experiments of the era. None of the people in the experiment seem to actually think that it could work at all, and yet they still try. Coverdale himself states in many sections of the book that he feels that the experiment as a whole will not work out and will falter and die quite quickly. In the first quarter of the book, after he is well again, he looks at the people that are at the farm and feels that they could not hold together long because they are all so different, and ultimately intolerant of each other’s ideas of utopia (Hawthorne 63). Later in the novel Coverdale is in his hermitage and states that he cannot but laugh at their attempt at reforming the world for it being so ridiculous (Hawthorne 100). And yet he stays a while longer doing all the same
chores he had been doing all summer long since he was no longer ill. Coverdale's is not utopian because of his inability to be faithful to any idea that keeps him from becoming the utopian. Even though he fancied himself one before he saw the futility in the ways in which the people went about Blithedale and their idea of utopia. The people there were trying to capture utopia in their hands to show to the world, only to find fool's gold instead.

As for Hollingsworth, he never actually believed in their enterprise at all, but saw it as a way that he might be able to gain what he desired for his own interests. Coverdale immediately notices this in one of the opening chapter, when referring to Hollingsworth, "His heart was never really interested in our socialist scheme..." (Hawthorne 36). In the chapter "A Crisis" Hollingsworth's true colors come out when he argues with Coverdale over the validity of their utopic attempt he states "Your fantastic anticipations make me discern, all the more forcibly, what a wretched, unsubstantial scheme is this, on which we have wasted a precious summer of our lives. Do you seriously imagine that any such realities as you and many others here, have dreamed of will ever be brought to pass?" (130). Just two pages later, he states, "I see through the system. It is full of defects- irremediable and damning ones! - from first to last, there is nothing else! I grasp it in my hand, and find no substance whatever" (132). These statements prove that Hollingsworth is indeed not a utopian at all, but more like Westervelt, a person who desires their visions and only their visions and will do anything and think anything of their own ideas to put them ahead
of others thoughts of perfection. His inflexibilities as mentioned earlier are the reason why he cannot be a utopian.

Zenobia was not a utopian because she did not stay with her own thoughts of it and gave up her nature as a person for the iron sway of another (Hawthorne 121). Zenobia, right before her suicide, realizes that their utopia is not one at all, and would never be such, because of the failures of the people in the experiment to be utopians in the first place, her among them. She states that, “we have surely blundered into the very emptiest mockery, in our effort to establish the one true system” (227). Although she tried to be a utopian, she failed because she was not true to herself. This is quite the opposite of her half-sister Priscilla who thought the highest of their enterprise, but perhaps only because those around her did (59). With Zenobia, she had convictions at one point, gave them up, and was lead about. Priscilla however, is always lead around and although she is at times free to do as she pleases, she always returns to her path behind or under either Hollingsworth or Zenobia. Thus, she cannot be considered a utopian because she does not seem to understand how to be one, only that she was among people that thought they were utopians for a time.

What then makes a utopian, if all of these people and experiments failed? It is hard to say, but it seems to be a utopian one must be a person who is happy with his or her life and although they try to change the world, refuse to be tyrannical about it, as Hollingsworth was. The question is equally hard to answer because, it is quite evident, that no one person has in the history of mankind ever actually been a utopian, but at most the shadow of such a person. It is this failure of the people at Blithedale to
transfigure themselves into utopians and give up their materialistic and selfish ways that cause it to fall. In doing so they kill their chance to change, the future for the better and leave, the worldwide open to people like Hollingsworth and Westervelt to do as they please among the people of the world. It would be the melding of these two men, since it has been proven that unlike nature and the spirit, fluidity and rigidity and even the yeoman and the scholar cannot be melded together, these men can be with their materialism and industry. These are the men that would give rise to the idea of the technological utopia of the future, and that technology more than reforming the soul will be what saves man from doom.

At the end of *The Blithedale Romance*, the future of the enterprise and of people who would belong to such places and ideas is ambiguous. Although Coverdale states that he would want to go back and visit to see if it was still running after twelve years, it is most likely not in existence. The spot where they shared their un-united drive for a utopia would either be uninhabited, or another utopian enterprise, completely oblivious to the one that was there before as Berlant would suggest (32). Nevertheless, their ideals had failed and their attempts to curb the growth of materialism failed the second Zenobia put the jeweled flower in her hair. The consequences of this action and their failure to halt the materialistic and consumer society that was arising in the country would prove to make utopia even more difficult to achieve. Because of their lack of brotherhood, their inability to share a singular purpose and to love freely and without jealousy and passions is why the community Hawthorne created failed overall. The failure of this society, and why
they were not utopians, is that in this sense they could not be utopians because they could not, or in the case of Hollingsworth, would not see any other person’s point of view about utopia. Instead of working together to build up a utopia in a sharing of ideas, and evolving they way that other utopian experiment attempted to, Blithedale fell because of each person’s short sightedness and inability to cope with others ideas and points of view.
Chapter 3

Feed[ing] Utopia

Feed and the Fictional Future of Failed Utopia

Since the end of the utopian experiments of the nineteenth century, society, especially American society, has had a profound shift in its values systems. The experiments discussed in the previous chapter attempted to stop the spread of materialism, which, in time, would become the culture of consumerism in the years after their collective failure. By the end of The Blithedale Romance Hawthorne makes his point clear that utopian experiments, like that at the fictional Blithedale Farm and its real world analog Brook Farm could never be practical and functional ventures and would ultimately fail because of the inadequacies of its participants. The main inadequacy was that they were not utopians because of their lack of compassion and understanding of one another’s points of view, and inability to work with everyone’s point of view collectively. This is reflected in Coverdale’s statement, “The greatest obstacle to being heroic, is the doubt whether one may not be going to prove one’s self a fool; the truest heroism is, to resist the doubt—and the profoundest wisdom, to know when it ought to be resisted and when to be obeyed” (Hawthorne 10). This becomes an important idea when faced with the characters of Titus and Violet in Feed, both of whom have the utopian spark within them.

Regardless of why these utopian experiments faltered, their attempts to curtail the growth of industry and therefore the takeover of society by materialism unfortunately failed. What happened in the intervening years between the events of The Blithedale Romance and M.T. Anderson’s Feed (2002) becomes important in
understanding how society could shift so radically from shunning materialism to embracing it completely. In the future world that Anderson envisions, the characters experience a world, which is comprised of nothing but consumerism and advertisement driven values. The world becomes the future of Westervelt and even of Hollingsworth, men who are not interested in the protection of nature, but the fulfillment of their desires at all costs. Their future might be called a technotopia, a utopia that is based in technology, rather than the communal living and the denunciation of technology and material goods that characterized the nineteenth century utopian experiments. Feed exhibits this future in vivid details, which are eerily reminiscent of the current culture, especially in the United States. However, because there is a great deal of time between the failure of Blithedale and Brook Farm and the society that Titus inhabits, what transpired between needs to be discussed more thoroughly. The eras under discussion begin in the mid-nineteenth century and continue through the modern era discussing the progression of marketing and media, influence on the public will be discussed. From there the extremity of this lifestyle is presented in Feed as a possible but still fictional future if left unchecked.

A Brief History of Feed[ing]

Thus, before delving into the world of Feed and the meanings gleaned from its pages, not only about current societal trends but possible future ones as well, the past must also be looked at to create better footing for the discussion at hand. In this period between Blithedale and Feed different eras exist in the history of materialism and consumerism. These strata of materialism are discussed in Simon Gottschalk’s
article on hypermodernism and consumption, which he takes from Gilles Lipovetsky’s book *Paradoxical happiness: Essay on hyperconsumption society* (311). Lipovetsky is a French philosopher and sociologist who states in the book mentioned by Gottschalk that there are three phases of materialistic history in the modern era. The first phase deals with the Victorian era up through the World Wars (1880-1940s); the Second phase deals with the post-war era of the 1950s through the 1980s; then the phase, which deals with the world of the 1990s and through today’s culture (311). This is a useful strategy to discuss how materialism grew and conquered society so completely during the twentieth century and beyond. Thus, his model of explaining consumption in the modern era proves to make good scaffolding to build upon.

The 1880’s was a time of industrialization for American, and a time of transition from rural to urban lifestyles. Although the shift to industrialization was easier for some than others, it marked a permanent shift in ideology and how laborers became viewed in the work force. One of the most interesting and perhaps disturbing notions that came out of this period in history was the excessive attention paid to the new innovations in machinery, and the machines themselves. According to Iwan Rhys Morus, whose article covers the industrial revolution in the United Kingdom, that was mirrored in the United States, machines were looked upon favorably because they could “self-regulate” and forced the person manning the machine to become regulated as well (407). For this the machines were lauded by such people as the inventor Charles Babbage who felt that the new system of production with machinery took away the idleness, inattention and supposed human dishonesty that had existed
in these industries prior to this period of labor (407). This thought process begs the question, at what point do the people become little more than servants of the machines they operate? Is there not a point in which the machine becomes the master and the person the tool for operation? These same questions are in part some of the ideas raised by M.T. Anderson through the medium of his novel Feed just over a century and a half after these events.

Although civilizations have shown that new technologies can be a boon for them in the long run, there can also be an air of foreboding about the potential hazards of this new technology. In Morus’ article he mentions that during the building of the Thames Tunnel a device called “The Shield” was implemented to help build under the river, which was a large arch-shaped device that could be moved as the diggers progressed into the area they were tunneling (424). This “Shield” that was used and celebrated because it allowed laborers to work at the same pace, but at the same time independently, or at least it was marketed to the public that way (424). It is an odd paradox, because if people are to work independently then they will eventually work at a different pace than one another, and therefore perform uneven labor. Yet, because of this piece of hardware, the people were supposed to conform to it and everything would work out just fine. This raises a question that underlies the novel Feed at what point do people become automatons working for and waiting upon automata? (Morus 410).

Within the pages of both Feed and Morus’ article on Victorian consumerism, there is an underlying threat to avoiding or disturbing the system of the mechanisms
that the corporations had put into place. In *Feed* Violet tells Titus that she plans to resist the feed networks by becoming someone who opts out of marketing. She then takes him on a non-shopping trip (Anderson 97-104). In the world of the 1800’s United Kingdom, when the factory systems were replacing skilled craftsmen with unskilled laborers, the skilled artisans became flies in the ointment, much like Violet from *Feed* (408). Morus puts this more concisely in stating that, “The “cunning workman” was represented as a danger, a potential (and often actual) disturbing force in the smooth operation of capital, who could be tamed only by the disciplinary power of self-acting machines” (408). Although Violet is not one of these skilled workers per se, she is a person who stands against the overpowering corporations, and fights against their influence and greed. In this image of the work force, people were beaten into submission by machines, just as Violet was eventually beaten to death by a system that demanded that she conform to some ideal or another. When she asks for help with her feed she is denied because they cannot peg her as a certain type of consumer with certain tastes and therefore no one saw her as fit to sponsor (Anderson 247). It is a system like this that forces people either to conform to the standards of those that are in charge or to perish under their boot heels. The actions of Violet and the people of the nineteenth century when dealing with these changes reflect what Coverdale stated in *Blithedale* about being a hero or foolish. I would contend that the skilled workers and Violet are heroic in that they do not let themselves be truly beaten by the system, even as they fall victim to it. Violet heroically martyred herself, so that Titus could finish being in his foolish stage and become a heroic utopian himself.
However, for most of the populace in the nineteenth century advertising and marketing slipped in almost silently with popular culture. Because of the new ability to mass-produce goods, branding, advertising and marketing began to take hold in society, after the beginning of the industrial revolution. This was especially true for women’s magazines towards the end of the nineteenth century. R.F Bogardus discusses how women’s magazines at the turn of the nineteenth into twentieth century helped usher in the age of consumerism that dominated the twentieth century. Magazines like the Ladies’ Home Journal allowed advertisements into their articles about popular styles of dress, that expressed what a “lady” should like based upon the brand named corporations in the advertisements (Bogardus 508). These advertisements were not always received as well as they were want to be by all of the people in the public and even in the private sector. Bogardus’ article, which discusses the advertising of undergarments and other personal items, takes a deeper look as to how these items were sold to the public, without being overly offensive to people with delicate or conservative sensibilities. One of these people that disliked the advertising and discussion of undergarments such as bicycle corset in magazines was Edward Bok the editor of Ladies’ Home Journal who thought it was offensive to show such things (508). This idea in today’s hyper-sexualized world of “naked” women in showers selling liquid body soap is a strange and antiquated gesture. Yet, just under a hundred years ago, scholars like the one in Bogardus’ article, Arthur E. Morgan, lamented that the youth of that day was not paying attention to their elders, but to advertisements and doing what they wanted with a new sense of “freedom”
given to them by advertisements (508). However, how can one be free in either case? On one hand, there are the tried and true methods of the old establishment, and then the new movement's marketed to the younger generation, ironically telling them that if they join in on the fun that they will be individuals in this new movement.

Advertisements of the early twentieth century were very forward in telling their readers that what they had was inadequate and what they needed was at the local store or just a short mail order away (Bogardus 509). Yet, this marketing style would change drastically over the next century as companies found different ways to advertise to their customers and appeal to their senses, so that their customers would not even be aware they were the targets of marketing. Advertisers would always find a way to get the public to buy goods whether they were acceptable or taboo, as with bicycles for women at the turn of the century (519). According to Bogardus, some people, mostly men, did not want women to ride bicycles because they thought that they would exert themselves too much. They also feared the mobility of women at the time, and if a woman had a bicycle, she could leave the home and go places. Another interesting argument was one by some medical men who stated that the bicycle seat, because of its shape, taught masturbation to girls and thus was immoral for women to ride the bikes (519). Even with the negative publicity placed on bicycles for women, women still bought and used bicycles thus proving the persuasiveness of advertising and its power to override the advice of medical professionals and even conventional morality.
This conservative backlash did almost nothing to stop companies who made bicycle-corsets from selling them to women. It was how they were marketed that mattered. They were called bicycle corsets but could be worn all the time because they lend mobility to the wearer (Bogardus 511). It was advertisements like these in the magazines of the turn of the nineteenth-twentieth century that laid the advertising foundations of modern consumer society. According to Bogardus, “Youth had already bought into the modern taste by 1926, so consumer culture was in place” (513). Earlier Bogardus affirms Arthur Morgan’s fear of a consumptionist future because of the “early mass magazines like Ladies’ Home Journal, Munsey’s, McClure’s, and Cosmopolitan” (512).

Moving onto the second phase that Lipovetsky wrote about are the years between the end of World War II (hereafter WWII) and the 1980s, this period brought about and economic age that fueled business growth as well as technology, and more importantly the technology of advertisement. After WWII, the world was a much different place, politically, socially and economically. For most countries in Europe and Asia, the lifestyles and cultures were disrupted, fragmented or outright destroyed by the war. One of the only cultures that survived and thrived during and after the war was the American culture, which spread after the final Allied victory in August of 1945. It was after this period that the men returning home from the battlefront helped build a new economy and work force in America.

According to Shelly Nickles the author of the essay “More is Better: Mass Consumption, Gender, and Class Identity in Postwar America” discussed what
happened to the culture and its views of consumerism as America moved to dominate the world cultures, and began a new prosperity that had not been enjoyed by previous generations. Nickles' article, begins with discussing a study that found that the readers of a magazine called *True Story* were mostly blue-collar wives, and their taste preferences reflected this (581). According to Nickles, the market researchers and advertising departments advertised only the things that the upper-class people bought instead of more "practical" things (585). This idea was one that was not aiming to be detrimental to the consumers but in their minds, helpful. It seems that these people in marketing to the non-upper-class individuals were trying to create an ideal that people should aim for, something not flashy but utilitarian (586). However, this is not what happened. After WWII when factory jobs flourished in the United States, the people who once could not afford luxuries were able to purchase things that were not necessary, but desirable. They also purchased things that they liked, but were not told that they liked (586). This was a dangerous time for the advertisers, since the people they were marketing to bought items that the advertisers said were inadequate. It was perhaps this time in history when people could have broken away from the culture of being told they need to buy things and begun to only buy what they need. Yet, it did not take all too long for the market researchers to find out what the "common" people liked and began mass marketing and producing goods aimed at their tastes rather than solely the tastes of the upper-class.

According to Nickles, after the advertising agencies began to realize what was going on, they started to do more in-depth consumer research to see what the
consumers wanted and why (596-597). This mindset of course is still going on in the novel *Feed*, with the added twist that the corporations, who are in charge of everything, market directly to people, and because of the nature of the feed within them, the corporations know what the consumer wants before the consumer does (Anderson 48). Once the advertisers realized how they could manipulate their consumers, there was no turning back. This is of course a severe shift in business ethics that Anderson has the corporation make, so that his world is one of a consumerist dystopia, which is based in an individualized market structure.

During the middle part of the twentieth century, the idea of owning material goods and the idea of being happy were welded together finally by the people who wanted everyone to consume as much as possible. However, it seems that the general populace did not understand what was going on behind the scenes in corporate America, and how it would affect them later on in the twentieth century. The people in charge of marketing for corporations were under the assumption, according to Nickles, that as people gained more money, they would rise higher on the cultural ladder and become more sophisticated (586). However, this turned out not to be the case, and the more money that the once lower-class citizens earned the more they expressed their own tastes for goods. As Nickles writes, “The *True Story* editor’s slides made the point that blue-collar consumers had risen on the “economic ladder” as evidenced by the proliferation of household appliances, but not on the “taste ladder” that designers constructed” (586). What does this mean? It means that the corporate sector had to retool its arsenal of advertising to make war against the
sensibilities of the lower-class individuals so that they would buy products from them. This was done by becoming more flashy and shiny, rather than plain and simple (Nickles 592). Corporations learned to move with the desires of the people, only until they could understood the people so that the Corporations could once again be in control of what the masses bought.

**Feed[ing] Consumer Culture to Children**

At this point, it is prudent to break from discussing the next phase in Lipovetsky’s theory and discuss children’s culture, which permeates this whole history, but is on a different and more important level than those dealing with the suburban housewives of the 1950s and beyond. As mentioned before, the blue-collar workers had their chance to escape the clutches of marketing control, but for some reason were unable to, why is this? Perhaps it is because that at the same time that people began to buck the system, the forward thinking advertising and marketing people realized that the younger the audience paying attention to their ads the more likely they would have lifelong customers. This is what happens in *Feed*, only the people who buck the system are shut down so that the system does not even have the chance of being harmed by upstarts like Violet. During the 1950s and beyond the ideal of children’s consumer culture blossomed, grew, and was cultivated to control children with advertising and eventually control them as adults. This is not very different from the world of *Feed* where children have the feed placed within their brains in-vitro while they are being grown in tubes (Anderson 116-117). Although
Feed is an extreme extrapolation on these thoughts and actions in the current age, the basic ideas that Anderson uses are based in this century and the twenty-first as well.

Since the end of WWII, the industry of producing good for children has exploded across the world (Mickenberg 1218). A century ago, a child would more than likely be working in a factory or on a farm, making money for the family to get by on, rather than sitting for hours around the house. In the early nineteen hundreds, there were no child labor laws that protected them from going into the work force at a young age. It was not until those laws went into effect that children's culture really began to flourish (1218). This is not to say that one did not exist before that point, it is quite the contrary, but children were viewed in a different light. Before the child labor laws, children had their toys (occasionally) and games, books that were made just for their age levels and so on. After WWII according to Julia Mickenberg, children started getting an allowance, and were seen as part of a family unit that necessitated the giving of funds to them in a democratic fashion, however this was mostly an American phenomenon (1219). This shift in the culture of the home that Mickenberg notes is one that is unnerving in the speed of its transition from older ways to new. The fact that parents of all class levels would begin to act in such a fashion because they are told to do so by the media, go to show the power that media and advertising held even in its earliest years. In the fictionalized future of Feed, this thought process is expanded on greatly in the sense that Titus does not have a job, but somehow has a huge account that he draws from to make purchases with. It is the first thing he checks when he wakes up in the hospital, even before opening his eyes, or trying to
find someone, he knows his money/credit matters most (Anderson 43). This is not the
normal way of dealing with life, but it is the way that the society that Titus lives in
has shaped him.

Current culture makes children consumers at a younger and younger age, with
commercials during their favorite shows on channels made just for them. The shows
themselves teach morals and positive ideals, mostly, but they are not the issue for the
most part. The issue here is actually the commercials during and in between the
shows. Some of the commercials will be for products that are good for them like
yogurt, others for toys that they “have to have,” or more recently web sites they can
play games on as long as they ask for permission. Although, whether the children do
or not is up for debate, or even if their parents/guardians actually know what they are
discussing. The new marketing is not to adults for children, but children exclusively,
which at times forces their parents’ hands. Although parents can be stern and tell their
children “no” the way Violets father did in regards to toy guns. However, she ended
up making her own with twigs and branches, but using her imagination to do it
(Anderson 107).

Since the advent of children’s culture becoming an entity of its own,
advertisers have worked hard to make newer more pliable generations of consumers
of their products. This action though, hinders the natural growth of the child’s mind,
in that once they become conscious to the fact that they are being constantly marketed
to, everything they value comes into question. This happens to Violet, and finally
Titus. Perhaps this would be the first step at becoming a true utopian, since the
Blithedalers could not accept this premise and keep away from their early industrial/ad-driven society the way that Titus seems to be doing at the end of *Feed*. In the world of *Feed* the control of the companies over the people with the feed is so absolute that the corporations can steer the minds of the consumers away from feelings of dissent or angst against them. From birth the people with the feed are grown to become consumers and want things they do not necessarily need. Just as many children who watch programs designed for children, the commercials sneak in and begin to condition the child into a consumer and a person who desires the unnecessary.

After child labor laws went into effect, a new market was opened up for goods and materials for children. Because of this shift in culture and that children were no longer in the workforce, toy companies saw the sudden growth of potential consumers and began advertizing to this new consumer group. In *Feed* this is much easier than in past centuries because children like Titus’ younger brother, whom Anderson only names “Smell Factor,” are so very susceptible to advertising and learning from images and impressions. As Violet tells Titus, they are taught from a very young age to be consumers and nothing else (Anderson 97). They are pushed and prodded into certain major categories so that they are easier targets. From these major groups the consumers are put in smaller branches. The goal is to ultimately have just one marketing group after a few generations (97). Perhaps, when this happened advertisers realized that if they were to make consumers for life, that they would start making people become consumers at a much younger age. By the time
Feed happens the marketing apparatus has become so total that children are given the feed in-vitro so it is with them from the womb to the grave (Anderson 170). Although Anderson never mentions it in his novel, one would assume that the corporations that control whatever feed went into the babies being produced, that they would start giving them information from the time their brain develops enough to receive suggestions in the tubes in which they are grown.

According to the article written by Diane Carver Sekeres, children’s shows and books have been carefully crafted in recent years so that they have accessories for them. One of the examples that Sekeres uses is the Harry Potter series of books by J.K. Rowling. It is hard to argue against the idea that the books themselves are wildly popular around the world; the movies have made the series even more popular. The series has put out hundreds of different types of products for children to consume (Sekeres 400). From smaller books, to candies to collectable and action figures, bedding and pillows, sleeping bags and lawn chairs, children buy, or have their parents purchase these goods because they want the things that they associate with the series of books or television shows that they like. Hannah Montana, a show produced by the Walt Disney Corporation, does the same thing, but with a little bit more confusion for the children and eventually their parents. Because the character in the show is two people and a person, outside the show it is hard to tell which one the children are consuming and which one parents would want their child to watch and perhaps emulate in the future (Sekeres 409).
In *Feed* the ideas of children’s culture and marketing to them is interesting because the shows that Smell Factor watches, like “Top Quark” are sickeningly sweet with their dialogue, and really do not seem to have any values to them, moral or otherwise. The shows are there to placate the mind of the child so that they can be marketed to desensitizing children to the types of marketing they are being presented.

The idea of marketing to children without showing the public that the marketing agencies and corporations are exploitative begins, according to Mickenberg, with Disney and the *Mickey Mouse Club* and Disneyland (1221). According to the author of the article, Walt Disney both the person and his company made people think that the shows were beneficial and benign for children. In actuality, the shows and the properties that Disney owns were selling a new brand of consumerism for little children all the way up to adults. Even today, without the aid of much research, one can go to any of the Walt Disney Corporation properties around the world and find nostalgic adults, without children in tow, enjoying the parks they went to as children. This is of course not new, but it blossomed under the Disney ideals that popped up in the post-war era of 1950’s America.

What the Disney Corporation did, is almost the exact same thing that the feed companies do, they marketed themselves to schools and demonstrated their benefits to the children. Although, one can argue that Disney’s effects were beneficial in teaching children proper manners, how to plan for a fire in the home, and not talking to strangers (all things I viewed in elementary school), the feeds as demonstrated in Anderson’s novel were most definitely not beneficial to children’s culture.
Anderson’s novel is in part a response to this very idea as presented to the students in these elementary classrooms. Even without realizing it, they are being conditioned to like certain ideas, places and companies through passive advertisement. Because of this, people begin to view utopia as a place outside of reality, like in children’s movies or programs where everything works out for the best all the time. These presented ideals prepare the child not to look to build the possible utopia, but conditions them into the world of *Feed*. The children grow up into thinking in concrete terms rather than appreciating the abstract and move from a world of possible utopia to a world of hidden dystopia. Hidden dystopia meaning that they live in a dystopia but have been conditioned to believe its utopian in many respects. For instance, Titus states in *Feed* that at first the feed was marketed as an educational tool, Titus explains, “It was all…this big educational thing…your child will have the advantage, encyclopedias at their fingertips, closer than their fingertips etc. That’s one of the great things about the feed – that you can be supersmart without ever working” (Anderson 47). However, Titus makes a statement directly after that about the feed that completely negates his previous testimonial about the value of the feed, “Everyone is supersmart now. You can look things up automatic, like science and history, like if you want to know which battles of the Civil War George Washington fought in and shit” (47). Even as Titus is acting like a commercial for the feed, he is proving that the knowledge that the feed companies promised never actually came to fruition, and he is confused about the most basic of American historical information.
Likewise, it is right above that, where Titus does not even know how long the feeds had been around, but to him they had always been there (47).

In the novel *Feed*, the technology has made the people who use it blind to what is going on around them. The youth are supposed to be the movers and shakers of the world, but it is the feed, and the consumerist ethic that keeps them behind a very thick veil of ignorance. This is becoming a common theme in the late twentieth and thus far into the twenty-first century, which is part of Lipovetsky’s third phase. According to Gary Cross and Gregory Smits, in their article about Japan and the U.S. globalizing children’s culture, they discuss Barbie Dolls. They found out that the maker of Barbie, Mattel, had ceased production of the Asian looking doll even in Asian markets. This was because market analysts found out that the blond Barbie sold just as well as the dark haired Asian one (873). This might seem innocuous yet it is startling to find out, that to save a little time and money on the bottom line, that they would completely stop production of a race from amongst their popular and internationally known dolls. This is not to say that these girls see blond hair, European looking doll, as better than their own ethnicity, but it is a signal that there has been a shift in children’s culture (873). As with *Feed* the companies work to make consumer groups more encompassing this making less variety for more people, cutting cost and making greater profits.

Toy companies like Mattel, realized during the 1950’s that the best way to sell their materials, was not by advertising to parents but advertising to children (877). Cross and Smits state that it was when Mattel bought ad time on the *Mickey Mouse*
Club, that sales for their items went up dramatically (877). Due to the advertising and marketing to children during shows that they watched the company’s sales rose from six million to twenty-five million in five years, from 1955-1960 (877). This was all from marketing to children and their sensibilities, since children it seems were easier to influence by flashing pictures then, as most people are now having grown up with the television.

It was companies like Mattel and Hasbro that helped make the world like it is today, or at the very least America. This does not seem to stop in the fictional future of Feed as well. Children today still have the ability to think on their own and make decisions about what they want and why they want it if they are so inclined. However, this does not ever happen in Feed, no one, save for Violet and then Titus question the buying of things and whether they really need to be constantly consuming. Titus even realizes that he is tired of chasing what is supposedly cool at the moment and does not want to do it anymore (Anderson 279). This was the first point at which Titus realized where the foolishness was in himself and began down the path towards utopian character. Anderson’s novel works as a warning by showing an alternate future for America and the world if consumerism is not checked.

Because of this progression of advertizing weaving with technology the idea of the technotopia began to look as a possible future. However, as Anderson states through Feed one must be wary of the impact technology has on the user. In the fictional future of Feed the technology has become something more than addictive to
the user, it has become necessary for their survival. Without the use of technology the user goes through withdrawal and just like any other addictive substance.

*Feed*[ing] Wellness

What Anderson does with *Feed* is paint a world where people believe that well being and materialism go hand in hand. Thus it is important to discuss how the feed affects its host, mentally, emotionally and physically, and the effects that come from it. However, throughout the novel he proves that this is literally not the case. Nevertheless, it is because of the feed that the people who are plagued with this technology cannot see the harm in its use and implementation into their bodies and perhaps into their very souls. The feed “knows what you want before you do” as Titus so aptly put it (Anderson 48). This idea of course links to the notion that buying things makes one feel better or that they are better, either physically or mentally because of things. This is exemplifies in the scene after Titus and Violet have an argument, where the corporations use Titus’ emotions against him, so that he would buy things, which he does to satiate the voices (Anderson 274). The people who control consumer culture today have already given the image to the masses that people are better off with more stuff than without it. And most of the time appeal to the emotions rather than the practicalities of the product (Lyons 47) This has led to the general public having the feeling that more is indeed better and the more they have the happier that they are. However, this is not always the case, and in many cases this is probably the opposite.
Although well-being and materialism are shown by corporation to go hand in hand, social researchers James E. Burroughs and Aric Rindfleisch found information that negates this point of view, just as much as *Feed* does. As stated in pervious sections by others as well as myself, over the past century consumption has become the culturally accepted way to gain happiness, success and what is deemed to be “the good life” (Burroughs, Rindfleisch 348). Burroughs and Rindfleisch also found that society has competing and opposite messages of consumerism and collective oriented ideals (348). It is in this distinction that causes the most amount of anxiety among the consumers, especially in America. Through their own research and using previous studies of other they found out that in every case, materialistic lifestyles had long term negative consequences for both society in general and the individual consumer in particular (348). This correlates to *Feed* in the fact that the people in this future America cannot see what negative effects that their materialism is having on them, not just as people but also as a culture.

The affects of this techno-dystopia are not just emotional and intellectual ones, although they do show up in the novel. One of the first things that confirms that the characters are in danger are the lesions that pop up on their bodies. What makes this so interesting, is that at first everyone is scared about what is happening with the lesions on their bodies (Anderson 11). This changed when the issue was addressed through popular media on one of the more popular shows “Oh?Wow!Thing!” which had their characters have fake lesions put on their body (Anderson 96). Because of this being in the media, people began purposefully having lesions put on their body
because it was the popular thing to do (Anderson 202). The problems resulting from this is that the people are purposefully harming their bodies to be in vogue, while the companies that Titus believes care for their consumers harm the very people buying from them to turn profits. Yet, as aforementioned, Violet broke from the system and was punished by the consumer culture and forced to die because the feed is all-powerful in the body of its host.

Towards the end of the book, more signs of physical harm are displayed by the people in this future America. Titus states to the reader, without much alarm, that their hair has fallen out and that they are starting to lose their skin (Anderson 278). This point about losing their skin was over-looked by the people it was happening to and the medical community as well, even when Titus says that he can see his mother’s teeth through her lips, because the skin was so thin there (Anderson 284). Because the feed controls how the people perceive the world around them, and themselves, ailments brought on by these companies can be ignored because they will not allow their units to become aware of the adverse affects that come from the feed itself.

There are two ways of looking at this idea of “needing to consume”. One is that the need to consume for many has become a hard-wired need to be consumers and purchase things all the time. The second view is more sinister. In the case of Violet, if she does not purchase, the feed and the companies who own the feed in her, will destroy her from the inside out, and leave her a husk of a person. Although, Violet does not give in to their threats as much as they would desire and as a result
pays the ultimate price for it (Anderson 295-300). The idea of Violet dying nobly fighting the tyranny of the feed corps harkens back to what Coverdale said about being a hero or foolish (Hawthorne 10). Was Violets’ act one of heroism and martyrdom to help along the resistance to the feed? Or was it a fools venture to fight against seemingly omnipotent companies?

In the novel, it is quite true that people cannot actually live without the feed if it is taken out of their systems (Anderson 170-171). This is part of why Violet dies, because her basic functions are controlled by the system, that can be remotely accessed by a corporation or the police as it had been in the novel numerous times (Anderson 92-93,151). The ability to remotely access and control a person in the novel is a metaphor for how people allow technology into their life in today’s world control them and the extremes to which it can go. This is not to say that all technology is to be avoided, and certainly that is not what Anderson intends with his novel. Nevertheless, the story is a warning about letting technology become too much a part of one’s self, and not being able to live without it. In current society people can live without their technology, even though one could feel strange without it. In the fictional world of Feed the technology is the person and can never be separated.

The feed and the technology that governs it also allows for invasive searches of personal memories. It is dubious in the book as to whether or not the police actually nudge Titus and Violet in their sleep; or if it is the corporations that are checking up on their products to make sure that the message of the rebel elements in the society had not gotten through. They are indeed products rather than people, as a
defendant on a court show pleaded he case to “Judge Spandex” saying, “I am not a product, But a person!” (Anderson 26). They do not even know that they have become products because their intelligence and self-awareness has been so eroded and assailed that they find no problem in calling others “unit.” According to the Oxford English Dictionary the word “unit” means, “A single magnitude or number regarded as an undivided whole and as the ultimate base of all number.” Although the meanings of words change over time, the term “unit” has not done so in the past three hundred forty years since the Oxford English Dictionary cited it (OED “Unit”). The feed implantees are indeed being bought and sold to different companies and they allow it to happen. Their thoughts memories and feelings betray their sensibilities to money hungry companies who, without scruples, decide to sell these people products until the people stop being useful to their bottom line. Thus the eventual shift towards calling people “unit” or “unette” is significant because there is no historical basis for using this term for the people, Anderson shifts this idea into a means of making all people interchangeable. The corporations treat the people exactly like numbered units rather than living breathing people.

Likewise, the idea that the corporations and not the police are spying on the minds of the teens in the story becomes apparent when they give Titus a nightmare about a riot. This is after the point in which Titus and Violet decide to resist the feed together and not become marketable consumers. In the dream, Titus rejects the pants and then they are torn and destroyed and the same happens to people after the fact, because he rejected the act of buying the pants (Anderson 151). The message of the
dream marketed to Titus shows him that because he rejected the pants, the people who would have made the pants rebelled and caused trouble, because of Titus. The next day however, Quendy and Calista are wearing “retro Riot gear” (Anderson 163). The interesting part is that they do not even know what riots they are talking about and why they are doing what they are doing, because they are such good consumers (Anderson 163). They even remain good consumers without the feed. When Loga goes and changes her hair style, because the feed said so, Quendy and Calista do the same things moments later, even though their feeds had been shut down for repairs (Anderson 163). It seems that the idea of being a consumer and a follower is so ingrained into the system of these characters that it is hard to get away from, even without the connection to the feed.

The feed also controls emotional well-being in a way, by trying to nudge its hosts one way or another. When their feed connection is returned to them they danced and celebrated, and the feed picked up on this and gave them ideas about how to celebrate (Anderson 70). None of them realized the implications of what happened to them and how it could have changed their lives for the better. Before the feed is restored to them, the characters that lose the connection all rediscovered oratory and storytelling when Loga would come and visit them and tell them what was going on in their favorite show (Anderson 58). During the characters stay at the hospital Titus becomes familiar with and angry at a picture on the wall. The painting is of an empty boat in the middle of a lake (45). When Titus looks at the boat and gets upset because not only is it in the middle of a lake doing nothing, there is no person (45). The
rendering of the empty boat in the middle of a lake confuses and upsets Titus. The confusion seems to emanate from the fact that the feed had conditioned Titus to think about things literally and only for function. The picture violated the rule of function since it was unmanned, which is what bothered Titus the most about the painting. However, because the feed was inactive and unable to skew his thoughts as much, he began to see the beauty in the abstract rather than the literal. This lead to his ability to use figurative language which Violet tells him later on that no one else that he associates with does. He used a critical thinking skill, moreover a literary skill of associating the boat to himself, or with the open air garden on the moon in simile, “It’s like a squid making love with the sky,” (Anderson 62-63). This is the difference between Titus and his friends, he has a spark within him that none of the others have, and he does not even know it. He does poorly in school, because he does not conform to their standards and feels stupid because of it (Anderson 110). But what are the standards that he had to conform to? He had to learn how to be a better consumer, like everyone around him, and he fails at that (Anderson 109). Perhaps it is a deeper part of him that innately rejects the feed, and he just needed a catalyst like Violet to bring that out in himself.

The people of *Feed* are for the most part happy, because they do not know what else to be. The people in *Feed* have a lot of stuff, and they are happy, but why are they happy? And are they happy, or are they just too wired up to know that they are unhappy? This is because the feed that is within them has been built to figure out their emotions and use material goods that have been branded to them to lift their
spirits, so to speak, and make them happy by giving them material goods (Anderson 92-93). This may be a patch for emotions that one feels, but covering them up does nothing but hide them until they explode. When Titus is faced with his own mortality and the fact that he might get shut down the way that Violet was getting shut down and denied help he bought a certain pair of pants so many times that his credit account ran dry (Anderson 293). This is the only way that he learned to cope with his emotions, was to buy things that the feed suggested for him. He was not any better for buying these pants, but after it all, he realized something about himself, and what he had to do. By the end of the novel, Titus realized that buying things and materialism was not the answer and that bucking the system, though it might cause his demise, would be the only way to actually live and be free from a system that controlled so much of the freedom that the people supposedly had. He awoke from the technotopia to find that he had been plugged into a techno-dystopia instead. It was through his association with Violet that led him to this understanding, but he did not know what to do with it, and had to fight the urges that the feed was giving him. One must understand that advertising even in today’s world is very powerful and persuasive, and would be even more so if one was constantly being marketed to nonstop, the way the people are in Feed. It would be harder for them to turn off their electronics, because they would have to be turned off themselves, as when they were broadcasting the hackers message (Anderson 40).

Bringing these ideas from the world of this fictional future to current an article written about the newly released Apple iPad becomes key. A recent article in
Newsweek discussed the attributes of Apple’s new iPad. The article turns into nothing but a five-page advertisement for the product, using all sorts of gimmicks to get the reader to want to purchase it. The beginning of the articles states that Steve Jobs, the head of Apple, single handedly invented the personal computer in 1976 (Lyons 47). The article also claims that the Apple Corporation under the guidance of Steve Jobs makes computers that people want to buy and actually like to use over other brands and operating systems (47). Both of these statements are not backed up by any sourcing or anything that would validate their place in the article, but they are there nonetheless the latter statement is completely subjective. The article ignores other technologies in other brands when it comes to products like the iPhone, which, “nearly three years after its introduction, no other phone comes close” (Lyons 48). This is all subjective information being presented in a way that seem to the not so careful reader to be objective. Lyons goes on to say that Steve Jobs invents gadgets that “we didn’t know we needed, but then suddenly can’t live without” (48). I think people who have experienced the new technologies of today can in fact live without them, and do not need these technologies as much as people like the author of this article tells them that they do. The author on a number of occasions states that when a person buys and iPad or an Apple product, that they are giving up some of their freedom as consumers and individuals. A quotation from the cofounder of the Berkman Center for Internet & Society, Jonathan Zittrain states, “The price is you give up the freedom to choose what code you run and what content you see...the fear is that we could be charmed by platforms that turn out to be not very good for us”
(Lyons 50). This is a direct correlation to *Feed* and the feed within the people of that world.

Today people do not seem to have a problem giving up some of their freedoms to the Apple Corporation, which even the biased author of the article is leery about saying “Never mind that you’re giving up control to a company that doesn’t always play nice with others,”(50). Lyons goes on to say that, some of the developers of the iPad were so afraid of Steve Jobs and his committee that they would not talk to the news magazine or if they did so under anonymity for fear of what would happen to them (50). This does not sound like cute and cuddly company that has marketed itself so successfully to the world. According Lyons, the people who run Apple are to be feared and bad things will happen if someone were to make them upset. This is exactly what happens in *Feed* when people cross the Corporations, like the old man from the Coalition of Pity who hacks the teen’s feed (Anderson 38-39). He was beaten to death and nothing ever came of the trial. Nevertheless, the memories of the children were subpoenaed and confiscated by the police and the corporations that owned the feeds in the heads of those that were hacked (Anderson 68). The same goes for the users of the iPad and future, if not current Apple products, nothing that one does on the iPad will ever be secret, because of its 24/7 connection to the internet (Lyons 49). Nothing that anyone does on the feed is secret either. Everything that someone does is broadcast somewhere, where people are watching it. About the giving up of personal freedoms for easy to use technologies, one of Ben Franklin’s quotations fits this idea best, “They who can give up essential liberty to
obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety”
(http://www.ushistory.org/franklin). These people that are so willing to give into
Apple now, will be the people that will give into the Apple iThink(a title I came up
with for a not yet existent device) when it comes out most likely before the end of this
century. Moreover, those consumers will lose more and more security as they become
sucked into a world close to that of the fictional one in Feed. These consumers, who
are following the fictional plot-line will do so with blinders on as to what is going to
happen, not only to themselves but also to the world around them when this
materialistic society finally shows its face on the earth. When Violet finally snaps on
the people at Link’s party she states that, “You don’t have the feed! You are feed!
You’re feed! You’re being eaten! You’re raised for food! Look at what you’ve made
yourselves! (Anderson 202). She means two things here, one that the feed
corporations would not exist without them and second that because they are part of
the feed system, they are being used as food for the corporations to feed off of and
become stronger. And once a person is used up, the individual is discarded and
replaced; much like Violet is at the end of the book.

Feed[ing] Nature

Along with all of the negative effects of the world in which the Feed
characters live and after all of the things that have happened to them because of their
association with it they are blinded to the fact that nature does not fair so well either.
When Violet first eats dinner with Titus’ family and they discuss places she would
like to go, she mentions a place called Jefferson Park, as being one of the last places
in America that one can see a forest (Anderson 125-126). She is then told by Titus’ father that the forest was cut down for an oxygen factory, which then incited an argument about trees being naturally oxygen factories, and their “inefficiencies” (Anderson 126). It is the people in the world of *Feed*, as well as people of this current time, to an extent, who do not see the damages that they are causing to the environment and their lack of a plan for the future. The scene with Titus father arguing with Violet is accented by the disposable table that Titus mother and brother throw away after their dinner (Anderson 129). This is a telling scenario in this fictional future America, where nothing is permanent and everything is disposable. This is one of the main points that Violets’ father brings up when telling Titus he is no good, and that he just threw Violet away, rather than treating her like an actual person and not a unit (Anderson 290).

In the world that Anderson created for Titus and Violet, true nature is dying at an alarming rate. For example, the fish have to be sprayed with a type of foam or plastic that keeps them from being killed by the acidic waters, of the ocean. When Titus and Violet go to one of the oceans, they have to wear protective body suits because of the toxic beach environment and cannot actually go into the water because it is so corrosive to them (Anderson 179). This is a dismal view of the future, but one that is not too far off if certain people keep lobbying for nothing to be done about helping out the planet. In one interesting scene towards the end of the novel, is when Titus’ father comes home from a business trip, where they did a corporate exercise and went whale hunting, killing one of the last living sea creatures found on earth
(Anderson 280-83). This is of course extremely disturbing and saddening to find that people would participate so readily in the destruction of the things that are keeping them alive. Likewise, Titus and Violet go out for a day and go to a maze that instead of being made from corn, it is made from filet mignon and is called a “steak maze” (Anderson 142). Nature, in this world has become so debased, that instead of herding cattle, people have genetically engineered the muscles of cows to grow like agricultural crops (144). The strange thing is, no one seems to mind, not even Violet, especially when they realize that there are parts where the genetic coding was wrong and there were other parts like eyes and hearts visible to tourists (144). This would then beg the question, is this field of beef and steak alive, can it feel pain, is it conscious? This is never addressed in the novel, and perhaps it is not of major significance, but at the same time, are the people on the feed not a little like the field of beef waiting to be harvested? And when a section is not grown correctly, it can be cut out and replaced, much like Violet and her desire not to be part of the system any longer.

But who has time to worry in a technotopia? The world of Feed becomes utopic to those with the feed implanted in them because it gives them the ability to be completely oblivious to everything that is going on in the world if they so choose. One of the major underlying events in the story is that there is a growing anger towards the United States and the corporations like Feedtech that produce the feeds that are placed within the people (Anderson 85, 119, 189, 242, 272). At the end of the novel, the Global Alliance threatens the country and tells them if they do not comply
with their demands, there will be a global and total war against the United States (Anderson 296). But, Titus states that even though some people do not like the corporations, they are there and will not go away and there would be no use in fighting them (Anderson 48-49). This is before his feed is hacked and his thoughts are controlled. Later on in the novel Titus states that he does not think that the corporations would do anything dishonest or truly detrimental to the environment or the people they are supposed to be helping, again when his thoughts are monitored by the feed corporations. (Anderson 110). He of course is saying this from inside a house that is inside a bubble with its own pseudo-atmosphere and pseudo-sun and clouds™. It is only when he is not hooked up to the feed, when he states that the corporations are probably doing something evil to the populace (Anderson 48).

The feed in this example completely controls how he sees things and how he views the corporations that he is marketed to. While he is connected to the feed, he sees the advantages of using it for the most part. Even in his melancholy state, when he laments about the corporations being omnipotent, he says there is nothing to be done about it (Anderson 48-49). It is because of the feed and how they manipulate the mind that he does not understand the real world and how it works. He does not experience the natural world, as can be done today, but instead a world that is artificial almost exclusively. When he goes to Violet’s suburb, he is amazed that she has to live with just one sun, and that no one lives in the bubbles that he is used to (Anderson 134). Where she lives, nature survives the best it can, just as she does,
being the harbinger for nature under the auspices of the machine, much the way
Zenobia represents less of nature and more of the artificial.

Of course, Titus does not totally understand the negative effects of his world,
and neither does Violet really. One of the things that they do share is that they were
both test tube babies. Titus mother discussed the night that she and Titus’ father
decided to have him and he is uncomfortable hearing about it, especially when they
discuss the features that he has and why he has them. For instance, Titus’ parents tell
him that he looks the way he does, because his parents liked the look of a specific
actor and decided that that is how they wanted him to look, with some of their
features mixed in as well (Anderson 225). Violet, though born from an experimental
type relationship, as she states, was “hatched” as well, although her parents probably
would have done the natural method if they could have. The ability to naturally
conceive and birth babies had gone away long before Titus and Violet were born.
This turn of events is most likely due to the ambient radiation that the people were
subjected to, which is possibly why they lost their hair and skin, radiation poisoning.

**Feed[ing] The Future**

What M.T. Anderson’s novel shows is a possible future that people in this
country seem to be aiming for without knowing it. With all of the new technologies
that are being developed the idea of a technotopia is out there and could possibly be
like the one in *Feed*. It is important to look at this novel as a way of seeing into a
possible future that is not all that far off. The reformers of the nineteenth century saw
this type of future and tried to move away from it. Titus’ becomes the modern day
Hollingsworth, both man and machine, unable or unwilling to see beyond his own views, which leads to the demise of another. Likewise, Violet becomes the future of Zenobia, a woman of nature that develops a desire and then need for the machine that cannot be sustained, and ultimately causes her demise.

One of the most important quotations from *Feed* comes at the end, between Violet’s father and Titus, when Titus is trying to defend his actions and Violet’s father calls him an Eloi (Anderson 291). Titus does not understand this is told to read the book it comes from, which is H.G. Wells’ *The Time Machine*. Like the Eloi, Titus and the people of this fictional future America receive their goods from destinations unknown, and they do not care whence the goods come from, as long as they come in a timely fashion. They do not worry about anything but themselves and how they are sustained, much like in Wells’ novel. Thus, the Morlocks would be the corporations, which feed upon their Eloi by forcing them to be consumers under penalty of death. It is at the end of the novel that Titus realizes, not that he is an Eloi per se, but that he is a “unit” and that he does not need to be a “unit” any longer. The end of the novel ends with a feeling of hope and that in his mind, as associated with the advertisement on the feed, “Everything must go” (Anderson 299). If Titus can break free from the feed, and have the uplink shut off, like he did when he was in the hospital, perhaps he can gain some more freedom, which at the end of the book, he seems to be aiming towards. As stated before, Titus was able, through the help and sacrifice of Violet, to see the light from outside of the cave and perhaps be all the better for it. *Feed* functions as a light for the consumer culture of the third phase in Lipovetsky’s model,
in which the people of today inhabit. It is up to modern culture to make sure the
 techno-dystopia of *Feed* never actually comes to fruition, and that the iThink will
 never be a product that people will buy into.
Concluding Utopia

In both *The Blithedale Romance* and *Feed*, Hawthorne and Anderson, respectively, write novels of failed utopian ideals. What then does this say about utopia as a concept, should people still look upon it favorably or should it be relegated to the past as antiquated thought? With just a cursory glance at the subjects and the failures of these movements over the centuries, one might agree with modern critics who say that the concept of utopia does not have a place in society any longer and that it is time to move on and deal with the problems at hand (Beaten 145; Beauchamp 53; Couton Lopez 98; Sargent 573; White 52). This for some would be the logical conclusion to the failed attempts of the past. However, as stated previously, when people stop aiming for a more perfected and harmonious lifestyle one cannot easily tell the direction of where the human civilization will go. The thought of utopia or its counterpart seem to be necessary in the human consciousness, even in the hypermodern world of today, the absence of one will bring up the ideas of the other. Benjamin Kunkel comments in his article, “Dystopia and the End of Politics” that, “Every other month seems to bring the publication of at least one so-called literary novel on dystopian or apocalyptic themes and the release of at least one similarly themes movie” (90). He does mention utopian literature in the fact that it is a “less fashionable kind of political dream” which he places within parenthesis further marginalizing the literary genre (90). Therefore, when looking at society in this way, of desiring dystopia over utopia, one must ask why people would desire to see their world in decay, rather than in glory or perfection.
These perceptions of society and its frailties in these dystopian novels or movies reflect current world and political events that argue against the ideas of utopia. “There are no more possible worlds or alternate histories as in a Philip [K.] Dick novel or McEwan’s own playfully metafictional *Atonement*, there is only the nightmare or a real *newness* in a cosmic uncertainty. The world has stopped feeling safe...” (Sicher, Skradol 175). In a modern world that seems to the people who influence trends and buy into these dystopic fantasies as unstable the concept and key component in life becomes unpredictability. This constant fear and the feeding of fear to the public through these media create a dystopia in itself. Indeed, characters in literature and movies do not seem to realize that they are in a dystopia until it is too late for them to do anything with their circumstances to shift their dystopia back into a utopia, as with Winston from *1984*, or Montag from *Fahrenheit 451*. This idea is exemplified in the characters of Zenobia and Violet in their attempts to bring about a utopian change to society, but instead meet their demise because of it.

Both of these women are the lynchpins of their stories. Without Zenobia, Blithedale could not have begun to function, since Coverdale portrays the events as revolving around her more than anyone else in the story. As for *Feed*, without the character of Violet, there would be no real story for the reader to follow. *Feed* sans Violet would not exist, because it is only through her influence on Titus that he begins to realize the world in which he lives is a manufactured lie and for the sake of all must learn to resist the feed at all costs. In this way, Violet takes a step away from her female predecessors and is the positive catalyst towards a utopian ideal, rather
than the one who brings down the utopia(s). Both of the main women in these novels, Zenobia and Violet, are also harbingers of Nature as well. This is very clear with Zenobia since the term follows her around in Hawthorne’s narrative of Blithedale Farm. Violet is the harbinger of Nature in her story because she is the most natural and has the highest respect for Nature out of any of the individuals in the novel, except perhaps her father. Even Violet’s name is a product of nature bringing her closer to nature and its beauty than Zenobia ever could with the cut flower adorning her hair. Although both women are advocates of Nature, they each treat it differently in turn during their parts of the narratives in which they inhabit.

Zenobia starts the novel as the character that is the most central to the events at Blithedale, perhaps even its heart. When the newcomers arrive at Blithedale the first night, it is Zenobia on which Hawthorne has Coverdale reflect on having the most influence on the people at Blithedale (Hawthorne 13-18). Hawthorne writes little about Mrs. Foster, and does not even give her a first name; Zenobia on the other hand is given the last part in the chapter and the beginning of the next chapter (13-18). As aforementioned about Zenobia, in the novel she is the incarnation of Nature in her time. However, she turns her back on true Nature when she allies herself with Hollingsworth and Westervelt, which causes her to become a gilded, jeweled, manufactured and industrialized Nature, and thus shows herself to be a pseudo-utopian rather than a true utopian (Hawthorne 164). Zenobia is the “first-comer” to Blithedale and because of this she becomes one of the central figures on the experiment if not the central figure around which all the other contributors to the
experiment orbit (Hawthorne 16). But, at the end of the novel she does not stick with her own aspirations for a better society, but gives in to the harsh realization of their experiment that Hollingsworth gave to Coverdale. Hollingsworth had stated, “I see through the system. It is full of defects – irremediable and damning ones! - from first to last, there is nothing else! I grasp it in my hand, and find no substance whatever, There is no human nature in it!” (Hawthorne 132). This goes to prove the long-standing feeling in the novel that Hollingsworth was not there at Blithedale to help out their experiment, but at its weakest point to overtake it and reform it into his own enterprise, which has its merits and faults as well. Nevertheless, Zenobia echoes this point of view shortly before committing suicide when she tells Coverdale, “I am weary of this place, and sick to death of playing at philanthropy and progress. Of all varieties of mock-life, we have blundered into the very emptiest mockery in our effort to establish the one true system,” (Hawthorne 227). In both the case of Hollingsworth and Zenobia, neither can see the pitfalls of their actions, and neither are truly utopian because of this. Zenobia is not utopian because she gives up her Nature to become a part of an idea that although seemed utopian, becomes dystopian rather quickly in the hands of Hollingsworth. The system that Hollingsworth had in mind, before the death of Zenobia, is one that is not far off from creating a true working utopia. This is because he realized that utopia cannot be built (although he needed his edifice) but that it must come from within, before it can be built from without. Therefore, his desired goal is to recuperate the wayward individuals in prisons and remake them into utopians to help with his utopia (Hawthorne 21-22). The frailty of this logic, which
Hollingsworth could not understand, is that being utopian cannot be forced into the being of a person; one must have a utopian spark and understanding to be a utopian and ultimately build utopias. This idea is quite like that from *Feed* in which two people in the story harbor this spark, Violet and Titus.

This is where the character of Violet from *Feed* comes into play. Her story mirrors that of Zenobia’s in that they both are speakers for Nature, but treat it differently, and through their treatment of it find their ultimate fates. In *Feed* Violet is the only character mentioned that wears non-synthetic clothing, she pays attention to world events, she cares about the state of the environment and what the corporations are doing to it, and she resists the materialistic siren’s call of the feed (Anderson 17, 126, 97, 272). Violet, unlike Zenobia, has the ability to be a true utopian soul regardless of her environment. Violet has the utopian spark but she does not have a utopia to inhabit, as Zenobia does. Although Violet does use the feed for parts of the novel, she was always ambivalent to the lifestyle that went with the use of the feed, and when the feeds were shut down, was able to plant the seeds of skepticism in Titus. Through this meeting with Violet and their short relationship, Titus is able to see the dystopia in which he lives and is a part of, but this only becomes clear for him through the sacrifice of Violet. Her death came, unlike Zenobia’s, because she wanted to keep as much Nature and what was natural about her as possible. By rejecting the feed, Violet rejected the symbolic jeweled flower that Zenobia so readily took up towards the end of her life. Perhaps this is because even in her name “Violet” she embodies a natural object, the violet flower. Thus, as a person she is a part of the
natural world and tied to true Nature because of her name. With the death of Zenobia, Coverdale’s skepticism over their experiment is solidified and becomes a foolhardy venture to pursue, whereas with the sacrifice of Violet because of her unwillingness to yield to the demands of the corporations, the dormant skeptic within Titus is awakened. Thus, the utopian within Titus arises from his skepticism of the system, which controls the lives of so many people, and he becomes aware of the dangers that this lifestyle creates for those not just in this future America, but in the world as well. As Violet did earlier in the novel, at the end of her life, it is Titus that brings her the news of terrible things that are happening in the world that he would have otherwise been oblivious to. With the movie pre-view styled story, Titus tells Violet at the end of the novel, he gave the impression that he will take up the cause of his fallen friend and carry on resisting the feed as long as he can. Thus, *The Blithedale Romance* and the fictional place is a utopia that is devoid of utopians and is an unsuccessful enterprise because of that. Alternatively, the utopian Violet and the proto-utopian Titus do not have a utopia or maybe even the hope of a utopia in which they could inhabit and create a successful society outside the reach and control of the technodystopia in which they lived and in the case of Violet, died.

The literary utopian enterprises of the past such as in *The Blithedale Romance* and those of the possible future as in the novel *Feed* attempt to change society from without, through examples and moral lessons, and other stimuli exhibited by the caretakers of the “utopian” ideals. But as evidenced here, utopia does not start with external forces and demonstrations, utopia, for it to be successful, must start from
within each person who wishes to make his utopia a functional reality. Before the ground is broken on these enterprises, if they are to thrive, there must be true utopians with their hands upon the shovels and pick-axes. Without utopian hands, hearts, and minds, how then can a true utopia be built? Critics of these utopian movements and ideals state that utopias necessarily create their own dystopias (Couton, Lopez 94; Sargent 573). Why does this have to be so? Perhaps this ideology is true from a certain point of view, but it is an aspect of thought that is coming from a non-utopian mind. Would true utopians find themselves in a dystopia because rules and regulations are put in place that the outside world does not agree with? This is certainly not the case. True utopians can look at their society and meditate on it and fix it if necessary. As Guarneri points out, one of the main differences between Oneida and its counterparts is that Oneida evolved and changed itself where weaknesses were found in their logic, instead of staying static and locked on to only certain ideologies (484). If Zenobia or Hollingsworth could have looked at their own ideals and frailties, perhaps the events of their story would not have ended as they did. If Zenobia had not given into others ideals, the way that Violet did not, her situation would not have ended in tragedy. Likewise, if Hollingsworth looked at his own ideas and thought about what might not work, perhaps he would have gone about his business in a different way.

Thus, perhaps utopia begins with the marginalized translations of the word as “ou-topos” or “no place” (Sargent 565). Just because the place is not a physical one does not mean that it cannot start from within the soul of a person. Therefore, utopias
start out as “ou-topos” within the pre-utopian, which then builds and grows within them and then turns into a literal place, “eu-topos” or “good place” (Sargent 565). For centuries hopeful utopians has started their utopian enterprises in the opposite direction, attempting to create utopians through a utopia. As evidenced with The Blithedale Romance, this does not actually work and can have dire consequences. Likewise, a utopian without a utopia is placed in a dangerous situation as with the case of Violet in Feed. What needs to happen is a marrying together of these ideals. One cannot exist without the other. To make a successful utopia, one must first have a utopian sensibility and then contemplate the utopian enterprises of the past and why they failed. Because the people at Blithedale did not pay heed to the failed attempts before them in “the dust of deluded generations,” they fell into the same traps of the generations before them (128). As previously stated, before people can become utopians and create their utopias, they first must understand the failures of the past attempts to create functional ones in the future (Berlant 32). It is understandable why people are skeptical of utopias and of people who want to be utopian. The enterprises have always failed or caused undo stresses to the societies around them whilst trying to maintain themselves as a working community. Yet it is important to note that most worthwhile ideals take time to work out and find the flaws. It is through faith to the original ideals of the project and diligence in keeping the concepts but maintaining flexibility that people who desire to be utopian need to exhibit and instill in themselves before they create a utopia that can be ultimately successful and functional.
Works Cited


Miller, John N. “Eros and Ideology: At the Heart of Hawthorne’s Blithedale.”


