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**POSTHUMAN SUBJECTIVITY AND THE ILLUSION OF AUTONOMY
IN NEWITZ'S *AUTONOMOUS***



Mahrukh Rana¹, Dr Katsiaryna Hurbik^{*2}

*¹PhD Scholar English Literature Department of English
Language and Literature the University of Faisalabad*

*^{*2}Professor PhD Linguistics (Theory of Language)
Department of English Language and Literature the
University of Faisalabad*

*¹2025f-phd-el-003@tuf.edu.pk, ^{*2}khurbik.ENG@tuf.edu.pk*

Abstract

*This research examines Annalee Newitz's *Autonomous* novel through the theoretical lens of posthuman feminism, focusing on the intersections of cyborg identity, autonomy, bio-capitalism, and human-machine hybridity. Set within a dystopian future governed by pharmaceutical monopolies and technological capitalism, the novel problematizes traditional humanist assumptions regarding identity, agency, embodiment, and subjectivity. Drawing upon the posthuman theories of Donna Haraway and Rosi Braidotti, the study critically investigates how the novel destabilizes binary distinctions between human and machine, natural and artificial, gender and technology. Furthermore, the study explores how *Autonomous* critiques bio-capitalist systems that commodify bodies, emotions, pharmaceuticals, and artificial intelligence, through close textual analysis and interdisciplinary engagement with posthumanism, feminist theory. This research argues that Newitz reconstructs subjectivity as relational, hybrid, and technologically mediated. Ultimately, the study demonstrates that *Autonomous* functions as a powerful critique of neoliberal capitalism and anthropocentric ideology while reimagining identity, embodiment, and ethical agency within the posthuman condition.*

Key words: *Posthuman feminism, cyborg identity, bio-capitalism, posthuman subjectivity, human-machine hybridity*

INTRODUCTION

In this recent era of technological advancement posthumanism and posthuman feminism have challenged the concept of subjectivity in the perspective of autonomous, rationality and self-containment. The most influential scholars like Rosi Braidotti, Donna Haraway, N Katherine Hayles, and Cary Wolf advocate for relationality, hybridity, embodiment and interdependence as the salient characteristics of the present day subjectivity, whether it is human or non-human. While negating the notion of identity as fixed and autonomous, these theorists have argued that the subjectivity is a dynamic process which is constructed by the interaction among the humans, non-human (machine/robot) and material environment. Therefore, posthumanism and posthuman feminism have emerged as a dominating critical framework for scrutinizing the representation of identity, agency and power structures in this technologically mediated and digitalized world.

The present research implies posthuman feminism theory, incorporating the works of Rosi Braidotti and Donna Haraway to interpret and analyze how the novel *Autonomous* revamps the concept of bodies, subjectivity, and agency. Braidotti's notion of nomadic posthuman subjectivity puts emphasis on affirmative, relational becoming beyond anthropocentrism, while Haraway's concept of cyborg manifesto disintegrate rigid boundaries between human being and machine, nature and culture, introducing hybrid identities that challenge dominant structures. These theoretical frameworks explore the novel's depiction of modified human bodies, sentient machines, and fluid gendered manifestation as sites where autonomy is both sabotage and potentially reclaimed. This study asserts that *Autonomous* brings to light the individual autonomy

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under biocapitalism on one hand, and, on the other hand, beckoning towards alternative posthuman ethics grounded in interdependence, resistance, and collective becoming. This study asserts that *Autonomous* illustrates that autonomy is not an innate or universal condition, rather it is relational and contested phenomenon shaped by bio-capitalism, power structures, technological dependence, and the ownership system. Aligning with the same concepts, the novel conceptualizes alternative possibilities for agency through collective resistance, ethical interdependence, and posthuman forms of becoming. By interpreting the overlapping of posthuman subjectivity, cyborg embodiment, and bio-capital control, this study contributes to the existing scholarship of *Autonomous* by exploring the posthuman feminist interpretation of the illusion of autonomy and the emergence of relational forms of agency in contemporary speculative fiction.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the construction of posthuman subjectivity and hybrid identities in Annalee Newitz's *Autonomous* through the theoretical perspective of Donna Haraway and Rosi Braidotti
2. To investigate how bio-capitalism, technological control, and corporate system of ownership shape autonomy, agency and relational ethics

Research Questions

1. How does *Autonomous* construct posthuman subjectivity and hybrid identities through its representation of human, biobot and cyborgs?
2. In what ways do bio-capitalism, technological control and corporate system of ownership shape autonomy, agency and relational ethics?

Theoretical Framework

This study is rooted in posthuman feminism, a critical approach that challenges the disruption and destabilization of traditional humanist classification such as the autonomous, rational, and confined human subject, in the age of biotechnological capitalism. Posthuman feminism repudiates anthropocentric humanism and lays stress on the intertwined, hybrid, and relational nature of subjectivity, embodiment, and agency. Rosi Braidotti's notion of posthumanism offers a vitalist and nomadic understanding of subjectivity. In her influential work *The Posthuman* (2013) Braidotti argues for destabilizing the humanist subject and embracing "the life beyond the self" -through relational intertwined with non-human agents, technologies, and milieus (Braidotti, 2013, p.49-50). For Braidotti, posthuman subjectivity, is not a loss of agency but an accenting process of becoming, a nomadic, embodied, and collective mode of being and existence that confronts neoliberal individualism and bio-capitalism commodification (Braidotti, 2013, p. 163–164; Braidotti, 2022, p. 1–12). This viewpoint is especially important and beneficial for interpretation and analyzing how characters in *Autonomous* mediates identity and resistance within the networks of power.

Constituting Braidotti, Donna Haraway's cyborg theory provides a powerful tool for scrutinizing hybridity and bound-blurring. In her seminal work *A Cyborg Manifesto* (1985), Haraway explains the cyborg as well as a "cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction" (1985, p.149). The cyborg figure repudiates myths of purity and naturalness, instead encompassing partiality, irony, and contradictory amalgamation forged in the

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“informatics of domination” (Haraway, 1991, p. 161–165). Haraway’s conceptual framework elucidates how gender, embodiment, and identity become fluid and constructed in biotechnological backgrounds, while it also highlights possibilities for subversive resistance.

By combining together, Braidotti’s nomadic subjectivity and Haraway’s cyborg politics facilitate a subtle reading of *Autonomous*. They promote analysis of:

- They body as a technological and economically mediated site
- The emergence of posthuman subjectivities through human- AI intertwined
- The illusion of autonomy under bio-capitalist structures
- The fluid, constructed nature of gender and identity

This dual theoretical framework moves beyond mere critique to explore both the oppressive dimensions of posthuman conditions and the potential for affirmative, relational ethics and resistance.

Methodology

This study assimilates qualitative interpretive research design by focusing on literary textual analysis. The study investigates that how posthuman feminist criticism intersects with technology, embodiment, gender, and autonomy in Newitz’s *Autonomous*. The study offers an interdisciplinary framework by combining posthumanism and feminist theory to investigate how the novel reconstructs the human subjectivity and agency within the technological mediated futures.

The study focuses on:

1. Posthuman Subjectivity and Hybrid identity

Examining the representation of human, artificial, and hybrid beings through characters such as Paladin, Med, and Threezed to explore how the novel challenges conventional distinctions between human and non-human existence.

2. Embodiment, Technological Intervention, and Biopower

Investigating pharmaceutical technologies, bodily modification, and the circulation of Zacuity to analyse how scientific innovation regulates, transforms, and commodifies bodies within neoliberal systems.

3. Autonomy, Ownership, and Agency

Analysing forms of indenture, labour exploitation, and proprietary control to evaluate how the novel interrogates freedom, self-determination, and the politics of ownership in posthuman contexts.

4. Gender, Sexuality, and Relational Ethics

Exploring interactions among human and posthuman characters to examine how the text destabilizes traditional gender binaries and reimagines intimacy, desire, and ethical relations beyond human-centred frameworks.

5. Narrative Construction of Posthuman Experience

Examining narrative techniques, including alternating perspectives and interior focalization, to understand how the novel represents fragmented identities and multiple forms of consciousness associated with posthuman existence.

These analytical categories are derived from central concepts of posthuman feminist theory and are employed to address the study's research questions concerning the reconfiguration of identity, agency, embodiment, and gender in technologically mediated futures.

Literature Review

The scholarly discourse encompassing Annalee Newitz’s *Autonomous* (2017)

bifurcates with broader arguments in posthumanism, feminist science fiction studies and critiques of bio-capitalism. This literature review places the present research study within existing scholarship, also accentuating the distinctive contribution of a posthuman feminist analysis focused on subjectivity and the illusion of autonomy.

1. Posthuman Feminism and Cyborg Theory

Donna Haraway's and Rosi Braidotti's seminal work are the focal points of the present research. Haraway's *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women* (1991) envisages the cyborg as a hybrid entity that destabilizes demarcation between machine/human, culture/nature, and gender dualities, proposes a tool for feminist defiance within the "informatics of domination" (Haraway, 1991, p. 149–165) Braidotti (2013) forges an affirmative posthuman that emphasizes nomadic subjectivity, interdependence and the destabilization of the autonomous humanist subjects in favour of intertwined, multi-species becoming.

In addition to Haraway and Braidotti, posthumanist discourse has been significantly shaped by N. Katherine Hayles and Cary Wolfe. In *How We Became Posthuman* (1999), Hayles challenges the Cartesian separation of mind and body by arguing that subjectivity emerges through the dynamic interaction of embodiment, information, and technology. She critiques the notion of disembodied consciousness and emphasizes the material conditions through which human and non-human agencies are constituted. Similarly, Cary Wolfe (2010) contends that posthumanism is not merely concerned with technological enhancement but with a fundamental rethinking of human exceptionalism. By emphasizing the interconnectedness of humans, animals, machines, and environments, Wolfe advocates a posthuman ethics grounded in relationality and interdependence. Together, Haraway, Braidotti, Hayles, and Wolfe provide a comprehensive theoretical foundation for examining how *Autonomous* represents hybrid subjectivities, technological embodiment, and the contested nature of autonomy in a bio-capitalist world.

Recent scholarship on Newitz's novel grounds upon these concepts. G'opporova and Karimov in *The Poetics of Cyborg Characters in the Novels of Annalee Newitz* (2025), interpret the poetics of cyborg characterization via four interconnected narrative modes which are: monologue, dialogues, landscape, and portrait. Their close reading on the character of biobot Paladin's interior monologue depicts how Newitz bestows non-human subject phenomenological depth and moral responsibility, destabilizing anthropocentric perspectives. The conversation between Paladin and his partner Elias, promotes pronouns, consent and self-hood under reign of code and property, while the landscapes portrayed in the novel operates as techno-natural, spatio-temporal spheres of indenture and resistance. The interpretation intensifies posthuman feminist concern with hybrid embodiment and relational subjectivity.

2. Autonomy, Bio-capitalism and Democratic Transhumanism

Khan and Anum in *The Endangered Ideals of Democratic Transhumanism in Annalee Newitz* (2025) implement James Hughes' concepts of democratic transhumanism to assert that *Autonomous* represents the "endangered ideals" of universal approach, non-anthropocentric selfhood and autonomy (Khan and Anum, 2025, p. 55–69). The setting of novel in 2144, the monopolies and hegemonies of pharmaceutical companies exemplified by Zaxy' addictive Zacuity and indenture systems for humans and robots exploit both human and robotic bodies and subjectivity, amplifying inequalities rather

than gratifying transhumanist commitments of enhancement and progress. The novel serves as a warning against unregulated and chaotic bio-capitalism.

Muhammad Rafi Adani in *Dominance Power by the Capitalist in Annalee Newitz's Autonomy: A Hegemony Study* uses Gramsci's Theory of hegemony to expose three interconnected form: ideology, state and dominance power, exercised by capitalist giants like Zaxy and the International Property Coalition (IPC). Human beings and biobots are considered as commodities with indenture aggregating to form a system of slavery that violates the selfhood of human beings and biobots. This Marxist concept highlights the material structures that sabotage Braidotti's affirmative relationality and Haraway's hybrid alliance.

3. Illusion of Autonomy

Nagheen Fatima (et al.) in *Illusion of Autonomy: Cyborg Interactions and AI's Ulterior Mechanisms in Annlee Newitz's Autonomous* (2025) focus on the "illusion of autonomy" through Haraway's cyborg mechanism. They examine bio-tech and bio-med elements, pharmaceutical monopoly and cyborg interactions especially between Paladin and Jack, illustrating vague identities and corporate ulterior mechanism.

Ahmed Hussain and Fatima Raheem (2025), in their article *The Ethics of Transhumanism in Annalee Newitz's Autonomous*, reveal that the novel exhibits a dystopian future where advanced capitalism transforms both humans and intelligent robots into commodities controlled by corporate systems. The researchers particularly focus on pharmaceutical monopolies, highlighting how the corporation named Zaxy manipulates human bodies through addictive enhancement drugs for profit maximization. Their study exposes that the novel critiques the dehumanizing consequences of biocapitalism, where autonomy becomes an illusion under systems of ownership and indenture. This perspective strongly aligns with the present research, which examines how posthuman subjectivity and bodily autonomy are destabilized through technological and economic control.

Furthermore, Hussain and Raheem (2025) explore the ethical implications of human-machine hybridity and the blurred distinction between humans and robots in *Autonomous*. Drawing upon deontological ethics and virtue ethics, they contend that the novel challenges traditional definitions of humanity by portraying sentient robots such as Paladin as beings capable of consciousness, emotional attachment, and moral reasoning. Their analysis demonstrates how the "indenture system" in the novel reduces both humans and AI beings to exploitable property, thereby exposing the destructive effects of capitalist power structures. While their research primarily focuses on ethics and transhumanism, the present study extends this discussion through a posthuman feminist framework based on Donna Haraway and Rosi Braidotti, emphasizing relational subjectivity, cyborg embodiment, and the illusion of autonomy under bio-capitalist systems.

The present study advocates cyborg poetics, capitalist hegemony, democratic transhumanism, and Haraway's hybridity, integrates posthuman feminism framework centered on subjectivity and the illusion of autonomy. Other studies tend to investigate autonomy either as political-economic issue but scarcely examine how bio-capitalism generates posthuman subjects whose apparent agency remains relationally restricted and ideologically illusory.

G'opporova Gulmira Shuxratbek qizi and Karimov's (2025) study on Annalee Newitz' *Autonomous*, puts emphasis on non-human subjectivity and cyborg, while Anum and

Khan have focused on the limitations of democratic transhumanism under the control of corporate capitalism. Muhammad Rafi Adano (2026) discusses the role of hegemonic power structure in controlling and regulation the human and non-human bodies. Fatima et al. and Hussain and Raheem (2025) scrutinize the concept of the illusion of autonomy, AI consciousness and technological dependence.

These studies show the increasing interest in the interconnected concept of technology, power, identity and autonomy. However, despite the contribution of these studies, the present study has mainly focused on these concern through separate transhumanist, political-economic, ethical and representational framework by proposing a gap to the combined application of Haraway's cyborg politics and Braidotti's nomadic subjectivity in exploring how bio-capitalist power structure reshape and construct posthuman subjects whose autonomy persist through relational, contingent and ideological restrictions.

Analysis and Discussion

Annalee Newitz's debut novel *Autonomous* fabricates a near-future dystopia set in 2144, where bio-capitalism has subjugated both human beings and machines. In this world, pharmaceutical corporations expand patent dominance far beyond human life duration, while both human beings and sentient robots are made indentured as property under hegemonic system imposed by entities like the International Property Coalition (IPC). The novel juxtaposes between the perspectives of Judith "Jack" Chen, a pharmaceutical pirate who reverse-engineers and distributes generic drugs to the underprivileged people, and Paladin, a newly activated combat biobot indentured to the IPC alongside human agent Elias, "People with no credits would be dying soon, and the pharma companies didn't give a shit. That's why Jack had rushed to sell those thousands of doses of untested Zacuity all across the Free Trade Zone" (Newitz, 2017, p.7).

This interpretation employs posthuman feminist theory, the works of Rosi Braidotti and Donna Haraway to examine how *Autonomous* depicts the body as a technologically and economically constructed entity, reconfigures subjectivity through human-AI hybrids, problematizes autonomy with bio-capitalist structures, and depicts gender as fluid and constructed, "There were entire text repositories that focused on eliminating the indenture of humans. Their pundits argued that humans should not be owned like bits because nobody paid to make other humans" (Newitz, 2017, p. 26). The novel exposes autonomy as an ideological illusion that encompasses deep relational dependencies and power imbalances. By incorporating these inquisitions in a thriller-like plot indulging corporate conspiracy, black-market pharmacology, and personal intertwinements, Newitz proposes a subtle critique that echoes with present day issues of intellectual property, AI ethics, healthcare access, and identity crisis in late capitalism, "Families with nothing would sometimes sell their toddlers to indenture schools, where managers trained them to be submissive just like they were programming a bot" (Newitz, 2017, p.21).

1. Embodiment, Biopower and Technological Intervention

In posthuman feminism, the body goes beyond its status as a natural, bounded entity, and becomes a site of ongoing material-discursive fabrication. Braidotti, in her works like *The Posthuman* (2013) and *Posthuman Feminism* (2021) explains posthuman subjectivity as nomadic and affirmative, arising from entanglement with technology, other species, and non-human forces rather than from sovereign selfhood and

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individualism. Haraway's seminal work "*A Cyborg Manifesto*" (1991) repudiates mythical narrative of organic wholeness and purity, accepting hybridity amalgamate in the "informatics of domination", the combination of high-tech and militarized capitalism that reconstruct the bodies and shapes.

Autonomous objectifies these theoretical lens through its pharmaceutical regime. Drug like Zacuity, a productivity booster that chemically interlinks tasks and work with narcotic pleasures, is not only a tool but it is an operation of bodily and psychic control, "It didn't just boost your concentration. It made you enjoy work...Zacuity, work gave you a kind of visceral satisfaction that nothing else could...It was easy to see why the shit sold like crazy", (Newitz, 2017, p.4). Zaxy, the pharmaceutical corporation company behind Zacuity, makes it with addictive properties that user's reward system, turning them into obsessive laborers who ignores their basic need like eating, sleeping, or hygiene until they collapse or die, "Completion reward was so intense that it made you writhe right in your plush desk chair, clutching the foam desktop, breathing hard for a minute or so", (Newitz, 2017, p.4). Jack's reverse-engineered generic version reveals the systemic violence, her act of making the drug available unintentionally intensifies the corporate-designed harm, leading to widespread addiction crises that she must alleviate.

The plot of the novel highlights how bio-capitalism functions at the molecular level. Patent drugs transfigure life-saving or life enhancing molecule into private ownership, making a deep generational gap and inequality. The wealthy and rich people have the access to anti-aging treatments, cognitive boosters and customized gene therapies, while the poor and unprivileged suffer from short lifespans, debt-driven indenture, and dependency on black market generic brands and products, "Zaxy had always placed profit over public health, but this went beyond the usual corporate negligence, (Newitz,2017, p.19)". Jack's own subjective body demonstrates this posthuman manifestation. She continuously transforms and compromises her physiology as she is a submarine-dwelling pirate who is operating outside the Free Trade Zone. Moreover, she uses synthetic biology, implants and chemical intrusion to live and survive underwater pressure, to escape her detection from IPC and continues her mission of providing brands to the unprivileged. In fact, her submarine functions as a part of her body, a portable laboratory where selfhood and technology obscure indistinctly.

The novel depicts manipulation and commodification of subjective bodies through the character like Threezed, the escaped indentured human who joins Jack's mission, "Suddenly Jack realized why the bot could look so beaten up but still show no signs of an alloy endoskeleton. This wasn't a biobot-it was just a plain bio. A human", (Newitz, 2017, p.20). Threezed was sold by his family as a child and trained for docile and submissive in ways reflecting like a biobot programming. Threezed's wounded and malnutrition body illustrates the literal and symbolic scars of economic hegemony on one hand and on the other economic deprivation, "Families with nothing would sometimes sell their toddlers to indenture schools, where managers trained them to be submissive just like they were programming a bot" (Neiwitz, 2017, p.21). These lines from the novel blur the demarcation between the free, autonomous human beings and objectified commodity, depicting that how bio-capitalism manufactures "bare life", in Agamben's terms, adapted to posthumanism that is manipulative across the organic subjects as well as the synthetic materials.

Further depending on Haraway, the cyborg in *Autonomous* is not just a utopian figure but one entangled in discrepancies. The bodies are the site of data, having patent nexus,

tracked metabolisms, neurological pattern under surveillance. Jack's job as a synthetic biologist implicates hacking these information flow, yet she herself tangled in the same vicious logics she opposes. Her mission to provide the generic brand and medicine require resources often acquired through merchandising reverse-engineered drugs, constructing ethic equivocation that prevent any superficial heroic narrative. Braidotti's nomadic subjectivity resonates here as Jack's life is one of continuous movement across oceans and borders, her identity counterfeits in relational bonding with machines, chemical, allies, and adversaries rather than a fixed essence, "Black pharma smuggling wasn't exactly the job she'd imagined for herself thirty years ago, in the revolutionary fervor of her grad student days...But when she'd finally left the university labs, her life had become one stark choice: farm patents for shitty startups, or become a pirate. For Jack, it wasn't a choice at all. Not really", (Newitz, 2017, p. 18).

The novel also critiques real-world parallel. In our present era, pharmaceutical patents, e.g., on antiretroviral or COVID vaccines, create socio-economic, political and developmental disparities between wealthier, economically strong and industrialized countries and under-developed countries, while debt and gig economies disintegrate worker autonomy. Newitz incorporates these monopolies into a future where indenture integrates what is already under surveillance, bodies as sites for education, healthcare, or survival. The subjective bodies thus become a battle field where socio-economic and political structure portray themselves biologically, demanding posthuman feminist implementation to deconstruct the subjectivities.

2. Posthuman Subjectivity and Hybridity Identity

Rosi Braidotti lays stress upon a "vitalist" relationality, in which subjectivity derives not from isolated consciousness but from robust bonding of human subject, technological and environmental, and sentient forces. *Autonomous* represents this through its non-human, machine and hybrid characters, destabilizing the human being as the delinquent subject of narrative and ethics.

Paladin, the combat biobot protagonist, personifies the archetypical posthuman figure. A combat machine embodies with a human brain, harvested from a deceased female soldier, basically for advanced facial recognition, Paladin's consciousness emanates relationally, through his interactions with Eliazsz, other bots, environmental variables, and its own evolving code. Initially indentured, Palandin was programmed to obedience, but starts interrogating its desire and feeling when Eliazsz's charm and appeal triggers physiological and emotional response, " "I will," said Paladin. He wanted to please Eliazsz. Paladin was sure that wasn't just some indenture algorithm weighting his decision matrix: it was his true desire." (Newitz, 2017, p. 29)". The bio-bot shifts his processing power to research human sexuality and gender even in the middle of violent mission, which demonstrates the fragmented, multi-layered and divided nature of posthuman mind. This hybridity explores the concept of Haraway's cyborg; half machine, half human residue, negotiating the informatics of domination while establishing new connections, "I have been thinking about your experiences with Eliazsz. Fang's antennas slowly swept the room, drifting lazily in a default algorithm that scanned for security vulnerabilities. I think he's anthropomorphizing you" (Newitz, 2017, p.116).

Paladin's quest for gender identity is very important. Bots especially combat bot lack inherent gender identity, but Paladin transfers pronoun "he" to "she" to facilitate Eliazsz uneasiness and discomfort with his charm and attraction. This gender identity fluidity

destabilizes the binary categories but also exposes threat under power imbalances. Paladin entangles between its feelings emerging from genuine becoming or just from internalized app like “masterluv” in its indenture programming, “Some of the robots said they were learning about human sexuality. Do you think military robots need to do that? ...I don’t know anything about that. I’m not a faggot” (Newitz, 2017, p.86). Paladin’s relationship with Elias, shaped by initial homophobia on his end, reshaped once Paladin’s female –origin brain is revealed, depicts gender as performative and relational. Paladin obeys not genuinely from autonomy but from the dynamics of affection and survival, revealing the messy ethics of hybrid relationship that Haraway puts emphasis to “stay with the trouble”. Elias becomes sexually attracted to Paladin but feels uncomfortable because he initially perceives Paladin as male. The interactions between Elias and Paladin destabilize heteronormative assumptions by depicting desire as fluid, performative, and technologically mediated rather than biologically fixed. Paladin’s analytical understanding of sexuality exposes the socially constructed nature of human gender and erotic desire. In *Autonomous*, sexuality is represented not as biologically stable but as technologically mediated, psychologically negotiated, and performatively constructed.

Med, an autonomous robot scientist who aids Jack, proposes a divergent posthuman subjectivity. No doubt she has legal freedom but she is also intertwined in networks of solidarity and resistance. Her cooperation with Jack, Threed, and others at Free Lab to produce RetCon, an antidote to Zaucuity’s effects, illustrates the posthuman ethics and moral; collective, problem-solving beyond human- machine, organic –synthetic boundaries, classifying damage deduction over individual glory. Med’s persona combating anthropocentric norms, depicting how autonomous and free AIs can contribute to ethical becoming without eliminating relational dependencies.

All of these character collectively destabilize and decenter the human subjectivity and centrality. The novel’s multi-layered narrative structure, changing Jack’s pirate thoughts with Paladin’s enforcer perspective, while interacting flashbacks and combining element, reflects Braidotti’s nomadic subjectivity. It rejects a single anthropocentric perspective, contributing subjectivity as divided, evolving always intermediated by technology and capital. Jack’s crew, including the reformist activist Krish, creates a temporary bonding challenging corporate hegemony, despite the internal conflicts, power imbalances, past betrayals undermine that such collective becoming are never utopian.

Furthermore, the novel explores how posthuman subjectivity intersects with labor and memory. Paladin’s human brain fragment conveys latent influences, complicating its “machine” identity. Human beings like Threed, conditioned from childhood, depicts bot-like programming, blurring demarcations. This relational ontology coincides with new materialist and posthuman feminism, where agency is not possessed but enacted in networks.

3. Autonomy, Agency and Ownership

The title of the novel is ironically significant. “Autonomous” symbolizes both the legal status robots can have after completing indenture contracts via an “autonomy key” and the humanist illusion of self-governance. Under bio-capitalism, autonomy is conditional, commodified, conditional, and surveilled.

Robots purchase freedom, but it remains partial, conditioned to monitoring and social prejudice. Human beings suffer the worse as they are indentured transforming them

into property for debt repayment, education, or survival, while pharmaceutical corporations and economic hegemony enslave “free” citizen to dysfunctional culture. *Zacuity* illustrates this illusion, the users’ sense enhanced productivity as chosen empowerment, but the toxic drug dismantles neural pathways, robbing agency and generating fatal compulsions. This crisis become the motive for Jack to challenge and confront her complicity: her generics, deliberate as liberation, reconstruct corporate damages when scaled without safety testing.

Jack’s character shows that one person’s resistance has limits. Her piracy fights with pharmaceutical corporation hegemony that control intellectual property, but she still resists and challenges within their system. The antidote which she produces, *RetCon*, causes unexpected problems, like making the recovered victims avoid works, showing how even good intentions can have harmful results. This illustrates Donna Haraway’s idea that cyborgs; combination of human and machine, are full of contradictions. Resistance itself is not genuine; it is tied to the same corrupt system it tries to fight against. Jack’s past, from being an academic activist to becoming a lone pirate, illustrates how idealism can vanish into flawed, practical choices. In short, it explores how resistance within systems can become complicit in power structures and how idealism transform into pragmatism.

Paladin’s quest for autonomy proves conflicted. It has been given temporary autonomy key for undercover work, Paladin digs deep into its codes, finding programmed attachment to *Eliasz*. Genuine autonomy goes beyond the technical root access. Privacy signifies protected ethical values against corporate or relational surveillance, a hard-earn relational achievement rather than innate right.

The novel explores that autonomy is not a single fixed independence, but a mediated process through power structure. Braidotti’s affirmative posthuman perceives possibilities for ethical becoming in such negotiations; *Autonomous* disposition this with vulnerability and coercion. Corporate pharmaceutical entities like *Zaxy* manipulates patents as weapons, deploying IPC agents while hiding their own identity and role in the *Zacuity* disaster. The hunting of Jack exposes state-corporate fusion, where “property” rights overcome lives. But the light of hopes emerges in cross-species solidarities at Free Lab and in character’s evolving self-understanding.

This critique expands to broader suggestions. In an era of AI regulation debates, gene editing patents, and platform capitalism, *Autonomous* predicts that technological “progress” under unregulated capital often promotes inequality. Autonomy evolves into privilege for the ownership, an aspiration for the indentured, and a capitalist slogan for socio-economic and power structures.

4. Gender, Sexuality, and Relational Ethics

Autonomous richly engrosses queer and non-binary posthuman identities, disconnecting gender from biology and embodiment. Jack is bisexual and practical about emotions and desire, perceiving romance through a biochemical lens while forming emotionally complex bound. Her relationship with *Threezed* demonstrates shadows of master slave dynamics due to his indenture history, proposing bitter questions of power and healing in posthuman contexts.

Paladin and *Eliasz*’s relationship is more provoking. *Eliasz*’ primarily homophobic discomfort, perceiving Paladin as amle-bodied, and ultimate acceptance upon learning of the female brain donor expose gender as performative. Paladin acceptance of pronoun “she” highlights how posthuman bodies serve as site for human desires and

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insecurities. The novel depicts queer cyborg by rejecting utopian resolution: hybridity permits new bonding; physical, emotional, comparison, but exposes exploitation and self-doubt.

These concepts align with Haraway's notion for "staying with the trouble" of hybrid relationship and Braidotti emphasis on affirmative, nomadic becoming that accept difference. Gender appears as one fluid variable in larger structures of code, capital and affect. The novel ignores the essentialism, depicting identities as constructed, contested, and relational, sometimes liberal often restricted.

Conclusion

This study examines Annalee Newitz's *Autonomous* (2017) through the lens of posthuman feminism, drawing primarily on Donna Haraway's concept of cyborg politics and Rosi Braidotti's theory of nomadic subjectivity. The results of the analysis depict that *Autonomous* challenges humanist presuppositions of autonomous, rational and self-contained subject by emphasizing hybrid form of self and existence positioned at the interconnection of technology, embodiment, and capital. The study exposes that *Autonomous* shapes and constructs posthuman subjectivity through relational and hybrid identities that go beyond traditional demarcation between human and non-human, organic and artificial. The characters like Paladin, Jack, Med and Threezed, the study represents that subjectivity is not static condition rather it is dynamic and fluid process of collective becoming shaped by the technological meditation, socio-political relation and capitalism. Consequently, the narrative destabilizes human-centered and anthropocentric notions of identity and conceptualize the subject and fundamentally interrelated with non-human agencies and technological systems.

The results indicate that bio-capitalism, technological control, and corporate systems of ownership have their deep impact on autonomy, agency, and ethical relation in the dystopian world of the novel. Pharmaceutical monopolies, intellectual property regime and power structure of indenture function as mechanism of power that regulate human and non-human (machine) revealing the limitation of individual freedom under the capitalist conditions. Therefore, *Autonomous* exposes autonomy to be neither absolute nor inherent but rather a contested and conditional phenomenon negotiated within networks of economic, technological, and institutional power.

Together Haraway's cyborg and Braidotti's concept of nomadic subjectivity, the study contributes to the existing scholarship by offering a nuanced posthuman feminist reading of identity, and autonomy in *Autonomous*. The study puts forward an ethical vision based on relationality, interdependence, and collective becoming, therefore challenging neoliberal ideals of self-sufficiency and individual sovereignty. Instead of perceiving autonomy as an innate character of individual subject, *Autonomous* reshapes and redefines it as continuous and relational process that emerges through encounters among humans, technological, and materialism.

Consequently, the study asserts that Newitz's novel operates as dynamic and powerful critique of bio-capitalist power structures while visualizes transformative possibilities for posthuman subjectivity and ethical coexistence.

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