**PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA**
***Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research***
***University of Ain Temouchent - Belhadj Bouchaib***

**Faculty of Letters, Languages and Social Sciences**
**Department of Letters and English Language**

# Postmodern Consumerism and Zombification in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*

***A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for a Master's Degree in Literature and Civilisation***

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Academic Year: 2024/2025

# Dedication

*To the quiet architects of the soul,*

*To stillness, the first teacher,*

*To the absence that once hovered closer than presence,*

*To the fellows who lent their light to this journey, leaving echoes beyond the classroom.*

*And to my family and friends… no footnotes needed.*

*May this not be an ending, but a bookmark between many lives.*

*–Thank you.*

## Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I extend my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Mrs. Zahera Hassaiene, whose support, patience, and guidance have been like a lighthouse beam, steady through the rotation of dark and bright moments alike. In obscurity, her presence offered directions; in clarity, she illuminated new paths. This work bears her imprint in every layer of inquiry.

My heartfelt thanks go to Ms. Fatima Yahia. Her thoughtful guidance made the challenges of dissertation writing manageable, and her encouragement and expertise were invaluable at every step.

I appreciate all the department teachers who have accompanied us on this academic journey. Their contribution helped shape the intellectual and human foundation upon which this work is built. Each lecture and discussion laid a brick on the path leading to this manuscript.

Last but certainly not least, I thank our esteemed jury members, Dr. Sara Bensahla Tani and Dr. Selma Belhamidi, for the honor of their presence, their time, and their thoughtful reading and examination of this humble work.

To all of you, thank you for pushing us forward and making this moment not only achievable but meaningful.

# Abstract

This interdisciplinary qualitative research investigates how postmodern consumerism induces a state of zombification in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), positioning the novel as a prophetic parallel to contemporary society. Employing Marxist criticism, postmodern and psychoanalytic theories, and discourse analysis, the analysis reveals how institutionalized consumption and technoscientific manipulation commodify humanity. The study demonstrates that the novel's systemic control mechanisms erode identity, individuality, agency, and autonomy, reducing individuals to passive, obedient subjects. The resistance embodied by characters serves as a counterpoint to social homogenization and consumer culture. Additionally, an intertextual reading of George Orwell's *1984* reveals the shared dystopian warnings against the manifesting zombification across literary criticism. Ultimately, this study asserts that *Brave New World* is both a diagnosis and a cautionary tale about the consequences of prioritizing mindless consumption that blurs the lines between the living and merely existing.


**Keywords:** Consumerism, Zombification, Identity, Individuality, Agency, Humanity, Social homogenisation.

## ملخص

تستقصي هذه الدراسة النوعية متعددة التخصصات كيف يُحدث الاستهلاك ما بعد الحداثي حالة من "التحول إلى الزومبي" في رواية ألدوس هكسلي "عالم جديد شجاع" (1932)، واضعًا الرواية في سياق نبوئي موازٍ للمجتمع المعاصر. من خلال توظيف النقد الماركسي، نظريات ما بعد الحداثة والتحليل النفسي، وتحليل الخطاب، يكشف التحليل كيف أن الاستهلاك المؤسسي والتلاعب التكنوعلمي يسلعان الانسان و يحولانه الى مجرد منتج. تُظهر الدراسة أن آليات التحكم المنهجي في الرواية تُقوّض الهوية والفردية والقدرة على اتخاذ القرار والاستقلالية، مُحوّلةً الأفراد إلى ذوات سلبية ومطيعة. وتُشكّل المقاومة التي تُجسّدها الشخصيات نقيضًا للتجانس الاجتماعي وثقافة الاستهلاك. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تكشف القراءة النصية لرواية جورج أورويل "1984" عن التحذيرات المُشتركة من ظاهرة "الزومبي" المتجلية في النقد الأدبي. في نهاية المطاف، تؤكد هذه الدراسة أن رواية "عالم جديد شجاع" تُمثل تشخيصًا وتحذيرًا في آنٍ واحد بشأن عواقب إعطاء الأولوية للاستهلاك الأعمى الذي يطمس الحدود بين الحياة والوجود المجرد.



**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الاستهلاكية، التحول الى زومبي، الهوية، الفردية، الفاعلية، الإنسانية، التماثل الاجتماعي

# Résumé

Cette recherche qualitative interdisciplinaire examine comment le consumérisme postmoderne induit un état de zombification dans « Le Meilleur des mondes » (1932) d'Aldous Huxley, positionnant le roman comme un parallèle prophétique à la société contemporaine. S'appuyant sur la critique Marxiste, les théories postmodernes et psychanalytiques, ainsi que sur l'analyse du discours, l'analyse révèle comment la consommation institutionnalisée et la manipulation technoscientifique marchandisent l'humanité. L'étude démontre que les mécanismes de contrôle systémique du roman érodent l'identité, l'individualité, l'action d'agir et l'autonomie, réduisant les individus à des sujets passifs et obéissants. La résistance incarnée par les personnages sert de contrepoint à l'homogénéisation sociale et à la culture de consommation. De plus, une lecture intertextuelle de « 1984 » de George Orwell révèle les mises en garde dystopiques partagées par la critique littéraire contre la zombification qui se manifeste. En définitive, cette étude affirme que « Le Meilleur des mondes » est à la fois un diagnostic et une mise en garde contre les conséquences d'une consommation aveugle qui brouille les frontières entre le vivant et le simple existant.



**Mots-clés:** Consommation, Zombification, Identité, Individualité, L'action d'agir, Humanité, Homogénéisation sociale.

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# General Introduction

From the dawn of industrialisation to the contemporary era, consumerism evolved from seeds to shape economic relations and dominate cultural and social ideologies that dictate individual behavior and self. The grim reality within this framework is that in the quest to consume, we often become the very product of the systems we engage with. This condition forms the unsettling core of postmodern and contemporary existence, raising the question: Are we consumers or being consumed? Or are we both? The lines between these positions blur in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*.

Huxley's depiction of John the Savage as an outsider in rebellion further contrasts humanism with commodification. His use of Shakespearean narratives further positions literature as a powerful resistance amidst the zombifying effects of consumerist culture and homogenisation. Unlike the traditional depiction of the zombies as reanimated corpses, this study reconstructs the term metaphorically within a socio-economic context, representing a consumer whose actions, decisions, and desires are tied to a system that trades humanity for consumption. In Huxley's narrative, the zombified subject is not dead, but dehumanised.

Since its publication in 1932, *Brave New World* has attracted extensive academic attention. It is often analyzed through the lenses of totalitarianism, dystopia, and technoscientific control. The novel presents a society where distraction and manipulation are imposed through pleasure, entertainment, and consumption instead of violence. Indeed, consumption once promised joy and fulfillment, but nowadays, it offers superficial gratification that pacifies consumers. Speaking of artificiality, the drug *soma* in particular received notable academic interest as a symbol of fake happiness, psychological control, and the suppression of authentic human emotions. However, while *soma* as a metaphor was explored, it is often examined within the frameworks of psychological conditioning or biopolitics, rather than the systemic mechanisms of consumer culture and the metaphorical zombification it induces. At the same time, despite a few studies that treat consumerism within the novel, a critical gap

remains in examining what can be understood as a kind of "zombification" due to postmodern consumerism, as mirrored in the contemporary context through the lens of Huxley's dystopia. This dissertation responds to that gap by focusing on consumerism as a psychological and social mechanism of control and zombification in *Brave New World*.

Furthermore, Huxley's visionary novel appears amid the flourishing of technoscience, the rise of totalitarianism, and the prioritisation of social stability and economic growth. As a new ideology emerges, consumerism, which once answered basic needs, becomes a life constructor. Along with this, the human subject in Huxley's imagined future is shaped by production systems and psychological manipulation.

Through mechanisms of conditioning, the drug *soma*, and hypnopaedia, the World State fabricates identity, erases individuality, and controls agency and autonomy. The result is a zombified society, stripped of critical thinking, authentic experience, and emotional depth. Yes, Huxley's dystopia was written nearly a century ago, but it reflects the present logic of zombification, where people are emotionally numb, intellectually detached, and spiritually void.

In order to investigate the relationship between consumerism and zombification in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, this study seeks to answer the formulated questions:

- Does Huxley's *Brave New World* warn against manipulating minds and realities through consumerism?
- How does the zombification of citizens in Huxley's World State reflect contemporary society's mindless pursuit of comfort through consumerism?
- How does the depiction of *soma* in *Brave New World* symbolise the allure and hidden costs of contemporary convenience culture?

- Do John the Savage's criticisms and rebellion express resistance to the contemporary zombification of humanity and the culture of instant gratification within the novel?

By taking his ideas to their extreme, Huxley crafts a dystopian nightmare that conveys his vision of consumerist manipulation and the systemic molding of zombified individuals. As much as this idea sounds irrational, it reveals an uncomfortable fact: external forces already shape us in one way or another. A fact that leads us to draw it on solid academic grounds, we propose the following hypotheses in response to the research questions outlined above:

- It is hypothesised that the novel exemplifies Huxley's warning regarding consumerism, which controls minds and fabricates realities. The world State's manipulation of citizens through manufactured goods is thought to turn citizens into dependent consumers at the cost of sacrificing human components.
- It is believed that the World State's programmed happiness and psychological conditioning numb its citizens. Their possible resemblance to a "zombified" contemporary society criticizes the potential consequences of mindless consumption.
- In *Brave New World*, *soma* is likely to represent a mechanism of psychological control and artificial comfort. It suppresses genuine emotions, personal growth, and reflective consciousness, serving as a cautionary reminder to prioritize instant gratification over resilience and meaning.
- John the Savage's rebellion against conditioning and emphasis on authentic individual existence can be seen as a rejection of humanity's commodification and zombification. His character symbolises a criticism of humanity's erasure in contemporary consumerist societies.

The present research work aims to contribute a novel interpretation of Huxley's *Brave New World* by examining how consumerist ideology leads to the zombification of human beings

while paralleling it with examples from the real world. These examples are used to illustrate a thematic parallel and not a comprehensive case study. Specifically, the research seeks to:

- Investigate how consumerist systems manipulate minds, perceptions, and behaviors through technoscience.
- Reconceptualise "zombification" in the context of psychological control and dehumanisation through consumerism.
- Expose the governmental hidden mechanisms, such as *soma*, that facilitate control over human beings under the guise of comfort and happiness.
- Analyze how characters like John the Savage symbolise resistance to homogenisation.

The inspiration behind this research stems from a desire to understand how individuals knowingly or unknowingly participate in systems that diminish their humanity. As a curious observer of social behavior and global trends, a feeling of unease at the widespread mindless acceptance of a culture that prioritises consumption over consciousness has always been present in my mind. This very feeling of uneasiness leads me to say that the world today resembles the postmodern world in its worst version. This surprisingly echoes Huxley's pessimistic vision.

Moreover, this silent conformity, the happy identical faces everywhere, and the passive surrender to an all-consuming system compel the researcher to wonder whether people are truly unaware of their zombification or accept it for its artificial satisfaction. This discomfort serves as the foundation of this academic work. This study does not seek a deconstruction of Huxley's narrative only, but also to provoke a reflection on the systems shaping human lives and minds today.

To achieve the desired goals, the researcher adopts a multidisciplinary approach by combining literary and discourse analyses with socio-political, postmodern, psychoanalytical, and cultural theories. Furthermore, to meet the topic requirement, the qualitative research tools

of interpretation will be used throughout the research. Additionally, this research proceeds across three chapters:

-Chapter One lays the theoretical groundwork, drawing on Marxist, postmodern, and psychoanalytical theories to define consumerism, zombification, identity, individuality, agency, and autonomy.

-Chapter Two provides a literary analysis of *Brave New World*, focusing on key symbols such as conditioning systems, *soma*, and character development to expose the consumerist mechanisms of control and zombification.

-Chapter Three adopts an aesthetic examination. It also uses an intertextual lens to compare Huxley's work with another literary dystopia, such as George Orwell's *1984*, to investigate the broader literary commentary on ideological conformity, alienation, and zombification.

To conclude, the methodological framework of this dissertation is shaped by a qualitative and interdisciplinary approach grounded in critical interpretation and theoretical synthesis. Centering *Brave New World* as the primary object of inquiry, the study combines close intertextual analysis with insights from postmodern, psychoanalytical, and socio-political theory to investigate the novel's engagement with consumerism and the zombification of human foundations. Secondary sources, including critical and theoretical works, are used to inform and enrich the analytical and comparative aspects of the research. This extended essay adheres to the seventh edition of the MLA Handbook for writers of research papers.

# Chapter One: Postmodern Consumerism and Zombification

## Introduction

As a defining feature of modern society, *consumerism*, with its production and consumption systems, extends far beyond its economic horizons to reach society. The nature of human beings evolves around consumption, yet the latter becomes an irrational act, perpetuating their core of selfhood. The approach of this chapter lies in interpreting the mechanisms through which consumerism zombifies human identity, individuality, agency, and autonomy. Drawing on economic, cultural, social, and psychological studies, this discussion illuminates the tension between the delusions of fulfillment and the subdued realities of gratification; providing a critical perspective on the zombifying effects of postmodern consumer culture.

## I.1. What is Meant by Consumerism?

As Western societies grow more deeply shaped by consumption patterns, defining consumerism becomes essential. The concept can be approached through both economic structures and cultural ideologies.

### I.1.1. Economic definition

In *The Theory of the Leisure Class* by Thorstein Veblen, consumerism can be defined as consuming and acquiring goods. A social practice that sustains capitalist expansion and becomes a "means of life" for the consumer (80). Building upon this perspective, Jean Baudrillard extends it in *The Consumer Society*, reframing consumerism as a global system of material excess fueled by a desire for possessions through which status and identity can be established instead of economic necessity (91). Together, these frameworks regard consumerism as an engine of economic development and expansion that emerged as a fundamental aspect of capitalist economies, emphasising the role of consumer demand in shaping the rules of trade, production, and market dynamics.

#### I.1.1.1 Consumerism Between Marxism and Postmodernism

In *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Karl Marx critiques consumerism and its function in the capitalist system. Marx introduces the concept of "Commodity Fetishism", which refers to the magical quality of a commodity by attaching it to a symbolic meaning. For example, possessing luxurious items is a symbol of success and status.

When discussing Marxism, consumerism is an illusion of fulfillment for consumers who exist at the periphery of economic power. The trap of the commodity lies in pursuing this illusion; consumers believe it brings them closer to a healthier and more worthy version of themselves while sacrificing their true desires for what they actually need (Marx, ch. 1, sec. 4).

In postmodern theory, Zygmunt Bauman extends Marx's critique of commodity fetishism in *Consuming Life*. Bauman explains how consumerism replaces material production with a 'moral ageing' (92) system, where identity depends not on labour but on the 'profusion and rapid circulation' of goods (92). According to Bauman, this cycle of 'preordained obsolescence' (92) produces a person with 'consumerist syndrome' (92) who "accepts the short lifespan of things and their preordained demise with equanimity, often with only thinly disguised relish" (92).

Bauman's perspective portrays a passive consumer—a zombie entrapped in addictive consumption. He reinterprets Marx's perception as a form of zombification, a postmodern condition where people chase 'new sensations' (Bauman 92) to sustain a transient self.

### I.1.2. Cultural Definition: Consumerism as a Cultural Ideology

Transitioning from an economic framework, postmodern consumerism is conceptualized as a cultural ideology that reshapes values and social relationships around consumption. "Liquid modernity" theory illustrates how consumer culture evolved into a dominant space where society is defined more by consumption and less by production (Bauman 53). In *Consuming Life*, Bauman argues that modern and postmodern commodities hold

"investment value" (62 –3) as consumers compulsively "invest" for symbolic validation. The theory of Bauman corresponds to Don Slater's interpretation of *Consumer Culture and Modernity*.

According to Slater, the cultural spectrum of consumerism evolved to be "always and everywhere a cultural process" (16). An ideology sustained by the active participation of individuals who, paradoxically, are rendered passive by the very system where consumption becomes a form of self-expression (16). A condition in which Bauman argues that consumers are "pushed and/or pulled to look unstoppably for satisfaction, yet also to fear the kind of satisfaction that would stop us from looking" (104).

Slater warns about the cultural logic of consumerism, which perpetuates a "restless quest" (16) for fulfillment, where "a satisfied consumer is neither motive nor purpose—but the most terrifying menace" (Bauman 104). In the postmodern era, consumerism is a cultural ideology that changes the act of purchase and consumption into an instrument for maintaining social cohesion while creating a continuous process of short-term satisfaction.

## I.2. Historical Evolution of Consumerism

**Consumerism, as an act of survival,** initially sustained community life and gradually evolved into a strong force reshaping social and human structures in the postmodern era. Veblen demonstrates the collective consumption patterns of "pre-modern societies", emphasising necessity over excess goods and wealth (13). At that time, the economy was based on agriculture and craftwork.

**The Shift from Subsistence Economies to Mercantilism** from the 16$^{th}$ to 18$^{th}$ centuries marked the beginning of the commodification of goods. In *Mercantilist Origins of Capitalism and Its Legacies,* Kari Polanyi Levitt notes that Europeans expanded global trade networks during this period. Levitt posits that these networks fueled the exchange of commodities that would later become symbols of status and power in postmodern consumer culture (3). On the

other hand, Veblen argues that the commodification of goods transformed everyday articles into signs of cultural capital; a practice that continued into the industrial era (160).

**The Industrial Revolution** in the 19th century expedited the expansion of consumerism by introducing mechanised manufacturing and mass production, resulting in accessible and affordable goods, especially for the growing middle class. In *Advertising the American Dream*, Roland Marchand illustrates how advertising became instrumental in promoting consumer goods as markers of modernity (1). This act shaped public perception and desires (Marchand xx).

Alparslan Nas's "The Representation of Desire in Advertising: A Psychoanalytical Critique of Coca-Cola" illustrates that companies like Coca-Cola emphasise the aspirational aspects of consumption to create brand loyalty by reflecting the consumer's taste. Illustrated advertisements transform individuals' desires, linking products to ideals of modernity and catalogs.

**The post-World War II** explosion of consumerism is exemplified by the "American Dream," which redefined not only a mark of a successful life but also a way of expressing oneself, a change that Colin Campbell discusses in *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism*. He writes:

> The modern consumer will desire a novel rather than a familiar product because this enables him to believe that its acquisition and use can supply experience that he has not so far encountered in reality. It is therefore possible to project onto this product some of that idealized pleasure which he has already experienced in day-dreams, and which he cannot associate with those familiar products currently being consumed. … What matters is that the presentation of a product as 'new' allows the potential consumer to attach some of his dream

> pleasure to it, and hence to associate acquisition and use of the object with realization of the dream. (152).

Campbell's perspective illustrates how consumerism becomes a domain where people express their expectations and fantasies through products, even when the latter offer no absolute novelty or additional utility. That is to say, the "American dream" follows a similar ideology when material acquisition signifies wealth and the ability to express oneself. Consequently, this leads to a constant consumption of new, idealized experiences.

**Postmodern Consumerism**, as Slater discusses in his work, is described as "the collapse of meaning into pure significance" (61). Hence, postmodern consumption operates through self-referential systems of signs, which Slater expresses as "a world no longer governed by traditions but by flux" (61). Therefore, postmodern consumption rejects the Enlightenment myth of rational choice, as he notes: "values have been divorced from material satisfaction [and] the sign-value of goods takes precedence" (Slater 61).

For example, Nike sneakers are not merely products but a symbol of "athleticism", characterising a lifestyle centered around energy, achievement, and self-discipline. This indicates that the brand sells the idea that anyone can embody an athlete's spirit, not just sell footwear. Slater argues, "by the integration of markets through marketing, using such new techniques as branding and packaging, national sales forces, advertising, point of sale materials and industrial design— all designed to unify product identity across socially and geographically dispersed markets" (22).

This assertion shows how branding and advertising promote products and create a homogenised consumer culture where goods are universal symbols of status and belonging. However, Slater offers a contrasting interpretation about the role of television in India, arguing that "images of elite lifestyles create desires that disrupt traditional consumption" (72). This act serves as a cultural transformation which differs from social norms and original consumption habits.

Consequently, it improves a world of commodities where people connect items with self-expression and prosperity.

Therefore, the historical evolution of consumerism reveals a trajectory from survival consumption to a postmodern framework, where consumerism sets a dominant cultural ideology. In this context, commodities become more than mere objects of use; they become powerful symbols that define social relationships, and one's self in a society drowned and drained in postmodern consumption.

## I.3. Integration of Consumerism in Human Life

From its historical evolution, it becomes clear how consumerism evolved across human services. This process reflects the wide penetration of consumerist ideologies in various areas of life beyond traditional goods that were historically considered necessities. Slater summarises this thought by stating, "Consumer culture is largely mundane, yet that mundanity is where we live and breathe, and increasingly so as we sense that public sphere of life has become a consumable spectacle that is every more remote as a sphere of direct participation. 'Consumer culture' is therefore a story of struggles for the soul of everyday life, of battles to control the context of the quotidian" (Slater 12). Slater's idea illustrates how goods and consumption practices become fundamental to fulfilling even the most ordinary needs in modern life.

Dr. Bernard Lown further exemplifies this commodification in healthcare services. In the "Commodification of Health Care", he pens: "health care in America [becomes] a for-profit enterprise where physicians are 'providers,' patients are 'consumers,' and both serve corporate interests' (40). According to Lown's perspective, the marketisation of healthcare redefines care as a transactional commodity instead of a universal right. Such an example shows how consumer logic spreads its epistemology in these areas where goods become the answer to the needs of everyday lives across social strata.

On the other hand, schools are another example mentioned in Raymond Williams' *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society Revised*. He notes, "the predominance of capitalist model ensured its widespread and often overwhelming extension to such fields as politics, education and health" (39). This can be seen in today's schools, as they act like competitors, seeking students' attention by offering exclusive experiences and designed programs.

In this case, education in the postmodern world is portrayed as an investment rather than an intrinsic human development. As people stop seeing these services as necessities and start treating them as commodities that empower them, they are marching in a way where consumerism rules.

### I.3.1. Social Stratification in Postmodern Consumerism

Consumerism is not solely an individual act but is deeply entrenched in social structures that shape access to goods and even influence social stratification. Slater underlines this idea, saying:

> The consumption of goods and services requires the social mobilization of social resources, and this is always carried out under specific arrangements of productive organization, technological abilities, relations of labour, property and distribution. The specific arrangement arrived at, the way in which relations of production and relations of consumption mediate each other, place consumption at the heart of questions about what kind of society we are: how is access to objects of consumption regulated: what is the logic that determines the nature of the goods provided to the everyday world; how are our notions of needs, identity, ways of life defined or identified or mediated? (12)

Slater's idea shows how consumerism structures people's consumption habits and mindsets, embedding notions of worth and status in everyday commodities.

Building on Slater's argument, Veblen's work introduces a seminal perspective on the cultural and social dimensions. The modern lifestyles of individuals' consumption of goods and services as a display of wealth and superiority, instead of pure utility, is summarised in his concept of "conspicuous consumption"[i]. The leisure class engages in this behavior of extravagant consumption for one main goal: differentiating itself from the working classes by embracing luxury as their lives' title (Veblen 34). In this sense, Veblen demonstrates how consumption speaks of superiority and nobility.

Additionally, Veblen contrasts the leisure class and the working-class individuals, where the latter seek to imitate the elite's consumption practices to become more recognised in society. This act is fueled by a desire to draw attention by adopting pecuniary emulation[ii]. According to Veblen, such behavior creates a stressful atmosphere, where people are forced to compete [with wealthier people] to elevate their social status. This results in economic inequalities as it reinforces social stratification and social hierarchies (59).

Therefore, consumerism becomes not just a factor of individual validation but also a source of supporting inequalities and asserting dominance, as the progress of social status is connected with living beyond means rather than having structural equity.

## I.4. Postmodern Interpretation of Consumerism

According to contemporary discourse, as reflected in William's work, consumerism evolved and broadened its scope to embrace services and address one's identity and experiences. William writes: "The development relates primarily to the planning and attempted control of markets which is inherent in large-scale industrial capitalist (and state capitalist) production, … The development of modern commercial advertising ... is related to the same stage of capitalism: the creation of needs and wants of particularly ways of satisfying them"

(39). This interpretation reflects a shift in consumption patterns integrated within modern societies, which are no longer interested in owning physical articles but are more about intangible elements and symbolic consumption.

Expanding this line of reasoning, Bauman's *Liquid Modernity* presents an interesting theory that explains how consumerism adapts to fit the demands of a world in an era of rapid transition. He describes the paradigm of a modern world; indeed, the idea captures features of societies that change from a "solid" phase, epitomised by Fordism[iii]. This phase is characterised by the committed order of markets and structures stability, which includes massive factories and heavy machinery, to a "liquid" phase dominated by uncertainty, fluidity, and constant change (Bauman 61).

### I.4.1. Consumption as Symbolic Exchange and Cultural Construct

Within contemporary societies, goods are often valued less for their practical utility and more for their symbolic meanings. As explored in William's *Advertising: The Magic System*, these meanings are created by cultural systems, such as media and advertising. He contends, "a highly organised and professional [iv]system of magical inducements and satisfactions, functionally very similar to magical systems in simpler societies, but rather strangely coexistent with a highly developed scientific technology" (13). This statement underlies the multifaceted role of advertising, which serves a purpose beyond its intended purpose. It also serves as a mechanism for external manipulation, communicating products through inspiring narratives that evoke desire and social significance.

In *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*, Baudrillard further analyses this notion. He examines the reality of these systems, which encourage individuals to engage with them, thereby indirectly making their perception of themselves and others deeply dependent on those systems (28). According to Baudrillard, "Few objects today are offered alone, without a context of objects which 'speaks' them. And this changes the consumer's relation to the object:

he no longer relates to … particular objects in [their] … specific utility, but to a set of objects in its total signification" (28). Upon this idea, consumption crosses the limits of purchasing for necessity. Commodities are used as a language that communicates symbolic exchange.

Moreover, Baudrillard elucidates this idea more in his analysis, stating:

> A history of the changing status of objects and their representation in art and literature would itself be revealing. … they have ceased to live by proxy in the shadow of man and have begun to take on extraordinary importance as autonomous elements in an analysis of space … They have as a result been fragmented, even to the point of abstraction. Having celebrated their parodic resurrection in Dada and Surrealism, which were then destructured and volatilized by the abstract, they are apparently now reconciled again with their image in neo-figuration and pop art. … In short, is pop the form of art contemporaneous with the logic of signs and consumption we are speaking of, or is it merely an effect of fashion, and hence itself a pure object of consumption? There is no contradiction between the two. … Advertising shares this same ambiguity. … the logic of consumption eliminates the traditional sublime status of artistic representation. (98)

In this passage, Baudrillard argues that anything can become a "consumer object": something that is bought, sold, and consumed, not for its intrinsic value but for its symbolic meaning. When "anything" is included, cultural products, such as literature, music, and art, lose their inherent and sacred significance within a commodified system[v] (Baudrillard).

For example, numbered paintings are mass-produced and sold like any other product. Their value is no longer tied to their artistic merit but is relative to other commodities within marketability, like Levi's jeans and McDonald's hamburgers (Baudrillard 20). This

"commodification of culture"[vi] erodes the distinction between "high culture" (classical music or fine art) and "low culture" (pop music or fast food). This perspective can be sharply observed in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, where the government traded high art for the passive consumption of sensory films and drugs (151), reducing all forms of expression to exchangeable commodities.

### I.4.2. Consumerism as a Tool for Social Control

Herbert Marcuse criticises the idea of consumerism as a mechanism of social control in *One-Dimensional Man.* He writes: "The people recognize themselves in their commodities; they find their soul in their automobile, … split-level home, kitchen equipment. The very mechanism which ties the individual to his society has changed, and social control is anchored in the new needs which it has produced" (Marcuse 60).

This form of recognition gives consumerism a dual role: while it offers joy to these consumers, it integrates them into the existing social order. This leads to an unconscious passive acceptance of the status quo, while framing consumerism as a means of social control. An ideology that mirrors the dystopian surveillance of *1984*, where citizens are watched in the statement: "Big Brother is watching you" (Orwell), and *Brave New World*'s Motto: "Community, Identity, Stability" (Huxley).

Similarly, in *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault introduces the concept of the "Panopticon", which shares the same essence. This design allows a single observer to monitor many individuals without them knowing. He writes, "The Panopticon is a machine for dissociating the see/being seen dyad: in the peripheric ring, one is totally seen, without ever seeing; in the central tower, one sees everything without ever being seen" (221).

This device is primarily designed for prisons; however, Foucault argues that its surveillance model is not restricted to this role; it can be utilized in hospitals, schools, workhouses, and, in fact, in every part of society. It is a tool that creates obedient citizens who

can be programmed to self-discipline. For instance, in April 2021, Google's Shopping Graph announced that it leverages various sources to personalize shopping experiences (Harvard Business Review). Similarly, Amazon uses bug data to understand customer behavior and influence purchasing decisions with personalized ads and algorithmic recommendations (Marr).

On the other hand, individuals' nature is to behave when being watched. As Foucault asserts, "We are neither in the amphitheater, nor on the stage, but in the panopticon machine, invested by its effects of power, which we bring to ourselves since we are part of its mechanism" (236). He also declares:

> The Panopticon must not be understood as a dream building: … it is in fact a figure of political technology that may and must be detached from any specific use. … it serves to reform prisoners, but also to treat patients, to instruct schoolchildren, to confine the insane, to supervise workers, to put beggars and idlers to work. It is a type of location of bodies in space, of distribution of individuals in relation to one another, of hierarchical organization, of disposition of centers and channels of power, of definition of the instruments and modes of intervention of power, which can be implemented in hospitals, workshops, schools, prisons. Whenever one is dealing with a multiplicity of individuals on whom a task or a particular form of behaviour must be imposed, the panoptic schema may be used. (224)

This interpretation summarises that individuals engage with self-discipline on platforms like LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram, curating their online personas due to perceived social and professional scrutiny.

This model of surveillance results in citizens modifying their choices, consumption, and behavior not through force, but through the awareness of being watched, making consumerism a powerful yet unseen authority of postmodernist social regulation. Consumerism is not just

about material acquisition but a profoundly integrated structure of power and control, with an influence that extends beyond economic behaviors to immerse individuals in its ideology.
It does not stop here; it impacts individuals' behavior and the core of self-formation and transformation. Therefore, it is crucial to understand how these individuals experience the loss of their fundamental human components once they become immersed in the influence of consumption.

## I.5. The Erosion of Selfhood Through Consumerism

**Identity** within the psychology of subconscious learning and identity formation is treated in Bessel van der Kolk's theory of trauma. In his article "The Compulsion to Repeat the Trauma: Re-enactment, Revictimization, and Masochism", Van der Kolk explains that "Unbidden memories of the trauma may return as physical sensations, horrific images or nightmares, behavioral reenactments, or a combination of these" (389). While rooted in trauma studies, his insights into how involuntary repetition becomes embedded in the psyche speak to broader mechanisms of ideological conditioning.

He further notes that "state-dependent learning in humans is produced by both psychostimulants and depressants: … as well as other psychoactive agents" (403), illustrating how pharmacological and emotional environments can determine how individuals internalise narratives and behaviors. This situates identity not a fixed entity but as a fluid and contingent process of becoming, one that is shaped through repeated exposure, affective conditioning, and external control.

Stuart Hall captures the fluidity of this change in "Cultural Identity and Diaspora", stating:

> Cultural identity, … is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from

> somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialized past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power. (4)

From this conceptualisation, one can tell that identity is a process influenced by history, culture, and society. An influence and a change are apparent in consumerist societies, where identity is often shaped by programmed markets, commodification, and consumption habits based on brands and products. In *Brave New World*, Huxley depicts people with pre-packaged identities via state-engineered conditioning (5), just as modern consumers who adopt brand-defined personas.

These people use media tools, products, or services to tie themselves to certain social groups or lifestyles, as seen in contemporary society. Here, consumption is followed by individuals whose priority is to embody external qualities that grant them identification in such a society, rather than seeking an authentic self-identity. These characters confine themselves to externally dictated roles through caste systems and depend on *soma*, the drug, to remain satisfied with their situation (Huxley).

These persons enact what Bauman interprets about non-satisfaction in *Consuming Life*: "Consumer society thrives as long as it manages to render the non-satisfaction of its members (and so, in its own terms, their unhappiness) perpetual. … What starts as an effort to satisfy a need must end up as a compulsion or an addiction" (53). Both Huxley and Bauman show how external mechanisms inhibit the formation of genuine identity. As consumption erases the anxiety of self-definition, it constrains identity within a cycle of dependency that hinders the development of authentic selfhood.

This ideology is magnified in the postmodern society where media, advertising, and brands impose a false self, dictating the so-called consumer life, which is never their choice. As a

result, opportunities for personal growth and self-discovery are restricted, for brand identities and material possessions are present, hindering and limiting genuine identity development.

Similarly, Foucault's work expands on how identity is defined through power relations and social control mechanisms. He writes, "Discipline 'makes' individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise" (189). Foucault introduces a form of power that allows individuals to see how they are not only subjected to outside forces but also are produced through institutions that control their wants, actions, and even the very concept of themselves. Foucault's bits of knowledge suggest that in a consumerist society, people are unconsciously conditioned to form their identities through market ideals, advertising, and media.

This consumerism encourages those consumers to embrace identities based on material wealth instead of personal authenticity, eroding their critical ability to examine or resist these imposed characters. Herbert's work further intensifies this notion: "The very mechanism which ties the individual to his society has changed, and social control is anchored in the new needs which it has produced" (60). His criticism exposes how capitalism reduces individuals to one-dimensional beings whose identities are standardised and homogenised by the logic of modern consumerism.

Upon these interpretations, the impact of consumerism on identity is profound; it is not a way of living anymore, it is a definition of individuals within themselves and their place in the world. A consumer culture that gives a sense of identity, a molded one devoid of genuine authenticity. This is not just a psychological process; it is a socially constructed fact that continuously imposes passive consumption as a way of being, affecting both agency and autonomy.

**Agency and Autonomy** flow into each other just as the yin and yang. Agency enables people to act and shape their outcomes, while autonomy ensures that these actions are

undertaken freely and controlled. These two concepts are undermined when consumerism equates choice with liberation and awareness. This illusion of agency and autonomy is perpetuated through mechanisms that offer freedom while seemingly predefining frameworks of self-exploitation.

In *The Burnout Society*, Byung-Chul Han builds upon this saying: "the achievement-subject gives itself over to compulsive freedom—that is, to the free constraint of maximising achievement" (20). This is to say that individuals internalise the deans of neoliberal capitalism, leading to a contradictory situation where free will and constraints coincide. This "compulsive freedom" results in "The exploiter is simultaneously the exploited. Exploitation now occurs without domination. That is what makes self-exploitation so efficient" (58).

This condition is further prefigured throughout *Brave New World*. Citizens are conditioned to believe they freely pursue pleasure and fulfillment even when controlled by a state apparatus (Huxley). The illusion of choice in consumer culture is seen in the novel, with characters convinced of their freedom to indulge yet remaining profoundly constrained by their conditioning, which mirrors Han's "freedom and constraints coincide" (20).

In *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt defines agency as the power of freedom to initiate action, as it allows humans to assert themselves through participating in the world, "With word and deed we insert ourselves into the human world, and this insertion is like a second birth, … to act, in its most general sense, means to take an initiative, to begin … to set something into motion" (196– 97).through this process, one can tell that agency can shape an environment with active members instead of passive ones.

Bauman articulates this in *Consuming Life*: "In the society of consumers no one can become a subject without first turning into a commodity, and no one can keep his or her subjectness secure without perpetually resuscitating, resurrecting and replenishing the capacities expected and required of a sellable commodity" (18). In this sense, Bauman

underlines how self-optimisation and self-commodification in consumer societies undermine the notion of credible agency and autonomy that present the basis of human dignity, since it enables acting rationally according to self-imposed moral laws. Through their theories, Han, Arendt, and Bauman underline the connection between agency and autonomy as they emphasize their unified role in enabling the individual to act freely and purposefully.

However, their role can be perpetuated as postmodern consumerism presents itself as an obstacle to personal choice. Since the freedom to consume is equated with personal agency, one's autonomy is undermined. Huxley articulates this notion in *Brave New World* by depicting state-imposed desires on individuals using technological methods, through which their capacity for true autonomy is weakened and their ability to act independently is suppressed. Projecting it on a consumerist society, this process offers individuals an illusion of agency through an endless array of products and lifestyles to adopt.

While they believe that their consumer behavior stems from their independent desire, it is constructed by consumption conditioning. The absence of agency and autonomy in decision-making emphasises Bauman's note: "And commodity they are prompted to put on the market, promote and sell are themselves. They are, simultaneously, *promoters of commodities* and the *commodities they promote*. They are, at the same time, the merchandise and their marketing agents, the goods and their travelling salespeople" (Bauman 12).

Here, Bauman captures the dual role of the modern consumer, who is not only the buyer of the product but the product itself, marketed and sold in the marketplace of postmodern capitalism. Thus, agency and autonomy in consumer choice are predetermined within consumerism; such a system fosters a culture in which individuality is systematically replaced by a constructed one.

**Individuality**, as Stuart Mill describes in *On Liberty*: "It is desirable, in short, that in things which do not primarily concern others, individuality should assert itself" (107). However, consumerism commodifies the letter's assertion as interpreted by Bauman:

"Consumer 'subjectivity' is made out of shopping choices – choices made by the subject and the subject's prospective purchasers; its description takes the form of the shopping list. What is assumed to be the materialisation of the inner truth of the self is in fact an idealisation of the material – objectified – traces of consumer choices" (Bauman 21).

Marcuse conceptualises this argument further in his work, stating: "the role of technology and technological rationality, … the capitalist state, mass media and consumerism, and new modes of social control, which in their view produced both a decline in the revolutionary potential of the working and a decline of individuality [and] freedom" (25). Huxley reflects this systemic flattening of subjectivity in *Brave New World*, where he demonstrated citizens as all "identical" (7), illustrating how one's individuality is reduced to an identical commodity in industrial societies.

Moreover, "consumerism, advertising, mass culture, and ideology integrate individuals into and stabilise the capitalist system. In describing how needs are produced, which integrate individuals into a whole universe of thought, behavior, and satisfaction" (Marcuse 31). This highlights the blurred lines between "true and false needs" (31); something that nowadays consumers cannot distinguish. The interpretation between Marcuse's critique and Huxley's reveals a shared thesis: consumerist systems stabilise capitalism by collapsing individuality into commodified choices.

Marcuse argues that "the system's widely touted individualism and freedom are forms from which individuals need to liberate themselves" (32). For Marcuse, the "one-dimensionality" arises when "economic, political and social freedoms … become subtle instruments of domination" (32). Huxley literalizes this notion in the same novel where the mere definition of an individual is obscured, buried, unknown: "after all, what is an individual?" (100), a simple question with complex meaning. The latter is an answer to the erased individuality in a consumerist system.

Both Marcuse's and Huxley's ideas meet their parallel in contemporary consumerist societies, where advertising campaigns promote the exclusivity of their products, suggesting that having them will enable consumers to remove individuality from the crowd. In this regard, these shoppers are gradually becoming part of the unified trope, standing in a sharp contrast to the authentic meaning of individuality.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, Erich Fromm presents a compelling criticism of modern consumer societies that commodify personality in *Escape from Freedom*, wherein people neglect their individuality and adapt their personalities to meet the demands of societal consumption habits and market conditions. Fromm writes, "Man does not only sell commodities, he sells himself and feels himself to be a commodity … As with any other commodity, it is the market which decides the values of these human qualities, yes, even their very existence. … If he is sought after, he is somebody, if he is not, he is simply nobody" (70).

Fromm's argument captures that in consumerist culture, self-worth is contingent upon validation, eroding authentic individuality. In other words, in the shadow of consumerism, one's individuality is constrained by the demand for conformity to market-driven rules. This phenomenon transforms people into entities devoid of true individuality as they become a reflection of the market's desires rather than expressing their own, becoming "standardized beige" rather than authentic individuals.

In light of this, the rise of consumer culture increases the dilemma of absent individuality. Social media platforms like TikTok encourage users to perform and publish themselves according to pre-designed performances by commercial interests. It is consequently clear that through several new opportunities for self-expression that individuals have behind them, the number of products consumed to maintain their online personas is increasing. Thereby, individuality is reduced to being defined as the aesthetic trends and choices shaped by advertising, where it becomes both the producer and the product of consumer systems. As the

human being is somehow deprived of his fundamental foundations, he changes into a passive consumer, all within the notion of zombification.

## I.6. The Notion of Zombification

**The Metaphorical Definition of Zombification** is the transformation of someone into a hollow shell with a decayed mind and wild, uncontrolled thirst for consumption. This concept reflects the allegorical nature of individuals within consumerist societies. This phenomenon is manifested in what Han terms "the burnout society", where "the disappearance of domination does not entail freedom. Instead, it makes freedom and constraint coincide. Thus, the achievement-subject gives itself over to compulsive—that is, to the free constraint of maximising achievement. Excess work and performance escalate into auto-exploitation" (20).

This self-exploitation mirrors the behavior of zombies, driven by an external force, hunger, and consuming without fulfillment. Similarly, individuals in the developed society are caught in a cycle of self-optimisation, leading to burnout and a loss of autonomy. In *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* Mark Fisher articulates the concept of zombification, writing, "Capital is an abstract parasite, an insatiable vampire and zombie-maker; but the living flesh it converts into dead labor is ours and the zombie it makes are us" (19). This vivid imagery captures the transformation of the mundane into passive participants within the capitalist system, consuming and being consumed without self-awareness.

**Haitian Folklore** represents the origins of zombification when it comes to the literal definition. In *The Serpent and the Rainbow*, Wade Davis talks about zombification in the Haitian Vodou Traditions[vii], as the reanimation of corpses controlled by external forces or necromantic sorcery. According to Davis, in Haitian folklore, the meaning of a zombie extends beyond a mere supernatural figure, but a real phenomenon tied to spiritual beliefs and ritualistic practices that strips humans of their autonomy and identity (109 –10).

Davis further offers a deep explanation, as he writes: “Tetrodotoxin induces a state of profound paralysis, marked by complete immobility during which time the border between life and death is no at all certain, … it became clear that tetrodotoxin[viii] was capable of pharmacologically inducing a physical state that might actually allow an individual to be buried alive” (109 –10). This shows the creation of zombies through a combination of tetrodotoxin and cultural practices, which induce a death-like state in individuals, and later allow them to be “revived”; or in other words, “controlled” by a sorcerer, or a bokor[ix].

As much as this process of controlling symbolizes the loss of individuality to external forces, as Wiggins et al describe in “The Evolution of the Zombie in Popular Culture”: “Haitian mythology suggests that a mystifying toxic concentrate transformed men into catatonic, slobbering creatures completely null and void of any moral or spiritual control. These beasts served as continuous labor for their master” (3). However, it is also attached to historical significance. The latter stems from fear of losing one’s free will related to slavery and colonial oppression, due to the social and psychological implications of being subject to an external authority since Haiti was a French colony (Davis 58 –9).

The way Davis describes this control: “Administered to an individual who has already suffered the effects of the tetrodotoxin, who has already passed through the ground, the devastating psychological results are difficult to imagine. For it is in the course of that intoxication that the zombi is baptised with a new name, and led away to be socialised into a new existence” (148). This form of control meets its parallel in *Brave New World*, interpreted by the depiction of controlled citizens through external force, which is the pervasive conditioning of hypnopaedic psychology (Huxley).

Moreover, the baptism of the zombie echoes the systematic renaming and socialisation of the citizens, where they are branded with commodified identities (Huxley 6 –7). They are baptized, but instead of water, whispered messages of order and consumption are whispered

until their original selves dissolve, and their existence is replaced by a commodified, zombified one (12).

## I.7. Zombification as a Representation of Societal Anxieties

Anxiety arises whenever individuals and communities face threats to their livelihood and survival. Indeed, in consumerist societies, zombies serve as cultural symbols long associated with societal anxieties, particularly the fear of losing oneself and the human components that define it. Bishop articulates this fear, noting: “Zombies are not uncanny because of their humanistic qualities; they are uncanny because they are, in essence, a grotesque metaphor for humanity itself” (qtd. in Wiggins et al. 6).

Such a profound description conveys a deep despair, as one can witness the extent of fundamental humanity that consumerist ideology grotesquely distorts. Additionally, Fisher interprets the psychological impacts of consumerism, affirming: “Capitalism is what is left when beliefs have collapsed at the level of ritual or symbolic elaboration, and all that is left is the consumer-spectator, trudging through the ruins and the relish” (9). Fisher’s observation of the perils of later capitalist consumer culture perpetuates a sense of disillusionment and inactivity, which people fear.

This notion fits in with the image of zombies as unthinking creatures, deprived of agency, identity, and individuality. Similarly, the metaphorical power of consumer zombies is emphasized in “The Zombie Economy and the Aesthetic of Austerity”, where the zombie symbolizes the economic crisis: “The zombie allows us to read through the political economy of crisis to better imagine the embodiment of harm caused by austerity: the zombie is undead, unthinking, reanimated corpse relentlessly searching for another life to devour” (Cain and Montgomery 4). This portrayal rings with fear from the zombifying effects of consumer societies, which are apparently in progress.

Further, Fisher reveals the hidden truth behind "salvation" which consumerism offer for a "better life", he writes, "The role of capitalist ideology is not to make an explicit case for something in the way propaganda does but to conceal the fact that the operations of capital do not depend on any sort of subjectively assumed belief? It is impossible to conceive of fascism or Stalinism without propaganda – but capitalism can proceed perfectly well, in some ways better, without anyone making a case for it" (16 –7).

This explains why these "walking dead" are a powerful metaphor for industrialised political systems that present themselves as the only viable ones. This propaganda dehumanises persons while depriving them of the chance to question their situation, leaving them as merely workers and consumers.

Such systems maintain individuals in perpetual participation, even when acknowledging the exploitative end. A theme that resonates in contemporary consumer societies, yet George Romero encapsulated it a long time ago in *Dawn of the Dead*. Within the setting of a shopping mall, survivors find themselves imprisoned alongside the zombies, interpreting the ideology of consumerism that breeds zombified people. Furthermore, the satirical expression in Romero's work: "They're us, that's all" ("Dawn of the Dead"), criticizes the zombies' nature as they are not infected victims like the traditional zombies, but a result of conformity to mindless consumption. Fundamentally, zombification as a reflection of social anxieties is deeply connected to its long existence in literature as a deep narrative device with political, social, and psychological horizons.

## I.8. Zombification in Literature

**The Traditional Representation of Zombification** in literature dates back to early references in archaic texts such as the Sumerian Epic of *Gilgamesh* (ca. 2700-2500 BCE). In this epic, the goddess Ishtar threatens to "raise up the dead, and they will devour the living; / I will make the dead outnumber the living!" (Gilgamesh 6.99-100). Additionally, the depiction

of zombification evolved into more malevolent and horrific creatures, seen in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

The novel depicts a reanimated creature, devoid of selfhood (Shelley). This failed scientific experiment reflects the result of consumerist systems that reduce people to passive versions of themselves. Additionally, this traditional representation of zombies rings in consumerist societies, as persons become subservient to the relentless drive of consumption ambition and the dehumanising effects of industrialisation.

**Modern Representation of Zombification,** on the other hand, evolved to symbolize scientific hubris, dehumanization, and the commodification of selfhood. H.P. Lovecraft epitomizes this shift in "Herbert West—Reanimator", underlying the literary horror fiction that remains in contemporary archetype. What makes it more relevant is the West's pursuit of reanimation, he writes: "artificial reanimation of the dead can depend only on the condition of the tissues" ("From the Dark").

West's scientific experiments reduce corpses to mechanistic entities, and unlike Shelley's creature, Lovecraft's are viewed as "*morbid, unnatural, and brainless motion*" ("The Plague-Daemon"). This metaphor mirrors the dehumanising effects of postmodern consumerist labor, where workers become "galvanized[x]" bodies stripped of selfhood (Lovecraft). Similarly, Huxley conceptualises the unchecked scientific progress in *Brave New World*, where conditioning systems mold people into compliant and obedient entities by exposing them to electric shocks (15 –7). Huxley's theme aligns with Lovecraft's "zombie-like" as they are stripped of reason, self-awareness, and humanity.

Such themes portray the "walking dead" as a dominant feature of contemporary literature and even the world? Lovecraft further pens: "The result of partial or imperfect animation were much more hideous than were the total failures, and we both held fearsome recollections of such things … lumps of graveyard clay had been galvanized into … unnatural"

("the Plague-Daemon"). This description shows that Lovecraft "zombies" are not merely consumers but products of a culture that weaponizes science to erase humanity.

Within postmodernism, zombification in literature reflects the unchecked, increased progress of technology related to industrialisation, consumerism, and totalitarianism. George Orwell's *1984* is another influence that goes beyond the supernatural horror. Orwell offers a special form of zombification through propaganda, the party's surveillance, and psychological manipulation to impose conformity and erase any potential for rebellion. As already seen, Huxley creates this parallel dystopian vision in *Brave New World*, depicting zombification through conditioned passive entities.

By criticising consumerist systems and totalitarianism, both novels act as cautionary tales that reveal the unsettling truth hidden beneath the West's polished illusion of consumerist progress and prosperity. Eventually, the transformation of zombification from its origins rooted in Haitian folklore to its assimilation into literature and media results in a paradigmatic shift in its impact on Western culture, as it shifts from metaphorical to visual and visceral criticism of the postmodern era. Yet, whether zombification is rooted in Haitian folklore or postmodern cultural representations, both share common characteristics, highlighting the result of consumerism.

## I.9. Key Characteristics: Consumerism as a Catalyst for Zombification

Zombies in both folklore and media share common characteristics. One feature that highlights them is their appearance, as something seems to be familiar in an unfamiliar figure, "a grotesque metaphor of humanity itself" as described by Kyle William Bishop in "Raising the Dead: Unearthing the Nonliterary Origins of Zombie Cinema" (qtd. in Wiggins et al. 6). This depiction stems from the lost human foundation, mindless agency and autonomy. They are further illustrated by Franz Kafka in *The Trial* as "workers become their own auditors, forced to assess their own performance" (qtd. in Fisher 55), showing how consumer systems

internalize control, resulting in a form of self-regulation that serves the imposed consumer objective, which diminishes personal agency and autonomy.

In “The Four Symbols of the Zombie Metaphor”, John et al. interpret the zombie’s lack of free will: “They do not coordinate to achieve concurrence. They are in company, but not together”. The portrayal demonstrates how zombie tropes, much like today’s consumers, seek to inhibit a space where no meaningful action is taking place. Their lack of interrelation strips them of any act of will, as in most cases, their bodies act and choose on programmed desires of consumer ideology rather than conscious choices.

This portrayal emphasizes how zombie tropes occupy spaces without a meaningful purpose, much like today’s consumers, who are actively present everywhere, together, but passively consuming. This absence of connection underlines their detachment from agency and autonomy, as their bodies function and choose based on pre-determined desires of consumer ideology rather than conscious choice.

Throughout the layers of *Brave New World*, Huxley constructs this haunting metaphor, in which citizens’ existence is deeply tied to the consumption of a drug. The entire narrative presents this act as a result of a designated choice rather than an independent one (Huxley). This theme reflects the grim absence of agency and autonomy, as citizens are devoid of critical thinking, become zombies incapable of self-determination, and seek controlled consumption.

In the same vein as Huxley’s narrative, citizens are not fully human, nor non-human. Their grotesque appearance mirrors the metaphorical characterisation of zombies, with rotting flesh, shambling movement, and vacant eyes. This imagery serves as a visual reminder of both the profound impact of a drained identity and the fragility of humane existence. Similarly, in consumer culture, the metaphorical zombie embodies identity loss, for people are defined by their consumption habits instead of intrinsic qualities and historical heritage.

Additionally, the zombies' vacant eyes characterise the hollow gaze of the postmodern consumer, a present brilliance tied to the presence of commodities. The rotting flesh is no less reminiscent of the psychological and psychical degradation of individuals stripped of a sense of individuality in the pursuit of uniformity and unconscious submission to consumption control. As already seen, the human apocalypse narrative serves as a cultural allegory for the zombifying results of the relentless pursuit of consumption.

In their analysis of "The Zombie Economy", Cain and Montgomerie posit that zombies symbolize the profound effects of consumerism: "The zombie is our future in a post-apocalyptic nightmare … they are what is left when humanity has completely or almost wiped itself out? They embody the blond neoliberal drive to keep consuming, to reproduce and grow exponentially regardless of environment, social and personal destruction. … Since the zombie consumers all living matter in its path, and create only endless copies of itself, it can only usher in a post-apocalyptic state" (5). This assertion rings the notion that consumerism breeds zombies. Ultimately, the boundaries between consumer and consumed are no longer recognized, as the relentless hunger of zombies becomes integrated within the postmodern consumerism.

## Conclusion

This chapter investigates the power of postmodernist consumerism that reshapes the phenomenon of zombification. Consumer culture does not conquer only the most developed nations by commodifying, erasing, and forming human components. It creates a global population of "self-exploited zombies" who willingly conform to market rules and consumption patterns. This superficial hint sets the stage for a deeper examination of a literary futuristic vision of a destructive world. Through a close reading of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, the second chapter analyses how the concepts discussed above are displayed in such a dystopian

narrative that serves as both a reflection and a commentary on postmodern mechanisms of consumerism that breed a zombified population.

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[i] A concept introduced by Veblen in *The Theory of the Leisure Class* that defines the practice of spending money on luxury goods and services to publicly display wealth and social status rather than fulfilling practical needs.

[ii] Refers to the social phenomenon described by Thorstein Veblen in *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, where individuals from the lower strata imitate the consumption patterns and lifestyles of the wealthy.

[iii] Henry Ford introduced a mass production and consumption system in the early 20th century. It was characterized by standardized manufacturing, assembly lines, and high worker wages to stimulate demand. This system represented a "solid" phase of modernity marked by interconnectedness of industries, labor, and capital in large-scale structures (Bauman 61).

[v] A social framework where nearly everything in life is commercially treated as commodities with exchangeable value, thus the profit obscures intrinsic worth. (Baudrillard).

[vi] The process by which cultural products (art, music) are transformed into commodities. In this case, the focus is on how culture loses its unique and artistic qualities, absorbed into the economic system as a part of the consumer market (Baudrillard).

[vii] A Caribbean nation shaped by African, Indigenous Taino, and French colonial traditions, with Vodou as the central belief system. For more reading: Kette Thomas, "Haitian Zombies, Myths, and Modern Identity". *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 12. No. 2(2010): 1-10.

[viii] A potent neurotoxin found in a particular marine species, such as pufferfish. It blocks nerve signals, causing paralysis and even a death-like state (Wade Davis).

[ix] A Vodou practitioner who performs both good and evil magic.

[x] According to *Oxford English Dictionary*, it is “the therapeutic application of electricity to the body”. Refers to the corpses stimulated to move or reanimated through electric currents.

# Chapter Two: Consumerism and Zombification in *Brave New World*

## Introduction

Science is the application of thought to reality, and literature is the limitless space where thought and reality interconnect. In his celebrated novel *Brave New World* (1932), Aldous Huxley combines both to present a vision of the future, where scientific advancement and consumer capitalism meet to redefine what it means to be human. A deep analysis is set to investigate the connection between consumerism, science, and psychological manipulation that results in a society of addicted zombies, devoid of the very foundations of humanity, all under a totalitarian control that silences dissenters. In examining these points, this chapter aims to illustrate the novel's prophetic relevance in bridging postmodern consumerist mechanisms that culminate in zombification within Huxley's fictional world, which meets its parallel in the Western reality.

## II.1. The Novel as a Totalitarian Entity

Novels, within their nature, are a reflection, and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World,* in its essence, does not merely depict a totalitarian regime; it operates as one. Huxley's dystopian framework immerses readers in a world structured around the absolute control of every aspect of its citizens' lives. Societal systems are fabricated precisely to maintain oppressive authority, not through overt violence, but through the subtle manipulation of identities, behaviours, and desires, ensuring the elimination of emotions, critical thinking, and any conceptual possibility of resistance. This ideological control aligns with Althusser's concept of the Ideological State Apparatus, where institutions such as education, science, and the media reproduce dominant ideologies not through coercion but through everyday normalisation of beliefs (23).

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that Huxley's dystopia is rooted in his observation of the interwar period, a time marked by economic instability, social upheaval, and the rise of totalitarianism. in *Brave New World Revisited*, Huxley remarks: "They did not foresee what in fact has happened, above all in our Western capitalist democracies—the development of a vast

mass communications industry, concerned in the main neither with the true nor the false, but with the unreal, the more or less totally irrelevant. In a word, they failed to take into account man's almost infinite appetite for distractions" (30).

Huxley's subjective experiences during this period also informed his witnesses on the rise of fascism and the trauma of World War I, as he was concerned with the fragility of democracy and the comfort with which authoritarian regimes could manipulate the masses, as he writes about "non-violent manipulation of the environment and of the thoughts and feelings of individual men, women and children" (8). Huxley's stress intensifies as he "saw an overpopulated world that had gravitated toward his dark vision, in which freedom and individualism were willingly exchanged for sensory pleasure and endless consumption, making order out of chaos" (8).

Zygmunt Bauman's notion of "liquid modernity" reflects this criticism, in which individuals overwhelmed by instability seek refuge in consumption and routine as a coping mechanism, leading to greater social conformity (24). Huxley's modern narrative echoes themes of humanity's destruction in the postmodern and contemporary societies. He pens:

> Under the relentless thrust of … using ever more effective methods of mind-manipulation, the democracies will change their nature; … The underlying substance will be a new kind of non-violent totalitarianism. … Democracy and freedom will be the theme of every broadcast and editorial—but … in a strictly Pickwickian sense. Meanwhile the ruling oligarchy and its highly trained elite or … thought-manufacturers and mind-manipulators will quietly run the show as they see fit. (87)

These experiences reflect a response to a shaped vision of a futuristic world built within fictional boundaries, yet align deeply with the past and the present, the emblematic, direct, and indirect dominance of tyranny.

Huxley projects his concern into his fictional narrative, where he criticises these control mechanisms by exposing how processes like the Bokanovsky[xi] and hypnopaedia[xii] involve exploited technology and psychology to normalise passivity, as they create conditioned zombies who willingly surrender their agency in exchange for the illusion of security and stability. This reflects Han's argument in *The Burnout Society*, where late capitalist control is exercised through the internalisation of self-discipline, performance, and productivity, leading to depoliticised subjects (20). In the opening chapter, Mr. Foster's explanation of the State's conditioning process emphasises this authoritarian control: "'We also predestine and condition. We decant our babies as socialised human beings, as Alphas or Epsilons[xiii] as future sewage workers or future …'" (11).

Similarly, Mustapha Mond, one of the World Controllers[xiv], asserts in chapter 17, "'One believes things because one has been conditioned to believe them'" (160). These passages reflect the State's fundamental principle: individuals do not develop personal beliefs through free thought but are instead conditioned to accept the roles and lives imposed on them. This process, in turn, imposes a totalitarian system where control is not maintained through overt oppression, but through the internalisation of ideology from infancy, where citizens are not only content with their roles but also incapable of questioning the system[xv].

Moreover, Huxley's narrative mirrors his view of humanity devoid of purpose with its clinical detachment and calculated portrayal of beings as a commodity immersed in repressive rule. In this cautionary world, conformity, compliance, servitude, and obedience are hidden with uniformity, stability, happiness, and community slogans, all serving totalitarian dominance within its narrative logic.

## II.2. The World State's Consumerist Systems: Hypnopaedia and Conditioning

The *American Psychological Association* dictionary defines identity as "individual differences in characteristic patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving". These patterns significantly influence how individuals perceive themselves and are perceived by others. This is evident in Huxley's *Brave New World*, where the State predetermines the identity of its citizens through consumerism systems; where the concept of identity is not an organic construct shaped by personal experiences, self-discovery, or heritage, but instead is assigned by the state and systematically stripped of these values. This is reflected in chapter 1, where the Director states, "'We decant our babies as socialized human beings, as Alphas, or Epsilones, as future sewage workers'" (11).

This passage offers a total opposite definition of human identity. In the world, where names carry personal, familial, and historical significance, the names in *Brave New World* are stripped of these significances as they are assigned arbitrarily. The citizens of this dystopia are named in a manner that reinforces their roles as interchangeable parts of a vast consumerist caste system hierarchy. As the Director explains in the same chapter, "'Ninety-six identical twins working ninety-six identical machines!'" (11).

The Director's statement is exemplified by names like Bernard Marx and Lenina Crowne, which allude to historical figures associated with economic ideology. According to the Course Hero website, Bernard's surname recalls Karl Marx, whose theories criticized capitalist societies, while Lenina Crowne's name references Vladimir Lenin, a key figure in the Russian Revolution (*Book Connections*). However, the names of these characters are ironically hollow and devoid of any deeper personal meaning, detached from lineage and personal legacy. This systematic stripping of identity corresponds with the State's consumerist ideology, prioritizing mass production and disposability. The expression "identical twins" means that

names like “Lenina Crowne” do not signify an individual but rather a model of a citizen, pre-conditioned for mindless pleasure-seeking and consumption, just as every Lenina before her and every Lenina after her will be. However, this erasure of personal identity is confirmed through hypnopaedic indoctrination and conditioning as well.

### II.2.1. The Cultivation of Identity

In Huxley’s narrative, the World State’s consumerist system is built on the foundation of psychological manipulation, that of conditioning and hypnopaedia. These techniques are used as the primary tools for shaping identity, as their use proves that the latter is nothing but a product of both insidious and systematic social engineering. This is reflected in the repeated recurrence of the State’s motto: “Community, Identity, and Stability” throughout the novel.

Starting with hypnopaedia is one of the most effective tools used by the World State to instill its ideology, values, and ideas in its citizens from infancy without resistance through leveraging the subconscious mind’s receptivity during sleep with pre-approved scripts that dictate their crafted identity. In chapter 2, Mustapha Mond explains this: “‘Till at last the child’s mind is these suggestions, and the sum of the suggestions is the child’s mind. … the adult’s mind too-all his life long’” (21). This statement reveals the enduring and deviant nature of hypnopaedia, as these predetermined suggestions become the foundation by which one’s identity and worldview are formed.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of hypnopaedia is demonstrated in the novel through the repetition of slogan phrases in rooms called “Elementary Class Consciousness”, for instance. Phrases like:

> ‘All wear green,’ … ‘and Delta Children wear Khaki. Oh no, I don’t want to play with Delta children. And Epsilons are still worse. They’re too stupid to be able to read or write. Besides they wear Black, which is such a beastly colour. I’m so glad I’m a Beta. … ‘Alpha children wear grey. They work much harder

> than we do, because they're so frightfully clever. I'm really awfully glad I'm a Beta, because I don't work so hard. And then we are much better than the Gammas and Deltas. Gammas are stupid. (20)

These whisperings are repeated "forty or fifty times more before they wake; then again on Thursday, and again on Saturday. A hundred and twenty times three times a week for thirty months" (21). Throughout the novel, the psychological foundations of hypnopedia become ingrained in the subconscious, ensuring that identity is not a personal realisation but an imposed belief system. Thus, children's minds are entirely shaped to associate the State's goals, illustrating its success in integrating the internalisation of social hierarchy and shaping identity without the individual's conscious awareness.

As Van der Kolk theorizes, such repeated exposures can implant automatic behavioral responses—akin to "behavioral reenactments" (389)—that bypass conscious thought. This concept of unbidden memories shaping behavior is directly applicable to hypnopaedia. The citizens of *Brave New World* do not remember their conditioning in a traditional sense, but it re-emerges involuntarily as guiding mantras: "When the individual feels, the community reels." This slogan, like many others, becomes embedded through what Kolk would identify as "state-dependent learning" (403).

In the context of *Brave New World*, hypnopaedia functions as a form of state-dependent learning, where the suggestions implanted during sleep become automatic responses that shape the citizens' identity. This is evident in Lenina Crowne's mechanical repetition of slogans, such as "'I'm glad I'm not a Gamma'" (42), "'What a hideous colour kaki is,' remarked Lenina, voicing the hypnopaedic prejudice of her caste" (42), and "'I'm glad I'm not a Gamma'" (42), which she recites without understanding their implications.

On the other hand, conditioning is a more overt and direct method of shaping its citizens' identity through manipulating behavior and instinctively making their actions align with its

goals without question from birth. It exploits principles of classical conditioning, which, according to the *American National Library of Medicine*, is a learning that associates a stimulus with a specific response (Rehmane et al.). Like Hypnopaedia, this process begins in infancy; as shown in the Hatchery and Conditioning Centre, babies are subjected to controlled stimuli to shape their future behavior.

Through conditioning, the World State ensures that individuals are molded into obedient and predictable members of society. One of the most important examples of this system is the aversion therapy used to instill a hatred of books and nature in Delta children. The Director explains this process to a group of students in the first chapter: "The babies at once fell silent, then began to crawl towards those clusters of sleek colours, those shapes so … brilliant on the white pages. … From the rank of the crawling babies came little squeals of excitement, gurgles and twitterings of pleasure" (Huxley 16).

However, this moment of innocent curiosity and excitement is abruptly disrupted: "The Head Nurse, … pressed down a little lever. There was a violent explosion. Shriller and ever shriller, a siren shrieked. Alarm bells maddeningly sounded. The children started, screamed; their faces were distorted with terror" (Huxley 16). When the babies are exposed to books and flowers again, they exhibit avoidance behavior, driven by fear: "But at the approach of the roses, at the mere sight of those … images … the infants shrank away in horror, the volume of their howling suddenly increased" (16).

This conditioning process ensures that Delta children will grow up with an "instinctive" hatred of books and nature, as the Director explains: "'They'll grow up with what the psychologists used to call an 'instinctive' hatred of books and flowers. Reflexes unalterably conditioned. They'll be safe from books and botany all their lives'" (17). These passages demonstrate the way the World State associates certain stimuli with pain and fear to shape the preferences and

behaviors of its citizens while ensuring that they remain obedient with predictable programmed actions.

*Brave New World'*s citizens have systematically engineered identities instead of experiencing what Erik Erikson defines as the "Identity vs Role Confusion" stage (132) in *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, which is a critical period where individuals explore distinct roles and experiences that make them develop a sense of personal identity. The citizens are deprived of this natural process, as their identities are shaped from birth through this conditioning that ensures them a life free of any potential conflicts. Citizens do not experience existential doubt or struggle because they have been reinforced to find satisfaction and accept their pre-determined roles. In this sense, identity is not discovered or formatted, but instead assigned. Such deprivation echoes the psychoanalytic lens, where Fromm in *Escape from Freedom* argues that "modern man still is anxious and attempted to surrender his freedom to dictators, or to lose it by transforming himself into a small cog in the machine, well fed, and well clothed, yet not a free man but an automaton" (7).

Moreover, B.F. Skinner's theory of Operant Conditioning solidifies Fromm's argument, he posits that behavior is dictated by its consequences; reinforcement increases the likelihood of repeated behavior, while punishment decreases it (3). In *Brave New World*, Huxley posits a conditioning process that is used to reinforce consumerist behavior by associating consumption with pleasure. For example, Delta children are conditioned to hate books and nature, which demonstrates that they will not look for intellectual or emotional fulfillment outside of the state-approved consumerist system.

Talking about emotions, in chapter 16, Mustapha Mond declares: "'They get what they want, and they never want what they can't get. They're well off; they're safe; they're never ill; they're not afraid of death; they're blissfully ignorant of passion and old age; they're plagued with no mothers or fathers; they've got no wives, or children, or lovers to feel strongly about;

they're so conditioned that they practically can't help behaving as they ought to behave'" (151). This assertion ensures that people of the World State will never experience deep, exclusive bonds and struggles that would launch authentic feelings.

Parenthood, which forges a lifelong sense of duty and identity, is dismissed as unnecessary and grotesque, as described by Mond, "'What suffocating intimacies, what dangerous, insane, obscene relationships between members of family group!'" (Huxley 28). Later in the same chapter, he says, "'Our Freud had been the first to reveal the appalling dangers of family life. The world was full of fathers-was therefore full of misery; full of mothers-therefore of every kind of perversion from sadism to chastity; full of brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts-full of madness and suicide" (28). Mond posits the family as the main source of misery and everything negative as the reasons behind eradicating relationships, which is a calculated inversion of traditional human values.

In eroding these bonds, the State does not merely end suffering, it drops the structures through which identity is formed and defined. As people are stripped of the so-called suffocating intimacies of family life, and replaced with devoid fulfillment through conditioning, where people are deprived of the natural vacuum of selfhood, a fundamental source that gives them a distinct personal identity throughout the narrative. The World State's systems of conditioning do not simply form and shape identity, they also affect agency and autonomy in the same way.

### II.2.2. Controlled Agency and Autonomy beneath the Guise of Social Stability

While *Brave New World* forms identity for easy control over citizens, its primary concern is the preservation of social stability. This stability is carefully maintained through the illusion of agency and autonomy, both of which are unbreakably linked, and their nature is subjected to control since the manipulation of one needs the regulation of the other. The illusion

of agency and autonomy in the World State is sustained by a consumerist structure that presents a range of free choices to citizens, all designed to strengthen the state's values and priorities.

The economic system of the State is designed in a way that erodes the agency and autonomy of citizens while encouraging them to consume, engage in recreational activities, and participate in state-sanctioned events, such as "Centrifugal Bumble-Puppy" (42)", "Electro-magnetic Golf" (60), and "Obstacle (67), which serve no real purpose other than ensuring constant happy engagement with consumption. This reflects Byung Han's concept of "compulsive freedom", where individuals believe they are acting autonomously while conforming to systemic demands (20).

Even children's games are designed for economic consumption, as clear in the Director's statement in chapter 4: "'Imagine the folly of allowing people to play elaborate games which do nothing whatever to increase consumption. It's madness. Nowadays the Controller won't approve of any new game unless it can be shown that it requires at least as much as the most complicated of existing games'" (Huxley 23). This statement illustrates how the State sustains leisure activities to meet economic and political needs. Citizens believe they are freely choosing to engage in leisure, yet their choices are predetermined already. This illusion of agency and autonomy is a cornerstone of the World State's control, as it ensures that citizens remain content without realizing the constraints on their freedom and decision-making.

Perhaps the most noticeable example of controlled agency and autonomy is the "feelies", sensory-enhanced films that provide hyper-realistic pleasure without intellectual depth. These films, controlled by the "Professor of Feelies in the College of Emotional Engineering" (Huxley 105), are designed to pacify citizens and prevent them from seeking meaningful emotional or intellectual experiences. As Bauman notes, in consumer society, people become both "the merchandise and their marketing agents" (12), perfectly embodied in the shallow entertainment of the feelies. This is shown in Lenina Crowne's instruction to John

the Savage during a feelie: "'Take hold of those metal knobs on the arms of your chair,' whispered Lenina. 'Otherwise you won't get any of the feely effects'" (112). John the Savage reacts to the feelies as superficial: "'Like this horrible film'" (113), and "'It was base, … it was ignoble'" (113). Later, in his discussion with Mustapha Mond, John criticizes the feelies again by comparing them to traditional art in chapter 16: "'All the same, … Othello's good, Othello's better than those feelies … they're told by an idiot'" (151), alluding to Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

Unlike traditional art, which provokes thought, Mustapha Mond acknowledges the State's preference for shallow entertainment over high art, stating: "'That's the price we have to pay for stability. You've got to choose between happiness and what people used to call high art. We've sacrificed the high art … That require [s] the most enormous ingenuity. You're making fivers out of the absolute minimum of steel-works of art out of practically nothing but pure sensation" (151).

These statements prove that feelies exist purely to pacify, ensuring people never need meaningful emotional or intellectual experience. Meaning, citizens' choices are pre-approved pleasure stimuli, thus emphasising the State's erosion of genuine agency and autonomy.

Furthermore, the State's manipulation of this self-determination extends to controlling natural desires. For instance, the State initially made lower-caste citizens love nature to encourage the consumption of transport, as exhibited in the Director's explanation: "Not so very long ago … Gammas, Deltas, even Epsilons, had been conditioned to like flowers-flowers in particular and wild nature in general. The idea was to make them want to be going out into the country at every available opportunity, and so compel them to consume transport" (17).

However, the State soon realised that this love of nature did not contribute to industrial productivity, he continues explaining: "A love of nature keeps no factories busy. It was decided to abolish the love of nature, but not the tendency to consume transport" (17). To achieve this,

the World Stat conditioned the masses to hate nature while simultaneously encouraging them to engage in country sports that require elaborate equipment, as stated by the Director:

> It was essential that they should keep on going to the country, even though they hated. The problem was to find an economically sounder reason for consuming transport than a mere affection for primroses and landscapes. … We condition the masses to hate the country, … But simultaneously we condition them to love all the country sports. At the same time, we see to it that all country sports shall entail the use of apparatus. So that they consume manufactured articles as well as transport. Hence those electric shocks. (17)

This passage illustrates the State's strategy of offering a fake satisfying engineered consumer behavior, aiming at putting the citizens in a position where they contribute to the economy even when their natural inclinations are erased. However, these choices are heavily influenced by the State's conditioning and consumerist incentives. As Lenina Crowne declares in chapter 6, "'I am free. Free to have the most wonderful time. Everybody's happy nowadays'" (61).

Her belief in her self-governance reflects the success of the State's manipulation, as she cannot recognise the constraints imposed on her. Constructing the case of Lenina on everyone else in the novel creates an obedient, delusional population, which ensures stability in return. Mustapha Mond states: "Stability isn't nearly so spectacular as instability. And being contented has none of the glamour of a good fight against misfortune, none of the picturesqueness of a struggle with temptation, or a fatal overthrow by passion or doubt. Happiness is never grand'" (151 – 52).

In this context, Mond explicitly acknowledges that struggle is necessary for growth, which is why the State removes any potential conflict to maintain order, thus stripping individuals of any real capacity for autonomous decision-making, as Mond himself confirms in

chapter 3, “The primal and the ultimate need. Stability’” (31). His assertion reflects the State’s emphasis on stability by ensuring that every perceived act of agency and autonomy matches preconditioned behaviors; the freedom of agency and autonomy is not the freedom to choose but the absence of the need to choose.

### II.2.3. Individuality vs. Uniformity

Individuality is an absent component in the citizens of *Brave New World*. As a concept, individuality is rendered absolute. Huxley created a fictional city with inhabitants conditioned to embrace a rigid sameness, guaranteeing that their key role is to serve consumption, which fulfills economic efficiency, and to comply with social stability. Thus, this erosion begins at birth to ensure that citizens never develop an independent sense of self. One of the remarkable examples of this uniformity is found in the Bokanovsky process, which produces identical twins.

According to the Director’s statements in the first chapter: “Bokanovsky’s Process is one of the major instruments of social stability! … Standard men and women; in uniform batches”, and “Ninety-six identical twins working ninety-six identical machines!” (Huxley 7). This mass production of humans mirrors Marcuse’s warning about how consumerism creates “standardized” individuals (31), stripping them of authentic selfhood. The Director adds later in the same chapter: Fertilize and bokanovskify-in other words, multiply by seventy-two-and you get an average of nearly eleven thousand brothers and sisters in a hundred and fifty batches of identical twins” (8). These statements indicate that the State’s biological uniformity is further emphasised by conditioning, which reflects the mass production models of consumer capitalism, wherein individuality is sacrificed at the cost of predictability, stability, and progress.

According to John Stuart Mill in his book *On Liberty*, individuality can only thrive when people can freely express and exchange their thoughts and beliefs (106 –7). However, in *Brave*

*New World*, such freedom is systematically erased as its citizens do not develop their ideas; instead, their thoughts and beliefs are already implanted. The psychological consequences of this uniformity align with the psychologist Erich Fromm's concept of "automaton uniformity", which describes the individuals' unconscious adoption of societal norms at the cost of surrendering their sense of self and trading their authenticity for the sake of blending into a collective societal system of expectations which leads to the loss of individuality (*AllPsych*).

In *Brave New World*, the State's systemic conformity is evident in the citizens' identical appearances and behaviors, as Huxley describes in chapter 11: "Eight identical Dravidian twins in khaki" (106), and later described by The Human Manager in the novel as "Eighteen identical curly auburn girls in Gamma green" (107). These descriptions demonstrate the impossibility of individuality in a society that prioritises uniformity over personal expression.

The suppression of individuality is also clear in Helmholtz Watson's struggle to express his narratives within the constraints of the State's controlled system that prescribes what is acceptable to think, feel, and write. As a propagandist, Watson feels stifled by the shallow narratives he is forced to produce: "'I feel I could do something much more important. Yes, and more intense, more violent. But what? What is there more important to say?'" (Huxley 46 –7). This passage reflects Watson's frustration with the broader human need for "self-actualization", something natural that contradicts his conditioning, which is why it seems unknown to him. Watson's sense of "something important to say" suggests that true individuality requires freedom to define one's meaning and satisfaction.

The World State's motto, "Everyone belongs to everyone else", promotes a collective ideology for stability while contradictorily erasing personal individuality. This suppression reduces people to interchangeable parts of a uniform whole in economic consumption and production. Lenina Crowne highlights this ideology, stating, "'And how can you talk like that about not wanting to be a part of the social body? After all, everyone works for everyone else.

We can't do without anyone. Even Epsilons'" (61). In the same chapter, she adds, "'I don't know what you mean. I am free'" (61). Her declaration reflects a total conformation to the idea of uniformity in an incomprehensible way by the system.

Furthermore, this uniformity is achieved through the suppression of emotional and personal connections, leaving people passively content and compliant. As Mustapha Mond asserts: "'They're plagues with no mothers or fathers; they've got no wives, or children, or lovers to feel strongly about" (151). In this context, Mond's statement shows that when individuals are stripped of familial bonds, real-life struggles, and even unfulfilled desires, the State erases the core elements that define human individuality. Hence, the essence of selfhood often appears through contrast, through the tension between connection and loss, longing and denial. However, in Huxley's fictional world, where "everyone is for everyone else", there is no room for such contrast.

Moreover, the Director's statement in chapter 10: "'After all, what is an individual?' … 'We can make a new one with the greatest ease-as many as we like'" (100). This question serves as a noticeable dismissal of personal individuality, reflecting the State's ideology that human beings are nothing more than mass-produced commodities. As Fromm observes, in a consumer society, individuals become commodities whose value is determined by the market (70). The Director's weeping gesture toward the tools of artificial reproduction (100) reduces the concept of individuality to a mechanical process, devoid of any intrinsic meaning of original humanity. This reflects the consequence of equating human life with scientific replication.

## II.3. *Soma* as the Ultimate Tool of Control

In his work, *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault's concept of biopower defines how various modern states identify psychological manipulation strategies as a means of regulating life at the biological level (148). This insight lays the groundwork for understanding *soma* not just as a fictional drug but as a biopolitical and economic process that ensures populations

remain manageable, compliant, and productive. In *Brave New World*, *soma* directly manifests this principle, serving as a biochemical tool that supports totalitarian control and societal regulation. It is a weaponised substance designed to provide all the benefits of comfort while cutting the need for introspection and, most importantly, rebellion. As Mustapha Mond explains, *soma* is "'the perfect drug … Euphoric, narcotic, pleasantly hallucinant'" (37). This statement demonstrates its effects as immediate, offering its consumers a temporary escape from their anxious realities while ensuring they remain docile and conditioned.

From a psychological standpoint, the ability to think critically declines whenever the consumption of *soma* increases. In "Civilization and Its Discontents", Sigmund Freud identified substance use as a way to avoid psychic pain and internal tension: "Life, as we find it, is too hard for us; it brings us too many pains, disappointments and impossible tasks. In order to bear it we cannot dispense with palliative measures … There are perhaps three such measures: powerful deflections, which cause us to make light of our misery; substitutive satisfactions, which diminish it; and intoxicating substances, which make us insensitive to it" (18). This is evident in the statement of Bernard Marx, an Alpha Plus character: "'I'd rather be myself … myself and nasty. Not somebody else, however jolly'" (Huxley 60). Bernard understands the function of *soma* and momentarily resists it.

However, despite his disparate resistance as evident in the novel: "Often in the past he had wondered what it would be like to be subjected (soma less and with nothing but his own in ward resources to rely on) to some great trial, some pain, some persecution; he had even longed for affliction" (69). As a conditioned member of society from birth, Bernard ultimately surrenders to *soma* whenever he is overwhelmed by his somehow awareness that makes him question his existence. Thus, the conditioning of the citizens is so effective that the mere suggestion of going without *soma* is met with horror, as it is considered a necessity. For instance, in chapter 6, when Bernard suggests that people might be better off without "soma",

his companion Lenina Crowne, from Beta class, reacts with disbelief: "'Why you don't take soma when you have these dreadful ideas of yours. You'd forget all about them. And instead of feeling miserable, you'd be jolly. So jolly'" (62).

This moment signifies the profound reliance on *soma*; any deviation from it is unthinkable. This latter does not offer delusional happiness and stress relief only, but ensures that their dissatisfaction never leads to self-reflection or rebellion for the sake of maintaining societal order. This philosophy is explicitly articulated by Mustapha Mond when he states in chapter 17, "'But people never are alone now, … We make them hate solitude; and we arrange their lives so that it's almost impossible for them ever to have it'" (160). In this context, comfort means eliminating any mental discomfort, such as isolation that might incite critical thought or resistance, which renders individuals powerless against the system's control.

### II.3.1. The Commodification of Contentment

Huxley portrays *soma* as the ideal commodity, fulfilling the human need for emotional satisfaction and ensuring that citizens remain content regardless of circumstances. The slogan "A gramme is better than a damn" (38) is an alarming critique of a system in which distress is not resolved and confronted but chemically eradicated by a pill consumed. The psychologist Martin Seligman's theory of Learned Helplessness identifies the effect of *soma*, where citizens become entirely dependent on an external substance to manage their emotions and passively accept their oppression (42).

In chapter 6, Lenina Crowne asserts: "'Remember one cubic centimeter cures ten gloomy sentiments" (Huxley 60). Mustapha Mond later revisits this ideology in chapter 17, where he declares, "'And if ever, by some unlucky chance, anything unpleasant should somehow happen, why, there's soma to give you a holiday from the facts. And there's always soma to calm your anger, to reconcile you to your enemies, to make you patient'" (161 –62). These statements show how *soma* is considered the first and ultimate salvation of the masses.

Furthermore, the State organises parties specialised for consuming *soma*, such as the Solidarity Service, where the latter is served within rituals as described by Huxley in chapter 5: "Soma was passed from hand to hand and, with the formula, 'I drink to my annihilation,' twelve times quaffed" (54). As Baudrillard explains in *The Consumer Society*, "objects are no longer linked … to a *definite* function or need … they function as a shifting and unconscious field of signification" (10), underlying the transformation of *soma* from a mere drug to a symbolic, communal ritual. In this context, *soma* functions as a ritualistic object that embodies communal obedience where participants willingly surrender their consciousness for the sake of achieving contentment without even questioning.

This situation can be seen in societies of the 21st century, where medications with significant effects are misused in contrast to their intended traditional medical purposes. According to the article "Lifestyle Drugs, Mood, Behaviour and Cognition," written by Simon N. Young, this misuse is referred to as "lifestyle drugs", a term that describes the process through which the consumption of drugs by people is done under the belief that they will achieve improved life-related conditions, [such as comfort, impotence, and baldness], even when the conditions they address are not universally recognised as diseases, they are still being numbed by drug consumption instead of treated (87). The only difference between the real use of *soma* and its fictional one is negligible; both *Brave New World* and postmodern society use mood-altering substances to maintain stability by suppressing distress instead of treating it in a meaningful way.

### II.3.2. *Soma* as an Illusion of Choice

Perhaps, the most insidious aspect of *soma* is its ability to create a liberating illusion of choice within a rigidly controlled system. The citizens of *Brave New World* believe they are free to consume *soma* whenever they desire, but in fact, this freedom is a carefully constructed facade of their conditioning. The novel repeatedly imposes the idea that *soma* consumption is

not an act of personal choice but an externally imposed necessity that ensures indirect compliance for the benefit of the State.

This drug does not simply dull pain; it makes people believe that escaping discomfort is a logical and desirable choice, as evident in Mustapha Mond's statement in chapter 17: "'There's always soma to give you a holiday from the facts'" (162). This reflects Herbert Marcuse's concept of "one-dimensional man", in which "The distinguishing feature of advanced industrial society is its effective suffocation of those needs which demand liberation—liberation also from that which is tolerable and rewarding and comfortable--while it sustains and absolves the destructive power and repressive function of the affluent society" (58). Herbert's dynamic is reflected through *soma*, which is always an accessible, accepted, and institutionalised drug that disguises state-imposed compliance as personal freedom. Ultimately, Huxley's consumerist systems produce a grotesque embodiment of the human figure.

## II.4. The Zombification of Citizens

*Brave New World* is built on a foundation where consumerism presents one of the main pillars that ensure its stability and progress at the cost of its citizens. As already discussed, the World State's use of conditioning mechanisms creates submissive citizens, who function upon a predetermined mindset. Indeed, the concept of "zombification" is not explicitly depicted in the novel, but it is reflected through the State's manipulation of science. For instance, human reproduction is no longer a natural process where babies are born, they are artificially created. As the Director explains in the first chapter, "'They're decanted as freemartins-structurally quite normal … but sterile. Guaranteed sterile. Which brings us at last, … out of the realm of mere slavish imitation of nature into the much more interesting world of human invention'" (11).

This passage reflects the organic and deeply personal nature of birth; the freemartins, who are "guaranteed sterile," symbolise the essence of scientific intervention over natural

procreation. Just as Wade Davis describes in his analysis of Haitian zombification, these individuals are stripped of autonomy through cultural control (109 –10). Similarly, this process is just like zombies who like freemartins, do not give birth and exist solely through external forces that determine their purpose without the possibility of contributing to the natural cycle of life. The sterility of freemartins is not only biological but ideological; by which, the World State ensures that no lineage can disrupt its rigid control structure with new ideology. In the conventional sense, this system is exemplified in zombies; they do not reproduce or build civilisations. Instead, they present nothing but extensions of consumers.

Moreover, the metaphorical zombification process of human beings through infection or reanimation is reflected in the masses of *Brave New World,* who experience the same thing through stages. These stages are presented firstly in the Bokanovsky process, the phrase "mere slavish imitation of nature" (11) implies that these creations are devoid of variation, originality, and genuineness, resulting from natural human reproduction. Like zombies, the psychological and physical grotesqueness brought by the Bokanovsky clones is presented in their identical appearances: same features, height, and dull-eyed compliance; mirroring the interchangeable products.

For example, Huxley describes Delta children as: "Identical eight-year-old male twins was pouring into the room. Twin after twin, twin after twin, … Their faces, their repeated face … all nostrils and pale goggling eyes. Their uniform was khaki" (137), their appearance reveals a profound ontological horror; they are not human being in any meaningful sense, evoking an unsettling image of the zombified mass production, where people are manufactured instead of born. This demonstration aligns with Zygmunt Bauman's concept of "liquid modernity", where individuals are reduced to interchangeable units defined by transient consumer identities, resulting in social zombies (87 –8). Additionally, the homogenisation and artificiality in

reproduction reflect Marcuse's idea of a "one-dimensional" society, where dissent is anticipated and neutralised through standardisation (156).

Additionally, the way the Director describes these masses as "Standard men and women in uniformed batches" (Huxley 7) demonstrates the consequence of consumerist systems that extend beyond their economic horizons to shape the very biology of humans, breeding uniform zombies whose bodies are stripped of any potential of humanity. In chapter 5, Lenina Crowne asserts: "'I suppose Epsilons don't really mind being Epsilons. … Of course they don't. How can they? They don't know what it's like being anything else. We'd mind, of course. But then we've been differently conditioned. Besides, we start with a different heredity'" (50). Lenina's assertion reveals a terrifying truth about *Brave New World* citizens, where the erosion of individuality is biological and psychological. Her statement that they "don't know what it's like being anything else" reveals their misunderstanding that discontent is neither normal nor peaceful, but rather related to ignorance. They are not even aware of the possibility of a different life. Unlike traditional zombies, who are at least corrupted versions of once-individual people, Bokanovskied clones are never afforded this possibility in the first place. However, they are stripped of self-determination and the inner spark that assists human change, just like the walking dead.

David Bering-Porter's psychoanalytic discussion of the zombie as a "voracious analogy" in "Analogy in Ruins: Populism, Transgression, and the Zombie" argues that the zombification represents the death of subjectivity under consumerist dogma wherein the self becomes a casualty of systemic indoctrination, its autonomy consumed by the demands of mass media, ideological reproduction and economic logic (1). Regardless of the metaphorical presence of zombification, it is not accidental; it is a product of a consumerist system that sees people not as individuals but as units of consumption and production. This homogeneity is evident in postmodern consumer culture, where people are immersed in algorithmic

recommendation systems that capitalism hides behind the guise of "trends." Social media platforms, for instance, flatten individuality by encouraging consumers to adopt the same speech patterns, clothing, and even facial features through cosmetic procedures, such as the "Instagram face," as discussed by Liraz Margalit in "Behind Online Behavior."

Like the Epsilons, many individuals are unknowingly in systems that dictate their behaviors, identities, and values. They live according to a narrative written by capitalist forces that they do not question. They consume out of impulse and rarely stop to wonder. Indeed, people are not originally identical like the State's masses, but their consumption patterns put them in an alarming mold of unconscious uniformity, very much like standard zombies.

Therefore, in Huxley's novel, the State considers individuality the first threat to be erased before it can manifest. This radical erasure undermines agency and autonomy, as they are carefully engineered and not naturally possessed. As zombies spread their condition through biting, the State spreads consumerist ideology through hypnopaedia. Like an ideology, the "Ending is better than mending" slogan becomes integrated within the zombification of desire, where the zombified masses do not repair their decaying bodies or think of changing their consumption habits.

This postmodern consumerism is evident in contemporary society, as people thrive on the same "Ending is better than mending" logic. For example, consumers discard smartphones after two years or less, not because the devices are unusable, but because they have been unconsciously conditioned to crave the new. Another real-world example is websites like Amazon that use algorithmic recommendations that function as a form of digital hypnopaedia, with all the advertisements to make users want what the system needs them to buy. The result is a zombified populace that moves in a state of insatiable but meaningless hunger, not for a living tissue but for added items, clothes, and doses of *drugs*.

Notably, Huxley's dystopia sheds light on the relationship between pleasure and domination. The World State employs *soma* as a soft form of domination, wherein pleasure and sedation replace oppression. As their consumption is not an act of choice but a reflex, *soma* presents a perfect tool for zombification. True to its name, this happiness drug eliminates any feeling of dissatisfaction that might lead to reflection, realization, or rebellion. This process reveals the ultimate hidden costs of convenience, which pacify its consumers and ultimately suppress the human element. Mark Fisher also describes this system, arguing that capitalism "proceeds without belief", numbing dissent through pleasure rather than force (16 –7).

This reflects the State's aim behind the programmed plans of zombifying citizens, as the masses are not just addicted, but are heavily dependent on instant gratification. This is evident in Linda's severe addiction in chapter 11: "[a]nd Linda, … The return to civilization was for her the return to soma, was the possibility of lying in bed and taking holiday after holiday" (Huxley 107). At its surface, her situation appears to be a simple statement of relief after years of suffering in the Savage reservation. However, it shows Linda's addictive consumption is not her choice, but a submissive response to her zombified nature.

Another crucial aspect to consider in the novel is the absence of intelligence. When Lenina reflects on the lowest caste, the Epsilons, who appear happy with their societal roles and cannot conceive of a different existence (12), she speaks with sincere incomprehension. Her tone reflects the lack of intelligence, even for the higher castes like her, who think themselves capable of acknowledging the limits imposed on them. The intelligence spoken of is the critical thinking that *soma* numbs by the so-called "Soma holiday" (Huxley). Thus, this is ignorance that ensures their zombification by design, as Mr. Foster states in the opening chapter, "'For of course some sort of general idea they must have if they were to do their work intelligently though as little of one, if they were to be good and happy members of society'" (5 –6).

The explanation of Mr. Foster reveals the philosophy that the State uses to ensure ignorance among its citizens. The phrase "some sort of general idea" means that details are necessary flames of "thinking" and "acknowledging". He declares in the same chapter, "'We don't need human intelligence'" (12). The rejection of intelligence is enforced with scientific conditioning that puts the masses into a state of zombies: they are not alive in the complete sense but animated shells who are calm, smiling, and functioning upon an external force, "the State" that controls their mere existence, which they never chose.

Huxley further describes this zombie-trope situation in chapter 5, "The approaches to the monorail station were black with the ant-like population of lower-caste activity" (50). This postmodern description of zombification echoes the disturbing contemporary culture of Black Friday mega-sales, which attract mass consumers. This event is globally celebrated through advertising that serves as psychological manipulation and behavioral conditioning. Psychologically, shopping is a form of consumption that functions as a chemical regulation that helps create a sense of happiness (*Cleveland Clinic*). Just as *soma*'s consumption suppresses dissatisfaction, Black Friday consumption offers "happy hormones" that make the brain unconsciously conditioned to shop whenever feeling discontent.

Additionally, the way consumers line up for hours and sometimes days, eagerly waiting for the doors to open, reflects the "zombie tropes" of *Brave New World*. While Huxley's citizens take *soma* to feel "better," Black Friday shoppers chase the "idea" of happiness through buying rather than the object itself, reflecting the controlled agency and autonomy driven by capitalist systems. This form of consumption results in zombies who passively move, grab, fight, and consume, not out of conscious choice and awareness but out of conditioned response.

This zombification results from consumerist conditioning and is not met with total obedience. Characters such as John the Savage and Bernard Marx represent significant representations of dissent, each embodying a form of awareness that makes them feel

dissatisfied and fuels them with questions about the consumerist systems that breed zombified masses.

## II.5. Voice of Dissent: Resistance to Consumerist Control and Zombification

Huxley's dystopian narrative presents an imposed tyrannical consumerism that controls to ensure social stability, regardless of the passive results of zombified masses. He also paints John the Savage as a contrasting character to show how a natural, genuine, and powerful embodiment of human dissent will function, resist, and reject such a mechanised system of *Brave New World*.

To begin with, John's birth and growth in the Savage Reservation play a crucial role in understanding his rejection and resistance[xvi]. Unlike the mass-produced masses, John is born naturally. His life in this environment offered him an authentic human experience of moral reasoning, genuine emotions, and desire, which are radically erased in the World State (Huxley). This explains his profound discomfort upon witnessing the eerie zombified uniformity, where the Bokanovskied twins fill him with confusion and weird astonishment as he describes them: "'O brave new world. … O brave new world that has such people in it'" (107).

As it is known, zombies give a sense of horror, and Huxley's usage of the walking dead imagery is no less reminiscent. John does not observe humans but creatures who are identically dressed and lifelessly moving:

> He woke once more to external reality, looked round him, knew what he saw … with a sinking sense of horror and disgust, for the recurrent delirium of his days and nights, the nightmares of swarming indistinguishable sameness. Twins, twins. Like maggots they had swarmed … Maggots again, but larger, full grown, … he stood. 'How many goodly creatures are there here! … 'How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world'. (143)

This statement reveals the ability of John to recognize a genuine human being from something else. The phrase "swarming indistinguishable sameness … like maggots" evokes a sense of zombies, where Huxley presents them not just as lifeless creatures but a deep decomposition of the human spirit with their grotesque appearance and unconscious moves. His emphasis on their uniformed appearance reflects a critique of the State's success in keeping efficiency and control at the expense of identity and individuality.

Similarly, his subsequent description of them as "maggots" (Huxley 143) reflects John's deep revulsion, which analyzes the emotional vacuity of these zombies. When considering the zombie analogy, like maggots consuming dead flesh, the citizens of the World state unconsciously consume their shallow souls with pleasure. For someone who values the soul like John, he finds a total absence of the latter compared to where he came from.

As it is clear in the report of Bernard Marx to Mustapha Mond in chapter 11: "'The Savage shows surprisingly little astonishment at, or awe of, civilised inventions. … Partly on his interest being focused on what he calls the soul'" (106). This passage can be interpreted as John's critique of the State's obsession with materialism to the point where spiritual and emotional depth were systemically erased. It is important to note that John's critique stems from a deep analysis and awareness that only a true human being with sharp critical thought and an awakened mind can do, highly contrasting with the World State's passive zombies.

Talking of pleasure, John's rejection of *soma* stems from witnessing its effect on Linda, as Bernard's report says, "'The Savage … Refuses to take soma, and seems much distressed because of the woman Linda'" (Huxley 107). This passage shows how John perceives *soma*, where he sees Linda's condition not as a rest but erasure. He sees her as someone who has been stolen by a drug, emptied of everything, being detached from reality and herself. Nevertheless, the tension arises after her death, John finds himself surrounded by *soma*-addicted zombies, which makes his trauma turn him from a passive observer to an active rebel.

In a significant scene at the hospital, he urges the Deltas: "'Listen, I beg of you, … Lend me your ears … Don't take that horrible stuff. It's poison, … poison to soul as well as body'" (Huxley 145). John's determination to rebel against the State's zombification of humanity reflects the possibility of a meaningful humanised world. A candy-sized drug that turns them into living zombies who are numbed instead of aware and absent souls in hungry, grotesque bodies. Here, John presents a humanistic idealism against the zombified, commodified world. In chapter 17, he expresses that actual human experience encompasses the full spectrum of feelings: "'But I don't want comfort. I want God, I want poetry, I want real danger, I want freedom, I want goodness. I want sin'" (163).

Upon saying this, Mustapha replies, "'In fact, …. You're claiming the right to be unhappy'" (163). The culmination of John and Mond's debate revolves around zombification versus humanity, as someone is alive by the experiences that John reclaims. John, however, rejects the State's notion of happiness, proclaiming: "'I'm claiming the right to be unhappy. Not to mention the right to grow old and ugly and impotent; the right to have syphilis and cancer; the right to have too little to eat; the right to be lousy; the right to live in constant apprehension of what may happen [tomorrow]'" (163). This enthusiastic declaration reflects John's humanism. While Mond offers safety and happiness, John embraces the essence of humanity, which lies in the freedom to experience the vicissitudes of life in their most extreme and complete forms.

The rebellion of John ends with his suicide, as Huxley describes in the closing chapter, "Just under the crown of the arch dangled a pair of feet. … Slowly, very slowly, like two unhurried compass needles, the feet turned towards the right; north, north-east, … then paused, and after a few seconds, turned as unhurriedly back towards the left. South-southwest" (167). John's tragedy shows his ultimate resistance. A critique of the impossibility of sustaining

humanity in a world structured to eradicate it. His death serves as a testament to the existential violence inflicted by systemic consumerism.

On the other hand, like John, Bernard Marx represents a more ambivalent figure of dissent in *Brave New World*. His performative resistance is rooted in personal insecurity due to his physical and psychological differences, rather than ideological conviction. His critique of the World State, exemplified in his rejection of *soma*, appears to signal a genuine opposition to societal norms, as clear in chapter 3, "'I'd rather be myself, … Not somebody else'" (60). His refusal to consume *soma* with Lenina Crowne highlights his desire for authenticity, or at least something he seeks to discover when not suppressing dissatisfaction.

Beyond this drug, Bernard is aware of his conditioning, unlike the other masses. In one moment, he demonstrates self-reflection in his question, "The real problem is: How is it that I can't, or rather-because, after all, I know quite well why I can't-what would it be like if I could, if I were free-not enslaved by my conditioning'" (61). This passage captures the psychological conflict of Bernard, as his self-awareness opposes within a system designed to eliminate such awareness and reflection. His reflection on the possibility of "what it would be like if I could" reveals a profound subjugation that he acknowledges.

His refusal to consume *soma* further intensifies his feeling of dissatisfaction, as it does not thoroughly numb his ability to think; it leaves him tormented by his consciousness. The phrase "enslaved by my conditioning" reveals Bernard's recognition that all his identity, agency, and autonomy are not entirely his but are the product of consumer culture programming, making him a tragic figure trapped by the very awareness of his situation.

The discussion between Bernard and Lenina further illustrates the difference in their beliefs about conditioning. The rhetorical question posed by Bernard, "'Don't you wish you were free, Lenina?'" is met with her dismissive response: "I don't know what you mean. I am free. Free to have the most wonderful time. Everybody's happy nowadays'" (61). His

philosophical question contrasts with her idea of freedom as self-determination with the World State's superficial version of happiness.

Bernard nervously retorts, "'Yes, 'Everybody's happy nowadays'. …. But wouldn't you like to be free to be happy in some other way, Lenina? In your own way, for example; not in everybody else's way'" (61). His answer shows the contradictory understanding of freedom that these characters have. Also, it reflects the State's success in blinding the citizens to the possibility of alternative forms of existence.

Speaking of existence, the way Bernard yearns to "know what passion is" and his desire to "feel something strongly" (63) means that he looks for more than a passive, regulated existence, unlike his contemporaries. In the World State, emotions, consciousness, and individual passion are seen as dangerous to collective stability (151). Thus, Bernard's desire to experience such intense passion is an act of re-humanisation, which criticises the zombification process of the State.

Moreover, the hospital scene in chapter 15, where John rebels and starts throwing the *soma* tablets out of the window, Bernard hesitates to join him, as described by Huxley:

> Hesitant on the fringes of the battle. … ran forward to help them; then thought better of it and halted; then, ashamed, stepped forward again; then again thought better of it, and was standing in an agony of humiliated indecision- thinking that they might be killed if he didn't help them, and that he might be killed if he did … ran the police … Bernard dashed to meet them. … He shouted 'Help!' several times; … more loudly to give himself the illusion of helping. … Bernard stood for a second or two wambling unsteadily on legs that seemed to have lost their bones, their tendons, their muscles, to have become mere sticks of jelly, and at last non even jelly-water: he tumbled in a heap on the floor. (146 –47)

This passage shows his existential paralysis. Unlike John, Bernard remains partially captivated by his conditioning, even as he is fascinated by his courageous rejection of the system, which he also rejects. The hesitation reflects the challenge of resisting consumerist comforts despite acknowledging their zombifying effects. Additionally, his partial complicity highlights the insidious power of consumerist systems, as they function as pacifiers and ideological ones.

Ultimately, the relationship between John the Savage and Bernard Marx is based on shared "unhappiness and alienation" rather than anything else. Both characters offer a significant contrast between embodied resistance and intellectual dissent. While Bernard questions the system from within, John rejects it from without. John desires suffering when Bernard yearns for an imagination of it. John refuses *soma*, while Bernard ultimately gives up on its consumption. John engages in a destructive protest when Bernard recoils.

It does not stop here, as Bernard begs for mercy during their confrontation with the authorities. When faced with the threat of punishment, Huxley describes him in a very crowded situation,

> 'Send me to an island?' He jumped up, ran across the room, and stood gesticulating in front of the Controller. 'You can't send me; I haven't done anything.' … He pointed accusingly to Helmholtz and the Savage. 'Oh, please don't send me to Iceland. I promise I'll do what I ought to do. Give me another chance. … 'I tell you, it's their fault,' he sobbed. 'And not to Iceland. Oh please, your fordship, please'. (154 –55)

This moment captures the core of Bernard's character, a man whose dissent collapses under pressure, whose rebellion is subjected to safety. His ultimate exile to an island for nonconformists mirrors the State's method of managing dissent. As Mustapha Mond declares,

> 'One would think he is going to have his throat cut, … Whereas, if he had the smallest sense, he'd understand that his punishment is really a reward. He's

> being sent to an island. That's to say, he's being sent to a place where he'll meet the most interesting set of men and women to be found anywhere in the world. All the people who, for one reason or another, have got too self-consciously individual to fit into community-life. All the people who aren't satisfied with orthodoxy, who've got independent ideas of their own. Every one, in a word, who's any one. (155)

This passage shows that the State's marginalisation, rather than execution, is somehow efficient. It does not neutralise dissent through violence but expels it in valuable ways that preserve systemic and social equilibrium. The embodied resistance by John the Savage and Bernard Marx in the modernist *Brave New World* finds its parallel in contemporary society.

Like John, who refuses to participate in the State's system and challenges it, whistleblowers[xvii] challenge the consumerist culture. Edward Snowden is one of the most significant cases published by *The Guardian* that embodies John's tragic archetype. He is a former contractor for the United States National Security Agency who exposed the mass surveillance used by the latter in 2013 (Greenwald et al). Snowden revealed how corporations like Google and Facebook enable state surveillance capitalism, yet his defiance led to exile and systemic marginalisation rather than reintegration into society (Greenwald et al). The act of being celebrated by some and vilified by others who see his actions as dangerous to systemic stability (Greenwald et al) reflects their "voluntary numbness", which governments ensure to spread among citizens.

Another example of dissent is seen in Russell Brand, one of the former anti-establishment figures who once positioned himself as a critic of societal passivity and capitalist media. In his works, such as *Recovery: Freedom From Our Addiction*, and an interview with *Positive News* in 2017, Brand condemns consumerism's numbing effect, comparing addiction to unchecked consumption.

The resilience of the consumerist system lies in its ability to either marginalize or assimilate any form of opposition. As the writer of *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism*, Thomas Frank notes that advertising companies assimilate countercultural aesthetics before they can subvert the system. This corresponds directly to Mustapha Mond's declaration, "'We prefer to do things comfortably'" (Huxley 163). In this context, the statement means stability is prioritised over truth. This same logic is reflected in contemporary consumerist culture, where the pressure of visibility, branding, and virality blur the lines between marketing and dissent. For example, content creators who begin with authentic critique are often rapidly absorbed into molded ecosystems, where the algorithm rewards palatable rebellion and disciplines any form of structural and uncomfortable criticism.

The trajectory of dissent in both *Brave New World* and contemporary consumerist society reveals the grim reality of governing systems running in the shadow of consumerism, a form of control that is seductive rather than coercive. Whether through *soma* and conditioning in Huxley's fictional society or commodified distraction and algorithmic pleasure in the 21st century world, dissent is always silenced.

The cases of John the Savage and Bernard Marx illustrate the social and psychological costs of resisting such a system, which are mirrored in modern figures that challenge the dominant logic of consumption and zombification. In fact, these systems function as a form of power that reshapes and redefines resistance instead of crushing it. It is needed to understand and identify the systems that decide which voices are heard, forgotten, and never even allowed to appear, so that it can be possible to detect dissent.

## Conclusion

This chapter recounts how consumerism in *Brave New World* is not only a background of daily life but a fundamental pillar of the World State's pursuit of a perfectly controlled

society with grotesque, imperfect citizens. Consumerist systems of conditioning, pacification, and programmed gratification dismiss humanity in the name of social stability. What emerges from these systems is a powerful image of zombification, not literally, but as a symbolic result of manipulating and eradicating the core components of identity, agency, autonomy, and individuality. At the same time, dissenting voices are buried beneath layers of conformity and uniformity. This phenomenon is not confined to Huxley's fiction alone, as the analysis reveals parallels with the 21st century world. Where convenience culture, commodified desires, and algorithmic technologies replicate similar patterns of passive consumption and zombification. In both worlds, consumerism replaces meaning with shallowness, selfhood with compliance, and truth with distraction. Ultimately, in the age of grotesque consumerism, the road to zombification is not paved with horror but pleasure.

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[xi] A fictional method of human reproduction used to produce standardized citizens in the World State. This process involves artificially arresting embryo development to induce the budding of identical embryos, resulting in up to 96 genetically identical clones from a single fertilized egg. It is considered one of *Brave New World*'s primary social stability instruments.

[xii] Sleep teaching is a method of indoctrination used by the World State to condition citizens from infancy. Through repeated messages played during sleep, individuals absorb societal norms and beliefs without critical thought in *Brave New World.*

[xiii] In *Brave New World*, society is divided into five genetically engineered castes: Alphas (the intellectual elite), Betas (skilled professionals), Gammas (semi-skilled workers), Deltas (mass laborers), and Epsilons (unintelligent menial workers).

[xiv] Ten World Controllers govern the World State, each overseeing a different region in the novel.

[xv] This theme is developed in more detail later in the chapter.

[xvi] Raised by his mother, Linda, John grows up hearing fragmented memories of the World State while living a contrasting life filled with spiritual rituals, beliefs, suffering, and, most importantly, reading.

[xvii] An individual who exposes information or the system's functioning and reports it to internal or external authorities. They often face significant personal risks in doing so.

# Chapter Three: Aesthetics and Didactic Dimensions in Huxley's *Brave New World*

## Introduction

A novel is never just a story; it is a mirror, a siren, a weapon crafted to reflect the world and to serve as an architect of clarity that places the final dots on unfinished letters. This chapter positions Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* as a literary artifact and a cultural warning. The chapter investigates the novel's contradictions of utopian and dystopian layers, as well as the fragmented narrative Huxley uses to criticize and satirize consumerist societies and the propaganda system. It also emphasizes the aesthetic and didactic elements of the novel, which serve as a sharp warning against an over-reliance on technoscience and mindless consumption. Huxley's use of the Shakespearean narrative through the character of John the Savage will show how literature enables resistance amidst the zombification of humanity. An intertextuality between Orwell's *1984* and the novel will further reflect Huxley's commentary within a broader literary and ideological context.

## III.1. The Aesthetics of *Brave New World*

The aesthetic and architecture of Huxley's fictional narrative rests on constraints, polished surfaces, unsettling depths, and a narrative style that both reveals and restrains meaning through incisive satire.

### III.1.1. The novel as a Titanic Iceberg

In his narrative, Aldous Huxley presents a society that appears to be a utopia, an iceberg characterised by progress, hygiene, and a developed civilisation. However, beneath this facade lies a dystopian reality of technological control, consumerist conditioning, and grim zombification, through which this "superficial perfection" is achieved. The World State is built upon systems designed to eradicate any potential for instability, pain, and conflict. This is why people's existence results from intentional scientific and social "construction", rather than a purely natural process of birth, growth, and life.

From the outset, the State projects an image of a perfect civilisation, albeit opposed to nature, unpredictability, and chaos, with advanced technology governing every stage of life. Starting with the Bokanovsky process, the State ensures the stability of the economic and social hierarchy as long as everyone is biologically and socially destined and conditioned to embrace their specific roles and lives within the rigid caste system. These people are indoctrinated from infancy to accept and love their predetermined positions. Thus, results in a society of harmony, filled with people who flawlessly function as intended without disruption. In *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, Neil Postman discusses such conditioning, "When a population becomes distracted by trivia, when cultural life is redefined as a perpetual round of entertainments, when serious public conversations become a form of baby-talk, … then a nation finds itself at risk; culture-death is a clear possibility" (130). This observation underlies how control in such a society is exerted through distraction and gratification.

Even knowledge is turned into an aesthetic power tool in this perfect world. Nowhere is this more evident than in chapter 3, where Mustapha Mond functions as both spokesperson and one of the world controllers. Knowledge has not disappeared in this society, yet it is purified, trimmed, and weaponized to serve social engineering and conditioning. With Mustapha's calm, almost fatherly tone as he explains the fall of the old world and the rise of the World State. His narration is laced with confident rationality, "History is bunk" (26), echoing the society's pseudo-deity, as in this world, knowledge is no longer a tool for investigating history and bringing the past back in favor of the present contentment.

Within knowledge shines the technological marvel of hypnopaedia. It is perhaps the clearest example of a utopian teaching tool, through which children are easily taught to recite "facts" in their sleep and later live upon them. What can be more efficient than such soft and rhythmic teaching? It is professionally designed to remain unnoticed, fostering a structured mindset in individuals who do not question their world and derive pleasure from adhering to

established norms. This indoctrination blurs the lines between education and propaganda. Postman's declaration that "we are amusing ourselves to death" finds its most apparent fictional manifestation in this mesmerising education.

One can assume that this city is stable to the point where its citizens are unfamiliar with "unhappiness." A theme that is constantly displayed by characters like Lenina Crowne, who states: "'Everybody's happy nowadays'" (61), and Mustapha Mond, who proudly declares in chapter 16: "'The world's stable now. People are happy'" (151). Both statements are repeated throughout the novel as directives, ideological chants, and assurances. They reflect the universal contentment that the State has achieved, which places it at the peak of a successful controlling government.

Indeed, this contentment demonstrates the absence of dissatisfaction and disconformity due to *soma*, the "perfect drug." However, it is also a result of numbed genuine feelings, a critical mindset, and an authentic personality. This explains the ongoing happiness of the masses, which is linked to *soma*'s availability and accessibility. In the vein of happiness, the slogan "Ending is better than mending" captures the State's pursuit of progress and consumer source of dopamine. This phrase reflects a society that eliminates scarcity and the anxieties of personal attachment.

This encouragement to replace and discard rather than repair echoes a world where technological richness allows constant renewal and replacement. Thereby, citizens are liberated from the burden of maintaining not only material goods such as clothes and objects but also relationships and ideas. They are in a state of comfort as they are not overwhelmed by emotional constraints and responsibilities; instead, they are occupied with living in the present and constantly contributing to the economic flow.

This mantra also reflects the instilled ideology “more stitches, less ritches” that can be seen throughout the novel in their subconscious, where “ending” signifies that people are not poor, are well-dressed, well-fed, and in constant consumption, thriving in a state of disposability. Thus, consumerism has become a moral principle rather than just an economic activity.

Perhaps the most seductive form of peace in *Brave New World* is the complete absence of political conflicts; Mustapha declares, “There aren’t any wars nowadays” (161). The State has solved the problems of conquest, violence, and rebellion. By providing everything people need, as they “get what they want” (151), they indirectly have no motivation for such dilemmas. However, this peace is not maintained through justice and mutual respect, but through comprehensive control. It is a peace achieved through compliance and sedation, not reconciliation and resolution.

Of course, the aesthetic of a civilized society is tied to efficiency, order, and hygiene. For the masses, appearance is an essential reflection of “civilisation”, as evident in Linda’s observation: “‘A civilized face. Yes, and civilized clothes’” (80). This passage shows that “civilization” is synonymous with uniformity, revealing how the State’s definition of progress aligns with the values of cleanliness and sterility.

This vision presents a utopian place free of war, disease, and poverty, which contradicts John the Savage’s Reservation. A place full of “the dirt, ... the piles of rubbish, the dust, the dogs, the flies” (74). The description of the reservation, with all its imperfections, represents the chaotic yet authentic aspects of human existence that the World State has chosen to eliminate. This paradox defines the aesthetic of Huxley’s narrative; although it may appear to be a clean and perfect world, it is underwritten by a profound loss of humanity.

Beneath the waterline, Huxley reveals the larger, unseen mass of the iceberg: the cold, dark shadow of the glittering surface of a perfect society. It is a civilisation not written in human

blood, but in humanity itself, from those who live within it. The dystopian reality of *Brave New World* lies in its consumerist systems and zombification. Because of the latter, order and peace are perfectly maintained among "people", yet at the cost of everything that defines these individuals as human beings. As Mustapha Mond asserts: "Stability. The primal and the ultimate need. Stability" (31).

This stability, however, sacrifices intellectual depth, identity, individuality, agency, autonomy, and consciousness through conditioning and hypnopaedia. This reveals a regime more invested in the State's own preservation than in the well-being of its citizens, governing not with care, but with oppressive control. Lenina Crowne acknowledges one of the repetitive slogans: "'When individuals feel, the community reels'" (63). This exemplifies the State's fear of emotion, where feelings are seen as both a threat to order and a sign of life, which is why the State's masses do not possess such feelings, resembling zombies.

Indeed, the world is free of any form of violence; yet, this absence is itself a form of the latter. The awakened feelings lead to self-awareness, representing a thread of gunpowder that could ignite a rebellion. The "Bokanovskied" zombies are produced in such a way that makes their behavior predictable. *Soma* also plays a critical role in this zombification by dulling curiosity, pain, and sorrow. Mustapha's statement: "'All the advantages of Christianity and alcohol; none of their defects'" (37) points to the replacement of religion and philosophy with pharmacology.

His later description of *soma* as "Christianity without tears" (162) reveals the core problem: no meaning without tears, no beauty without soul, and no peace without struggle. Therefore, by eradicating suffering, longing, spirituality, and guilt, the State also destroyed the real depth of human experience. This means that the state perceives its citizens as zombified

commodities, ensuring their feelings remain dormant, as their emotions and desires are seen as subversive. In this way, a single moment of human authenticity could unravel the entire system.

Moreover, the illusion of utopia fades as Huxley introduces characters who expose the contradiction between reality and appearance in the World State. As John the Savage witnesses the differences between the Reservation he comes from and the "Brave New World", he becomes a living critique of this dystopia. His rejection of the civilized world: "'No,' shaking his head" (150) stems from the sadness and horror he encounters. John's answer is more than a subjective preference; it is a spiritual and moral rejection of a society that sacrificed meaning. Mustapha's declaration "Happiness is never grand" (152) crystallises the absence of genuine joy, which the State defines as happiness and satisfaction.

Huxley further exposes the dystopian basis of the State's structure in chapter 16 through Mustapha's statement: "'We have our stability to think of. We don't want to change. Every change is a menace to stability. That's another reason why we're so chary of applying new inventions. Every discovery in pure science is potentially subversive; even science must sometimes be treated as a possible enemy. Yes, even science'" (154). This is perhaps the most apparent confession of the regime's contradictions. While it celebrates technological advancement as a sign of progress and civilisation, it uses it without respecting the ethical and philosophical laws to create consumer zombies.

Mustapha adds, "'Science is dangerous; we have to keep it most carefully chained and muzzled'" (154). This statement reveals the State's fear of real scientific inquiry that may hinder its fragile balance. When Helmholtz asserts that their use of science is everything, Mustapha replies with biting sarcasm: "Yes: but what sort of science? … all our science is just a cookery book, with an orthodox of cooking that nobody's allowed to question'" (154). This sharp answer illustrates how even the most progressive and rational human enterprise—science- is

aestheticised into a tool of compliance. In this sense, science is not designed for enlightenment and truth but for obedience. Between the illusion of utopia and the control of dystopia, the novel's aesthetic is not merely one of contrast but of collapse. In his narrative, Huxley blends perfectionism and the grotesque, and he also blends criticism with satire and irony.

### III.1.2. Aldous Huxley's Satirical Tone

The author's satire in the novel is insidious, embedded in the straightforward language and logic of the World State. His satire exposes the internal absurdity of his crafted world. The foundation of this satire lies in the State's perversion of language. This can be seen in the way he cuts rapidly between multiple layers and perspectives of indoctrinated voices, mimicking the disorienting chatter of modern media.

As exemplified in the State slogans that echo from the mouths of sleeping children: "'Every one works for every one else. We can't do without any one'" (50), adult citizens recite hypnopaedic beliefs without thought. This overlapping of voices generates a chaotic flow, a manufactured chorus that drowns out individual consciousness. The State's slogans exemplify Herbert Marcuse's critique, that consumer culture anchors identity in commodities (60), flattening dissent into repetitive chants. Such satire is not only in the content but in the dissonant form, as it captures how propaganda infiltrates every layer of perception and how language can be twisted into a tool of conformity. Demonstrating how citizens grow up with such beliefs, he satirizes a social engineering process where language, stripped of nuance yet replete with totalitarian mechanisms, is reconstituted as instinct.

In the vein of totalitarianism, Huxley's satire is demonstrated in his portrayal of the latter as a more seductive force than a violent one. This is perhaps his most disturbing satire: the idea that people can be zombified by pleasure and not fear. The Assistant Predestinator explains in the opening chapter, "'That is the secret of happiness and virtue-liking what you've got to do. All conditioning aims at: making people like their unescapable social destiny'" (13).

This line immerses readers in a world where individuality and liberty are readily sacrificed for a twisted aesthetic of convenience and control. The World State's conditioning literalises Mark Fisher's claim that capitalism thrives when alternatives collapse into "ritual or symbolic elaboration" (9).

The seductive control extends to every aspect of life in the World State just like in postmodern and contemporary era, as captured in this description in the same chapter: "The light was frozen, dead, a ghost (5), where human life is distilled into gleaming 'test-tubes' (6) and 'conveyors'[xviii] (10) This line is not just a reference to dystopia, but to a carefully planned high-tech world where the author's satire quietly infiltrates every controlled detail. The Haterchy's "racks upon racks of numbered test-tubes" (6) mock industrial progress, transforming reproduction into a factory process that becomes so zombifying that it takes on a form of dark comedy. Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* describes this process of modernity as spaces designed to produce docile bodies, much like the assembly-line humans of Hatchery.

Nowhere is this aestheticised control more grotesquely beautiful than in the chanted "Orgy-porgy" (57) during state-sanctioned group orgies, mimicking religious incantation. Here, Huxley ridicules the spiritual ruin of a society that equates collective sensuality with sacred communion. The phrase is childlike in rhythm, yet strangely adult in content. This grotesqueness lies in the disturbing reduction of deeply personal human experience resulting from replacing true worship with a hollow gathering. It even echoes Slater's critique of consumer culture as "a sphere of consumable spectacle" (12), where even intimacy is commodified into ritualized performance.

This hollowness is emphasised when Bernard Marx cries out in faux ecstasy, "'I hear him; He's coming.' But it wasn't true. He heard nothing and, for him, nobody was coming. Nobody—in spite of the music, in spite of the mounting excitement. But he waved his arms, he

shouted with the best of them; and when the other began to jig and stamp and shuffle, he also jigged and shuffled" (56). The emptiness beneath the surface spectacle reveals a key satirical point: emotional depth is numbed in this world, and participation is an obligation rather than a pure desire. Bernard's forced participation reflects Marcuse's critique of individuals who "find their soul in their automobile" (60), a false consciousness that confuses imposed rituals with genuine fulfilment.

Following the empty ritualistic act devoted to Ford, Huxley continues his satire through slogans like, "Cleanliness is next to fordliness" and "Yes, civilization is sterilization" (74). These lines reveal more than the State's obsession with order and hygiene. They expose how consumerist ideology degrades spiritual and moral values to sanitary and industrial ideals, aligning with Raymond Williams's statement in *Keywords*: "The capitalist model extends overwhelmingly to fields like education and health, reducing them to sterile transactions" (39).

By reshaping virtue, purity, and even civilisation itself as matters of literal sanitation rather than ethical and existential significance, Huxley lays bare the moral corruption of a society that worships efficiency and order above all else. His satire is multilayered; he does not criticize the State's redefinition of human concepts alone, but also demonstrates the absurdity of a world that replaces spirituality with consumerist doctrine, where sanctity is no longer found in its religious places but in conditioning centers.

Mustapha Mond further contributes to the irony when he says, "'There was a thing called Heaven; but all the same they used to drink enormous quantities of alcohol … Take a holiday from reality whenever you like, and come back without so much as a headache or a mythology'" (37). His remark dismisses the religion and myths that were once profound sources of meaning, now replaced by drug-related pleasure. Mond's almost humorous tone enhances the satire as he ridicules what once grounded human identity.

Additionally, Huxley employs a key satirical method to transform religious devotion into a corporate cult. The way the State redirects worship toward Ford, somehow a being, reveals the hollowness of a society that has not abandoned faith but merely transferred it to the very system that erases human spirituality. What deepens the satire is the characters reciting mantras of obedience as if they were divine truths, depicting them as zombies. This zombification parallels Cain and Montgomerie's analysis of the "zombie economy", where individuals "consume and reproduce without agency" (5), as their actions are dictated by systemic hunger. Simultaneously, the author's satire extends to the State's pathological fear of the organic and the unpredictable.

Literary and metaphorically, the glorification of sterilisation serves as a darkly comic indictment of a society that eliminates all the natural messiness of life. In the World State, birth is manufactured, emotions are chemically regulated, and relationships are disposable—all to avoid what they see as "authentic human disorder." Bernard's statement in chapter 8, "'A mother, and all this dirt, and gods, and old age, and disease'" (83), exposes the State's hypocrisy. The aging, natural reproduction, and religious passion—all that defines humanity—are removed by the State in the name of "civilisation." This line also highlights Huxley's satire of the characters who are blind to their dehumanisation and their inability to recognise their own loss.

When speaking of loss, there is also *soma*. The slogan, "Was and will make me ill, I take a gramme and only am" (70), captures Huxley's satirical approach to temporality. He employs the idea that the past "was" and the future "will" are treated as psychological burdens. At the same time, the present "only am" is artificially preserved through the detachment that *soma* induces. The slogan's childlike rhyme of hypnopaedic nursery offers a sharp criticism. He employs a simple description to mock how the State reduces complex human experiences

into shallow, digestible messages. This phrase also reflects Huxley's satirical view of temporality by portraying time as a psychological burden instead of something meaningful.

The burden of memory carried by the past and the weight of the unknowable future convey a philosophy that the State explicitly rejects by providing *soma*. Through this earlier slogan, Huxley satirises the State's devaluation of human reflection and growth as it numbs them through this drug. Huxley's satirical tone, established through the zombifying aesthetic of the World State, is not solely an exposure of the golden brilliance of polished copper but also a preparation for a deeper criticism of both real and metaphorical worlds obsessed with control and pleasure.

### III.1.3. Narrative Structure and Style

When reading *Brave New World*, one can tell that Huxley's narrative style is likely modernist realism with elements of ironical criticism and dystopian allegory. His novel is not just a novel, but a carefully structured, thematically cohesive narrative to mirror the fractured psyche of its society.

In the opening chapter, the novel begins in the midst of the action, with the Director giving a tour of the Central London Hatchery: "A SQUAT grey building of only thirty-four stories. … Wintriness responded to wintriness. The overalls of the workers were white, their hands gloved with a pale corpse-coloured rubber. … "And this," said the Director opening the door, "is the Fertilizing Room" (5). This beginning is not merely expository; it immerses the reader immediately into the mechanised, sterile world of reproductive technology.

Huxley's use of technical jargon like the "Bokanovsky Process", "Hypnopaedia,", and descriptions like "Only from the yellow barrels of the microscopes did it borrow a certain rich and living substance, lying along the polished tubes like butter, streak after luscious streak in long recession down the work tables" (5), he establishes the scientific consumerist

zombification language. His choice of vocabulary sets the tone of an impersonal and structured world that defines the entire narrative.

Furthermore, the narrative does not follow a single protagonist but merges rapidly different characters, perspectives, and scenes. In chapter 3, for example,

> "Horrible; precisely," said the controller. "Our ancestors were so stupid and short-sighted that when the first reformers came along and offered to deliver them from horrible emotions, they wouldn't have anything to do with them."
>
> "Talking about" Bernard ground his teeth. "have her here, have her here?' like … Degrading her. She said she'd think it over, … Oh Ford." He would have liked to go up and hit them in the face hard, again and again.
>
> "'Yes, I really do advise you to [know her],'" Henry Foster was saying".
>
> "'There was something called Christianity. Women were forced to go on being viviparous.'" [Mustapha Mond Said]
>
> "'He's so ugly!'" Said Fanny. "'But I rather like his looks.'"
>
> "'I think that's rather sweet,'" said Lenina. (33)

In this excerpt, Huxley masterfully juxtaposes shallow engagements with the ideological indoctrination delivered by Mustapha Mond to a group of students, Henry Foster's and the Assistant Predestinator's degrading conversation about dating Lenina, Bernard Marx's internal discomfort with their attitude as he overhears them, and Lenina's discussion with her friend Fanny about dating Bernard, all co-occurring.

These quick cuts serve as a cinematic function similar to montage, reflecting the World State's mechanised rhythm while symbolically illustrating society's fragmentation. The characters are depicted together in a tightly woven narrative moment. Nevertheless, they all remain disconnected within the narrative structure, as none of the characters truly connect and communicate with each other in a meaningful, moral, and emotional way. Additionally, Henry

Foster and Mustapha's dialogue lacks genuine engagement with individual thought or resistance. This technique recalls the modernist narrative strategy of fragmentation, which Huxley employs to underline societal alienation and shattering.

A central realistic technique is the juxtaposition of setting and characters that highlight thematic contrasts, complemented by the intentional and consistent pacing throughout the novel. This is exemplified by the most prominent contrast between London and the Savage Reservation in chapter 8: "Lying in bed, he would think of Heaven and London and Our Lady of Acoma and the rows and rows of babies in clean bottles and Jesus flying up and Linda flying up and the great Director of World Haterchy" (86). Here, Huxley blends the developed imagery of the World State with the cultural and spiritual elements of the Reservation flawlessly, shaping John's hybrid worldview.

Similarly, the internal contrasts within characters like Bernard and Helmholtz serve as a microcosm of the novel's ideological conflicts that can be seen in these passages:

> Bernard's physique is hardly better than that of average Gamma. … [his] contact with members of … lower castes always reminded him painfully of this physical inadequacy. … The mockery made him feel an outsider; and feeling an outsider he behaved like one, … Which in turn increased his sense of being alien and alone. A chronic fear of being slighted made him avoid his equals, made him stand, where his inferiors were concerned, self-consciously on his dignity. (43 – 4)

Huxley adds: "'Able, was Able,' was the verdict of his superiors. "Perhaps, "a little too able. … That which had made Helmholtz so uncomfortably aware of being himself and all alone was too much ability" (45). Bernard's physical inadequacies and social insecurities expose the flaw in a society that claims to have eradicated all human discontent. In contrast, Helmholtz is the

ideal Alpha Plus who nonetheless feels constrained by the superficiality of the State-sanctioned system, revealing the oppressive limits of society's intellectual culture.

Furthermore, Huxley's language is precisely chosen to reflect the artificiality and zombification of the society he depicts. The diction of the World State is characterized by sanitized, clinical, and consumerist terminology. Words like "Decanting Room" (10), "hypnopaedia" (19), "feelies" (26), "viviparous" (26), "maggoty" (37), "soma" (38), and "Bokanovskification" (105) are not just linguistic novelties or neutral descriptors. They decode a worldview where natural human processes are commodified and mechanised; their humanity is conditioned into passive zombies, and their emotional depth is trivialized. The industrial language of biological duplication ironically reflects the zombification of citizens who are not born but manufactured and programmed.

The syntactic choices within the narrative often mirror society's efficient, utilitarian nature, reinforcing the idea that language in the World State functions to numb its citizens. For instance, when Huxley describes the Conditioning Centers or the Haterchy, the language is densely procedural and detached, focusing on efficiency rather than psychological impact. The statement "We also predestine and condition" (11) means that everything is predicted, measured, and controlled, emphasizing function over identity, individuality, agency, autonomy, and even feelings.

In contrast, when the narrative shifts to John or Helmholtz, the language becomes more lyrical and emotionally resonant, as seen in Helmholtz's declaration to Bernard, "'Did you ever feel, … as though you had something inside you that was only waiting for you to give it a chance to come out? Some sort of extra power that you aren't using-you know, like all the water that goes down the falls instead of through the turbines?'" (46). This yearning for deeper meaning stands in stark contrast to the sterile, dense language of Mustapha Mond when he states,

> Only an Epsilon can be expected to make Epsilon sacrifices, for the good reason that for him they aren't sacrifices; they're the line of least resistance. His conditioning has laid down rails along which he's got to run. He can't help himself; he's foredoomed. Even after decanting, he's still inside a bottle-an invisible bottle of infantile and embryonic fixations. Each one of us, of course, … goes through life inside a bottle. (152)

This detached, bureaucratic phrasing ironically criticizes a world in which every aspect of life is precisely engineered and predetermined. In this sense, Huxley's novel serves not only as a condemnation of a devastated future but also as a reflection on how structure, language, and style can be employed to ironically expose the defects of a society that prioritises consumerism over humanism.

## III.2. The Didactic Elements of *Brave New World*

Huxley's didactic vision emerges through his warnings against consumerism and technoscience that invade the Western world, while portraying resistance through John the Savage's journey, shaped by Shakespearean themes.

### III.2.1. Warnings Against Over-Reliance on Consumerism and Technoscience

Indeed, imagination is the boundless world where everything can be created, stretched, and shaped to express a particular idea, and Huxley did not miss the chance to use his own. He did not hesitate to offer one of the most disturbing dystopian novels. His narrative is not merely a literary work; it is an urgent and profound didactic piece that seeks to awaken its readers to the dangers inherent in over-reliance on technology in a consumerist world.

From the very first chapters, Huxley depicts the World State as a society that embraces technology and is obsessed with consumption. The fertilisation process with its "test-tubes" (6), the "mass production" (8) characterisation of these humans as physical commodities, and the

"synthetic" (11) materials that replace the natural with the artificial all reduce human reproduction and existence to a coldly industrial process. This is reflected in Karl Marx's critique of "commodity fetishism", where human relations are mediated by objects, and production becomes an alienating force (ch. 1, sec. 4). The Director's proud declaration that "Bokanovsky Process is one of the major instruments of social stability" (7) captures the State's primary concern of maintaining a predictable, easily managed population.

Huxley warns that under such a system, humanity's greatest threat comes not from external oppression but from the willingness to trade fundamental aspects of nature for comfort and stability. Through Mustapha Mond's alarmingly rational explanation, "People were ready to have even their appetites controlled, then—anything for a quiet life. We've gone on controlling ever since (156), Huxley's warning voice is heard most clearly. Unlike traditional dystopias, where totalitarianism is imposed through violence, Huxley's narrative demonstrates that this control does not necessarily require force when compliance can be achieved through engineered consent.

He warns about technoscientific advances and consumer culture that can pacify individuals far more efficiently than force. Within consumption, chemical pacification can be the death of the soul. This light-hearted phrase, "A doctor a day keeps the jim-jams away" (125), reflects the World State's reliance on consumer products that offer instant gratification to solve human problems. Such process is described by Slater, wherein consumer culture reduces complex human needs to "mundane" transactions, where even emotional distress is commodified (12). Through the idea that a "doctor" or a "drug" can simply erase discomfort, Huxley warns against the dangers of living in a world where technology is used to numb and pacify humanity instead of elevating it.

This ties directly into the consumerist culture, where citizens are conditioned to view products as solutions to all problems without engaging in critical thought. Another hypnopaedic

slogan that shows the omnipresence of *soma*, "One cubic centimetre cures ten gloomy sentiments" (38), illustrates Huxley's fear that humanity would prefer to anaesthetise itself rather than confront brutal truths, even those encountered in everyday life. It also aligns with Fisher's critique, where systemic disillusionment is masked by artificial satisfactions (9). In this sense, Huxley envisions a society that is conditioned to view artificial happiness as the ultimate goal, while ignoring the complexities of genuine emotions.

Similarly, through the slogan "A gramme is better than a damn" (38), Huxley dramatizes how language itself becomes a tool of zombification. As the ultimate consumer product, *soma* ensures that even suffering, once a catalyst for growth and resistance, is neutralised into oblivion. The novel's didactic warning is clear: a society that seeks to eliminate pain by technological and chemical means is one that eliminates meaning, depth, and the very capacity for genuine life.

Linda's tragic demise under the influence of *soma* highlights this philosophy vividly. Her death in the hospital for the Dying is merely another event managed by technological intervention, devoid of reflection and dignity. When faced with a situation outside the bounds of the controlled, *soma*-infused world and the structures of synthetic happiness she once knew, she is left emotionally unprepared, vulnerable, and ultimately unable to adapt to real life, as she collapses into helpless dependency. Jean Baudrillard's analysis reflects on this situation where consumer society reduces death to a "managed event" stripped of its existential weight (28). Through Linda's death, Huxley warns that sustained reliance on artificial pleasure suppresses authenticity and can lead to psychological disintegration and emotional emptiness.

It is obvious that he also offers a reminder that natural feelings, genuine human connection, and the ability to confront life's hardships cannot be replaced by technological fixes and the shallow comforts of consumerism. Regardless of the terrifying existence of *soma*, the true horror lies in how eagerly citizens embrace it. When the Savage attempts to free Delta

workers by throwing away their *soma* ration, “The words ‘Throw it all away’ pierced through the enfolding layers of income-prehension to the quick of the Delta’s consciousness. An angry murmur went up from the crowd” (145), they riot, not against their oppression but for the right to remain drugged.

Huxley describes the Deltas as not coerced into taking *soma*; instead, they demand it. This scene captures his distressing warning that in a sufficiently engineered society, its people will actively defend their passive servitude if it brings them enough pleasure and comfort. Alongside oppression, the State’s masses are under the illusion of freedom, as they do not experience overt coercion. Their comforts are carefully maintained, and their desires are gratified.

However, as Mustapha states, “Happiness is never a grand” (152). This means true happiness is rooted in original humanity, with its forms and experiences that replace the shallow prison of conditioned satisfactions. Huxley’s portrayal of Bernard Marx’s unease, John the Savage’s desperate fight to live authentically, and Helmholtz Watson’s yearning for meaningful creation reveals the human costs that society sacrifices for stability.

Bernard’s discomfort reflects a persistent sense of alienation that shallow consumption cannot eliminate. John’s rebellion highlights the soul-crushing reality for zombified humanity. Similarly, Helmholtz’s frustration reveals the sterility that emerges when creativity is subordinated to the demands of mass culture. Here, Huxley warns against prioritising technological control and consumer gratification, as they risk creating zombies with a commodified existence.

Within the vein of technological control lies science. The statement where Mustapha admits the State fears science: “Every change is a menace to stability. That’s another reason why we’re so chary of applying new inventions. Every discovery in pure science is potentially subversive; even science must sometimes be treated as a possible enemy" (154), reveals the

State's fear of genuine innovation. Scientific exploration in this civilisation is not an independent pursuit of knowledge or a motivation for human development.

Instead, it is strictly regulated and suppressed because true scientific inquiry could lead to changes that may not be controlled or predictable. Unpredictable change poses a threat to the delicate balance of consumerist conformity that maintains the State's power. Huxley here delivers a direct message that placing science as well as technology under control will prevent liberating forces and ensure that individuals never question their manufactured lives.

Mustapha's assertion, "Science is dangerous; we have to keep it most carefully chained and muzzled" (154), extends Huxley's warning by exposing the contradiction of the State's technological dominance. Indeed, the society uses advanced science to engineer the masses, maintain its immense system of consumption, and manufacture its *soma*. Yet, it fears the core of science; that is, a spirit of disruption and analysis—something that it ensures to deprive its citizens of.

Furthermore, Mond's description of science as "just a cookery book, with an orthodox theory of cooking that nobody's allowed to question, and a list of recipes that mustn't be added to except by special permission from the head cook" (154) reflects a metaphorical stagnation of the World State. In this sense, science is reduced to a system that forbids deviation, which explains the passion of curiosity, introspection, realisation, and observation that are numbed and turned into passive addiction. This parallels Cain and Montgomerie's critique, where innovation is stifled to maintain a cycle of endless consumption (5). This "cookery-book" model of science demonstrates that technological expertise is stripped of moral responsibility and philosophical inquiry in the shadow of such a control. Huxley's vision of a world where science exists only to produce inhuman beings, drugs, and entertainments that keep the citizens submissive and passive is a sharp warning. The latter is against the scientific and technological

systems designated by political and commercial interests as omnipresent and imprisoned; they serve nothing more than control, regardless of the costs.

The didactic thrust of the novel is that the final consequence of over-reliance on technology and consumerism is the zombification of the masses, as it becomes especially clear when social progress means "Ninety-six identical twins working ninety-six identical machines!" (7). Instead of social loss, Huxley warns against the dehumanising effects of technology and industrialisation. Through this portrayal, he demonstrates a society where human beings are reduced to mere cogs in a machine, stripped of identity, individuality, personal agency, and autonomy.

Huxley also highlights the danger of a future where uniformity walks side by side with efficiency, prioritised over creative expression and human fulfillment. Yes, Huxley presents a modern literary work, yet draws on postmodern and contemporary narratives about how technological progress becomes a tool for social control, with individuals conditioned to accept their roles within a system that values production and consumption over critical thinking, profound feelings, and authentic actions. Hence, society may trade its humanity for false notions of progress.

The isolation of John and his ultimate suicide serve as the novel's tragic climax, illustrating the impossibility of sustaining true humanity within the World State. His desperate rejection of *soma*, "'But I don't want comfort. I want God, I want poetry, I want real danger, I want freedom, I want goodness.'" (163), is not merely a personal act of rebellion and longing. It can be seen as Huxley's cry against a world that has exchanged its human soul for a mechanized one.

John's fate reveals that the systemic eradication of uncertainty, pain, and natural intensity through the tools of scientific conditioning and control results in a hollow existence, rather than human flourishing. Thus, John's tragic end is a powerful warning that his death is

not just the death of a man; it symbolises the destruction of the essential human qualities: it is the death of what makes people fully, vibrantly human. Although Huxley never explicitly describes the citizens of the World State as "zombies," the patterns of dehumanisation he depicts strongly suggest the potential for such a condition. He introduces a disturbing possibility that, in pursuing consumption, convenience, and comfort at all costs, society may unwittingly breed its own decline into conformity, docility, and spiritual death. This mirrors Romero's movie *Dawn of the Dead*, where consumerism turns humans into zombies, mindlessly shuffling through shopping malls.

The didacticism of the novel involves not only what the author shows but also what he intentionally leaves out. Huxley presents order, consumer goods, and pleasure, and erases fathers, mothers, family ties, aging, disease, and any reverence for the past. These absences, particularly in the World State, are not accidents but systematic removals. Through this passage said by Mustapha, "they're never ill; they're not afraid of death; they're blissfully ignorant of passion and old age; they're plagued with no mothers or fathers; they've got no wives, or children, or lovers to feel strongly about; they're so conditioned that they practically can't help behaving as they ought to behave" (151), Huxley shows the absence of kinship and philosophical debate about this loss, only a collective amnesia.

This void is a cautionary symbol of the consequences of embracing the technoscientific removal of the primary structures of meaning, resulting in nothing but programmed zombies. When people no longer understand what it means to age, grieve, be part of a family, or feel deeply, they lose the essential elements of being human. Hence, they no longer participate in the story of life but become passive consumers of distractions. In this sense, these citizens are spiritually undead; yes, they move, speak, and work, but without reflection.

Another absence is the personal memory; no line in the novel depicts the latter. This is evident in the Director's "I think she had yellow hair. … I remember that" (65), John's flashback

when “He remembered the first time she found those little animals in his hair, how she screamed and screamed” (86), and Mustapha’s speech of his past personal experience, “I started doing a bit of cooking on my own” (154). These unique terms contrast with the lack of autobiographical reference of the masses’ engineered speech that echoes nothing but a language of repetitive consumer advertising. Huxley’s warning here is about the deprived narrative thread of personal history, which is achieved through developed means that claim to create stable masses, yet all they breed is zombies.

As much as *Brave New World* presents a utopian warning against the passive consumerist zombification, it also presents a vision of what it means to live fully and meaningfully. This vision finds its place in the values and richness of humanity preserved in great works of art. Nowhere is this tension more vividly dramatised than in the figure of John the Savage, whose immersion in Shakespearean literature provides both emotional and moral language that is utterly absent from the sterile, gloomy society around him.

### III.2.2. Resistance Through Literature: Shakespearean Themes in John’s Narrative

In *Brave New World*, Huxley constructs a future in which consumerism and technological control have reduced human beings to shallow, manufactured shells. However, within a zombifying society, literature and art become symbols of resistance through the character of John the Savage.

What makes this young man special is his hybridity. His mind and soul have been shaped by the Savage Reservation he was raised in and the Shakespearean literature he obsessively read after discovering an old copy as a child. This aligns with Stuart Hall’s theory of cultural identity as a process of “becoming” (4), where the State’s conditioning does not fix John’s identity but is continually shaped by his engagement with literature. From this, John’s internal

world is rich and complex, unlike the conditioned children of the State. This explains the contrast between the masses' passive acceptance of consumerist pleasure and John's rejection of this latter.

The influence of Shakespeare on John is evident in his vocabulary. His understanding of emotions, betrayal, honor, despair, and love comes straight from Shakespeare's plays. These profound, authentic emotions are alien to the numbed souls and minds of the State's masses. For instance, when he expresses his love to Lenina Crowne, he interprets his feelings through the lens of *Romeo and Juliet*'s dramatic, passionate way, which is why he says things like, "'I wanted to do something first. I mean to show I was worthy of you'" (127).

For John, love is something profound and sacred, demanding honor and sacrifice, not casual and empty. He even quotes Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* to express how deeply he is hurting: "'Is there no pity sitting in the clouds, that sees into the bottom of my grief'" (123). This illustrates how seriously he takes his emotions, unlike the casual, unemotional relationships of the World State that Erick Fromm critiques, where authentic emotions are replaced by commodified relationships (70). This internalisation of Shakespearean drama not only shapes John's emotional responses but also preserves within him a vision of life that resists the zombie-like shallowness of the consumerist society.

What increases this observation is John's realisation that language has lost its power in a zombified world. His speech is sophisticated with Shakespearean grandeur, with heavy poetic words, passionate expressions, and existential depth, all of which the citizens are immune to. When he first met Bernard Marx and saw the society of the World State, he instinctively responded with a quote from *The Tempest*[xix]*:* "'O brave new world that has such people in it!'" (83). At this moment, John speaks with genuine excitement and hope.

To him, the technoscientific marvels of the State seem at first like something perfect and wonderful, as he envisioned it within Shakespearean ideals of nobility, beauty, and honor. Following Linda's stories, he imagines that he has finally found a civilisation where human greatness thrives. Yet, his initial wonder turns into deep disillusionment each time he experiences more of this "brave new world." His words, he once said with awe, are now ringing with biting irony upon realising how emotionally drained, mentally dead, and physically handicapped these zombie-like beings are.

John's use of Shakespearean expressions like "A man who dreams of fewer things than there are in heaven and earth" (158) is not simply a stylistic exaggeration; they serve as a profound form of resistance to the consumerist culture he observes and judges. This quote criticizes the World State's intellectual sterility and narrow rationalism, which he rejects. As Marcuse argues, consumerism reduces individuals to "one-dimensional" beings, incapable of imagining alternatives (32), a fate John resists through literature. Furthermore, John's active engagement contrasts with the citizens' fragmented, flat slogans: "Ending is better than mending" (35), and "Everybody belongs to every one else" (81). From these designated phrases, one can see John's literary richness that requires critical thinking and questioning, which the citizens lack.

From the citizens to Mustapha Mond, one of the few individuals who understands the cost of stability, and provides John with a significant insight into the mechanisms of consumerist zombification. In one of the most revealing conversations of the novel, Mustapha explains the State's suppression of art and literature, as he precises the problem with beauty itself: "Particularly when they're beautiful. Beauty's attractive, and we don't want people to be attracted by old things. We want them to like the new ones'" (150). Here, Mustapha exposes a central principle of the zombification of people.

Since beauty from the past, whether in art or literature, provides them with insights into truths and timeless emotions, it means it will fuel a thread of humanity in them; something which the State fears. From Mustapha's statement, if people were allowed to admire Shakespearean beauty, it might invite comparison, thinking, and nostalgia, all of which challenge the disposable logic of consumerism. Consequently, they might begin to question the superficiality of their world. They might long for deep experiences that new consumer products like "soma", the "feelies", and "scent organ" cannot provide.

Mustapha further explains the core of the State's ideology, saying harshly,

> Because our world is not the same as Othello's world. You can't make flivvers without steel- and you can't make tragedies without social instability. The world's stable now. People are happy; they get what they want, and they never want what they can't get. They're well off, they're safe; they're never ill; they're not afraid of death; they're blissfully ignorant of passion and old age; they're plagued with no mothers or fathers; they've got no wives, or children, or lovers to feel strongly about they're so conditioned that they practically can't help behaving as they ought to behave. And if anything should go wrong, there's soma. Which you go and chuck out of the window in the name of liberty, Mr. Savage. Liberty! … expecting Deltas to know what liberty is! And now expecting them to understand Othello! My good boy! (151)

This passage captures the heart of Huxley's warning, which is exemplified in the fact that true art demands instability because it draws from real human suffering, family, mortality, complexity, and passion, particularly the things that the State considers "tragedies" and ensures their erasure. This philosophy of not just eliminating literature but the very conditions that allow

for literature to exist is a great reflection of the State's dependence on the complete genocide of humanity and zombifying it.

The Shakespearean themes running through John's narrative, with his constant quotations from *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, and *Othello*, stand in sharp resistance to the State's conditioning. Where the State breeds passive consumers through Bokanovsky and Hypnopaedia, Shakespeare gives John the active inner life, thinking, language, morality, and depth. Byung-Chul Han notes that genuine autonomy requires resistance to the "compulsive freedom" of consumerism (20), a resistance that John embodies. His tragic Love for Lenina, filtered through *Romeo and Juliet*, becomes a protest against the State's reduction of love to recreational pleasure.

But it is not just love in every dimension of John's experience; Shakespearean literature provides what the State has destroyed: passion in place of gratification, moral reasoning in place of conditioned obedience, identity in place of manufactured roles, individual conscience in place of uniformity, and agency and autonomy in place of mechanical desires and compliance. His rebellion, shaped by *Hamlet*'s torment and *Othello*'s jealousy, is not a political and social one, but a profound, genuine personal resistance against a world that no longer recognises a human being from a working zombie.

In each case, literature becomes a vessel for freedom and a means of preserving humanity in a world designed to abolish it. Through John's narrative, Huxley warns that when society trades high art for *soma* and slogans, it does not just lose its books, soul, and mind. Despite his resistance, John's fate is unquestioned amidst the chaos of the World State. Yet, his downfall is not a physical suicide as much as it is a psychological collapse. In Van der Kolk's observation, trauma can lead to re-enactment or self-annihilation (389), representing John's fate

as he surrenders to when his resistance proves useless. In killing himself, John embodies the only form of rebellion left to him: self-annihilation.

A collapse that marks Huxley's warning about such a consumerist dystopia, that even literature, one as powerful as Shakespeare, will ultimately fail to stand. John's resistance is heroic, rooted in Shakespearean drama's emotional and moral richness, yet it is doomed. Through John the Savage's tragedy, Huxley shows that literature is a museum that preserves the unique, genuine humanity that consumer society seeks to erase in the name of progress and stability. Still, like John's single voice echoing in a crowded auditorium of slogans, literature does not resist in isolation. *Brave New World*'s consumerist zombification gains even greater resonance when placed in dialogue with other dystopian texts.

## III.3. Intertextual Echoes: Footnotes to Orwell's *1984*

For the twin pillars of dystopian literature, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and George Orwell's *1984* stand alongside each other as reflections of totalitarian regimes, regardless of how each writer presents it. They both converge on themes of the suppression of individuality and truth manipulation as means of societal control. However, while Huxley's World State imposes control through comfort, pleasure, and conditioning, Orwell's Party of Oceania uses extreme surveillance and fear.

### III.3.1. Surveillance and Eradication of Privacy

Needless to mention that surveillance plays a central role in maintaining control over citizens in both Huxley's *Brave New World* and Orwell's *1984*. In the latter, *1984*, Oceania operates on absolute surveillance, where even the slightest deviation from the system is punishable by death. The idea of control is maintained through the "telescreen" (Orwell 4), an unblinking eye in every home which shows the Party's intrusion into private life:

> The telescreen received and transmitted simultaneously. Any sound that Winston made, above the level of a very low whisper, would be picked up by it, moreover, so long as he remained within the field of vision which the metal plaque commanded, he could be seen as well as heard. There was of course no way of knowing whether you were being watched at any given moment. How often, or no. (Orwell 5)

This idea of control through omnipresent surveillance leads to a phenomenon known as the panopticon[xx]. In this context, the telescreen "panopticon" represents a totalitarian system of total observation, where the individual is always aware of the potential for surveillance, which conditions behavior without the need for physical force. As Neil M. Richard notes in *The Dangers of Surveillance*, "Surveillance menaces intellectual privacy and increases the risk of blackmail, coercion, and discrimination" (3). He further argues that "Surveillance transcends the public/private divide" (25), emphasizing the idea that control in Orwell's narrative operates on a psychological level.

Throughout the novel, the repetitive recurrence of the slogan, "BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU" (Orwell 4) is profoundly impactful, resulting in terrified people who live under stress and terror. What makes it worse is the Thought Police, "The Thought Police plugged in on any individual wire was guesswork. It was even conceivable that they watched everybody all the time. But at any rate they could plug in your wire whenever they wanted to. You had to live—did live, from habit that became instinct—in the assumption that every sound you made was overheard, and, except in darkness, every movement scrutinized" (5). Through this, people are afraid even of thinking in a way that contrasts with the Party's ideology, since even their thoughts are subject to scrutiny through "Thoughtcrime" (Orwell 24).

As Orwell writes, "WAR IS PEACE [.] FREEDOM IS SLAVERY [.] IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH" (34). Yes, these are contradictions, but the citizens internalise them because

they are conditioned to accept them and fear the consequences of resistance. Hence, in O'Brien's confirmation, the control is psychological before it is physical: "We do not destroy the heretic because he resists us: so long as he resists us we never destroy him. We convert him, we capture his inner mind, we reshape him. We burn all evil and all illusion out of him; we bring him over to our side, not in appearance, but genuinely, heart and soul" (Orwell 321). Orwell's portrayal of totalitarianism makes the idea of both control and privacy a mere illusion.

Similarly, in *Brave New World*, privacy does not exist, not through the overt Orwellian surveillance, but through a more insidious propaganda of control: hypnopaedic conditioning that shapes the masses' thoughts and predetermines their behavior; consumerism that sustains passive contentment, keeping them weak and distracted from rebellion or self-reflection; and ultimately, the complete elimination of individual privacy, where their lives are already designated from birth to death within a metaphorical glass bottle, stripped of even a bit of personal experience.

In "Living the Orwellian Nightmare: New Media and Digital Dystopia", Greg Diglin observes, "The negative effects of new media technology can only be ameliorated through critical thought" (608). Diglin's observation illustrates how Huxley's seductive form of control undermines agency by dulling critical consciousness. In such a society, the capacity for resistance erodes not through fear, but through the loss of thought itself. In this sense, surveillance is embedded in social norms. The absence of prisons, unlike in *1984*, is not a sign of freedom but a testament to the system's success in manufacturing obedient people.

In both *1984* and *Brave New World*, the erosion of privacy is linked to the erosion of meaningful individuality. Whether Orwell's oppressive enforcement or Huxley's internalised one, the loss of personal space signifies the loss of self-reflection. This means that when this space is invaded, individuals lose their capacity to think independently, feel deeply, and relate

genuinely to others. Thus, Orwell's dystopia resembles a prison built on fear, while Huxley's is a playground with invisible bars, where submission is cheerfully embraced rather than forced.

### III.3.2. The Manipulation of Truth

Much like *Brave New World*, manipulating truth, particularly historical truth, serves as a control mechanism. The suppression of foundational human concepts such as "mother" and "father" from the World State results in people being deprived of their personal and collective past. "Human beings" who are artificially created, manufactured, and stripped of the very lineage, memory, and history that define their identity.

This is evident in Orwell's historical manipulation of erasure in *1984,* where the Party systematically deletes individuals from existence: "Your name was removed from the registers, every record of everything you had ever done was wiped out, your one-time existence was denied and then forgotten. You were abolished, annihilated: VAPORIZED" (24). In both dystopias, citizens are rootless and disoriented, leaving them vulnerable to easy control.

Furthermore, in *1984*, Winston's job at the Ministry of Truth involves rewriting historical records to align with the Party's falsified narratives: "Every record has been destroyed or falsified, every book has been rewritten, every picture has been repainted, every statue and street and building has been renamed, every date has been altered. That process continues day by day and minute by minute. History has stopped. Nothing exists except an endless present in which the Party is always right (Orwell 195). This echoes in *Discipline and Punish*, where Foucault asserts that "there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge," where institutional memory becomes a political tool (38).

In *1984*, the Party's falsification of records is a method of dominating reality itself, demonstrating how power sustains itself by controlling what can be known, remembered, or believed. Reflecting the World State's indoctrination: "Till at last the child's mind is these suggestions, … The mind that judges and desires and decides- made up of these suggestions.

But all these suggestions are our suggestions!" (21). This shows that when belief is shaped before critical thought can even form, it sustains control over knowledge, and knowledge itself can become a medium of power.

The Party's slogan also captures this Orwellian strategy: "Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past" (Orwell 313). The deliberate manipulation of truth here ensures that citizens remain trapped in a designed reality, deprived of the knowledge to answer, resist, and even recognise oppression. *1984*'s suppression of memory is no less reminiscent than Huxley's. The state's craft of history is achieved through preemptive erasure, which produces citizens who are ignorant of the past and incapable of imagining alternatives to their present.

Indeed, both dystopias destroy historical truth. In *1984*, history is falsified and rewritten, while in *Brave New World*, it is rendered irrelevant through technology and consumerism. As Foucault reminds readers in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*: "The archive is the first law of what can be said" (136). By denying access to the past, both societies imply that the present remains unquestioned. The panopticon of Orwell's world and the glass bottle of Huxley are not just metaphors for surveillance but for the elimination of privacy and history, through which consciousness might emerge. When Orwell creates a world where books are banned because they are archives of truth, Huxley creates one where no one cares to read them.

### III.3.3. Glitches in Agency and Autonomy

Both novels depict societies where personal agency and autonomy are dismantled. Orwell writes,

> To know and not to know, to be conscious of complete truthfulness while telling carefully constructed lies, to hold simultaneously two opinions which cancelled out, knowing them to be contradictory and believing in both of them, … to forget whatever it was necessary to forget, then to draw it back into memory again at

> the moment when it was needed, and then promptly to forget it again: and above all, to apply the same process to the process itself. That was the ultimate subtlety: consciously to induce unconsciousness, and then, once again, to become unconscious of the act of hypnosis you had just performed. (44 –5)

The ideology of "doublethink" in *1984* is not merely a linguistic anomaly but a mechanism of psychological control. It compels individuals to accept contradictions without question, thus affecting their ability to think independently and act autonomously. This cognitive distortion aligns with Louis Althusser's notion of ideology in *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, where "all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects" (40). Meaning, ideology transforms individuals into subjects who recognize themselves in the structures that dominate them. Additionally, it ensures that individuals cannot trust their perceptions, leaving them dependent on the Party's version of reality. Such an illusion is evident in *Brave New World* through the use of *soma*. As long as people are happy and can have this drug whenever they want, their perception remains trapped within a façade of joyful promises of an idealised world.

Furthermore, the novel's slogan, "*Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four. If that is granted, all else follows*" (103), is one of the most profound philosophical declarations in *1984*. On the surface, it appears as a fundamental affirmation of objective truth. However, in the context of the Part's logic, it represents a defense of intellectual truthfulness, personal agency, and the human right to define reality on one's own terms. Orwell explains this epistemology in a harsh dialogue between O'Brien and Winston,

> 'How does one man assert his power over another, Winston?' Winston thought. 'By making him suffer,' he said. 'Exactly. By making him suffer. Obedience is not enough. Unless he is suffering, how can you be sure that he is obeying your

> will and not his own? Power is in inflicting pain and humiliation. Power is in tearing human minds to pieces and putting them together again in new shapes of your own choosing.' (336)

This exchange reveals the Party's goal, as it does not aim only for obedience but also for the annihilation of the autonomous itself.

Winston's eventual love for Big Brother after a long and deep despise, "Two ginscented tears trickled down the sides of his nose. But it was all right, everything was all right, the struggle was finished. He had won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother (Orwell 376) signifies the complete collapse of his agency. This passivity breeds what can be understood as a form of zombification. Not the undead of horror fiction, but a cultural and psychological state. A state in which individuals are devoid of their depth, agency, consciousness, and capacity for resistance.

In both narratives, this metaphor is well-suited. In *1984*, citizens are turned into ideological zombies with a mindless pursuit of the Party's lies while believing them to be true. On the other hand, *Brave New World*'s citizens are manufactured consumerist zombies, whose entire lives are defined by the pursuit of superficial hunger for pleasure and unthinking conformity. The population of both dystopias stands as a zombie trope, infected by a virus of physical and psychological consumption, leading them to one single aim: destruction disguised in construction.

The intertextual dialogue between *Brave New World* and *1984* reveals two sides of the same coin. Both writers construct dystopian visions within a masterful blend of fiction and logic that serves as a complementary warning. Yes, zombification is metaphorical, but Huxley's seductive world and Orwell's brutal one present the consequences of losing authentic selfhood and even the very core of humanity in a world where technology and consumerism dominate.

While Huxley depicts it as a mirage sustained through conditioning and pleasure, Orwell achieves the same erasure through pain and fear. However, both operate within a common totalitarian system.

## Conclusion

In tracing Huxley's masterful dystopia's aesthetic, stylistic, and didactic corners, this chapter has shown how the novel can be targeted as an ideological prescient. Through the aesthetic duality of utopia versus dystopia and satire, the book oscillates between attachment, which is at once grotesquely exaggerated and turned into detachment. Its narrative structure, with shifting perspectives, fragmentation, and coldness, imposes the dehumanisation it criticizes. Its didactic elements, particularly Huxley's language of warning and John's doomed Shakespearean resistance, underlie the consequences of unchecked technology and consumerism: the production of hollow human shells, who are rendered physically and, more crucially, psychologically, zombified. Such a narrative compels readers to question whether a society without privacy, feelings, and purpose can still be called human. Ultimately, George Orwell's *1984* intertextuality positions *Brave New World* as not a reflection of the anxieties of its time, but a futuristic vision set a long time ago, yet illuminates the mechanisms through which postmodern consumerism breeds zombification. Hence, literature is not just a mirror of the future we fear, but also the present we have learned not to see.

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[xviii] A mechanical system used to move objects on a chain or belt from one point to another. Here, it refers to the hidden mechanism that transports embryos where the masses are artificially grown and conditioned. As the racks of embryos move slowly through different rooms over 257 days, the conveyor system ensures exposure to chemical treatments and stimuli (Huxley 10).

[xix] A play by William Shakespeare.

[xx] For a detailed rhetorical discussion, see Chapter 1. In *1984*, this panopticon structure is reimagined through the surveillance of the telescreens to internalize discipline and social control.

# General Conclusion

Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* is not just a speculative dystopia; it also serves as a diagnostic lens, sharpened to reveal and challenge the ideological trajectory of a society reshaped by consumerism. Huxley delivers powerful and haunting criticism with imaginative precision and unsettling beauty. His cold, sterile narrative offers a rich and provocative warning built at the cost of "tragedies" and "truth". In the destructive world he envisions, a society that once responded to genuine human needs abandons tradition and authenticity, instead embracing a new artificial life and order. This novel compels us to confront a reality in which *consumerism* has reduced human life to nothing but a zombie-like existence.

This research has demonstrated that the novel's vision is not a pessimistic expression of the author but a prescient allegory for zombification. As depicted in the novel, the horizons of consumer culture do not merely capture one's materialistic desires, but the very core of his humanity itself. As we ventured deeper into the layers of our topic, it became evident that the unconscious pursuit of convenience and instant gratification does not advance civilisation; rather, it nurtures a progressive gradual of *zombification.*

The transformation of the human subject into a passive consumer is highlighted in red by the metaphorical zombification explored in the novel. Unlike the traditional depictions and definitions of zombies, Huxley's figures are not reckless or rotted; they are sanitised, functioning, and smiling. However, their cognitive passivity, programmed responses, emotional hollowness, profound detachment, and decaying minds denote a profound loss of identity, individuality, agency, and autonomy. Just as modern and postmodern people, especially, the zombified individual is one whose sense of reality is mediated entirely by external scripts and an endless hunger for consumption. In both contexts of *Brave New World* and the contemporary society, the results map a process in which the commodification of the soul and the mind becomes indistinguishable from the destruction of humanity.

What makes this transformation particularly insidious is the tension between freedom and comfort. The totalitarian control is imposed through the systematic eradication of the desire for anything beyond what the system provides. Through a complex apparatus of language, conditioning, and cultural programming, individuals are denied the tools of reflective thought and offered a reflective gratification. This economic and psychological model ensures that people remain content and docile in the age of pharmaceutical dependency, algorithmic persuasion, and the commodification of oneself. Huxley's foresight lies in identifying that the erosion of inner life does not require authoritarian brutality but a consistent denial of complexity in favor of pleasure.

As the structure of society reduces dissent to unimaginable and unnecessary in the eyes of its subjects, the tragedy of rebellion becomes impossible when oppression is dressed as benevolence. The presence of alternative figures and spaces, those who remain unconditioned or marginal to the system, suggests the capacity for thinking, feeling, and transcendence. They remind us that humanity cannot be fully eradicated but buried beneath layers of cultural anesthesia.

Ultimately, the vision of the novel demonstrates what it looks like to place the human condition under the shadow of modernity and postmodernity, since our novel is set in postmodern times. In this system, consumerism is not just an economic activity but a comprehensive worldview; one that redefines values, restructures emotions, numbs the brain, and entraps the soul. The zombification that results is not a simple loss of humanity, but a transformation of what it means to be conscious, ethical, free, and fundamentally, human.

*Brave New World* functions as a profound example of intertextuality. Huxley's use of Shakespearean narratives adds layers of depth to his criticism. As he references Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth*, and the *Tempest*, shows how literature itself can stand as a pillar of resistance in the age of "electronics." This "high art" sharply contrasts with the

shallow emotions of the Bokanovskied masses. This intertextual layer deepens Huxley's warning of a society where the depth of human experience is suppressed in favor of convenience and control.

Furthermore, *Brave New World* can be read in conversation with George Orwell's *1984*, another iconic dystopia that explores the consequences of totalitarianism and the erosion of human foundations and history. As we drew this parallel, it shows how extremely grim the government systems are. Whether they come cloaked in the direct brutality of Orwell's control or the seductive consumerism of Huxley's, both systems culminate in the same result: a submissive, zombified population.

This research traced the evolution of consumerism's zombifying effects and established its relevance to contemporary cultural and unchecked technological advancements. Huxley's imaginative world is a prophecy urgently echoing in our time, where attention is commodified, technology functions as a subtle form of control, and complexity is discarded in favor of consumable experiences. In exposing the mechanics behind this radical shift, *Brave New World* does not criticise a fictional future only, it holds a mirror to the ideological patterns of the present. It urges a reconsideration of the values that underlie our definitions of progress, pleasure, meaning, comfort, and civilisation in a world where the lines between authentic humanity and zombified existence are blurred amidst consumerism.

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# Appendices

## **Appendix 1:** Synopsis of *Brave New World* and thematic framework

Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) envisions a dystopian future in which the progress of civilization is held in the pursuit of societal stability achieved through the systematic application of psychological conditioning and technoscientific control. Set in the year A.F. 632 (After Ford), the novel introduces the World State, a global regime governed by principles of consumerist ideology, social stratification, and the manipulation of human behavior. In this Western society, natural reproduction has been abolished: individuals are manufactured in Hatcheries and assigned to castes—ranging from the intellectually elite Alphas to the subservient Epsilons—through engineered genetic determinism.

At the heart of Huxley's criticism lies the zombifying potential of science when it becomes detached from ethical and humanistic concerns. The State erases emotional depth, moral agency, and individual autonomy through reproductive technology, behavioral engineering, and pharmacological intervention. The result is a posthuman society in which complexity and contradiction—hallmarks of the human condition—are suppressed in favor of mechanical predictability. This dynamic reflects a central anxiety of postmodernity and contemporary western societies: that the emancipatory promises of science can be co-opted to serve ideological control systems.

The World State's apparatus of dominance is maintained not through violence or coercion but via internalised consent and soft power. From infancy, citizens experience hypnopaedic conditioning designed to instill obedience, eliminate critical thought, and sustain uniformity. Historical consciousness is erased; intellectual freedom is replaced with engineered contentment. The mechanisms of *soma* (a hallucinogenic drug), state-sanctioned promiscuity, and compulsive consumption ensure that individuals remain subdued, distracted, and disinterested in meaningful self and life examination. In this framework, consumption is elevated beyond economic function—it becomes a moral imperative, binding personal identity

to material acquisition. Huxley depicts consumption as an ideological infrastructure and a psychological narcotic: it pacifies dissent, commodifies desire, and renders human subjectivity passive and programmable.

Within this context, zombification finds a vivid demonstration. It is embodied in the docile and homogenised masses of the World State. These citizens are biologically alive but psychically hollow, exhibiting no capacity for resistance, reflection, or self-determination. Conditioned to consume, obey, and forget, they represent a powerful metaphor for the postmodern and today's subject under late capitalism: a consumer devoid of critical consciousness living in controlled apathy. This condition aligns with the metaphorical conceptualisation of "zombification" as the gradual erosion of individual agency under ideological and consumerist saturation.

The novel's central conflict is articulated through the figure of John "the Savage," a character raised in the Savage Reservation outside the World State's jurisdiction. Unlike the engineered citizens, John is shaped by natural birth, literature, emotional suffering, and spiritual longing. His encounter with the World State is a confrontation between unmediated humanity and the synthetic order of technocratic society. John's refusal to submit to the values of this civilisation, and his ultimate self-destruction reveals the tragic limits of human authenticity in a world that equates happiness with control and individuality with deviance.

John is the antithesis of the zombified masses: a symbol of aesthetic sensibility, moral struggle, and existential awareness. His presence emphasizes the thematic dichotomy between originality and enforced uniformity. In this context, John represents both the last vestige of human resistance and the impossibility of sustained dissent within a culture of totalising consumerism. His fate illustrates that in a world where all aspects of life are commodified, even resistance itself becomes unsustainable.

**Appendix 2:** Illustration of the Metaphorical Consumer Zombie (AI-generated image)


Note: Image generated using ChatGPT (OpenAI, 2025). Source: https://openai.com/chatgpt