MIRANDA'S DREAM PERVERTED: DEHUMANIZATION IN HUXLEY'S *BRAVE NEW WORLD*

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Paul C. Chizmar

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Thesis written by

Paul C. Chizmar

Approved by

_____, Advisor

_____, Chair, Department of English

Accepted by

_____, Dean, Honors College

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

What comes to mind when one thinks of science fiction?

In the basest sense, they might think of imaginative—and often plausible—inventions such as lasers, cloning, starships, time travel, etc. In a broader sense, they might think of fun action movies like *Tron* or *Avatar*, or television series like *Star Trek* and *Dr. Who.* For the most part, such stories are geared toward a more casual audience, with the simple intention of providing entertainment. Some, however, do not want to be simply entertained. They want something that has more to offer than just lasers and spaceships; simply put, they want something that makes them *think.* For such audiences, there is a plethora of science fiction tales that deal with mature themes on a social, political, and/or psychological level.

One such theme is that of dehumanization. As it pertains to science fiction, this term stands for the suppression or nullification of one's basic humanity – free will, individuality, and emotion. Depending on the story told, the way that this condition is brought about can vary. In Orwell's *1984*, citizens are stripped of their basic humanity through constant surveillance, torture, and brainwashing. In William Gibson's *Neuromancer*, mankind's progress into the cyber era has fundamentally changed people's lives. However, these advancements have led some to have "a certain relaxed contempt"

toward the body and everyday reality (6). These examples reflect two of the most prominent factors behind dehumanization: harsh government control and overindulgence in high technology. One novel that incorporates both of these ideas is Aldous Huxley's landmark work *Brave New World*.

Published in 1932, *Brave New World* is set roughly six centuries into the future, where the old world has been washed away by conflict and social upheaval. From the ashes has arisen a global order known as the World State. Led by a dozen individuals called the World Controllers, the citizenry has finally achieved the long dreamt-of goal of a "perfect" society. The long-dreaded forces of disease and bodily aging have been washed away, and people enjoy almost limitless comforts. All of this comes at a price, however. Art and religion have been abolished, as they have proved century after century to sow the seeds of dissent towards authority. The only acceptable emotion is happiness; any negative thoughts—anger, sorrow, disappointment—that could lead to authoritative challenge are nullified with the powerful drug *soma*, regularly distributed as rations to the populace. The concept of individuality is adamantly discouraged for the sake of social conformity. As a result, the ideas of love, marriage and even family have been removed from the picture. All children are now born artificially in massive hatcheries. From the moment they are taken from their individual tubes, they are harshly conditioned to conform to society's norms. As these examples show, those in authority have all but destroyed the concept of humanity.

The story initially centers on Bernard Marx and Lenina Crowne, two employees of the London Hatchery and Conditioning Center. The pair embarks on a relaxing vacation to a primitive Savage Reservation – one of the last vestiges of pre-war civilization – in New Mexico. Here, they meet a young man named John, who, to their surprise, is the son of a London citizen who had been abandoned there years ago. After listening to the story about his past, Bernard and Lenina make him the offer of a lifetime: that he come to live in London. John, being an outcast in his village and having always been intrigued by his mother's tales of the World State, is all too eager to oblige.

Upon his arrival in London, John becomes an overnight celebrity due to his strange upbringing and his overly emotional nature. Additionally, he grows a budding admiration for Lenina. He soon finds, however, that neither she nor the rest of society are as appealing as his mother would have him believe. Although he initially finds some wonder in the World State's technological innovations, he becomes utterly repulsed by the citizenry's frivolous forms of entertainment and its overall apathy towards individuality. He utterly rejects Lenina due to her adherence to the status quo. Eventually, John's distaste leads him to incite a rebellion among the lower-class workers, an attempt which fails miserably. This incident results in a climactic meeting between him and Mustapha Mond, the World Controller of Western Europe. After a heated debate regarding the status of art, religion, family, and other concepts, John expresses his desire for the very way of life that the World State rejects:

> "I don't want comfort. I want God, I want poetry, I want real danger, I want freedom, I want goodness. I want sin . . . I'm claiming the right to be unhappy" (Huxley 240).

After this meeting, John goes on a self-enforced exile into the countryside, where he leads a simpler life. The citizenry, however, remain close to his heels; after his exploits are secretly filmed and presented as documentary footage, John is besieged by citizens who continue to see him as a spectacle. This eventually leads him to commit suicide in a final effort to escape from this repellent, dehumanized brave new world.

Through *Brave New World,* Huxley creates a frightening – yet fascinating – tale of a world in which the human element is all but lost. This raises a vital question: what were the author's inspirations for writing such a novel? The answer lies partially in title itself. The title was taken from a quote from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, uttered by the character Miranda. Miranda is the daughter of Prospero, the exiled Duke of Milan. For as long as she can remember, she has lived her entire life on an enchanted island with her father, the spirit Ariel, and the bestial slave Caliban. One day, a ship carrying Prospero's usurping brother, Antonio, comes near the island. Seeking revenge, Prospero commands Ariel to capsize the vessel through a raging tempest, but leave the crew alive and stranded on the isle. As the play progresses, she meets more and more of these crew members; the one who has the greatest impact is Antonio's son, Ferdinand, whom she becomes infatuated with. In Act V, Scene I, she finally utters the iconic phrase:

> O, wonder!
>
> How many goodly creatures are there here!
>
> How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world,
>
> That has such people in't! (http://shakespeare.mit.edu/tempest/full.html)

This line is uttered by a girl who has had no prior knowledge of the world outside the island; Ferdinand and his peers represent her first taste of this brave and wondrous new world. Such a mind-set is initially shared by John the Savage; taken aback by the technological wonders of the World State, he repeats Miranda's iconic words. However, as he sees the darker, more dehumanized side of this society, Miranda's words become a statement of mockery and contempt.

Perhaps the meaning of the novel's title, as well as John's use of these words, can be interpreted through a historical context. *Brave New World* was published in 1932. At this time in history, Western industry and consumerism had been steadily growing across the world. Additionally, there was discussion of how scientific reform and further technological advancement could help pull civilization into a better, perhaps even utopian, future.

Another key to understanding the novel is the views of the author regarding these times. The Surrey-born graduate of Oxford University had much to say regarding contemporary society, not all of which was positive. Indeed, he had already earned a reputation of being a highbrow "elitist" who looked down on contemporary norms (Murray 152). This attitude, however, did not stop him from expressing his views. From

his point of view, industry was already beginning to affect the human condition, making its workers the equivalent of machines. Consumerism, for instance, reduced the capacity for a person to think rationally. He was also pessimistic about the proposed utopian ideas, saying that they had the potential to enslave mankind as much as liberate it. This, however, depended on the attitudes of the human race; unless people changed the way that they thought and acted, it was more likely that future generations would lead a much darker existence. Perhaps this, then, is the meaning that Huxley was trying to convey by using Shakespeare's words in the book: The way that John uses Miranda's words may reflect the author's own ideas regarding the likelihood of mankind achieving a much less wholesome future.

The purpose of this thesis is to address four primary arguments regarding the novel and its portrayal of dehumanization. The first part of the thesis is an analysis of the text, demonstrating how dehumanization occurs in the World State. From this, it will be argued that Huxley meant for the novel to be a warning regarding the poor use of mankind's scientific/technological prowess. The second part involves an analysis of the novel's main characters, focusing on their development as the novel progresses. It will draw emphasis on how they demonstrate both positive and negative qualities of the human condition. With this in mind, it will be argued that Huxley intended to demonstrate humanity's ultimately imperfect nature. The third part involves a fuller look into how Huxley may have drawn upon the real world – notably the effects of consumerism and the concept of utopia – to shape his own dehumanized society. The

final part involves a look into how the theme of dehumanization, as portrayed in the novel, may have influenced the same theme in future science fiction literature.

CHAPTER II

DEHUMANIZATION IN THE WORLD STATE

Huxley describes the origins of this brave new world in chapter three of the novel. Approximately five centuries prior to the events of the novel, a controversial new movement arose, calling for global unity. Those who perpetuated the movement called for sweeping – and often morally ambiguous – reforms on a technological and social basis. Though their ideas were initially rejected, these reformists would soon have the opportunity to bring their proposed world to fruition. The civilizations of the globe found themselves at the mercy of the devastating Nine Years' War and the Economic Collapse. With civilization spiraling into collapse, more and more people came to accept the policies of the reformists, convinced that it was the only choice for survival. With their power and influence significantly increased, the reformists had finally seen their dreams realized with the formation of a global order calling itself the World State. (Huxley 45-53).

By the time the novel takes place, ultimate power rests with the World Controllers, a body of ten men who each hold jurisdiction over a select portion of the globe. In the novel, the only one of these men who plays a significant role – or even appears – is Mustapha Mond, the Controller of Western Europe. Together, they are responsible for the well-being of approximately two billion subjects worldwide.

Such well-being has been achieved through nothing less than man's technological and scientific prowess. Major advancements in science and medicine have done away with disease and lessened bodily aging. Mass production and distribution ensure plentiful nourishment, shelter, and transportation for all citizens. Advances in the workplace have made labor easier, lessening the average work day to six and a half hours. The rest of the day is dedicated to leisure and social interaction. Indeed, at first glance, it appears as though mankind has finally achieved the ever-elusive dream of a perfect society.

Most things, however, are rarely as idyllic as they appear; this can be doubly so with utopias. The nearly limitless comforts that the people enjoy come with a price: their basic humanity. From the outset, the World Controllers have taken great steps in suppressing the human element – and keeping their followers blissfully unaware of it.

A Definition of the Human Element

In order to understand dehumanization in the novel, perhaps it is necessary to examine Huxley's views on what qualifies as being human. In a 1930 essay entitled "To the Puritan All Things are Impure," the author describes his belief in the dual nature of humanity; "Man," he wrote, "is an animal that thinks" (159). Basically, humans share the same bodily functions as any other animal; they must multiply like any other animal, eat like any other animal, and evacuate like any other animal. Along with these natural functions, humans inherit "a set of [natural] instincts" such as the tendencies for avarice, violence, and sexual intercourse (Huxley "Personality" 259-273).

While retaining more primal, animalistic qualities, humans are blessed with cognitive skills which set them above all other creatures. With the power to think comes the capacity for creativity, speculation, and mysticism; it was the mind that allowed Michelangelo to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, for Chaucer to write the *Canterbury Tales*, for Plato to speculate on man's place in the universe, and for religions like Judaism and Christianity to develop over the centuries (Huxley "Puritan" 159).

Another faculty that Huxley attributed to the human mind is that of emotion and individuality. Although some might categorize the emotions as being akin to the instincts, Huxley has often grouped the ability to feel among humanity's mental capacities. In a 1927 essay entitled "A Note on Dogma," for example, the author groups the emotions alongside mental faculties such as reason, separate from the instincts (156).

As Huxley explains in "To the Puritan All Things are Impure", the ideal human state is one in which the animal and intellectual aspects are brought into harmony, where both sides are made to "co-operate in the building of a consummate manhood" (160). Such cooperation involves breaking down established walls – both social and personal – and accepting the bodily/primal aspects as part of our basic humanity. It does not, however, imply letting the animal side go unbridled. For example, Huxley points to having "a normal, healthy interest in" things such as sexual intercourse; once again, balance is key (156).

How, then, does the World State suppress this dual humanity? As indicated earlier, all the material advantages that the citizenry enjoys are the fruits of industrial

prowess. Coinciding with this, the World State is grounded firmly in the ideals of *consumerism*. For instance, people are expected to throw out their old clothes, rather than repair them, and buy new ones. After all, stitches do not keep factories running; "The more stitches, the less riches" (Huxley *BNW* 49).

The dehumanizing nature of this technocratic/consumerist society becomes more apparent in the context of what Huxley dubbed as "Fordism . . . the philosophy of industrialism" ("Puritan" 159). The following passage describes how this rising new philosophy would have profound effects on the human condition:

> Fordism demands that we should sacrifice the animal man (and along with the animal large portions of the thinking, spiritual man) not indeed to God, but to the Machine. There is no place in the factory, or in that larger factory which is the modern industrialized world, for animals on the one hand, or for artists, mystics, or even, finally, individuals on the other. Of all the ascetic religions Fordism is that which demands the cruelest mutilations of the human psyche . . . and offers the smallest spiritual returns. Rigorously practiced for a few generations, this dreadful religion of the machine will end by destroying the human race (159-160).

The World State has taken this "religion of the machine" all too literally. Henry Ford, one of the founding fathers of modern industry, has been practically deified. World Controllers are given the honorary title "Fordship". The calendar is dated as A. F., standing for "After Ford." In place of the crucifix lies the sign of the T – no doubt in

reference to his legendary Model-T automobile. This literal interpretation of Huxley's Fordism implies the supreme status of industry and consumerism in contemporary society. Jerome Meckier, for example, cites how people in the World State make the T-sign across their stomachs, as a person would cross themselves on the head and chest. To him, this "primacy of stomach over [the] head and heart implies a faith premised on consumer satisfaction rather than spiritual fulfillment" (432). In other words, the citizenry follows a religion that, like any effective consumer system, places consumption on the highest pedestal.

How, then, does suppression of the human element occur as a result of this advanced industrial/consumerist supremacy? Perhaps it would be helpful to examine the individual tenants of its unifying slogan, which Huxley introduces in the first chapter of the novel: "Community, Identity, Stability" (7).

The society of the World State places strong emphasis on the **community**; "every one belongs to every one else" (40). Individuals are regarded primarily as "cell[s] in the social body'" (90). The work that every individual does is as much, perhaps more so, for the greater whole as it is for the individual. Social interaction is also put above spending time alone. When it comes to leisure, most activities are group-oriented; this primarily comes in the form of mass meetings.

Identity stands for the individual finding their place in society; in the World State, such place is predetermined through a strict caste system. The citizenry is divided, before birth, into Alphas, Betas, Gammas, Deltas and Epsilons. Each caste is allowed

only specific vocations; the Alphas, for example, are the only ones able to take up executive and leadership positions. The lower the caste, the lower the tasks they receive. Epsilons, for instance, must handle the absolute lowest tasks, such as sewage.

Both community and identity are tied to the final and most vital tenant, **stability**. This entails the physical and psychological soundness of the individual, who must be fit to efficiently tend to the machinery that keeps society running. This, in turn, results in a stable community, which results in an overall stable civilization. Stability also entails maintenance of overall population levels. The population is maintained at approximately two billion people in order to better conserve space and resources. Finally, stability stands for consistency, the avoidance of *change* to this ideal society.

All three of these tenants share common ground as to what they stand against: **individuality**. In the mechanically orderly World State, this dreadful concept entails several things. First, it stands for a citizen to put his/her own interest above that of the community. Second, it stands for exclusiveness; to show feelings of love for one person, for example, is to defy the code of *everyone belonging to everyone else.* Finally, it stands for independent thought; such a faculty has the potential to breed ideas that could disrupt the status quo. In other words, independent thought could easily bring about *change*.

Another subversive force is **any strong emotion –** many of which are bred from individuality – other than relaxed happiness. For example, passion for a soul mate and overwhelming love for a child can be brought into conflict with communal loyalty. The hardships of family life potentially breed anxiety, which in turn may breed psychosis.

Individual interest may result in ambition, therefore disrupting the order of the caste system. In short, individuality and the unwholesome emotions that stem from it prevent the wheels of civilization from running efficiently.

The dehumanizing effects of technology and consumerism become apparent. Perhaps the suppression of individuality and emotion is meant, in part, to stand for how consumerist dogma calls for the "bypass [of] rationality" for the sake of producing passive consumers (Huxley "Revisited" 64). Perhaps the stability the World State promotes is reflective of the absolute, mechanical orderliness of the industrial system. Here, in this future, this order is maintained by suppressing the natural *instability* of man.

Methods of Dehumanization

Eugenics

To the World Controllers, one of the greater threats to global stability has always been mankind's natural faculty of reproduction. If left unchecked, this would undoubtedly lead to overpopulation, followed by the overconsumption of space and resources. Additionally, reproduction is strongly tied to some of the most potentially subversive ideas: parenthood, family, love, etc. Fortunately for the Controllers, science has come a long way to ensure that reproduction need not become such a burden. This is because <u>natural</u> reproduction is no longer conducted at all.

All procreation is done <u>artificially</u> through an extensive eugenics program. In accordance with the taboo status of the family, such procreation is no longer referred to

as “birth,” but as “decanting.” Readers are introduced to this norm in the book’s first chapter, which begins with a student tour through the thirty-four-story Central London Hatchery and Conditioning Centre. Here, the Director of Hatcheries and Conditioning for Central London guides them through the entire process. The first step takes place with incubated ova, harvested from excised ovaries, being immersed in fluid containing billions of sperm. When all the eggs are fertilized, they are incubated. Eventually, each egg is set into an artificial womb: a labeled bottle lined with pig’s peritoneum and various solutions. Finally, after each embryo becomes a fully-formed fetus, they enter the Decanting Room, where they are removed from their bottles and “born”. (1-18)

What is even more notable regarding the decanting procedure is that it is the point in which a person’s social destiny is predetermined. All eggs that are destined for lower-castes – Deltas, Gammas, and Epsilons – undergo Bokanovsky’s Process, a procedure which “consists of a series of arrests of development” (6). Such arrests occur through the eggs being bathed in alcohol and sustained x-ray bursts. The result of these arrests is that the eggs – those which survive, at least – form separately-developing buds. From one egg can come “anything from eight to ninety-six embryos,” completely identical to one another (7).

Upon developing into embryos, each bottled human is taken to the Social Predestination Room, where they each undergo the various processes that tailor them to their specific caste. Depending on how low the intended rank is, embryos will receive less oxygen, affecting their brains and intelligence levels. Naturally, it is the Epsilon, the

absolute lowest caste, which gets the brunt of this procedure. Mental stunting is for the sake of ensuring that lower castes have only the intelligence to perform their future duties. Next, they are inoculated for the sake of improving their ability to perform specific vocational functions. For example, future chemical workers are "trained in the toleration of lead, caustic soda, tar, [and] chlorine" by injecting small amounts of these very substances into their bottles (17).

Through this eugenics program, the World Controllers achieve stability in three ways. First, they are able to maintain global population at around two billion, allowing for the controlled use of resources and space. Second, they effectively sever any sort of line between children and parents, as parenthood is not involved. Third, the caste-predestination procedures help to ensure that future members of each caste stay within their social limits. For example, an Epsilon sewage worker is inoculated before birth for the sake of filling into only his or her specific job. Additionally, he lacks the intelligence – and, therefore, the ambition – to work in a more mentally-demanding position. What past hierarchy could have ever hoped to gain such control – such stability – over its subjects?

In terms of dehumanization, the most obvious argument against the eugenics program is that it goes against the natural human faculty of reproduction. In accordance to Fordism, it can be interpreted that this stands for suppression of the unstable, unorganized animal side of man. Additionally, caste-predestination serves as a means to suppress the capacity of each individual to forge their own destiny and identity.

Another argument of dehumanization may stem from the consumerist foundation of this future society. The decanting procedure, from fertilization to birth, is aptly described in the novel as the "principle of mass production at last applied to biology" (7). This point is struck home in a description of the bottling operation, the "harmonious bustle and ordered activity" of the Bottling Room, in which bottles are steadily scooted along a conveyor belt as workers mechanically line the insides with fresh sow's peritoneum (9).

Another example can be implied further on, when the D.H.C. asks Henry Foster, a Hatchery employee, about the highest record of an ovary for production of eggs. He responds by saying that, although levels of production are high, they are not as good as those for hatcheries in Singapore or Mombasa. He reassures his employer, though, that they will eventually top these marks. The way that Foster speaks—"the light of combat was in his eyes and the lift of his chin was challenging" (9)—can be interpreted as having a spirit of *industrial competition*. From these examples, consumerism can be seen as extending itself beyond the mere psychological and into the physical. With this in mind, Huxley's eugenics program is perhaps intended to be metaphorical of the growing effects of consumerism on society: defining every aspect of human identity.

Opiates of the Masses

Happiness and comfort are the highest achievements that one can reach; even workplace duties are never overly strenuous. However, in the end, such comfort is merely a means to an end: social control.

The most effective opiate for the masses is found in the wonder-drug *soma.* Developed many years before the novel's beginning, *soma* is a miracle drug that has "all the advantages of Christianity and alcohol; none of their defects" (54). In other words, it has the soothing effects of a church sermon, without the self-renunciation involved. It has the calming effects of alcohol, without any sort of stupor or hangover. In fact, the recommended amount of *soma* taken (a half-gram to two grams) has no negative side effects; it neither dulls one's ability to work, nor clouds the mind enough to forget important procedures (the taking of vitamins, contraceptives, etc.). Therefore, it can be taken anytime, anywhere. As for distribution amongst the populace, rations of the drug are given to workers as payment.

Another prominent form of pleasure is presented through sex. Citizens practice a great sexual freedom, with men and women copulating at will with one another. Of course, such freedom is completely divorced from the obligations of romance and marriage. People are expected to switch partners frequently; such behavior helps to avoid *exclusive attachment.* Of course, sex appeal is an important part of day-to-day life. Handsome men tend to get the most girls, and women who are especially leggy are dubbed as being "pneumatic". Suffice it to say, thorough precautions are taken to prevent pregnancy. Women, for example, are regularly supplied with contraceptives that they store in belts.

Art is yet another effective means of pleasure – so long as it adheres to certain guidelines. Artistic materials, such as books by the likes of men such as Shakespeare and

Tolstoy, have been abolished. The reason behind this is self-evident: they are, by nature, the products of excessive emotion – genuine love for a woman, misery brought on by hardship, anger at injustice, etc. – and individual effort. The messages conveyed by these stories are capable of evoking thought, and therefore change. For those who wish to maintain stability, change is always dangerous.

The only art that is enjoyed – if it can be called "art" at all – is generally frivolous in nature. The most interesting example is found in the "feely," a movie that stimulates all five senses. As incredible as such a film may sound, the subject matter of a feely is simple and often pornographic. One such feely, entitled *Three Weeks in a Helicopter*, is described in detail in chapter eleven: the beginning sequence involves a Beta-Plus woman copulating with a man on a bearskin rug. Every sensory detail—from the smell of musk to the feel of the woman's lips—is simulated. The simple plot involves the man becoming violently passionate toward the Beta-Plus. After several scenes of action-packed hijinx, he kidnaps and imprisons her for three weeks in a helicopter. Eventually, the woman is saved by three handsome Alpha males—who, nonetheless, have an equal share of the damsel (168-169).

How do such extensive pleasures fit into the framework of dehumanization? The answer is affirmed by Huxley himself. In his reflective novel *Brave New World Revisited*, the author writes of contemporary society's "almost infinite appetite for distractions," and how it is regularly provided through the products of mass communication: cinema, radio, the press, etc. (44). In this future, he notes, the World Controllers are acutely aware of

this appetite, and purposely use their plentiful entertainments to keep the people blissfully ignorant and docile in their servitude. Distraction has effectively "become, in Marx's phrase, "the opium of the people" and so a threat to freedom" (45).

An important thing to note is that Huxley seems very much to hold a mirror to man's natural desire for happiness. People desire relief from hardship and stress, from marital responsibility, from strenuous thought, etc. Whereas in novels such as Orwell's *1984,* in which those in power use fear and hatred to maintain power, the defining method of control in *Brave New World* is *manipulation of the pleasure principle.*

Such social control reflects what Huxley saw as the *irresponsibility* of too much pleasure. "There are certain occasions," as he writes in *Brave New World Revisited,* "when we *ought* to be tense, when an excess of tranquility (and especially of tranquility imposed from the outside, by a chemical) is entirely inappropriate" (93). Huxley seems to imply humanity's natural susceptibility to negative emotion and stress. By playing upon the people's desire for happiness, the Controllers bring this natural state out of balance. Once again, dehumanization occurs.

Another important staple of control is a strong emphasis on group activity. In this future, happiness also stands for adequate social interaction. The people have ready access to sports stadiums, nightclubs with saxophone-spewing bands, and bars serving ice cream laced with *soma.* Additionally, there are the pseudo-religious Solidarity Services, group rituals which celebrate the system's adamant communal spirit. As described in chapter five of the novel, twelve people drink a concoction of strawberry ice-cream soma

while listening to hymns in praise to the "Greater Being" and "Twelve-in-One" (81). As the music reaches a fevered pitch, so do the people stir in *soma*-induced ecstasy. Eventually, all twelve get up and perform the Orgy-Porgy, a furious dance in which participants stand in procession and beat the buttocks of those in front of them. They also chant the following song:

> *Orgy-porgy, Ford and fun,*
> *Kiss the girls and make them One.*
> *Boys at one with girls at peace;*
> *Orgy-porgy gives release* (84).

Both the dance and the chant seem to symbolize the strong communal and sexual aspects of the World State. It also underlines what Huxley may have meant to say regarding group emotion. As he writes in *Brave New World Revisited*, Huxley writes of the more dulling effects of group emotion:

> . . . a crowd is chaotic, has no purpose of its own and is capable of anything except intelligent action and realistic thinking. Assembled in a crowd, people lose their powers of reasoning and their capacity for moral choice . . . They become very excitable, they lose all sense of individual or collective responsibility, they are subject to sudden accesses of rage, enthusiasm and panic. In a word, a man in a crowd behaves as though he had swallowed a large dose of some powerful intoxicant (52-53)

In the solidarity services, the same thing seems to happen. Enhanced with the aid of the euphoric *soma*, the Solidarity Services seem to sap its participants of their rational

thought. In this case, the World Controllers use group emotion as yet another opiate of the masses.

Dehumanization and Conditioning

It would be folly to assume that everybody would accept a life of extensive leisure and test-tube babies automatically; some may see it as irresponsible and incredibly immoral. Unrest and even rebellion would surely result. How do the Controllers curtail this? The answer: psychological conditioning.

"Government," as Mustapha Mond tells his listeners in the chapter three, "[is] an affair of sitting, not hitting. You rule with the brains and the buttocks, never with the fists" (49). What he means by this is the overall ineffectiveness of violence for the sake of maintaining order. This was the greatest mistake that the first World Controllers made. Fortunately, scientific advancement ensured that there was a much slower – but surer – means by which to achieve stability. Such means come in the form of an extensive conditioning program.

Conditioning begins even before birth, with the aforementioned procedures which reduce mental capacity and prepare future workers in their specific vocations. All castes are raised against ambition, to "like their unescapable social destiny" (16). After being decanted, babies are thoroughly conditioned to accept both the norms of society and whatever caste they are part of. One startling example is described at the start of chapter two, when the D.H.C. takes his students through the Conditioning Rooms. Here, a group of infant Deltas are presented with bowls of roses and picture-books of animals. As they

gleefully play with the objects, the children are abruptly startled by the deafening sound of bells and sirens. While the din continues, the babies are electrocuted through the strip of floor they lie on. Afterwards, when presented with the books and flowers again, the children shrink from them in terror. This cruel procedure, meant to condition them against both nature and books, is repeated two-hundred times (20-22).

After infancy, the conditioning process continues through a process called hypnopaedia; as described in chapter three, this discovery was made around four hundred years prior to the novel's beginning. One evening, as he was sleeping, a Polish boy unconsciously listened to a lecture broadcast from his radio during the night. He woke up the next morning being able to recite the message exactly as it had been broadcast. With the rise of the World State, hypnopaedia is readily used as a means of moral education for children. These lessons, each repeated forty to fifty times each night for thirty months, range from lectures on caste-appreciation – " 'I'm really awfully glad I'm a Beta, because I don't work so hard [as a more intelligent Alpha]'" (28) – and the promotion of consumption – " 'The more stitches, the less riches . . . Ending is better than mending, ending is better than mending'" (48-50).

The ultimate intention of hypnopaedia is to mold a child's mind until it "'*is* these suggestions, and the sum of the suggestions *is* the child's mind'" (28-29). This conditioning makes itself apparent throughout adulthood, as well; almost everything that a person does, believes and even says is due largely to hypnopaedic conditioning. The higher in caste a person is, the less intense their conditioning. In fact, Alpha-conditioning is such that, as the D.H.C. puts it, "'they do not *have* to be infantile in their emotional

behavior'" (98). Perhaps this gives them a better ability to perform their tasks; Alphas are, after all, responsible for leadership and propaganda.

Conditioning takes place beyond hypnopaedia, as well. Starting at three years old, children undergo death conditioning, in which they spend "'two mornings a week in a Hospital for the Dying'" (Huxley 164). In this future, even death does not hold the same value as it used to. After all, what is the loss of one individual compared to the greater whole? What value can it hold to the individual if love and family are taboo? Instead, death is "'a matter of course [. . .]'" no different from "'any other physiological process'" (164). In this type of conditioning, every measure is taken to ensure that children are as disenfranchised from death as possible: not only do they have access to the finest toys, but they are even given chocolate éclairs on days when somebody dies. Such conditioning is invaluable in that the children will learn not to be saddened or shocked by death . . . perhaps even their own.

The basic purpose of conditioning is to instill desirable ideals and behaviors into the minds of the populace. However, the conditioning used in the World State not only instills the ideals promoted by Fordism, but is sometimes downright cruel in its methods. Finally, the World Controllers allow no room for thought outside of acceptable established lines. So, dehumanization occurs through inhibiting individual growth.

There is, however, an interesting thing to note about the conditioning of higher castes, notably the Alphas. As they are destined for vocations requiring peak mental capability, they receive notably less conditioning than lower castes. As such, they are

more capable of thinking and choosing for themselves. This may say a lot about who must take the blame for this dehumanized society in the first place. The Controllers use pleasures and conditioning to manipulate the populace, but many of the higher castes accept it. It is reasonable to assume that many choose to take part in this society, for the sake of unending pleasure. They choose to sacrifice freedom for happiness. Therefore, they share the blame for this dehumanized World State.

Last Vestiges of Humanity

Although the Controllers have taken thorough steps in suppressing the human element, there are still some areas of the world in which humanity is allowed to thrive. The most obvious example is found in the Savage Reservations, isolated areas in which the inhabitants lead a primitive lifestyle free from scientific and technological advantages practiced elsewhere. Here, people reproduce naturally, remain susceptible to illness and old age, and retain individual concepts such as romance and family. Ironically, citizens of the World State are allowed to visit these places, to get a first-hand view of the ugly life outside their borders. This is similar to how one would go to see a horror movie for cheap thrills.

Another example is that of the Islands. In the inevitable case when somebody becomes overly individualistic, they are permanently removed to "Sub-Centre[s]" – possibly meant to refer to prison colonies – on any number of reserved islands separated from the main hub of society (98). Most notable about these sub-centers is that exiles are allowed a great degree of personal freedom, namely intellectual.

Whenever they are marked for this sort of punishment, offenders are publicly denounced amongst their peers. For instance, in the case of an Alpha-Plus worker of the Hatchery and Conditioning Center, the Director may reveal this sentence to the offender's colleagues, denouncing him as "an enemy of Society, a subverter [. . .] of all Order and Stability, a conspirator against Civilization itself" (149). Such humiliation implies the possible meaning behind the Islands and the Reservations: they are meant, perhaps, to instill fear into the populace: the fear of illness, the fear of excessive thought, the fear of an end to distraction and comfort.

Implications

What was Huxley trying to say through his portrayal of dehumanization? Perhaps it is meant to be a warning concerning mankind's scientific and technological prowess. Throughout its history, humanity has become more and more advanced; this trend will only increase in the future. Unless humanity uses these advancements wisely, it could become something far less than human. *Brave New World* depicts a civilization that has failed to demonstrate such wisdom.

The World State represents a future in which the human element is all but lost. There are, however, those within this society which demonstrate some degree of individual and emotional freedom, the same subversive forces that those in power wish to suppress. The main characters of the novel – John the Savage, Bernard Marx, Lenina Crowne, and Helmholtz Watson – demonstrate being much more human than machine.

CHAPTER III

SEEDS OF DISSENT

The four main characters of the novel – Lenina Crowne, Bernard Marx, Helmholtz Watson, and John the Savage – are all similar in that they freely exhibit individuality and strong emotion, the very subversive forces that the World Controllers seek to suppress. They demonstrate individuality through independent thought, independent choice, and even artistic expression. They freely express such strong emotions as sorrow, anger, and passion. Indeed, these characters are much less like automatons and more like genuine human beings. At the same time, they also demonstrate the basic imperfection of humanity. Examples of this imperfection include neurosis and the inability to understand alternate points of view. The following section will track the development of each of the major characters, and to highlight both their positive and negative human aspects. The primary argument of this section is that Huxley, by juxtaposing the characters' actions with the dehumanized World State, meant to emphasize the ultimately flawed nature of humanity.

Setting the Stage: Character Introductions

Bernard Marx

Bernard Marx is an Alpha-Plus psychologist who, like Lenina, works at the London Hatchery and Conditioning Center. He participates in the hypnopaedic lessons that will mold the adult minds of the future. His individuality is demonstrated through an extensive distaste for many aspects of the status quo. For example, he has become disgusted over the current standards of courtship, where women are passed around from one man to another "'like so much meat'" (53). What upsets him even more is how much these women regard themselves as sex toys. Additionally, he wonders why people cannot take relationships slower and more permanently.

Such pessimism is reflected by the fact that he has grown, more and more, to value solitude and individual interest. He is dissatisfied with being so heavily conditioned, so constantly surrounded by the community, so heavily molded to social standards of behavior. He wishes he were not so chained by his conditioning, that he had freedom to achieve happiness in his *own* fashion. This attitude could explain why he refrains from taking *soma*; much to the bewilderment of his friends, he rarely takes the drug. Perhaps this is his way of wanting to find happiness in his own way, without having to rely on a ready-made substance. Through his more unorthodox – and potentially hazardous – points of view, Bernard shows individuality through independent thought.

Perhaps his desires, however, stem from how distanced he is from his community. Although Alpha-Pluses are noted for being taller and more handsome than members of

other castes, Bernard is relatively stunted and unattractive. As such, he does not attract much attention from the opposite sex. His feelings on the norms of the World State are juxtaposed with a thirst for belonging. For one thing, he is extremely envious of other men within his caste, some of whom have a beautiful woman around every corner. At the Solidarity Services he attends, such as the one described in chapter five, he dearly wishes to be integrated into the communal joy of those around him. For this reason, he must pretend that he, like the others, *does* feel his own annihilation, and the coming of the Greater Being. However, he miserably acknowledges that "he [hears] nothing and, for him, nobody [is] coming. Nobody—in spite of the music, in spite of the mounting excitement" (Huxley 84). So, each of these nights end with him feeling how he usually feels: like an outcast.

From these feelings, perhaps it could be argued that his cynicism toward the status quo is merely a rationalization of his status as an outcast. As the novel goes on, his desires for belonging will be put in conflict with his desires for breaking away.

Lenina Crowne

Lenina Crowne, a Beta nurse of the London Hatchery, indoctrinates future generations of workers to their specific vocations. She is a textbook example of the ideal woman within the World State: exceptionally attractive and healthily promiscuous. As such, she is extremely popular among her male colleagues. What denotes her budding individuality, however, is how <u>exclusive</u> she is beginning to be in her relationships. In other words, she is showing particular interest in *select* mates. For instance, as she reveals

in chapter three, she had been going out with Hatchery worker Henry Foster without seeing anyone else; this evokes the concern of her friend Fanny, who reminds her how this is frowned upon. After all, everyone belongs to everyone else. Lenina responds by saying that she has not "'been feeling very keen on promiscuity'" of late (43). After being encouraged by Fanny to make a better effort of it, she chooses to go out with Bernard Marx, on the grounds that she actually likes the way he looks. At this point, perhaps this preference can be interpreted as thinking outside of established norms of what is attractive. In other words, she may be showing fledgling signs of independent thought. This, coupled with her earlier preference for just one partner, denotes budding individuality.

Aside from her changing attitudes on courtship, however, Lenina is considerably conformist. She deeply enjoys group-orientated activity, and she relishes taking *soma.* When it comes to courtship, she acts as any virtuous girl in her age would: copulation on the first night of going out. She reveals this way of thinking when she and Bernard go out for the first time. As they interact, she is perplexed by how glum he feels whenever he is in a crowd and how easily he turns down *soma.* Confusion turns to shock as Bernard begins to express how he likes to think of himself as more of an individual being rather than "just a cell in the social body" (90). Lenina is taken back by how dangerous ideas like that are. In the end, her final verdict of this short, unattractive Alpha-Plus male is "odd, odd, odd" (87).

Although she shows individualism through being selective in courtship, she is unable – and unwilling – to understand views like Bernard's, subversive relics of an ancient and barbaric time. This failure of understanding will eventually put her at odds with her friends as the story continues.

Helmholtz Watson

Helmholtz Watson, and Alpha, is an Emotional Engineer, a writer of news articles and feelies. He has a reputation of being exceptionally able in his writing – "a little *too* able," as his superiors would say, due to how effective he is at capturing a reader's attention (67). He knows the importance of how words can be used "'like X-rays'" to pierce a reader/listener (70). He himself is aware of his skills, and considers sex, sports, and communal activity to be inferior compared to his writing. As he confesses to Bernard in chapter four, he has "a feeling that [he has] got something important to say and the power to say it," but is not sure what it is or how it can be used (69). He wants to make better use of his writing skill, to write "something much more important" (70) than what is presented by the average feely or news article.

The fact that Helmholtz is looking for something important to write about is extremely significant. Aside from demonstrating his potential power to *think*, one could interpret this as a sign of potential *artistic creativity* on par with that of writers of the past. One could say that he is meant to represent what Huxley viewed as the artist within this dehumanized world. Although Helmholtz does not know the full extent of this power now, it will come to him as the events of the novel take place.

John the Savage

The greatest difference between John and the other characters of the book is that he was raised in a society completely different from that of the World State. As is explained in chapter seven, he was born and reared in Malpais, a Savage Reservation in New Mexico. What is most fascinating is that he is, in fact, the son of tourists from London. Eighteen years prior to the novel's beginning, an Alpha named Thomas and his current Beta-Minus partner, Linda, went to visit Malpais. One day, Thomas was separated from Linda in a thunderstorm, and never found her. In the end, he gave up his fruitless search and returned to London, where he would eventually become the current Director of Hatcheries and Conditioning. Linda, meanwhile, was rescued by natives, and would soon be horrified to learn that she was unintentionally pregnant with Thomas' child. Knowing that she could not return for this travesty, she would remain in Malpais with John as her charge.

Linda's decision would be far from easy. Repulsed by ever-present bodily aging and disease, and plagued by strenuous work, she became an active part of an older and much harder way of life. Without ready access to *soma*, she must turn to the closest substitute: the hallucinogenic and foul-tasting *mescaline*. She also finds solace in many an unfaithful husband – often with a painful comeuppance from their jealous wives. She does, however, learn to find solace in raising John, whom she comes to genuinely love.

So, John is reared in a society in which hardship, sorrow and suffering are law. Indeed, he is no stranger to such forces; he is an outcast, due to his mother's promiscuity.

He is not allowed to partake in the village's religious ceremonies – which involves a young man walking in a circle and being whipped continually – even though he had been preparing himself for them throughout his adolescence. Additionally, he is fiercely jealous and possessive of his mother, growing more and more hateful of the men who come to see her.

Having a lesser place in the village, John finds solace in a complete collection of works by William Shakespeare. It is from these stories that he learns a great variety of traditional morals: justice, chastity, the belief in God, and the necessity of pain and suffering. Soon, the lessons he has learned will eventually be put into conflict with those of a world hundreds of miles away; a conflict which will be instigated by the arrival of Bernard and Lenina to Malpais.

The Wheels are put into Motion

Bernard and Lenina take vacation leave to visit the Savage Reservation of Malpais. There, they meet John, who relates his story. After hearing it, Bernard makes him the offer of a lifetime: for him and Linda to come with them to London. John, who had been raised on his mother's wondrous stories of the World State, wholeheartedly agrees. Although it seems odd that he would bring someone raised in a Savage Reservation to the sterility and order of civilization, Bernard has considerably selfish reasons for making this offer.

In chapter five, prior to leaving for Malpais, Bernard is notified by his employer, the Director of Hatcheries and Conditioning, that his individual and unorthodox

mannerisms have not gone unnoticed. Shortly before passing out his threat, the Director. admits, on the grounds that Bernard would not repeat it, that he had gone to a Savage Reservation with a Beta-Minus companion, whom he had lost in a thunderstorm. Afterwards, he threatens to have Bernard transferred to a Sub-Center in Iceland, should he not show signs of conformity. Initially unphased by what he sees as an empty threat, he eventually learns that he will indeed be transferred to Iceland upon returning from Malpais (95-104). Hearing John's tale, however, of how his mother had him, causes Bernard to immediately think of the Director's story, instantly identifying him as John's true father.

So, Bernard is resolved to bring John and Linda to London, with the intention of showing them as evidence of the Director's wrongdoing. He hopes to humiliate his employer, causing him to resign and preventing him carrying out his threat of transference to Iceland. Upon getting necessary clearance, he brings John and Linda to London, and eventually to the Hatchery and Conditioning Center. After revealing himself to the employees there, John steps forward to present himself, loudly proclaiming the Director to be his father. Stricken with this public humiliation, the man soon resigns from his position (139-152).

Afterwards, Linda takes no time in returning to the leisurely pleasures she had been separated from for so long. Her social life is non-existent, given the fact that no one would want to see her due to her old age and ugliness. She does not care, however, as she

begins to take *soma* in steadily larger doses. Wanting to stay in a perpetual *soma* holiday, she takes "as much as twenty grammes a day" (54).

As for John, he becomes a celebrity practically overnight; the people are fascinated by this stranger who had been raised according to old practices. He, however, soon begins to regret his choice of coming to London. At first taken aback by the technological wonders around him, he becomes repulsed by the apathy felt towards the individual. For example, he requests that his mother be denied the tremendous amounts of *soma* that she has been taking, as they will eventually kill her. However, he is countered by talk of infinite happiness, how she does not have a useful role in society, etc. In the end, much to John's distaste, Linda is allowed to remain "away, infinitely far away, on holiday" (155). From this, he comes to believe in the utter abhorrence of pursuing false happiness through means such as *soma*.

Soon, even the wondrous technology he was so fascinated by becomes something much uglier. This is exemplified by his visit to a small factory in which helicopter lighting sets are constructed. Here, John witnesses first-hand the unnatural, dehumanized uniformity of the World State: hundreds of lower-caste, Bokanovskified workers, all repulsive and identical to each other, performing the monotonous factory work that ensures social stability. John is struck by severe culture shock: he is unable to comprehend the shocking, mechanical uniformity of everything around him. Here, he recites the iconic words of Miranda: "'O brave new world that has such people in it'"

(160). He then breaks away from the scene and vomits. Soon enough, John withdraws from this brave new world which he has discovered.

Despite his changing outlook on the World State, he finds solace through his growing friendships with Helmholtz, Bernard, and Lenina. These three characters, as a result of these interactions, begin to show major signs of development.

Bernard has profited greatly from bringing John to London, netting him popularity that he has only dreamed of. Everybody shows him the utmost respect, and now he cannot keep the women away from him long enough to catch his breath. "Success," as Huxley writes, "[goes] fizzily to Bernard's head, and in the process completely [reconciles] him (as any good intoxicant should do) to a world which, up till [now], he had found very unsatisfactory" (157). Here, Bernard's behavior shows how his desire for belonging has curtailed his disapproval of society. Additionally, he demonstrates one of the oldest and most potentially subversive emotions: greed.

His popularity wanes, though, with John's continued withdrawal from society. People come to chastise him for bringing this individual to their midst. Soon enough, he has lost every bit of respect from the community, and no woman will look at him with a straight face. Glumly, the only solace that he can find is in John, his friend. However, deep down, he cannot help but feel resentment for him, for bringing about his unpopularity. So, he essentially becomes a "victim-friend," in which Bernard contemplates "a campaign of small revenges" that he is unable to wreak upon all the others in society who resent him (179).

Helmholtz, meanwhile, begins to grow as a potential artist, as he demonstrates in chapter twelve. He has drawn the attention of his superiors through a lecture to students, involving the use of rhyme in their poetry. As a technical example, he incorporates the following verse which deals with some rather controversial subject matter:

> *All silences rejoice,*
> *Weep (loudly or low),*
> *Speak—but with the voice*
> *Of whom, I do not know.*
> *Absence, say, of Susan's,*
> *Absence of Egeria's*
> *Arms and respective bosoms,*
> *Lips and, ah, posteriors,*
> *Slowly form a presence* (181)

The subject matter of this poem is, as Helmholtz mentions, loneliness. What makes the verse so controversial is the fact that it centers on strong, negative emotion. Why would he recite such verse? He reveals that it was merely to get a reaction from his pupils. He then mentions that he feels as though he is realizing the power that he felt was within him. What is that, exactly? Perhaps it is his potential for *artistic creativity*.

Out of their shared interest in verse, Helmholtz and John soon become acquaintances. Here, John recites passages from Shakespeare, the words of which Helmholtz listens to "with a growing excitement" (183). Soon enough, Helmholtz comes to regard the Bard as an emotional engineer that could put all others to shame. At the same time, however, he tends to laugh at the "smutty absurdity" of the subject matter,

such as the lack of promiscuity Juliet shows and the presence of parents (185). At the same time, however, he acknowledges that Shakespeare could only write such "'good, penetrating, X-rayish phrases'' only by being "'hurt and upset'" in the first place (185). Helmholtz's ideas and commentary reveal an important turning point: although he does not understand older ideologies and norms, he is beginning to come in his own as an *artist* with something to say. From a *human* standpoint, his understanding of how suffering and sorrow – banned emotions – can play into art is especially important. Finally, Helmholtz admits that, in order to craft such effective writing as Shakespeare did, one would need to find "'madness and violence'" within contemporary society (185). Regretfully, he does not know where such ideas can be found in a society which rigorously suppresses them.

John and Lenina, meanwhile, begin to develop their own relationship. John begins to show stronger feelings of attraction for the ravishing young Lenina, although he is considerably shy around her. Although she does not understand his timid behavior, she grows mutually attracted to this handsome young man from the West. She shows interest in him only, once again demonstrating her exclusive interest in just *one* partner. This mutual attraction leads to their first outing together in chapter eleven, in which Lenina takes the curious John to his first feely film, *Three Weeks in a Helicopter*. Here, John learns first-hand how abhorrent entertainment in the World State is. He is frightened by the realistic feeling of the woman's lips, of the bearskin rug which she and her lover lay on. Needless to say, he finds the storyline completely idiotic. Of course, his feelings are in stark contrast to what Lenina thinks, as she is enraptured by this artificial spectacle. As

they walk out of the theater, John tells her that she should not be seeing such filth; Lenina cannot help but wonder why he has to "go out of his way to spoil things" (170). As John calls for a taxi, Lenina is thinking that, at last, they will make love. However, after the cab arrives, John bids her good-night and leaves. After realizing that the night will not end the way she had hoped, Lenina tearfully returns home. As indicated by their opposing feelings—John's warnings against the feelies and Lenina's concern for his oddity—one could see this as a sort of foreshadowing regarding any sort of relationship that may blossom between them.

As John withdraws further from society, Lenina feels "a sense of dreadful emptiness, a breathless apprehension, a nausea" (174). When asked by others to go out for the night, Lenina flatly refuses them. Her feelings even affect her job; at one point, she forgets to imbibe an embryo under her care with a mandatory sleeping-sickness injection. When confronted by Fanny about her behavior, Lenina confesses that, although she has slept with dozens of other men, her desire for John simply will not be abated. Simply put, she is feeling heartache at John's absence; something which, needless to say, is all but lost in this brave new world.

John's desire for Lenina, however, continues to grow. He spends one night in his room, reading *Romeo and Juliet*. As he does, he compares Lenina with Romeo's counterpart. As indicated by this, as well as the concerns he expressed at the theater, John views Lenina as something pure and special in a world he finds increasingly repulsive. The feelings of these star-crossed lovers culminate in Lenina's entry into John's home.

There, John—after putting his feelings into poetic verse that she cannot begin to comprehend—confesses his love for her. Lenina, overjoyed, immediately begins to remove her clothes and tempt John into intercourse. With her response, everything breaks down: John, after failing to convince her to desist, now realizes that she is *not* the woman he thought she was, that she is just another loathsome facet of this horrid land. He furiously screams out his new-found derision, denouncing her as a whore and strumpet. And so, their relationship ends before it could even begin (184-198).

Here, both characters show serious flaws. Lenina is completely ignorant of John's ideals; in some cases, even revolted by them. For instance, she is "genuinely shocked" by the thought of people living together for the rest of their lives (191). At first, it seems as though she is adapting to the idea of love. However, the "love" she feels seems to be primarily sexual in nature; after all, the main reason she is so infatuated by John is his looks. She is unable to comprehend the ideals that John has introduced: marriage, virginity, etc. Her idea of love is the one that has been implanted into her by the World State. This demonstrates the initial – and human – difficulty of a person to see beyond what they have been taught all their lives.

John, meanwhile, demonstrates a similar dilemma. In his case, it could be interpreted as a sort of Puritan fervor against what he views as sexual unorthodoxy. Now that Lenina has acted out of touch with his beliefs, she has condemned herself in his eyes. In her essay "Huxley's Feelies: The Cinema of Sensation in *Brave New World,"* Laura Frost interprets his hostility "as a puritanical hysteria of which Huxley is as critical as he

is of thoughtless consumption of the feelies, soma, and orgy porgy" (449). Support for this sort of criticism can be found in a 1930 essay of Huxley's entitled "To the Puritan All Things are Impure." Here, Huxley writes of how contemporary society campaigns against anything regarding sexual unorthodoxy, such as defiance to matrimony and intercourse before marriage. The proponents of these ideas seek to rear the youth accordingly, so that they have instilled barriers that prevent them from accepting an alternate point of view. John, who was raised in a world more attuned to traditional values, demonstrates similar behavior. As the novel enters its final stages, this behavior will complicate things even further.

The last four chapters that Huxley writes see the catalysts for the fates of all four characters. Following his final, disastrous meeting with Lenina, John is shocked to learn that Linda has been admitted to a Hospital for the Dying. Here, he spends time with her during her last moments, still off on her perpetual *soma*-holiday, and not even aware that her son is there with her. Eventually, she succumbs to respiratory failure. As he grieves, a group of Delta workers gather for their *soma* rations. John, noting how happy they are to receive their hard-earned payment, takes action against their adherence to this damnable substance. He interrupts the payments, and begins to plead with them to see reason, to realize that they are just ignorant slaves. (198-212).

Bernard and Helmholtz, meanwhile, receive word of the disturbance their friend is causing, and rush to the Hospital. By the time they arrive, they are shocked to see John tossing boxes of *soma* out the window, right before the horrified Deltas. Violence soon

erupts as the workers angrily rush for John, who defiantly fights back. Bernard watches in horror, indecisive between his friend's safety and his own, while Helmholtz rushes to defend John. The fracas is soon dispersed by gas-masked policemen who subdue the crowd with vaporized *soma*, and afterwards take John and his two compatriots into custody (212-216).

Face to Face with Mustapha Mond

Eventually, the three men come face-to-face with World Controller Mond himself. Mond, ironically, is yet another character who demonstrates unorthodox individuality. In the book's third chapter, when readers are introduced to Mond, the D.H.C. recalls "strange rumors of old forbidden books hidden in a safe in the Controller's study" (35). This rumor is confirmed at the current point of the novel, chapter sixteen; the World Controller reveals that he has read from the likes of Shakespeare and even the Holy Bible. In fact, he even confesses to finding religion, as a subject, very interesting. While acknowledging that such texts are prohibited, he says, "as I make the laws here, I can also break them" (219).

The fact that he indulges in the very things that are denied to his followers is evidence that he may not fully believe in the codes and ideals of the World State. A second line of evidence can be seen from his views of change. He reveals that, despite how far humanity has come thanks to science and technology, further advancements – an invention which would further decrease hours of labor, etc. – have the potential for bringing about change, the most potent threat to stability. Lastly, Mond confesses that,

when he was younger, he was a physicist who had dabbled too much into his work. When his superiors learned of this, the young scientist expected to be exiled. Much to his surprise, they gave him a choice between exile and actually joining their ranks, due to his intelligence. In the end, Mond preferred a seat of power rather than freely practicing his science. (222-229).

These last two lines of evidence – the limitations that the World Controllers must place on science and technology and Mond's choice to gain his current position – strongly suggest what could be the true reasons for such extensive control over humanity: power. The founders of the World State may have had good intentions for the species at first, but they eventually deteriorated to personal greed.

The Journey Ends

After this lengthy discussion, Mond gives the trio their sentence: they are to be exiled to the Islands. Each person's reaction reflects their own individuality. Bernard reacts by begging for mercy, as though "'he was going to have his throat cut'" (226). What Bernard demonstrates is, as mentioned earlier, the purpose behind such Islands: to instill the fear of being separated from the carefree bliss presented to citizens. Additionally, he demonstrates his own choice in submersing himself in such irresponsible pleasures as soma and unrestrained intercourse.

Helmholtz, meanwhile, is all too eager to be sent away; in fact, he requests to be sent to an island with "a thoroughly bad climate,'" on the grounds that "'one would write better if the climate were bad'" (229). This is reflective of his earlier comments to John

about how effective negative emotion such as loneliness and anger are in crafting the sort of piercing art he wishes to emulate. By so casually accepting his punishment, he is gladly accepting his freedom for creativity and human emotion.

As for John, he rejects both the World State and Mond's punishment. Although the Islands offer intellectual freedom, he would rather find his own freedom. So, he announces to Bernard and Helmholtz that he will not be coming with them, that he is going to live alone and completely apart from the society he resents. He wanders off into the country outside of London, eventually establishing himself in an abandoned lighthouse near Surrey. Here, he lives the simple life of farming and Native American ritual. Additionally, he is plagued by memories of Lenina; rather than showing regret for leaving her, he feels temptation for her body, for the sweet smell of her perfume. He quells these feelings through frequent flagellation (241-248). Here, his puritan attitudes are steadily growing in intensity, once again reflecting the difficulty of seeing alternate ways of thinking.

Meanwhile, the civilization he sought to flee from is ever on his heels. His exploits are secretly filmed and presented as a popular documentary. One night, John is unhappy to see his home surrounded by a massive crowd of citizens wishing to see him in person. These spectators cheer him on, wanting to see him flagellate himself for their entertainment. Then, from amongst the band, comes a woman whose presence he abhors more than anything. This is none other than Lenina. She walks toward him with outstretched arms and teary eyes; although her words cannot be heard over the roar of the

crowd, it can be inferred that she is pleading with him to come back to her. John, on the other hand, has something much different in mind. To the crowd's exultation, he viciously attacks her with the whip. Despite her pleas for help, nobody within the intoxicated crowd comes to her aid. Instead, they imitate his behavior to the point where they perform a similar ritual: the orgy-porgy (248-258).

The scene then cuts to the noon of the next day, when John wakes up to a horrifying realization. Although the details presented are not entirely clear, it is known that he had been "[stupefied] by *soma,* and exhausted by a long-drawn frenzy of sensuality" (258). From this passage, it can be implied that the intoxication of the crowd had led him to participate in their reveries – and perhaps even succumb to his desires for Lenina, whose fate is never revealed.

Whatever happened, John is struck with guilt. His journey – and the novel – ends with his own suicide.

Implications

All of the aforementioned characters – John, Lenina, Bernard, Helmholtz, and Mond – demonstrate their humanity through individuality and emotion. In many ways, they represent some of the better aspects of human nature. At the same time, however, they are far from being perfect.

Helmholtz Watson demonstrates his capacity for artistic creativity, and develops an understanding as to how negative emotions such as sorrow and fear can be used in

artistic expression. By the end of the novel, he is willing to give up life in the World State for the sake of individual/artistic freedom. In regards to his more negative qualities, he is most definitely the least flawed of all the main characters. His only major flaw is his initial inability to comprehend the influences of artists such as Shakespeare. However, given his eagerness to be sent away to the Islands, he shows the human capacity to learn and adapt.

Bernard Marx, as shown at the beginning, demonstrates the capability for one to think outside the status quo. In other words, he demonstrates the power to choose. His greatest flaw is how irresponsibly he uses this power, given his eventual intoxication to fame and popularity. This seems to stem from his conflicting desire for belonging, one of the most common of human flaws. His irresponsible indulgences in pleasure, however, could perhaps demonstrate how he curtails individualism for the sake of falling in with the crowd. His choice for irresponsibility demonstrates how, in a way, human nature is responsible for the dehumanized World State in the first place.

Mustapha Mond's early interest in scientific pursuit demonstrates the human capacity for intelligence and advancement. Additionally, he freely exercises his capacity for choice. His acceptance of his current position as World Controller, however, demonstrates an all-too human desire for power. As is the case with Bernard Marx, Mond's flaws demonstrate how human nature is responsible for the World State.

Lenina Crowne shows her individuality through her exclusive attachment to just one partner. Eventually, these feelings turn into some semblance of genuine love and

desire. She is flawed, though, in how she is unable to comprehend alternate ways of thinking, particularly as they pertain to courtship. As a result, any sort of relationship she may have had with John is doomed to fail.

Finally, John the Savage represents many of the positive human aspects shown by other characters, notably the desire for individual and emotional freedom. He is also arguably the most flawed character of the story. He is unable to see past the lessons of his upbringing, causing him to view both Lenina and his own desires as abhorrent. One could argue that he is not even the consummate human being that Huxley believed in, one who brings both his animal and intellectual properties into harmony. His rejections ultimately lead to a self-destructive neurosis.

No character in *Brave New World* is a perfect, triumphant hero. They are, for lack of a better word, human. It can be strongly argued that this is very much what Huxley intended when writing the novel. By juxtaposing these human characters with the orderly, dehumanized World State, the author seems to highlight how ultimately imperfect – and, sometimes, downright ugly – human nature is.

This section marks the end of the textual analysis. At this point, it is necessary has come to move beyond the text of the novel and to explore how Huxley's dehumanized world may have been inspired by the world around him.

CHAPTER IV

INFLUENCES BEHIND THE BOOK

Through his dehumanized world, Huxley gives frightening insight into how humanity may become enslaved by the very fruits of its own intellect. The most important thing to note is that Huxley drew heavy inspiration from contemporary norms and ideas. Huxley was no doubt influenced by the industrial progress made in real life, given the negative stance that Ford has in the book. Additionally, the World State is also an answer to the concept of utopia. The purpose of this section is to explore just how these influences went to shape his dehumanized *Brave New World*.

Brave New World **as Utopian parody**

The term "Utopia" was first introduced in 1516 with the titular book by philosopher Thomas More. In it, the author painstakingly describes a fictional island in which the well-being of the commonwealth is the highest priority. All citizens partake in an equal share of labor, ensuring that resources are optimally processed and utilized. The needs of the people are curtailed through the equal distribution of nourishment and other necessities. As such, wealth and currency are non-existent. Even the gems and precious metals valued elsewhere do not hold the same luster to the Utopians; gold and silver, for instance, are used to make rings and chains that criminals are forced to wear, for the sake of marking their guilt (87).

Since its appearance in the book, the word "Utopia" has become a general term for a perfect society. In the realm of literature, especially science fiction, it has been explored by a variety of authors as a response to social norms. One such author – and proponent of the utopian ideals – was H. G. Wells, the mind behind such novels as *The Island of Dr. Moreau* and *The Invisible Man*. To him, the best path to the future could be achieved through the implementation of science and technology, in the form of "a disinterested scientific oligarchy" (Meckier 430). This sort of belief is reflected in stories such as his 1923 novel *Men Like Gods*.

Men Like Gods centers on a group of ordinary English citizens who, while driving down the road, are teleported accidentally to an extraordinary future Earth. They come across a technologically advanced, perfectly ordered society which they unanimously dub Utopia. Perhaps even more alluring are the human citizens of this world, who are all beautiful, healthy, and of sound intelligence. Fascinatingly, they have long since learned to communicate telepathically among themselves and even to animals.

In terms of leadership, the Utopians lack a central government, leaving decisions on certain matters to those who are most knowledgeable on them. The goings-on in Utopia are organized and synchronized by various intelligence groups which are attuned "to the general psychology of the race and to the interaction of one collective function upon another'" (63). The thing that separates them from an actual government, however, is that they do not set themselves above any other citizen.

The concepts of commerce and private property no longer have a place in the world; despite having their own appliances, dwellings and other necessities, there is no longer privatization of property or resources. Food and other resources are equally distributed depending on the needs of the populace. As in Thomas More's original tale, the Utopians place the needs of the commonwealth on the highest pedestal.

Science and technology have enabled the Utopians to live in the highest comfort. Almost all illness has been eradicated. Procreation is carefully regulated, in order to avoid overpopulation and the overconsumption of resources. Additionally, such selective breeding ensures that most individuals are physically and intellectually sound. The implementation of technology has allowed for increased leisure time; such free time is spent on scientific pursuit and on copulation between lovers.

If this sounds familiar to another novel, perhaps it is meant to be. According to Jerome Meckier, Huxley originally began writing *Brave New World* in May of 1932 as a parody of *Men Like Gods* (442). Indeed, the similarities between the two books are difficult to ignore.

The dehumanization presented in Huxley's novel certainly seems to parody Wells' utopia. Both societies, for example, are characterized by eugenics. In *Men Like Gods,* selective breeding is conducted to produce superior children; in *Brave New World,* the World State deliberately produces mentally deficient individuals for the sake of better social control. Both citizenries also enjoy increased leisure time. However, whereas the Utopians spend this time in intellectual pursuit, the citizens of the World State rely on the

most frivolous, intellectually uninspiring forms of entertainment. The Utopians, like the World State citizenry, copulate frequently. They, however, still maintain the concepts of family and romance, as well as the responsibilities associated with them. Both societies are characterized by the well-being of the commonwealth. Whereas in Utopia, where this is done for the genuine good of the race, the World Controllers use happiness merely as a tool for control.

Brave New World **and Actual Utopian Ideas**

It is very likely that Huxley drew not only upon not only the utopian fiction of Wells, but also proposed utopian ideas. Such ideas included the ideas of globalization, eugenics, and increased leisure.

Globalization

In his 1928 essay "The Fallacy of World Brotherhood," Huxley comments on the optimistic, internationalist idea that, with new advances in communication and transportation, world peace would become a reality. Cultures would blend, new ideas would bloom, and, most importantly, people of all creeds and nations would finally learn to understand each other. Huxley, however, offers a much more pessimistic outcome to globalization. The acquaintance of one nation with another has, more often than not, led to aggression between the two. Here, Huxley calls to mind the interactions between China and England: hundreds of years ago, both countries had known each other through limited contact, via periodic ventures by explorers and missionaries. As such, much of either culture was left unknown to the general public; such mystery resulted in respect for

the unknown cultures. This would change with the increase of trade and communication between the two empires, which would foster war, bigotry, and disorder (98-102).

Huxley argues that the humanitarian principle could be possible if people of one culture could truly understand the mindsets of other peoples. As it stands, however, too many are "brought up in one place, speaking one mother-tongue, and in the tradition of their parents' nation" (100). Even without such prejudices, people could still find fault in cultures whose ways they would find silly or just abhorrent. Lastly, those in control of the media propagate lies about other nations—both during and outside wartime—making the realization of cultural truth all the less likely.

One of the things Huxley seems to convey in *Brave New World* is a parody of the World Brotherhood. Indeed, globalization has resulted in a peaceful society, but the only prominent culture is that of the World State; nearly everybody follows the Western Fordian Consumerist dogma. All around the world, people engage in Community Singings and random intercourse. They are all born artificially, conditioned all the same, taught to disregard any emotion besides happiness. So, in this way, dehumanization plays into this "parody" aspect.

Eugenics

In his 1927 essay "A Note on Eugenics," Huxley relates the concerns that too many of lesser intelligence are being born at the expense of the more intelligent. Birth-rates vary, due to the higher class' embrace of increased birth-control. He then goes on to explain the theory of eugenics being key to reversing the problem by ensuring that more

people with higher intelligences are born. Briefly speculating on how this would be carried out, Huxley considers the possibility that people "will learn to breed babies in bottles" (283). The results, however, may not be as positive as reformists might have hoped. As with all societies, only a select few are necessary to rule or forward science and art; there must be subjects to fill the more menial tasks. If everybody is born capable of higher positions, however, this could very well result in, as Huxley would describe it, a time "of chronic civil war" (284):

> Strength of will, determination, obstinacy, and ambition are among the chief ingredients of the socially successful individual. The intellectually gifted are notorious for the ruthless way in which they cultivate their gifts [. . .] States function as smoothly as they do, because the greater part of the population is not very intelligent, dreads responsibility, and desires nothing better than to be told what to do . . . The socially efficient and the intellectually gifted are precisely those who are not content to be ruled but are ambitious either to rule or to live in an anti-social solitude. A state with a population consisting of nothing but these superior people could not hope to last for a year (Huxley 285).

This pessimism is reflected in *Brave New World*. In chapter sixteen, John asks Mond why, if it has the power to do so, the World State does not simply make everybody a superior Alpha Double Plus. "Because," Mond answers, "we have no wish to have our throats cut." (Huxley 222). In other words, stability and happiness are possible only if

specific castes are organized to do specific work; if Alphas or Epsilons did work that was against their conditioning, discontent and disorder would ensue. Mond then provides concrete proof of this theory. In A.F. 473, the World Controllers established an experimental colony on the island of Cyprus, consisting entirely of Alphas. Naturally, these twenty-two thousand people inherited the tasks left to lesser castes—farming, factory work, etc. The results were catastrophic: discontent among the populace led to factory strikes, disobedience, demand among the workers for higher positions, etc. Eventually, a devastating civil war erupted, resulting in the deaths of nearly eighty percent of the population. In the end, the World Controllers resumed rule of the island and set things back in order (222-223).

This example very much reflects Huxley's views on how human emotion and interest could complicate things; if everybody is superior, they will all be plagued by the same ambitions. The way that the World Controllers curtail this is through the dehumanizing factors of the caste system, conditioning, and extensive pleasure. As with the concept of World Brotherhood, dehumanization is used to parody the Eugenists' utopian theory, and to emphasize the likelihood of a much less optimistic future.

Comfort and Leisure

In his 1930 essay "Notes on Liberty and the Boundaries of the Promised Land," Huxley refers to the Utopian idea that, in the future, all citizens will make equal amounts of income, which will have much more value; "three hundred a year will buy five thousand pounds' worth of" leisure, necessity, and comfort (110). With the extensive aid

of advanced technology, citizens would "enjoy an almost indefinite leisure": cheap and reliable transportation, plentiful entertainment; synthetic food, etc. (110-111). Huxley, ever so pessimistic about such ideas, offers his own point of view on the subject. He brings up the Law of Diminishing Returns and how leisure is subject to follow the same rules. Excessive leisure may result in boredom and even willing abandonment "to a servitude of amusement and social duties, more pointless than work and often quite as arduous" (114). What Huxley may be trying to say here is that, should leisure become too excessive, people could basically become enslaved to it.

This idea seems to be parodied, once again, in Huxley's novel. The citizens of the World State indeed abandon themselves to frivolous forms of entertainment; this parody seems to be reinforced by the idea that those in power use leisure and happiness to maintain control.

Beyond Utopia

Brave New World was initially meant to parody *Men Like Gods*. Jerome Meckier makes reference to a 1962 lecture of Huxley's, in which he reflected on his experience in writing the novel:

> . . . when I addressed myself to the problem of creating a negative Nowhere, a Utopia in reverse, I found the subject so fascinatingly pregnant with so many kinds of literary and psychological possibilities that I quite forgot Men Like Gods and addressed myself in all seriousness

> to the task of writing a book that was later to be known as Brave New World" ("Utopias" 1) (444).

As such, the final product was, in part, a satirical reflection of contemporary society, especially in regards to industrialism and entertainment.

Industrialism/Consumerism

One of the most defining factors to this change was Huxley's opinions on modern industry. As early as the 1920s, Huxley was notably pessimistic in regards to industry and consumerism. Meckier, for example, cites a 1927 essay of Huxley's entitled "The Outlook for American Culture: Some Reflections in a Machine Age." He writes that Huxley saw the material benefits of technology and mass-production, but doubted if they promoted spiritual enrichment (454). Additionally, as Nicholas Murray writes, it was western society, notably America, which was promoting the spread of this industrialized state across the world. (203) To Huxley, one of the leading figures behind this spread was none other than industrialist Henry Ford, responsible for the legendary Model-T automobile .

What is ironic is that, initially, Huxley seemed to approve of Ford's various ideas. Huxley was introduced to these ideas when he first read *My Life and Work*, Ford's autobiography, in 1925. As he describes in the introduction of the book, Ford and co-writer Samuel Crowther describes his views on the duties of both the industrial system and the working individual. Those who perform a service – build furniture, make cars, etc. – must always place affordable service before making money. In fact, responsible

service will eventually lead to a good profit; it "cannot be the basis – it must be the result of service" (20). Manufacturers should make their products as least costly to buy as possible; that way, more can afford them and turn in a good profit. They should be cheap, however, in ways that need not sacrifice quality. One way of doing so is to simplify the product, remove unnecessary accessories and/or bulk from a car, a hat, etc., thus reducing sales costs. Manufacturers should also put more money and effort into workplace improvements; rather than simply hire more workers and clutter the work place, an industrialist should spend as much needed for machinery that can increase efficiency. This would result in increased manufacturing. Ford also opposed the notion that industry and mechanization would make automatons out of its workers. Contrariwise, such mechanization gave workers an opportunity to enjoy life more fully, as it made work easier. Additionally, the work done in a factory would free the mind for other thoughts.

Ironically, regarding his future hostility toward the industrial system, Huxley showed optimism when reading *My Life and Work.* To him, Ford had applied "common sense to the existing methods of industry and business" and improved the current system (Huxley "Malaya" 526). This optimism, however, would wane as he came to disapprove of industrialism in general. Meckier, for example, also writes that Huxley "accused Ford of turning workers into robots," contrary to what the industrialist professed (454).

Murray also makes reference to yet another essay, "Sight-Seeing in Alien Englands," written in 1931. In it, Huxley chronicles visits he made to two factories in the June of that year: one a chemical plant in Billingham, the other a magneto manufacturing

plant in Birmingham. These visits gave him a first-hand view of the overly-ordered, mechanized monotony of factory work: “the work performed by the overwhelming majority of my fellows seems to me so dreary, so utterly boring, that I feel ashamed, in their presence, for my freedom from it” (Murray 247). As Murray suggests, Huxley noted a sort of dehumanizing effect of such work.

According to Meckier, Huxley had realized that his predictions of American industry had already began to come true; “Ford’s factories were the prototype for” the industrial facilities in Britain (434). The most profound effect that these visits had, as Meckier writes, is that it inspired Huxley to heavily revise the original typescript of the novel, adding more references to Ford, therefore Americanizing it (434).

From his negative views on both the industrial system and of Ford, it is easy to see the influence behind Huxley’s concept of Fordism, his aforementioned religion of the machine. As mentioned before, it is a religion characterized by suppressing the individual for the sake of profit and power.

Contemporary Entertainment

To Huxley, the entertainment that was produced through modern industry was no better for spiritual enlightenment. In a 1923 essay entitled “Pleasures”, he differentiates between two methods of pleasure: traditional, “real” pleasure and contemporary, ready-made pleasure. The former involves individual effort on a cognitive and/or physical basis. Such pleasure could be achieved in a variety of ways: participation in sports, creative participation in the arts, reading thought-provoking literature, etc. To Huxley, this was

the most favorable form of pleasure, as it allowed people to exercise both their bodies and their minds. This sort of pleasure, however, was steadily and rapidly losing ground to an avalanche of contemporary drivel. In the essay, he lambasts the contemporary variant of pleasure, describing it as a collection of "ready-made distractions . . . which demand from pleasure-seekers no personal participation and no intellectual effort of any sort [. . .] No mental effort is demanded of them, no participation, they need only sit and keep their eyes open" (356).

Technology was the driving factor of this pleasure's rapid spread. Gains in mass-communication, such as radio and the printing press, allowed the profit-conscious press to spread idiotic tabloid drivel. Film technology allowed for the steady rise of Hollywood, which proved no better in fostering quality material.

Reading this, one's mind may instantly revert to the feelies in *Brave New World.* These films are meant to provide cheap, pornographic thrills. There is nothing in them to inspire strenuous intellectual effort, as would a novel; all the viewers need is to lie back and bask in full sensory artifice. In order to trace the influence behind these feelies, one need only look at the 1920s and the rise of the "talkies", or movies which incorporated sound. The future influence of these films is self-evident. At the time of their release, however, the talkies were met equally with approval and opposition.

For many critics, talking pictures were a perversion of the established medium. In the journal article "Huxley's Feelies: The Cinema of Sensation in *Brave New World*" Laura Frost writes that some believed "that each art should stay within and develop

according to its own limits;" in other words, a film's meaning and aesthetic significance was conveyed through silent imagery (451). One such man who was of this opinion was silent film legend Charlie Chaplin, who said that he would never play a speaking role. To him, the "cinematic experience of ephemeral, mute dreaming was shattered by the talkies, which forced a new kind of embodiment on the medium" (445). From Frost's point of view, Huxley also shared similar beliefs regarding talkies. She recalls his experience with watching *The Jazz Singer* in 1929, in which he '[condemned] the talkies as "the latest and most frightful creation-saving device for the production of standardized amusement'" (443).

Drawing upon this and the commentary in "Pleasures," Frost suggests that Huxley saw cinema as "symptomatic of cultural degeneration," with "the introduction of sound" as "a particularly alarming development because of its implications for bodily pleasure" (447). Despite his hostility toward the talkies, there is ample evidence that he was not hostile to *all* cinema. Murray, for instance, writes that the author had taken an early interest in silent films. Frost expands upon this idea, saying that he "often praised documentary film[s]" as a potential means to educate viewers on culture and nature (461).

Frost also mentions that, interestingly, Huxley would relocate to Hollywood in 1938, where he would write movie scripts based on classic novels. From this experience, Huxley eventually saw the artistic potential of even the talkies.

It can be argued, however, that he may have seen this potential even as he was writing *Brave New World*. During his discussion with Mond in chapter sixteen, John addresses his distaste for the feelies, and questions why more traditional forms of art are outlawed. Mond answers that, given the taboo status of the individual, the citizenry would be unable to comprehend the ideas presented. John then proposes that they be given "something new that's like *Othello,* and that they could understand" (219). Perhaps this can be seen as evidence that Huxley saw an early potential to things such as the real-life talking pictures. However, given how the film industry focused more on profit rather than artistic expression, this would not happen any time soon.

Implications

Huxley meant for *Brave New World* to be a critique and parody of the concept of utopia, as portrayed in literature and in theory. Additionally, he meant for it to be a criticism of contemporary society, notably the industrial/consumerist system. Both of these elements combine to give readers the equivalent of what the author saw as the most likely vision of the future. What Huxley may have been trying to say by conveying these satirical elements is that, as long as society continued on its current trends, it was more likely that the future would develop along lines similar to that of the novel. If people continued to delve so much into irresponsible leisure and frivolous entertainment, and if those in power still put wealth and influence before genuine advancement, then future generations would suffer greatly for it.

The influences behind dehumanization in *Brave New World* are extremely apparent. How influential, then, is this theme to future science fiction literature?

CHAPTER V

THE LEGACY OF *BRAVE NEW WORLD*

Brave New World is widely considered a "dystopia." From utopian literature stemmed a darker genre, one known as "dystopian" literature. The altered first syllable of the word "dystopia," as described in , stands for "'bad," "faulty," or "disordered"' (More 239). As this implies, stories in this vein depict much more negative – sometimes much darker – fictional societies. Like its more optimistic parent genre, dystopian literature has been thoroughly explored by science-fiction authors. One of the most common themes to dystopias is dehumanization. The primary argument of this final section is how dehumanization in *Brave New World* may have served as a blueprint for the theme in future sci-fi tales. Five texts will be used as examples: *1984* by George Orwell, *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury, "Sales Pitch" and by Philip K. Dick, and *The Forever War* by Joe Haldeman.

1984

Besides *Brave New World,* one of the most renowned dystopian tales is Orwell's notorious *1984.* Given the fact that it was published in 1948, almost two decades after *Brave New World,* it is easy to assume that Orwell may have been influenced by it. However, his world exhibits many features that set it apart from Huxley's.

Orwell's nightmare future takes place in London, now renamed as Airstrip One, just a small part of the hierarchical super-state of Oceania. This nation is ruled with an iron fist by the Party. The hierarchy is arranged from highest in power to lowest, beginning with the Inner Party, which are the minds responsible for rule; the Outer Party, which fills in higher positions of labor – the equivalent of the middle class – and the Proletariats, the ignorant and numerous masses. Above all of these tiers lies Big Brother, the omnipotent and ever-vigilant figurehead of the Party.

Here, the differences between the two novels become apparent. Whereas the World Controllers maintain control through manipulation of the pleasure principle, the Party rules primarily through fear. One of the most effective means of control is constant surveillance. Privacy is rapidly becoming a myth. Whether a person is on the streets or even their own homes, they are always being watched and listened to through innumerable pieces of surveillance equipment. Should a person commit even the slightest offense, they are swiftly arrested by the Thought Police. Through constant surveillance, dehumanization occurs once again through suppression of individual action. Additionally, it further plays upon the fears of the people in order to keep them in line.

There is another, slower process which the Party develops in order to reduce the capacity for thought. The English language is being completely rewritten into a new language called Newspeak. The basic purpose of this new language is to nullify the capability of a person to utter a word that entails "a thought diverging from the principles of" the Party (299). By doing so, this language helps to narrow the range of thought

which could be associated with a word or phrase. Take, for instance, the word "thought." It could denote either the past tense of the verb "think," or the noun entailing the process of thinking for oneself. In order to help do away with this latter and obviously subversive concept, the word "think" becomes both a verb and a noun. Additionally, the verb-form is made more regular; the past tense has changed from "thought" to "thinked." This reduces the tendency for one to utter speech with the process of individual thought in mind.

By the events of the novel, Newspeak is already being used in small amounts by the Inner and Outer Party. The continuous integration of the language, combined with the regular suppression of subversive ideas, ensure increased control over the mind.

In spite of the differences in control, there are several similarities between Orwell's future and Huxley's future. In Oceania, the populace has been reared to live in utter fear of Oceania's three mortal enemies: the rival super-states Eurasia and Eastasia and the Brotherhood, a terrorist organization under leadership of the heretical Goldstein. One of the more harmless ways to manipulate the people is through collective emotion. One example of this is a daily program called the Two Minutes Hate. At its beginning, everybody stops what they are doing and gathers around large television sets. They are shown imagery they fear the most: the march of enemy soldiers, Goldstein's face spouting out absurd heresies, etc. They promptly respond with the utmost hatred: jeering, spitting, even throwing objects at the screen. The effectiveness of the Two Minutes Hate is shown through the manipulation of group emotions:

> "Within thirty seconds any pretense was always unnecessary. A hideous ecstasy of fear and indictiveness, a desire to kill, to torture, to smash faces with a sledge hammer, seemed to flow through the whole group of people like an electric current, turning one even against one's will into a grimacing, screaming lunatic" (14).

Here, one may draw parallels between the Two Minutes Hate and the Orgy-Porgy. Although the subject matter differs greatly, Orwell definitely notes the potential of group emotion to tear down barriers of individual rationality. In both cases, dehumanization through individual suppression ensues. Perhaps Orwell was at least in agreement with Huxley as to the effectiveness of group manipulation to maintain control.

Another similarity between the novels can be seen in how the Party controls the proletariats. The proletariats are completely separated from the Inner and Outer Parties, and therefore not subjected to the extreme surveillance or hate-based rituals practiced elsewhere. This is all for the sake of practicality; should the proles become aware of their situation as slaves, they could easily rise up and disrupt the Party's hold of power. So, the best solution for controlling them is to keep them ignorant and docile. To this end, the Party simply allows them to live ordinary lives. They are too encumbered by family life and work in order to be bothered by what is going on outside their sphere of existence. In order to ensure their docility, the Party secretly circulates frivolous entertainment, such as pornography. In the event that a proletariat becomes too knowledgeable, he or she is swiftly dispatched by undercover agents of the Thought Police.

This means of control bears similarity to the way citizens are controlled in *Brave New World*: docility and ignorance through pleasure. Circulation of thoughtless entertainment amongst the proles is rather similar to the ways that the Controllers use the thoughtless feelies. It could be implied that Orwell's use of pleasure among the proletariats may have been at least partially inspired by Huxley's use of pleasure among all citizens; or, at the very least, Orwell may have agreed with Huxley of its potential for maintaining control.

Fahrenheit 451

Published in 1950, Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* was no doubt inspired by the previous dystopias before it. Given the subject matter, however, it may be easy to imply that it was inspired more by Huxley's novel rather than Orwell's.

As in *Brave New World,* the increased influence of industry and consumerism has contributed to a dehumanized state. Similar to the dystopias that came before it, the society of *Fahrenheit 451* has indicted knowledge, independent thought, and culture. One of the most inventive ways of doing so is to destroy one of the most important sources of these ideas: books. For this purpose, a special brigade is formed to gather and incinerate every last scrap of literature in the country.

In place of literature, the citizens take part in frequent get-togethers between friends. In these gatherings, they talk about a wide variety of subjects . . . mostly meaningless. Whenever they do talk about something that is presumably meaningful – a woman's soldier husband sent away to war, a disobedient child sent away to boarding

school, etc. – they talk with an utmost apathy, as though it is the least of their worries (93-99).

Then, of course, there are advancements in mass entertainment, most notably television. Those who can afford it, for example, may even have the walls of a room in their house torn out and replaced by huge TV screens, so that they are surrounded by continuous electronic thrills. Advancements in mass communication allow for people to interact with each other via their television screens. For example, people may take active roles in brief plays conducted over the screens (20). The destruction of literature, as well as advancement in consumerism and mass communication, has resulted in a society of extreme apathy: apathy towards family, apathy towards responsibility, etc.

In this future, the government maintains control through ignorant happiness. There is no hatred for intellectuals, as there are no longer any to hate. There is no philosophy or speculation for people to tangle their minds with. People care less and less about the well-being of a friend or family member, in exchange for their own pleasure. As one character puts it, what the government truly draws upon is the people's desires to be happy:

> "'Ask yourself, What do we want in this country, above all? People want to be happy, isn't that right? Haven't you heard it all your life? I want to be happy, people say. Well, aren't they? Don't we keep them moving, don't we give them fun? That's all we live for, isn't it? For pleasure, for

> titillation? And you must admit our culture provides plenty of these'" (Bradbury 59).

What he also implies is that this form of control is as much the fault of the subjects as it is the rulers. People desire happiness, and the government gives it to them. However, if this form of happiness were to be relinquished, how many would accept that? Given how easily people may seek an escape from familial and moral responsibility, perhaps not many would approve.

The similarities between *Fahrenheit 451* and *Brave New World* are very difficult to ignore. Both seem to emphasize the potential of happiness for the sake of power, and both foresee the threat of rabid consumerism on the human condition. It is likely that Bradbury saw the increasing influence of consumerism and mass entertainment in the *real world*; after all, the fifties did herald the rise of television. From this, he may have partially drawn upon *Brave New World,* seeing its implications on the same subjects as becoming more and more prophetic.

Sales Pitch

Philip K. Dick is a household name in science fiction literature. His many novels and short stories are widely considered to be some of the most influential ever written. As with *Brave New World*, Dick has drawn influence from the effects of industry and consumerism, as demonstrated in his short story "Sales Pitch"

This comical story depicts a future in which people can barely find relief from near-relentless advertising. Thousands of audio-visual advertisements pave the galactic super highways, pitching their products "into the eyes and ears, noses and throats, of a thousand weary commuters" (176). Potential customers are not even safe when they finally step out of their vehicles; advertising droids relentlessly pursue them straight to their doors.

One commuter, Ed Morris, has simply had enough of this overwhelming corporate manipulation. One day, he proposes to his consumerist wife a plan to leave for a system of planets completely separate from this endless commercialism. The proposal is interrupted, however, by the arrival of a robot called the *fasrad*, an acronym for "Fully Automated Self-Regulating Android (Domestic)" (181). It wastes no time in pitching itself as a valuable home assistant. Although Morris staunchly refuses to buy it, the robot simply refuses to leave, on the grounds that he will eventually change his mind. It even follows him to work as he flies toward his job on the moon of Ganymede. Eventually, Morris decides that he's had enough, and proceeds to the star system he has wanted to go to. Desperate to escape the robot's constant pitches, he puts too much strain into his rocket's engines, causing the vessel to disintegrate.

The most obvious similarity to *Brave New World* is the extreme emphasis on the consumer system. Similar to Huxley's tale, Dick's story emphasizes the efforts of the corporate world to convert the individual into the thoughtless consumer. The intensity and frequency of advertising can easily be interpreted as a parody of the increasing

influence of consumerism in the real world. He formed a world in which corporate greed forms a veritable dictatorship of commercialism. In this way, it could be considered a spiritual successor to *Brave New World*.

The Forever War

Written by author and Vietnam War veteran Joe Haldeman and published in 1974, *The Forever War* is, in the author's own words, "about war, about soldiers, and about the reasons we think we need them" (v). Along the way, it describes the possible dehumanizing effect of technology, much like Huxley's story.

The Forever War chronicles the exploits of William Mandella, a soldier of the United Nations Exploratory Force. Beginning in the year 1996, he is sent to fight humanity's first interstellar war. After travelling hundreds of light-years via starship, he witnesses first-hand the horrors of conflict. However, the earth he returns to becomes even more alien than the worlds he fights on. The advent of interstellar travel has the disadvantage of time dilation: while traveling faster than the speed of light, time effectively slows down for travelers. As a result, ten years go as fast as just a month. As Mandella sequentially returns to Earth, things change considerably. His loved ones have died or aged severely, and society has been drastically altered.

The novel is an interesting interpretation on the potential effects of travel through space and time. Additionally, Haldeman seems to include elements of dehumanization that are rather similar to what is seen in *Brave New World*. One of the first examples appears in William's first encounter with the enemy. Prior to being sent into battle, he

and his platoon are implanted with false imagery of the enemy. Their commanding officer recites a special code, causing them to remember violent and completely absurd imagery of savage aliens mercilessly killing, raping, and consuming human colonists. Although he is perfectly aware of the images' absurdity, Mandella is subconsciously filled with bloodthirsty rage towards the enemy. (72-73) This example of hypnotic manipulation recalls the hypnopaedia used to enslave denizens of the World State of Brave New World.

As human science becomes much more advanced, soldiers going into battle are expected to take a drug which "makes [them] feel optimistic without interfering with [their] sense of judgment (Haldeman 170). One could be instantly reminded of *soma* and its intoxicating effects. Later on, children are regularly bred in test-tubes, much like the children of the World State. By the time the war is finally over in the year 3138 A. D., the majority of the population are clones who behave based on logic rather than emotion (270-274).

Based on these examples, it is possible to assume that Haldeman may have directly borrowed elements that had been established by *Brave New World.* The strongest point of evidence in this regard may, perhaps, be seen by around three-fourths of a way into the novel. Mandella, contemplating how far technology has come in lessening the human experience, thinks to himself, "O brave new world" (198).

Whereas writers such as Bradbury may have been directly imitating the novel through his depiction of totalitarianism, Haldeman may have borrowed established

elements of dehumanization from *Brave New World* in order to populate his own unique vision of the difficulties a soldier of the future may face. At the same time, he emulates similar ideas of how science/technology have the potential to dehumanize.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, a question should be raised: how close is the modern world to the one which Huxley envisioned?

Compared to the early 1930s, industrialism has become more advanced, with machines taking more of a place of human labor. In symbiosis with industry, the consumerist machine has certainly become more advanced. One example can be seen in commercials that draw appeal solely through appealing imagery (sex appeal, etc.) or deadpan humor. The advent of the internet has provided new avenues for advertisement, even if it is as simple as one of those irritating ads appearing before playing a favorite YouTube video. Needless to say, children are still a primary target for the brunt of consumerist vitality; given how children as young as six can surf the net, they are even riper for commercial influence.

As for entertainment, there are some areas in which it is as frivolous as ever. Take, for instance, cinema. Studios produce senseless comedies based on flatulent jokes, summer blockbusters fueled by incredible special effects, etc. Additionally, people can watch such as easily at home as at the theater, with the advent of DVD players and Netflix. Then, of course, there are video games, portable music devices, iPads, etc. to

ensure that boredom is purged. With such advances, it is easy to see the growing potential of entertainment to breed passivity.

From a scientific standpoint, there have been major advances in genetic engineering. Cloning is now an established reality, and scientists have been rampantly studying gene therapy as a means of improving mankind. These, perhaps, further increase the potential for manipulation through eugenics.

Thankfully, civilization is not anywhere near the sort of dehumanized future imagined by Huxley. Maybe this reflects the true importance of novels such as *Brave New World*: it is an ever-relevant warnings of how humanity's technological and scientific prowess may one day be its undoing. There is no doubt that those of sound knowledge have taken heed of these warnings, and will strive to be ethical in the future advancement of our species.

While it is possible that humanity will heed the wisdom laid down by authors such as Huxley, it is equally possible that it will not. The capacity for apathy, avarice, and fear are inseparable from the human condition as understanding, creativity, and wisdom. So long as human beings still walk the earth, this will always be the case. The greatest factor in determining the future is humanity's ability to choose its destiny.

After all, choice is what being human is all about.

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