The Brave New World of the Post-society: The Mass-production of the Individual Consumer and the Emergence of Template Cities

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ABSTRACT *Aldous Huxley's novel* Brave New World *(Longman, Harlow, 1932/1991) portrayed a post-human world, a world where human beings were mass-produced like clones and kept in complete happiness through an endless variation of seductions and pleasures. This essay explores parallels in contemporary urban society by analysing why and how we consume—goods, places, and ultimately ourselves—in our daily shopping spaces. In today's post-society, new fashions, representations and make-overs are introduced onto the global market at breakneck speed. Globalization implies an inexhaustible resource for change in local consumption spaces, creating continuous opportunities to transform our personal identities as well as our urban environments. In our world of globalization, hyper-capitalism, and mass-individualism, there seems to be no escape from having and parading a personal identity, no escape from the commercial template for seductive urban shopping spaces. Are we in control of our own destinies? Who are we fooling when we hide in the consumerist maze of fiction and fantasy? What brave new world are we living in?*

Introduction

Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932/1991) portrays a post-human world, a world where human beings are mass-produced like clones and kept in complete happiness through an endless variation of seductions and pleasures. If these do not suffice, there is always the anti-depressive drug *soma*, plentiful and freely available. The remaining human beings who are not produced in factories are called "savages" and live in a barbed wire-enclosed reservation; they reflect the society of the early twentieth century

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when the novel was written. In the novel, it is the savage, John, who protests against the (in his eyes) dystopian, artificially fabricated state of happiness, the relief from pain, and the achievement of sexual, individual and material fulfilment. If this is civilization, John argues, he claims the right to be unhappy, to have real feelings and real freedom.

In writing *Brave New World*, Huxley was inspired by the changes of his time: the industrial revolution which brought mass-production, the Russian revolution which brought communism, and World War I which disclosed the destructive power of extreme nationalism. Not surprisingly, the dystopian future was an apocalyptic forecast and mockery of these modern totalitarian regimes—of communism (everything and everyone belongs to each other), fascism (the mass-production of "pure" humans within a strict hierarchical order) and modern capitalism (i.e. Fordist mass-production).

In Huxley's novel, the entrepreneur Henry Ford is the founding father of the brave new world. The new society is based on the economization of human life—the principles of assembly line mass-production introduced by Ford at the beginning of the last century to produce his Model T cars. Ford is worshipped as the new God in Huxley's novel. The old God is declared history (and "history is bunk" as Ford would say). When excited, members of the new mass-produced civilization appealed to Ford rather than God: "Oh my Ford!" they would exclaim. The symbol "T" had replaced the Christian cross. The starting date for the calendar is the year Henry Ford introduced his model T: 1908. Dates are prefaced by *A.F.* (After Ford).

Huxley's *Brave New World* has inspired dystopian narratives of the mass-production of human quasi-biological beings, genetic engineering and human cloning, the ethics of which are regaining importance in our present society. As Francis Fukuyama has pointed out in his new book *Posthuman Future* (2002), the topic of genetic engineering is still overshadowed by the cruelty of fascist regimes' eugenic research. But the fear is losing ground and is being replaced by a new optimism. Here Huxley's novel has inspired the works of the French writer Michel Houellebecq. Especially the novels *Atomised* (1998/2000) and *The Possibility of an Island* (2005) refer to a dystopian—yet at the same time utopian—new world where human beings are produced quite literally (as in Huxley's novel) in a factory.

This essay sheds a different light on Huxley's novel. How does Huxley's brave new world, a master chronicle of the early twentieth century, speak to our world of today—the world of globalization, hyper-capitalism, mass-individualism, the parading of individual identity? What brave new world are we living in? How is the neo-liberal space of flows, the space oddity of the network society that Manuel Castells predicted in the 1980s, affecting our identities? How has the circulation of money, goods and information influenced identities in "glocalized" places? Is neo-liberal globalization the ultimate post-ideology as Fukuyama predicted? Have we really left the arena of the ideologies and the grand narratives (Lyotard, 1979/1984) of the twentieth century? Or is liberation from a grand narrative itself a grand narrative? Is it the case, as Žižek (1998) has argued, that we are living in a post-narrative world, the world of post-ideology and post-politics? Or has this post-society itself become the dominant paradigm, a grand narrative totalitarianizing our daily lives and practices? What are (thinking in Foucauldian terms) the power scripts and subjectifying normative disciplinizations of today? Put differently, what echoes of Huxley's totalitarian brave new world do we see in today's post-society?

We would argue then that it does not take much imagination to connect Huxley's tale of human beings produced by a grand machinery to the hyper-economic world of today.

The grand machinery, however, should not only be seen in a morphological sense. It needs to be understood more broadly, as imagination, as a disciplining idea. Seen in this way, it can be argued that today's grand machinery is the dominant and almost undisputed ideology of mass-consumption. What has happened over the past century—as has been described by numerous scholars (for instance, Urry, 1990; Glennie & Thrift, 1993; Miles, 1998)—is a revolution in our socio-economic landscape. We have in fact turned the production system upside down. We have moved from an economic system of mass-production, often described as modernism and Fordism, where products were standardized and made on an assembly line, to an economic society of mass-consumption, often described as flexible specialization, post-Fordism or post-modernism, in which the consumer is believed to set the standard.

Accompanying the transition from Fordism to post-Fordism has been the break-up of society as one and indivisible. A significant feature of the new system is the emphasis on individualism. The dogma of free individual choice on which the system is based requires that human beings are individuals. Everybody is required to be somebody. There seems to be no escape from having an identity in the brave new world of mass-individualization. The question that remains is whether we as mass-individuals living in various locales of the globalizing world have real power. Are we really in charge and in control? Do producers really depend on our desires and needs? Is not the whole idea of managerialism, marketing and serviceability, so significant in "western" capitalism, merely producing a myth, a fantasy of control? Is this not precisely what producers of variation want us to believe? Do we really own ourselves? Do we really have freedom of choice? Do we really have free will? Or have we again become slaves, this time of an intelligent marketing-controller?

To begin to shed light on these questions, we focus first on our daily consumption practices in our shopping spaces. We try to find out who we are and who we want to be by analysing why and how we consume. We explain how the production of the "I" is a continuous process of construction and reconstruction which reflects an endless dynamic interplay between local and global dimensions. Finally we return to the larger questions that tickle our imagination, trying to trace the ghosts evoked by Aldous Huxley's grand dystopian narrative that still haunt us today.

I Consume Therefore I am

Human beings buy objects not only to consume them but also to establish and reproduce status and identity. People shop for "identities" in a variety of urban contexts, thereby collecting and consuming many dimensions of the "I". Increasingly, the "I" itself has become a product to buy. Consumer goods and shopping environments are consumed to create new identities as well as to select those already on the market. In doing so, we as consumers have adopted a mobile lifestyle to find commodities, people and places to materialize a preferred status and lifestyle (see Spierings, 2006). Consumer goods and shopping environments we (do not) want construct our identity. We need something, someone and somewhere to belong to, to demarcate ourselves from, to define ourselves.

Guy Debord observed in *The Society of the Spectacle* ((1969/1994) that what is consumed in contemporary "western" society is actually images of objects, through which consumers imagine themselves to be subjects. But the identity of the image of the object can never be fully attained. Buying and consuming an object is only a temporary

and discontinuous attempt to establish the identity provoked by the image of the object. The desire is never fulfilled, for it is the constant production of new desires that defines and drives the economy. Hence the desire to consume, to occupy the image of newly produced objects, is endless; there remains a constant lack in the subject that makes the subject differ from the ideal image of the object. The desire to be someone, to be wholesome, to fill the lack (Lacan, 1966/1989) is therefore perpetual. What do we do in an attempt to fill this personal lack? And where do we "shop" to find ourselves?

Consuming Commodities

As consumers we stroll around in consumption spaces to gaze at, contemplate and perhaps also buy goods to define ourselves, to distinguish ourselves from others, and to make ourselves recognizable to members of the group we aspire to belong to. Strolling and gazing, however, need not result in acquisition. Deliberately not entering shops and not buying certain goods also gives us an identity. The act of shopping as such is a stage act, a performance to show oneself to others. As Shields puts it, "everyday shopping activities are foregrounded as if on a theatre stage, to be observed by passers-by who may vicariously participate in the bustle and lively activity of consumption without necessarily spending money" (1992, p. 6). On shopping streets and within shops we have the opportunity to look, dream and spend time without an obligation to spend money. Yet freedom in this consumer paradise is largely an artefact; seduction is the key to understanding this production of artificial freedom. The opportunity to look is meant to seduce to buy, and it is through seduction that the modern human being is turned into an artefact of the master producer: a consumer of endless seduction (Bauman, 1993).

The layout of consumption spaces is designed to keep visitors contemplating commodities for as long as possible (Gottdiener, 1986). As Goss puts it bluntly, ". . . the goal is to trap consumers in the world of consumption" (1993, p. 32). According to Lash and Urry (1994), consumers have learned to approach consumption spaces as worlds of seduction and illusion in a "cool" manner. They are "just looking". Obviously, attempting to keep people strolling and gazing is not done without reason. Crawford argues that "by extending the period of 'just looking', the imaginative prelude to buying, the mall encourages 'cognitive acquisition' as shoppers mentally acquire commodities by familiarizing themselves with a commodity's actual and imagined qualities. Mentally 'trying' on products teaches and disciplines consumers not only what they want and what they can buy, but also, more importantly, what they don't yet have, and what they therefore need to learn to desire" (Crawford, 1992, p. 13).

To put it in another way, people are invited to step into the ready made dream world of the shopping zone, forget worrisome reality and spend timeless time in the space-less space of the consumer paradise. It is a fantasy world made imaginatively real. In this zone, everything is aimed at consumers who are expected to enter shops and perform "just looking" behaviour, along with trying (on) commodities and spending money on their purchase (Gregson *et al.*, 2002). Looking around and trying commodities shows us new possible identities, a better and happier "I".

Through the consumption of commodities, we as human beings can realize who we are as well as imagine what we could become. "Identity is momentarily stabilized even while the image of a future identity begins to take shape, but the endless variation of objects means that satisfaction always remains just out of reach" (Crawford, 1992, p. 13).

In this masterminded machinery of the shopping paradise, the urge to imagine and create a new and better "I" is continuously produced. The local offer of commodities in consumption spaces constantly changes and reveals the latest trends in global fashion, and hence keeps us strolling and gazing. The result is that shoppers can never be satisfied in their desire for an up-to-date identity. As a consequence, ". . . goods and practices become things to be played with for a while, then ditched as we move to something else" (Corrigan, 1997, p. 179). The "I" is never found and is always "not yet"; the desire of becoming is endless.

Consuming Others and Producing Ourselves

While moving among the shopping crowd, consumers observe others and sense the urban atmosphere. In this context, Lynch argues that "moving elements in a city, and in particular the people and their activities, are as important [for the image of the city] as the stationary physical parts. We are not simply observers of this spectacle, but are ourselves a part of it, on the stage with the other participants. Most often, our perception of the city is not sustained, but rather partial, fragmentary, mixed with other concerns. Nearly every sense is in operation, and the image is the composite of them all. We are not simply observers of this spectacle, but are ourselves a part of it, on the stage with the other participants" (1960, p. 2) By consuming a city's "moving elements", shoppers are looking for places to feel "at home" in, to belong to. Innovative places are especially desired as they are expected to showcase trendy people and practices. Consumers are looking for social groups to connect with and disconnect from at the same time. To become an "I" that does not float in a vacuum, shoppers need other I's in a certain spatial context to compare to, to be the same with, to be slightly different from (see van Houtum & van Naerssen, 2002).

By taking part in the hustle and bustle of shopping, people today co-perform the "spectacle" they observe (see Debord, 1969/1994)—a spectacle, ". . . marked by the exchange of looks and gazes, complements the theatrical display of goods and commodities" (Shields, 1992, p. 7). Shoppers not only want to observe other shoppers; they want to be observed (Urry, 1990; Oosterman, 1993)—the branded bags they carry and the branded clothes they wear. As consumers, we also produce and sell ourselves as commodities (Clarke, 2003). More specifically, we sell our identity as a commodity which can be bought by other shoppers to acquire the same status and to become members of the same group.

Global fashion trends affect us when we compare ourselves with and sell ourselves to other consumers in cities and consumption spaces. New street cultures from anywhere are marketed and copied everywhere, generating generic scripts for mass-consumption and creating what we would like to refer to as "template cities". Global fashions spread easily across the globe and strongly impact on who we are and want to be as consumers. The result of this system of endless competition between fashions and products and the continuous production of desire is that we all become the same—for instance, we all dress according to the latest global fashion trends—while believing in our difference. The sameness is comforting, as it produces order, identity and continuity. It is also discomforting, as it threatens the uniqueness and wholeness of the "I". Hence it leads to new desires, to new needs to be different from other I's and to be "one". Again, as with shopping for commodities, the result is an endless cycle of revolving sameness and difference. We are products that are not finished and never will be.

What is more, increasingly via spectacle-media such as You Tube, Hyves and Google Video, we have become marketers of our own product—our face and image—to produce

an identity of the self for ourselves, to re-centre and de-fragment the subjects we have become in the post-society. It is a way to end what Jameson (1983) and later Deleuze and Guattari (1983) have described as cultural schizophrenia, which in their view is an epiphenomenon of the fragmented social subject of the post-Fordist era. For Jameson, the schizophrenic lacks personal identity and is unable to differentiate between self and world and to experience continuity over time. It is a state of egolessness (Peretti, 1996). In "Postmodernism and Consumer Society", Jameson writes that the schizophrenic "is condemned to live in a perpetual present with which the various moments of his or her past have little connection and for which there is no conceivable future on the horizon. In other words, schizophrenic experience is an experience of isolated, disconnected, discontinuous material signifiers that fail to link up into a coherent sequence. The schizophrenic thus does not know personal identity in our sense, since our feeling of identity depends on our sense of the persistence of the 'I' and the 'me' over time" (1983, p. 119).

In our desire to have an unfragmented identity and not to be disconnected and isolated—to be someone—the private world of the subject is opened up to be communicated to the public. In wanting-to-be-someone, as *wannabees*, we have fallen in love with the camera, the eye of the consuming other. Illustratively, it is telling that George Orwell's dystopian novel *Nineteen Eighty-four* (1949/1984), which portrays a nightmare world governed by the all-controlling panopticon eye of Big Brother, has in our commercial age become amusement, a television show watched by millions. Participants in the television show *Big Brother* volunteer to be locked up and watched by camera 24 hours a day; through the lens, we the public, the other, is watching. We have become our own Big Brother and we seem to love it. It is as if our identities exist only if they can be communicated publicly, if they can be published. Our names, our faces, our reputations, our images—all have become products to be consumed by others. Our identity has become *prêt-a-porter*.

But we do not only commodify our faces and images in a metaphorical sense. We increasingly reshape our faces and bodies as well, as can be seen in the growth of the plastic surgery industry and "make-over" reality TV. We shop for piercings, tattoos, noses, boobs, hair, blood, organs, chins and waists. If we do not buy new body-parts, we go to the gym to live up to the image of the "trendy body". Never satisfied with the present, we endlessly seek the illusory ideal. Body shopping has become an accepted way to commodify one's image and corpus; we have become like the marketing on the products we buy: "New and Improved!" The production and consumption of our images and bodies have further blurred the distinction between production and consumption. We have become both master and slave of our own commodification.

Consuming Places

While strolling around cities, the built shopping environment is visually consumed as a commodity (Urry, 1995; Crewe, 2003). Physical features—such as shop exteriors and interiors, street furniture and billboards—are consumed alongside fellow consumers and goods in shopping windows (Schroeder, 2002). And the displayed goods are not alone in revealing the latest global trends. New retail development projects embody the latest trends in "urban fashion". The current vision of the functional and morphological structure as well as the architectural style of shopping complexes is to provide consumers with entertainment and fantasy (Hannigan, 1998). It is all about making the search for a new identity as much "fun" as possible because "fun" sells. In fact, cities are also "shopping"

for identities. By comparing themselves with and copying physical and functional elements from other places, cities aim to offer up-to-date shopping façades and facilities for visitors to consume (Spierings, 2006). For cities, the search for an urban identity within globalization is a continuous exploration, much like the search for personal identity among individuals.

In searching for new comparisons and pleasures, we as consumers do not stay put—mobility has become central in our endless endeavour to fill the lack, to be whole and unique. Identities are constantly created, confirmed and contested while visiting places (see Uitermark *et al.*, 2005); we visit more and more distant and "exotic" places to find and create "ourselves" (Rojek & Urry, 1997; Terhorst & van de Ven, 1999). We explore consumption spaces to spend leisure time, to re-create, to re-construct, to decode and recode ourselves, for "bargain hunting, discovering new lines, new fashions, new 'product ideas' and new forms of fun..." (Gabriel & Lang, 1998, p. 69). We travel to create our own, individual consumption spaces—an ever-changing selection of places, other people and goods (Hajer & Reijndorp, 2001; Gregson *et al.*, 2002)—which support current identities and are expected to introduce possibilities to construct new ones.

It is no wonder then that what we believe to be our "free time"—our non-working hours—have become subject to intense commercialization as well. Tellingly, tourism is also one of the fastest growing sectors in the economies of our favourite destinations. Travel destinations and consumption spaces now compete to offer the highest net happiness by selling themselves as the newest, hippest and trendiest spaces. In their attempts to attract consumers and to keep them coming, continuous urban update is necessary; attention for any city or consumption space fades quickly when global trends materialize faster elsewhere. The result is a constant search for new consumable city brands through the serial plastic surgery of local environments. The new and improved rat race between cities for consumers and their spending is endless (Spierings, 2003). The result of this contest for consumption flows between cities is the creation of longed-for fantasies, made seductive and easily accessible through the blowing up of products and brands. The commercial shopping world produces a seductive hyper-reality, a seemingly neutral and socially accepted emptiness that is appealingly easy to buy and consume—the overt and short-lived banality of appealing bar-coded brands, un-coverings, images, advertisements and representations that seduce to consume here and now. It could all be labelled *topoporno* (van Houtum & van Dam, 2002).

Template Cities

Having travelled to foreign cities and countries, shoppers believe they have purchased exclusive commodities and unique, new identities. But disappointment waits at the local city centre, for they will find the same commodities and identities (which they had not noticed before) could have been acquired by staying at home. Here we witness the continuous recoding of cities, the use of often locally invented templates for new fashion trends, food cultures and electronic gimmicks that are, if successful, copied and inserted in localities elsewhere (Crang *et al.*, 2003; Goonewardena & Kipper, 2005).

As constantly renewed generic scripts are continuously and at increasing speed downloaded in an ever-growing number of locales, the earlier global-local dichotomy is breaking down. Template capitalism can insert itself anywhere and everywhere as a decoder and recoder. Deleuze and Guattari argue: "[o]ur [capitalist] societies exhibit

a marked taste for all codes foreign and exotic ... this taste is destructive and morbid. While decoding doubtless means understanding and translating a code, it also means destroying the code as such, assigning it an archaic, folkloric, or residual function" (1983, p. 245) Capitalism works as a polymorphous destroyer of codes and a constructor of a generic recode; it continually breaks down the cultural, symbolic, and linguistic barriers that limit exchange (Peretti, 1996). Paradoxically, the stress on global competition results in the growing uniformity of local desires and consumption spaces. Everybody claims authenticity, which then becomes a uniform script. The choice is not between the global and the local anymore, if it ever was; the two are increasingly interwoven and what is more, increasingly intrinsic to one another.

It seems that no place or adventure remains pristine in the speed-race of hyper-capitalism. You cannot permanently outrun the speed of travelling commodities and experiences by travelling yourself. Each and every urban configuration anywhere in the world that is in any way commodifiable will become subject to endless commercial decoding and recoding. Our contemporary "experience economy" (Pine & Gilmore, 1999) bears witness to this. Locally taken pictures, digital films and souvenirs become items to materialize our experiences gained by travelling to specific destinations. The films and souvenirs are evidence of our new and improved personal identities. Look at me! Here I was! But buying into the unique experience, the unique adventure—to escape the sameness of other local I's—is a short-lived fantasy. Precisely the belief in this fantasy is the oil that lubricates the machinery of our current brave new world. And what is more, we deny it is a fantasy, thereby paving the way for further urban templatization.

Conclusion: Resisting Ourselves in the Post-society

We have created a new post-society of mass-consumption. However, the world controller in Huxley's modernist brave new world is now absent; the grand leaders of the twentieth century, promising us freedom through equality and similarity, have been replaced by a hyper-individualistic and hyper-democratized globalizing world. In a totalitarian Foucauldian move, we have internalized hierarchical power through a system of mass-democratization. Huxley's novel warned readers against communifying totalities including communism and fascism, standardization and mass-production, and to defend individual rights and freedoms. However, individuals in the current era of mass-individualization (where personal freedom is the new God) have not been empowered. While we have not become subjects of a master-controller—a leader telling a grand narrative promising a world of tomorrow—we have become the subjects of our own selves. The God of Huxley's world, Ford, has now been replaced by the image of the larger and whole "I". We no longer worship the mass-producer leader, but adore our greater "I", a whole and unified "One".

We have become consumers of the "One", a socially fabricated fantasy "I". As consumers we try to shop for, construct and reconstruct our fantasy "I" by consuming goods, places, and others, and by producing and publishing our own names, images, faces and bodies. The desire to become "One" creates personal uncertainty, a constant unrest to keep up with the latest trends. This uncertainty and unrest—the unceasing need to consume goods, explore places, and observe people—is created and exploited by the consuming and producing others that make up the "market economy". New goods are introduced and "marketed" at breakneck speed. Thus goods, travel destinations and

body parts may no longer be "hot" when purchased, rendering the acquired identity old-fashioned. The cities we just consumed may already be outmoded, with old quarters demolished to make way for new development projects and architectural styles designed as urban "selling points".

All of these urban developments reflect the interplay of the local and the global. We are predominantly locally-embedded shoppers: we usually shop at nearby consumption spaces and sometimes visit more distant places. Yet, the goods, places and people we consume increasingly reflect global trends which reach us through transnational networks. The globalization of urban economies implies an inexhaustible resource for change within local consumption spaces, creating further opportunities to adopt and transform our personal identities. Due to the continuous decoding and recoding of cities and consumption spaces, we are continuously encouraged to search for new goods, places and people to confirm and help us reproduce our identities. Popular social groups we want to join lose their prominence; previously unpopular groups become trendy; new groups arise. In the face of our urge to belong to certain groups and to be distinguished from others, the "market economy" uses our "branded bodies" to make and break the popularity of groups. In short, in the brave new world of the "One", the totalitarian mode is no longer a system for the masses as communism, fascism and Fordism was, but is now a system of the masses. We have become mass-producers of our selves.

The result is that we are living in a new mass-individualized urban society. In this new world it is not equality, sameness and standardization that matter, but difference, uniqueness and variation. We are free to choose, free to do what we want. And we choose to both produce and consume ourselves. The individualized advertisements, the homepage fetishism, You Tube and Google Me, the body shopping and the almost daily opinion polls have created a hyper-sensitive societal arena in which every voice and vote counts. We have become watchers of our moves, of our motives, of our selves. The importance of marketing and beauty shops and clinics in our economy is telling. Advertising the experience of goods and services seems to have become more important than the actual goods and services themselves. These are the features of our present brave new world. This is our fairytale, our current utopia, our dreamland. And hence we "shop till we drop", constantly seeking new pleasures, following new desires, consuming ourselves. Making a choice from the incredibly diverse offer of commodities only temporarily relieves us from the stressful desire to constantly update our identity. And if the world does not give us what we long for, if we can no longer bear its consumerist pace, if we are in danger of falling off the high-speed track of consumerism, we take the Huxleyian *soma* of our time—an anti-depressive like Prozac or Seroxat.

So where does this leave us as individuals if we are both the subjects as well as the producers of our own desire? For Deleuze and Guattari, the egolessness of the schizophrenic is not the core of the problem of capitalism (as it is for Jameson), but its solution. The schizophrenic in their eyes is a radical, revolutionary, nomadic wanderer freed from all beliefs, who resists all forms of oppressive power. Hence they see schizophrenia as central to a subversive post-modern politics capable of bringing down capitalism (Peretti, 1996). Yet we argue that the costs of schizophrenic existence are too high. The oppressive system, causing fear and anxiety, can be overwhelming. Living as a nomadic schizophrenic does not address the lack, the gap between society and the self. What remains then is the lack, the fragmented self that in order not to become psychotic, needs some form of control over oneself and one's environment, some relief from the anxiety and fear that a totally fluid and groundless society implies.

We need some kind of control, some kind of balance between control and freedom. At issue, then, is the unravelling of one of the great paradoxes of our time—that we sacrifice ourselves and our bodies in order to gain ourselves. Maybe we should begin by asking why we pursue the rat race at all? Who are we fooling when we hide in the consumerist maze of fiction and fantasy? Why don't we try to escape the intoxicating and illusionary system of personal freedom and pursuit of personal happiness that makes fabricated consumers of ourselves and template cities of our locales? To find possible exits, we need to start a reflective process that goes beyond ourselves. That is, we need to resist ourselves within the context of self-created and controlling myths and beliefs of how we should want to be. The question then is: Do we wish to break with the route to a post-human brave new world? Do we, like the savage in Huxley's novel, wish to break with civilization as we know it? Do we then also "claim the right to be unhappy, not to mention the right to grow old and ugly and impotent; the right to have syphilis and cancer; the right to have too little to eat; the right to be lousy; the right to live in constant apprehension of what may happen tomorrow; the right to catch typhoid; the right to be tortured by unspeakable pains of every kind?" (Huxley, 1932/1991) Do we really wish to escape the brave new world of today? Can we resist the lure of cities to continuously decode and recode ourselves? Well, can we?

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