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Review

“To thee the harmless snake I bring”: The Non-Cavalier Erotics of Marvell’s Mower Poems

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The fusion of eroticism and misogyny is perhaps one of the most prominent characteristics of Cavalier poetry. Women are generally idealized, having their bodies figuratively dismembered, listed from the head down, and compared to pure and beautiful objects through the use of simile and exaggeration (Scott-Baumann, 2008). Furthermore, it is common for women to be portrayed as physically, emotionally and intellectually inferior to men. In Cavalier poetry, women are objectified by angry speakers who, when rejected, express their frustration by calling to mind the wickedness of women. However, Marvell’s mower poems appear to possess a different essence than that of the Cavalier persona because he fuses the erotic with the pastoral, oftentimes using the green world as a vehicle to explore and play with love and desire. In addition, the speaker in the poems maintains his non-contact despite attempting to satiate his lustful feelings for Juliana, and does not become misogynistic when he is rejected as a lover.

Key words: Andrew, Marvell, Mower poems, erotics, cavalier, women, gender, representation, pastoral, 17th century English Literature.

INTRODUCTION

There are a number of different opinions and interpretations when it comes to Marvell’s mower poems. Anthony Funari asserts that “as Damon becomes more sexually aware of himself, he makes the transition from interpreting himself in an intimate relationship with the meadows to one in which his environment becomes alien and must be subjugated to his will” (Funari 2010). He suggests that the love for Juliana is not the reason why Damon is miserable, but it is the fact that Juliana causes him to have a sexual awakening in which he begins to feel distanced and no longer co-eternal with his environment (Funari). As a result, Damon does not mourn for his unrequited love for Juliana, but for the loss of a once pure and pre-sexual existence, so he feels that he must regain that pure relationship with the meadows once again (Funari). Moreover, Damon’s gift of a harmless snake suggests that he is a childish, immature, and asexual character who is not interested in a sexual relationship with Juliana (Funari). Critics like Andrew Kinney believe that Marvell’s mower possesses an insincere persona, because the gift of the chameleon denotes fickleness and dishonesty (2002). In addition, he
suggests that the offering of a snake is “a symbol of inconstancy and insincerity, hiding from the effects of love and disguising himself from love” (Kinney, 2002). Kinney believes that the snake represents “sexuality, sin, and temptation,” so it seems like he associates it with Satan’s deception of Eve and the loss of Eden (2002). However, Andrew Marvell’s final three mower poems are complex in their design, presenting us with an intricate mower who is anything but immature, deceitful, or asexual.

**DISCUSSION**

In “Damon the Mower,” Andrew Marvell places the mower Damon in a Pastoral setting where he is bewitched by the powerful and painful love of Juliana. The first two lines begin by “Hark how the Mower Damon sung, / With love of Juliana stung” (1-2). The reader immediately realizes that this love is not sweet or relieving to Damon; it is a love that stings, swells and aches just as a wasp bite or worst. Furthermore, Marvell creates a landscape that responds to Damon’s grief since “…everything did seem to paint / The scene more fit for his complaint” (2-4). Marvell merges human emotions and nature by presenting an environment that changes and becomes a direct reflection of Damon’s inner melancholy. Damon’s condition affects his surroundings given that “Sharp like his scythe his sorrow was, / And withered like his hopes the grass” (7-8). Clearly, the deep feelings of love and desire for Juliana destroy not only Damon, but also the meadows and the landscape since they become a mirror of his suffering. Damon’s unrequited love for his fair Juliana fills him with hopelessness that is powerful enough to cause the grass to wither and die.

Juliana is not figuratively dismembered and praised for her individual body parts like most women in Cavalier poetry. Her mere, and oftentimes, distant presence in Damon’s mind causes him to have passionate feelings of lust and desire. Damon says: “Oh what unusual heats are here, / Which thus our sunburned meadows sear” (9-10). The intense heat of his hot desires and his burning lust for Juliana has burned the grass and probably set the meadows on fire. He is aware that this blazing heat is not caused by the sun but “…from a higher beauty growth, / Which burns the fields and the mower both” (19-20). It is clear that Damon attributes his feelings of lust and desire to a “higher beauty,” which is something that is above and more significant than that of the sun’s powerful rays. This higher beauty, which burns the landscape and causes the animals within it to “seek out the shades” (14), has melted Damon internally so that “Only the snake, that kept within, / Now glitters in its second skin” (15-16). The phallic snake is the only “creature” that has been thriving in the intense heat caused by Damon’s hot passion for Juliana (Klawitter 2008). Marvell’s use of the snake which “glitters in its second skin” to symbolize Damon’s love is ingenious, because he is hybridizing elements of the green world and the erotic.

Drowning in a boiling sea of lust and desire, Damon wanders in the fields and ponders on how he can extinguish the fire “Of the hot day, or hot desires” (26). He says: “To what cool cave shall I descend, / Or to what gelid fountain bend.” The sexual imagery is quite vivid. Presumably, Damon is imagining himself relieved of his burning desire because of a sexual encounter with Juliana. His fiery infatuation would be satiated if he moves down to the yonic “cold cave” and bends to her “gelid fountain” to quench his lustful thirst in a passionate sexual experience. Because of this, it is apparent that Damon is not asexual and is clearly not immature. However, Damon does not attempt to court his “fair shepherdess” (33) by suggesting that he wants to have sex with her. On the contrary, his gifting of “…the harmless snake” (35) that is “Disarmed of its teeth and sting” (36), implies that Damon is interested in a relationship that is beyond that of a sexual one. The offering of a phallic snake that is not dangerous suggests that Damon’s love for Juliana is more platonic than sexual. On the other hand, a speaker in a Cavalier poem would generally present his lover with a perilous snake, armed with sharp teeth that are ready to tear pleasures. For instance, in John Donne’s poem, “To His Mistress Going to Bed,” the speaker seeks to unclothe his lover and use his “roving hands” (25) to physically “explore” her body as if it was a land to be colonized. And in Robert Herrick’s “The Vine,” the speaker dreams of being transformed into a vine which continuously grows and crawls against his lover’s flesh tearing “such fleeting pleasures” (20) as he ravishes her. Such sexually charged language is quite common in the erotic works of Cavalier poets, but seems to be missing in Marvell’s mower poems.

When Damon is rejected as a lover, he expresses his feelings of frustration and despair throughout the three poems. After a failed attempt to court Juliana in “Damon the Mower,” Damon is emotionally distressed and broken. Nevertheless, he does not suggest that Juliana is wicked for denying him, and he does not speak negatively of her (Klawitter 2008). Instead, he begins to meditate on his misery and feelings of loss: “How happy might I still have mowed, / Had not Love here his thistles sowed” (65-66)! Damon once enjoyed a blissful state within the wonderful meadows, but Juliana’s entrance into his life has robbed him of all happiness. He is full of grief to the extent that his anguish pushes him to take out his despair on the landscape. So he “…whet[s] [his] scythe and woes” (72), and begins by “Depopulating all the ground” (74).

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1 In the Hindu religious tradition, the term “yonic” is derived from “yoni,” which refers to the female sexual organs. See Olson, *The Many Colors of Hinduism*, 225.
Damon’s woes and suffering have become as sharp as his scythe, having the ability to tear the grass and the plants from their roots. Similarly, the woes caused by Juliana’s rejection of him have come to pierce and tear through his very being. While Damon resumes the act of destruction to the landscape, he “The edged steel by careless chance, / Did into his own ankle glance; / And there among the grass fell down, / By his own scythe, the Mower mown” (77-80 emphasis mine). Because of his profound anguish, Damon accidentally afflicts himself with a physical wound while he frantically destroys the meadows. Now he lies wounded on the dying grass that reflects his pain. Marvell’s play on words is witty, and his pun on the word “mown” further suggests the merging of the natural world and human emotions. Furthermore, even though Damon tries to heal his wound, he realizes that the injury caused by his own scythe can be treated. Yet, he suggests that “Only for him no cure is found, / Whom Juliana’s eyes do wound” (85-86). Physical wounds are treatable, but those that are emotional tend to rip through one’s entire being. Juliana’s mere gaze tears through Damon’s heart and his thoughts, afflicting him with a wound that can only be cured and mended by death: “’Tis death alone that this must do: / For Death, thou art a Mower too” (87-88). The figure of Death uses his scythe to mow and bring death to lovers, just as Damon mows and brings death to the grass. Here, Marvell uses the imagery of the mower mowing grass and compares it to a Grim Reaper mowing lover’s lives to intensify Damon’s grief. Even though Damon does not physically die, he believes that only dying can spare him from the pain caused by his unrequited love for Juliana.

In “The Mower to the Glowworms,” the speaker, who is presumably Damon, continues to mourn for his beloved shepherdess. However, this time he is not only anguished because of Juliana, but he seems to be lost and unable to perceive where he goes in spite of the glowworms “whose officious flame / To wandering mowers shows the way” (9-10). The glowworms are insect larvae that glow and light up a dark path for mowers like Damon “That in the night have lost their aim, / And after foolish fires do stray” (11-12). The “foolish fires” caused by Will-o’-the-wisps can trick the wanderer and lead them to stray off the path. Metaphorically, they can deceive the viewer just as a hope that temporarily leads one on but is impossible to reach. It seems as if Damon believes that his wish of finally uniting with Juliana is far-reaching and impossible to grasp; it is a false hope that misleads him to stray off the path and probably fall in eternal sorrow. When Juliana enters the scene once again, whether in his mind or in reality, her light radiates and is more powerful than the glowworm’s flame. In fact, Damon suggests that her luminosity is so strong that she “[h]is mind hath so displaced / That [he] shall never find [h]is home” (15-16). It is quite apparent that at this point, Damon is blinded by the brightness of her love to the extent that he can no longer find the way home. Here, finding the way home can symbolize a previous state of comfort, safety, and well-being. As a result of Juliana’s blinding light, both Damon’s vision and mind have been displaced to the point that now he is a lost wanderer who will never feel content or comfort again.

In “The Mower’s Song,” Damon continues to sing of his obsessive and unrequited love for Juliana. However, the natural scenery around him is no longer a reflection of his grief and melancholic state of mind, but comes to mirror his lustful feelings for Juliana. The grass “Grew more luxuriant still and fine; / That not one blade of grass you spied, / But had a flower on either side” (8-10). The grass and the flowers begin to flourish and recreate an image of a penis in response to Damon’s unsatisfied erotic feelings for Juliana. At this moment, Damon is upset and angry as he accuses the meadows of being “Unthankful” and of betraying him and his true fellowship (13). He addresses the meadows directly and asks: “And in your gaudy May-games meet, / While I lay trodden under feet” (15-16)? Instead of sharing his grief as before, the landscape thrives as it engages and participates in the May-games festivities. Anthony Funari suggests that in the pastoral world, the “May festivities center on a robust sexuality, one that celebrates the lustfulness of the natural world. The gown stained green from rolling in the grass, presumably in an amorous embrace, symbolizes the participants devolving into a more natural state of sexual liberality (Funari). The green world has no longer stopped reflecting Damon’s painful unrequited desires, but it has become a highly sexualized entity mirroring what he will never experience. Moreover, nature’s sexual behavior “reduc[es] him to the position of the grass,” where he is merely crushed and flattened to the ground (Funari).

Damon views this transformation as evidence that Nature has betrayed and separated from him. As a result, Damon is driven to madness and decides to take out his suffering on both himself and the landscape. He cries: “And flowers, and grass, and I and all, / Will in one common ruin fall” (21-22). Damon’s decision to equally destroy both himself and the natural scenery around him implies that he will be connected with the green world once again, even if this connection is not as positive and “green” as it used to be. Instead, the grass and the plants “Shall now the heraldry become / With which [he] shall adorn [his] tomb” (27-28). The grass that once reflected Damon’s hopes and miseries will now become an emblem of hopelessness and death caused by Juliana’s rejection of him. Damon sings: “For Juliana came, and she, / What I do to the grass, does to my thoughts and me” (29-30). He is aware of the fact that he can no longer live in peace, since Juliana has become a mower that rips through his thoughts and his entire being. Her rejection of Damon did not cause him to despise her, or insult her by calling her an inconstant wicked woman.
Conversely, his platonic love for her has caused him to mourn his fate and bring about an end to the meadows and himself.

Marvell hybridizes the pastoral with the erotic, and incorporates the use of elements from the green world to symbolize and explore love and desire. The last three mower poems possess a different aura than that of the Cavalier sensibility because the erotic is oftentimes linked to the pastoral and the natural world, as opposed to misogyny. Additionally, Juliana is not placed on a pedestal and objectified like most women in Cavalier poetry. Alternatively, she mostly exists in the realm of Damon’s mind and thoughts. However, not only does her bright burning light displace his mind and lead him off the path of comfort, peace and well-being, but she possesses power that causes him to develop intense feelings of lust that bring about his and the landscape’s common ruin.

**Conflict of Interests**

The authors have not declared any conflict of interest.
Review

Pragmatism, prostitution and morality in Philip Chidavaenzi’s the haunted trail (2012) and Virginia Phiri’s Highway Queen (2010)

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The article utilises Philip Chidavaenzi’s The Haunted Trail and Virginia Phiri’s Highway Queen to argue that female characters pragmatically turn to prostitution when the society, which should nurture morality in humanity, turns immoral against them. The moral principle is apparently premised on the notion that, when human beings behave altruistically they distinguish themselves from animals and bring order and peace to the society. The moral principle is applauded for bringing societies into homogenous folds. However, Chidavaenzi and Phiri’s works seem to challenge the presumptuous outing of morality as essential to the existence of human beings for its creation of a so-called civilised society. This enables the researcher to argue that morals fall away in the advent of poverty and hunger. The article further argues that in instances where human beings have to choose between morality and survival, the latter prevails. This article draws from the Marxist feminist theoretical frame work, to argue that in capitalist environments the poor disregard moral values for the purposes of self –sustenance. Marxist feminists have posited that controlling women’s sexuality and their access to resources in turn allows men to control women's labour power and their sexuality. This observation enables a discussion on both Chidavaenzi and Phiri’s handling of female characters in as much as the characters' adoption of prostitution and crime presents moral dilemma. Pragmatic ethics and the African Philosophy of Ubuntu are utilised toilluminate the writers’ representation of this moral problem. Pragmatist ethics is broadly humanistic because it is the ultimate test of morality beyond whatever matters, for as humans, good values are those for which we have good reasons (Dewey, 1999).On the other hand, the Ubuntu philosophy believes that a person’s behaviour determines their ‘personhood’ and that immorality reduces the ‘personhood’ of a human being. In the face of adversity, the poor find good reasons to be amoral. Overall, the article argues that both writers, though in differing ways, portray characters who believe that in the face of adversity there are good reasons to be amoral.

Key words: Morality, Pragmatism, Prostitution, Feminism, Poverty.

INTRODUCTION

The Haunted Trail is a novel set in post-independence Zimbabwe in when the country was facing economic meltdown evidenced in the closure of banks and decay in the moral fibre of its citizens. To survive in this harsh
economic environment women operated shebeen and prostituted themselves. The protagonist Michael is a business man not spared from the harsh economy. He turns to corruption and murder to keep business afloat. To add to the struggles of the citizens at this time, the country is affected by HIV and AIDS pandemic, which results in children being orphaned at a young age as they are left to fend for themselves. The result is cyclic as children, like Michael and Jackie turn to prostitution and crime to survive and become infected by HIV and AIDS. Similarly, Highway Queen is set in post-independence Zimbabwe where the economic meltdown has resulted in the closure of companies and industries. Workers are retrenched. The result is mushrooming squatter camps that become homes to unemployed people who engage in illegal means to their living. Sophie the protagonist is faced with the crisis of feeding her family and decides to take up sex work to provide for them.

Marxist feminist theory is ideal for this research as it generally provides a critique of social relations. Many feminist theories focus on analyzing gender inequality and the promotion of women’s rights, interests, and issues. Themes explored in feminism include art history and contemporary art, aesthetics, discrimination, stereotyping, objectification (especially sexual objectification), oppression, and patriarchy. Both male and female writers, highlighting the different burdens that women have to bear through the ages, have written various literature showing how inequality in the economy results in the oppression of one group of people by another. Marxist feminists purport that, capitalism is the root cause of women’s oppression and that discrimination against women in domestic life and employment is an effect of capitalist ideologies (Bottomore, 1991). Marxist feminism is a sub-type of feminist theory that focuses on the dismantling of capitalism as a way to liberate women. Perhaps for Zimbabwe, a country bedevilled by economic woes, Marxist feminism wraps up the root cause of inequality. Both texts articulate that the root cause of immorality in society is the lack of economic means.

This article makes the two novels to be understood in a context where human nature is prone to judgement of what is good and bad. Kant cited in Leitch (2001: 504) avers that judgement is generally the ability to think the particular as contained under the Universal. This means that what society deems to be immoral behaviour is applied universally no matter the circumstances that may affect an individual. Patriarchal societies set up moralistic principles, which act as measures to check the appropriateness of human behaviour. These measures premised on the androgenic standard of what is good or bad are then applied to both men and women. The androgenic society decides that prostitution is immoral as far as the woman is the one selling sex. For the truck drivers in Highway Queen it is normal for them to have sex with various women but for Sophie it is immoral. Society neglects to define what the buyer of the sex who is a man is doing. The woman is the one who is monitored for social reprehensible behaviour. This is evidenced by a lack of a synonymy that aptly describes a man who buys sex from women. Words used to describe men who have several sexual partners do not have the same negative connotations. While a man can proudly call himself, a casanova, libertine, gigolo; ladies’ man or philanderer a prostitute may not do the same. Michel is a philanderer but his fiancée is expected to be a virgin. Spivak therefore argues that, “The subaltern enters official and intellectual discourse only rarely and usually through the mediating commentary of someone more at home in those discourses” (Leitch, 2001: 2195). From Hudson-Weens’ (2004) point of view, definitions belong to the definers not to the defined, historically. It is up to women to define themselves if they do not someone else will and they would do it miserably. Sophie and other prostitutes in Highway Queen are raided and arrested for soliciting while the men they solicit are not affected by the raid. For women and the proletariat what is considered good for them is decided in their absence. Therefore, prostitution can only be immoral and no situation can warrant it to be regarded differently.

From an African philosophical point of view, morality embraces the Kantian principles as expounded in the Ten Commandments of the Bible. Similarly, judgement is made on individuals depending on the relationship of ones behaviour and how it relates to the community. The African traditional concept of morality is humanistic or anthropocentric in nature. The central moral norm was to maintain harmonious relationships within the community (Gyekye, 1996; Wiredu, 1998; Bujo, 1990; Mojola, 1988; Motlhabi, 1986). As such, women in African societies are socialised to respect the community and follow the androgenic principles regarded as the norm. Sophie desperately tries to keep her prostitution a secret, as she is aware of the consequences of her behaviour. The idealised and respected women are those who are obedient to their husbands even if the husbands are wrong and unreasonable (Gaidzanwa, 1985). African maxims are specific about the formation of character. Character is acquired. Every person is responsible for the state of his or her character as it is a result of habitual actions approved by the patriarchy. The conduct of human beings ought to conform to certain fundamental norms and values, which translate to moral virtue. A human being not capable of displaying the expected characteristics falls short or lacks personhood (Ubuntu). Michael and Sophie therefore lack Ubuntu because of their behaviour. Eckensberger, (2004) argues that morality is not only a central aspect of culture but it is unique to humans. From an African perspective, morality forms character and character forms ‘personhood’. One who lacks ‘personhood’ is judged as lacking character and therefore does not qualify to be a human hence the use of the Zulu proverb umuntungumuntungabantu (a person’s character is determined by how others view him).
In an ideal utopic society, man and women would have equal opportunities and access to economic resources. Women would, therefore, have no need to sell themselves for money. On the other hand, for one to be able to sell there should be a buyer. In situations where oppression prevails and in an unjust society where systematically and over long periods one group denies another access to resources of the society immorality is bound to prevail (Collins, 2000). Sexual double standards and male control of access to the means of production and reproduction control women just as surplus labour is controlled by low wages. Men exercise their control in receiving personal service work from women, in not having to do house work or rear children in having access to women’s bodies for sex and in feeling powerful and being powerful (Hartmann, 1979). Until recently in Zimbabwe, the police would arrest women for soliciting but the solicited were never arrested. “The patriarchal nature of Zimbabwean traditional culture has for ages relegated women to second class citizens. Activists say this resulted in women struggling to assert equality even where it is enshrined in the constitution” (The Zimbabwean 3 June 2015).

Women and girls are not born into prostitution but rather a society that is based on the availability of economic resources forces women to be prostitutes. Jackie and her siblings in the Haunted Trail are exposed to prostitution at a very early age. Prostitution represents the fusion of exploitation for an economic purpose namely the commodification of women’s sexuality (Collins, 2000). Similarly, men are not born thieves and murderers but in capitalist societies, men are forced to make money or they become emasculated. The choice given to them is limited; they can either sink or swim. Sanyinka in Walsh (2008) argues that, when one is born into the “lumpen proletariat” one becomes self-centred and egoistic as one is at the fringes of the society. The “Lumpenproletariat” engages in acts of violence and crime as outlets for frustration in a class struggle. In Zimbabwe, this group of people has come to be known as “Majagger” meaning to balance. Unfortunately in the balancing act there is no stability hence morals are easily discarded. Marx and Engel in Walsh (2008:94) have proffered that crime is the product of an unjust and alienating social condition, “the struggle of an isolated individual against the prevailing condition”. Both Phiri and Chidavaenzi in their novels narrate the struggles of men and women who are aspiring for a better life in the face of a decaying economy.

Colonisation in Zimbabwe brought with it capitalism and subsequently urbanisation. Since the resources generated from the urban industrial world were swiftly transported to the mother country (Fanon, 1997), the native countries did not have enough resources to develop their industrial base and create employment for all their citizens. The lack of resources, coupled with rampant mismanagement of the economy, left the country Zimbabwe in distress. The majority of the citizens in urban areas live in poverty. Tuan (1984) in Collins (2004:144) suggests that “power as domination involves reducing humans to animate nature in order to exploit them economically and to treat them condescendingly as pets”. This is true of all colonised states where the natives were always treated as inferior and the women too as inferior in relation to men. Marx has articulated that a person’s beliefs and values are a reflection of that person’s economic interests (Leitch, 2001). For the colonisers the main interest was to make much profit. However, for the marginalised native person one had to do whatever it took to survive. The protagonists in both novels are not averse to throwing caution to the wind. They show that consciousness can be over ridden by circumstances. In instances where one is faced with adversities conscious is subjugated by the survival instinct.

**Fallibility, vulnerability and rational humans in a decaying economy**

Very often human beings judge others based on what society defines as right or wrong behaviour. Humanity has created organizations and units of existence. It is within these organizations, such as the family, religion, political party or work place that rules and standards of behaviour are defined. These units set up yardsticks to measure the morality or immorality of one’s behaviour. The concepts of morality and goodness (this varies according to persons and is contingent to ethics) are linked to the well-being and dignity of other fellow human beings (Boss, 2008:378). What humans consider morally upright should be ultimately good to all and not for an individual. One’s ideology or proposition can only be true if it works satisfactorily for all involved. For pragmatists there is no fundamental difference between practical and theoretical reason or any ontological difference between facts and values (Dewey, 1999). Gelfund (1987:65-88) argues that the vices rejected by traditional societies are abuse, lying, deceit, stealing, adultery, drinking, violent quarrelling, pride, jealousy, covetousness, hatred, ingratitude, anger, negligence, weakness, assault, provocation and selfishness. Both Chidavaenzi and Phiri pick on these avarices and show how the individual characters are forced to forget their ‘personhood’.

Chidavaenzi and Phiri opine that human action cannot be viewed from the prism of one’s orientation. They bring to the fore the old adage of ‘don’t judge a book by its cover.’ Both authors discuss the decade of crisis that was characterized by an economic meltdown that resulted in the closure of banks, factories, industry, excessive unemployment and ultimately poverty. The job losses increased the plight of Zimbabweans whose situations were further worsened by the scourges of HIV and AIDS. Olen et al. (2008) point out that, it is the moral duty of the
Michael is driven by an insatiable lust for wealth and power as he makes determined effort to escape from the poverty and squalor of Mbare. Michael who is raised by a single mother, a shebeen queen and prostitute is selfish as his only concern from an early age is to do what gives him pleasure. Wireedu (1998) affirms that, at all stages ... morality is grounded in conceptual and empirical consideration about human wellbeing. Michael’s egoism is a trait nourished by a capitalist society where the subjugation of the proletariat is a means of reducing labour cost and maximising profits. Marginalisation of women and their function as secondary labour forces is an essential and fundamental characteristic of Capitalism (Kristeva, 1982; Selden, 1989). Michael’s mother as part of the marginalised is incapacitated from giving him a life different from what he has. His tragic flaw becomes like that of Okonkwo in his attempt to transcend the weakness of his father (Achebe, 1990) and like that of Macbeth with its vaunting ambition (Shakespeare, 1971). Ultimately, the characters' flaws lead to their demise.

Similarly, Phiri’s protagonist Sophie turns to prostitution in order to feed, clothe, and send her children to school. Her husband, the breadwinner is incapacitated and emasculated by unemployment and alcoholism (Muponde, 2007). Sophie tries to find a solution to her predicament, which in itself is a result of immoral leaders failing to govern the country and therefore driving it to decadence. She makes a rational and pragmatic decision to sell sex. “While the practice is morally reprehensible, it is a crisis management strategy that on the other hand enables her to retain her dignity,” (Muwati et al., 2003: 126). In the circumstances, she is in a catch 22 situation where inaction results in starvation, homelessness, failure to put the children to school and inviting the judgemental scorn of society for selling her body. In the end, her pragmatic and innovative impulses prevail.

Michael’s upbringing is a very shameful experience, which develops in him selfish character. His mother, who is abandoned by her gangster lover, is poor and the only source of her income is the shebeen and prostitution. She changes lovers, is eventually infected with HIV and dies of AIDS alone and is given a pauper’s burial. Michael, like Sayinka Shaku, emerges from the lumpen proletariat background as a paranoid control freak, a sexual sado-masochist with a repressed inferiority complex (Muponde, 2007:12). His violent behaviour is a reaction against the feeling of class subjugation and poverty, which he adversely tries to escape. He uses the despicable traits to gain success in the banking sector. Driven and motivated by the fear of poverty Michael becomes a misanthropic, ruthless workaholic “all his life he had been escaping the squalor, overcrowding, and degrading poverty of his youth”(p. 9).Michael lives in the shadows of his fear that when he eventually encounters the light it fails to penetrate the darkness in him. Chiedza, his girlfriend is the direct opposite of him, brought up in a secure home, by a widowed lawyer mother. Chiedza has a wonderful childhood, Christian upbringing and a philanthropic nature.

Chidavaenzi creates a complete contrast of the Jacha and Deng family. The Jacha family is driven by conservative values while the Deng family has no moral value system. While both women lose their life partners in different circumstances, for Fungai, a middle class working woman, life is not difficult because she is empowered with an education and a lucrative career and manages to raise her daughters in a pleasant environment. Hungwe (no date: 47) this article has no date attests that, “While education is regarded as vital in fighting poverty it is not seen as fundamental in the development of the girl child among the marginalised populace”. For Michael’s mother, the options before her are limited. Without an education and no means of taking care of her child, the only option is prostitution. It is however ironic that in spite of their different backgrounds both Michael and Chiedza are not spared from the HIV and AIDS virus. Chidavaenzi seems to articulate that HIV has no class boundaries.

From the beginning of the novel, we meet Michael, a self-aggrandizing, corrupt and uncultured boy who matures into a decadent adult. Michael leads a reckless childhood. He sleeps with different women some older than him from an early age. His family background does not give him any moral or ethical values. His lust for sex is equated with his lust for power and control. His failure to control his lust results in his losing Pentagon Bank, his empire. In spite of his success with the bank having opened branches in major cities in Zimbabwe, Michael’s lust is voracious as he moves to buy Manrow Bank. The same lust is exhibited by the truck drivers in Highway Queen. They are all keen to have unprotected sex with Sophie. Michael orchestrates the illegal take-over of struggling banks and fraudulently amasses funds to finance his schemes. He is pragmatic in his approach as he argues that, “We are registered as a Financial Services Provider but owing to the economic crisis we are facing
at the moment. It is advisable to divert a little if we are to remain above water” (p.7). One of the clearest influences from the West is the growing materialism in Africa (Mwikamba, 1992 in Indouw et al., 2008). Money and material wealth have become semi-gods leading to the decay of morals, as economic activities and successes have become ends in themselves. African communities have moved away from the communal way of life to Eurocentric individualism that makes it difficult to apply the principles that worked in traditional societies. While in traditional societies the success of an individual translates to the success of a community in modern day success is individualistic (as gaining it is a competition).

Chidavaenzi brings forth a fallacious argument that the greater impulse to do whatever is necessary to attain which ever roles are given high status is a function of male physiology (Boss, 2008: 488). Michael and his directors who are males will stop at nothing to amass wealth at the expense of the ordinary people. Chidavaenzi seems to argue that even the most egocentric of the human lot share their egocentrism with those of their kind. Michael and his directors act altruistically, at least with regards to those within their group, which to them is a moral standard regardless of the effects it has on the people with accounts in their bank. Both Chidavaenzi and Phiri seem to argue that morality falls away when the poor are faced with an opportunity to escape their poverty. Sophie is threatened by hunger and poverty, so prostitution seems to be a gallant means of survival. Similarly, for Michael buccaneering is the only way he can make enough money to keep him safe from poverty.

Michael, as a narcissist is well aware that his actions are against the law while Sophie is aware that prostitution is immoral. However, for both characters to survive and not go back to the squalor and poverty of the squatter camp and Mbare they have to do those things which are not good for the whole. Michael becomes a ruthless shark who is “only contented when an enemy was bleeding helplessly on the floor” (p.8). Poverty has taught both Michael and Sophie that they live in a dog eats dog world. Sophie sees her passion for a family. Michael is portrayed as a business tycoon. He does not share her passion for a family. Michael is portrayed as a panjandrum as he believes that managing to escape the squalor of Mbare puts him above everything else including HIV and AIDS.

The moral woman in the wake of poverty and AIDS

Emmanuel Kant has stated that moral judgments are binding to all human beings no matter what kind of society they live in (Stanford Encyclopaedia, 2002). Chidavaenzi and Phiri argue against this view as they posit that a person’s behaviour is controlled by their circumstances more than what the society expects of them. Human beings are generally egocentric and more often than not the golden rule of ‘do unto others as you want done unto you’, is put aside for self-fulfilment and survival imperatives.

Chiedza and Jackie are two graduates with diverse backgrounds who meet at the university. While Chiedza sits in her dorm room reading Jackie parties until morning. In a traditional African society, a shared morality is cement to the society (Kigongo, 1991, kinoti, 1992). While the ultimate goal of traditional education was morality, the behaviour of both characters is indicative
that modern education unlike traditional education does not place emphasis on ethical behaviour. Chiedza is a determined, hard-working, goal oriented and moralistic woman. She is highly religious and believes that sex before marriage and "having a child outside wedlock was a sin against God" (p. 95). Orphaned at a young age, Jackie is the exact opposite. She has street shrewdness and is very independent. In spite of having multifarious boyfriends, Jackie takes exceptional care to protect herself and becomes selfish. As a female gigolo, she dates men of her own choosing and whim. She calls herself the ‘men’s lady’ taking away the Casanova masculine role to apply to her love for sex with different partners. Like Sophie in Highway Queen, she assumes a new identity as a self-namer and self-definer (Muwati et al., 2013: 121). Jackie is liberated from patriarchal control and learns from an early age to take care of herself. She has no remorse or regret of her decision even that of sleeping with her best friend’s fiancé. She exhibits qualities that are masculine in nature and uses them to protect herself from patriarchal dominance. She uses men as objects for her own pleasure and knowingly engages in adulterous affairs with married man. In this way, she adopts a process that Bell describes as disidentification in which she challenges patriarchally ascribed gender roles of what a woman should be. Simons (1975) argues that as females increasingly adopt male roles they will increasingly masculanise their attitudes and behaviour and thus become crime prone. Jacques Lacan in his seminar encore (1972-3) suggests ‘jouissance’ by which he means sexual pleasure and enjoyment are fundamentally phallic and thus do not relate to the female other as such (Collier, 2013: 98). Jackie however, takes back her sexuality and enjoys sex as much as her numerous male partners.

Chiedza, on the other hand, comes from a sheltered background and courts danger by escaping the protected small town environment, refusing to register at Africa University an institute guided by moralistic values and forms an embryotic protection for its students. The Africa University is opposed to the University of Zimbabwe, which is highly liberal in its approach. Chiedza is attracted to danger. In Michael, she sees an enigma, which she is curious to explore. She takes the role of the light, as her name seems to suggest, in the relationship. The two are of opposite orientation. While Chiedza’s childhood is very cultured, nurtured, and cosseted, Michael is amoral and has no family values to talk of. Michael's life has a lot of dark alleys, secrets and shady dealings. Chidavaenzi brings forth the theme of beauty and the beast. Michael holds on to Chiedza in the hope that she would bring light into his dark life and restore him to a better person. Unfortunately, he is not aware that the pursuit of his pleasure has ramifications, which have a negative impact on others and those he cares about the most.

Chiedza’s mollycoddled childhood did not expose her to the debauchery found in the big city of Harare. She genuinely believes that if she is good nothing bad will happen to her. She fails at self-preservation because of her naive belief that being good would protect her. Although she suspects that Michael is an adulterer, she continues with the relationship. Even after they are engaged, she does not take precaution to protect herself or insist on an HIV test before their sexual encounter. She prophetically exclams that, "you know what scares me HIV and AIDS, Jackie" (p20). Chiedza seems to fulfil Kant’s upshot assumption that a man has autonomy while the woman lacks the autonomous capacity to reason for herself (Anderson 2003). She inevitably authors her own tragedy by failing to reason.

For Jackie, Chiedza should not be fearful as she does not sleep around but she quickly cautions her naive friend and warns that, “a condom can make a difference between life and death” (p21) Chiedza only realizes the importance and difference a condom would have made after she is tested HIV positive. Chidavaenzi is suggesting that HIV is not always a result of loose behaviour or prostitution therefore, people should not judge those that are HIV positive in a totalising and homogenising manner. Chiedza’s status is different from Sophie in that she is innocent. Chiedza’s only sexual encounter with her fiancé, leaves her HIV and AIDS positive and therefore exposed to the stigma, associated with the virus. Her tenacious hold on Michael is motivated by his success in business. She seems to be substituting him for her father whom she lost as a child. She fails to act on her instinct that warns her that Michael is not what she needs; she fails to make an ethical decision. Michael’s obscurantism is a fascination that she enjoys to her own detriment.

Jackie and Michael, coming from marginalized background has a proclivity to engage in sex with different people. For Chiedza sex is sacred and a preserve for the married. Precocious sex for both Michael and Jackie is inevitable as they are exposed to it both at home and in their neighbourhood. Precocious sex for both characters ruins their view of love and the purpose of sex. Jackie’s first sexual encounter is at fifteen. The early exposure to sex sets her apart from her best friend as she becomes aware of what it entails. Chidavaenzi seems to be arguing that there is apreponderance in poor families to engage in sex from an early age.

“Jackie then an innocent naïve young girl did not know what that meant. She later learnt that a girl had something, a priceless possession that any man would do whatever it took to have, including parting with his hard-earned salary only for a few minutes of pleasure with a woman” (pp35-36).

Jackie emerges as an ethical egoist ready to take on the world but on her own terms. This realization is also an awakening for Sophie when after three episodes of unprotected sex with men she realizes she has a
commodity that men cannot resist. “To achieve this I would sell my body. That was the only commodity that no one had control over except myself” (Phiri, 2010: 88). Selling sex is the best employment available; her body is hers to control just as an athlete decides whether to run or not. Tate (1983) cited in Collins (2000:4) avers that, “this type of change ...occurs because the heroine recognises and more importantly respects her inability to change her situation. This is not to say that she is completely circumscribed by her limitations. On the contrary she learns to exceed former boundaries.” What is ironic about Sophie is that she is married, a mother and a prostitute. Gaidzanwa (1985) attests that, motherhood is respectable and held in high esteem as long as it goes with socially approved wifehood. For as long as she is married, the community and society respect Sophie. Her trips to the boarder are approved as she is working to support the family. Gaidzanwa (1985) further states that, a wife is judged by how she behaves towards her husband and how she looks after household and the children. Sophie makes sure that the family is provided for and when she can she fulfils her conjugal rights as once her obligations are fulfilled she is idealised and her morality is not questioned.

Characters in both texts seem to justify their choices reverently. However, morality should never be overridden, that is no one should never violate a moral prohibition or requirement for non-moral considerations (Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, 2010). Hammar (2008) argues that, prostitution evinces the decline of the economy and of social and ideological systems within which such matters can be regulated coherently. It neither indexes the moral decline of people nor is it rooted in natural promiscuity. Sophie is not a prostitute under normal circumstances she is a housewife. For Sophie however, no level of morality can justify her family going hungry and uneducated.

Boss (2008:373) avers that, premarital chastity is the best way to guarantee marital commitment and faithfulness. Chiedza strongly believes in fidelity and chastity before marriage. Chiedza’s undoing is her respectable home; she is not taught how to handle men, alcohol and sex. Michael who attempts a romantic date, which eventually leads to their premarital encounter, easily traps her. She agonizes over the adulterous act, which seemingly violates the principle of fidelity (Boss, 2008). Fungai is closer to the centre of the moral community and has shielded her (pre-eminent) daughters and watched over them like a mother hen (p13). While this might have been good for their welfare, it does not prepare Chiedza to face the darker side of love. She is too trusting and believes that Michael will do the right thing. She is so innocent that her friend flirts with her fiancé and she does not see it as a threat. Fungai in some ways lets her daughter down by not following through on her instincts. She is driven by the nature of a patriarchal society that demands that all ‘good’ daughters should be married. Hungwe (no date???) this article has no date attest that, women would garner respect through marriage and bearing children within wedlock and earning money for the patriarchal family. At the mention of an engagement, Fungai lets her guard down. She feels her work is done. While she has been perturbed by Michael’s character from the onset, the prospect of marrying her daughter off to a successful businessperson overrides her scepticism. She welcomes Michael into her home.

Michael is scarred and does not have any standard to determine what is moral or immoral. It does not bother him to sleep with other women while engaged to Chiedza. Life in the Shebeen taught him that women are sexual objects that are to be used for pleasure and the benefit of men. He adheres to the chauvinistic belief that women are there for the gratification of men (Muponde, 2007:13) Women, especially in cases where they would ordinarily be inaccessible to the psychopath are regarded as chattels of sexual gratification and objects of humiliation (Muponde, 2007:14). Beauvoir argues that throughout history women have been reduced into objects for men because men have imagined women as the other. Women, in patriarchal cultures are regarded as the other while men are the norm (Leitch, 2001:1404). Mrs Kanda, like Sophie falls prey to Michael’s demands. Imperceptibly threatened with the loss of her job and a looming disciplinary hearing, she has no choice but to comply even “when she knew what the dinner date entailed” (p.11). Michael’s masochistic nature is unveiled in the fact that he is not even attracted to her but he sleeps with her to show his dominance and machismo. Similarly, Dhuri abuses Sophie when she tries to purchase goods for sale to feed her family. Muwati et al. (2003:126) attest that, “Through these heinous acts by unscrupulous masculinities, the author depicts how in a crisis women become exposed to multiple risks and crises. Sophie finds it difficult to protect herself from such powerful men who have access to scarce resources and commodities. She becomes a victim of the excruciating decade long economic, political and social crisis in Zimbabwe”.

Women cannot protect themselves from masculine autonomy, as they do not have the means to preserve themselves from exploitation. Patriarchy is centred upon the conservation of patrimony, which implies that those who transmit and own the wealth control the existence of property and its circulation (Beauvoir in Leitch, 2001).

Michael is a sociopath who fails to empathize with an ailing parent. He is a coward who fears responsibility and does not want to associate with a diseased female. Instead, he neglects his mother and relocates to his friend’s house. Attree (2007:62) argues that, “The failure to associate compassion with those suffering from AIDS and the resulting distancing from the obstruction of those who are ill as enemies to be defeated leads to the misunderstanding and miscommunication of the dangers
and risk associated with HIV infection”. He does not learn anything from his mother’s illness because he chooses to shut it out of his life. When his girlfriend Lina is pregnant, he immediately threatens and chases her away. When Chiedza becomes HIV positive and pregnant, he is not penitent but instead, he dismisses her and takes away his ring. Broodyk (2002) believes that, caring for oneself and for others members of the community through human labour is a moral imperative in Ubuntu. Michael lacks the ability to share in someone else’s pain and has no sense of moral duty. His scapegoating strategy is indicative of anachronistic masculinity that pathologizes the female body as the one that carries diseases. His mother, unlike Sophie who hides her activities, does not attempt to hide her immorality hence he adopts the same strategy.

Michael like Stephen is bludgeoned by crisis and embraces a typically nihilist attitude to his HIV status and the loss of his company. Both losses are metaphors of castration and emasculation as he has always regarded himself as a bull powerful enough not to be scathed by anything. Michael is in the same trap that resists the acknowledgement that ‘the strong healthy man’ is vulnerable to infection and disease (Attree, 2007). While Chiedza is devastated by her HIV status, she goes into a depression, cries and fails to eat. Michael is resolute and conjures up some bluster and bravado, as he believes, “he is still on top of the world. HIV and AIDS- whatever they called it would not touch him” (p. 101).

Chidavenzi and Phiri both seem to lament the lack of change in behaviour for most Zimbabweans. Sophie like Nora in Ibsen’s In a Doll House discovers her own power to act in certain sense, autonomously. She is aware of HIV and AIDS and makes a determined effort to use a condom but she realises that most of her clients prefer not to. A reading of Highway Queen illustrates how this conception of the ideal autonomy misrepresents the reality of individuals lived experiences and imposes a gendered identity, which subordinates women to a masculine narcissism. For most men, a whore cannot be reduced to sexual objects for men as virgins, prostitutes, (Svanstrom, 2005). Historically women have been reduced to sexual objects for men as virgins, prostitutes, wives or mothers (Showalter, 1996). Men claim right to women’s bodies and claim right of command over the use of women’s bodies because patriarchal norms concerning sexuality still dominate the judicial system and public opinion (Paterman, 1988:17 in Svanstrom, 2005). Most men like Michael think they are untouchable because they have money and therefore they are immune to the disease. Michael does not take into consideration that he has been indiscriminately sleeping with different women.

Michael is too ashamed to accept his status because he has violated all moral principles in his quest to enrich himself at the expense of fellow human beings. He has violated the principle of fairness to satisfy his ultra-ego. He foresees a bleak future, as he fears that once it is known that he is HIV positive the golden rule will apply. All those he has treated harshly before will also treat him the same. He has been treating people badly therefore, he cannot expect to be treated differently. He realises very late that the man who is afraid of nothing at all, but marches up to every danger becomes foolhardy (Olen et al., 2008). It is a truism that courage is not necessarily the absence of fear but the ability to do the right thing at the right time and in his wilful narcissism, he ignores this. He has habituated himself to have what he wants predisposing to seek gratification. Because of his indulgence in every pleasure without refraining from a single one, he becomes incontinent. One may then conclude that the biblical warning of life being a Newtonian experience aptly applies to Michael; that what goes around comes around.

Conclusion

The economic differences between the rich and the poor define the standards of measure that can be used to determine the morality of a person. While the bar can be set high for those in privileged positions, the same measure cannot be used for the poor who in most instances are forced to commit crimes to survive. Capitalism has not incorporated women into the labour force the same way it has accommodated men. Women are marginalised in terms of employment hence they look for alternative ways to earning a living. Capitalism has created a distinction between men and women with women being relegated to the home and family life where there is no source of income. Morality is an ideal that every human being should strive to uphold, as the society does not have a balanced fair scale of existence for everyone. While prostitution may, under normal circumstances, be regarded as reprehensible in some extraordinary instances it may be a morally upright form of employment. Morality cannot be regarded universally, in an umbrella term, to judge all humans, as some may not be privileged enough to stay away from crime and corruption. While in an ideal world an immoral person is judged as lacking personhood and therefore not qualified to be considered human the nature of modern day society calls upon humanity to consider the standards set as measurement for acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

Conflict of Interests

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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Full Length Research Paper

Enslavement and freedom in Aldous Huxley’s

Brave New World

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This research paper focuses on the subject of enslavement and freedom in Aldous Huxley’s Brave New World. It compares between two contrasting worlds: the primitive world, where John the Savage lives and the utopian world, where Bernard Marx, Helmholtz Watson, and their fellow-citizens inhabit. The primitive world, in this connection, symbolizes freedom, whereas the utopian world represents enslavement. The story of the novel, Brave New World revolves round these three central figures: John the Savage, Bernard Marx and Helmholtz Watson. The novel examines how the characters of the World State are enslaved and very few of them attempt to rebel against the principles of the World State.

Key words: Enslavement, freedom, primitive world, the savage.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this research paper is to investigate enslavement and freedom in Aldous Huxley’s Brave New World. Although Huxley is a famous writer in the Western World, his works are sadly neglected in Egypt (the author’s country) in particular and in the Arab World in general. The second reason for approaching this study is that most studies discussed Huxley as a science fiction writer and very few of them handled him as a writer seeking freedom.

Aldous Huxley (1894 to 1963) is considered as one of the best science fiction writers during the twentieth century. He made his fame as a novelist with Brave New World (1932). He was described by T. S. Eliot as “one of the four chief contemporary English novelists” and also has been acclaimed as “a brilliant and promising novelist” (Enroth, 1960: 123). He contributed immensely to the genre of science fiction. From his early childhood, he had great interest in the field of science and technology. This affected his life as a writer, most of his writings deal with scientific issues.

Huxley’s writings fall into three periods: Period one includes Crome Yellow, Antic Hay and Those Barren Leaves; the second consists of Point Counter Point and Brave New World; and the third comprises Eyeless in Gaza, After Many a Summer Dies the Swan, Time Must Have a Stop, Ape and Essence, and The Genius and the Goddess. Through reading and evaluating Huxley’s works, one can say that the second period, which includes Brave New World, is the best one. (Enroth, 1960: 123). Brave New World has marked Huxley’s genius and good ability of producing such scientific novels. It “has an assured place as a popular classic” (Drabble, 1985: 487). It has been claimed that Brave New World is “one of the two most widely discussed English fantasies of this century.

The other is…Orwell’s 1984” (Schmerl, 1962: 328). Brave
New World provides" artificial pleasures which dim the mind". It also draws "an extremely pessimistic picture of humanity's future" (Varrichio, 1999: 98). The novel "depicts a scientifically perfect society based on a caste system in which human beings are 'conditioned' to occupy a place on a social scale" (Carter and McRae, 1997: 433).

Title

The title of the novel, Brave New World, is taken from Shakespeare's The Tempest. The words of brave new world were repeated by Miranda in The Tempest as well as John the Savage in Huxley's Brave New World. (Grushow, 1962: 42)

Setting

From the very beginning, Huxley established his setting. He announced the time and the place of the story. Brave New World is mainly set in Central London in the year 632 AF (After Ford); London, the imaginary world, is one of the ten world zones. The events of the story alternate between London and the Reservation. London represents civilization, whereas the Reservation represents the primitive world.

Plot

The question of enslavement and freedom is a significant theme in Brave New World. Most characters of the World State are enslaved. Only two of them could rebel against the codes of the society, in which they lived. These rebellious characters are Bernard Marx and Helmholtz Watson. Bernard is the first individual to rebel against the World State, attempting to challenge the principles of his society. He also urges his friends to revolt against the society. Among his friends is his girlfriend, Lenina. Bernard’s rebellion can be shown in his talk with Lenina:

How can I? .... No, the real problem is: How is it that I can’t, or rather -- because, after all, I know quite well why I can’t -- what would it be like if I could if I were free -- not enslaved by my conditioning .... Don’t you wish you were free Lenina?

I don’t know what you mean. I am free. Free to have the most wonderful time. Everybody is happy nowadays. But wouldn’t you like to be free to be happy in some other way, Lenina? In your own way, for example; not in everybody else’s way. (Huxley, 1932: 78-79)

Bernard wants Lenina to be happy in her own way, not in the way of her society. For realizing this, he tries to persuade her to have a child. He explains for her that having a child is amazing:

"What a wonderfully intimate relationship .... And what an intensity of feeling it must generate! I often think one may have missed something in not having had a mother. And perhaps you've missed something in not being a mother, Lenina. Imagine yourself sitting there with a little baby of your own .... “(Huxley, 1932: 96). It is oddly enough that getting married and having a child are not allowed in this dystopian world; they are against the stability of the World State; they are also signs of freedom which is forbidden in this new world.

Helmholtz Watson is another character who revolted against the rules of the World State. Helmholtz is highly admired by Aldous Huxley. This sense of admiration springs from Helmholtz’s intelligence. Helmholtz, as previously mentioned, is one of the very few characters who rebelled against the arbitrary state. He expresses his rebellion through poetry which is against the Brave New World. He recites:

Yesterday's committee,
Sticks, but a broken drum,
Midnight in the city,
Flutes in a vacuum,
Shut lips, sleeping faces,
Every stopped machine,
The dumb and littered places
Where crowds have been --
All silence 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, posterioris,
Slowly from a presence;
Whose? And I ask, of what
So absurd an essence,
That something, which is not,
Nevertheless should populate
Empty night more solidly
Than that with which we copulate,
Why should it seem so squalidly? (Huxley, 157-158)

Accordingly, Helmholtz now feels free:

“I feel … as though I were just beginning to have something to write about. As though I were beginning to be able to use that power I feel I’ve got inside me – that extra, latent power. Something seems to be coming to me” (Huxley, 158-159).

In this strange world, there is no space for freedom; all the people’s actions are guided and controlled. Brave New World is a community without freedom. Freedom, in fact, has been sacrificed for happiness and stability. In contrast to this new world, comes John the Savage who is considered as the protagonist of the novel. John represents the primitive world. It can be safely said that John “is the most admirable character in the book, the one with whom we can most closely identify …. The great challenge comes when he enters civilization” (Grushow, 1962: 45). John’s message is to free humanity, namely the citizens of the World State:

“I come to bring you freedom” (Huxley, 186).

In fact, John is not satisfied with the so-called utopian citizens. He even despises their self-satisfaction:

“Don’t you want to be free and men? Don’t you even understand what manhood and freedom are” (Huxley, 187).

He acknowledges that his mother, who was once a utopian citizen, died as a slave. At this point, he says:

“Linda [john’s mother] had been a slave, Linda had died; others should live in freedom, and the world made beautiful” (Huxley, 185). John rejects Mostapha Mond’s talk, one of the World State’s controllers centered in London, when he says:

The world’s stable now. People are happy; they get what they want, and they never want what they can’t get. They’re well off; they’re safe; they’re never ill; they’re never afraid of death; they’re blissfully ignorant of passion and old age; they’re plagued with no mothers or fathers; they’ve got no wives, or children, or lovers to feel strongly about; they’re so conditioned that they practically can’t help behaving as they ought to behave. And if anything should go wrong, there’s soma. (Huxley, 193 - 194)

John silently and scornfully replies:

“You seem to have paid a fairly high price for your happiness” (Huxley, 203). According to John, man seeks his happiness and stability at the expense of his freedom. Like H. G. Wells in his famous novel The Time Machine, Huxley attacks human self-satisfaction. The citizens of the World State have become very satisfied with their own life; they are not ready to free themselves from slavery imposed upon them by Mostapha Mond.

In fact, freedom is not found in this totalitarian state. People’s happiness is controlled by their masters. Strangely, they have no right to be unhappy. This can be proved in the words of the Savage: “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, 212).

As a matter of fact, “Aldous Huxley’s Brave New World is impressive in its bold insights into a frighteningly mechanized, regimented world”. According to Ward:

“Man was no longer free, but manipulated according to society’s master plan” (Ward, 1960: 178). In Brave New World, Huxley compares two contrasting worlds: materialistic world, in which there is no freedom; and the other is the primitive world, in which people enjoy their individual freedom:

In Brave New World, Huxley shows that any society that has set happiness and material well-being as its goals must, for the sake of stability, deliberately cultivate mediocrity and perpetual adolescence in all but a tiny portion of its numbers. If, on the other hand, it wants to make its members fully human, individual, and independent, it must abandon the economic, political, and social structures that impose conformity – in a word, it must revert to primitivism, with all of the attendant disease, intolerance, and ignorance. (Enroth, 1960: 130)

The world of Brave New World is extremely totalitarian. The world government totally controls the whole world. The World State is under the supervision of only ten controllers who dominate everything in the state, such as work, life, love, happiness, and the right to have children. In this strange world, children are not born and raised by natural parents. They are conditioned and decanted in bottles and forced to do the roles imposed upon them by the World State. In this strange society, there is no space for love or marriage:

Aldous Huxley’s Brave New World… is a satirical attack on the utopia of social reformers in which misery and instability have been abolished by a supreme, benevolent state, at the expense of individual freedom of action and thought” (Coleman, 1967: 6). Huxley claims that the World
State “aim[s] at the destruction of man as a human being, and seeks to replace him with a monster hatched and conditioned by a machine, indoctrinated in the cradle, and without any inclination to be anything other than a cog in the machine of the state” (Coleman, 1967: 7).

In Huxley’s World State, “there are no social, political, or religious questions, because they have all been solved by the government” (Coleman, 1967: 8). In fact, the people of Brave NewWorld have no souls; they have lost feeling. This can be described in Lawrence’s poem:

When men are made in bottles
and emerge as squeaky globules with no bodies to speak of,

and therefore nothing to have feelings with,

they will still squeak intensely about their feelings

and be prepared to kill you if you say you’ve got none. (Qtd. In Firchow, 1976: 271)

The novel criticizes the society of the World State:

The society of A. F. 632 is “perfectly” terrifying to the creative individual who wishes to test the gates of heaven and hell, and who seeks to find doors of perceptions not conveniently opened for perverse purposes by the state. When pleasure and escape become unavoidable goals. Huxley reasons, the individual lives in a nightmarish ideal society that cannot allow him the right to be unhappy. (Matter, 1975: 148)

Accordingly, “Brave New World shows that the greatest heights are achieved only by those willing to suffer at times”. Thus, “these inhabitants have no options, no free will, no chance to make a difference; only the opportunity to be another happy cog in a vast machine designed and run by the government” (Barr, 2010: 856).

Huxley proceeds to attack the World State; he “enforces in us disgust toward the future society largely through constant reference to our own society. We find the World State intolerable largely because we see in it perversions of our most cherished ideas and institutions” (Grushow, 1962: 42).

Now, we can safely say that lack of freedom results in the death of individuality. People of this ugly new world lose individuality. In fact, the idea of individuality is highly discussed in Brave New World. In much of his works, “Huxley pays so many respectful compliments to the dignity of the individual and to the truly free society that one is disarmed for what is to come” (Ward, 1960: 178). Huxley believes that there are some factors which help destroy man. These factors are: “Society’s inherent weaknesses, over-organization, mass propagandization, [and] mass mind-maneuvering”. These factors are described as “the enslavers of man”. Huxley asserts that these destroy his individuality, his unique mentality, and his freedom” (Ward, 1960: 179)

As a result, people of Brave New World have feelings of loss. In this new world, there is no time for mourning or sadness. People seek only their physical pleasures. When one feels angry or tired in this new world, he resorts to soma as a means of relief and escape. For example, Bernard takes four tablets of soma.

In fact, the citizens of the World State are amoral; they do not care about each other. Their minds and souls are controlled by machines. According to Huxley, the use of technology leads to the enslavement of man. The novel, in this connection, criticizes modernism embodied in technology. It “articulates deep anxiety about the drift of modern civilization”. In this novel, “man’s weakness and infirmities are exposed” (Rajimwale, 2006: 452).

In Brave New World, “Huxley foresaw the development and dangerous abuses of technology by government in its perpetual search for ways in which to control its subjects. He “also understood the power of technology to not only enable government to control the populace, but also as a way to control the human mind” (Barr, 2010: 849). In this new world, “human beings are limited in both mental and physical abilities to meet the needs of the government and society at large, not their own” (Barr, 850). Citizens of Brave New World live in luxury. They “put in a few hours of non-taxing work and then immerse themselves in the high-tech entertainment of movies and TV, sports, and drugs” (Seabury, 1995: 184).

However, in this so-called utopian world, we have a character like Bernard rebels against this world; he wants to have sex with Lenina instead of soma: “Exceptions certainly present themselves even in Huxley’s utopian dystopia, as when a major character, Bernard Marx, indicates a preference for a thoughtful relationship with a female rather than soma-laden sex” (Barr, 2010: 850). In this novel, Huxley predicts “the development of advertising and propaganda as weapons to suppress freedom, as well as social destiny control by genetic means” (Firchow, 1975: 308). In fact, Huxley “reject[s] the blind technological domination of human society, and find[s] a solution to it through a primitive way of life” (Hadomi, 117).

Since the world of Brave New World enhances the role of technology and neglects the value of individuality, it surely ignores the value of art in man’s life. Thus, the world of Brave New World pays no interest in art, literature, or history because these things open man’s mind to the question of freedom which is, according to the World State, against the stability of society:

The dystopian world of BNW condemns history and
cultural heritage, memory, art, and any kind of emotional expression of inner life, whether individual or collective. This fact is satirically depicted in BNW by the function of the Shakespearian references used explicitly or implicitly in the text. Whether they subtly or grossly reveal the raw archaic life of the Reservation or the automated reality of the New World, the effect of this disjunction and distortion is strongly satirical. (Hadomi, 1991: 116-117)

As a matter of fact, "in BNW, there is no need for spiritual activity, scientific curiosity, artistic creativity, or exploration of cultural heritage. These are replaced by the consumption of Soma Pills, sex-hormone chewing gum, and escapist, sensuous "Feelies"” (Hadomi, 1991: 113)

The idea of inequality can be noticed in this novel. "...inequality has not only been recognized as biological and psychological fact, it has been made into one of the World State’s cardinal principles. Intelligent people do not labor in the factories and morons have nothing to say about the government". Finally, the novel tragically "closes ... with an image of universal death" (Schmerl, 1962: 331), in which John commits suicide. John’s suicide is, indeed, a symbol of freedom and a reaction against this enslaving new world.

CONCLUSION

Brave New World showed that Aldous Huxley is a writer with a message, and the message is to warn us against self-satisfaction. In Brave New World, Huxley confirmed that "if man became completely happy and society completely efficient, he would cease to be human and it would become intolerable" (Burgess, 1974: 220). Through the characters of John the Savage, Bernard Marx and Helmholtz Watson, Brave New World focused on the question of enslavement and freedom. The novel depicted that happiness and sensual pleasures of the World State are the sole aims for utopian citizens. Brave New World proved that the inhabitants of the World State are selfish and immoral; they only seek their worldly pleasures. The novel also discussed the notion of individuality. In addition, it exposed modern civilization. Furthermore, Death of spiritual activity was cleverly portrayed in the novel.

In this novel, very few utopian characters, namely Bernard Marx and Helmholtz could rebel against the codes of the World State, seeking their own freedom. Brave New World predicted the trivial mentality of our future people. In spite of the tragic image drawn by Aldous Huxley in this novel, we saw glimpses of hope.

This was manifested through the characters of Bernard Marx and Helmholtz; both of them longed for freedom.

Conflict of interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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