> In short, consumerables embody the ultimate non-finality and revocability of choices and the ultimate disposability of the objects chosen. Even more importantly, they seem to put us in control.[72]

Indeed, what all of these versions of community appropriated thrive on is the contingency of community without responsibility; they couldn't operate without it.

In the light of the above discussion we can perhaps conclude that if liquid modern communities are not communities in the orthodox sociological meaning, they are at least their poor relations – perhaps old aunts or distant cousins. And what this means is that Bauman can agree with Benedict Anderson[7'] that liquid modern community can be conceived as a deep-felt mutuality, albeit temporarily. He also agrees with Anderson that community is imagined in the sense that it is limited by its strictly demarcated, though elastic, boundaries; beyond which lie ways of being and living that take the form of various threats, anxieties and uncertainties. Bauman also knows that like Anderson's imagined community, liquid modern community is sovereign, because it came to maturity at a particular stage in history when freedom was hardly unequivocal. However, he also knows that its stage in history is not the same as Anderson's – when freedom was only a rare and much cherished ideal – it is a time when freedom depends on one's ability to consume. Indeed, as we shall see in the next chapter, in this regard Bauman suggests that if today freedom means happiness, liquid modern men and women are never happier than when they are consuming.

5

Consumerism as the Liquid Modern Way of Life

> If our ancestors were shaped and trained by their societies as producers first and foremost, we are increasingly shaped and trained as consumers first, and all the rest after.
>
> Zygmunt Bauman'

In the *Sage Dictionary of Cultural Studies*, Chris Barker's first definition of consumption simply suggests that to consume is 'to use or ingest'.[2] Without actually saying so, Barker goes on to add that the process of consuming is better understood as consumerism because this second concept recognizes the economic and cultural dimensions that underpin the different uses to which the commodities that circulate in capitalist societies are put. In this regard and in keeping with most other interpretations of consumerism in cultural studies,[3] he suggests that consumers do not merely consume commodities like unsuspecting dupes (or dopes), but they 'generate their own meanings through the interplay of commodities and [their own] cultural competencies'.

It must be noted that what is missing from Barker's definition is any recognition of the culture of excess associated with consumerism which in its oversupply leaves innumerable endings, untied and messy – wasted

lives as well as wasted commodities. It is conspicuous too that in Barker's definition consumerism is not understood as an all-encompassing reality – it appears instead as a powerful belief system but one that can be transgressed or resisted because there are other alternative belief systems that vie for people's attention in latter-day capitalist societies. In this sense, Barker plays down Bauman's argument that today we are all 'consumers in a consumers' society. Consumer society is a market society; we are all in and on the market, simultaneously customers and commodities'.[4]

However, the intention of Bauman's theory of consumerism is neither to ignore the point that some people endeavour to transgress or resist the pervasive consumer culture nor to accept *vis-a-vis* Baudrillard that the production society of solid modernity has been superseded by a depthless and hyperized asociality where individual agency is irrelevant and where the illogic of a consumer 'code' reigns supreme over subjective ideas, marking the victory of the 'anti-social sign over the social sign'.[5] On the contrary, and as we have seen throughout this book, for Bauman, the 'real world' and the people who inhabit it are always drumming insistently on each other's doors.

In this chapter, I want to suggest that the strength of Bauman's analysis is not so much in the way he sees consumer culture as an all-encompassing reality, but the way in which he suggests to us that if we are prepared to admit that consumerism has become *the* way of life we are in a better position to learn a great deal about the 'means and the mechanisms' of the liquid modern sociality, which means of course that we will also be better equipped to do something about changing the world for the better, for humanity.

In response to this challenge, I consider here two important themes relating to consumerism in Bauman's work: that of social control and that of the relationship between consumerism and intellectual work. In relation to the former I explore the changing nature of social control with the shift from a producer society to a consumer sociality, while with regard to the latter I critically discuss the implications of consumerism for sociology and the conditions this places on the development of intellectual activity. In the first instance, however, it is necessary to briefly consider in more detail the meaning of consumerism. As the reader will see, if in Bauman's eyes liquid modernity is far from being a hermetically sealed universe, he sees it as an all-consuming playpen of consumerism which is so pervasive that it not only 'becomes the social link between the life-world of individuals and the purposeful rationality of the system as a whole',[6] but also takes on the character of a eusociality or a 'swarm', whose personnel mechanically stick to their mission to consume without the need of 'commanding officers, marching orders and daily briefings'.[7]

CONSUMERISM IN A CONSUMER SOCIALITY

As Bauman puts it, consumerism 'stands for production, distribution, desiring, obtaining and using, of symbolic goods.'[8] It is an over-the-counter culture that is as loud and shiny as lip gloss and which evokes a world in which image is piled upon image with the relentless impersonality of a comic strip come to life. Consumerism is also what various commentators have described as Disneyfication, Nikeization and McDonaldization all at once. It exists in the real of the city as well as in the irreal of cyberspace; it is on advertising hoardings, in shop signs and on the internet. It exists in the pace of everyday life: in popular culture, in the instantaneity of fast food, in the waist-lines of bloated consumers, in fast cars, in the muzak piped through the speakers in the myriad shopping malls. It exists on the emblems of t-shirts, jeans and trainers just as it exists in the language of the streets where it can be heard in the voices in the crowds: 'you want us to consume – OK, let's consume always more, and anything whatsoever; for any useless and absurd purpose'.[9]

In the event, people's emotional engagement with consumer culture is all-pervasive in liquid modernity. Liquid moderns are men and women who possess and are possessed by consumer culture and like the characters in Georges Perec's classic novel *Les Choses* (*Things*) they live their lives through the objects they buy and consume. They find it desperately difficult to leave the crude, fervent world of consumption behind and as a consequence they are destined to live their lives on the surface; they have to, since there is nothing much below it. They have no credible history that they are aware of – only the nostalgia for a marketwise DIY ready-made historicity – and no culture other than a consumer culture that is their own.

As has been remarked by numerous social historians, by the middle of the eighteenth century Britain had created its own 'empire of consumer colonies'. What Bauman's sociology suggests is that at the turn of the twenty-first century, Britain, in common with most other countries in the west, has become an 'empire of colony consumers' – everything from Japanese and Korean TVs, DVDs and computers and Taiwanese and Indonesian-made sports wear, to Indian cuisine, Italian chic and American culture. According to Bauman, consuming has today become an obligation rather than simply a choice; the globalized world we inhabit is a realm of great shoppers who take great pleasure in acquiring commodities.

However, the possession of commodities is, as Bauman suggests, 'only one of the stakes in the competition'.[10] What we also need to grasp is that there is (no)thing that is uncommodifiable in liquid modernity. As Bauman points out in his most recent work," the consumer industry has even at

last found 'the bottomless and self-replenishing gold-mine it has long sought' in the commodity of fear, which he goes on to argue is for the consumer industry a 'fully and truly renewable resource', to the extent that it 'has become the *perpetuum* mobile of the consumer market – and so of the present-day economy'. Nowhere is this commodification of fear better illustrated that in the mock documentary film, Fahrenheit 9/11, where Michael Moore gleans ironic amusement from the security devices now sold to American consumers panicked by the 'war on terror': the steel 'safe rooms' which protect purchasers in the safety of their own homes and the specially designed harnesses for abseiling to safety down a burning skyscraper.

Bauman also alerts us to the point that consumer culture involves a kind of symbolic rivalry over the meaning of commodities and 'the differences and distinctions they signify'.[12] In this process, commodities themselves necessarily acquire an unlasting aura – an ephemerality wrongly described by some critics as planned obsolescence – which the market endlessly recycles to make anything from feel-good films to innocent songs that take their watchers and listeners back to some past golden era. In this way consumer culture not only allows the past to be 'up-graded' in the light of new experiences but it cannily permits nostalgia without necessarily depending on it.

If the major accomplishment of the centred 'roots of order' underpinning solid modernity was to turn life into a regimentality in which the work of homofaber and the leisure of homo *ludens* was divided,[13] the major accomplishment of the decentred disorder-sustaining liquid modernity has been its ability to turn the attention of *homo faber* and *homo ludens* to the life of *homo consumens*.[14] Indeed, as Bauman argues, it is the instantaneity of consumer culture and its ability to 'take the waiting out of wanting' in delivering *homo consumens*' hopes and dreams that is today what is imagined as the measure of the success of a life worth living.

Of course consumption has always been with us. But the consumption that the majority of people of the time of solid modernity knew was a different but equally discriminatory kind of consumption. It was a disease, otherwise known as tuberculosis, which ate the body from within and was what the poorest 'producers' of solid modernity used to die of. Consumption in liquid modernity is, on the other hand, a disease of spending from without and is one the 'flawed consumers' of today would gladly like to suffer, would happily die for. If solid modernity was for the majority of people a world with the problem of living with reduced circumstances, liquid modernity is one with the problem of living with excess – a world of endless choices. An apt aphorism for liquid moderns

is that they expect to do everything to the full. They certainly know how to do excess: drink, food, sex, shopping – whatever and wherever.

As I pointed out in the last chapter, the individual liberated through reflexivity is burdened with choice, and is at every turn faced with the need to make decisions; it is up to the individual to choose the life they think is best. In their droves, liquid modern individuals, according to Bauman, are now free to choose, choose to consume. In a consumer culture the market plays on people's desires and wishes to be entertained and as such, life becomes a cycle ofdeveloping and fulfilling desires and wishes.

Bauman is suggesting that consuming is the way of life. We can shop both at home and away – we even have TV channels dedicated to home shopping when we cannot be bothered going to the shopping mall – but going to the mall has a special kind of pleasure all of its own. As Walter Benjamin might have said, the 'event' of the shopping experience, at the moment of its realization, is everything, since it incorporates pleasure, such pleasure that pleasure is not a word capable of identifying with the kind of pleasure that shopping brings. Don DeLillo's novel White Noise, at once mocking and applauding about consumer culture, captures well Bauman's sense of ambivalence towards the freedom offered by consumption, and the following description, which elucidates all of the juicy significance of shopping for consumers in a consumer culture, deserves to be quoted at length.

The book's main protagonist, Jack Gladney, is galvanized into shopping mode by one of his fellow teaching staff at the 'College-on-the-Hill', Eric Massingdale, who he meets for the first time outside work in the Mid-Village Mall. Eric, who is intrigued by Jack's off-campus choice of clothing, tells him, 'with a grin turning lascivious, rich with secret meaning', that he has the look of a 'big, harmless, aging, indistinct sort of guy'. The encounter awakens Jack to the significance of his own invisibility – which, as Bauman might say, is the damning dread of all liquid modern men and women – and it puts him 'in the mood to shop':

> I found the others and we walked across two parking lots to the main structure in the mid-village Mall, a ten-story building arranged around a center court of waterfalls, promenades and gardens ... into the elevator, into the shops set along the tiers, through the emporiums and department stores, puzzled but excited by my desire to buy. When I could not decide between two shirts, they encouraged me to buy both. When I said I was hungry, they fed me pretzels, beer, and souvlaki. The two girls scouted ahead, spotting things they thought I might want or need, running back to get me, to clutch

> my arms, plead with me to follow. They were my guides to endless well-being ... We smelled chocolate, popcorn, cologne; we smelled rugs and furs, hanging salamis and deathly vinyl. My family gloried in the event. I was one of them, shopping, at last shopped with reckless abandon ... 1 shopped for its own sake, looking and touching, inspecting merchandise I had no intention of buying, then buying it ... I began to grow in value and self-regard. I filled myself out, found new aspects of myself, located a person I'd forgotten existed ... I traded money for goods. The more money I spent, the less important it seemed. I was bigger than these sums. These sums poured off my skin like so much rain. These sums in fact came back to me in the form ofexistential credit. I felt expansive, inclined to be sweepingly generous ... I gestured in what I felt was an expansive manner ... Brightness settled around me ... we ate another meal.[15]

As Bauman sees it, for liquid modems as for Jack Gladney, consuming is what makes life palpable; this is because individually it makes liquid moderns feel visible, and it has the ability to show them what happiness looks like. In this sense he recognizes that consumer goods are not simply objects; consumers see themselves in them. In the manner of Lyotard,[16] Bauman observes that consumption is no longer of objects, but of *consumptions*. As we saw in the last chapter, the slipping away of the certitudes that once seemed to go with solid modern lives is what leaves liquid modem men and women vulnerable and hankering for promises of paradise. But if consumption is about the individuals' long-term love affair with themselves, it is first and foremost through the acquisition of consumer goods that individuals perceive that they can best transform themselves. As Linda Grant puts it:

> Because how you feel when you have your new coat or wrap dress is something so mysterious, complex and potentially transformative that it is almost metaphysical. For a new coat can induce not only happiness but a radically revised sense of who you are. You can call this by some piece of jargon if you wish, you can invoke phrases such as 'self-esteem', but they don't encompass the whole vast empire of the self. The new coat makes things possible. It casts you in a new light to yourself.[17]

In this regard, it is important to recognize Peter Beilharz's point that Bauman's sociology prompts us to recognize that 'even in consumption there is creativity of action, for culture is praxis'. But as the same author calls to our attention, 'Batman's purpose here is to alert us to the contrary,

> that to consume in the dominant social forms of today is also necessarily to conform. It is always the dark side that threatens us.'[18] Bauman recognizes that consumer culture begins where authenticity leaves off, ends, ceases to exist. It inhabits a different territory, which is a marketized, featureless, cultural desert and individuals recast as consumers for the most part live in that desert.

But the wonderful thing about consumer culture is just that: it is consumptive, nothing more than an excruciatingly staged performance act. It is for the moment. As Bauman points out, with consumer culture things 'must be ready for consumption on the spot; tasks must bring results before attention drifts to other endeavours; issues must bear the fruits before the cultivating zeal runs out. Immortality? Eternity? Fine – where is the theme park where I can experience them, on the spot?'[19] And you can do anything with commodities – if you can afford the cost. Consumer culture is compelling in a profound way because it works ingeniously through strategies of entertainment, with comprehensive engagement not required. Indeed, as clearly demonstrated in the quotation from *White Noise*, what is celebrated in liquid modernity is the unextraordinary moment, that familiar individualized quality of consumption, which Bauman argues is the defining existential feature of liquid modernity.

SOCIAL CONTROL IN A SOCIALITY OF CONSUMERS

Bauman draws on the theory of surveillance associated with Foucault to suggest that, in liquid modernity, consumer culture has emerged, for the masses, as the new 'inclusionary reality' or precarizing constraint. Like Foucault's other critics, Bauman also conveys in his work an unmistakable critique of this model of surveillance.[20] Unlike these writers, however, he theorizes the relationship between power-knowledge and social control anew, resolving to understand social control in the present rather than in the past. 1 will discuss these two aspects of Bauman's theory of liquid modem social control presently, but it is first of all necessary to outline the rudiments of Foucault's model.

As is well known, in his seminal theorization of modem social control, Discipline and Punish, Foucault used a startling juxtaposition to provide a graphic representation of the unfolding of the machinery of surveillance in what he described as a new disciplinary society.[21] In so doing he suggested that in solid modem societies there has been a historical movement from brutal and overt repression to rational, scientific and bureaucratic social control of 'deviant' populations through surveillance. In this most illuminating work, Foucault evoked the image of Jeremy

Bentham's Panopticon in order to argue that the all-seeing 'gaze' (*le* regard) comes to serve as a metaphor for surveillance connected with governmentality in the modem state.

A significant feature of the Panopticon is that like George Orwell's[22] ***Big Brother*** surveillance, it is indiscernible; those under surveillance are always unsure whether or not they are being watched. This model of surveillance keeps those being watched subordinate by means of uncertainty and as a consequence the 'watched' simply act in accordance with the Panopticon, because they never know 'when' or 'who' might be watching. Foucault argued that these social controls – the panopticonisms of everyday life found in schools, hospitals, factories as well as in the more obvious places such as prisons and military barracks – micro-manage individuals more efficiently than the carceral systems of yore because they thwart deviant behaviour through self-actuating prohibitions reinforced by the subject's own certainty in the omnipresence of the all-seeing power of the gaze.

Although the work of Foucault initially held much promise in overcoming the growing disenchantment with the problems of the more established understandings of social control, there were soon exposed a number of theoretical and empirical difficulties in adopting an alternative perspective for exploring social control which was at once anti-foundationalist, anti-scientific and anti-humanistic. Consequently, in recent years social control has become controversial; it floats indecisively between applications and critiques of the Panopticon model; it suffers from severe problems of legitimacy because the power of the state and other large social institutions has diminished in significance, at the same time the ability of individuals to say no has spectacularly increased.[23] Indeed, however beguiling Panopticon social control was in its attempts to make the oppressed complicit in their own repression, in liberal democracies it inevitably invited reaction and something had to give. Subsequently there has emerged a reticence to engage with the concept at a theoretical level and it has become little more than an aphorism for a theory, which gives sociologists a way out when all else fails.[24]

As I have argued elsewhere, sociologists of deviance and criminologists alike have in the main moved their focus away from ideology, theory and abstract thought and as a consequence more recent analyses of social control have been concerned with the ways in which public perceptions of crime have become sensitized to danger and how the right to censure as a result of 'dangerization' has come to feature more extensively in crime control.[25] For example, Lianos with Douglas considers this new way of thinking as a 'tendency to perceive and analyse the world through categories of menace', which invokes the tacit assumption that the world

'out there' is unsafe.[26] The upshot is that social control has become managerial rather than curative.

The demise of Big Brother Mark One

In developing his own critique of Foucault's Panopticon model, Bauman argues that the configuration of economic arrangements associated with consumer capitalism has become of crucial importance for explaining patterns of social control today. To put it another way, social control like much else in liberal democracies has by and large been commodified and privatized. As Bauman points out, Panopticon social control assumes an 'ordered and reason-led society' reflected in the nation states which emerged and grew in solid modernity.[27] As he puts it:

> One can hardly imagine a group more strictly differentiated, segregated and hierarchic than the population of the Panopticon ... Yet *all* residents of the Panopticon – the Overseer, the supervisors and the lowliest of the inmates alike – are *happy*. They are happy because they live in a carefully controlled environment, and thus know exactly what to do. Not for them the sorrows of frustration and the pain of failure.[28]

However, as I argued in Chapter 2, Baurnan shows us that the comfortable majority no longer live in the shadow of tyranny of the state; instead they create their own paroxysm, driven by market forces that they have no authority over, but at the same time have no final authority over them. Liquid modems live in a sociality where taste and aesthetics are all-pervasive and everything is always up for grabs. Bauman argues that the kind of life offered by consumer culture appeals most of all because it is perceived to be a life of freedom and the unwillingness to take on the trappings of being grown-up; at the same time, however, it is a challenge to the social hierarchies which prevailed in solid modernity.

Inequality in a consumer sociality, inequality in a casino culture

As we have seen already, liquid modernity operates with a system of power and a hierarchy which on the surface of things is no longer conferred by the orthodox sociological stratifications of social class, gender and 'race'. The freedom liquid modernity celebrates is the personal freedom to consume: the freedom to live and to love without social interference, to cross social class, gender, culture and ethnicity divides in the search for personal fulfilment. In this sense, the collective unconscious of the masses is no longer tied to social stratifications associated with the solid

modem producer society but expertly tuned into the essential purpose of private consumption, like the toy-town demeanour of the vast out-of-town shopping malls it so much resembles.

Bauman argues that in liquid modernity private consumption replaces work as the backbone of the reward system in a sociality which is underpatterned rather than patterned, disorganized rather than ordered. It is only the poor – the 'flawed consumers' – who are still controlled through the work ethic. Bauman argues that liquid modernity is a predicament that breeds new forms of inequality and servility. It is consumer culture that is today the central unequalizing tenet, which takes shape in the market place, telling individuals when, like Coca-Cola, they are the 'real thing'. It is a hypermarket of hype. Just as the market is ruthless in the way it does business, so the transnational corporations are rootless in their national, communal and moral allegiances, and unabashed in their contempt for culture. Because of globalization, international trade, slacker border controls, cheaper and quicker forms of travel, and the internet, all the countries in the world today share resources and affect each other. And the losers in this process, the 'flawed consumers', not only lack the competencies for work, but the capacity to be accomplished shoppers.

To put it simply, liquid modernity redraws the boundaries between social class divisions as a relationship between those who happily consume and those who cannot, despite their want of trying. What Bauman is suggesting is that it is exclusion rather than exploitation that is the watchword of repression in liquid modernity. Social control is barely noticeable, except for the flawed consumers, whose subordinate position prevents them from participating freely in what has become for the masses a dream world of consumer culture. Instead of being repressively controlled, this fragmented society is driven by Freud's 'pleasure principle'. To be a consumer is to escape the problems of blood and social class; in a consumer culture hierarchy only exists in the power of advanced capitalism to create images of the system people spend all their time trying to aspire to or stand apart from. Liquid men and women realize too that they are no different from anybody else and that to perform their individuality is the only game in town. Consequently they are destined to live a life as a 'casino culture', that 'wants from you nothing but to stay in the game and have enough tokens left on the table to go on playing.'[29] A life that is messy, uncertain, fragmentized, ongoing, a skein of dangling opportunities and chances – a dice-life which is as fathomless as the sea and where everything seems as if it happens by chance – and this has the paradoxical effect of making life appear in a way that nothing happens by chance, that everything is fated.

To reiterate, the solid modem pecking order lies in ruins because, in a casino culture, life is a game and no one social class, gender or ethnicity can make use of every opportunity on offer. To a large extent, to be a consumer is to escape the problems of social class, 'race' and ethnicity or gender; in a consumer culture hierarchy exists in the power of advanced capitalism to create images of the system people spend all their time trying to aspire to or stand apart from. The principle features of this liquid modem kind of social stratification are, for Bauman, obvious enough: no *apparent* inequalities as such, no *apparent* solid modem narratives, no *apparent* social class, racial or patriarchal hierarchies. Yet the consequences of this type of sociality allow for new, more insidious forms of social control, which are not endowed with any of the coherent or identifiable structures of domination outlined in more orthodox sociological accounts.

The duplicity of consumer culture

Nonetheless Bauman is aware that in liquid modernity individual identity-seeking is a form of dream-making that is pathetically absurd. The idea of individuality, like authenticity, emerges at its most potent when it transpires that there is no such thing; existentially individuals may be unique, but uniqueness or 'being' the 'real thing', is fated to be no more than fleetingly significant in the marketized consumer culture that is liquid modernity. In the event, individuals set themselves a circle that they can never hope to square; the ambivalence of being authentic in a consumer culture where authenticity is just another lifestyle choice. Yet this does not and nor could it prevent individuals seeking out the significance of their own personal individuality through the task of performativity, which is brought on by the damning fear of invisibility. What is more, it barely matters that the DIY lives made in liquid modernity, with their rhino skin aesthetics, look and sound like a lot of other lives; it is something about the mood that those lives instil that makes them feel so utterly fresh.

Shadowing the very freedoms that liquid modernity names as consumerist are the consumer inequalities which the market tries to disguise. For Bauman, if liquid modernity is constructed through consumption, we are all consumers today, and it takes a 'heroic constitution' to concede that one is not part of the consumer game.[30] The upshot of this is that liquid modem inequalities are cast as consumer inequalities; in a sociality of consumerism you are what you can afford. Consumers appear to be free to choose any life-style they wish, because the market flaunts consumer choice so lavishly. However, the purported equality perpetuated by the free market forcefully dupes the masses by hiding the

accomplished inequalities of consumers, even though these inequalities are materially visible to even the untrained eye.

The old adage that private freedom thrives on public squalor is as relevant today as it has always been, but as Bauman[31] suggests consumer capitalism gives an undertaking to deliver what it cannot – equality. The market disciplines some – notably the flawed consumers – and like the national lottery provides a week-in-week graduated roll-over prize to be shared unequally amongst the others. Differently from its predecessor, production-orientated industrial capitalism, consumer capitalism is bereft of any openness and honesty – at least with industrial capitalism you pretty much knew where you stood.

Bauman accords consumer capitalism a second two-facedness. It reduces the notion of freedom to consumerism; it leads people into thinking that they can liberate themselves by simply choosing a new identity. Consumer capitalism

> puts the highest premium on choice: choosing, that purely formal modality, is a value in its own right, perhaps the sole value of consumerist culture which does not call for, nor allow, justification. Choice is the consumer society's meta-value, the value with which to evaluate and rank all other values. And no wonder, since the 'choosiness' of the consumer is but a reflection of competitiveness, the life-blood of the market. To survive, and even more to thrive, the consumer market must first shape the consumer in its own image: the choice is what competition offers, and discrimination is what makes the offer attractive.[32]

Although consuming seems to be something to celebrate, Bauman suggests that the freedom it brings comes with a sad undertow. In this sense, the echo of an older, familiar grievance rings through Bauman's theory of liquid modernity; the rational humanism of the Enlightenment led to a shallow, self-centred materialism which today manifests itself most noticeably in consumer culture. A long time before Bauman was charting contemporary consumer culture, Adomo and Horkheimer,[33] two of the most perceptive philosophers of modem times, were suggesting that it is not possible to separate human consciousness from the material existence of people's lived condition. And they offered their own theory of the modem world, which if it suggested that the chaos we live in today originated in America where a religion of serial consumption was established along with the idea that continuing acquisition of ever better-looking, better-performing material goods makes life perfect, also suggested that everything we see is mediated through the filter of the 'culture industry'.

As is well known, Adomo and Horkheimer asserted that we may think that we are free, but we are only free 'to choose an ideology – since ideology always reflects economic coercion – everywhere proves to be freedom to choose what is always the same'. But as I have said already, if for Adorno and Horkheimer it was 'monopoly' and 'sameness' that were the two important defining features of the 'culture industry', in liquid modernity it is the search for 'polysemy' and 'difference' which defines individuals' roles as consumers and their 'rebellion' is more personal and consumptive than ideological and productive.

What Bauman does stress, *vis-à-vis* Adorno and Horkheimer, however, is that having liberated modern men and women through consumer culture, liquid modern capitalism keeps them performing the same forced choreography ad *infinitum*. An endless fresco of more of the same, and a sameness from which the mind and eye keep a distanced refuge and a world in which nothing very distinct is expressed but then again where lavishly borrowed and recycled images are always designed to shock, to excite, to keep the consumer curious – liquid modem aesthetic, that once became established, simply took over. A fantasy league of men and women jumping free of the burden of their solid modern history, which, *contra* Marxism, could not have been anybody else's intention. The other problem with this is the lack of competition for consumers' attention. There is only so much consumers can do with commodities; there are only so many ways you can achieve incongruity before you get bored with trying. For Bauman, these consumer identities appear to be torn from time, from the here and now, and brought together in an all-together-now chorus. For all its surface glamour, consumer culture is as shallow and empty as the shelves are seemingly bottomless and full to bursting in the stores which comprise the out-of-town shopping malls.

Even the men and women who were incapable of knowing consumer culture in their youth are seduced by its instant availability in liquid modernity. And like other consumers they have no intention of changing the world, they just want to enjoy being in it. In the unlikely event that they were ever to make a vow, it would be to never grow up. As Emma Soames, the editor of ***Saga Magazine,*** recently pointed out, no social group is

> more obsessed by youth than the new old [those who came of age in the 1960s], who display a gritty determination to cling to the culture they invented. Scared of nothing but death and dependence, they are using the toolkits of trusted brands, cosmetic surgery and the culture of youth to stay young. They are prepared to go the distance on the running machine to stay in the playground of youth. They are turning up the volume and getting on the dance floor.[34]

If older liquid moderns do not mature well, their younger counterparts do not do childhood well either. Their behaviour is always that of someone a different age to themselves; adults behave like teenagers and teenagers behave like adults. Wrapped up with consumer culture is the subversion of linear narratives, such as age and time so that we can be 40, a teenager, parent and grandparent all at once. All of this is not so much motivated by resistance to anything as such but simply by a wish to break free from the fixities which accompany more predictable forms of identity and the life course; and it is in the untidy realm of consumer culture that these always-in-progress cultural dynamics tend to metamorphose.

Superseding ethics with aesthetics and the evasion of the public realm

Bauman also recognizes that Adorno and Horkheimer were right when they suggested that the masses live in an infantilized world for much of the time – cushioned by prosperity, only occasionally awakened into difficult ethical choices of maturity – which is not to say that there is never time for direct political drama. As Bauman points out, in a consumer world, liquid moderns live perpetually on the edge of change and there is always demand for drama. Even here, though, direct action is usually no more than play-acting, however well intentioned. Voices are insistent on being heard, but as Bauman observes, these tend to belong to the television, not the political platform or the polis.[35] This is because in liquid modernity 'it is aesthetics, not ethics that is deployed to integrate the society of consumers, keep it on course, and time and again salvage it from crises. If ethics accord supreme value to duty well done, aesthetics put a premium on sublime experience'.[36]

In liquid modernity, aesthetics are worth more than knowledge and wisdom and because they draw on a heritage soaked in surface rather than depth (aesthetics rather than ethics) liquid moderns become the real-life incarnations of Baudrillard's cult of the 'into', who are obsessed with 'forms of appearance and become dedicated to the utopia of preservation of a youth that is already lost'.[37] They also expect the celebrity faces on their television screens – which on the one hand peddle the wares of the consumer capitalism and on the other feel the need to confess to us their every depravity and addiction – to be youthful and wrinkle-free. The celebrities are perceived to be the miracle of the liquid modern obsession with self-construction, not least because they are the 'stars' who give hope to ordinary people who long to reinvent themselves. In this sense it is clear to see why liquid modernity is also the age *par excellence* of makeovers and botox because its incumbents 'naturally'

believe that lines on the face are unpleasant on the eye – as well as being a constant reminder of mortality – and it makes perfect sense to airbrush them out of sight. This aesthetic impulse also makes perfect sense because liquid modernity is a world where theatricality and the childlike delight in pretending go hand in hand – as Lyotard might have put it, the idea of performativity is coterminous with the new 'generalized spirit' of knowledge in liquid modernity.

If consuming is the stuff of dreams in liquid modernity it co-exists with a hopeless evasion of the public realm. Bauman brings to our attention the point that at the present moment in time liquid moderns are likely to be neither independent-minded individuals nor interdependent-citizens but slavering dogs more accustomed to shopping and too busy-minded towards consuming to be bothered by the messy particulars of politics. To paraphrase Pyotr Chaadaev: the minds of liquid moderns reach back no further than yesterday; they are, as it were, strangers to themselves ... That is a consequence of living in a consumer culture that consists entirely of imports and imitation. They absorb all their ideas ready-made, and therefore the indelible trace left in the mind by a progressive movement of ideas, which gives it strength, does not shape their intellects ... They are like children who have not been taught to think for themselves; when they become adults, they have nothing of their own – all their knowledge is on the surface of their being, their soul is not within them.[38]

The great French novelist Andre Gide may have found wisdom in Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's[39] demonstration of the 'paradoxical truth' that 'man's happiness lies not in freedom but in his acceptance of duty (sic)'.[40] But as Bauman reminds us, when that duty is toward shopping – as it is in the liquid modern sociality – much more than the happy shoppers' contentment to shop is at stake. It is the threat of losing the hard-won citizenship rights, which until their emergence in modernity were restricted to only the most privileged social groups, that are most at risk. As Bauman puts it:

> The truth is that the consumer's skills, indeed, rise at the same time as the citizen's ineptitude and, ultimately, the citizen's impotence. The 'consumer's skill' consists in seeking biographical solutions to socially-produced afflictions; to use a metaphor – it consists in fighting a nuclear threat by purchasing a family nuclear shelter, or pollution of drinking-water supplies by finding a reliable brand of bottled water. Consumer skills emphatically do not include the art of translating private troubles into public issues, and public interests into individual rights and duties – the art that

constitutes the citizen and holds together the polity as the congregation of citizens.[41]

When 'things don't go as planned', citizens recast as consumers are naturally inclined to blame the manufacturers rather than taking responsibility of putting things right themselves. As Bauman points out, it as if 'we have been trained to stop worrying about things which stay stubbornly beyond our power ... and to concentrate our attention and energy instead on the tasks within our (individual) reach, competence and capacity for consumption.'[42] Liquid moderns are free, but existentially they are stubbornly bound by their dedication to consumer culture. For the majority, freedom consists of little more than deciding whether to eat at McDonald's or Burger King, shop at Sainsbury's or Asda, buy their furniture at Ikea or Habitat, or fill their car up at Shell or BP. Consumer culture, with its bland, uniform ubiquity, has a sameness and wherever you go there will be Britney Spears playing in the background and the world's local bank, HSBC, will do nicely thank you. But even this lack of surprise and suspense does not seem to dull their propensity to shop.

If in Adorno's administered society[43] consumer culture felt like a violation of what life was meant to be, in Bauman's liquid modernity it seems more and more like life itself, as life should be. Consumerism seems to have everything going for it, because more than anything else it makes consumers feel free. But if men and women recast as consumers act as if they are overtaken by a sublime confidence, it is one that has a surprising absence of responsibility. Consumers might operate with a feeling that they are flying on automatic pilot and as obstacles present themselves, so adjustments have to be made, but these are made with the caveat that as consumers they do not really have to get involved. Like Lyotard, Bauman insists that there is something performative and wished about liquid modern living. It is a privatized kind of theatre, in which the larger sociality provides the parts, but doesn't directly cast the play. But rather than being a public world proper, this sociality of individuals is a performance of individuals who perform their lives and continue to do so even when their individual circumstances dictate otherwise. But the real problem is that it is a consumer culture that robs individuals of the responsibility of the stewardship, which if they were prepared to look for it, would make them the architects of their own destinies.

Seduction and repression

Bauman argues that, contrary to the postulations of the critical theory of Habermas,[44] in the liquid modern sociality, the 'weapon of legitimation'

– the hegemony by which the state acquires its *raison d'être* – has been supplanted 'with two mutually complementary weapons: this of *seduction* and that of *repression*'.[45] For Bauman, as for Giddens,[46] 'experts' and 'expert systems' play a crucial role in liquid modern sociality, but not in Habermas's sense. They are no longer needed to serve the needs of capitalism to 'legitimate' the dominant hegemony; rather, they become crucial to the enforcement and preservation of the weapons of *seduction* and *repression*.

For Bauman, as for Foucault, it is the poor who continue to experience the hard edge of exclusionary and repressive surveillance. As Bauman points out, '*repression* [still] stands for "Panoptical" power, as described by Foucault. It employs surveillance ... and is indispensable to reach the areas *seduction* cannot, and is not meant to, reach'.[47] A crucial role that *repression* carries out in this respect is to elucidate the unappealing traits of non-participation in the realm of the free market, by reforging 'the unattractiveness of non-consumer existence into the unattractiveness of alternatives to market dependency'.[48]

Ultimately, it is the prevailing presence of *repression* that manifests itself in the form of the welfare services – the reforms that once aimed to destroy the 'five giants' of want, disease, squalor, ignorance and idleness – which makes *seduction* the secure vanquisher in this game of domination. Rather than being emancipatory, the welfare services today constitute a second-rate and repressive regime, which have recourse to the expert and governmentalized 'gaze' of those employed by the state: the DSS officer, the community development worker, the GP, the social worker, the probation officer, and so forth who collectively 'police' the 'flawed consumers'. In Feeley and Simon's terms this approach is 'concerned with techniques to identify, classify, and manage groupings sorted by dangerousness. The task is managerial not transformative'.[49] What we see with this trend is plain and simply the criminalization of poverty. To illustrate his argument, Bauman points out that in

> New York for instance, in the five years to 1999 the police budget rose by 40 per cent, and the police force by 12,000 officers, while the social service budget went down by 30 per cent and the number of social workers by 8000. In California, the penitentiary budget rose between 1975 and 1999 from $200 millions to $4.3 billions, while the sums dedicated to social assistance fell by 41 per cent.[50]

As Bauman suggests, this repressive kind of social control, which always operated with a sense of detachment, is today made possible through the death-in-life zombie institutions of the state which just about have the necessary authority to command the power-knowledge of

governmentality. For Bauman, cool distance is of the utmost importance here since social control is not merely used to differentiate 'us' from 'them', it also allows 'us' to construct 'them' as 'the objective ofaesthetic, not moral evaluation; as amatter of taste, not responsibility'.[51] This process is what Bauman describes as idiaphorization, which if it signals 'the removal of certain classified groups from the spheres of moral concern and competence',[52] it also essentially marks the comfortable but anxious majority's disengagement with a commitment and responsibility for those who do not conduct themselves as 'we' do.

Watching the celebrities or the making of Big Brother Mark Two

Be that as it may, Bauman argues that since in liquid modernity the market has accomplished its ideal of 'making consumers' dependent on itself',[53] the ***repressive*** apparatus of the Panopticon has largely been supplemented by the ***seductive*** allure of Synopticon watching. Drawing on the work of Thomas Mathiesen,[54] Bauman argues that in the liquid modem sociality it is by and large not the few ***who watch the many*** (Panopticon), but rather ***the many who watch the few*** (Synopticon) and the few who are most keenly watched are the celebrities, who

> may come from the world of politics, of sport, of science or show business, or just be celebrated information specialists. Wherever they come from, though, all displayed celebrities put on display the world of celebrities – a world whose main distinctive feature is precisely the quality of being watched – by many, and in all corners of the globe: of being global in their capacity of being watched.[55]

In Bauman's liquid modernity, Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*[56] does not so much give way to Baudrillard's *Third Order of the Simulacrum* – that is the 'hyperreal' does not supersede the distorted 'real' – rather the *Society of the Spectacle* is succeeded by one of celebrity, what Nicholas Bourriaud has called the 'society of extras, where everyone finds the illusion of an interactive democracy in more or less truncated channels of communication.'[57] As we have seen, the flawed consumers are the neglected underside of liquid modernity, the silent emblem of poverty, which brings together the sub-themes of social exclusion, obesity and human waste. The overside is represented by the celebrities, that deafening coterie of consumer culture, which brings together the opposite sub-themes of inclusion, skinniness and consumptive waste, who exist to remind us that we could be all these things if we, too, were so fabulously successful. But celebrity has its own ambivalence; it is ordinary and

special, within reach but somehow, at the same time, out of reach, of some other world. However, this does not stop ordinary men and women themselves wanting to be famous. A recent survey in the UK found that 'being famous' is the number one ambition of most children under 10 years old and that 'we have moved into a celebrity culture so strong ... being famous is an end in itself'.[58]

Celebrities in their pre-modern form were understood as icons and as such relics of divinity, but consumer culture merely bleeds them for sanctity. In the age of liquid modernity, celebrity 'spectacles'– anything from divorces, to deaths of princesses, to football matches, to larger-than-life episodes of soap opera stars' 'real' lives – take on a special role. They offer 'that something missing' by proxy: a surrogate memory, a surrogate significance, a surrogate solemnity, a surrogate community – a surrogate 'anything you want'. In this way, celebrities succeed in creating an audience in their own image, a tribe hardened to the modes and manners of heightened fandom. As Schickel has suggested, that celebrity has the power to create these kinds of myth is what makes it all the more enticing. The idea of celebrity is of particular significance because, as he suggests, celebrities are often represented by the media as a small and cohesive group of individuals, who in their fame or notoriety share close communal ties, no matter how different their routes to stardom.[59]

Social control: from normalization to precarization

What is also significant about the Synopticon, however, is that unlike the repressive apparatus of the Panopticon it 'needs no coercion' – it is the substitution of celebrity for everything else that has fed this phenomenon. With the Synopticon come 'new' and 'cool' ways of imagining life as it ought to be lived which supersede the discourses of power-knowledge associated with the 'work ethic' and 'scientific truth', which undergirded the Panopticon as Foucault imagined it. If the ambition of Panopticon surveillance was situated in its repressive exercise of power-knowledge, the success of decentred Synopticon surveillance lies in the seductive allure of desire made into wish. This is because in liquid modernity desire is not enough, only wishes that come true will suffice. For the comfortable majority, ***normalization*** is thus replaced by ***precurization,*** and when the 'normal' lost its authority, the world became committed, as Bauman might say, on people revealing themselves. In this sense, social control in liquid modernity has for the most part become rather more like the world of Channel 4's ***Big Brother***[60] than Orwell's dystopia.

As I have intimated already, for Bauman,[61] the major achievement of the solid modem world underpinned by the Panopticon 'gaze' was its

ability to suppress the 'pleasure principle'. For Freud,[62] the 'pleasure principle' is a tendency inherent in the unconscious of all individuals and involves their 'wishes' to seek their own satisfactions regardless of all other considerations. In solid modernity, the suppression of these 'wishes' operated through what Freud called the 'reality principle'. But the price of the triumph of the 'reality principle' was the temporary suspension of the 'pleasure principle', which had to be put off ***ad injinitum.*** In the event, solid modernity achieved its status quo by 'allowing' its incumbents to achieve the utmost possible expression of their desires with 'normalizing' conditions. Basically, shame was what maintained the 'reality principle': the shame of being found with one's pants down in a compromising situation unworthy of somebody 'normal'. In other words, individuals had to be sure they knew the differences between 'fantasy'and 'reality' in accord with the demands of the 'reality principle'. People were of course wont to take some risks but this did not ultimately ever lead to the complete undermining of the moral order, because with the 'reality principle' intact:

> rather than complete suspension of morality one finds the lifting of the curtain of morals followed by embarrassed or guilty returns to moral codes ... And so the attempt to escape perishes because it depends upon the very conventions that make everyday life possible. By searching for the total sexual encounter, the orgy of freedom and self-expression, the unbridled carnivalesque and the other 'real' experiences which lie beyond civil society, we collide with the antinomies of our desire.[63]

As such, the guiding feature of the 'reality principle' was procrastination. Phillips suggests that desire is the watchword for a society dominated by the 'reality principle', because it is another word for a risk not taken: 'the unlived life that seems the only life worth living'.[64]

The guiding feature of the 'pleasure principle', on the other hand, is instant gratification. As Bauman suggests, liquid modernity is a world where the ovemding view is that people must ***have*** what they desire as a 'wish' and have it now, this very minute. As he adds, the stock in trade aesthetic of consumerism is its ability to abolish delay by taking 'the waiting out of wanting'.[65] If, for Freud, the central goal of life in solid modernity was death, for Bauman, the central goal of life today is to consume. In this sense liquid modernity is the land of fantasy ***and*** wish fulfilment. Therefore it was inevitable that in a sociality where the individual is first and foremost ***homo consumens*** that the 'pleasure principle' would come to the fore. Indeed, when the central goal in life is the pleasure of self-indulgence through instant gratification, putting off

until later what is presently being denied through the 'reality principle', if not becoming an altogether redundant life-strategy has increasingly been cast in the shadow of the 'pleasure principle'. And when the 'normal' lost its authority, shame, if not disappearing, took on a different but equally meaningful role in people's lives.

Liquid modernity is a world committed, passionate one might say, on people revealing themselves and this is why Bauman understands it as the world of Big Brother Mark Two. With liquid modernity came the individuals' need to shed the burden of their shame, in order to ease the pain: the need to share the anxiety of their distress, to have someone else to carry the burden, not *for* them – in a sociality of individuals that is too much to ask of anybody – but *with* them. This form of confessional is facilitated by the technological advances of the increasingly visual culture of liquid modernity which obliges us to perfom, not just tell, our stories. Here again it is the celebrities, those ubiquitous televisual figures, who perform the central role because their lives make for delicious vicarious reading and what

> the avid watchers expect to find in the public confessions of the people in the limelight is the reassurance that their own all-too-familiar loneliness is not just liveable, but given some skill and a modicum of luck may be put to some good use. But what the spectators who eavesdrop on the celebrities' confessions are rewarded with in the first place is the much missed feeling of belonging: What they are promised day by day ('almost any minute of the hour') is a community of non-belonging, a togetherness of loners.[66]

To repeat, with liquid modernity, 'normalization' is thus replaced by 'precarization' as the 'reality principle' and the 'pleasure principle' strike a deal. As Bauman puts it, with liquid modernity it was as if the 'reality principle' and the 'pleasure principle'were destined to make each other's acquaintance, basically because consumer capitalism had on the one hand now found a new way for individuals to share their personal burdens and on the other the market 'needed' them to live out their impulses, irrationalities and perversions. In so doing, liquid modernity marked out that ambivalent temtory at the beginning and the end of procrastination. Bauman elucidates:

> The two kinds of space ... are strikingly different, yet interrelated: they do not converse with each other, yet are in constant communication: they have little in common, yet stimulate similarity. The two spaces are ruled by sharply dissimilar logics, mould

power. In his more recent work, however, Bauman suggests that if in liquid modernity intellectual work is generally becoming more interpretive, it is nonetheless marked with a sense of ambivalence because there is a trend in some intellectual work which is not prepared to leave behind its legislative characteristics.[72] In the event, there is a tendency for intellectual work to come in two modes: the 'integrated', which rejects consumer culture out of hand, and the 'apocalyptic', which true to liquid modem form embraces the pop and the pap of consumer culture like there is no tomorrow.[73]

Integrated sociology

According to Peter Beilharz,[74] in much the same way as the legislators, 'the integrated carry on with the tasks of the day, business as usual'. Yet they seldom theorize anew. As Bauman puts it: 'They are more likely to be busy producing and transmitting their own messages, in every sphere, on a daily basis ... the integrated ... are neither pessimists nor optimists (though privately they may be either), but first and foremost they are not dissenters'.[75] In Foucault's meaning,[76] which follows the logic of Nietzsche's genealogy of power relations, integrated intellectuals pretend to be guided by their senses, but they are actually motivated by their ideologies or their martyrs. An aphorism for integrated intellectual activity might be: big ideas may be dead, but let's preserve big ideas.

In sociology the work of the figurationalists[77] reflects the ambivalence associated with integrated intellectual activity. As I have argued elsewhere,[78] the intellectual trajectory of figurationalism is marked by its two historically distinctive roles in sociology. On the one hand, figurationalism can be described as a grand narrative conceived by someone (Norbert Elias) who understood sociological activity as that of a legislating strategy, while on the other it has of late become a type of integrated intellectual activity, maintained by Elias's disciples, such as Eric Dunning and Richard Kilminster,[79] who in their collective output carry forward a self-regulating tradition of sociological thought, merging the first into the second in order to provide a direction for still further expansion of the original grand narrative.

As is well known, figurationalists are sociologists of unswerving faith and share a belief that Norbert Elias, though not infallible, bequeathed them a precious store of permanently valid and reliable 'sensitizing' concepts. This catalogue includes the figuration, interdependencies, process (implicit to this concept is a critique ofprocess reduction), power, involvement and detachment, and of course the centrepiece of it all, the theory of civilizing processes.

As integrated intellectuals, the figurationalists attempt to both defend and transcend the legislating 'perfection' of Norbert Elias's sociology through various stratagems and subterfuges, involving only subtle 'tweaks' to that legislator's work. This is the only way that they can break free from the stultifying influence of the past in order to move their ideas forward. Nowhere is this ambivalence more apparent than in Eric Dunning's book ***Sport Matters.*** When reading ***Sport Matters,*** one gets the feeling that Dunning wants to develop his sociological imagination in new directions. Yet the metaphysical structure that he has inherited demands that new ideas must always remain secondary and subservient to the central ideas of Elias. I shall elucidate.

The meaning of Elias's critical distinction between 'involvement' and 'detachment' has long troubled figurational sociology. Despite the implications of some figurational sociologists[80] that Elias uses the term interdependence unconditionally to mean this of independence (detachment) and that of dependence (involvement), numerous authors have criticized this dichotomy in relation to the methodological and epistemological problems associated with 'doing' figurational sociology.[81] Dunning himself acknowledges this problem when he notes that involvement and detachment is 'an area to which figurational sociologists need to devote a great deal more attention'.[82]

Be that as it may, in ***Sport Matters*** we can see Dunning defending the figurational understanding of the relationship between involvement and detachment by reiterating virulently Elias's key arguments.[83] We can also observe that he seeks to distance himself from the problems associated with this dichotomy by continually evoking the concepts of inter-dependence and ***habitus***, particularly in his discussion of gender ***habituses*** and identities.[84] This type of anxiety continually remains, in Dunning's work, unresolved. In his theoretical discussions, Dunning also skirts very quickly over the concept of the civilizing processes. He continually strives to avoid a reified conception of the civilizing processes by introducing different interpretations of the meaning of the concept, which he hopes will respond flexibly to the demands of each new situation and will anticipate the tendency of non-figurationalists to oversimplify its meaning.

Yet the suspicion is unavoidable that a reified social class hierarchy is always at work in Dunning's thinking regarding this concept. For example, in Dunning, Murphy and Williams's work on football hooliganism,[85] it is obvious that Elias's underlying metaphysics implies that football hooligans will more or less inevitably be rough and working class. Yet more recent work in this area, ***vis-a-vis*** Bauman's sociology, suggests that such violence is very much contingent upon time and context, rather than being a universal attribute of particular sections of working class

men.[86] This work also suggests that despite their efforts to overcome the duality of structure and agency, the figurationalists' synthesis emphasizes similarity rather than difference, fixity rather than contingency: an incongruity that undermines and disrupts the coherent order of the concept of the civilizing process. The figurational approach also relies too heavily on this abstract, reified and logocentric concept of progress, which has little practical content and is difficult to relate to concrete social relations. This gap between theory and 'reality' continually undermines Dunning's attempt to make the theory of civilizing processes relevant to concrete social relations.

Apocalyptic sociology

Whereas the integrated draw their purpose and energies from their martyrs, the apocalyptics not only reject grand narratives but draw their inspiration from the vantage point of the commodified and individualized experience of living in liquid modernity. Moreover, because they are 'free of the immediate need to please their masters, [they] can take more than the occasional snap at the hands that claim to feed them'.[87] Bauman is drawn to apocalyptic intellectual work precisely because it is not tied to any grand narrative. He also knows that any discipline that is out of touch with the world it sets out to represent is in danger of withering away and in this context he is drawn to apocalyptic sociology because not only does it speak the language of liquid modern times, but it always has the potential to fragment, acquire diverse meanings. Indeed, with apocalyptic intellectual work, there always remains the possibility that countering the neo-liberal hegemony can be made conceivable.

However, Bauman also fears apocalyptic intellectual work. His ambivalence towards it owes a great deal to his idea that as much as they are free from the constraints of the ideologies to which the integrated intellectuals are subservient, in a consumer culture the apocalyptic intellectuals are always likely to be 'absorbed' by the dominant neo-liberal hegemony. This is because intellectual lives no longer proceed the same way as before. And the consumerist capitalist economy attempts to abolish intellectualism altogether, mobilizing apocalyptics as consumer guide trainers, experts in anything from football to Big Macs and electronic toys.

Apocalyptic sociology celebrates what the British philosopher Bertrand Russell once called 'useless knowledge': topics which are pleasurable in themselves, but do not present themselves in any way useful. Consequently, this kind of sociology seldom reaches its intended targets. Overdesigned and underwritten apocalyptic sociology is everything that Bauman's sociology is not and it can be seen as a triumph of form over

content. In the struggle to hold on to the viewer's attention – apocalyptic sociology is made to be seen rather than read – it has all the cutting-edge carnival of quips and barbs and its protagonists are always ready to connive increasingly melodramatic devices.

Consequently, as in the case of any other commodities purchased on sale, apocalyptic intellectual work is often less than fully honoured; this is because it is always liable to self-commodify. It does not resist the power of the market; it cannot. It does not pretend to be 'outside' consumer culture; it is already inscribed in the flux of that culture, including of course the 'free' market[88] and, equally significant in this process, the mass media. It could not be any other way in 'liquid' modernity. In the event, intellectual work 'becomes televisual. Public intellectuals are televisual intellectuals; they no longer get 15 minutes, only 15 second grabs, and must needs simplify; as well as purring appropriately at the camera'.[89] Bauman suggests that the apocalyptics have been raised on, and numbed by, the altogether less imaginative, less accurate, fabrications of reality that punctuate the television schedules. That the apocalyptics, like the TV schedulers, are obsessed with quick makeover show intellectual work and can be seen appearing on TV 'reality' shows is not unsurprising, because liquid modernity is governed by quick-fix transubstantiations and confessional culture. This televisual culture not only considers that trying to be famous is an intellectual activity but it also ends up treating serious issues lightly and light issues seriously.

Indeed, that apocalyptic sociology expects its legitimacy to be judged by the 'performativity criterion' (to use one of Jean-François Lyotard's terms), inevitably means that its knowledge claims are compelled to be limited and limiting. All that a sociology committed to the 'techniques and technologies' of performativity is capable of producing is the kind of intellectual work that is always trying to be 'bigger' and 'noisier' than that which preceded it. To this extent the sociology of the apocalyptics is crowd-pleasing stuff, it is of the Hello! magazine style of criticism and its chief characteristics are populist rather than the subtle food of social observation and critical interpretation. Indeed, all apocalyptic intellectual work has the tawdry taste of comfort cuisine for lovers of Big Macs, albeit prepared by academic chefs: a stodgy 'filling-in' bite, surrounded by the most appetising nuggets, meant to slake the appetite, but it remains ultimately just a 'happy meal' composed of empty intellectual calories.

Apocalyptic and integrated sociology: a summary

In the above discussion we saw that contrary to apocalyptics, for the integrated, the small screen is not the place for learned discussions. We

also saw that integrated intellectual work with its *Bildungphilister* attitude is underpinned by a defensive strategy founded in substance over shock. We saw too that the trouble with this strategy is that its narrow-minded intellectualism tends to rely on the heritage ideas of one thinker or one perspective. As a consequence, integrated sociologists are only prepared to read the world in one way which offers images of stability and a sense of continuity in a time of incessant change. Consequently, integrated sociology is only able to aspire to a profoundly conservative vision of what constitutes intellectual work because it relies on clichéd theories and recycled text. It is for all its classical principles proleptic, not least because of its endless reworkings of the same ideas and theories. The integrated might bring new material from other places, but the programmes which they follow and with which they explore these new materials have already been laid out for them in advance. In the event, the integrated have to try hard to find the real-life companions to their sociological narratives.

We saw, too, that integrated sociology may resist the powerful impact of the consumer culture that pervades the works of the apocalyptics, but it is founded on a sensibility that has an inability to handle new vistas and as a result the informational drive of the writing is all too narrowly defined. For all its brio and willingness to acknowledge the shape-shifting qualities of liquid modernity, it merely provides the kind of sociological analyses that feel like a mourning, what Baudrillard might call a fetishism for the lost object.

We saw that the apocalyptics, on the other hand, try to understand the world through the impoverished language-games that consumer culture has trained them in. Accordingly, apocalyptical sociology sacrifices thoughtfulness for pace. By taking a celebrity-magazine approach to sociology, the business of apocalyptic intellectual work is more to do with creating a climate around the work – as well as selling and promoting it – than anything else. Gift-wrapped in Christmas colours, apocalyptic sociology provides a pleasant way of passing the time, but with it there is a desperation to please, to seek the easiest applause and the speediest pay-offs.

However, the bigger problem with these two trends is not just what they imply individually, but, more seriously, what they imply for sociology in relation to each other. What Bauman suggests is the more the apocalyptics immerse themselves in liquid modern capitalist consumer culture the more they deprive themselves of the ability to take a position outside it, whereas the more the integrated deprive themselves of the opportunity to engage with the ideas and theories associated with vocabularies outside their accustomed jurisdiction so they deprive themselves of the opportunity to better grasp the 'progressive individualization of life challenges, the tasks they posit and the responses they call for'.[90] Conjointly these two intellectual strategies fail in their capacity to adequately and responsibly account for the messy realities of human existence and in the event a sociology 'made to the measure' of liquid modernity becomes an impossibility.

A SOCIOLOGY 'MADE TO THE MEASURE' OF LIQUID MODERNITY

Yet all is not lost. We have seen throughout this book that in his own intellectual work, Bauman, in one fell swoop, shatters the sociological lethargy of the integrated at the same time as stirring the stagnant intellectual pond of the apocalyptics. In so doing he effects a passage between the Scylla of the nostalgic and enervating sociology of the integrated and the Charybdis of the topically wide-ranging but analytically anorexic and disappointingly unconventional sociology of the apocalyptics. The reader should have grasped by now that Bauman has forged a unique voice in a world of sociology where, increasingly, bogofs ('buy one get one free' offers) are becoming the *sine qua non* of market success. In a liquid modern world that panders to marketing ideas of what sociology should be like, his instinct is to write against the grain. To use two of his own metaphors, Bauman is no ordinary sociological tourist but a passionate pilgrim, whose work as we have seen throughout this book is chock-a-block with the kind of erudition associated with that of the founding fathers. That said, following Guy Debord's stratagem for analysing the society of the spectacle, Bauman recognizes that to speak of liquid modernity 'means talking its language to some degree'[91] and what this means is that his sociology, unlike that of the integrated, is able to overcome any disdain it has for the extraordinary as well as it is able to reject the 'nineteenth-century' ways of doing sociology which try to keep the subject at the same level. Be that as it may, what Bauman does take from the integrated is that sociology is not all the same, some sociologists are intrinsically better at what they do than others, and it is wrong to pretend any different. He also understands, like the integrated, that it is not cultural up-to-the-minuteness that makes classic sociology but the more elusive element of timelessness. Indeed, as reading Bauman time and again reminds his readers, delight cannot be taught or measured, but good scholarship can.

As I am in the process of finishing writing this book in November 2004, Bauman's prodigious scholarship shows little sign of either

retreating from its ability to metamorphose or slowing down. The third book he has published this year,[92] ***Europe: An Unfinished Adventure***, which is a brilliant critique of the Hobbesian world Europe seems to have been immersing itself into ***ad infinitum*** coupled with a political and ethical challenge to its leaders – has just landed on my doorstep. It remains to be seen what Bauman has in store for us as he approaches his ninth decade. ***Europe*** confirms that this mesmerizing sociologist retains all his powers of witness, of warning and of wonder and we can be sure that whatever it is it will continue to extend the possibilities of the sociological imagination and confirm the truth of one of Bauman's own aphorisms: that 'there is more to what you see and hear than meets the eye, that the most important part is hidden from view, and that there is a huge and dense tissue of inter-human connections below the visible tip of the iceberg. An insight that triggers imagination that, if worked on properly, sediments sociology'.[93]

Suggestions for Further Reading

It had initially been my intention to provide the reader with an annotated bibliography of all Bauman's major book-length studies, but by the end of the project I decided against this because the primary target of this book is those coming to Bauman for the first time or who need step-by-step guidance.

With these readers in mind, the best place to start is with the interviews, and the pre-eminent and most extensive among these is Z. Bauman and K. Tester, ***Conversations with Zygmunt Bauman,*** Cambridge: Polity Press (2001), which as well as providing some good background information on the development of Bauman's thought from the early career in Poland right through to the intellectual shift from 'postmodernity' to 'liquid modernity', deals with topics as wide-ranging as ethics and human values, the significance of ambivalence to Bauman's sociology, individualization and consumerism, and politics and justice. For the reader wanting to get a handle on the orientation of Bauman's thinking on liquid modernity, the best interview to consult is Zygmunt Bauman, 'Liquid Sociality', in N. Gane ***The Future of Social Theory,*** London: Continuum (2004). There are a number of other important interviews which not only provide further insights into Bauman's thought but also enable the introductory reader to better situate him in relation to other thinkers, and in this regard I