

**ÇANKAYA ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
İNGİLİZ EDEBİYATI VE KÜLTÜR İNCELEMELERİ**

YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ

**CONSUMERISM AND REFLECTIONS OF VIOLENCE IN CHUCK
PALAHNIUK'S *FIGHT CLUB* AND JAMES GRAHAM BALLARD'S
*MILLENNIUM PEOPLE AND KINGDOM COME***

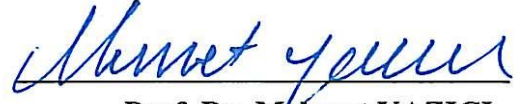
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OCAK 2019

Title of the Thesis: **CONSUMERISM AND REFLECTIONS OF VIOLENCE IN CHUCK PALAHNIUK'S *FIGHT CLUB* AND JAMES GRAHAM BALLARD'S *MILLENNIUM PEOPLE AND KINGDOM COME***

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ABSTRACT

CONSUMERISM AND REFLECTIONS OF VIOLENCE IN CHUCK PALAHNIUK'S *FIGHT CLUB* AND JAMES GRAHAM BALLARD'S *MILLENNIUM PEOPLE AND KINGDOM COME*

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Master Thesis

Graduate School of Social Sciences

MA, English Literature and Cultural Studies

Supervisor: Asst. Prof. Dr. Berkem GÜRENCİ SAĞLAM

January 2019, 64 pages

Today, consumerism as a new life-style, propels societies into consumption, eroding the conventional social morality of societies, and the cultural and natural destruction caused by this consumption tolls the death knell for humanity. Consumerism puts the consumption culture in to the centre of civilization and social life, as the main activity for pleasure, creating phony perceptions of happiness and freedom. However, those who do not have adequate free time and financial sources for consumption are isolated in this consumer culture. People who are deprived of consumption opportunities gravitate towards violence, crime, pornography and addictions as alternatives to consumption. These inequalities, which cause conflicts between the social strata that are classified according to their product choice, not only pave way to social disintegration, but also to the annihilation of civilisation. The hazards of consumerism, which have been criticised by many thinkers such as Baudrillard, Badiou, Bocoock, Bauman and Zizek, has also inspired many literary works of prominent writers in the world. The aim of this study is to scrutinize consumerism and the reflection of violence in the novels *Fight Club* by Chuck Palahniuk and *Millennium People* and *Kingdom Come* by James Graham Ballard. Due to the striking parallelism between *Fight Club* and *Millennium People* in terms of characterization and plot, these novels have been analyzed comparatively.

Key Words: Consumerism, Chuck Palahniuk, *Fight Club*, J.G. Ballard, *Millennium*
People, Kingdom Come



ÖZET
**CHUCK PALAHNIUK'İN *DÖVÜŞ KULÜBÜ* İLE J. G. BALLARD'IN:
MİLENYUM İNSANLARI VE *ÖTEKİ DÜNYA* ROMANLARINDA
TÜKETİMCİLİK VE ŞİDDET YANSIMALARI**

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MA, İngiliz Edebiyatı ve Kültür İncelemeleri

Tez Yöneticisi: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Berkem GÜRENCİ SAĞLAM

Ocak 2019, 64 Sayfa

Tüketimcilik anlayışı yeni bir hayat tarzı olarak günümüzde toplumların alışıla gelmiş sosyal ahlak değerlerini bozmak pahasına insanları tüketime özendirilmekte ve bilinçsiz tüketimin neden olduğu kültürel ve doğal tahribatla insanlığın sonunu hazırlamaktadır. Postmodern tüketim, yarattığı sahte mutluluk ve özgürlük algıları sayesinde tüketimi uygarlığın ve sosyal yaşamın merkezine koymakta; bununla birlikte, tüketim için yeterli boş zaman ve finansal kaynaktan yoksun olan bireyleri toplumun dışına itmektir. Tüketememenin yarattığı hayal kırıklığı ve ötekileştirmenin yol açtığı stres durumunu ortadan kaldırmak için yeterli kaynaklara sahip olamayan bireyler, tüketime alternatif olarak şiddet, pornografi, suç ve bağımlılık gibi sapkınlıklara yönelmektedirler. Tüketim değerlerine göre sınıflaşan topluluklar arasında çatışmaya sebep olan bu durum toplumsal çöküşü hızlandırmakta ve medeniyetin temelini oluşturan ortak yaşam bilincinin yerini kaosa bırakarak uygarlığın tükenişine yol açmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, tüketimcilik anlayışının iç dinamiklerini irdeleyerek, yarattığı şiddet kültürünün yansımalarını Amerikalı yazar Chuck Palahniuk 'in *Dövüş Kulübü* adlı romanı ile son dönem İngiliz yazarlarından James Graham Ballardın'ın *Milenyum İnsanları* ve *Öteki Dünya* adlı romanlarında ele almaktır. İçerik, kurgu ve roman kişileri arasındaki dikkat

çekici benzerliklerden ötürü *Dövüş Kulübü* ve *Milenyum İnsanları* adlı romanlar karşılaştırmalı olarak incelenmişlerdir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tüketimcilik, Chuck Palahniuk, *Dövüş Kulübü*, J.G. Ballard, *Milenyum İnsanları*, *Öteki Dünya*



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply grateful to my supervisor Asst. Prof. Dr. Berkem GÜRENCİ SAĞLAM for her great patience, confidence and her invaluable support during my research. Without her guidance and suggestions, completion of this research would not have been possible.

I owe many thanks to all my professors in the Departments of English Literature and Culture Studies, and in Translation and Interpreting Studies in Çankaya University for their invaluable contribution to my academic career.

I would like to thank the Library of Çankaya University for the facilities they provided.

In addition, special warm thanks to my wife Özlem for her affection, benevolence, encouragement and sacrifice during the preparation of this thesis.

Finally, I want to express my gratitude to my friends and to both of my families for their love and support.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

STATEMENT OF NON-PLAGIARISM PAGE.....	III
ABSTRACT.....	IV
ÖZET.....	V
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	VI
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	VII
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER I:	
1. Theoretical Introduction to Consumerism.....	8
CHAPTER II:	
2.You Are What You Own!: <i>Fight Club</i> and <i>Millennium People</i>	20
CHAPTER III:	
3. A Shot Across The Bow: <i>Kingdom Come</i>	38
CONCLUSION.....	57
WORKS CITED.....	59
CV.....	64

INTRODUCTION

Consumerism, which can be defined as protection or promotion of the consumer's benefits, later gained a negative meaning as being overly preoccupied with buying and owning goods. In *Collins Dictionary* consumerism is defined both as; "the protection or promotion of the interests of consumers" and "the preoccupation of society with the acquisition of consumer goods".¹ There are theories that take a stand for consumerism as it is desirable for economy and society. Increasing consumption of goods means amplification of production, so it makes it more possible for the majority to meet their needs and thus creates a more happy society. On the other hand, many philosophers, psychologists and sociologists such as Badiou, Zizek, Bauman and Bocoock claim that capitalist consumption culture does not bring real happiness, on the contrary it causes cultural and moral degeneration. Today, consumerism, what degrades humans to consumers or to consumables, and propels individuals and societies to consume more and more, is a new catastrophe that not only destroys social morality and dharma, but also disturbs the natural balance of our world.

Consumerism, changes ethics and mentality of today's societies and individuals, causes the alienation of man from his society and nature. This consumption culture not only consumes humanly traits, but also causes the termination of natural resources, and the extinction of species. Menace of an alien invasion, or the threat of a nuclear war for the end of the world has become outdated after the 1980s and a new threat, consumption frenzy has occurred. This change has become apparent in literature too. Besides the changing of life styles and social structures, new literary genres such as cyberpunk² and blank fiction³ were introduced

¹'consumerism' <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/consumerism>

² A type of science fiction typically describing a violent, urban future in which computers and drugs predominate. (<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/cyberpunk>)

³ "In contemporary literature, the system of representations governing consumer society and commodification has become the subject matter of a new narrative form known as "blank

in literature. The cultural degeneration and alienation of people because of consumerism has become a popular theme for many literary works, not only in America, but also in other Western and Eastern literatures. Although occurrence of the effects of consumerism differs in each country and culture, during the 1990s degenerative and violent effects of consumerism became apparent in the USA and the United Kingdom. Reflections of consumerism and violence are apparent in such novels: Bret Easton Ellis' *Glamorama* (1998), Maxx Barry's *Syrup* (1999), Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club* (1996) and Ballard's *Millennium People* (2003) and *Kingdom Come* (2006). They all criticise and satirize consumerism and the spread of consumer culture.

Although consumerism firstly appeared as an economic policy that is helpful for the economic development and welfare of societies, it turned into a disaster because of the wild capitalistic tendencies of both the private and state sectors, which have neglected the environment and social structures. Continental sociologists prefer to use the term; postmodern consumerism, late capitalism or postmodern capitalism instead of consumerism so as to make a distinction between beneficial consumerism and malevolent wild capitalistic consumerism. Consumerism is an ambivalent term and "its meanings have been the subject of differing opinions and periodic reinterpretations" (Swagler, 347). According to Cravens and Hills, consumerism "encompasses a multitude of group actions concerned with such issues as consumer protection laws, the availability of product and price information, fraudulent and deceptive business practices, and product safety" (1973, 233). On the other hand, there are also critics who link consumerism to abuse of consumers, pollution, and unconscionable materialistic ethos. One of the early critics, Vance Packard in his book *Waste Makers* points out the manipulative advertising practices of consumerism " as businessmen caught a glimpse of the potentialities inherent in endlessly expanding the wants of people under consumerism, forced draft or otherwise, many began to see blue skies" (1960, 24). Nowadays, consumerism is mostly associated with excessive consumption culture that not only causes pollution and waste, but also diminishes the resources of our world. According to Conrad Lodziak, the latest ideology of consumerism is "the increasing commercialization and commodification of everyday life, the growing volume of commodities in

fiction", with which the works of Chuck Palahniuk, Bret Easton Ellis and Douglas Coupland are associated. " (Yazıcıoğlu, 2014)

circulation" and addressing superfluous "needs and wants by purchasing goods, services and experiences rather than providing these for themselves" (2002, 1).

Perception operations of advertisements propagate to provide unlimited freedom, eternal bliss, and positive self-esteem through purchase. Products are advertised according to symbolic values attributed to them by advertisements, rather than their utility values. That is to say, advertisements promote goods according to values that they do not actually have. Goods are promoted according to fickle desires that consumers fantasize to possess. Consumers find themselves trapped in an endless game of absence and presence of desire in commodities.

Another problem in consumerism is that, when one does not earn enough money, s/he will be excluded from the amusement of shopping and lose the chance of self expression. What people buy, eat or wear reflects their own personality and attaches personal meanings to their self-esteem. Even if shopping does not bring permanent happiness and relief, people who are not able to consume can develop aggression for lack of expression and can nurture grudge against others, since in this consumer culture, consumption is not only a pleasure activity but also a language of signs that people use to build on their characters. As Baudrillard points out, "objects never exhaust themselves in the function they serve, and in this excess of presence they take on their signification of prestige" (1981, 32). People use what they have purchased as a language to send others messages about their identities. In post-consumerism, one not only consumes material objects, but s/he also purchases symbolic meanings and ideologies together with the products that s/he eats, drinks, buys, or places s/he visits. The things that people purchase become parts of their identity and give us social prestige.

The rage against misrecognition can slide the society into a chaos in which different strata of population conflict with each other. Especially males who are not able to express their masculinity in consumption, can use violence as a means of self expression and relaxation. Furthermore, as Bonino notes in his essay *On Post-Modern Consumerist Societies, Crime and Violence*:

The real victims of consumerism are the lower classes, whose cultural incorporation and structural rejection produces intense dynamics of resentment; its most dramatic result—violence and crime—is a transgressive act engaged in for the purpose of dignity and identity re-assertion. (119)

This consumption culture, which undermines traditional ethical structures, creates a moral vacuum that causes the depletion of virtues, and fills this void with a culture of violence, pornography, crime, addictions and perversions. Sometimes violence can also occur as a protest of those "inadequate", "unwanted", "flawed consumers", or "non-consumers"⁴ against social inequalities and injustices. In brief, consumption culture may be one of the causes of crime culture.

This economic system or life style has not only been criticised in philosophy, sociology or economics, but also in many literary works. Consumerism is one of the main themes of disaster novels, dystopias, and blank fictions. Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club* and J.G Ballard's *Millennium People* and *Kingdom Come* are novels that severely criticise consumerism and some of its effects: violence, celebrity-culture, and pornography. The plots of all these three novels discuss the occurrence of collective crime and violence as a reaction against inequalities in society, corruption and consumer culture. Thus, the aim of this study is to analyse these three novels in terms of consumerism, so as to understand representations of violence in American and British literature.

James Graham Ballard's science fiction novels were so distinctive and yet consistent that he gave a new term to English. The term 'Ballardian' is explained as: either "(adj.) of James Graham Ballard (J.G. Ballard; born 1930), the British novelist, or his works" or "resembling or suggestive of the conditions described in Ballard's novels & stories, esp. dystopian modernity, bleak man-made landscapes & the psychological effects of technological, social or environmental developments".⁵ As in the definition, Ballard is famous for his science-fictions and dystopias of contemporary society.

Ballard published his first novel *The Wind From Nowhere* in 1961, and this was followed by his other disaster novels, *The Drowned World* (1962), *The Burning World* (1964)—which later retitled as: *The Drought* (1965)—and *The Crystal World* (1966). Ballard attracted the attention of literary circles after the publication of *The Atrocity Exhibition* (1970). In 1973 he published *Crash*; one of

⁴ Bauman, Z., *Work, Consumerism and the New Poor*, 2nd ed., Open University Press, Buckingham, 2005,38-112-13)

⁵ 'Ballardian' in www.collinsdictionary.com, Collins 2018, Web. 1 April 2018.

the most controversial novels in English Literature, in which he told stories of people who gain sexual pleasure in car crashes. *Crash* is one of the first examples of punk fiction in English literature with its freaky handling of car accidents and celebrity culture. It was also filmed by director David Cronenberg in 1996. He later wrote *Concrete Island* (1975), and *High-Rise* (1976)—which was adapted into film in 2015.

Ballard's writing career reached its peak when he published his autobiographically-based novel *Empire of the Sun* in 1984. This novel was adapted to screen by Steven Spielberg, and won worldwide fame. Ballard, being a prolific writer, also published many short story books such as *Bilennium* (1962), *The Terminal Beach* (1964), *Vermillion Sands* (1971), *Myths of the Near Future* (1982) and later a collection of all his short stories in 2006, *The Complete Short Stories of J. G. Ballard Volume I and Volume II*. Ballard later turned his steps to blank fiction and crime novels; *Cocaine Nights* (1996) and *Super-Cannes* (2000) depicted the capacity of people for evil and how they can turn this life into hell.

In his novel *Millennium People* (2003) Ballard depicts social and economic inequalities that create unrest in society. In his last novel, *Kingdom Come* (2006) he portrays the consumerist apocalypse awaiting the United Kingdom. After the 2000s consumerism began to show its dark face in the United Kingdom. Disaster of the IKEA opening in Edmonton, in 2005, and the riots of 2011 showed how consumerism has changed the social structure of the country. The riots in 2011, which began in London, also triggered riots and marches in other cities like Birmingham, Liverpool and Manchester. During these riots the society witnessed looting and the destruction of public goods. Many researchers put forward that these riots were not a resistance against the system, rather "the riots were about looting, and represented an opportunity to advance the consumer and financial interest of the self" (Treadwell et al., 2012, p.17). There is now a completely changed society that has degenerated by consumerist life style. On one hand, hooliganism, anti-immigration and racism has been increasing in the United Kingdom, on the other hand, respect to traditional values and faith in moral and social ethics has been decreasing. Ballard reflects this deterioration in English society in his novels *Millennium People* and *Kingdom Come* years before the breakout of such riots.

Ballard has also published non-fiction books: *A User's Guide to the Millennium: Essays and Reviews* (1996) and his autobiography, *Miracles of Life* (2008). After Ballard's death, famous film maker Chris Petit wrote: "If there were

any sense of cultural justice in this country, the Westway—that chunk of concrete modernism—would be renamed after J. G. Ballard" (<https://granta.com/The-Last-Modernist/>). This is what best describes Ballard's influence on English literature and British culture, and his visionary writing style. Since Ballard in his novels mainly depicts English society and uses London, especially the Westway, as settings of his novels and stories, he indeed deserves to be taken into consideration when exploring postmodern English literature. In the analysis of consumerism in English literature, Ballard's two novels *Millennium People* and *Kingdom Come* have been chosen as the core of this study as they have been written after 2000.

Chuck Palahniuk, who was born in Washington, USA in 1962, owes his fame to his novel *Fight Club* which was adapted to screen by director David Fincher in 1999, and is now accepted as one of the best movies ever—10th in the top-rated movies list of IMDB. There are now millions of fans of *Fight Club* and they founded fight club-like organizations in different parts of the world. Chuck Palahniuk, who is now accepted as a prominent representative of transgressive fiction, has also published other controversial novels such as *Survivor* (1999), *Invisible Monsters* (1999), *Choke* (2001), *Lullaby* (2002) *Diary* (2003), *Haunted* (2005), *Snuff* (2008), *Pygmy* (2009) and *Adjustment Day* (2018).

The first chapter of this study is devoted to the terminology of consumer culture as a postmodern problem. Consumerism imposes new norms and various identities on individuals to create themselves according to their shopping tendencies. Effects of consumerism, and consumption culture on the construction of the self will be discussed through the views of significant philosophers, sociologists, political economists and psychologists such as Karl Marx, Alain Badiou, Robert Bocoock, Jean Baudrillard, and Slavoj Zizek. How advertisements manipulates consumers will be handled by referring to Lacanian concepts about desire and phantasy. The relationship between consumerism and violence is also going to be dealt with so as to understand moral breakdown that consumer culture has caused in the society. Contradictions against this consumer age are going to be discussed in this chapter.

The second chapter will trace the consumerist culture and violence in *Fight Club* and *Millennium People* in the terms that are examined in chapter I. *Fight Club*, which can be seen as an inspirational novel for *Millennium People*, also deals with the epic journey of the narrator to find his true identity that is surrendered by consumerist culture. In the novel, the narrator who is also the protagonist faces social

inequalities and triviality of purchasing, begins a heroic struggle against consumerist culture that consumes humanly traits and destroys nature. Likewise, *Millennium People*, which begins with a terrorist attack in Heathrow Airport, narrates the epic journey of the protagonist to find his true self. While trying to solve the case of bomb attack, the narrator David Markham faces with the social unrest growing among the middle class of England due to economic inequalities. The character development of both narrators is going to be handled referring to Jungian psychoanalytic concepts. There are explicit similarities between *Fight Club* and *Millennium People* in terms of plot and fiction. Ballard seems to get his inspiration for this novel from German left anarchist group RAF⁶, and also some real events that happened in England, such as the murder of TV presenter Jill Dando⁷. However, it would not be wrong to suggest that the novel *Fight Club* has given inspiration for Ballard to write on consumerism, anarchy, crime and violence.

The third and last chapter of this study is mainly concerned with Ballard's last novel *Kingdom Come*, which depicts the break-down of English society under the threat of the disaster of consumerism. In the novel consumerism is depicted as a disaster which destroys traditional values and social structures of modern England. In this novel, while there are some people who are nostalgic for the past British society, there are people who are glad about the new shopping malls and life-style that consumerism has introduced. However, both groups are disturbed by the presence of new dwellers around their neighbourhood. Immigrants, as a third group in London, suffer from alienation and violence. Ballard, depicting the social clashes among these groups, predicates a social disasters in United Kingdom that is similar to the holocaust in Nazi-Germany. *Kingdom Come* as a dystopian and apocalyptic disaster novel, is sum of Ballard's ideas that he had handled in his previous writings. Between sanity and insanity, people can be good and virtuous, but they suddenly go mad and commit unimaginable crimes. This is handled in the novel by discussing consumerism as either beneficial in terms of community development, or as destructive for the society because it may trigger aggression.

⁶ Radical Leftist Group, Rote Armee Fraktion. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Red-Army-Faction>

⁷ Jill Wendy DANDO (9 November 1961 - 26 April 1999) who was a TV presenter and journalist was murdered on the doorstep of her house. Her case still remains unsolved. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/7525826.stm

CHAPTER I

THEORETICAL INTRODUCTION TO CONSUMERISM

Consumption has now become a significant behaviour of people of contemporary societies. Nowadays people not only purchase for their needs, but also try to find or define an identity for themselves and gain a place in society. Conspicuous consumption has changed the norms of consumption based on needs. According to Maslow's pyramid of needs⁸, our basic needs are physiological; the need of food, water, sleep and so on. Then comes our safety needs, belonging, being loved and respected. Later, at the top of the pyramid, there are self-actualization needs. Maslow has structured our humanly needs in a hierarchal order. That is to say, firstly physiological needs have to be met, in order for other needs to emerge. However, in our consumer world, advertisements changed our perceptions so much so that this hierarchy has been lost and our needs become fluxional and faddish. Karakas points out "in the culture of consumption, needs are removed from their contexts and contents of these are filled in different ways" (247). As is pointed out in the film *Pervert's Guide to Ideology*, we drink cola, instead of water when we get thirsty even though it makes us thirstier⁹.

Needs are the basic motives behind consumption. But, needs can be shaped by various perception operations and changing cultural norms. In his book *The Theory of the Leisure Class (1899)*, Veblen touches on another function of consumption. According to Veblen, people not only consume for their biological needs, but consumption also functions as signs and symbols of the prestige to show the social status of the consumer. Accordingly, Baudrillard expresses: "The fundamental conceptual hypothesis for a sociological analysis of 'consumption' is not use value, the relation to needs, but symbolic exchange value, the value of social

⁸ "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs." *Psychology and Mental Health* (online Edition). Salem Press, 2013.

⁹ *Pervert's Guide to Ideology*, Dir. Sophie Fiennes, Star. Slavoj Zizek, NJUTA Films 2012.

prestation, of rivalry and, at the limit, of class discriminants" (1981, 31-32). It is clear that consumption offers more inclusive meaning than the fulfilment of the needs. Consumerism is an umbrella term that includes all those definitions related with consumption, so it has various, conflicting and paradoxical meanings. Consumerism can be explained as the belief that the more you consume, the happier you become. Consumerism is thought to provide the needs of the majority of people, and thus, it creates a more equal and democratic society. However, there are some thinkers like Baudrillard, Bauman, Bocoock and Zizek who do not agree that consumption brings happiness, or that is useful for the society and economy, on the contrary they associate consumerism with degeneration, alienation and moral breakdown. As seen, the word consumerism contains positive and negative meanings. The meaning of consumerism differs according to various points of view, and different periods. In order to understand what consumerism is, we have to shed light on the historical development of consumerism.

Unlike animals, humans do not consume only for their survival needs; different conscious or unconscious desires and life and death instincts can play a role on consumptive behaviours. However, unlike the previous generations, today's societies are the most consumptive generations of human history due to advances in technology. Computer aided mass production methods make it possible for goods to be produced in vast numbers. Moreover, improvements in transportation networks make the distribution of goods easier, and purchasing has become easier and faster thanks to communication tools and the internet. Contemporary age, which can be also defined as the "age of consumerism" (Malone, 140), is the age in which human consumption has reached its ultimate peak.

As already stated above, the term consumerism has a brief history. It is not certain when the term consumerism has been used for the first time, but it is thought to be firstly documented in *The New Republic* in 1944 (Swagler, 1994, 348). At first, consumerism showed up as an idea to protect consumer rights against big firms to receive better quality products. Max E. Brunk¹⁰ dates the consumerism movement to the 1900s, to the writings of the famous American writer, Upton Sinclair. Sinclair, who described the unhealthy working conditions of labourers and filthy production methods of meat in his novel *The Jungle* (1906), attracted public attention on the

¹⁰ Brunk, Max E., *The Anatomy of Consumerism*, Journal of Advertising, Vol. 2, No.1, 1973, pp9-11

meat business. Causing uproar in the society, the novel led to the first Federal Meat Inspection Act in 1906. Consumer safety and health were taken under governmental protection thanks to this act, and later similar acts such as Agricultural Marketing Act (1929), Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act (1938), Poultry Products Inspection Act (1957) and Egg Products Inspection Act (1970) have been conducted in the USA to guarantee consumer rights of safety against fraudulent products in the market. Moreover, protection acts and bills such as Trademark Act (1946), Fair Packaging and Labelling Act (1966) were introduced by American governments to protect consumer rights of information and the market. For Buskirk and Rothe, consumerism is defined as "the organized efforts of consumers seeking redress, restitution and remedy for dissatisfaction they have accumulated in the acquisition of their standard of living" (62). Similarly, George S. Day and David A. Aaker, in their essay *A Guide to Consumerism* remark, "The most common understanding of consumerism is in reference to the widening range of activities of government, business, and independent organizations that are designed to protect individuals from practices (of both business and government) that infringe upon their rights as consumers" (13). According to Kotler, "consumerism is a social movement seeking to augment the rights and power of buyers in relation to sellers" (49). Of course, consumers should have the rights of product safety, rights to be informed and heard, and rights to choose. These rights take customer satisfaction under warranty, so customers hesitate less in buying a product or service. Consumption triggers productions, so not only companies find opportunities to grow up thanks to sale rates, but also people find more employment opportunities that can provide them financial opportunities to possess the goods they need. Thus in this sense, consumerism helps the growth of economy and social welfare. Consumerism is not just an issue of consumer protection against fraudulent products, it is also protection of the market by taking necessary measures against inflation, deflation and other obstacles that hinder economic growth.

There must be consumption in the market so as to continue production. Production means employment and earnings and welfare of the state. Thus, production should be designed according to consumer expectation and satisfaction. Yet, there is another notion of consumerism, which does not deal with customer satisfaction, on the contrary, this approach considers customers as gullible by advertisements. According to this second type of consumerism, customers do not

think rationally while choosing a product. Freud's nephew Edward Bernays is one of the originators of this point of view. For Bernays; "human nature is readily subject to modification" (150). Humans can be deceived by advertisements designed by creative methods of skilful psychologists. Selling a product depends on the capabilities of sellers to induce customers to buy their products or services. Customers have no logical control of what they want to buy. Social engineers like Bernays and Ivy Lee do not hesitate to manipulate and design the society which they define as public relations.

How do brands and firms succeed in enticing consumers? Advertisements, or in their terminology, public relations, are the main tool to induce consumers to buy services and goods of certain brands. For instance, the cigarette brand Marlboro is a famous success story in business. Thanks to advertiser Leo Burnet, Marlboro, which was mostly preferred by women before, became one of the favourite cigarette brands for men. Advertisements imposed masculinity propaganda on consumers using a macho figure, a cowboy, in advertisements. The main weapon of consumerism is advertisements. Companies use advertisements to stimulate consumers into buying their products.

In metropolises of industrialized countries, on a typical day people are exposed to thousands of advertisements. Advertisements surround people everywhere; public buses, toilets, parks, streets, and so on. People wake up with advertisements as soon as they take their mobile phones in their hands, and go to bed with advertisements. Since the 1950 television has become the main media source of advertisements in the USA. Besides the commercial breaks on television, people are exposed to surreptitious adverts during the programs that they watch. To promote their products some companies shoot movies, and sponsor different reality or show programs. While watching a highway chase scene in a movie, people are also exposed to certain types of car brands that secretly influence their brain to buy those type of vehicles without considering economical features. Seeing the favourite actors and actresses using certain type of products or services, wearing special brand watches or clothes stimulate people to buy the same brands. Many people buy SUV cars despite living in the city. Besides being more expensive these cars exhaust a lot of fuel, so they also pay more for the gasoline. But due to the movies and series showing characters driving SUV cars in city, it become normal to buy those cars for many people even if they drive on city roads.

Implicit or explicit messages are used to direct people to consume. These mind manipulating methods are even used by drug dealers to extend the use of narcotics. Charismatic actors and actresses in movies and television series, who become rich and powerful by using or selling substances may become admired role models for some adolescents. The television series titled *Breaking Bad* and *Narcos* can be examples for those kind of media. Such programs promote the use and production of drugs via movies and Television series. Even music clips and music programs are used to make propaganda of drug addiction. Especially, rap music stars are notorious for their lyrics and clips that are claimed to encourage youngsters to use illegal substances and to commit other crimes¹¹. Although there is not enough empirical data that proves a direct relation between such media contents and crime rate and substance abuse, it cannot be denied that these media contents introduce crime culture. According to Pikney and Robinson-Edwards, music clips are used by gangs to promote their illegal activity and "popular media and global entertainment industries have 'sensationalised' crimes and specifically gang crimes" (2018, 107).

However, television is not the main media source for advertisements. Nowadays it seems to have been dethroned by smart phones. Smartphones have become more violent and dangerous than television because now people spend much time on their mobile phones. Television is a unilateral type of media, which only transmits the message. However, a smartphone collects all the data of what users do, read, watch and gives feedback to the senders. People using internet and social media voluntarily reveal their thoughts with their comments or like and dislike buttons. However, some technology firms abuse this data. As in the Facebook scandal¹² of 2018, it has come to light that this social media firm has maliciously used personal data to manipulate elections in different countries. It has been understood that with their advertisement policies, Facebook helped some election campaigns to make perception operations on voters. It shows how strong and dangerous advertisement companies can be, since they can have an impact on elections and can change the destiny of a nation.

¹¹ See <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-rap-artist-ezhel-faces-10-years-in-jail-for-inciting-use-of-cannabis-132819> or <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-45824358> for further information regarding this phenomenon.

¹² See <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2018/mar/21/mark-zuckerberg-response-facebook-cambridge-analytica> for further discussion on this issue.

Radios, newspapers, subway or bus stations, transportation means, and even public toilets serve as sources of advertisements. Advertising sells both the advertisements and products. People pay money for the advertisement when they buy a product that promotes the brand name of the producing company. For instance, think of two t-shirts, which are made of the same material and in the same quality, but one is more expensive than the other due to the brand name or logo in front of it. The surprising thing is that people are eager to pay more, although this means that they voluntarily promote these brands freely. Namely, in order for the promotion of that company people spend more money willingly.

There are also other secret stimulants and advertising methods like guerrilla advertising that imposes purchasing on us. Guerrilla advertising is the promotion of brands in unusual places and tactics for effective sale increase. For example, giving free pencils or erasers with brand name or logo of a private teaching institution to the students entering exams will create positive perception. Music, atmosphere, and architecture of super markets and stores are designed to motivate consumers implicitly to spend more. Colours, writing fonts, images and words are chosen deliberately for the advertisements to create a maximum impact on consumers. It is known that various factors like music playing in the background, warmth, colours, light and design of stores and malls are used to stimulate the consumer into more consumption.

The ideology of consumerism suggests a world of ultimate happiness. Dream holidays, dream houses, the dream job, a dream spouse or friends all of which are projected by adverts become realities. According to Freud, the main function of phantasy is to fulfil an unfulfilled desire. Advertisements just sell phantasies not the reality. As Bocock suggests,

What is desired in post-modern consumerism is not the 'real chocolate, the 'real' car, or house and furniture, which is consumed. Rather these 'real' things are substitutes; the desires they purport to satisfy are symbolic desires, not biologically given needs unmediated by cultural symbolism. (114-115)

In order to seduce people into shopping, advertisements play with unconscious drives and instincts. Postmodern consumerism does not sell goods without ascribing meanings to them.

According to Lacan, absence of a thing can be quenched with symbols. Consumers lacking *objet petit a*¹³ try to fulfil its absence with alternative symbols in the market. This is the point where they fall into the net of late capitalism. This trap shapes and re-shapes our fantasies to sell the same thing. It is similar to the fort/da game¹⁴ that Freud mentions in his "Beyond the Pleasure Principle". Similarly, absence and presence of commodities give pleasure to consumers. As has been mentioned before, Coca-cola propagates to quench our thirst, however in fact it increases our thirst because of the sugar in it. Giving the example of coke in the documentary, *Pervert's Guide to Ideology*, Slavoj Žižek explains this paradox: "A desire is never simply be desire for a certain thing, it is always also a desire for desire itself; a desire to continue to desire." When the desire is fulfilled, the desire re-shapes itself for another desire. Gessert suggests,

The primary lack of an object is the ultimate cause of repetition. The drive does not know what it wants, it does not have any knowledge of the object, and desire emerges in order to try to offer some answers to that open question of the drive. Desire will push the subject to craft objects, and these objects that it finds or creates will ease the constant pressure of the drive and give it partial satisfaction, but they will never be able to tame this constant pressure of the drive completely. Thus the subject will be driven constantly from one object to another and his desire will slide between the signifiers of the symbolic order. (41)

When the desire is fulfilled, the desire must re-shape itself to be desired again. For instance, life and death instincts are drives which motivate people and some animals to some behaviours, however it is uncertain which instinct motivates to which

¹³ Dylan Evans explains the *objet petit a* as, "In the seminar of 1960–1, Lacan articulates the *objet petit a* with the term *agalma* (a Greek term meaning a glory, an ornament, an offering to the gods, or a little statue of a god) which he extracts from Plato's *Symposium*. Just as the *agalma* is a precious object hidden inside a relatively worthless box, so the *objet petit a* is the object of desire which we seek in the other (S8,177)." Evans, Dylan, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, Routledge, New York, 1996, 128.

¹⁴ For further reading on 'Fort-Da' see Freud, Sigmund, *Beyond The Pleasure Principle*, Trans. James Strachey, W.W. Norton Company, New York, 1961, 8-9.

behaviours or emotions. But desires are oriented fantasies towards certain behaviours or feelings. Desires can be sexual phantasy for any object, animal or human. On the other hand, life or death instincts do not necessarily stipulate sexual feelings or behaviours. For example, motives behind eating a banana or an apple can be the life instinct or the death instinct. But the desire defines pleasure objects for itself for satisfaction. When the desire is fulfilled by a fantasy object, it begins to vanish. In the consumerist world, instincts trigger consumption, however, the people do not know what to consume. The market presents various commodities to consumers. Here, advertisements are used to create desire for products they promote. Yet, in the advertisements products are not generally promoted according to what they really are. They are usually associated with something that is not in the products like freedom or sexual pleasure. Thus, the products continue to be desired. The absence of what is desired makes consumers continuously desire for the consumption of the same products. When some goods no longer quench their desires, consumers then begin to look for new commodities to purchase.

In the consumption world consumers always desire the goods they do not really need or want. Advertisements must create the impression that the utility value of a product is unimportant, that what is significant is the sign value of commodities that consumers can also have when they buy it. Since there are thousands of brands of watches or sun glasses in the world, in order to make you buy their product, advertisements must create an ideological bond with you and the product like social respect, or virility and glamour, something more than the utility value of the commodity. From the poorest to the richest strata of society, people need something new and unattainable in order to be happy with the phantasy of possessing the nonexistent. Additionally, advertisements loading new meanings to the products cause people to desire the same object as if it is a new thing that one has to gain in order to be happy. Kozo Yamamura in his book *Too Much Stuff* explains that:

As consumers, we are befuddled. We are confronted daily with advertising for necessary luxuries, and peer pressure to buy the latest styles or goods, and shopping has become a favourite pastime. So we drift through malls, visiting store after store selling things we don't need, purchasing stuff from salespeople whose earnings are barely above the poverty level. We buy "new" products and throw out the "old", instead of using ones that are nearly identical to the "new" and still perfectly useful. Nor do people repair broken

appliances, which often costs more to do than purchasing new ones. Hints of thrift and "make do and mend" have become passé. The "new" things do not improve the quality of our lives, but we are urged to buy anyway. (24)

Consumerism not only plays with fantasies, but with identities also. Nowadays, consumptive behaviours are mostly oriented on identity-building. According to Lodziak, "the view that consumption is the principal means through which we construct, maintain, reconstruct and display our identities has become the most important element of the latest ideology of consumerism" (48). That is to say, consumption becomes the main factor in the identity formation of the self. The things that one buys define his or her identity, and social status. People not only buy the product itself but also its symbolic meaning. For Firat & Schultz, postmodern consumers recognize that they are not just consumers, but also customizers and producers of self-images at each consumptive moment (195).

The things that are bought ensure social belonging. People do not feel as if they belong to any class, but to consumption classes that have emerged in postmodern age. Bocoock explains,

The construction of a sense of identity can be seen as a process which may make use of items of consumption such as clothing, footwear, popular music or sporting activities, including being a supporter of a particular music groups, singers or soccer clubs. Such consumption patterns could be used as a central means of defining who was a member and who was outside a specific group. These kinds of phenomena were found especially among young people aged between 14 and up to 30 or more. Similar patterns existed, and still do, among older groups who may have settled down into marriage and child-rearing. (28)

A commodity is not a simple object which we buy, it also carries an ideology. Wearing certain clothes, or buying certain products bring us some identities. In this process the commodity becomes an object of love, a fetish for the consumer. Its utility value and production quality loses significance, and a symbolic relation is established between the commodity and identity. According to Baudrillard, "the fetishization of the commodity is the fetishization of a product emptied of its concrete substance of labour and subjected to another type of labour, a labour of

signification, that is, of coded abstraction (the production of differences and of sign values)" (1981, 93). In a way, people do not buy the material commodity itself, but signs it represents in the market.

Personalities lose their significance and brand names take places of identities. As Baudrillard expresses, "men of wealth are no longer surrounded by other human beings, as they have been in the past, but by *objects*. Their daily exchange is no longer with their fellows, but rather, statistically as a function of ascending curve, with the acquisition and manipulation of goods and messages" (200, 32). In such relations, people become commodities of those who can afford their intimacy. This situation in a way proves what are claimed in the advertisements when people experience buying each other. Seeing that the things one buys help him or her to have 'beautiful' or 'handsome' lovers as promoted in the advertisements, became more attached to the delusion created by consumerism. Yet, no matter how much or what one buys, consumption culture hinders one from being content with what she or he has, so one always feels the lack of something, and thus always feels unsatisfied and unhappy, except for the short time during the purchasing process.

Consumerism that creates the feeling of lack. Those who cannot afford to consume feel the pain of lack. Having limited money, they cannot afford the life styles and culture that are promoted in the advertisements, so they always feel deprived. Those who are deprived from the pleasures of consumption develop aggressive behaviours or addictions. Late capitalism causes the poor strata of society to suffer from structural violence, a term introduced by Johan Galtung, to suggest the deprivation of some people from humanly needs. People are prevented from enjoying the welfare of the state, because of their age, class, gender, ethnicity, skin colour, or religion. Though there is no direct visible violence, those under the exposure of structural violence do not have the same living standards with the privileged elite. For Bauman, the welfare of the state can be measured by the welfare of the class of people who are termed as 'flawed consumers' in consumerism. These 'unwanted consumers' suffer from poverty and otherization and feel isolated from the society. They are unwanted in consumption, yet late capitalism needs this strata of people in production of goods. In their life struggle to earn a living, they serve as low-cost labour to capitalism.

Life must be more meaningful than the daily hassle of people and odds and ends of consumerism. In his book *The True Life-Polity*, Alain Badiou, referring to

Socrates, explains that there are two hindrances that prevent young people from capturing the real meaning of life. These two traps are what consumerism shows as the reality of life to blur people's eyes. One can be explained as having a bohemian life-style. Badiou explains:

The first enemy is what could be called the passion for immediate life, for amusement, pleasure, the moment, some song or other, a fling, a joint, or some stupid game. All of that exists; Socrates doesn't try to deny it. But when it all builds up, when it's carried to its extreme, when that passion produces a life that is lived from one day to the next, a life dependent on the immediacy of time, a life in which the future is invisible or at any rate totally obscure, then what you get is a kind of nihilism, a kind of conception of life with no unified meaning—a life devoid of meaning and, consequently unable to go on as a true life. (9)

According to Badiou, this kind of life also contains its opposite, namely death. Thus putting aside the true meaning of life and indulging in lightweight daily pleasures is also a kind of suicide.

Consumerism creates the enchantment that being wealthy is the key to success. One should not only be rich, but also should reflect his or her wealth and luxurious life style to others through their consumption. Some social media platforms such as Instagram are used to publish photos of commodities bought, or foods that are going to be eaten. Purchasing power is what defines the success of a career. But assuming that the meaning of life is to become very rich and popular is another hindrance in capturing the real meaning of life. As Badiou explains,

Not the idea of consuming oneself in immediate life but, on the contrary, of obtaining a good position in the existing social order. Life then becomes the sum total of tactics for becoming well established, even it means you have to be better than everyone else at submitting to the existing order so as to succeed in it. (10-11)

The definition of success in the world of consumerism is to be able to buy more than others. Being successful in life means that one should have a well paid job. A good job means not what one would like to do most, but the occupation which offers the highest salary. Phoney life experiences, happiness, friendships, loves, careers,

achievements all turn this life into a scenario in which everyone plays his or her role, therefore they feel alienated from their real identities. This is very similar to Marx's argument on alienation in his *Economic Manuscripts of 1864-1865*,

[395] In the capitalist mode of production, the worker is not the owner of the conditions of production, of the lands he tills; of the raw material he works up, etc. This alienation of the conditions of production from the producers, however, corresponds here to a real change in the mode of production itself. The tool becomes a machine; the workers are brought together in a workshop, etc. (2016, 695)

According to Marx, workers become passive producers in their working fields. They do not have any authority on what they produce so they feel alienated from their production. They become like machines who are operated by the employers paying their wages. Workers turn into commodities that can be bought and sold. This alienation creates social and psychological disorders in the identities of individuals. Thus, characters in the novels *Fight Club* and *Millennium People*, who are alienated from their identities, tend to show aggressive behaviours to the phoniness of life. Many characters in these two novels commit crimes and do violence to some institutions that impose consumer values. Even though they are financially in good conditions to afford commodities, they understand that it is not consumption that give pleasure to them, but violence. This will going to be discussed in chapter two. Likewise, in chapter three, there are people are victim of consumer culture. They fight back against institutions of consumption to struggle with social and moral erosion that they have caused.

CHAPTER II

YOU ARE NOT WHAT YOU OWN!: *FIGHT CLUB* AND *MILLENNIUM PEOPLE*

Consumerism stresses that; "We are what we have and possess" (Belk, 2000, 76). In this sense, it can be said that Palahniuk's *Fight Club* and Ballard's *Millennium People* are manifestos that protest against the consumerist customization of people. These two writers blow up the notion that you become the things that you buy, imposed on us by consumerism. In *Fight Club* the narrator expresses how attached he is to his possessions:

I tell the detective, no I did not leave the gas on and then leave town. I loved my life. I loved that condo. I loved every stick of furniture. That was my whole life. Everything, the lamps, the chairs, the rugs were me. It was me that blew up. (110-111)

In the novel, people are live in a consumerist culture in which commodities such as lamps, chairs and rugs attract more affection than people. In this consumerist world, identity of people are created according to what they own. As the narrator expresses above, the furniture he has constructs his identity. In *Millennium People*, the narrator David Markham feels like his wife's baby doll. He feels uneasy about his life. Both narrators complain about the pointlessness of their life, and look for a 'real life' that is not corrupted by consumerist culture. These two books contain similar characteristics with each other in many aspects. Even Ballard's *Millennium People* can almost be seen as British equivalent of *Fight Club*.

First of all it can be said that these two novels are quests, as narrators of both novels seek for real and better identities for themselves. Quests are stories that tell travel memories of the hero, in which he sets off to beat an enemy. Throughout his trip, the hero comes across hard tasks to reach his final destination;

A quest is a journey that someone takes in order to achieve a goal or complete an important task. Accordingly, the term comes from the Medieval Latin *questa*, meaning 'search' or 'inquiry'. Quests are heroic in nature, usually featuring one protagonist who goes on a dangerous mission against all odds to save a group of people or society. Sometimes, the hero sets out on a quest to find a symbolic object or person and bring it or them back to his home. Quests are the foremost element of the epic. They also have a particularly large presence in medieval romance, folklore, and Greek and Roman mythology, and have been playing an important role in fiction since the earliest examples of English literature. (<https://literaryterms.net/quest/>)

In *Fight Club*, the narrator feels stuck in his life. He has a well-paid job that allows him to buy a house, and decorate it with various furniture. He works for a car company as an expert who examines to car accidents in case of production defects. While keeping reports of many deadly accidents the narrator in *Fight Club* understands that he can also die at any time and anywhere. However, he feels so lonely as there is nobody who cares about him, or love him. He just have a flat decorated with furniture he chose but he does not feel real attachment to his commodities.

He realizes that there is nothing but purchasing in his life. He reads shopping catalogues and brochures as if they were pornographic magazines and in a way he gets sexual pleasure while deciding which item to buy. According to Yim and et al,

The primary shopping-oriented goals of consumers with high hedonic shopping motivations are to seek and obtain self-gratification, to learn about new trends in the pursuit of social interaction, and escapism/freedom from mundane life, thus providing themselves hedonic fulfilment and enjoyment while engaging in shopping, without necessarily making any purchases. (530)

The narrator expresses this situation in the novel as: "the people I know who used to sit in the bathroom with pornography, now they sit in the bathroom with their IKEA furniture catalogue" (43). Alain Badiou, referring to Freud, expresses that: "...this vision of life is one in which the life drive is secretly inhabited by the death drive. At an unconscious level, death takes hold of life, undermining it and detaching it from its potential meaning" (2017, 10). The life that Badiou mentions here is the life that is spent in seeking temporary pleasures. Consumerism resembles to pornography since consumption gives a sort of orgasm of possession for a short time, and then

people begin to look for other 'sex objects' or fetishes to experience new pleasures. Investigating and choosing which product to buy is very important, since people not only get short-time pleasure and happiness, but also they choose a self perception and identity for themselves in choosing everything they own.

The narrator feels trapped by the consumerist world, in which he has to work in a job that he does not like, and in order to be happy he shops as a free time activity. When considering his life, he understands that he works in order to buy things that he does not need. Understanding how vainly he lives despite his closeness to death, the narrator suffers from insomnia, so he goes to the doctor for sleeping pills. However, the doctor does not prescribe the pills that the narrator wants, instead advising him to join support groups. This is how the narrator in *Fight Club* starts off on his quest. In support groups he gets acquainted with people who have fatal diseases. Because only those who are dying are not in competition of possessing. They understand that life is ephemeral, so instead of purchasing material objects they look for intimacy and friendship of real people, not for commodities. In this groups, the narrator finds mental peace, since there is no competition and greed in these support groups. He is temporarily cured of his insomnia (seeing the agonies of people, and faking as if suffering from malignant sicknesses the narrator finds relief from distress).

However when he sees Marla, who is a strange woman who also fakes her illness like the narrator, in support groups he has to face with his conscience about the fact that he does not have any fatal disease. While Marla is there he cannot play the role of a deadly ill person as he used to do, so he becomes unable to relax as he feels his lie has been exposed. He wishes to die in a plane accident on his business trips. Feeling stuck in this consumerist culture, the narrator sees death as an exit. The narrator explains his hopelessness saying: "I was tired and crazy and rushed, and every time I boarded a plane, I wanted the plane to crash. I envied people dying of cancer. I hated my life, I was tired and bored with my job and my furniture, and I couldn't see any way to change things" (172). Support groups help the narrator to relax for a time, only when he cries with the terminally ill. But he is not dying. The narrator thinks that death can be a way for his salvation.

This death instinct which leads to violence causes the narrator to create an alter ego, Tyler Durden, who offers him a rebirth of a kind. In his first delusionary fight with Tyler, the narrator expresses how he relieved,

I felt finally I could get my hands on everything in the world that didn't work, my cleaning that came back with the buttons broken, the bank says I'm hundreds of dollars overdrawn. My job where my boss got on my computer and fiddled with my DOS execute commands. And Marla Singer, who stole the support groups from me.(53)

Fighting for his self destruction, the narrator escapes from his problems. The consumerist self that the narrator projected onto himself is the source of his problems. Because it is not built on realities. His identity formation depends on fake discourses that consumer culture exposes on people. This death instinct of the narrator emerging from his consumerist life style causes him to create the fight club. The narrator no longer feels satisfied through consumption and wants to die. This death drive leads to the foundation of fighting clubs in which people come together to get away from their problems by fighting. As Bock explains:

Consumption offers the promise of satisfaction, not the 'real thing' which would be actual orgasmic satisfaction. In any case there are other desires which lurk in the unconscious—those of the death drive.

The death drives or death instincts, seek destructive aggressive satisfactions, which are in part given release, directly or indirectly, by consumer sports such as soccer, boxing, fencing, hunting or whatever. (115)

The death drive behind the consumptive behaviour shows itself in such activities as in martial arts and in the novel as the foundation of fight clubs. Fight clubs offer more than these consumer sports, as the narrator expresses: "After you've been to fight club, watching football on television is watching pornography when you could be having good sex" (50). In the consumerist world many people work vainly to buy the things that they do not need. The narrator of this novel works like a slave in a job to buy things that he does not need. In order to free himself he needs to get rid of his consumerist self. In the novel Tyler explains why the narrator's house exploded: "I'm breaking my attachment to physical power and possessions," Tyler whispered, "because only through destroying myself can I discover the greater power of my spirit" (110). In order to find his real identity, the narrator first has to destroy his possessions so as to get rid of the self that the commodities created.

The quest of the narrator in *Millennium People* is parallel to that of the narrator of *Fight Club*. Both begin with a flight. In *Fight Club*, the narrator has to fly to many different destinations to which his managers do not want to go. In *Millennium People*, David Markham, who is also unhappy in his current job, about to go to Heathrow Airport for a business trip. David expresses his frame of mind in the following words,

All these trips? Let's face it, they 're just a delusion. Air travel, the whole Heathrow thing, it's a collective flight from reality. People walk up to check-ins and for once in their lives they know where they 're going. Poor sods, it's printed on their tickets... Flying off to Florida isn't what I really want to do.
(16)

While waiting for the taxi that will take him to the airport, he watches the news and learns of a bombing that has killed his ex-wife and that is delaying flights. Seeing the death of his ex-wife and thinking that he also could have been a victim of this bomb attack, like the narrator of *Fight Club*, David also begins to question his life. He wonders why such an attack has happened to kill ordinary people. Later, he is able to attend to police investigation thanks to his job. Thinking more deeply about the bloody terrorist action to find answers, David also questions the direction of his life. He begins to attend protests to find clues about the terrorists, and eventually he meets anarchists Richard Gould, Kay Churchill, Vera Blackburn and Stephen Dexter.

The most dominant characteristic of the quest motif in literature is a hero's voyage to unknown places. However, in these two novels there are no epic heroes that have special powers, nor are there trips to distant lands. The narrators of both *Fight Club* and *Millennium People* are ordinary people who are fed up with their jobs and the vicious cycle of consumption. David Markham is a psychoanalyst at the Adler institute, and the narrator of *Fight Club* is a white collar employee. Their heroism is internal and their heroic acts involve opening their eyes to true life and leaving their possessions behind. What is common to these two novels is depiction of a society contaminated by post-capitalism and consumerist culture. In these societies, people are like the slaves in Plato's famous cave metaphor.¹⁵ Plato describes people

¹⁵ Plato, *Republic*, trans. G.M.A. Grube/Hackett Publishing, USA, 1992. (p186-190)

in the cave who cannot move around except to watch the wall in front of them. They assume the shadows of the images reflected on the wall as real objects. Likewise, these novels show how consumerism imposes upon us a phoney world image rather than realities. Consumer culture shows itself as the ultimate happiness in life. In *Fight Club*, the narrator expresses this in relation to buying furniture:

You buy furniture. You tell yourself, this is the last sofa I will ever need in my life. Buy the sofa, then for a couple years you're satisfied that no matter what goes wrong, at least you've got your sofa issue handled. Then the right set of dishes. Then the perfect bed. The drapes. The rug. (44)

The concept of perfect furniture is presented by society as something like Platonic ideal forms. It is shown in the advertisements as the perfect form of happiness, beauty or glamour. In the material world of consumerism it is impossible to find ideal commodities since advertisements are unreliable and changeable. What they promote today as the perfectness, becomes old-fashioned when the new version are ready for sale. In the novel it has been expressed: "If you don't know what you want, the doorman said, you end up with a lot you don't". (46)

Both novels tell stories of people, who renounce the lifestyles and worldviews that postmodern consumerism imposes upon them, this is their heroic deed. They show the courage to thwart the system. In *Fight Club*, the narrator blows up his flat together with the furniture in it, and then moves to Tyler's house in Paper Street. In *Millennium People*, the narrator David Markham, leaves his house and wife to live with protesters and support their demonstrations. Despite the lures of consumerism both characters choose to leave them behind so as to gain freedom. As is uttered by the narrator in *Fight Club*, "then you're trapped in your lovely nest and the things you used to own, now they own you" (44). That is to say, *Fight Club* defies consumerist life style and show people that they are not what they own.

Quests are stories in which the hero goes on an adventurous journey and encounters difficult obstacles. However, unlike the medieval romances, in which the hero combats with dragons, monsters or sorcerers, in these two novels the narrators fight against the capitalistic consumerist system. Their quest is not to a far unknown place, but to their real identities.

Fortunately, the narrators are not alone in their quests. They also have wise guides that help them to find a life and personality beyond consumerism. In *Fight Club*, Tyler Durden guides the narrator. Likewise, in *Millennium People*, Richard Gould, Kay Churchill, Vera Blackburn and Stephen Dexter play the role of the wise old man. David Markham, upon receiving the news of his ex-wife's death in a bombing attack while she is waiting for her luggage in the airport, begins to pry into the forces behind this bloody attack. According to Jungian psychoanalysis, the wise old man is a form of the spirit archetype that helps individuals in their process of 'individuation'¹⁶, to achieve wholeness and understanding.

Both narrators in the novels under discussion lack personal integrity. First of all they have oedipal problems with their fathers and problematic relationships with their mothers. In *Millennium People*, the narrator, David Markham, has never met his father and is neglected by his mother. He lacks the affection of his parents. In *Fight Club*, the father of the narrator does not care for his son's life. The narrator says: "What you see at fight club is a generation of men raised by women"(50). It is clear that fight club members have a problematic relationship with their parents, especially with their fathers. Tyler makes his first fight imagining his father which shows that the narrator has Oedipal problems with his father.

This consumer culture affects people from childhood by teaching them to have relationships with commodities, instead of humans. Children who are unable to develop relationships with their parents, learn to set up relationships with commodities rather than real men and women. According to Zepf "if interactions with things dominate over interaction with people, a self idealisation will be the result" (2010,148). For Zepf, over interaction with objects, lacking parental affection, spending little time with parents and fearing the loss of parental love, growing in a culture in which identities are shaped according to possessions, and growing in a capitalistic world of competition in which children are forced to achieve success, are what creates narcissism in children.

¹⁶ Jung clarifies "I use the term "individuation to denote the process by which a person becomes a psychological "in-dividual," that is, a separate, indivisible unity or "whole." See Jung, Carl G. *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. Trans. R.F.C. Hull. New York: Princeton UP, 1990.p.275

In *Fight Club*, the narrator describes his father making a new marriage and family every six years as if franchising a business: "This isn't so much like a family as it's like he sets up a franchise" (50). He thinks that his father does not care about him. Growing up without paternal love is what leads people in fight clubs to gather in a masculine organization to fulfil the lack of the father figure. Lacking affection of the father, people purchase many items. As the narrator says,

"We all have the same Johannesov armchair in the Strinne green stripe pattern...
We all have the same Rislampa/ Har paper lamps made from wire and environmentally friendly unbleached paper."(43)

However, the narrator in *Fight Club* is unable to find wholeness by purchasing things through IKEA catalogues. He says: "I was too complete. I was too perfect." (173). It is seen that he cannot become happy by purchasing commodities. It is clear that the narrator meets with Tyler in his dream-like moment, as an archetypal figure in his mind. As Jung utters: "Natural transformation processes announce themselves mainly in dreams"(1990:130). The narrator, feeling lack of integrity and wholeness in his life creates his wise old man guide who can help to find salvation. According to Jung, the wise old man is a form of the spirit archetype. "The archetype of spirit in the shape of a man, hobgoblin, or animal always appears in a situation where insight, understanding, good advice, determination, planning, etc., are needed but cannot be mustered on one's own resources" (1990, 216). The narrator first destroys his belongings and then target the belongings of the whole world. Tyler explains the aim of the Project Mayhem: "Like fight club does with clerks and box boys, Project Mayhem will break up civilization so we can make something better out of the world" (125). This is the quest of the narrator: he starts his journey to his identity for his individuation, and his task in this quest is first to gain a real identity for himself which is not shaped by consumerist perceptions, and then awake other people with fight clubs and destroy civilization with Project Mayhem. "This was the goal of Project Mayhem, Tyler said, the complete and right-away destruction of civilization"(125). Tyler thinks that this is necessary for our world to gain enough time to recover itself from the hazards that humanity has wreaked upon it. When the

narrator gets rid of his identity projected on the norms of consumer culture, he does not need Tyler's guidance anymore, even Tyler becomes an obstacle for his relationship with Marla, so he tries to prevent Tyler in Project Mayhem. At the end, the narrator manages to get rid of his suicidal identity Tyler by shooting himself in the cheek. As a wise old man Tyler has completed his job. He started an anarchy movement by creating a system that automatically recruits members for project mayhem and perform anarchy actions. Tyler makes the narrator understand the vanity of his life. Thanks to Tyler, the narrator gets rid of the false perceptions and ideas that consumerism imposes on his sense of self.

David Markham, in *Millennium People*, also feels uneasy about his life style. He is not content with his consumerist identity, in which he feels to be a commodity of his wife, bought as a present by his father-in-law. Thinking that he can be also a victim, David wants to create an identity and relationship beyond postmodern consumerist understanding. Richard Gould, who put the bomb in the airport, aiming to kill David, kills David's ex-wife and tries to help David to find his real identity. Richard expresses,

'Look closely in the mirror, David. What do you see? Someone you don't like very much. When you were twenty, you accepted yourself, flaws and all. Then disenchantment set in. By the time you were thirty your tolerance was wearing thin. You weren't entirely trustworthy, and you knew that you were prone to compromise. Already the future was receding, the bright dreams were slipping below the horizon. By now you're a stage set, one push and the whole thing could collapse at your feet. At times you feel you're living someone else's life, in a strange house you've rented by accident. The "you" you've become isn't your real self. (138)

David decides to join Richard's anarchist team and finds his real identity among them.

While Tyler is an imaginary guide that the narrator created in his mind, Richard, Kay, Vera and Stephen are independent individuals like the narrator David Markham. On the other hand, Tyler embodies many peculiarities in himself ranging from making soap and bombs to sabotaging movies as a projectionist; but, in *Millennium People*, each of these group members has different roles and skills. Vera is responsible for making bombs, Richard plays the psychopathic leader role of the anarchists and Kay works in coordination with other protestors dwelling in Chelsea

Marina with her charm and charisma. Both Tyler and his Project Mayhem team and Richard and his mob try to guide people to break the chains of postmodernist consumerist culture. Tyler sets rules for the attendants to break. Then he gives members assignments to attract more people into the fight clubs. He founds Project Mayhem, in which there are such groups as: misinformation, arson, assault and mischief committees. Each performs a different task for the salvation of all the people in the world. Likewise, Richard Gould and other militants also perform similar actions for the sake of people in their neighbourhood. Kay Churchill conducts fake surveys and advertising research to change the perspectives of people about their consumerist behaviour. They think that people are trapped in this consumerist culture, so there must be radical actions to open their eyes. Tyler in *Fight Club* and Richard, Kay, Stephen and Vera in *Millennium People* use anarchic terrorist actions to make people ruminate on the meaning of life and death. As Tyler says, "We have to show these men and women freedom by enslaving them, and show them courage by frightening them" (149). Similar ideas are expressed in *Millennium People*: "We have to set people free from all this culture and education. Richard says they're just ways of trapping the middle class and making them docile (61). Activists in both novels use significant or insignificant targets to shock people, and help them to think about capitalism. The mechanic, who is one of the leading members of Project Mayhem, and one of the most loyal disciples of Tyler explains their actions saying,

You have a class of young strong men and women, and they want to give their lives to something. Advertising has these people chasing cars and clothes they don't need. Generations have been working in jobs they hate, just so they can buy what they don't really need.

We don't have a great war in our generation, or a great depression, but we do, we have a great war of the spirit. We have a great revolution against the culture. The great depression is our lives. We have a spiritual depression. (149)

The anarchist mob in *Millennium People* also have a similar vision. Dexter in their conversation with David explains how consumerism entraps them:

Genocidal wars, half the world destitute, the other half sleepwalking through its own brain-death. We bought its trashy dreams and now we can't wake up. All these hypermarkets and gated communities. Once the doors close you can never get out. (63)

Likewise, Richard Gould also makes a similar speech to David about the desperate situation they are in:

People don't like themselves today. We 're a rentier class left over from the last century. We tolerate everything, but we know that liberal values are designed to make us passive. We think we believe in God but we're terrified by the mysteries of life and death. (139)

David also has to perform different tasks in his quest for his individuation. He is not pleased with his current situation in his marriage and career, so he needs a spiritual transformation to get rid of the banality of his life. He takes part in demonstrations and clashes with the police. When he is brought to justice for his actions, he meets Kay Churchill, who can direct David to his new path in quest of a new life. He also gets involved in the bombings of different targets. During his investigations, David finds out that the bomb is actually meant to kill him. This helps him understand the value of life and that it should not be spent in vain. While looking for people who bombed the airport, David actually searches for his real identity and a sublime meaning for his life.

My thumb hesitated, as I expected. Richard Gould was more deranged than any patient who had passed through the Adler, but as always I felt better for seeing him. Despite his admission that he had tried to kill me, I felt calmer and more confident. The long search for Laura's murderer had come to an end and, by claiming to have killed her, this demented paediatrician had set me free. (263)

David, feeling so close to death, attaches more importance to his life and freedom.

In *Millennium People* there are no special forces similar to the space monkeys of *Fight Club* to demolish targeted buildings. There are five main members and the ordinary residents of Chelsea Marina. Sometimes the ordinary middle-class

dwellers also commit crimes together with the leaders. However, they are people who have families and estates. So their revolt is not so successful in *Fight Club*. In *Fight Club*, project mayhem members are guerrilla-like warriors, who do not care about having a family or possessions. So, in the end the Millennium People, leaders are pacified, and their struggle is resolved by the government. Members of their group either kill their own friends or die in the operations. It is seen that Joan dies in action, Richard and Vera are killed by Stephen, and Kay and David and even Stephen, go on with their ordinary middle-class lives. Other dwellers who also revolted against the government return to their houses. The government softens their policies on taxes and parking. Everything is resolved in the end, just psychopathic terrorists and some victims of their actions die and England becomes normal again. However, in *Fight Club*, even if the narrator kills Tyler by committing suicide, he is alive and speaks with God in his imagination. Nevertheless, members of Project Mayhem still continue to perform anarchist actions. That is to say, Tyler succeeds in encamping anarchist forces to destroy civilization, and becomes a living martyr in the narrator's mind. In *Fight Club* people do not have anything to lose so they are not afraid. Tyler educates them so well that they become fearless militants of Project Mayhem. They do not care about the government or social rules, or religion. A Haiku that the narrator in *Fight Club* wrote summarizes the situation:

Worker bees can leave
Even drones can fly away
The queen is their slave. (63)

Workers do not have anything to lose, they can leave the system that binds them to an inferior life. It reminds us of the famous slogan in *Manifesto of The Communist Party*: "the proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains" (Marx & Engels:32). Drones that represent the middle-class here can also leave the system. But the upper class who created this capitalistic, consumerist world cannot leave this system that makes them richer day by day. Kay in *Millennium People* expresses that "our role is to keep the lower orders in check, but in fact we're policing ourselves" (193). As middle-class people, Chelsea Marina dwellers understand that their role in the system

is to control the lower-class for the sake of upper-class. They see that they are new proletariat of the system that work for the security and safety of the rich. As lower class people, characters in both novels revolt against the system. Kay Churchill in *Millennium People* explains how the middle-class is entrapped by consumerism: "The people here are gripped by a powerful illusion, the whole middle-class dream. It's all they live for — liberal educations, civic responsibility, respect for the law. They may think they're free, but they're trapped and impoverished" (86). They realize the trick of civilization and revolt against the system. Civilization is just an illusion that convinces people to give up their freedom voluntarily. However, British people do not see radical revolutions as in France or other countries. So Ballard could not expect more from Chelsea Marina dwellers. In the novel, British middle-class people are conformists, they revolt against the system for a short time, and return to their estates as soon as the conditions are improved.

In *Fight Club*, there is a systematic violence growing to demolish post-capitalistic consumerist system. First violence is used to awaken individuals from the dreams of consumption. Later, violence changes into a war against consumerist capitalistic system. Violence here takes the form of class struggle. The narrator describes himself and Tyler as guerrilla terrorists of the service industry. In revenge for the structural violence on workers in the form of low salaries, Tyler, who does not care about being fired, urinates into the soups he serves. It can be said that his aim in violence is just cause anarchy which can liberate humans from the illusion of consumerism by destroying the notion of property.

Tyler's actions remind us the of book of *Minimanual of the Urban Guerrilla*, written by Carlos Marighella. In chapter 1, Marighella defines the urban guerrilla as "an implacable enemy of the regime, and systematically inflicts damage on the authorities and on the people who dominate the country and exercise power" (1996). It is seen that Project Mayhem is an organization that aims to destroy the consumerist regime, but it does not aim to create another one in its stead:

When Tyler invented Project Mayhem, Tyler said the goal of Project Mayhem had nothing to do with people. Tyler didn't care if other people got hurt or not. The goal was to teach each man in the project that he had the power to control history. We, each of us, can take control of the world. (122)

Tyler wants lower class people to understand their power and gain an identity in this consumerist world that turns them to commodities. The aim of Project Mayhem is to subvert civilization. As one member of the project whispers to the narrator in the hospital "We're going to break up civilization so we can make something better out of the world" (208). Only selected and determined disciples can participate in it. Space monkeys in project mayhem are eager to devote everything they have. Just as Marighella expresses in chapter 2 "the urban guerrilla is characterized by his bravery and decisive nature"(1969). Tyler tests their agility and pertinacity. Space Monkeys in project mayhem also never give up their aim even if they lose friends in the action, or when plans do not work. In *Millennium People* characters do not hesitate from sacrificing themselves or their friends.

Soap is a significant motif in the novel. Tyler clears the civilization away with soap, in that he uses materials in soap-making to produce home-made dynamites. So in this sense soap, which is one of the key stones of the foundation of civilization now becomes a tool for the destruction of civilization. One of the major inventions of civilization that helped the growth of population is soap. Thanks to the disinfecting quality of soap, epidemics were prevented and the growth of populations became possible. In the novel, they produce soap from the "liposuctioned fat sucked out of the richest thighs in America" (150). Paper Street company produces soap to fund the expenses of project mayhem, and produce dynamite for the explosions. Carlos Marighella explains: "Homemade weapons are often as efficient as the best weapons produced in conventional factories" (1969, Ch5). Space Monkeys need weapons for their actions and homemade dynamites are one of their main weapons. Ironically, they produce their soap from the fat of rich obese people, and sell them again to those rich, since only the rich can afford to buy these home-made expensive soaps. Another irony is that, generally those rich are owners of big production firms for mass consumption, but they like to use home made products. In brief, soap which is a yardstick in the development of civilization, is used to destroy civilization in *Fight Club*.

On the other hand in *Millennium People* violence is more nihilistic since it does not aim to demolish any system, but sparks enthusiasm to life by triggering primitive life instincts. For Ballard, madness or meaningless violence is a way out

from the mundaneness of life. In his interview with Jeannette Baxter, Ballard explains,

The point about the middle-class revolution in *Millennium People* is that it was pointless, that it failed. For all their efforts to throw off their chains, the revolution achieved nothing, and the rebels returned to Chelsea Marina, resuming their former lives, even more docile than before. What I'm arguing in *MP* is that in our totally pacified world the only acts that will have any significance at all will be acts of meaningless violence. (Sellars & O'Hara, 2012, 1276)

The revolution in Chelsea Marina is tried to be realized by a disgruntled middle-class, who are not really capable of performing difficult tasks. Richard and his friends perform actions that can awaken people and encourage them to attend their mob for future actions. They become leaders of the revolt in Chelsea Marina. Their actions are also as violent as Project Mayhem.

Yet in both *Fight Club* and *Millennium People* characters are not able to achieve their aims. Tyler is unable to succeed in blowing up the Morison Parker buildings. Richard and his friends likewise are not able to realize their dreams. However, David clarifies that Richard does not aim to be successful. His intention is just to spark the fire of revolution against the capitalistic system. When they achieve their target, the idea of resistance will not attract them anymore. As Zizek points out, what makes a love object desirable is the lack felt towards it (2008b, XVI). If they reach their aim they do not desire revolution anymore. David Markham explains this in the novel: "Violence, as Richard Gould once said, should always be gratuitous, and no serious revolution should ever achieve its aims" (293). Even though the anarchist movements in both novel are not so successful in action, they change the perspective of the narrators radically. The narrator in *Fight Club* replies to God in his mind: "We are not special. We are not crap or trash, either. We just are. We just are, and what happens just happens" (207). It seems that the narrator has attracted attention of God. His hatred seems to be pacified. The narrator now defines himself without his commodities.

Both of the novels exploit anarchy as the main way of struggling with postmodern consumerist culture. Violence aims similar targets in both of the novels.

For instance, in *Fight Club*, Tyler Durden tries to demolish the Parker Morrison Building to eradicate financial records and hopes to demolish also the national museum. By this way, people will get rid of historical and financial records, so a chance for a new beginning will be possible for people. In *Millennium People*, characters try to demolish National Cinema Centre to wipe out movies and other cultural records for the same aims. "There were lists of video stores to be torched, travel agencies to be attacked, galleries and museums to be sabotaged, and teams of residents assigned to each action"(9). The rebels also want to blast the museums and other buildings that contain historical records. They think that these centres pacified people and corrupted their minds. David expresses,

They had moved on to wider targets—a Pret A Manger in the Kings Road, Tate Modern, a Conran restaurant scheduled for the British Museum, the Promenade Concerts, Waterstone's bookshops, all of them exploiters of middle-class credulity. Their corrupting fantasies had deluded the entire educated caste, providing a dangerous pabulum that had poisoned a spoon-fed intelligentsia. From sandwich to summer school, they were the symbols of sub-servience and the enemies of freedom. (120)

These institutions only seem to enrich our culture and civilization, but in fact, the postmodernist culture, religion, history, education are all that cause people to go astray. What is shown as culture and civilization is just an illusion to trap us. In an interview Ballard explains,

People resent the fact that the most moral decision in their lives is choosing what colour their next car will be... Whether they should buy this or that brand of trainers—it all comes down to what you're going to buy next. I think people realise that they are so many hamsters turning round on these little money and it isn't enough.(Sellars & O'Hara, 2012, 1270)

To regenerate our polluted world and humiliated self-perceptions, people should commune with nature, and civilize their primitive side again without degenerating it with possessions. The narrator in *Fight Club* summarizes this in a Haiku,

Without just one nest
A bird can call the world home
Life is your career (64)

If people had not created the idea of self-possession, they would possess and protect the world and nature as they protect their commodities. Similarly, if they had preferred to have a good life, rather than a good job they would have better lives. Since many people sacrifice their life, health and families to be successful in their occupations.

It should also be mentioned that nobody in the *Fight Club* has a full name except for Tyler Durden and Marla Singer. However, in *Millennium People*, everybody has a name and surname. But, in *Fight Club* it is seen that only those who gave up their commodities, career, education and religion deserve a name. Bob's full name is mentioned after he is killed during an operation. He leaves everything behind when he devotes himself to Project Mayhem and becomes a martyr, then it is understood that his full name is Robert Paulsen. The narrator explains Bob's gaining a name: "Only in death will we have our names since only in death are we no longer part of the effort. In death we become heroes"(201).

It has been already mentioned that the narrator of *Fight Club* wants to die, and he respects those who are dying, or dead. Consumerism in order to make people vivacious consumers despises senility and death. Becoming old or looking old are shown as if a sin or a defect. As an ardent enemy of post-capitalistic consumerist system, the narrator or Tyler opposes to the idea of living a long healthy life, and the vain struggle to stay young, and having an attractive body and face. When his boss asks about the scars on his face, the narrator replies, "I just don't want to die without a few scars, I say. It's nothing anymore to have a beautiful stock body" (48).

Marla Singer also deserves to have full name, since she also does not attach importance to money or commodities and her life. The narrator says "Marla's philosophy of life, she told me, is that she can die at any moment"(108). This can be the reason why the narrator falls in love to her. Those, who have full name are distinct from commodities. Even the narrator has no name. He becomes a legendary Tyler Durden after his fight club organizations. It is seen that in support groups the narrator chooses different names. When the narrator goes to the support group Remaining Men Together Big Bob does not know that Tyler Durden and the narrator are the same person. Marla and others in Project Mayhem know the narrator as Tyler.

Even the doorman of his apartment calls the narrator as Mr Durden in his last visit. Tyler Durden may be his real name, or a name that the narrator has chosen for his new identity. When he loses everything, his house, his possessions he gains this name. Tyler, who is the split personality of the narrator reminds us the name of famous rebeller Wat Tyler¹⁷ in British history. On 1381, peasants, craftsmen, tradesmen and ex-soldiers of England revolted against the Kingdom under the leadership of Wat Tyler. They attacked tax collectors and destroyed tax records and registers and beheaded some government officials and looted finance buildings. Wat Tyler, who revolted to abolish serfdom, may inspire Palahniuk to use this name for the new identity of the narrator. Tyler, similar to Wat Tyler, attacks finance buildings to clear the registrations and free people from dues and bank loans.

There is also Raymond K. Hessel, whose name is mentioned when Tyler kidnaps Raymond and reads his name on the driving licence. Although Raymond is not a character who gained individuality by despising post-capitalistic consumer culture, he is one of the few characters that have full name. The mechanic in the novel utters Tyler's teachings, "You're not how much money you've got in the bank. You are not your job. You are not your family, you're not who you tell yourself... you're not your name" (143). Capitalism dehumanizes people and turns them into working machines. Raymond working as a common labourer forgets his humanity, his dreams and hopes. There is also Patrick Madden, whose full name is mentioned in the novel. As the narrator expresses "because only death do we have names" (201). Consumerist system imposes wrong self-perceptions, so without getting rid of them people do not deserve to have a name. But in *Millennium People*, characters have full names, they do not need to do anything to gain names.

Consequently, consumer culture causes cultural and moral decay of societies due to the life styles and psychological break-down of individuals due to branded identity construction. The narrators both in *Fight Club* and *Millennium People*, get rid of their identity projected on consumerist cultural norms. They leave their possessions, occupations and even their family bonds behind so as to be free themselves from the propaganda of consumer culture which always imposes to have or to do something to be more happy, but in fact makes people depressive and

¹⁷See Burg, F. David, *A World History of Tax Rebellions: An Encyclopedia of Tax Rebels, Revolts and Riots from Antiquity to Present*, Routledge, New York, 2004.

dispirit. They fight back against capitalistic consumerist norms and institutions to create an upheaval for the society.



CHAPTER III

KINGDOM COME: A SHOT ACROSS THE BOW

J. G Ballard who is mostly identified with the genre of science-fiction, has showed his writing skills in different genres such as the disaster thriller, apocalyptic fiction, post-apocalyptic fiction, pulp fiction, and blank fiction. Distinctively, Ballard does not tell stories of aliens, or UFOs; rather he deals with alienation of man to himself and his society, or people in suburbs who have turned into zombies because of the dominant effect of television or lost their humanity and turned to alien creatures or robotic machines.

Ballard in his last dystopian novel *Kingdom Come* anticipates the consumerism and fascism that is increasing in England day by day in this millennium. The people that he describes in this novel are like aliens that are estranged from humane feelings or like robots who are programmed only to consume. As it is implied in the title of the book, he portrays the apocalypse of Britain because of the degenerated society that has no ethical or moral values accept the consumerist ideology that is imposed on them via media. The title of the novel *Kingdom Come* has meanings like: "the next world, the end of the world, unconsciousness or death"¹⁸. It can be said that Ballard harshly criticises the future of The United Kingdom. On the surface, this novel is a detective story of an unsuccessful advertiser, who wants to clarify the murder of his father happened in a shopping mall. However, tacitly this is an allegory which points out that British society has lost the traditions of their ancestors, and Ballard here wants to state that United Kingdom is dissolving due to the devastating effect of postmodernist consumerism. The novel seems to be a warning for his readers about the coming apocalypse of unconscious consumption. The book starts with sentences on the coming danger as: "THE SUBURBS DREAM of violence. Asleep in their drowsy villas, sheltered by benevolent shopping malls, they wait patiently for the nightmares that will wake them into a more passionate

¹⁸ 'kingdom come' In www.collinsdictionary.com, Collins 2018, Web. 8 April 2018.

world... " (3). It can be said that English people are patiently waiting for a spark that can trigger turmoil in society. This novel is about consumption and the occurrence of violence due to consumption culture in society. According to this novel violence is a way to get rid of the boring cycle of consumption, in which people have to purchase all the time for gaining pleasure.

In the second paragraph of the novel, The narrator continues his words asking a critical question:

Beyond Heathrow lay the empires of consumerism, and the mystery that obsessed me until the day I walked out of my agency for the last time. How to rouse a dormant people who had everything, who had bought the dreams that money can buy and knew they had found a bargain? (3)

Here, the narrator describes the United Kingdom as divided into many empires because people are seized with the consumption madness. For the narrator, "empires of consumerism" are shopping malls around London. Each has different atmospheres, different environments with different store chains of different brand names, so they are like different empires, as if they are not in the United Kingdom. When someone enters these malls, s/he loses connections with the outside world. There is just one thing that brings people together: it is collective crime. People are on the verge of madness due to consumerism. Violence is the tool to rouse dormant people of the United Kingdom. Ballard, in his interview with Simon Sellars suggests: "*Kingdom Come* is a full-frontal attack on England today. I think in many ways this country has lost its direction, lost its purpose, and there are some very strange things going on under the surface" (2012, 1337). As Ballard expresses above, the falling kingdom that the title of the novel implies is the United Kingdom. He feels discomfort about the future of British society and the United Kingdom since people do not feel affection or respect towards their country. They only deal with their next purchase. Thus, consumerism decays the roots of England. This is explained in the first chapter of the book as. "history and tradition, the slow death by suffocation of an older Britain, played no part in its people's lives. They lived in an eternal retail present, where the deepest moral decisions concerned the purchase of a refrigerator or washing machine" (8). Britain, which was once the empire on which the sun never

set, is losing its power and glory in the present world due to the effects of consumerism. As seen above, people are much more interested in shopping rather than the retrograding situation in Britain. Ballard here criticizes how consumerism affects social life in present England. They are not aware that they are under the invasion of consumerism.

‘You have to think about England as a whole, not just Brooklands and the Thames Valley. The churches are empty, and the monarchy shipwrecked itself on its own vanity. Politics is a racket, and democracy is just another utility, like gas and electricity. Almost no one has any civic feeling. Consumerism is the one thing that gives us our sense of values. Consumerism is honest, and teaches us that everything good has a barcode. The great dream of the Enlightenment, that reason and rational consumerism.’ (102)

As is seen, Richard says that English society day by day loses its moral values, traditions and sense of right and wrong. Purchasing has become the main interest, people do not care about morality or politics.

In the novel that there are three different strata in the London suburbs, and they are in a battle with each other, and violence is their shared activity as an alternative of shopping that they all like to perform. On one hand, there are people who are nostalgic about old Britain, and against shopping malls, since malls are converting English society into a consumerist society. They try to demolish the Metro Centre shopping mall and all the ideas that it represents. That is to say, they are against consumerism and globalization. On the other hand, there are people whose lives are centred on shopping and mass media. And thirdly, there are migrants, who are trying to integrate into the English society, and also introduce their culture into this society. Migrants are a potential threat for global consumerism, since they can resist global brands of malls with their local products. In the novel, the first group (the nostalgic one's) wants to re-construct the English society. So they have to get rid of the shopping mall and they also want to expel the migrants out of the country.

Ballard in this novel uses Richard's father Stuart, who has been shot dead in a shopping mall, as a symbol. Similar to the British Empire that has gained many victories and invaded different parts of the world, the deceased Stuart Pearson has

visited many parts of the world and has had a successful career as a pilot. Tragically, his life ends in a shopping mall, which is an allegory of the end of United Kingdom because of consumerism. Thus, the name Stuart may have been deliberately chosen by the author to symbolize the Kingdom of Great Britain, which was founded with the Acts of Union during the Stuart Dynasty in 1707. Englishness is day by day going to be replaced by a new kind of consumerism. One of the characters in the novel, Geoffrey Fairfax, probate attorney who deals with the legacy of Richard's father, complains about the changing situation in Brooklands: "Everything has changed, we might as well be living inside that ghastly dome (Metro-Centre Shopping Mall). Sometimes I think we already are, without realizing it" (31). It is understood in the novel that as an old soldier who served in the military as a half-colonel, Geoffrey misses the old days of Britain and he is nostalgic for English people that are not corrupted by consumerism. He dislikes the Metro-Centre shopping mall as he feels that it changed the identity of society. For Geoffrey Fairfax nowadays students do not go to their schools, people do not visit churches, clubs and charities are closed due to the negative effect of the shopping mall on society. He describes the changing society as "Here in Brooklands we had a real community, not just a population of cash tills. Now it's gone, vanished overnight when that money-factory opened" (32). As Geoffrey expresses the English society has been evolved to a consumerist society, and they are only obsessed with their consumptions. Geoffrey's words are the best to depict this new society emerging in England:

We're facing a new kind of man and woman—narrow-eyed, passive, clutching their store cards. They believe anything that people like you care to tell them. They want to be tricked, they want to be deluded into buying the latest rubbish. They've been educated by TV commercials. They know that the only things with any value are those they can put in a carrier bag. This is a plague area, Mr Pearson. A plague called consumerism. (33)

Although Geoffrey only mentions changing life-style specifically in Brooklands, the narrator Richard Pearson tells that the situation in the rest of England is the same.

It is understood from this depiction that Ballard resembles this new society to zombies of science-fiction. According to Oxford Dictionary the word 'zombie' is defined as: "a person who seems only partly alive, without any feeling or interest in

what is happening". The consumerist society resembles zombies, because they do not care about what is happening around them. Under the effect of advertisements, they are just busy with their shopping. Generally in zombie stories, there happens a plague infecting people and turning them into zombies. As seen above, this plague is consumerism, which deracinates people from their traditions, social values and culture, and obsesses them with shopping. Characteristically, Ballard wants his readers to think that the world they live in is not far from science fiction and dystopia. Consumerism de-humanizes people and turns them into aliens, robots, or zombies. Generally, science-fiction tells stories about aliens, space and the things that can happen in the distant future. However, Ballard's style is different, he does not describe other planets or aliens, he deals with this world, in which people can commit the most brutal crimes. Here, in this novel *Kingdom Come*, Ballard does not tell a zombie story, but people who become zombielike creatures due to the frenzy of consumerism. Most people do not care about environment pollution and labour exploitation during the production of commodities when they go shopping. There is no need to zombies for the extinction of humanity and nature, with our consumptive behaviours human kind is not far from the apocalypse. As famous physicist Stephen Hawking has predicted, the Earth will turn into a giant fire ball because of increasing energy consumption and global warming, and humanity will be extinct by 2600 unless we settle in another planet¹⁹. This is the reality of our world, there happened two world wars, many massacres, and ghastly holocausts. In Ballard's science fiction, there is no need for aliens or outside forces who will invade our planet Earth to kill or enslave people, human history is abundant with the barbarity of dictators or tyrants that turn this life into a hell for all livings. In his autobiography *Miracles of Life*, Ballard explains his writing style:

Above all, the s-f genre had a huge vitality. Without thinking up a plan of action, I decided that this was a field I should enter. I could see that here was a literary form that placed a premium on originality, and gave a great deal of latitude to its writers, many of whom had their own trademark styles and approaches. I felt too that for all its vitality, magazine science fiction was

¹⁹ See Murphy, Margi, (2017 November 06th, updated 07th November 2017). *Flaming Hell*. accessed: 05.12.2018 <https://www.thesun.co.uk>.
url:<https://www.thesun.co.uk/tech/4852083/stephen-hawking-says-earth-will-become-a-sizzling-fire-ball-by-2600-and-humanity-will-become-extinct/>

limited by its "what if" approach, and that the genre was ripe for change, if not outright takeover I was more interested in a "what now" approach. After weekend trips across the border I could see that both Canada and USA were changing rapidly, and that change would in time reach even Britain. I would interiorise science fiction, looking for the pathology that underlay the consumer society, the TV landscape and the nuclear arm race, a vast untouched continent of fictional possibility... (305)

In Ballard's science fiction novels, characters are not aliens or zombies, they are humans of this world who have a great capacity for violence. Again in his autobiography, Ballard gives clues about his novel *Kingdom Come*, and expresses the difference between the issues that he and other significant writers have exploited,

Writers of so-called serious fiction shared one dominant characteristic: their fiction was first and foremost about themselves. The "self" lay at the heart of modernism, but now had a powerful rival, the everyday world, which was just as much a psychological construct, and just as prone to mysterious and often psychopathic impulses. It was this rather sinister realm, a consumer society that might decide to go on a day trip to another Auschwitz and another Hiroshima, that science fiction was exploring. (Ibid,132)

As is seen, Ballard opposes the views that despises the science fiction genre. For Ballard, science fiction can also provide opportunities to capture and reflect the reality of life and human psychology as strong as other literary genres do. Science fiction is not a genre that only deals with strange future events, it can be a prolific genre for describing ordinary events and daily routines in our lives, like going to shopping malls, eating kebab in a Pakistani restaurant and making online orders on mobile phones. During this routine, suddenly people can go mad, and a holocaust may begin. Normal people suddenly become psychopaths, zombielike, robotic or alien creatures with their ordinary actions. Ballard explains his fictions as exploiting the lives of average citizens living in the suburbs, and doing common jobs. What makes his novels interesting is that things go wild due to this ordinariness. As a science-fiction writer, and a survivor of WW II who witnessed the cruelty of war in Shanghai, Ballard is cognizant about the fiendishness of human kind. *Kingdom Come* is a dystopia; however, characters are real-life people who can commit a crime

or start a war. Throughout the history of humankind, people have committed ferocious atrocities that no other species can compete with. There is no need for extra terrestrials or zombies, or other creatures, humans have the capacity to turn the Earth into hell. As Ballard mentions above, people are inclined to do evil and consumerism can trigger people to atrocities. Consumerism is spreading like a contagious virus that brain-washes people, and, as a result, people begin not to care about anything but consumption. However, not so many people seem to be aware of the awaiting problem that will one day lead to a kind of tyranny and will lead to new holocausts in history. In the novel Sangster expresses to Richard,

‘And a hundred other shopping malls. Who needs liberty and human rights and civic responsibility? What we want is an aesthetics of violence. We believe in the triumph of feelings over reason. Pure materialism isn’t enough, all those Asian shopkeepers with their cash-register minds. We need drama, we need our emotions manipulated, we want to be conned and cajoled. Consumerism fits the bill exactly. It’s drawn the blueprint for the fascist states of the future. If anything, consumerism creates an appetite that can only be satisfied by fascism. Some kind of insanity is the last way forward. All the dictators in history soon grasped that—Hitler and the Nazi leaders made sure no one ever thought they were completely sane.’ (168)

As seen above, uncontrolled consumption is similar to a virus infecting people. It creates the perception that it is better to follow our instincts, in order to be happy, one should get rid of their control mechanism and just consume more and more. In his interview, "*I really would not want to fuck George W. Bush: A Conversation with J. G. Ballard*," Ballard talks about this novel as: "My newest novel *Kingdom Come* raises the question of whether the consumer thinking of the present day might not at some point suddenly turn into fascism" (<http://www.ballardian.com/i-really-would-not-want-to-fuck-george-w-bush>). It is clear that Ballard is worried about the situation in England. He fears that this bliss of consumption will one day turn into violence when it does not satisfy their zests anymore. In chapter seven when Richard asks Kumar about the reason for this violence, Kumar replies that people go to shopping malls and understand that their lives are empty and they look for a new zeal. No matter how much one consumes or buys, the lack of spiritual satisfaction will prevent him or her to find ataraxia, and eventually this will lead to insanity or violence. In his interview with Toby Litt, Ballard explains this as:

Because consumerism makes inherent demands, it has inherent needs, which can only be satisfied by pressing the accelerator down a little harder, moving a little faster, upping all the antes. In order to keep spending and keep believing, we need to move into the area of the psychopathic. (Sellars & O'Hara, 2012, 1323)

Maxted, who is a psychiatrist in the novel, diagnoses psychopathology of consumerism in the novel as:

'A voluntary insanity, whatever you want to call it. As a psychiatrist I'd use the term elective psychopath. Not the kind of madness we deal with here. I'm talking about a willed insanity, the sort that we higher primates thrive on. They're bored with chewing twigs and picking the fleas out of each other's armpits. They want meat, the bloodier the better, they want to taste their enemies' fear in the flesh they grind. So they start beating their chests and shrieking at the sky. They work themselves into a frenzy, then set off in a hunting party. They come across a tribe of colobus monkeys and literally tear them limb from limb. Very nasty, but voluntary madness brought them a tasty supper. They sleep it off, and go back to chewing twigs and picking fleas.' (103-104)

For Ballard madness is a mechanism that people use when people are trapped in mundaneness. Advertisements and campaigns promoted by the Metro Centre in the novel stir up wild instincts of people and lead them to vandalise the streets. In the novel, they march to plunder shops and the houses of immigrants. There are people who are under the influence of mass media attacking immigrants and their shops. They commit violence as an amusement, which is an alternative for shopping. In an interview Ballard further explains his ideas about violence in the suburbs:

At this time, the Baader-Meinhof—you know, that armed gang that came out very left politically, robbed banks, killed some American servicemen in a raid, and all the rest—was at its height. Nobody could understand these people. They were all sort of well-to-do, middle-class, well-educated kids from, comparatively speaking, rich families, who took to all this 'absurd violence'. Nobody could understand them. But suddenly I realised, 'My God, of course I can understand them.' If you're brought up in one of these suburbs around a German city, where nothing is ever allowed out of place, where because they were so terrified by the experiences of World War II and the Nazi epoch,

they'd gone to any length to make certain that everybody is happy, everyone in school or kindergarten is dutifully equipped so there would be no deviance and no problems later. If you have a world like that, without any kind of real freedom of the spirit, the only freedom to be found is in madness. I mean, in a completely sane world, madness is the only freedom! (Sellars & O'Hara, 2012, 484)

This madness is the only remaining way to resist the system that captures society. Seemingly innocent violence in sports becomes real violence, and people in the novel begin to directly attack the immigrants. Their hooliganism later turns to fascism against others.

Moreover, media imposes violence and crime culture on people with their programs. In chapter eleven, a TV program of the Metro Centre overtly channels people to attack immigrants. David Cruise in these programs seduces audiences into violence. By using violence he aims to attract attention to the Metro Centre. David asks his guests' opinions:

‘ I don't want to blow the Metro-Centre's trumpet, but consumerism is about a lot more than buying things. You agree, Doreen? Good. It's our main way of expressing our tribal values, of engaging with each other's hopes and ambitions. What you see here is a conflict of recreational cultures, a clash of very different lifestyles. On the one side are people like us – we enjoy the facilities offered by the Metro-Centre, and depend interests than your Member of Parliament. No disrespect, and no emails, please. On the other side are the low-value expectations of the immigrant communities. Their suppressed womenfolk are internal exiles who never share the dignity and freedom to choose that we see in the consumer ideal. Right, Sheila?’ (78-79)

Richard, the protagonist of the novel, helps David Cruise to increase profits of the mall thanks to diverting the inclination of violence towards immigrants. Although these immigrants have small properties and do not have much purchasing power since their shops are outside shopping malls, they are accepted as a threat to the shopping mall and the big stores in the mall. That is to say, as they are not attending the mob of consumers that come together in the shopping mall, these immigrants are reflected as enemies of the new nation of consumers. In brief, these immigrants are

'flawed' or 'defective consumers' that Bauman expresses as unwanted people in consumerism.

Many examples in the novel reveal that although people carry flags and nationalistic symbols, it does not represent their patriotism; they just behave as hooligans of a new kind of nationalism, which is shaped by mass media and capitalism. They are converted to Nazi SS troops to attack flawed consumers like Duncan Christie and immigrants. In the novel, immigrants are seen as the scapegoat of the negative change in the structure of society. But, immigrants are not the real cause for this degradation. Despite big firms capturing the economy of the nation, they are unnoticed. Immigrants are easy victims so hooligans attack them, not the real enemy of capitalism. It is easy to attack immigrants, however actually what degrades their local society is the consumerist culture introduced by big international firms. On the other hand, consumerist culture is the primal reason for the social problems, as many characters in the novel complain about it. Geoffrey Fairfax clearly blames the Metro-Centre shopping mall for the degradation in the society. He commits a car-bomb attack to the Metro-Centre. Moreover, the media organ of the shopping mall disorients local people so as to protect itself. Media sows immigrants as the target. However, these hooligans are indeed extremists of consumption, not supporters of sports teams. As Ballard expresses in an interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist, "Human beings today display a deep and restless violence, which no longer channels itself into wars but has to emerge in road rage, internet porn, contact sports like hyper-violent professional rugby and US football, reality TV, and so on" (Sellars & O'Hara, 2012. 1226). In *Kingdom Come*, it is seen that the intention of the sport fan clubs is not social gatherings to support their local sport team. Instead, these clubs serve as crime gangs in which people find the opportunity to commit crimes like looting and beating up immigrants. Their interest in the sport games emerges from their inclination towards violence. They also strike a nationalistic attitude to normalise their violence on immigrants. Their commitment to their team and nation is manipulated by the media for the profits of capitalistic investments of big business groups. Richard witnessing violence against immigrants states, "Using the supporters' clubs in their patriotic livery, they were moving against the immigrant population, harassing them out of their run-down streets to make room for new retail parks, marinas and executive estates" (78). While people are dealing with the wrong enemies such as immigrants and minorities, capitalism is busy with finding new

tactics and tricks to spin the wheel of consumerism. Metro-Centre also wants to create loyal consumers from these hooligans. These sport hooligans first turn into fascist troops under the command of David Cruise. Later they are seen to be converted into the brethren of the cultic religion of consumerism.

Shortly afterwards, control will be lost, and a new consumerist fascist state will occur in the novel. Our world has experienced how fascism and Nazism caused tragic sufferings for the whole world. This is what Ballard fears for the future of England. Frenzy of consumption in people, and vicious sales policies of capitalism can create neo-nazi state of consumerism. The narrator of the novel, Richard Pearson, after witnessing the evacuation of a Muslim community, expresses:

I accepted that a new kind of hate had emerged, silent and disciplined, a racism tempered by loyalty cards and PIN numbers. Shopping was now the model for all human behaviour, drained of emotion and anger. The decision by the estate-dwellers to reject the imam was an exercise of consumer choice. (12)

There is an increase of fascism and degeneration of traditions in English society, however people are not aware of it because they have sunk into a consumption frenzy. Dr. Maxted who is a psychiatrist in the novel describes English society as:

We're totally degenerate. We lack spine, and any faith in ourselves. We have a tabloid world-view, but no dreams or ideals. We have to be teased with the promise of deviant sex. Our gurus tell us that coveting our neighbours' wives is good for us, and even conceivably our neighbours' asses. Don't honour your father and mother, and break free from the whole Oedipal trap. We're worth nothing, but we worship our barcodes. We're the most advanced society our planet has ever seen, but real decadence is far out of our reach. (263)

In an interview with Sarah O'Reilly, when asked about real life influences on the novel, Ballard replies:

People think that the events in *Kingdom Come* are a bit extreme, but they actually aren't. For example, about two years ago there were riots in an IKEA store near the North Circular road in London. People abandoned their cars and were fighting over sofas; there was a huge riot in which people were hurt. Football hooliganism has been a terrible stain on the national character, and it could come back. Nothing I describe is all that extreme. (281-282)

Consumerism creates sick societies and individuals by urging them to shop continuously. Consumption is seen as the only way to be happy, to get pleasure of life, to love and to be loved, to relax and have a good time. Paradoxically, the urge of consumption is also what creates stress and depression, anxiety and unrest. In order to be happy, people have to buy more and more, and to buy more, people have to work more. To work more, they have to sacrifice the time that they can spend with their family and friends, or their health. Satisfaction of one need, creates another need. It is like a cage that captures people and makes them suffer from a social sickness called "affluenza". 'Affluenza' is defined by De Graaf as a painful, contagious, socially-transmitted condition of overload, debt, anxiety, and waste resulting from the dogged pursuit of more" (224). Big businesses, advertising firms, and the media all together trick people to buy something continuously offering happiness in shopping. But post-capitalistic system of consumption hinders societies to achieve peace. Ballard, who studied psychiatry, foresees that this system causes societies to lose their traditional morality and ethical values. This is what Ballard wants to warn us about in this novel. In his interview with Toby Litt, he suggests,

I don't think the madness thing is a big issue as far as *Kingdom Come* is concerned, because this is a warning. I'm trying to say: 'Dangerous bends ahead. Slow down'. The point is that what I see as threatening about the all-pervasive and all-powerful consumer society is that it's not any specific individual who is responsible for anything nasty that may happen in the future. This is a collective enterprise. All of us who are members of consumer society; all of us are responsible, in a way. (Sellars & O'Hara, 2012, 1320)

Madness is a way out of this cage of consumerism. Ballard foresees a new kind of dictatorship similar to Nazis emerging soon in England. There are many references to Nazism and Hitler in the novel. In the last part of the novel, the shopping mall

becomes a fascist state, in which there are supporters of this dictatorship and hostages who want to escape. The shopping mall and its Hitler-like leader David Cruise show parallelism to Nazism. It is clear that Ballard wants to show how dangerous the propaganda of consumerism is and how it is manipulated to create evil in society. In the novel, in order to increase sale rates, David Cruise uses propaganda methods used by Hitler during Nazi Germany. Thanks to the tactics of Richard, who plays the role of the minister of propaganda like Joseph Goebbels serving Hitler, David Cruise and Richard Pearson do not hesitate to use promotion tricks that can emerge hatred in society. For the sake of profit David creates pseudo-Nazi SS troops from hooligans using the tactics that Richard taught him. Their advertisement tactics cause a consumer fascist state in the Metro-Centre shopping mall. Sangster expresses, "Consumer fascism provides its own ideology, no one needs to sit down and dictate *Mein Kampf*. Evil and psychopathy have been reconfigured into lifestyle statements" (168). David Cruise utters hate speech against the minorities, and tries to form a consumer society and a consumerist world in Metro-Centre. Expecting something similar to happen in British society Maxted draws an analogy with Nazism:

People still think the Nazi leaders led the German people into the horrors of race war. Not true. The Germans were desperate to break out of their prison. Defeat, inflation, grotesque war reparations, the threat of barbarians advancing from the east. Going mad would set them free, and they chose Hitler to lead the hunting party. That's why they stayed together till the end. They needed a psychopathic god to worship, so they recruited a nobody and stood him on the high altar. (104)

Again in his interview with Werner Fuchs and Sascha Mamczak, titled "I really would not want to fuck George W. Bush: A Conversation with J. G. Ballard", Ballard explains the threat of fascism that is awaiting consumerist society:

but just take a look at what's going on in these huge shopping malls. Evidently not much more than shopping is left for us. That and sport. That's where we get our kicks, those are the new religions. I already believe that one of these days we could end up in a kind of leisure-time dictatorship. (<http://www.ballardian.com/i-really-would-not-want-to-fuck-george-w-bush>)

It is clear that Ballard is worried about a society that is prone to support a new kind of dictatorship. Dr. Maxted clarifies this situation in the novel as:

‘People feel they can rely on the irrational. It offers the only guarantee of freedom from all the cant and bullshit and sales commercials fed to us by politicians, bishops and academics. People are deliberately re-primitivizing themselves. They yearn for magic and unreason, which served them well in the past, and might help them again. They’re keen to enter a new Dark Age. The lights are on, but they’re retreating into the inner darkness, into superstition and unreason. The future is going to be a struggle between vast systems of competing psychopathies, all of them willed and deliberate, part of a desperate attempt to escape from a rational world and the boredom of consumerism.’(105)

Here, it is clear that this novel is not just an ordinary dystopia, *Kingdom Come* can be accepted as a presage for English society. The riots that occurred in England, a few years after the publication of the novel shows how deftly Ballard analyzes his society. Between 6th August and 11th August 2011, there happened one of the biggest riots in English history. People witnessed arsons, plunders, shootings, and skirmishes between protestors and police, and many rioters were arrested. Some people died and hundreds of people were injured, many public and private properties were damaged and a lot of markets and shops were looted. What makes these riots significant is consumerist motives behind the protests. For Newburn et al, "a number of commentators argued that the nature of modern consumer capitalism should be placed front and centre of any explanation of the disorder" (987). Slavoj Zizek's comments in *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* about the riots that happened in 2011 in England show how Ballard has correctly portrayed the problems of consumerism and characteristics of the riot:

But why were the protesters pushed towards this kind of violence? Zygmunt Bauman was on the right track here when characterized the riots as acts of "defective and disqualified consumers." More than anything else, the riots were a consumerist carnival of destruction, an expression of acquisitive desire violently enacted when unable to realize itself in the "proper" way (by shopping). As such, of course, the riots also contain a moment of genuine protest, a kind of ironic reply to the consumerist ideology by which we are bombarded in our daily lives: "You call on us to consume while

simultaneously depriving us of the possibility of doing so properly--so here we are doing it the only way open to us!" The violence thus, in a sense, staged the truth of our "post-ideological society," displaying in a painfully palpable way the material force of ideology. The problem with the riots was not their violence as such, but the fact that it was not truly self-assertive--in Nietzschean terms, it was reactive, not active, impotent rage and despair masked as a display of force, envy masked as a triumphant carnival. (60)

Many riots have happened in British History, but the 2011 riots differ from others as it is seen that looting has been used as a way of consumption. Rioters on low incomes plundered commodities that they could not afford to buy. Although the ringleaders of the riots that Zizek mentions above are lower class immigrants, they have similarities with the fascist hooligans who vandalise the city in the novel. Consumerism is the main cause of the violence both in real life London riots in 2011, and consumerist violence in the novel.

Here a special discussion should be held for Duncan Christie. Although his name is reminiscent of the notorious serial murder John Christie (1899-1953) of England, Duncan Christie in the novel connotes Jesus Christ despite the murders he commits. Duncan Christie is depicted as an innocent man who wants to get his revenge from the shopping mall for the death of his daughter during its building. In the novel, it is seen that the shopping mall is described as the arch-enemy that causes the depravation of English society. Throughout the novel, the shopping mall is depicted with many nefarious metaphors, such as cyclops, monster, monstrosity, a cathedral of consumerism, a reactor core, an inverted bowl of light, hell, an incubator, a pressure cooker, a fascist state, a dictatorship and so on. Connotations of hell and devil and Nazism especially attract attention. As it has been said above, this novel is an allegorical story, which refers the biblical story between Christ and Anti-Christ. Although there is no direct mention of Anti-Christ in the novel, with the characterization of Duncan Christie and David Cruise as well the description of the shopping mall allude to the story of Anti-Christ. Ballard uses David Cruise, as an allegory that symbolises the Anti-Christ, and Duncan Christie for the symbolization of Jesus Christ. When David see Christie he describes him as,

A constable threw a grey blanket over him, but for a few seconds I saw his sallow, unshaved face, scarred chin pockmarked by acne, forehead flushed by

recent punches. He was unaware of the crowd and the policemen jostling him, and stared at the radio aerials above the station, as if expecting a message from a distant star to be relayed to him. His head swayed drunkenly, a vacancy of mind coupled with a deep inner hunger that was almost messianic. (27)

The narrator describes this scene as if he is depicting the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Ballard by referring to Nazism and fascism, wants to warn people about the future dangers of consumerism. However, he takes a step further by allegorizing the story of Christ vs. Anti-Christ with his characterization of Duncan Christie and David Cruise. Anti-Christ is told in the Bible as: "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time." (1John 2:18) David Cruise is one of those antichrists, who tempts people into consumption. It is seen that Christie tries to kill David Cruise, and finally reaches this aim by shooting him down. Richard's father Stuart in his diary mentions about the expectation of Christ's return to defeat antichrist, saying: "Tomorrow I will put on my St George's shirt and try to get on his programme. I'll play the old BA pilot card and stage a demo of my own. Warn people of the danger of too much sport and nothing else. Sooner or later a messiah is going to appear" (197).

The Antichrist, according to apocalyptic texts, will appear toward the doomsday. The title of *Kingdom Come* suggest the end of the world. The novel draws analogy between Christie fight against consumerism and Armageddon battle in the Bible Unlike other dwellers of Brooklands, Christie does not pay much attention to money and racism. He is married to a black woman. In chapter thirteen, Christie exhibits second-hand free-of-charge domestic appliances, as a kind of revenge from capitalism. But, since people are so used to consumerism, they cannot accept an exchange without money.

Christie lowered his voice. 'I come every Saturday, sooner or later someone asks, "How much?" "Free," I say. They're stunned, they react as if I'm trying to steal from them. That's capitalism for you. Nothing can be free. The idea makes them sick, they want to call the police, leave messages for their accountants. They feel unworthy, convinced they've sinned. They have to rush off and buy something just to get their breath back ...' (91)

Ballard aims to contrast the unbearable lightness of consumption with the virtue of old-style trade. Consumerism has dramatically changed the viewpoint of people, so life without earning or spending cannot be imagined. But Christie, in order to get his revenge from capitalism, wants to show people another life style, one that is not dominated by money relations. Reverend Billy who sees consumerism as an enemy of Christianity expresses: "we need to perform this creative opposition. We haven't known how to oppose a culture led by Consumerism and apocalyptic Christianity—the twin fundamentalisms that overwhelm governments, silence creative culture or any non-commercial life (56). Similar to Reverend Billy, who founded the Church of Stop Shopping, Christie is fighting against consumerism since it consumes people's life energy, and so they have the risk of becoming submissive consumers that are gullible to the evil policies of consumption. Richard says,

‘You’re right,’ I said to Christie. ‘Nothing is true, and nothing is untrue. What was it? Say nothing, believe everything ...?’ Christie stood beside me, so close that I could hear his laboured breathing. His lungs moved in sudden starts, as if his body was trying desperately to uncouple itself from his brain. In a deep fugue, he stared at the retreating figure of David Cruise, parting the crowd like a cut-price messiah. (93)

Like the Anti-Christ which is an imposter of Christ, David Cruise is described as cut-price Messiah. Christie's words above summarize the world of consumption and advertisements. In this world David Cruise, the face of Metro Centre brand, becomes like an antichrist, and deceives people with his temptations. When he arrives to the scene his fascist consumerist followers attack Christie.

One of the peculiarities of the antichrist is to create a new religion by denying Jesus and God. Here in the novel there occurs a pseudo-religion of consumerism with its cathedral-like shopping centre and temples built inside. People who voluntarily fight for the shopping mall, build temples from commodities, and begin to worship the new religion of consumption. In the last chapters of the novel, when the Metro-Centre becomes like a castle that hooligans try to defend, Richard resembles supporters to worshipers of a different religion which can be named as religion of consumerism,

Nearby was a store with a still intact pyramid of sample wares in its doorway. A trio of microwave ovens supported columns of computer towers, topped by a plasma television screen, the whole display decorated like a Christmas tree with a dozen digital cameras, lenses gleaming in the half-light. The structure had been lovingly designed to resemble an altarpiece. Bouquets of artificial flowers lay at its base, and a circle of candles surrounded a framed photograph of David Cruise. An almost religious aura glowed from the shrine, a votive offering to the threatened spirit of the Metro-Centre. (247)

Even though David Cruise is not eager for this role, consumerist society and policies of capitalism entitle him to be their ultimate leader. In the novel, Ballard wants to emphasize that it is the society that causes all the turmoil. There should be collective conscience that restrain the people, otherwise turmoil and chaos can occur. The last paragraph of the novel clearly utters thoughts and prayers as:

I watched the spectators around me, standing silently at the railing. There were no St George's shirts, but they watched a little too intently. One day there would be another Metro-Centre and another desperate and deranged dream. Marchers would drill and wheel while another cable announcer sang out the beat. In time, unless the sane woke and rallied themselves, an even fiercer republic would open the doors and spin the turnstiles of its beckoning paradise. (280)

Nevertheless, Ballard is not a devoutly religious man, nor does he support primeval commerce, he is just uneasy about the savageness of new-capitalism. With his last novel, Ballard forewarns readers about the doom of consumerism awaiting Britain. Again in his interview with Toby Litt, Ballard asserts,

if we do what the advertisements say: consumerism. That has finite goals and finite means for achieving those goals: 'Buy this new microwave and you will cook delicious suppers and your husband will love you all the more'. And you'll probably find it's true. I mean, most of our lives are dedicated to consumerism in one form or another, and it seems to work. What I'm saying is that, left on its own, without the constraints of the other great former civic powers, it could get out of hand. (Sellars & O'Hara, 2012, 1323)

What Ballard want to stress is that we do not need fantastic creatures, aliens, or biblical monsters, if the madness of consumption spreads at this speed, it will lead societies into frenzy, eventually someone or something will trigger the fall of human civilization. In his *Living in the End times*, Zizek puts forward that "the global capitalist system is approaching an apocalyptic zero-point". Its 'four riders of the apocalypse' are ecological crisis, biogenetic consequences, inequalities in the system, and the growth of social divisions and exclusions (x). Consumerism slowly bring our human civilization to an apocalypse. *Kingdom Come* is an apocalyptic novel about the devastating effects of postmodern consumerism on societies. In the novel social inequalities and alienation of minorities lead to the violence and crimes. Ballard's message in this novel is, either we people change this capitalistic consumer system, or it will end our civilization sooner or later.

CONCLUSION

Consumerism is a social movement that occurred as an ideology to protect consumer rights against fraudulent producers. Consumers who do not have enough knowledge about the production processes of products, generally end up with disappointment in their purchases. Governments apply some acts and bills to take safety, and information rights of consumers under guarantee. Thanks to technological developments, mass production and consumption of goods has become possible. In order to earn more companies have had to produce more and sell more. They have made use of advertisements to attract attention of consumers. In order to increase consumption rates firms to began to abuse consumers by the tactics of psychologists. Advertisements are used to crate unnecessary needs for people. Societies who are daily exposed to thousands of manipulative advertisements have changed their characteristics. Shopping or purchasing have become the main spare time activity and pleasure of societies. People have turned into consumers, whose characteristics are defined and shaped according to their possessions. Ownership and property have become the dominant value of consumer societies. Possessions become the main tool of identity formation. Identities projected upon commodities have turned into commodities that can be sold or bought. Relationships also have turned into barter in which people exchanged each other. Moreover, those who cannot consume resources and services are exposed to alienation and structural violence. Inequalities in society and materialistic world view that rely on commodities lead to degeneration of people, so crime and violence rate increase in consumer societies. However, consumption and production which are directly proportional lead to environmental pollution. Consumption not only causes pollution of nature, but also leads to the termination of resources.

Consumerist degeneration, violence and crime are now among the most popular topics of different literary genres. Postmodern consumerism which become a disaster for societies and nature is often exploited by many authors. American writer Chuck Palahniuk made tremendous impact in the world with his novel *Fight Club*

along with its film adaptation. Palahniuk makes a harsh criticism on consumer society by his depiction of anarchic violence in the destruction of civilization. British writer J. G. Ballard also criticises civilization in his novels *Millennium People* and *Kingdom Come*. In *Millennium People* Ballard exploits one of his favourite topics: meaningless violence as he did in *Cocaine Nights* and *Super-Cannes*. Ballard in his *Millennium People* depicts meaningless violence once again as a tool to get rid of boredom, but this time he uses London as his setting and real crime events in the plot. Similar to *Fight Club*, in *Millennium People* there is an anarchic revolt and violence against capitalistic consumerist system. Likewise in *Kingdom Come*, Ballard makes an apocalyptic prophecy about the end of consumerism. Either this post-capitalistic consumerist system in the world will be changed, or we will destroy civilization and the whole world.

All these three novels *Millennium People*, *Fight Club* and *Kingdom Come* resemble each other in their exploitation of the violence and anarchy as a tool to change the existing regime. They attack on the consumerist values of the system and identity formation of individuals based on possessions. Consumerism, which was expected to bring welfare to the societies, is now expected to bring destruction of the world due the inequalities and moral decay it has created. In *Fight Club* and *Millennium People*, there is an anarchic revolt against the consumerist capitalistic system. In *Kingdom Come* there is a consumerist apocalypse which is expected to bulldoze human civilization. Ballard's other novels *Cocaine Nights* and *Super-Cannes* should also be analyzed to for further studies on the reflection of consumer violence in English Literature.

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