


Leisure and Posthumanism in Houellebecq's Platform and Lanzarote

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Nurit Buchweitz and Elie Cohen-Gewerc,
"Leisure and Posthumanism in Houellebecq's *Platform* and *Lanzarote*"
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Abstract: In their article "Leisure and Posthumanism in Houellebecq's *Platform* and *Lanzarote*" Nurit Buchweitz and Elie Cohen-Gewerc analyze Michel Houellebecq's novels in the context of leisure studies. They posit that in particular in *Platform* and *Lanzarote* Houellebecq explores leisure practices available in industrial societies marked by consumer culture. Further, Buchweitz and Cohen-Gewerc argue that the abundant depictions of leisure in Houellebecq's texts is not unintentional because he introduces the concept of the posthuman condition and rethinks agency and human selfhood as a consequence of the collapse of subjectivity. Employing postmodern indeterminacy, Houellebecq explores contemporary mores and debates the extinction of the individual "I" and its substitution by an empty being whose essence is cast into doubt owing to the irreconcilable co-existence of capitalism and technology.

Nurit BUCHWEITZ and Elie COHEN-GEWERC

Leisure and Posthumanism in Houellebecq's *Platform* and *Lanzarote*

The motif of leisure holds a central place in Michel Houellebecq's novels whose protagonists identify themselves as participants in a culture of leisure, a mark of industrial societies. The leisure sites of the protagonists are recreation locations in the "Third World," dance clubs, "swinging" clubs, and new age workshops focusing on meditation and free love. Houellebecq situates his plots in periods devoid of obligations when it seems that the individual is at the service only of himself at the weekend and during vacation. In *Whatever* there is a weekend break in the Provence, in *The Elementary Particles* there is a stay in a new age village, in *The Possibility of an Island* the protagonist participates in the annual gathering of the Elohimite cult, and in *The Map and the Territory* the protagonist and his girlfriend set off on a long-weekend in the Provence. In the study at hand we concentrate on leisure and the leisure/tourist industry in Houellebecq's novels *Platform* and *Lanzarote*.

Leisure is an activity that defines industrial societies where "experience has become its own justification" (Brinkman 92), focusing more and more on individualism free from obligation. In humanist anthropocentric conception leisure is the first means in raising an individual's awareness of himself/herself in realizing selfhood disconnected from social and institutional obligations. Alongside the tendency to perceive leisure as time for enjoyment, a break in routine, and escapism leisure can also be a "second chance" for the individual to encounter himself/herself as a person beyond the variety of functions he/she fulfils. Indeed, abilities and tendencies not required for social functioning may remain unnoticed until they appear and are discovered when time is available for every possibility. In the posthuman world, paradoxically, it seems that the more technology leaves humankind with more free time on its hands, the more it uses those same means in order to surround the subject with virtual structures which supervise and control him/her (see, e.g., Deleuze and Guattari 454-61). Thus, the meaning of the term "posthumanism" designates the waning of humanism and refers to the "end of man" resulting from the "disappearance of the modern metanarratives of the Enlightenment and human emancipation" (Herbrechter 78). Posthumanism is perceived as the destabilization and debasement of the idea of the human as the center of the universe, individuality, and selfhood (see Hall 78-131). The depiction of leisure in Houellebecq's oeuvre is not unintentional for he introduces a discussion on the posthuman: he rethinks agency and human selfhood as a consequence of the crisis and collapse of the subject owing to the co-existence and co-evolution of capitalism and technology. Houellebecq explores contemporary mores and debates the profusion of the individualist "I" and its substitution by an empty being whose internal essence is cast into doubt and he goes as far as to introduce a new human race in *The Elementary Particles* and in *The Possibility of an Island* controlled by technology. Among the range of leisure activities in Houellebecq's texts there are descriptions of organized package tours and tour guides and these are located as heterotopias (see Foucault 7; McCann 132-71) as he inspects the dynamics of organized groups in their internal and external interactions. Further, Houellebecq describes mechanisms of the business of the holiday package. If leisure is a part of practices in culture in general and reflects its prevailing norms, Houellebecq is a partner to the hegemony of capitalist consumer society and its failures.

In *Lanzarote* the protagonist enters a travel agency and while waiting for a sales assistant, he collects a bunch of leaflets on display:

The transaction between tourist and tour operator ... tends to transcend the framework of everyday commercial relations ... of all commercial transactions. Imagine yourself for a moment, dear reader, in the role of the *tourist*. What does it entail? You must listen attentively to the proposals made to you by the professional opposite you. She (usually it is *she*) has at her disposal -- such is her job -- a broad knowledge of the leisure and cultural opportunities on offer at each of the destinations listed in the brochure; she has a general idea of the clientele, the sports facilities, the opportunities for meeting new people; your happiness, at least your prospect of happiness -- during those weeks depends to a degree on her. Her role, far from the stereotypical notion of proposing a "standard" holiday package, and regardless of the brevity of the encounter -- is to discover your expectations, your desires, perhaps even your secret hopes. (2; in all subsequent quotations emphases are in the original)

After a brief negotiation in which the travel agent tries to match a suitable holiday to her client's stated needs, she suggests: "Have you thought about the canaries? ... We have a special offer for Bougainville Playa. One week, all-inclusive, 3,290 francs; departures from Paris on the 9th, 16th, and 23rd of January. Superior four-star hotel. All rooms with en-suite bathroom, hairdryer, air conditioning, telephone, TV, mini-bar, room safe, balcony with pool view (or see view for supplement), 1000m² swimming pool, Jacuzzi, sauna, hammam, fitness center, three tennis courts, two squash courts, miniature golf, table tennis. Traditional dance shows, excursions from the hotel (details available on site). Travel/cancellation insurance -- all-inclusive. Where is it?" I couldn't help but ask" (*Lanzarote* 4-5). The dialogue, familiar to most in Western consumer society, ends in success: the travel agent succeeds to awaken in the client an emotional reaction of desire and a sense of urgency to purchase the package and set off on vacation. The dialogue emphasizes the impersonal, mechanized, and serial characteristics of the interaction designed to promote the libidinal investments arrayed for the consumer by marketing. The prolonged presentation of the conversation underscores the extent to which the elaborate leisure techniques affect individual desire and how this desire is in fact structured and embedded in the cultural imaginary. The hackneyed words emphasize the extent to which the interaction is drained of depth and of acknowledgement of a fuller life outside technical boundaries. They also indicate that leisure is an inseparable part of the practices offered and is overpowered by its prevailing norms.

The promised holiday embodies the dream leisure of the Western tourist in as much as consumption takes on an aesthetic dimension, a consumer fantasy as represented in popular culture and that catalogs and constructs behavior (see Bauman, "Pilgrim" 30; Jameson, *Signatures* 5). The proposed holiday site

on the island of Lanzarote, as all other options, is an isolated, artificial, controlled, closed, and secure area within a territory in which all outside of it is alien to it. All the desires of the holiday-maker come to immediate fruition and if the holiday site is in a "Third World" country, sexual desires of the Western consumer are also fulfilled as Houellebecq describes in *Platform* about sex tourism in Thailand and Cuba. The holiday is in fact a de-localization of pleasure (see Granger Remy, "Le Tourisme" 281; unless indicated otherwise, all translations are by Buchweitz and Cohen-Gewerc) to a place more easily accessible and less expensive: "You several hundred million westerners who have everything they could want but no longer manage to obtain sexual satisfaction ... on the other hand, you have several billion people who have nothing, who ... have nothing left to sell except their bodies and their unspoiled sexuality. It's simple, really simple to understand: it's an ideal trading opportunity" (*Platform* 173; on sexuality in Houellebecq's novels, see, e.g., Holzer).

Contrary to the suggestion of the marketing of the holiday and the perception of the vacationer, by a kind of functional omniscience able to monitor all activity at all times there is no free time and no free space for both are framed and constructed by an organizing system and if there are excursions outside the enclosed holiday compound, they are often aimed at enabling a glimpse into the lives of the Other in a voyeuristic manner (see Freire-Medeiros). The vacationer in such an artificial space is disconnected from obligations to others and is motivated by the desire to realize his/her fantasies away from the concrete realities of daily life and hence such leisure resembles only remotely the framework and practice of leisure (see Stebbins). Elie Cohen-Gewerc and Robert A. Stebbins posit that there are three main forms of leisure -- serious, casual, and project-based -- and argue that each may provide a space in which "the individual may develop a positive identity within it" (201). The type of leisure proposed by the brochure described by Houellebecq would be categorized as casual leisure activity, one which is "immediately, intrinsically rewarding, a relatively short-lived pleasurable activity, requiring little or no special training to enjoy it. Casual leisure is essentially hedonic" (Cohen-Gewerc and Stebbins 206). Certainly, this type of leisure constitutes a space that features a constructed environment in which physical needs are satisfied by means of sensationalism inherent in realizing a fantasy. Hence the economy of excess facilitated by the sales agent is perceived by the narrator as a happiness-enhancing potency, which goes to show the entangled connections between posthumanism and the society of consumers and its meta-value of "happy life" (Bauman, *Does Ethics* 167). Nevertheless, what is lacking in such leisure is the recruitment of internal resources, the excitement in broadening and remapping subjectivity. Such an experience cannot realize the concept of leisure as a personal agenda determined by each individual for himself/herself, for it is not one possessing content, meaning, and distinctive enrichment. Here, leisure is merely a distraction and a disconnection from the "I" so that ultimately "even if originally leisure was designed as an alternative, and even festive, institution, acting to effect the personal liberation of the individual, it has become over time a standard capitalist product subject to financial and emotional manipulation; one more product in the market of human imports" (Gurevitch and Arav 964).

Giorgio Agamben contends in *What is an Apparatus?* that modern apparatuses reveal the difference from traditional ones which were separate from the subject and established him/her as such and following Michel Foucault's understanding of the apparatus as a set of practices and mechanisms developed by society, Agamben maintains that the event that created the human was that of a schism between being and action, ontology and praxis. The human is the being, the apparatus is the action: "The term 'apparatus' designates that in which, and through which, one realizes a pure activity of governance devoid of any foundation in being. This is the reason why apparatuses must always imply a process of subjectification, that is to say, they must produce their subject" (Agamben 11). Every living being aspiring to organize and modify a predictable life is required to determine rules and establish mechanisms of operation which will reduce and even prevent the ability for individual free choice: "All that we can do in one way or another, is to confine, direct, determine, intercept, shape, supervise and secure the deeds, the behaviors, the opinions and the statements of living beings" (31). The significance of the apparatus lies in the process of humanization, of the constitution of the subject given to management and control, but simultaneously separate from it and free. Nevertheless, Agamben points out that "what defines the apparatuses that we have to deal with in the current phase of capitalism is that they no longer act as much through the production of a subject, as through the process of what can be called desubjectification" (Agamben 20). In contemporary reality there is no longer a possibility of separating or distinguishing between human and machine. Today's apparatuses allow us to crave them and to be controlled by them, but they do not create subjectivity and hence the decline of essential identities and the rise of the economy and consumerism as rulers, as pure acts of management. Agamben claims that in our days "there is not even a single instant in which the life of individuals is not modelled, contaminated, or controlled by some apparatuses" (15).

Perfecting apparatuses via technology has led to the fact that the expanse of free time in which the subject supposedly is solely left at his/her own disposal, cannot avoid operational disposition. Once the posthuman is left to his/her own devices, he/she submits himself/herself all the more to the mechanisms of temptation and seduction resulting in a misrepresentation of happiness: "at the root of each apparatus lies an-all-too-human demand for happiness" (Agamben 17). Thus, the process of de-subjectivization is linked with posthumanism in that it unveils the invisible and the inevitable impact contemporary that technocultural logic has on the degree of agency ascribed to the individual. The leisure industry is such an apparatus managing the individual: the tour operator presents a developed and elaborate apparatus, a modular-technical system that offers an "answer" to every "need," supply to every demand suited to every personal whim with only ignorance and lack of self-awareness remaining. The posthumanist reality that has given birth to the leisure industry allows leisure to fulfil a social function: "The minute they have a couple of days of freedom, the inhabitants of Western Europe dash off to the other side of the world, they go halfway around the world in planes, they behave --literally -- like escaped convicts. I

couldn't blame them, since I was preparing to do just that" (*Platform* 20). The leisure industry apparatus does not permit subjectivization; rather, it is the posthuman human who, when given the task of facing himself/herself in moments of free time, flees. However, despite the time-off, distraction, and escapism being essential components in recharging one's batteries, this is not the true, deep significance of leisure and because leisure (not finding free time, but a state of mind) in its purest form is based on freedom of consciousness, cognition, and internal strength, it is alien to the modular functionality of the leisure industry that is based on the standardization of the human and on the pretense of considering in advance the entire range of possibilities of human desire: "My dreams are run-of-the-mill. Like all of the inhabitants of Western Europe, I want to *travel* ... to it more bluntly, what I really want, basically, is to be a *tourist*. We dream what dreams we can afford, and my dream is to go on an endless series of 'Romantic Getaways,' 'Colorful Expeditions,' and 'Pleasures à la carte' -- to use the titles of the three Nouvelles Frontières brochures" (*Platform* 20).

In *Platform* and *Lanzarote*, the narrator does not omit any tag or mark of the holiday marketing material. In *Platform* Houellebecq quotes directly from the catalog including the method of serial numbering and registration. By means of the quote, or the rhetorical language of the quote, Houellebecq emphasizes the commercial aspect of leisure, its conversion to a consumer product, cataloged and indexed, packaged and marketed. The holiday becomes a consumer product like any other, based on maximum expectation according to formulas and fixed models (see Delorme; Granger Remy, "Le Tourisme") meaning that leisure becomes a consumer need requiring a "finished product": "I hesitated quite a bit between 'Rum and Salsa' (ref: CUB CO 033, 16 days/14 nights, 11,250 francs for a double, singles and additional 1,350 francs) and 'Thai Tropic' (ref: THA CA 006, 15 days/13 nights, 9,950 francs for a double, singles an additional 1,175 francs). Actually, I was more attracted by Thailand ... I have to admit that the copy in the brochure was very well done, sure to tempt the average browser: *A package tour with a dash of adventure that will take you from the bamboo forests of the River Kwai to the island of Ko Samui, winding up, after crossing the spectacular Isthmus of Kra, at Ko Phi Phi, off the coast of Phuket. A cool trip to the tropics*" (*Platform* 20-12).

On the one hand, the catalogs are aimed at individual freedom in that they depict a maximum degree of possibilities of choice. On the other hand, the almost infinite number of possibilities leads to an actual weakening of choice to the extent of losing all ability to do so. The multiplicity of prearranged, ready-packaged options reveals subjectivity controlled by the many agents of consumer society that nurtures the hedonistic, dominant, and greedy "I." Thus, the leisure apparatus presents it in a showroom accompanied by brochures and sales talk turning its product into an object of desire. Not only is everything for this holiday prearranged and anticipated, but also a matter of *déjà-vu* in the brochure (see Delorme 299). All that remains is to realize the great promised adventure, which of course will never happen: "While consumer society rests its case on the promise to gratify human desires like no other society in the past could do or dream of doing, the promise of satisfaction remains seductive only so long as the desire stays ungratified" (Baumann, *Ethics* 169). It is the consumer society that preserves the situation in which the consumer will never be completely satisfied, since "Consumer society thrives so long as it manages to render dissatisfaction (and so, in its own terms, unhappiness) permanent" (Baumann, *Ethics* 170).

When arriving at the touristic site itself, "leisure" is experienced via the mediation of the apparatus": in *Platform* the narrator arrives at Surat Thani and rather than gaining an impression, he reads the guidebook in order to know what to be impressed about and whether there is indeed anything impressive. In this case "Surat Thani -- population 42.000 -- is distinguished, according to the guide book, by the fact that it is of no interest whatever" (60). As Julie Delorme posits, this is precisely the simulacrum or substitute for reality: the preference for the image (lacking) in this case, over that of reality (299). Further, even if the cynical, sophisticated protagonist is both self-aware and aware of the marketing strategies with which the catalog manipulates him by means of words emotively claiming "adventure," "wonderful," "cool!," he is indifferent to them and is unable to pass beyond the possibilities of this awareness. The society in which Houellebecq's protagonist lives is one in which people are constantly observed, measured, and monitored generally for economic needs as fuel for the genuine flywheels of the consumer-targeted economy (see Bauman, *Ethics* 170) in order to create new needs that the subjects cannot live without. This occurs because the posthumanist state is one in which despite the apparent immense freedom to choose one's lifestyle and leisure, the subject in actuality devotes himself/herself to apparatuses and applications which pretend to know better than he/she does what he/she really wants, even before he/she knows it. Which is why Houellebecq quotes verbatim from the catalogs, for the main experience is that of the image of leisure, the catalog itself, and not the real holiday.

In *Platform* and *Lanzarote* the protagonists analyze constantly their decisions with reference to the state-of-the-art leisure apparatus and large segments of the texts are comprised of citations from advertising brochures. For example, note Michel's analysis of holiday brochures in *Platform* he supports by adding a survey of scientific accounts which explain the marketing process:

I spent the last day of my grace period in various travel agencies. I liked holiday brochures, their abstraction, the way of condensing the places of the world into a limited sequence of possible pleasures and fares. I was particularly fond of the star-rating system, which indicated the intensity of the pleasure one was entitled to hope for. I wasn't happy, but I valued happiness and continued to aspire to it. According to the Marshal model, the buyer is a rational individual seeking to maximize his satisfaction while taking price into consideration; Veblen's model, on the other hand, analyses the effect of peer pressure on the buying process (depending on whether the buyer wishes to be identified with a defined group or to set himself apart from it). Copeland demonstrates that the buying process varies, depending on the category of product/service (impulse purchase, considered purchase, specialized purchase); but the Baudrillard and Becker model posits that a purchase necessarily implies a series of signals. Overall, I felt myself closer the Marshal model. (11)

"Being a tourist" or assuming the "role of a tourist" as expressed by Houellebecq in many reprises in his novels stands in contrast to traveling itself and means consuming some type of service package. One consequence of technological interfacing is the greater emphasis on what can be measured and everything connected to an individual's self-esteem and self-regard which cannot be measured thus gradually loses its power of existence as a creative component of the "I" along with leisure as constituting the channel of extraction of the human. Assuming the role of a tourist attests to the contemporary subject within the entanglement of apparatuses which nullify subjectivity. Maud Granger Remy suggests that Houellebecq's tourist represents the pure consumer and that mass tourism turns from being a leisure activity into a new economics and political and moral standpoint. She considers the appearance of the tourist to be linked to the rise of the individual characterized by void. It signifies the extinction of the "I" and its space for the sake of the standardization of the human as "the posthuman replicates itself while sterilizing human-relationships and leads to a solitary and sterile existence, depersonalized and automatic, driven by consumer attractions" (Granger Remy, "Le Tourisme" 278). Total freedom for the individual, as noted by Granger Remy, means disconnection from others and from any national, territorial or cultural affiliation. Separated from the world and protected from it, but also separated and protected from oneself, uninvolved with anything in the world, and uninvolved with oneself.

In the film *La Possibilité d'une Ile*, an adaptation of Houellebecq's novel, we encounter a holiday resort in Lanzarote where a beauty competition open to vacationers takes place. The contestants are fifteen-year-old girls and the judges are random middle-aged men and women, either indifferent to the scene or devouring the sight. The visual representation of leisure traces the emotional drain on the human owing to its constant interaction with the collective oppressive force of the apparatus: we witness the realization of the fantasy of exposed young bodies embellished in the myriad screens that surround us. Displaced from their homelands, conceptions of age, race, gender, and other paradigms of origin and individuality no longer apply for the vacationers. Meanings too collapse because obscenity and degradation are ignored. The scene indicates how posthumanism pauperizes self-contained agencies, of which one can say that they "possess intention" matching the definition of a "self-sufficient" subject. Houellebecq shows how the urge to consume fantasy is conflated with ready-made apparatuses of consumption and is thus key in understanding the way in which human identities are remapped by apparatuses. Hence the question of leisure in the posthuman era is a question of the individual and his/her responsibility. The sophisticated apparatuses of the leisure industry is one more means to sterilize the human. The leisure industry, in itself however, is the product of the society that engendered this need. The vast choice provided by the catalogs blurs free will and releases the subject from responsibility. Elsewhere Houellebecq describes the place of the individual in industrial societies controlled by the logic of the supermarket: "Supermarket man is organically unable to be a man of one desire, of one passion. This is the source of a certain suppression of the will existing among modern man; people do not desire less; quite the opposite, they desire increasingly more; but in their desires there is something screaming, shrieking: without any symbols of pure simulacra, human beings are in the main a product of external definitions, one might say *advertisements* in the broad use of the term. There is nothing about them that reminds one of that same total organic force stubbornly directed at its realisation, signified by the word 'will.' Thus, everyone is revealed as lacking a certain personality" (*Rester Vivant* 49).

Ostensibly, the supermarket, a "shrine" to consumer culture, is a temple of freedom. After all, no one except the buyer places anything in his/her shopping cart. Free to wander among the shelves, touch, examine, evaluate, and select the consumer can even leave without buying anything. Nonetheless, how often have we been witness to the surprise when the seemingly "free" buyer suddenly faces the size of his overloaded shopping cart, as if fallen victim to a painful fate? The more a person feels "free and thus obligated to manage his life, so too does he appear more vulnerable, fragile and with an unprepared internality" (Lipovetsky and Serroy 59). For the posthuman human freedom has become erroneously synonymous with permissiveness and thus limited to external circumstances only. This is the freedom that exposes the individual in his/her weakness and common fate as a victim of manipulation. The posthuman constitutes an organism in which a multiplicity of thought penetrates the mind without disturbance: thoughts that suggest, hint, urge, solicit, seduce, and maneuver. The leisure industry requires no effort and means no personal development and discovery of the self. It is a transfer of responsibility to the apparatus, which creates the holiday leaving absolutely no room for an effort to cope with limits and limitations: those of leaving a familiar environment for an unknown place which might force one to think and to discover aspects about oneself one might not ordinarily discover and all without relinquishing on holiday any comfort or need. The standardization of the individual also means standardizing fantasies, as well as a person's readiness to devote willingly to the industry that will do everything in order that there is no need to do anything exceptional beyond that of a "good consumer." Consequentially, rather than leisure only an effect of leisure is created. That this is everyone's dream reflects a deep modification of the posthuman subject who knowingly submits to the exploitative style of the apparatuses surrounding him/her so that returning from holiday he/she can reply to those who ask "I've already forgotten," a sign that the free time has failed to fulfil its aim and that one all too quickly returns to the situation in which one wants to escape from the world.

By means of the concept of leisure Houellebecq hints -- a mere hint, for he abides by the postmodern rule of opacity -- at an existential void standing in contrast to the utopia of the individual as a bio-technological being (see Lecourt). Houellebecq casts doubt upon the ability of leisure and narrates the self-fulfillment and consummation of the human to exist in a posthuman world. This suggests that the posthuman world impacts the ability of individuals to be themselves and sterilizes the authenticity of its meaning. The leisure industry reveals itself as a product of modified awareness, an expression of lack of the posthuman subject's possibility of facing and relating to leisure time as a basic resource in life, a resource at his/her disposal and obligating personal responsibility. In fact, the posthuman subject is but a mirror-screen on which are projected desires, needs, imaginary worlds (see Touraine) produced by

sophisticated apparatuses. The posthuman is unable to relate to leisure as a space in which to implement freedom and continues to constitute data in the network that the apparatuses weave. Against this leisure/tourist industry, a symptomatic practice of the posthuman era that strips the concept and practice of leisure of its meaning, there is another pertinent description in Juremir Machado da Silva's *En Patagonie avec Michel Houellebecq*. The book features conversations Houellebecq holds with his translator into Patagonese: the two men set off together to an unfamiliar space where they find themselves holding soul-searching conversations. In one of these conversations they talk about trips to Europe they had taken in their youth with the Alliance Voyages travel agency: "Michel, those who wandered from place to place on the Alliance Voyages buses bear their mark forever. I never saw anything more multi-ethnic than those buses ... Yes, we could meet so many people. Today it sometimes seems to me that travelling is the best way not to have to talk to people. On a well-organized tour, between the two of us, you don't really meet people, other than waiters, taxi drivers, I lamented ... To travel today is a myth of the tourist industry. A person buys a package and thinks that he will find adventure, happiness and novelty everywhere, while remaining safe, comfortable and at a good price. Every tourist is a potential sucker, even me" (169-72). The bus Houellebecq and Machado da Silva talk about was an "old" apparatus, a simple tool that allowed subjectivization since apart from performing the action all the rest was the traveler's responsibility to encounter the world and himself. This is in contrast to the leisure industry, which embodies an apparatus designed for the posthuman and as such is an acute expression of the transformation that has taken place in the concept of the "human" and the appearance of the posthuman.

In conclusion, through describing leisure and the leisure/tourist industry in consumer society, Houellebecq expresses his thinking on the posthuman as challenging the potential for self-knowledge and empowerment and the collapse of individuality owing to enslavement by machines that the full force of apparatuses exerts on human happiness. Leisure is inherently an option, a possibility, and an opportunity and the question Houellebecq raises is whether the posthuman condition is able to grasp and practice its full potential. The picture Houellebecq depicts is of a void invaded by apparatuses, but a void also created by the apparatus: via leisure, the posthuman is understood as an evacuation of essential selfhood and personality and prevents individuals in consumer society from assuming responsibility for their own will and conduct. Houellebecq suggests that posthumanism constitutes an attack on freedom and free will.

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