REASON IN RETREAT: THE NOVELS OF ALDOUS HUXLEY

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REASON IN RETREAT: THE NOVELS OF ALDOUS HUXLEY

by

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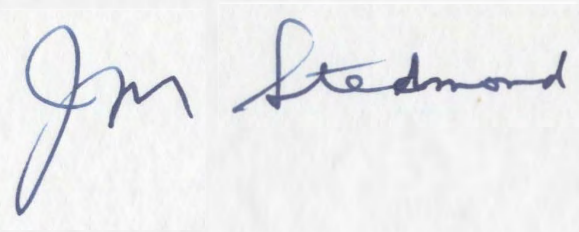

ABSTRACT

Aldous Huxley has been writing on all topics and in most literary genres since 1916. He is particularly well known for his essays and for his novels, which are the satirical classics of the twentieth century. But Huxley the novelist has yet to be definitively placed in literary history. He enjoyed considerable éclat in the twenties and thirties and his elegant satires, Crome Yellow (1921) and Antic Hay (1923), both shocked and delighted the young and almost young generation. His later novels shocked too, but for a different reason. Huxley had been considered the typical disappointed rationalist and aesthete of the post-war era. With the publication of Eyeless in Gaza (1936) it became clear that rationalism and aestheticism had, as far as Huxley was concerned, had their day, and for him, at least, the way of the mystic offered greater intellectual and moral rewards. Co-incident with this change in attitude came a change in Huxley's satirical technique. The polished, graceful, elegance of the early satire gave way to a savagery and bluntness obviously calculated to disturb rather than amuse the reader. In Ape and Essence (1949) this savagery and harshness reached its peak and, as in the fourth book of Gulliver's Travels, the message and the moral tended to become lost amid the overpowering ferocity of the delivery.

Huxley, it seemed, had lost, not only his sense of artistic perspective, but his talent for acute observation of empirical fact.

The Genius and the Goddess (1955), proved Ape and Essence to be but a temporary lapse in Huxley's literary career, and showed also that he had at last effected a compromise between his awareness of evil in the world and his respect for human potential.

Huxley's essays, published in twenty volumes, from 1923-1960, provide an illuminating sidelight on the Huxley of the novels and state, more directly and personally, many of the same theses.

T A B L E O F C O N T E N T S

PREFACE

'I shall talk,' said Mr. Huxley, 'of the troubles of an ape that has learned to talk - of an immortal spirit that has not yet learned to dispense with words.' This was the Aldous Huxley of 1956, but it could have been the startling new satirist who erupted unto the literary scene with Crome Yellow in 1921. The amused, nonchalent observer at Crome had yet to become the prophet and mystic of today but the disparity between man as he is and man as he likes to think he is was even then grist to his mill. For though he might, like old Rowley, look at a pig and happily call it a pig and have done with it, Huxley has never been able to look at man and call him man and consider that the last word has been said. But the delicate, subtle satire of Crome Yellow barely foreshadows the savagery with which Huxley later attacks the human race, and that ingenious and delightful rationalist, Mr. Scogan, might, incredibly, find himself at a loss for words if he were to be presented with Mr. Propter as a dinner companion. Only 'the incomparable Max' could do justice to the idea of the young Huxley meeting the old. It seems impertinent to attempt it, even in the roundabout manner of this essay. But the attempt having been made, it requires, perhaps, some explanation and apology.

I have tried to trace, by way of an examination of his novels, Huxley's gradual evolution from rationalist to mystic, from disinterested observer to concerned critic, and to keep an eye on the unvarying constants. This has involved a considerable amount of simplification, but not, I hope, distortion, of Huxley's ideas and necessitated the ignoring of much in the novels that is lively and stimulating. I have, for the most part, limited this essay to a discussion of the novels: what they say, how they say it, and why. Brave New World is disposed of in a few words because, though it is probably the most popular of the novels, it is the least interesting in the present context. I have included a chapter on Collected Essays because I felt some mention of the essays necessary to any study of Huxley's thought since so much of what is said in the novels is stated more directly and more personally in the essays.

Reference is made, incidentally, to misrepresentations of Huxley in early works of criticism and commentary. Such misrepresentation is not merely a thing of the past. It exists still. The impression I originally had of Huxley from references to him in literary histories was of a writer who began as a latter-day Peacock with overtones of Swift and Ben Jonson and degenerated into a lack-talent pseudo-prophet. Even a superficial reading of the later essays was enough to indicate that the impression was hardly consonant with the facts. The Huxley of today is implicit in the earlier novels.

The Huxley of yesterday has grown older and, wisely, put away childish things. The early Huxley is amusing and undemanding. The later Huxley is amusing and demanding. Here, I think, lies the explanation of the attitude of many critics. It is flattering to one's self-esteem to align oneself with a penetrating intelligence and laugh at the world. When that same penetrating intelligence requires that one also lay the blame for the absurd condition of the world at one's own door-step, it is tempting to take refuge from him in a comfortable superiority.

'Poetry,' says Mallarmé, 'is not written with ideas, it is written with words.' One might extend this and say that literature is not written with ideas, but with words, and that Huxley has sacrificed literature to his ideas. This is entirely possible, but it is the risk he has chosen to take. Once the literary critic goes beyond his appointed task of evaluating 'literature' and presumes to 'interpret' in the light of extra-literary judgements, as critics have done in their treatment of Huxley, he should be very wary. I have tried to be 'wary', therefore, in presenting the protean Mr. Huxley, of making literary judgements on things that are beyond the literary, and of bringing extra-literary prejudices to bear on things that should be judged only as literature. The main effort here has been to describe, as nearly as I can, Huxley himself, from his first appearance at Crome to his latest appearance, in The Genius and the

Goddess.

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E.A. McG.
7 April, 1961.

I

'You are not your grandfather's Enkel for nothing,' wrote D. H. Lawrence to Aldous Huxley in 1927,' - that funny dry-mindedness and underneath social morality.'[1]

The social morality underneath was completely overlooked by early critics of Huxley, but even in the detached, elegant satires such as Crome Yellow and Antic Hay there lies unobtrusively a suggestion of the mystic and prophet of today. And now when his social morality is the most dominant quality of his writings Huxley still retains the 'funny dry-mindedness'. The philosopher and the jester are rarely dissociated in Huxley; when the philosopher is being most profound the jester is often making comic faces. Always there is the difficulty of knowing for certain whether Huxley really means the thing he appears to be saying.

His novels are novels of ideas. What he says is often a paraphrase of something said by somebody else in some other time, or a tortured version of it held up for ridicule. It is often what he himself honestly thinks. It is all but impossible at times to know which is which. One can rarely be sure, for he has the dramatist's gift of getting inside the skins of many diverse characters and being equally convincing in all rôles. What does emerge from a Huxley novel is a portrait of the author as a man of immense

learning with a highly developed sense of the ridiculous in life and a clear view of man as he is as well as what he appears to be. Huxley can hardly require that his readers be of the same calibre of mind as himself, but he does require that they be of the same quality of mind if they are not to misinterpret or misunderstand him.

Because of his encyclopaedic knowledge of literature and science and his acute psychological insight into the minds of men, Huxley is in a particularly favourable position from which to examine the world and try to bring the parts into perspective. He has been both praised for his humility and condemned for his superiority. Opinions have always differed. It is unusual to find two critics who will agree entirely on what Huxley is trying or has tried to do, for he is a complex and disconcerting writer, always fundamentally serious and always superficially flippant or cynical. To treat him as an entirely serious writer is impossible. On the other hand it is a mistake to see him as merely a brilliant entertainer with an unfortunate habit of going sour and analytical when he has just told a particularly bawdy joke. What Huxley has always striven for is the complete view of man which includes the bawdy and the sordid as much as the analytical and the aesthetically pleasing.

That Huxley is obsessed by the flesh and corruption is a common criticism. This is not a criticism that can be convincingly illustrated. Awareness is not the same thing

as obsession. A reluctance to deny the existence of the more sordid aspects of life does not constitute an obsession with them. Mark Staithes, in Eyeless in Gaza, complains of 'the profound untruthfulness of even the best imaginative literature', of the 'Almost total neglect of those small physiological events that decide whether day-to-day living shall have a pleasant or unpleasant tone'. 'In life,' says Staithes, 'an empty cigarette-case may cause more distress than the absence of a lover; never in books.'[2] In his attempts to avoid untruthfulness Huxley may sometimes overcompensate, to borrow the psychologist's term, by a too nice detailing of the repellent. Nevertheless, the fact remains that, to the delicately nurtured, halitosis and dental caries may be of much greater immediate significance and cause much more real distress than caries of the intellect.

With scientific detachment Huxley trains his microscope on his chosen specimens and records what he sees. Patterns of conduct emerge and are charted. Reactions to given stimuli are noted. The specimens eat, sleep, work, play, make love, write poems. And in order of interest and importance these activities are examined, singly or in relation to previous observations. Types, sports, mutants, hybrids; all contribute to the general picture and are drawn in as they appear.

As a rule the plots are slender, but life is not packaged out in well constructed acts and scenes. The best

an observer can do, if he is to avoid radical distortion of ultimate causes and effects, is to take a central crisis and describe within the limits of a few hundred pages the habits of thought and behaviour that account for it. No one novelist can be all things to all men. The novelist of ideas like Huxley is more concerned with motivation than dramatic action, with subtleties of thought rather than with consequences of deeds.

Crome Yellow, Huxley's first novel, is a novel of talk in the Peacockian tradition. The characters are generalizations of recognizable types, but Huxley's extraordinary mastery of vivid descriptive detail gives his creations a wholly believable individuality. Denis is an adolescent poet, the man of reason still undeveloped. Mr. Scogan is his older counterpart; mature, cynical, learned, splendidly articulate, he ranges,in his all-but-interminable dissertations, over art, religion, eugenics, the Rational State, the cosmos. Henry Wimbush is the owner of Crome. For twenty-nine years he has been writing his history, a placid and uneventful record, as he calls it, of the Wimbushes and Lapiths of Crome. As it appears in Crome Yellow this 'History' is actually one of Huxley's most inspired satirical accomplishments. Mr. Barbecue-Smith had in his younger days liked to call himself a bohemian. But he has discovered how to canalize the infinite: 'I bring it down through pipes to work the turbines of my conscious mind.'[3] He is now a kind of prophet,

dispensing comfort and spiritual consolation to the masses. Priscilla, Henry's wife, is a woolly-minded woman addicted to New Thought and the Occult and to betting on horse-races and football matches. She spends her days 'cultivating a rather ill-defined malady' and casting the horoscopes of horses and football players. Priscilla and Mr. Barbecue-Smith are two of Huxley's most amusing and caustic satirical portraits. Other members of the Crome menagerie are Anne, Henry's niece; Gombauld, an ultra-Byronic painter; Mary Bracegirdle, young, naive, desperately earnest, a devoted follower of Freud; the vicar, Mr. Bodiham, beating with his iron flail on the india-rubber souls of his flock; and Ivor Lombard, upon whom nature and fortune had vied with one another in heaping their choicest gifts: 'For a mind like his, education seemed supererogatory. Training would only have destroyed his natural aptitudes.'[4]

Scogan, the man of reason, stands head and shoulders above the other characters in the book. He is the embodiment of intelligence, worldly wisdom and civilized sophistication. 'Why allow oneself to be distressed?' he says to Denis. 'After all, we all know there's no ultimate point. But what difference does that make?'[5]

Meditatively pacing and considering his own advice, Scogan concludes that the only answer to the problem of whether life is really its own reward is a drink of gin and a good night's sleep. It is not a very satisfactory answer

but it is the only one the man of reason has to offer. At worst he knows when to give up. At best he is probably less of a fool than those who persist in thinking that there is a satisfactory answer to the riddle of existence. Certainly Scogan comes off rather better with his solution than do the others at Crome.

Priscilla, deep in horoscopes and the Occult, has found out what it is to have faith:

> All that happens means something; nothing you do is ever insignificant. It makes life so jolly, you know....I have the infinite to keep in tune with....And then there's the next world and all the spirits, and one's Aura, and Mrs. Eddy and saying you're not ill, and the Christian Mysteries and Mrs. Besant. It's all splendid. One's never dull for a moment. 6

To Mr. Bodiham his faith is not a consolation. There are times when he wants to murder his whole congregation:

> He had tried to make them understand about God, what a fearful thing it is to fall into His hands.... The passengers on the Titanic sang 'Nearer my God to Thee' as the ship was going down. Did they realize what they were asking to be brought nearer to? A white fire of righteousness, an angry fire.... 7

And what is all this to the man of reason? Only escape:

> All philosophies and all religions -what are they but tubes bored through the universe ! Through these narrow tunnels, where all is recognizably human, one travels comfortable and secure, contriving to forget that all round and below and above there stretches the blind mass of earth, endless and unexplored. 8

But even Scogan has his tube:

> Give me ideas, so snug and simple and well made. And preserve me from nature, preserve me from all that's inhumanly large and complicated and obscure. I haven't the courage...to start wandering in that labyrinth. 9

Even as early as this Huxley indicates the discontent with the products of pure intelligence that is so characteristic of his later work. For the time being, since there is nothing else to do, he allies himself with reason and empiricism against folly and hypocrisy. Though he lacks complete conviction in the stand he takes there is no doubt that it is a better one than any other. There is some justification for a belief in conclusions drawn from intelligent observation. There is none for those drawn from idle speculation, bigoted enthusiasm, blind faith, wishful thinking or a desire to escape logical consequences.

Though the point of the insufficiency of reason alone is brought out in the character of Scogan, the necessity for a rational, balanced approach is forcefully underlined, though the appeal is made negatively:

> 'Everything that ever gets done in this world is done by madmen,' Mr. Scogan went on. Denis tried not to listen....'Men such as I am, such as you may possibly become, have never achieved anything. We're too sane; we're merely reasonable....Whenever the choice has had to be made between the man of reason and the madman the world has unhesitatingly followed the madman. For the madman appeals to what is fundamental, to passion and the instincts; the philosopher to what is supererogatory -reason !' 10

In the portrait of Gombauld, the artist, reason is shown as a sort of cathartic. The artist, the man of feeling, had ventured into the world of pure form and found the experience difficult and revivifying. But in the end:

> ...he felt himself cramped and confined within intolerably narrow limitations. He was humiliated to find how few and crude and uninteresting were the

> forms he could invent; the inventions of nature were without number, inconceivably subtle and elaborate. He had done with cubism....But the cubist discipline preserved him from falling into excesses of nature worship. 11

Gombauld's humiliation in his encounter with pure form is perhaps paralleled by the humiliation of the man of reason when he realizes the ineffectiveness of unadulterated sanity.

Denis, too, is in search of realism combined with simple form. His problem is that, in the literal sense, he does not know his own mind. He cannot distinguish what is himself from the product of his education; his thinking is perpetually clogged with 'rags and tags of other people's making'. In order to take things for granted, to take them as they come, he has first to rid himself of 'the weight of twenty tons of ratiocination', the product of all the weighty books he has read about the universe and mind and ethics. Denis, like many another intelligent man, has found himself landed in the world equipped with a ready-made philosophy only to find that the world refuses to conform to the pattern he has in mind:

> In the world of ideas everything was clear; in life all was embroiled, obscure. 12

In love with words as Gombauld is in love with colour and form, Denis has yet to achieve Gombauld's sense of balance. For Denis, Mr. Scogan prescribes 'a mental carminative.' 13

In Crome Yellow Huxley presents the problem of life in the form in which he is to pursue it relentlessly

throughout his career, as the problem of the human paradox, of self-division, the problem of, in the words of Fulke Greville, a creature 'born under one law, to another bound.' But the problem is an almost academic one at this point. The tone of weary futility that is always faintly in the background of Antic Hay (1923) is not yet evident. Crome Yellow is a thoroughly cheerful book. With Antic Hay the iron has entered Huxley's soul. The kindly satire of Crome gives way to a brittle brilliance and a profound disgust with the ways of men. One might almost say that Huxley wallows in and, in some perverse way, enjoys the spectacle of men comporting themselves like so many semi-intelligent baboons. Perhaps it is a conviction that he must see all things in their essence that has led him to attempt to purge reason with a view of utter unreason; by outraging his own sensibilities, by descending into the abyss of unreason, he may rise again with greater understanding and compassion.

Antic Hay, a study in futility, aimlessness, pretense, self-deception and wilful folly, is closely akin to Jonson's comedy of humours. The characters are vividly drawn caricatures; in fact, however, it is their very unreality, their larger-than-life size, that saves the book from being one of the most profoundly depressing ever written.

In Those Barren Leaves Calamy tells Chelifer:

> You're just the ordinary variety of sentimentalist reversed. The ordinary kind pretends that so-called real life is more rosy than it actually is. The

> reversed sentimentalist gloats over its horrors. The bad principle is the same in both cases - an excessive preoccupation with what is illusory. The man of sense sees the world of appearances neither too rosily nor too biliously and passes on. 14

In Antic Hay Huxley is not far from being the reversed sentimentalist himself, obsessed with the futility of an existence in which, by some freak of personality or circumstance, the irrational, the dishonest and the worthless take precedence over the good.

Nevertheless, it is a clever and grotesquely funny book, a little masterpiece of satirical writing. Coleman the diabolist and Lypiatt the 'muscular Christian' who is dedicated to restoring art and poetry to their proper positions as forces for moral good, but unaware of his own abysmal lack of talent, are magnificently comic figures. Gumbril in his beaver, acting 'the complete man', or dreaming dreams of glory about the day when his pneumatic trousers will be the mark of a gentleman, is Bertie Wooster raised to the nth power and given a brain.

But Antic Hay is not all farce. The predominant effect is not of farce but of tragedy presented with a tight smile. It has little of the ebullient self-assurance of Crome Yellow nor yet the spirit of discovery of Those Barren Leaves. Huxley is clinging to reason but reason unadulterated seems to be destroying his ability to remain detached and to see clearly. Nothing is reasonable in his world and the man of reason, in an attack of biliousness, hits out

promiscuously. For the man of reason finds he has, indeed, a social conscience. And the more his social conscience pricks him the more aware he becomes of some irrational but indubitable need for a metaphysic to explain what reason cannot.

Early in Antic Hay there is a scene in which Gumbril, the main figure in this tragi-comedy, meets with his motley collection of friends at a workingmen's coffee-stall after a night on the town. Huxley interweaves their clever, snobbish conversation with the lament of an unemployed carter. This device of pointing one theme against another is a favourite with Huxley and he uses it to great effect. Coleman sings 'Rot the People, blast the People, damn the Lower Classes'; Opps complains bitterly about the intolerable way that servants, no matter how well trained, always betray their humanity. Nearby the carter is telling his shocking story of poverty, unemployment, injustice and starvation. Gumbril is horrified, he finds it appalling that such things should exist: 'He was consumed with indignation and pity; he felt like a prophet in Ninevah.'[15] But he does nothing very much. He continues to relish the horror of it all and then, suddenly becoming preoccupied with his own affairs, puts the plight of the lower orders out of his mind. Like Opps he loathes everyone poor, ill or old. Appalled by the unreason of the state of the unfortunate, appalled by his own reaction of loathing and nausea, he still finds nothing in his experience which

equips him to deal with it. It is life, just, and there is nothing to be done, in spite of sporadic attacks of conscience.

Scenes of this sort are common in Huxley's early works. He is in the age-old situation of the intellectual, the sensitive man, who cannot help loathing the loathsome. He hates himself for it but feels helpless to do anything about it though honesty demands a struggle against retreat.

A growing notion of something of great importance beyond the everyday reality is illustrated in a conversation between Gumbril and Emily, the girl he has unexpectedly fallen in love with. To Emily Gumbril describes the acute awareness he has often had, when alone at night, of the quiet places in his mind:

> The quiet grows and grows. Beautifully and unbearably. And at last you are conscious of something approaching; it is almost a faint sound of footsteps. Something inexpressibly lovely and wonderful...inexpressibly terrifying. For if it were to touch you, if it were to seize and engulf you, you'd die; all the regular, habitual part of you would die....and one would have to begin living arduously in the quiet, arduously in some strange unheard-of manner. Nearer, nearer come the steps; but one can't face the advancing thing. One daren't. It's too terrifying, it's too painful to die. Quickly before it is too late, start the factory wheels, bang the drum, blow up the saxophone....Anything for a diversion. 16

Later, when through too many concessions to the noisier side of his life, Gumbril has lost Emily, he reflects:

> ...perhaps she was the one unique being with whom he might have learned to await in quietness the final coming of that lovely terrible thing from before the sound of whose secret footsteps more than once and oh ! ignobly he had fled. 17

It is obvious, from the context, that these metaphysical meanderings are not specimens of an attitude that Huxley is deriding. Gumbril is one of the few characters in Antic Hay that it is possible to take seriously. Unlike nearly all the others, he is self-aware. The full weight of Huxley's satirical blockbusters is taken, not by Gumbril but by those with whom he comes in contact. Gumbril stands a little apart from the world he moves in, united with the author in commenting on and interpreting the passing parade. He is by no means a fool. In spite of his posturings there are continual intimations of his awareness of something beyond and better than the life he leads. What he lacks is the courage or the interest to pursue it.

Gumbril slips back onto the treadmill of the pursuit of amusement but, though he lives in hope, the anodyne no longer will work. He decides to leave England and travel about on business. The night before he is to leave he visits Myra Viveash, the cause of many of his troubles, and while waiting for her muses quietly to himself:

> I have a premonition...that one of these days I may become a saint. An unsuccessful, flickering sort of saint, like a candle beginning to go out. As for love -m'yes m'yes. And as for the people I have met - I shall point out that I have known most of the eminent men in Europe, and that I have said of all of them what I said after my first love affair; Is that all? 18

When we last see him he is looking out at the Thames:

> On the opposite shore, St. Paul's floated up as though self-supported in the moonlight,...Like time the river flowed, stanchlessly, as though from

> a wound in the world's side. They looked out, without speaking, across the flow of time, at the stars, at the human symbol hanging miraculously in the moonlight....
> 'To-morrow,' said Gumbril, at last, meditatively.
> 'To-morrow,' Mrs. Viveash interrupted him, 'will be as awful as to-day' She breathed it like a truth from beyond the grave prematurely revealed, expiringly from her death-bed within.
> 'Come, come,' protested Gumbril. 19

We are left with the distinct impression that though for most of the world tomorrow will be as awful as today, there is something better in store for Gumbril.

Huxley's eventual retreat into mysticism was not, or so it would appear from a careful reading of Antic Hay, the sudden, D.H. Lawrence and Gerald Heard-inspired thing that critics generally tend to assume it was. The yearning for something beyond pure reason, intimations of a reality beyond that perceivable by the senses, are evident in Huxley's earliest works, particularly in Those Barren Leaves, published in 1925.

The setting of Those Barren Leaves is a house-party at the Italian villa of a Mrs. Aldwinkle. She is a huntress of literary lions and 'village-Hampdens' who considers herself a patroness of the arts and poses as a highly sensitive soul whose life is dedicated to the encouragement of unrecognized genius. That the geniuses are usually young, virile and handsome as well as unrecognized is proof of her sincerity.

The book is written in five parts and introduces several devices used by Huxley in most of his later novels:-

dissimilar pairs of people doing the same thing, such as falling in love, in their different ways; similars solving dissimilar problems; parallel, contrapuntal plots; the use of the diary for purposes of revelation of motives.

The most interesting characters for the purposes of a study of Huxley's thought are Cardan, Chelifer, Calamy and Mary Thriplow. Cardan is an aging, erudite bon-vivant, frightened at the prospect of a penniless old age. Chelifer is the editor of a trade journal, The Rabbit Fanciers Gazette. He has chosen this profession as an alternative to life as an Oxford don. Calamy is a handsome, intelligent young aristocrat with a reputation as a Don Juan and a secret hankering after the contemplative life. Mary Thriplow is a young and beautiful woman novelist, a fierce poseuse with no natural capacity for profound feelings but an intellectual conviction that she ought to have them.

The characters in all Huxley's novels bear a strong resemblance to one another from book to book. It is almost possible to categorize them:- the man of reason, the sentimentalist in reverse, the emotional bankrupt, the intellectual poseur, the child of nature, the undeveloped foetus. But members of the type are by no means identical - rather might they be considered as brilliant variations on set themes, or character actors playing different but essentially similar parts. In Antic Hay the parts are elaborate, well-defined caricatures. In Those Barren Leaves

the effect of caricature is not as evident and the characters are more life-like. Huxley probes more deeply into mind and motivation.

The partial replacement of story with music - a technique also suggested by Gide in Les Faux Monnayeurs (1925)[20] and discussed at length in Point Counter Point - is illustrated in Part III of Those Barren Leaves. Counterpoint and modulation are achieved in Huxley's prose by his use of parallel, contrapuntal plots, and dissimilar characters in similar situations. Here the situation is that of a love relationship between men and women. There is the pretty love story of two nice young people, neither of them at all analytical or even very intelligent; the sordid tale of Cardan and Miss Elvis, the half-wit; the vain and sickly passion of Mrs. Aldwinkle for Francis Chelifer; and the more complex affair of Calamy and Mary Thriplow which is entered into by the one partly because he has nothing else to do and partly because he is waging a battle against more important things which are bullying him and demanding his attention, and by the other because she wants to plumb the depths of her latent emotion.

Huxley sometimes appears to favour one or two of his characters above the others. Scogan, Denis, Gumbril and, in Those Barren Leaves, Calamy are drawn with considerable feeling. They are given, perhaps, an unfair advantage. But an accusation of tendentiousness may not therefore be

levelled at this stage, though in later works the point is more open to debate. What Huxley deprecates is obvious, what he supports is not nearly so obvious. His honesty as a recorder of observed facts is patent. He draws few conclusions; his comments on his characters, as they stand, are fair. Calamy emerges at the end of Those Barren Leaves as one who has chosen the better way. That he has chosen the way of the mystic can hardly be called coincidence in the light of Huxley's own future career, but the habits of thought and the world-weariness that led him this way are carefully presented. The opposite ways are equally carefully presented and it is left to the reader to decide who has won the debate.

Like Crome Yellow, Those Barren Leaves is primarily a novel of talk - the talk of the poseur, erudite talk on art and history and foolish talk. This kind of novel gives Huxley the opportunity to discourse on life and the meaning of existence, on ethics and epistemology, on aesthetics and science, on any topic that may excite his interest. It also permits him to allow the characters to reveal themselves and requires a minimum of direct commentary on the action. 'The Autobiography of Francis Chelifer' and selections from his notebook and that of Mary Thriplow allow of additional self-revelation and the presentation of other points of view. Mary Thriplow as seen by Calamy and the other guests is very different from Mary Thriplow as revealed by her journal. Occasional glimpses into the minds of the characters and their

processes of self-examination add light and shade to the outlines sketched by the conversations.

Huxley the hard-bitten nihilist and rationalist of the critical view of the time has, in Those Barren Leaves, no longer any excuse for existing. The vague tendency towards mysticism already pointed out in Antic Hay now shows itself much more clearly. The man of reason, dominant in Crome Yellow, has now taken up residence in the aging and sorry figure of Cardan and in the disappointed and ineffectual cynic, Chelifer. The dominant figure now is Calamy, struggling against his conviction that all flesh is grass and that his personal salvation in this world, to say nothing of the next, lies in a repudiation of life as most people live it.

Eventually, Calamy gives in to his conviction. He is not entirely sure that he is right in his choice, but he feels that he must, if he is ever to have any peace of mind, if he is to make sense of his existence, investigate the possibilities that are open to him.

Both Cardan and Chelifer try to dissuade him. But the arguments of reason and relativism fail to convince. Calamy is left to his fate. What that fate is, or whether he succeeds in making sense of the absurd human condition is not told. But Huxley himself has had his own vision and points the way he is to go.

Though he has been characterized as the typical disappointed rationalist of the post war era of the nineteen-

twenties, in sympathy with the characters and attitudes which he portrayed, it is, in fact, true that Huxley has never denied, as the true rationalist, by definition, must deny, the validity of sense experience and mystical experience. But, for the most part, he has had an abiding distrust of such experiences. They are rarely dependable and there is, for him, no single epistemological method which can be trusted. Disillusioned, the early Huxley cautiously picks his way through a forest of conflicting opinions and contradictory beliefs. Today he seems to say that man will find his salvation in awareness of all that goes on about him combined with a deliberate and conscious effort to keep a strong centre of balance. This is not really very much more than the logical conclusion of what he believed right in the twenties which was to strive to know everything to the best of one's capacities and try to make sense of it all, though the human condition might appear insane.

Analytical and intellectually cautious, Huxley saw his own social set clearly and critically and probed deftly into the inner reaches of their minds. Into his novels went erudition, the intellectual and ethical questings and the physical and emotional experiences of a serious, brilliant, well-read, snobbish and cynical young man.

Nineteenth century scientific rationalism, Freud's discoveries of the enormous influence of the unconscious on conscious thought and conscious action, the pitiful social

and political stupidities that precipitated the War and the General Strike, all combined to make nonsense of traditional beliefs, optimisms and ideologies. Man was no longer the master of the universe, the paragon of animals, the master of his fate. What emerged in the twentieth century was a pathetic spectacle - an overgrown foetus, anti-social but gregarious; a rational creature determined by hidden irrational drives; a thing whose every thought and deed was suspect.

The only sanity remaining was the ability to muddle through, to keep on searching for the possible although, perhaps, improbable answer that might restore meaning and significance to life. D.H. Lawrence evolved an anti-intellectual answer but though Huxley believed Lawrence partly right he could not but be aware of the limitations of an anti-intellectual approach to the problems of a complex and sophisticated society. For Huxley the answer could not lie in a denial of reason, in a doctrine of thou-shalt-not-think.

In knowledge and experience, in wisdom and empirical fact, in a rational approach, lay, for Huxley, a more promising way. For man is a failure not because he has too much head or heart, but because he has not enough of either and has a tendency to feel with his brain and think with his entrails. Huxley's aim was to be aware, even if awareness is used only to justify continuing in a chosem course; to preclude self-deception even if it means accepting the painful facts of one's own hypocrisies; to question and to continue

to question, even if the endless interrogation leads only to contradictory answers; to see all clearly, to be generally aware without losing single-mindedness.

Chapter One: Notes

1 D.H. Lawrence, 'Letter to A. Huxley, Nov., 1927', The Letters of D.H. Lawrence, ed. Aldous Huxley, London: Heinemann, 1932, p. 693.

2 Aldous Huxley, Eyeless in Gaza, London: Chatto and Windus, 1936, p. 520.

3 Aldous Huxley, Crome Yellow, Penguin Edition, London: Penguin Books, 1936, p. 34.

4 Ibid., p. 90.

5 Ibid., p. 166.

6 Ibid., p. 11.

7 Ibid., pp. 43-44.

8 Ibid., p. 134.

9 Ibid., p. 134.

10 Ibid., p. 126.

11 Ibid., p. 61.

12 Ibid., p. 22.

13 Ibid., p. 121.

14 Aldous Huxley, Those Barren Leaves, Collected Edition, London: Chatto and Windus, 1947, p. 371.

15 Aldous Huxley, Antic Hay, Phoenix Library Edition, London: Chatto and Windus, 1928, p. 80.

16 Ibid., p. 187.

Chapter One: Notes (contd.)

17 Ibid., p. 242.

18 Ibid., p. 296.

19 Ibid., p. 327.

20 Aldous Huxley, Point Counter Point, Collected Edition, London: Chatto and Windus, pp. 408-409.

> species as they do. But this man has something different and superior in kind, not degree.' ...A being, somehow, of another order, more sensitive, more highly conscious, more capable of feeling than even the most gifted of common men....
> To be with Lawrence was a kind of adventure, a voyage of discovery into newness and otherness.... To be with him was to find oneself transported to one of the frontiers of human consciousness. For an inhabitant of the safe metropolis of thought and feeling it was a most exciting experience. 2

The essay is, of course, a panegyric more than a critical appreciation, but even so it is surprisingly unlike the Huxley who describes himself as 'not at all inclined to enthusiasms'.[3] Placing it beside his comments on those who eventually exchange a doctrine of meaninglessness for any dogma that will restore meaning, one is forced to conclude that the dictum applied as much to Huxley himself as to any other.

It is difficult to assess how much Lawrence's theories contributed to the development of Huxley's present outlook. 'Writers,' says Huxley, 'influence their readers, preachers their auditors - but always, at bottom, to be more themselves.'[4] Ivor, in Crome Yellow, lived more by instinct than reason, and Huxley was kinder to him than to Denis. Anne Wimbush, too, has Huxley's approbation. Life is no problem for Anne. She takes things as they come, enjoys the pleasant things and avoids the nasty. Education for Anne as for Ivor, would be supererogatory. Barbara, in the story 'Green Tunnels' in Mortal Coils (1922), asks:

> Why do you always talk about art? You bring

> these dead people into everything. What do I know about Canova or whoever it is? 5

And the author's comment on Barbara's learned companions is: 'They were none of them alive.' Lypiatt, in Antic Hay is ridiculous not because of his howling about the great life force but because his accomplishments fall so short of his idea of them. He pretends, like Mary Thriplow, to emotions that he does not have. Lawrence brought to maturity in Huxley a concept that was already present in embryo, though this is not the entire explanation of the intoxicating effect which the wine of Lawrence's personality produced. The effect was heightened by Huxley's need for a belief of some sort.

John Atkins says in Aldous Huxley:

> In many ways Huxley was the antithesis of Lawrence - rational, tolerant and scientific in outlook where the other was instinctive, condemnatory and apocalyptic. Yet there was something in Huxley's make-up which responded to the Lawrentian view of things. Under the influence of Lawrence's personality this was fostered to a degree out of harmony with Huxley's essential nature; after the other's death the influence faded yet left a valuable colouring to his opinions. 6

Huxley has clearly defined what it was in Lawrence that appealed to him, in Point Counter Point (1928).

This novel was written during the period of Huxley's friendship with Lawrence and is certainly the most extensive and valuable exposition of Huxley's mind and methods that we have. Philip Quarles is a man so indistinguishable from Huxley as he is revealed in his novels and essays that we

cannot but accept him as an honest piece of autobiography.

A letter from Lawrence to Lady Ottoline Morrell suggests that Quarles is very close indeed to Huxley:

> Aldous and Maria were here for ten days or so - neither of them very well, run down.... I think the Counter-Point book sort of got between them - she found it hard to forgive the death of the child - which one can well understand. 7

In another letter, to Huxley, Lawrence says:

> I have read Point Counter Point with a heart sinking through my boot-soles and a rising admiration. I do think you've shown the truth, perhaps the last truth, about you and your generation, with really fine courage. 8

Which seems to settle the matter.

The point of contact between Huxley and Lawrence was their common belief in the inadequacy of science and philosophy to provide what man needs in order to make sense of the universe. As Quarles says, writing of Rampion:

> Opinions on which two opponents agree (for that's what essentially, and to start with, we are: opponents) have a fair chance of being right. The chief differences between us, alas, is that his opinions are lived and mine, in the main, only thought. Like him, I mistrust intellectualism, but intellectually I disbelieve in the adequacy of any scientific or philosophical theory, any abstract-moral principle, but on scientific, philosophical and abstract-moral grounds. The problem for me is to transform a detached intellectual scepticism into a way of harmonious all-around living. 9

Of the friendship between these two radically different people, Huxley and Lawrence, Richard Aldington, who knew them both, says:

> ...the two writers became as near friends as was possible without the risk of explosions. It was a

> happy alliance, since Huxley's very different type of mind was a complete foil to Lawrence's. Huxley's unaffected recognition of Lawrence as one who had in him 'something different' from the other eminent contemporaries he knew, as one 'superior in kind, not degree,' was very important to Lawrence. It was recognition of a kind which had been persistently denied him. 10

Huxley's contention in the introduction to The Letters of D.H. Lawrence that Lawrence had a more than human perception is denied by Aldington:

> ...I think that 'mystic otherness' was entirely a projection of himself. He bluffed us by assuming a knowledge that nobody has. For instance, none of us really has the least idea what it is like to be a tortoise or a goat or a bat; but when Lawrence, who loved playing charades, pretended for the time being that he was one and did it very amusingly and cleverly we were all impressed. Who could contradict him? 11

Nobody, as far as it is known, has made any claims that Mr. Charlie Chaplin has a 'mystic otherness', yet he has, on occasion, convincingly demonstrated his ability to be a stone or a rose, as Lawrence demonstrated his ability to 'get inside the skin of an animal and tell you in the most convincing detail how it felt and how, dimly, inhumanly, it thought.' 12

But whether Huxley was taken in by Lawrence is really a little beside the point. Lawrence had something to give that Huxley obviously felt he needed, and he espoused Lawrence's cause with an enthusiasm and a fervor that was surprisingly unlike him. Huxley felt that he could afford to ignore in Lawrence what he did not agree with:

> Lawrence could give so much, and what he gave was so valuable, that it was absurd and profitless to spend one's time with him disputing about a matter in which he absolutely refused to take a rational interest. 13

Another point which it might be wise to keep in mind is that Huxley knew Lawrence only during the last four years of his life when Lawrence was at his least unreasonable and most amiable, when he was suffering most from scurrilous criticism and misunderstanding.

The philosophy which Lawrence propounded has been broadly, but somewhat inexactly, labeled 'atavism'. Even Quarles rather facetiously refers to the 'noble savagery' of Rampion. Lawrence had no real wish to return to the savage:' If you prostitute your psyche by returning to the savages, you gradually go to pieces.'[14] He had no sympathy for the sentimentality of the Rousseau-ists. His was a faith in intuition distinct from rational thought. Man, in allowing the intellect to direct his actions, denies the value of instinct, according to Lawrence, which is inherent and necessary to his well-being. (Recent research in psychosomatic medicine indicates that Lawrence was not far wide of the mark in this.) Beyond consciousness there is the unconscious which, if freed from the bonds of intellect, is capable of directing man to an awareness of his place in the scheme of nature. There are what Wordsworth called 'unknown modes of being' which can be experienced only in a blind and unthinking outgoing or reaching out to the great darkness

of the unknown and the intellectually unknowable. God cannot be apprehended by the intellect, something of Him can be apprehended by the flesh:

> My great religion is a belief in the blood, in the flesh, as being wiser than the intellect. We can go wrong in our mind. But what the blood feels and believes and says, is always true. 15

Though the recent Lady Chatterly trial may have done something to modify this view, to the man in the street Lawrence is still the great purveyor of sex for the sake of sex. Nothing could be further from the truth. Lawrence was himself passionately puritan in outlook. He loathed the idea of promiscuity, he thought Freud a blasphemer, Joyce indecent, and Casanova filthy:

> My God, what a clumsy olla putrida James Joyce is ! Nothing but old fags and cabbage-stumps of quotations from the bible and the rest, stewed in the juice of deliberate, journalistic dirty-mindedness... 16

And:

> ...I tried Casanova and he smells. One can be immoral if one likes, but one must not be a creeping, itching, fingering, inferior being, led on chiefly by a dirty sniffing kind of curiosity, without pride or clearness of soul. 17

What he strove for, and what Huxley agreed with, was balance:

> Life is so made that opposites sway about a trembling centre of balance. The sins of the fathers are visited on the children. If the fathers drag down the balance on the side of love, peace, and production, then in the third or fourth generation the balance will swing back violently to hate, rage, and destruction. We must balance as we go. 18

Lawrence felt that in his time the balance had been destroyed. Politics, war, the industrial revolution, intellectualism had made a demon of man, put him so out of

balance that he was careering headlong to destruction. To restore the balance Lawrence advocated a flight from modern industrial society to a purer and more intuitive relationship between man and the universe, man and God, man and man, man and woman:

> If we think about it, we find that our life consists in this achieving of a pure relationship between ourselves and the living universe about us. That is how I 'save my soul' by accomplishing a pure relationship between me and another person, me and other people, me and a nation, me and a race of men, me and the animals, me and the trees or flowers, me and the earth, me and the skies and sun and stars, me and the moon: an infinity of pure relations, big and little, like the stars of the sky: that makes our eternity, for each of us, me and the timber I am sawing, the lines of force I follow; me and the dough I knead for bread, me and the very motion with which I write, me and the bit of gold I have got. This, if we knew it, is our life and our eternity: the subtle, perfected relation between me and my whole circumambient universe. 19

Morality, for Lawrence was the keeping of the balance between man and the ever-changing universe. And because of the ever-changing nature of things he distrusted a philosophy or system that denied this nature and sought to make and apply never-changing regulations of behaviour:

> Philosophy, religion, science, they are all busy nailing things down, to get a stable equilibrium....they, all of them, all the time, want to nail us on to some tree or other. 20

Huxley saw philosophies and systems as 'tubes bored through the universe' which prevent us from seeing or being aware of all the great universe outside. Lawrence saw them as things nailing us down and, similarly, preventing us from

coming into contact with the universe of which we are part. The two concepts are essentially the same. The metaphors betray the startlingly different attitudes.

Lawrence speaks as one persecuted, as a defiant rebel hitting out at those who wish to crucify him. Huxley speaks as one whose situation is no fault but his own, who has arranged his own crucifixion and who could save himself if he could but figure out how. Lawrence, sure that he had the answer, was ever incapable of practising what he preached. Huxley, seeking the answer, was infinitely more capable of keeping his balance. He got from Lawrence, above all, justification for his notion of what was wrong with the world and a reason to hope that amidst the meaninglessness there was something his rational faculties could seize upon which could restore meaning, not just to part of the universe, but to the whole.

Huxley's omniscient intelligence could discern in the unresolved mystical atavism of Lawrence a truth and a meaning that had value. His scientific turn of mind was sufficient protection against his complete conversion to a view of life that contained many vaguenesses and many fallacies. Lawrence never did succeed in making consistent his hatred of industry and his realization of the necessity for it. Nor did he successfully define what he meant by the recurrent term 'the relationship'. Perhaps he could not.

No mystic who has ever lived, no matter how articulate, has ever been able to describe the mystic experience in terms that have meaning for anyone but another mystic. He does say this:

> If we are going to be moral, let us refrain from driving pegs through anything, either through each other or through the third thing, the relationship, which is forever the ghost of both of us. Every sacrificial crucifixion needs five pegs, four short ones and a long one, each one an abomination. But when you try to nail down the relationship itself, and write over it Love instead of This is the King of the Jews, then you can go on putting in nails forever. Even Jesus called it the Holy Ghost, to show you that you can't lay salt on its tail. 21

Rampion in Point Counter Point is Huxley's interpretation of Lawrence, who found the portrait an embarrassing one:

> ...your Rampion is the most boring character in the book - a gas-bag. Your attempt at intellectual sympathy !- It's all rather disgusting, and I feel like a badger that has its hole on Wimbledon Common and trying not to be caught. 22

Lawrence, no doubt, felt he was being nailed down again.

Searching for influences in a novel is a questionable art; post hoc, ergo propter hoc can become the very dubious criterion. The novel of ideas is a veritable happy hunting ground for the practitioner of the art but he is apt to go wildly astray unless he admits and keeps in mind that any writer, even the most original, is largely the product of his education and of those who have gone before him. Individuality does not necessarily, or even at all, consist in originality. Similar ideas, novel and old, can and do occur in writers who have never heard of one another and have totally different

backgrounds. It is interesting in this connexion to quote from Andre Maurois' essay 'Aldous Huxley's Progress':

> If Philip Quarles seems to us like Huxley the novelist, Mark Rampion, I believe, expresses the ideas of Huxley the philosopher. [23]

M. Maurois makes no mention of Lawrence at all. He does say that Huxley is perhaps the first English writer 'who reechoed in English literature the notes struck by Proust and Gide' and couples him with E.M. Forster.[24] The whole question, it seems, is one of chacun à son gout, or perhaps of chacun à son idée.

Having struck the Lawrence gong we may proceed to a discussion of Point Counter Point as a record of Huxley's thought and if there are any audible echoes of Lawrence, well, be that as it may.

The epigraph to Point Counter Point is from Fulke Greville:

> Oh, wearisome condition of humanity,
> Born under one law, to another bound,
> Vanily begot and yet forbidden vanity,
> Created sick, commanded to be sound.
> What meaneth nature by these diverse laws,
> Passion and reason, self-division's cause?

Here again, the recognizable Huxley theme which goes back to and beyond the 'First Philosopher's Song' in Leda (1920), which begins in praise of mind and ends, desperately:

> But oh, the sound of simian mirth !
> Mind, issued from the monkey's womb,
> Is still umbilical to earth,
> Earth its home and earth its tomb.

Many of the characters are recognizable Huxleyian caricatures. All, excepting Mark Rampion and his wife, and possibly Eleanor Quarles, have one thing in common: infantility, they have failed in some way to mature emotionally, to achieve the balance, to maintain a proper relationship with the universe.

Lucy Tantamount is a more anthropophagous Myra Viveash, bored, ruthless, emotionally arrested in time, consciously pleasure seeking, refusing to be bullied by the universe. Lord Edward Tantamount, like Shearwater in Antic Hay whose world is limited by the walls of his laboratory, is, in all but intellect, a child:

> In the laboratory, at his desk, he was as old as science itself. But his feelings, his intuitions, his instincts were those of a little boy. 25

John Bidlake is an ageing Olympian. In his day he had been a remarkable painter and: 'handsome, huge, exuberant, careless; a great laugher, a great worker, a great eater, drinker and taker of virginities.'[26] But the approach of death leaves him helpless. Having taken of everything in life, he must face death inadequately armed with nothing but the helplessness of a spoilt child. Burlap is a spiritual journalist, a pseudo Franciscan. As Rampion says, even St. Francis is a little too grown up for Burlap who accomplishes an astonishing number of seductions by creeping into his victim's beds like an appealing child who needs comforting. Quarles Senior, too, is a case of arrested development. As a young man he was

thought to show great promise, but:

> ...the cleverness turned out to be no more than the kind of cleverness which enables brilliant schoolboys to write Ovidian Latin verses or humorous parodies of Herodotus. Brought to the test, this sixth-form ability proved to be as impotent in the purely intellectual as in the practical sphere. 27

Point Counter Point shows Huxley at the peak of his artistic accomplishment and at one of the crises of his intellectual life. He continues to be concerned with man's self-division, his malice and his stupidity, but in spite of his condemnation of the ways of life and habits of thought of the majority of men he appears himself to be more hopeful and more tolerant. We are led to think that man will eventually come through, that he has within him the capacity for right living, for making of himself a better thing than he now is.

There is in Point Counter Point a new respect for man and respect for life. Illidge helps Spandrell to murder Webley, the fascist leader. Spandrell seeks in this acte gratuit the ultimate in sensation, the taking of a life for no reason other than the commission of the sin. Illidge seeks revenge on the upper classes whom he blames for the life of humiliation and abject poverty that he and his family have led. But Spandrell finds in the act not the essential horror he hopes for, but silliness and stupidity, without point or dignity. Illidge discovers:

> ...that rich and poor, oppression and revolution, justice, punishment, indignation - all, as far

> as he was concerned, were utterly irrelevant to the fact of these stiffening limbs, this mouth that gaped, the half-shut, glazed and secretly staring eyes. Irrelevant and beside the point. 28

Spandrell, carrying meaninglessness to its logical conclusion, eventually destroys himself. Huxley who, as a young man, had found Baudelaire's nostalgie de la boue a fitting frame for his own disillusionment, thus lays this particular ghost. In the last chapter of Point Counter Point, Rampion, the life-philosopher, is called upon by Spandrell to deliver a judgement. Spandrell, the aesthete, is determined to find his soul, and God, in art, or not at all. He thinks that he has found the proof of God in Beethoven's A Minor Quartet. Rampion's agreement with him is to be the final test of the validity of the proof that life and art and God are one, an indivisible and simple trinity. Rampion's judgement is that a work of the imagination cannot be the last word in wisdom. He agrees that the Quartet is a perfect spiritual abstraction, a perfect expression of the life of the soul, but denies that the abstraction need be made, or should be made:

> Why can't he be content with reality, your stupid old Beethoven? Why should he find it necessary to replace the real, warm, natural thing by this abstract cancer of a soul? The cancer may have a beautiful shape; but, damn it all, the body's more beautiful. I don't want your spiritual cancer. 29

Rampion is almost persuaded. He admits the deep and absolute perfection of Beethoven's art, but is not convinced that it is what man should aim for in his life:

'But it's too good.'
'How can anything be too good?'
'Not human. If it lasted, you'd cease to be a man. You'd die.' 30

The lesson is, apparently, that perfection must be sacrificed to the keeping of the balance. But the lesson is not overtly stated. One must draw one's own conclusions.

These two, Rampion and Spandrell, are at opposite ends of the human scale. One is the life-worshipper; the other hates life but, in his perverse way, glories in his nausea and cultivates it by deliberate and methodical indulgence in excesses of sensual pleasure. Philip Quarles is more difficult to pin down, his place on the human scale seems to vary. Intellectually he is the complete man, emotionally he has neither the maturity of Rampion nor the imbecility of Burlap. He represents, perhaps, not just Huxley, but all the intellectually aware and emotionally detached.

One of the remarkable things about this novel, technically, is the valuable contribution that all the characters, without exception, make to the total effect. To remove any of them would be to try to play the symphony without some of the instruments. It is an extremely well integrated composition. The novel of ideas lacks realism, as a rule; the characters are mouthpieces for a set of ideas and are very little else. Huxley, by playing variations on his themes and by reduplicating his characters and situations gives a substance to his idea-mongers that they would otherwise lack. They do not have the appearance of paper cut-outs, though

they may be deficient in the 'fourth dimensional' quality that Lawrence speaks of in 'Morality and the Novel'.[31]

Huxley is very aware of the pitfalls of the novel of ideas. He has Quarles say:

> The chief defect of the novel of ideas is that you must write about people who have ideas to express - which excludes all but about .01 per cent. of the human race. 32

And also:

> ...people who can reel off neatly formulated notions aren't quite real; they're slightly monstrous. Living with monsters becomes rather tiresome in the long run. 33

The distribution of ideas in Point Counter Point is very complex. One may, as a general rule, take Rampion as Lawrence or, alternatively, as Huxley the philosopher, and Philip Quarles as Huxley the novelist, in their roles as mouthpieces. Spandrell's tragic life is modelled on that of Baudelaire and is also a realistic case-history of the Oedipus complex. Burlap, the editor of the Literary Review, might well be a most malicious satire on Middleton Murry, whose ability to reshape the ideas of others greater than himself was a prime quality of his criticism, but not a quality that Huxley admired, evidently.

There is not an honest rationalist in the lot. Mr. Scogan has been done to death. In his place we have Philip Quarles who is not really sure what he is but who clings to 'the cool, indifferent, flux of intellectual curiosity'[34] like hope to her anchor. Intellectually he understands

Rampion's theory of maintaining the balance between mind and the flesh, but in his mental solitude, in his refusal to make contact with other people, he finds his freedom, and of that he will not be deprived. Elinor, his wife, is his 'dragoman':

> Left to himself Philip would never have been able to establish personal contact....But when Elinor was there to make and keep contact for him, he could understand, he could sympathize, with his intelligence, in a way which Elinor assured him was almost human. 35

But Elinor cannot keep this up indefinitely. To interpret the world to Philip was amusing, as well as being her duty to his genius, but the constant giving, and getting nothing back, wears her down. Almost against her will she decides to leave Philip and live with Everard Webley. The sudden fatal illness of her son is the only thing that prevents her. Webley's murder by Spandrell and Illidge occurs at the same time as little Phil's death. Elinor is utterly broken. Philip remains Philip, refusing to let anyone come near his private misery. Spandrell tries to sympathize but Philip, as always, refuses contact with the world of emotion:

> 'It was a peculiarly gratuitous horror,' he said, to bring the conversation away from the particular and personal to the general. 36

Point Counter Point, though a novel of ideas, is also a novel of relationships (though not in the Lawrentian sense). Centrally there is the Philip-Elinor relationship, producing the Elinor-Webley relationship which produces the opportunity for Spandrell to kill Webley. The murder of Webley

is ultimately the product of the relationship which Spandrell had with his mother, and Illidge with the society into which he was born. Throughout the book relationships and their consequences are traced and related, compared and contrasted, and always the complete picture is one of self-division, of man's inability to find the point of contact between the ideal and the actual.

For the division is inescapable and pervasive, not just in the individual man, but between each man and the world and all other men. Though Philip Quarles tries to remain whole and apart, refusing to let human contacts to cut him up into pieces, he cannot escape the paradox. The paradox is man divided within himself and men divided from one another yet inevitably connected. Every action and impulse of every individual reacts again and again, producing an infinite complexity and affecting everyone to a greater or lesser degree. Against this infinite complexity reason alone is a poor weapon, but Huxley, like E.M. Forster, realizing that reason alone can't solve everything, still wants it to solve as many things as it can.

So, in Point Counter Point, although reason is not the sole standard against which behaviour is measured, it is the dominant criterion. Reason is muted but still very audible. Fundamentally it is stupidity and irrationality, fuzzy thinking and aimlessness, self-deception and hypocrisy, that Huxley continues to deride. Heart may cry out to heart,

but mind cries out to mind with even louder voice. Walter Bidlake's love for Marjorie Carling is destroyed by the stupidity which underlies her veneer of cultured refinement as much as by her lack of honest passion. Philip Quarles's retreat into intellectualism is less worthy of condemnation than John Bidlake's cultivation of the flesh-pots. Quarles Senior's sordid little amours are not nearly as repellent as his intellectual dishonesty. As a philosophy of life reason probably has more to be said for it than any other, including life-worship.

In his introduction to Lawrence's letters Huxley says that each of the ages of man has its suitable philosophy and that Lawrence's was not a very good philosophy for old age or failing powers. One might say also that Lawrence's statement: 'We can go wrong in our mind. But what the blood feels and believes and says is always true.', can lead to greater absurdities than one could ever reach by intellect alone. The blood has a habit of rarely saying the same thing twice running.

Point Counter Point is probably the best of Huxley's novels. It is certainly the most extensive commentary on his social world and its thought that he has written. Lawrence wrote to him of it:

> It seems to me that it would take ten times the courage to write P. Counter P. that it took to write Lady C.: and if the public knew what it was reading, it would throw a hundred stones at you, to one at me. I do think that art has to reveal the palpitating moment or the state of man as it is. And I think you do that, terribly. 37

Chapter Two

1 Aldous Huxley, 'Beliefs', Collected Essays, London: Chatto and Windus, 1960, pp. 364, 368.

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3 Ibid., p. xxix.

4 Ibid., p. xiii.

5 Aldous Huxley, Mortal Coils, London: Chatto and Windus, 1922, p. 191.

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7 D.H. Lawrence, 'To Lady Ottoline Morrell, 5 Feby., 1929', The Letters of D.H. Lawrence, ed. Aldous Huxley, p. 783.

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10 Richard Aldington, D.H. Lawrence, Portrait of a Genius but..., First American Edition, New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1950, p. 371.

11 Ibid., p. 150.

12 The Letters of D.H. Lawrence, ed. Aldous Huxley, p. xxx-xxxi.

13 Ibid., p. xv.

14 D.H. Lawrence, 'Herman Melville's "Typee" and "Typhoon"', D.H. Lawrence, Selected Literary Criticism, ed. Anthony Beal, London: Heinemann, 1955, p. 370.

Chapter Two: Notes (contd.)

15 The Letters of D.H. Lawrence, ed. Aldous Huxley, p. xiv.

16 D.H. Lawrence, 'To A. and M. Huxley, 15 Aug., 1928', op. cit. p. 742.

17 D.H. Lawrence, 'To Nelly Morrison, 1 Sept., 1921', op. cit. p. 523.

18 D.H. Lawrence, 'Morality and the Novel', D.H. Lawrence, Selected Literary Criticism, ed. Anthony Beal, pp. 110-111.

19 Ibid., p. 109.

20 Ibid., p. 110.

21 Ibid., p. 113.

22 D.H. Lawrence, 'To A. Huxley, Oct., 1928', The Letters of D.H. Lawrence, ed. Aldous Huxley, p. 758.

23 André Maurois, 'Aldous Huxley's Progress', Living Age, CCCXXXIX (Sept. 1930), p. 53.

24 Ibid., p. 54.

25 Aldous Huxley, Point Counter Point, p. 26.

26 Ibid., p. 27.

27 Ibid., p. 348.

28 Ibid., p. 544.

29 Ibid.,p. 597.

Chapter Two: Notes (Contd.)

[30] Ibid., p. 598.

[31] D.H. Lawrence, 'Morality and the Novel', D.H. Lawrence, Selected Literary Criticism, ed. Anthony Beal, pp. 108-111.

[32] Aldous Huxley, Point Counter Point, pp. 409-410.

[33] Ibid., p. 410.

[34] Ibid., p. 269.

[35] Ibid., p. 108.

[36] Ibid., p. 589.

[37] D.H. Lawrence, 'To A. Huxley', The Letters of D.H. Lawrence, ed. Aldous Huxley, p. 757.

III

In Eyeless in Gaza (1936) it is apparent that Huxley's enthusiasm for the life-worship of D.H. Lawrence has waned considerably. The problem of this novel, as of the others, is self-division and the argument is that the point of self-division is self-division itself. Here for the first time, Huxley attempts to resolve, rather than merely describe, the paradox of the conflict within the individual man. This endeavour to impose meaning on the chaotic appearance of modern life is presented through the progress of Anthony Beavis from conscious, withdrawn selfishness to a way of life and a heterodox philosophy of pacifism, practical Christianity and eastern mysticism. Affection, compassion and contemplation are offered as the triune answer to the difficulties of men: 'born under one law, to another bound'.

Beavis, like Philip Quarles, sacrifices human relat-ions to his personal freedom. Outwardly he is the complete man. Inwardly, though rarely, he has a consciousness of deficiency, an academic, theoretical knowledge that he is not entirely human, but he deliberately chooses, in spite of this knowledge to remain so. The choice as Anthony sees it, and, by implication, as all intellectuals see it, is between freedom to seek knowledge and enjoy a pleasant if meaningless existence, and slavery to the unknown and unknowable forces of life.

But Eyeless in Gaza is not merely a thinly disguised tract though, for present purposes, it may have to be treated as such. It is a well developed, comprehensive novel dealing with the paradoxical optimistic despair of a close group of upper middle class English people between the wars. It does not pretend to be as all-inclusive as Point Counter Point, nor is it as brilliant and youthful as Antic Hay. It has neither the depth of the one nor the mirth of the other. Like the protagonist, Anthony Beavis, Eyeless in Gaza has dominant overtones of incipient, if not actual, middle age.

Huxley has found, as Anthony is to find, that Lawrence, like patriotism, is not enough. For one so predominantly cerebral and so insatiably inquisitive about the whole of existence as Huxley the attainment of new modes of consciousness through the medium of the flesh could, at best, be part of the point of life, but never the whole. The way of the mystic that he had originally investigated in Those Barren Leaves and which he appeared to have abandoned, is again approached, but with a certain caution and deference.

Eyeless in Gaza is a puzzling work in that it is difficult to know whether Huxley is sincerely presenting as his own convictions doctrines that he had previously laughed to scorn. He may, possibly, be experimenting. Seeing things with a greater tolerance and maturity, made wise by the proven inadequacy of his more youthful attitudes,

he may merely be assuming a role for the sake of the argument. Anthony's conversion is not completely believeable. Miller, his 'avatar', has something of the figure of fun about him in spite of his admirable courage, and this suggests that Huxley himself is not unquestionably convinced of the rightness of the cause he appears to favour. The advocacy of vegetarianism and colonic irrigation as a cure for spiritual constipation carries with it the suggestion of a mild Huxleyian joke; but a joke that may be half in jest and all in earnest. Huxley, at any rate, is sufficiently convinced to carry it to a logical conclusion.

Huxley attempts two things in Eyeless in Gaza: his experiment with a new theory of the meaning of life, and an experiment with time. The difficulties of understanding the one are compounded by the difficulty of following the other. Anthony's life is presented as through a number of snap-shots taken at random from a box. The chronology of the tale seems to be governed by little more than caprice and one may be forgiven for rearranging the chapters in normal sequence and reading them in that sequence before attempting the demanding task of reading them as they are.

The years of greatest importance in Anthony's development are illustrated in detail. Much of his later intellectual questing is revealed through his journal, a favourite Huxley recourse when the method of detached

scientific observation threatens to become inadequate to the full expression of his ideas, when he finds it necessary to get at his characters from the inside as well as the outside. The most important years are those of childhood (1902), young manhood (1914), encroaching middle age (1926) and the years of crisis (1933-1934). In the studies of the latter years, which have been conditioned by the earlier ones, we find the new departures in Huxley's progression away from rationalism.

Here may be the explanation of the curious time switches. Rearranged in normal chronological order the novel, except towards the end, is a typically Huxleyian synthesis of disillusion, cynicism, sex, scatology, clever talk and humour to which the high morality of the conclusion is an uncomfortable appendage. By a judicious scattering-about and early introduction of the details of Anthony's conversion the conclusion is made to appear less contrived and less shocking in its context. For shocking it is, not in the way that might be expected of Huxley, but in its complacency that all will be well if the intelligentsia will but take up and practise self-abnegation, yoga, vegetarianism and a rather dubious mysticism. Eyeless in Gaza suffers as a novel, as do the novels which follow it, from an overt and shameless didacticism that leaves too many questions unanswered to be convincing in its propositions. Anthony's philosophy is too self-limiting to justify the self-satisfied

final words:

> Dispassionately, and with a serene lucidity, he thought of what was in store for him. Whatever it might be, he knew now that all would be well. 1

All would be well for Anthony in the euphoria that results from dedication to a cause and the prospect of a glorious martyrdom, but for the man of sensitivity and intellect whom he so obviously represents the solution can hardly be so simple.

The thing to keep in mind, of course, is that Huxley often overstates his ideas as he overdraws his characters, and to the same purpose. This extract from 'The Desert' (1956) is an example:

> For our survival, if we do survive, we shall be less beholden to our common sense...than to our caterpillar- and cicada-sense, to intelligence, in other words, as it operates on the organic level. 2

In another context the wisdom of intelligence operating on the organic level may have quite a different aspect:

> We fail to attend to our true relations with ultimate reality and, through ultimate reality, with our fellow beings, because we prefer to attend to our animal nature and to the business of getting on in the world. ('Beliefs', 1937.) 3

But both statements, taken in context, will be found to support the same basic argument, that too much emphasis on the development of the intellect is dangerous, and that the emphasis is often of the wrong sort. This is also one of the arguments of Eyeless in Gaza.

From childhood Anthony is theoretically aware of

his deficiencies, of his moral cowardice and of the escapes he makes into rationalization and self-justification. For years he has managed to escape the consequences, for he is extremely intelligent, amusing and attractive. Helen, his mistress, tells him:

> You are sweet, you are touching. God knows why. Because you oughtn't to be. It's all a swindle really, a trick for getting people to like you on false pretenses. 4

Anthony replies that though he often gets something for nothing there is no injustice in it since he never pretends to give anything in return for what he gets. These are the conditions which must always be understood in people's relations with him. In young manhood his one close friendship ends in tragedy through Anthony's moral cowardice. After that he refuses any demanding human relations, withdrawing into emotional detachment and cynicism.

Anthony is shaken out of his complacency when a dog falls from a plane on a roof where he and Helen are lying and drenches the lovers with its blood. For Helen the dog is a symbol of that part of life from which no intelligence, no effort at detachment, no aestheticism can protect her. It reminds Anthony of Brian's suicide and makes him realize that the artificial world of work and sensuality which he has created for himself has prevented him from transforming the raw material of his life into the real thing. He finds that his escape mechanisms no longer work. He can no longer

set conditions for his relations with other people. Helen refuses to accept his conditions. Anthony offers his love unconditionally but she refuses him. It is too late. This is the great crisis of Anthony's life and he cannot cope with it without some radical reformulation of values.

The conclusion of Point Counter Point leaves Philip Quarles much as he was at the beginning: self-conscious, detached, but more than ever unwilling to be concerned with other people. The Quarles type, with which Huxley identifies himself, again appears in Anthony Beavis. But a change has come about in the interval. Anthony is not permitted to remain detached. And there is no Mark Rampion to provide the answers in Eyeless in Gaza. Anthony goes to the works of Lawrence for help in his difficulty but Lawrence's view of the world is found inadequate in many respects:

> For Lawrence the animal purpose had seemed sufficient and satisfactory....But Lawrence had never looked through a microscope, never seen biological energy in its basic un-differentiated state. He hadn't wanted to look, had disapproved on principle of microscopes, fearing what they had to reveal; and he had been right to fear. Those depths beneath depths of namelessness, crawling irrepressibly - they would have horrified him. He had insisted that the raw material should be worked up - but worked only to a certain pitch and no further; the primal crawling energy should be used for the relatively higher purposes of animal existence, but for no existence beyond the animal. Arbitrarily, illogically. For the other, ulterior purposes and organizations existed and were not to be ignored. Moving through space and time, the human animal discovered them on his path, unequivocally present and real. 5

It is here that the real problem begins to take on

a recognizable form. The 'ulterior purposes and organizations', manifestations of intellect and the necessity of using the intellect to impose order, are as much a part of human existence as the more obvious animal functions of man. But neither the animal purpose nor the intellectual purpose can be an end in itself. How, then, are the two to be reconciled? Anthony has what amounts to an apocalyptic vision of the purpose of human existence.

> Thought as an end, knowledge as an end. And now it had become suddenly manifest that they were only means - as definitely raw material as life itself. Raw material - and he divined, he knew what the finished product would have to be; and with part of his being he revolted against the knowledge....But with another part of his mind he was miserably thinking that he would never succeed in bringing about the transformation of his raw material into the finished product; that he didn't know how or where to begin; that he was afraid of making a fool of himself; that he lacked the necessary courage, patience and strength of mind. 6

What the purpose may be is only hinted at for the present but becomes manifestly clear in the conclusion. As the first step in finding himself Anthony allies himself with Mark Staithes and sets out for Mexico to take part in a revolution.

Staithes's way of making sense of his own life is by making all possible demands on himself, forcing himself to contemplate all the ugliness and horror of life with courage and an almost inhuman stoicism, gaining his life by constantly risking it. He has no respect for the majority of men and is convinced that life is essentially meaningless.

For him the only way of dealing with manifest irrationality is by a show of force and personal courage. Staithes is the 'sentimentalist in reverse', another development of the type previously illustrated in the characters of Coleman, Chelifer and Spandrell.

While Anthony is on his Mexican adventure he meets Miller. Miller is an active pacifist, anthropologist, humanitarian and mystic. His effect on Anthony is immediate and lasting. From Miller's point of view the only human and intelligent sort of courage is that shown in respect for other men and in a refusal to do evil under any circumstances. Staithes sees men as bugs and himself as the only man in a world full of bugs. Miller, the anthropologist, sees Staithes not as a man but as an entomologist and tells him:

> If you call a man a bug, it means that you propose to treat him as a bug. Whereas if you call him a man, it means that you propose to treat him as a man. My profession is to study men. Which means that I must always call men by their name; always think of them as men; yes, and always treat them as men. Because if you don't treat men as men, they don't behave as men. But I'm an anthropologist, I repeat. I want human material. Not insect material. 7

Staithes retorts that though one may want human material one actually gets only undiluted bug, and suggests that Miller's approach is unintelligent and sentimental:

> 'Being sentimental has nothing to do with being intelligent.
>
> 'On the contrary, 'the doctor insisted, 'it has everything to do with it. You can't be intelligent about human beings unless you're first sentimental

> about them. Sentimental in the good sense, of course. In the sense of caring for them. If you don't care for them, you can't possibly understand them; all your acuteness will just be another form of stupidity.' 8

Miller sees very little distinction between the civilized and the uncivilized. The whole secret of politics, of dealing with people of any description, is overcoming hostility and suspicion:

> Savage societies are simply civilized societies on a small scale and with the lid off. We can learn to understand them fairly easily. And when we've learnt to understand savages, we've learnt, as we discover, to understand the civilized. 9

Huxley said the same thing five years before in an essay called 'Sermons in Cats':

> Primitive people, like children and animals, are simply civilized people with the lid off, so to speak - the heavy elaborate lid of manners, conventions, traditions of thought and feeling beneath which each one of us passes his or her existence.... Direct observation...tells us but little; and if we cannot infer what is going on under other lids from what we see, introspectively, by peeping under our own, then the best thing we can do is take the next boat for the West Indies. 10

Anthony, convinced that Miller holds the key to his salvation, returns to England to work with Miller and his associates.

From this point on Anthony's progress is described through his journal. The contents of the journal are essentially the same as that of the essays in Ends and Means (1937) and in a sixpenny pamphlet written for the Peace Pledge Union called 'What Are You Going to Do About It?'.

The diary begins with the line from Ovid which appears so frequently in Huxley:

Video meliora proboque; deteriora sequor.

Anthony knows what he wants to do but continues to do what he knows he ought not to do. The road to perfection is a rocky one. His greatest fault is indifference to people. What he wishes to achieve is a persistent affectionate interest in them. But he finds that brotherly love and fellowship in the abstract are entirely different things from the actual day to day practice of these virtues. Self-knowledge is essential to self-change but the two are not necessarily identical. Miller has pointed out the difficulties to him:

> Really and by nature every man's a unity; but you've artificially transformed the unity into a trinity. One clever man and two idiots - that's what you've made yourself. An admirable manipulator of ideas, linked with a person who, so far as self-knowledge and feeling are concerned, is just a moron; and the pair of you associated with a half-witted body.... Two imbeciles and one intellectual. But man is a democracy and in a democracy the majority rules. You've got to do something about that majority. 11

Huxley's stand in 'Ends and Means' is that means determine ends; that the use of bad means to achieve a good end automatically perverts or destroys the goodness of the end. Anthony's examination of himself and his world leads him to the same conclusion:

> Means determine ends; and must be like the ends proposed. Means intrinsically different from the ends proposed achieve ends like themselves, not like those they were meant to achieve. Violence and war will produce a peace and a social organization

> having the potentialities of more violence and war.... Peace and social justice, only obtainable by means that are just and pacific. And people will behave justly and pacifically only if they have trained themselves as individuals to do so, even in circumstances where it would be easier to behave violently and unjustly. And the training must be simultaneously physical and mental. Knowledge of how to use the self and of what the self should be used for. 12

By concentrating on means, by ceasing to chase greedily after ends, by increasing awareness of the most trivial mental and bodily acts, by inhibiting all improper or wrong uses of one's self, one should be able to proceed to the proper end, which is the fusing of the artificial trinity into the unity intended by nature, to a proper relationship between mind and body. This achieved, man should be capable of living a life that is both rational and happy. Bad behaviour and unhappiness are caused by poor use of the 'raw material' of existence.

'Awareness' is the key word in Huxley's new view of the universe and the purpose of existence. Anthony advocates contemplation but warns himself of the dangers:

> Reflect that we all have our...bolt-holes from unpleasant reality. The danger...of meditation becoming such a bolt-hole. Quietism can be mere self-indulgence....'The contemplative life.' It can be made a kind of high-brow substitute for Marlene Dietrich: a subject for erotic musings in the twilight. Meditation - valuable, not as a pleasurable end; only as a means for effecting desirable changes in the personality and mode of existence. To live contemplatively is not to live in some deliciously voluptuous or flattering Poona; it is to live in London, but to live there in a non-cockney style. 13

One is reminded of Scogan's saying that all philosophies and religions are tubes bored in the universe. But Huxley no longer sees philosophy and religion as solely an escape from a world that is unbearable. In 'Wordsworth in the Tropics' (1929) he pointed out:

> That man must build himself some sort of metaphysical shelter in the midst of the jungle of immediately apprehended reality is obvious. 14

But he also says in the same essay:

> The only satisfactory way of existing in the modern, highly specialized world is to live with two personalities. A Dr. Jekyll that does the metaphysical and scientific thinking, that transacts business in the city, adds up figures, designs machines, and so forth. And a natural spontaneous Mr. Hyde to do the physical, instinctive living in the intervals of work. The two personalities should lead their unconnected lives apart, without poaching on one another's preserves or enquiring too closely into one another's activities. Only by living discreetly and inconsistently can we preserve both the man and the citizen, both the intellectual and the spontaneous animal being, alive within us. The solution may not be very satisfactory; but it is, I believe now (though once I thought differently), the best that, in the modern circumstances, can be devised. 15

This is precisely the sort of dualism that Anthony Beavis tried to practise and found so unsatisfactory; the dual means to a single end produced an end identical with the nature of the means employed. Initially, Huxley found pure reason and intellectualism insufficient to order the universe. Point Counter Point proposed an alloy, so to speak, of reason and 'divine unreason', suitably balanced. But the problem of self-division remained. The dualistic solution was 'not very satisfactory'.

In Eyeless in Gaza Anthony, guided by Miller, finds that the point of self-division is self-division itself. In the final chapter of the book the answer comes to him as by some direct revelation:

> But why division at all? Why, unavoidably, even in the completest love, and, at the other end of the scale of being, even in that which is or seems to be below right and wrong, why must the evil of separation exist? 16

It is obvious to Anthony that there is a unity in life, a unity of all life. Each organism, each entity is one in itself, but each is one with the universe, dependent on the universe to preserve its unity. All that is evil in the world is that which tends to separation, to the accentuation of differences between men and between man and the universe of which he is part. But still division exists even within the unity that is a man. The paradox seems insoluble, yet a solution must lie somewhere or life cannot have meaning, must be nonsensical:

> He himself, Anthony went on to think, had chosen to regard the whole process as either pointless or a practical joke....He had chosen to think it nonsense, and for more than twenty years the thing had seemed to be - nonsense, in spite of occasional uncomfortable intimations that there might be a point, and that the point was precisely in what he had chosen to regard as the pointlessness, the practical joke. And now at last it was clear, now by some kind of immediate experience he knew the point was in the paradox, in the fact that unity was the beginning and unity the end, and that in the meantime the condition of life and all existence was separation, which was equivalent to evil. Yes, the point, he insisted is one that demands of oneself the achievement of the impossible....It is a test, an education

> - searching, difficult, carried out through a lifetime, perhaps through long series of lifetimes. Lifetimes passed in the attempt to open up further and a little further the closed universe that tends to spring shut the moment the effort is relaxed. Passed in making still the self-emphasizing cravings. Passed in constant efforts to realize unity with other lives and other modes of being. To experience it in the act of love and compassion. To experience it on another plane through meditation, in the insight of direct intuition. Unity beyond the turmoil of separations and divisions. Goodness beyond the possibility of evil. But always the fact of separation persists, always evil remains the very condition of life and being. There must be no relaxation of the opening pressure. But even for the best of us, the consummation is still immeasurably remote.
>
> Meanwhile there are love and compassion. Constantly obstructed. But oh, let them be made indefatigable, implacable to surmount all obstacles, the inner sloth, the distaste, the intellectual scorn; and, from without, the other's aversions and suspicions. Affection, compassion - and also, meanwhile, this contemplative approach, this effort to realize the unity of lives and being with the intellect, and at last, perhaps, intuitively in an act of complete understanding.... Step by step towards the experience of being no longer wholly separate, but united at the depths of other lives, with the rest of being. United in peace. 17

Considering Huxley's well-known paragraphs on Shelley in Point Counter Point,[18] it is rather disconcerting to reflect that some of the closest approximations to the ideas expressed by Anthony Beavis can be found in parts of Queen Mab, Adonais and Prometheus Unbound. Though, undoubtedly, Huxley was influenced in many of the conclusions he comes to in Eyeless in Gaza by Gerald Heard and the Eastern mystics, he is also very much in the tradition of the English Platonists, a tradition going back at least as far as Shaftesbury.

Huxley met Gerald Heard in the middle thirties when they were both writing for the Peace Pledge Union. Subsequently they travelled in America, sharing experiences and ideas. In 1939 Huxley published _After Many a Summer_, described by William York Tindall as a 'fictional twin'[19] to Heard's collection of essays _Pain, Sex and Time_. How much Heard contributed to Huxley's conversion to the 'perennial philosophy' is entirely uncertain. Heard may have been the proximate occasion of Huxley's conversion; he was certainly not the ultimate cause. Tindall, in his unnecessarily pejorative discussion of Huxley, credits Lawrence with the 'softening' of Huxley's intellect and Heard with his abandonment of the rôle of aesthete for that of prophet.[20] With or without Heard the change was bound to occur. It is implicit in the earlier novels, as has been pointed out, and it is ridiculous to assume that Huxley would, or could, have arrested his own development and continued to write in the vein of _Crome Yellow_ and _Antic Hay_ had it not been for his unfortunate choice of friends.

The final form which Huxley's religious ideas have taken is a curious mixture of Hindu and Western European Christian mysticism. In _The Perennial Philosophy_ (1946) he defines the nature of this heterodox approach to life:

> _Philosophia perennis_...the metaphysic that recognizes a divine Reality substantial to the world of things and lives and minds; the psychology that finds in the soul something similar to, or even identical with, divine Reality; the ethic that

> places man's final end in the knowledge of the immanent and transcendental Ground of all being.... The Perennial Philosophy is primarily concerned with the one, divine Reality substantial to the manifold world of things and lives and minds. But the nature of this one Reality is such that it cannot be directly and immediately apprehended except by those who have chosen to fulfil certain conditions, making themselves loving, pure in heart and poor in spirit.... It is only by making physical experiments that we can discover the intimate nature of matter and its potentialities. And it is only by making psychological and moral experiments that we can discover the intimate nature of mind and its potentialities. In the ordinary circumstances of average sensual life these potentialities of the mind remain latent and unmanifested. If we would realize them, we must fulfil certain conditions and obey certain rules which experience has shown empirically to be valid. 21

The 'rules which experience has shown empirically to be valid' are drawn from the Shruti of India and the non-biblical Christian canon: 'the work of genuinely saintly men and women who have qualified themselves to know at first hand what they are talking about'.[22] The divine Reality with which one must aim at union can be considered as either a personal or non-personal God. In <u>Eyeless in Gaza</u> Anthony writes:

> God - a person or not a person? <u>Quien sabe</u>? Only revelation can decide such metaphysical questions. And revelation isn't playing the game - is equivalent to pulling three aces of trumps from up your sleeve.
>
> Of more significance is the practical question. Which gives a man more power to realize goodness - belief in a personal or impersonal God. Answer: it depends. Some minds work one way, some another. Mine, as it happens, finds it impossible to think of the world in terms of personality. 23

This is also the position which Huxley himself has

taken up. The point is not whether God is a person or a source of energy but the effect which a belief in an ultimate good, an ultimate reality, has on the psychology of the individual man. If one needs a relationship with a personality it need not be ontological, for the relationship can be achieved with some personality in the past and within the framework of existing religions which already have systems of mental prayer which can be used to achieve the desired end, the contemplation of goodness which realizes goodness in life.[24]

A further expansion of the discoveries made in Eyeless in Gaza and their practical application is made in After Many a Summer. Eyeless in Gaza is primarily concerned with what can be made of the raw material of good. After Many a Summer is concerned with what can be made of the raw material of evil. This Gothic novel is set in California, near Los Angeles. Mr. Propter pursues his humanist-humanitarian- mystic life in the grounds of an architectural nightmare of a modern American castle. The owner of the castle is Jo Stoyte, an aging, demi-psychotic oil millionaire ridden by the fear of death and the avenging God, and driven by power lust. He has equipped himself with a pair of scientists, Sigmund Obispo and Peter Boone, to do research on longevity; an English antiquary, Jeremy Pordage, to catalogue his latest acquisitions of ancient books and papers; and a Hollywood show-girl, Virginia Maunciple, to render him homage and console him in the time-honoured fashion of pretty but unsuccessful actresses

toward aging tycoons.

The castle itself is almost indescribable in its combination of the extremes of wealth and the complete absence of taste:

> It's as though one were walking into the mind of a lunatic....Or, rather, an idiot....Because I suppose a lunatic's a person with a one-track mind. Whereas this...this is a no-track mind. No-track because infinity track. It's the mind of an idiot of genius. Positively stuffed with the best that's been thought and said....Greece, Mexico, backsides, crucifixions, machinery, George IV, Amida Buddha, science, Christian Science, Turkish baths - anything you like to mention. And every item is perfectly irrelevant to every other item. 25

Within this monstrous symbol of the contemporary world the greater part of the action takes place. In point of fact the action is fairly negligible and consists mainly of talk. But Stoyte's castle is not Crome Castle. And America is not England. <u>After Many a Summer</u> is <u>Crome Yellow</u> transported, transformed, and gone more than slightly insane. It is a farce but with so much of the rational, so much that is horribly possible that it is impossible to see it as farce. And then there is Mr. Propter; ex-scholar, present prophet, always about to remind us that this is life as many choose to live it. A gothic novel, but as by Mrs. Radcliffe and some New England transcendentalist. This is Huxley at his most philosophical and his most wildly grotesque.

Mr. Propter's place in the novel is like that of the chorus in a Greek drama; he comments on the action, is indispensable to a complete understanding of it, but in no

way affects it. As the living example of the practical application of the Perennial Philosophy, he is Huxley the prophet making his sorrowful commentary on the creations of Huxley the satiric artist. But the disadvantages of Mr. Propter's situation amid the gallery of grotesques are amply made up for.

Liberated by Propter's presence from the necessity of having compassion and affection for even the lamentable Jo Stoyte, Huxley gives free rein to his unparalleled talent for making the worst of all worlds. He does it with a ferocity and lack of subtlety far more characteristic of Swift than Peacock, with whom he displayed his affinity in the earlier novels. Propter is a sop to Huxley's religious convictions but Jo Stoyte, Dr. Obispo, Virginia and the Fifth Earl of Gonister are entirely the products of the satiric genius who produced Coleman in Antic Hay, 'The History of the Wimbushes and Lapith's' in Crome Yellow and Calamy and his idiot in Those Barren Leaves. Illuminating as he may be as a philosopher, it is as an artist that Huxley holds his audience. It is only after one has exhausted the almost inexhaustible sources of entertainment in his novels that one can give full ear to his plans for saving this corrupt world he describes.

Amid the baboons, real baboons, used for experiments, and the old masters, Mr. Propter's quiet scholar's voice is heard in opposition to Jo Stoyte's perversions of the

principles of Jeffersonian democracy; Jeremy Pordage's self-centred humanism; Peter Boone's naive worship of the ideals of patriotism, social justice, science and romantic love; the culture-cults of modern universities; and the madness of believing that freedom has anything to do with action on the strictly human level.

The main theme of Mr. Propter's philosophy and the truth which the grotesque story illustrates appears in Chapter nine of Part One:

> 'Time and craving,' said Mr. Propter, 'craving and time - two aspects of the same thing; and that thing is the raw material of evil....Time is potential evil, and craving converts the potentiality into actual evil. 26

In time there can be no actual good, only potentially good acts. The only way to realize the potential good is in liberation from time, liberation from cravings and revulsions and personality. Science and art can only be good if they contribute to liberation from the prison of personality into union with God. There is only one true ideal and that is God. All other ideals are merely projections of personality. Any man who serves an ideal other than God serves merely an extension of himself. Bondage to the self, through the service of false ideals, causes the potential evil in time to become realized and causes, ultimately, preoccupation with material possessions and with the individual ego. This in its turn causes war, suffering and fear, the great evils of existence. The fight for good and freedom cannot be

conducted on the purely human level, but on the animal level and on the level of God and the spirit:

> On the lower level, good exists as the proper functioning of the organism in accordance with the laws of its own being. On the higher level, it exists in the form of a knowledge of the world without desire or aversion;... 27

The story of Jo Stoyte illustrates the effects of evil caused by time and craving. Frightened into a pathological fear of death by his obsession with material wealth and power and his fundamentalist up-bringing, Stoyte would rather live as a gibbering ape than die as a man. Faced with the living proof of what he would become if his dream of immortality on earth were realized, he still makes the pathetic attempt at rationalization of the man bound to his own ego:

> 'How long do you figure it would take before a person went like that?' he said in a slow, hesitating voice. 'I mean, it wouldn't happen at once... there'd be a long time while a person...well, you know; while he wouldn't change any. And once you get over the first shock - well, they look like they were having a pretty good time. I mean in their own way, of course. 28

Even Dr. Obispo, the Marquis de Sade, is shocked to silence by this last outrage before he explodes into the hysterical laughter that ends the tale.

Within the framework of Jo Stoyte's search for immortality Huxley presents other examples of the realization of evil through the service of false gods. Jeremy Pordage, humanist gentleman, serves the ideals of scholarship and harmlessness; he has never really damaged anyone but

himself. Propter finds him comic but depressing. Pordage is what Anthony Beavis might have become in other circumstances. Nothing Propter says to him is new. He has read all the relevant books. He knows what he is, but has no desire to change. Quite the reverse:

> Nothing like self-knowledge, he reflected. To know why you do a thing that is wrong and stupid is to have an excuse for going on doing it. Justification by psycho-analysis - the modern substitute for justification by faith. 29

And he concludes, as a result of his self-knowledge:

> One scratched like a baboon...one lived, at fifty-four, in the security of one's mother's shadow; one's sexual life was simultaneously infantile and corrupt; by no stretch of the imagination could one's work be described as useful or important. But when one compared oneself with other people... with cabinet ministers and steel-magnates and bishops and celebrated novelists - well, one didn't come out so badly after all. Judged by the negative criterion of harmlessness, one even came out extremely well. So that, taking all things into consideration, there was really no reason why one should do anything much about anything. 30

Mr. Propter might almost agree with him, to the extent, at least, that to behave in a way that does not positively court universal disaster may be commendable. There are many worse types of human being in the world than the scholar and gentleman, and not too many better.

More positively bad are such as Virginia Maunciple and Dr. Obispo: the one beautiful, self-indulgent, rationalizing and infantile; the other deliberately self-seeking, ruthless, sensual and brilliant. Neither sees beyond the immediate chance for sensual enjoyment and the material

pleasures that money can provide. Obispo is more to be condemned, because of his intelligence, though both are completely amoral. Virginia has no sense of right and wrong though she suffers, at intervals from feelings of guilt contingent on her unthinking Mariolatry. On one occasion she leaps from the bed where Obispo is introducing her to certain refinements of sensuality to draw a curtain over the image of the Virgin to which she prays, for fear the Virgin may be offended by her behaviour.

Obispo is one of those physicians whose interests are all inward. To him patients are of three classes: those who will die anyhow, those who will get well anyhow, and neurotics who are undeserving of anyone's time. His research in longevity has no other purpose than to provide him with enough freedom and money to enjoy all the material benefits that the modern world has to offer those who have the capacity to appreciate them to the full. Unlike Peter Boone, though doing the same work, Obispo is dedicated to no ideal that even the most misguided could think good. His purposes are blatantly evil. Obispo is the only one of all the Stoyte castle company who does not attempt to put a good face on his activities. Any hypocrisy he may practise is to the purpose of not being found out, not of salvaging his <u>amour-propre</u>. In this he is as perfect of his kind as Mr. Propter is of his. It is perhaps significant that Huxley records no encounter between the two. These extremes of

good and evil do not meet.

These two novels, Eyeless in Gaza and After Many a Summer represent Huxley at what was probably the crisis of his life. Having discovered the ultimate purpose for which he had been seeking, he embodied his discovery in two self-revelatory novels. The works which follow are those of a man who has found what he has been looking for. In Huxley's case, as in many another case, the result of spiritual serenity has been, unhappily, poor art. As Mr. Tindall says:

> Although it is foolish to blame for aesthetic failure one who has abandoned the plane of aesthetics for a higher one, the pity is that good cynics are as uncommon in English literature as preachers are common. 31

Chapter Three: Notes

1 Aldous Huxley, Eyeless in Gaza, London: Chatto and Windus, 1936, p. 620.

2 Aldous Huxley, 'The Desert', Collected Essays, London: Chatto and Windus, 1960, p. 27.

3 Aldous Huxley, 'Beliefs', op. cit. p. 375.

4 Aldous Huxley, Eyeless in Gaza, p. 6.

5 Ibid., p. 360.

6 Ibid., p. 360.

7 Ibid., pp. 576-577.

8 Ibid., p. 579.

9 Ibid., p. 580.

10 Aldous Huxley, 'Sermons in Cats', Collected Essays, p. 78.

11 Aldous Huxley, Eyeless in Gaza, p. 14.

12 Ibid., pp. 325-326.

13 Ibid., p. 503.

14 Aldous Huxley, 'Wordsworth in the Tropics', Collected Essays, p. 5.

15 Ibid., p. 8.

16 Aldous Huxley, Eyeless in Gaza, pp. 614-615.

Chapter Three: Notes (contd.)

17 Ibid., pp. 616-618.

18 Aldous Huxley, Point Counter Point, Collected Edition, London: Chatto and Windus, 1947, pp. 166-167.

19 William York Tindall, Forces in Modern British Literature, New York: Vintage Books, 1956, p. 174.

20 Ibid., p. 173.

21 Aldous Huxley, The Perennial Philosophy, London: Chatto and Windus, 1946, p. 1-2.

22 Ibid., p. 4.

23 Aldous Huxley, Eyeless in Gaza, p. 564.

24 Ibid., pp. 564-565.

25 Aldous Huxley, After Many a Summer, London: Macmillan, 1939, p. 153.

26 Ibid., p. 108.

27 Ibid., p. 27.

28 Ibid., p. 314.

29 Ibid., p. 192.

30 Ibid., p. 196.

31 William York Tindall, op. cit. p. 174.

IV

In Time Must Have a Stop Huxley ventures into the world of life after death and describes what, in his cosmology, it may well be like. Artistic perspective, unfortunately, suffers. Such close knowledge of the details of Huxley's personal religion is necessary to an understanding of the half-dozen chapters devoted to Eustace Barnack's post mortem experiences: the allusions are so specialized, the language of metaphor so obscure, that the novel is badly cut about. The almost impenetrable difficulty of the imagery, in the relatively light context of the rest of the book, makes these chapters tiresome obstacles in the way of the progression of the main theme. For, on the whole, Time Must Have a Stop is concerned with one critical summer in the life of a brilliant adolescent poet, Sebastian Barnack, and three people, who in their disparate ways, do most to bring him from childhood to maturity.

Eustace Barnack, Sebastian's uncle, is a decadent though amiable aesthete who introduces Sebastian to the joys and pleasures of the good life. Veronica Thwale is a type of self-conscious bitchiness, sensual, self-seeking, discreet and immensely clever. Through her Sebastian discovers sexuality: the most complete and satisfying alienation from self that the unhappy boy has ever conceived of. Bruno Rontini, saint and mystic, is the conscious victim of

Sebastian's talent for dissimulation and, years later, the instrument of his conversion to the perennial philosophy. Like Point Counter Point this novel is much concerned with relationships between people and with the results, often unforseen and unintended, which even disinterested actions can have on the lives of others.

This badly constructed, brilliantly written novel catches Huxley falling with a thump between two stools. At once he tries to be Bruno Rontini, attempting to spread the contagion of love of God, and Eustace Barnack, enjoying 'the spectacle of the Good trying to propagate their notions and producing results exactly contrary to what they intended.' The result is a novel in which the world and the flesh totally overpower the moral lesson Huxley tries to point, a result 'exactly contrary' to what he apparently intended. There is considerable gratuitous vulgarity, too, of a kind that Huxley has previously avoided with great nicety. The decidedly pornographic is skirted rather too closely for comfort or art. In trying too hard not to sound like a fundamentalist preacher, Huxley leaves his audience wondering just what he is.

But the deficiencies of Time Must Have a Stop are never as great as its excellences. Uncle Eustace; the 'Queen Mother'; Veronica Thwale; the Poulshot Family; John Barnack, immovable in infallibility, rank with the best of Huxley's satiric characterizations. Sebastian, as a por-

trait of a precocious adolescent, is, like Ruth Maartens in The Genius and the Goddess (1955), drawn with sympathetic feeling and painful accuracy. Huxley has a most unsentimental yet penetrating understanding of the workings of the minds and emotions of children and adolescents. Too often in fiction children are shown as innocents or imbeciles, and adolescents as a race apart from the strictly human without the capacity to appraise their elders as more than symbols of authority. When dealing with the adolescent, as with the adult, Huxley metes out praise and blame in proportion as it is deserved, with an eye to the psychological and empirical facts. And the psychological facts may be used to explain, for instance, Sebastian's unwitting betrayal of Bruno, but not to excuse it, or preclude the possibility of his being paid out for it.

Sebastian at seventeen has a mind which, with some justice, he feels to be 'agelessly adult' lodged in the body of 'a Della Robbia angel of thirteen'. This is both his fortune and his bad luck, for he retains the beautiful child's ability to dissemble when it suits his purposes, but must suffer the indignity and humiliation of being treated as a child. In Italy, with Eustace, Sebastian's world changes radically and becomes for a short while all that he could wish. But he carries over into the new life the habits of cowardice, selfishness and self-protective lying that he has built up during years of being the spoilt bright boy at school

and his father's unwanted.disliked child at home.

As an adult in an adult world, Sebastian is forced to meet life on its own terms. The consequences, as it happens, are mostly to his practical, though not to his moral, advantage. For others, the consequences of Sebastian's actions are of a different nature. Because he needs money Sebastian sells, the day after his uncle's death, a Degas drawing Eustace has given him. The family believe the drawing has been stolen and, even after a peasant child is blamed for the supposed theft, Sebastian cannot summon the nerve to tell them what he has done. He appeals to Bruno who agrees to help recover the drawing, and suggests that in the meantime Sebastian work out a 'genealogy' of his offence:

> Who or what were its parents, ancestors, collaterals? What are likely to be its descendants - in my own life and other people's? It's surprising how far a little honest research will take one. Down into the rat-holes of one's own character. Back into past history. Out into the world around one. Forward into possible consequences. It makes one realize that nothing one does is unimportant and nothing wholly private. 1

Sebastian, instead.is carried away by the literary possibilities of the notion and writes a poem. This, to Bruno's way of thinking, is not enough. For though the poem may influence others to improve their characters it is unlikely to be of any moral value to Sebastian himself. Bruno even suggests that being born a poet is the boy's misfortune, since 'Every Fairy Godmother is also potentially the Wicked Fairy.' Sebastian, understandably, is mystified. The point

that Bruno is trying to make is that the more a man has of literary genius the less likely he is to inherit the Kingdom of Heaven:

> A man of genius inherits an unusual capacity to see into ultimate reality and to express what he sees. If his surroundings are reasonably good, he'll be able to exercise his powers. But if he spends all his energies on writing and doesn't attempt to modify his inherited and acquired being in the light of what he knows, then he can never get to increase his knowledge....Conversely, of course, if one gets better and knows more, one will be tempted to stop writing, because the all-absorbing labour of composition is an obstacle in the way of further knowledge. And that, maybe, is one of the reasons why most men of genius take such infinite pains not to become saints - out of mere self-preservation. 2

The dilemma is, of course, Huxley's own and he remains impaled on the horns. For though Sebastian is told that he might have done something more personal and practical than turn his perception of truth into literature, yet the discussion ends inconclusively:

> However, as I said before, In the beginning were the words, and the words were with God, and the words <u>were</u> God. 3

The notion that 'nothing one does is unimportant and nothing wholly private' is the classical base upon which this baroque novel is built. Sebastian's unwillingness, or inability, to apply to his own life the truths which his insight into 'divine reality' reveals to him has frightful results. Eustace dies, but he might have lived had Sebastian heard his despairing cries for help as he collapsed, in excruciating pain in, ironically, the lavatory. But Sebastian,

drunk on champagne and erotic day-dreams, is asleep. A dog is poisoned, a child is unjustly punished, Bruno is sent to prison - 'All because of you,' Sebastian is told. And rationalize as he will he knows it is true. Years later Sebastian's wife, dying, whispers reproachfully, 'It's all your fault.' It is, and he knows it; but:

> ... he had gone on... for the express purpose of enjoying yet another repulsive taste of that mixture of sensuality, abhorrence and self-hatred which had become for him the all too fascinating theme of what turned out to be a whole volume of verses. 4

But the end does come. Bruno, released from prison after ten years, far gone in illness, reappears. And Sebastian is shaken into consciousness of the enormity of his offences. Anti-climactically, he is converted by Bruno to a version of the 'perennial philosophy' and mends his ways.

The novel really ends shortly after the arrest of Bruno. Sebastian's conversion is relegated to an 'Epilogue' in which there is little that is new in Huxley's thought. Most of it is merely paraphrase of Mr. Propter. Even the meditation on the lines from Shakespeare from which Huxley takes the title of the book is reminiscent of Mr. Propter's disquisition on 'time and craving' in Chapter Nine of <u>After Many a Summer</u>. Sebastian says there is an epitome of an epistemology, an ethic and a metaphysic in the dying Hotspur's words:

> But thought's the slave of life, and life's time's fool,
> And time, that takes survey of all the world,
> Must have a stop.

'Three clauses,' he says, 'of which the twentieth century has paid attention only to the first.' He goes on to claim that the fallacy of modern philosophy is in thinking that thought is nothing but the slave of life:

> Thought's the slave of life - undoubtedly. But if it weren't also something else, we couldn't even make this partially valid generalization.

The significance of the second clause is that 'By merely elapsing time makes nonsense of all life's conscious planning and scheming.' Yet the only faith of modern man is in a future that they are sure science can plan for them, and to that 'they are prepared to sacrifice their only tangible possession, the Present'. And the third point is that time 'not only must, as an ethical imperative and an eschatological hope, but also does have a stop, in the indicative tense, as a matter of brute experience'.[5]

Eustace Barnack, the symbol of worldliness, is one of those who refuse to face the fact of their own inescapable temporality. Mr. Propter warned of the dangers of becoming chained to personality and ego, to time and craving. Eustace, even after death, refuses to give up his separate existence, prefers 'the chaos and delirium of unfettered mind', in a world where nothing is fixed and time has no meaning, to union with the universal mind. As he has lived, so he dies. And Huxley leaves him, firmly averting his attention from the 'light' and 'silence' which are trying to possess him, in the private hell of his own making.

The echoes are loud here of the decisions of Gumbril, Jeremy Pordage, and Philip Quarles to have nothing to do with the demanding and uncompromising world beyond the sensible reality. After death, battling against the demands of eternity, Eustace, now existing willy nilly in complete awareness, has to persist in the 'mere footling' that has always enchanted him, though he cannot escape the knowledge that it is both wearisome and evil:

> ... for the alternative was a total self-knowledge and self-abandonment, a total attention and exposure to the light. 6

The message is, again, that it is only in complete awareness in this life that man fulfils his nature, that he must identify himself with his animal nature on one level, with the 'cosmic order'; and with divine reality and universal mind on the other. In attempting any division, whether it be from nature or God, man courts evil and disaster. In identifying with anything that is not of the cosmic order, with such things as money-making or ideologies or literature, man cannot help but make nonsense of his existence and become more progressively ape-like.

Ape and Essence (1949) is a fantasy of a future very different from the soma paradise of Brave New World (1932). Written as a film scenario, it shows life as it might be after an atomic war. In Brave New World the possibilities of nuclear fission were not investigated and man was shown as being given a choice between a life of primitive savagery

and one of annihilating and un-thinking conformity. Science, from the vantage point of 1932, seemed to threaten a world of totalitarianism and drug-induced content. From the vantage point of 1949 even the Brave New World seemed an optimistic dream, in comparison with the still more horrifying potentialities that might be realized by the development of atomic power and the effects, on all life, of radiation.

The message of Ape and Essence is a heavily underlined and unsubtle one. Man's choice now would seem to be, not merely between conformity and savagery, but between God and Satan. Man must choose to serve God or the devil, and by allying himself with a narrow, amoral science, dedicated to the false ideal of Progress, he also allies himself with Belial and eventual self-destruction. The purpose of this moral fable is expressed at the start by the narrator who tells his audience:

> Somehow you must be reminded,
> Be induced to remember,
> Be implored to be willing to
> Understand what's What. 7

That which follows is a horror tale of what will happen unless man does, very quickly, 'Understand what's What.' The first scene shows a female baboon, in evening dress, with Michael Faraday cringing on a leash, singing into a Louis Quinze microphone, to a night-club audience of baboons, the latest popular ballad. Shame, disgust, indignation and anguish show on the captive scientist's tear-wet face. The next scene is of two armies of baboons at war.

Each army has an Einstein, on a leash. From the opposing sides the two Einsteins stare at each other, between the jack-boots of their captors, with expressions of pained bewilderment on their good, innocent faces. After the battle the two are discovered, horribly burned, lying side by side under what was once a flowering apple tree. Dying, they protest the injustice of their fate. They have lived only for truth. But the narrator, before 'a choking scream announces the death, by suicide, of twentieth century science' says:

> And that precisely is why you are dying in the murderous service of baboons. Pascal explained it all more than three hundred years ago. 'We make an idol of truth; for truth without charity is not God, but his image and idol, which we must neither love nor worship.' You lived for the worship of an idol. But, in the last analysis, the name of every idol is Moloch. So here you are, my friends, here you are. 8

The scene changes, and we are introduced to Dr. Alfred Poole, of the New Zealand Re-discovery Expedition of 2108 A.D.. New Zealand, like Equatorial Africa, has been spared the consequences of war because, fortunately, it lacked strategic importance. Dr. Poole, having strayed away from his companions, is captured by members of a Southern Californian tribe of survivors of the war and adopted into the society which gamma ray mutation has produced. Three generations after the war these people have again come out of the wilderness and live in what is left of Los Angeles. Ignorant now of technology they are a race of scavengers,

robbing graves for clothing, burning books as fuel. Their offspring are usually monstrous and they worship Belial as their God. Their religious ceremonial is a travesty of Roman ritual. The 'Shorter Catechism' reads:

> What is the nature of woman?
> Answer: Woman is the vessel of the Unholy Spirit, the source of all deformity, the enemy of the race... 9

and,

> My duty towards my neighbour... is to do my best to prevent him from doing unto me what I should like to do unto him.... 10

They live in filth and degradation, governed by a dictator and a priesthood of eunuchs under the 'Arch-Vicar of Belial.' Mating is restricted to two weeks of the year, after 'Belial Day', which are devoted to unrestricted and promiscuous sexuality. On Belial Day all children who exceed the legal limits of deformity are offered up as blood sacrifices.

The background and rationale of the new social system are explained to Dr. Poole by the Arch-Vicar:

> Ours, my dear sir, is a rational and realistic faith.... As I read history...it's like this. Man pitting himself against Nature, and Ego against the Order of Things, Belial...against the Other One. For a hundred thousand years or so the battle's entirely indecisive. Then, three centuries ago, almost overnight, the tide starts to run uninterruptedly in one direction.... Slowly at first and then with gathering momentum, man begins to make headway against the Order of Things....With more and more of the human race falling into line behind him, the Lord of the Flies, who is also the Blowfly in every individual heart, inaugurates His triumphal march across a world of which He will so soon become the undisputed Master. 11

The refrain is familiar, of course, though the Manicheism

has never before in Huxley been so blatant. It is the Lawrentian one of industrialization and progress for the sake of progress and the resultant upsetting of the cosmic order. But even without these evils, goes on the Arch-Vicar, Belial could have achieved his purposes. Even if man had managed to avoid total war he would have starved himself into extinction. Overpopulation and the misuse of natural resources would have seen to that:

> An orgy of criminal imbecility. And they called it Progress....I tell you, that was too rare an invention to have been the product of any merely human mind - too fiendishly ironical ! There had to be Outside Help for that. There had to be the Grace of Belial, which, of course, is always forthcoming - that is, for anyone who's prepared to cooperate with it. And who isn't? 12

Dr. Poole protests that as a man of science he can accept no such far-fetched explanation. The Arch-Vicar claims that, on the contrary, Poole must, as a man of science, accept the working hypothesis that explains the facts most plausibly. Since it is a fact that no one wants to suffer or be degraded or be killed, and since it is also a fact that human beings at a certain epoch accepted beliefs and adopted courses of action that could only result in universal suffering, general degradation, and wholesale destruction, then, obviously, they must have been inspired by some other consciousness working and willing the destruction of man. And the reason why men go on worshipping Belial, the 'Living Evil', even after falling into his hands, is for the same reason that one throws food to a growling tiger:

> To buy yourself a breathing space. To put off the horror of the inevitable, if only for a few minutes. In earth as it is in Hell - but at least one's still on earth. 13

But even among the members of this condemned race there are those who retain some intuition of the Order of Things, in spite of their degradation. And Dr. Poole, that product of a 'nice' civilization, that inhibited son of a devoted mother who is at once saint, pillar of fortitude and vampire, even Dr. Poole becomes accustomed with miraculous speed to the sub-humanity of life in post-war Los Angeles. He meets Loola, one of the five to ten per cent. of these people who are throwbacks to the old-style mating pattern. Together they find some sort of human love and understanding. Loola, indoctrinated from birth in a debased religion of hate and loathsomeness, is terrified of the vengeance of Belial should she surrender to her nature. But Dr. Poole assures her that Belial only wins when man co-operates with him:

> '...He can never win for good.'
> ' Why not?'
> ' Because He can never resist the temptation of carrying evil to the limit. And wherever evil is carried to the limit, it always destroys itself. After which the Order of Things comes to the surface again.'
> 'But that's far away in the future.'
> 'For the whole world, yes. But not for single individuals....Whatever Belial may have done with the rest of the world, you and I can always work with the Order of Things, not against it.' 14

'L'ombre était nuptiale, auguste et solonnelle,' quotes the Narrator, and we are told that here, in the love of these two, there is perhaps: '...already the beginning of an understanding that beyond Epipsychidion there is Adonais, and beyond

Adonais the wordless doctrine of the Pure in Heart.' 15

The novel ends on a note that suggests that whatever may befall man, and whatever he may bring upon himself, the Order of Things will prevail - the 'cosmic order' that Sebastian Barnack says man must identify with, and that D.H. Lawrence believed to be at the centre of all possible sanity.

In The Genius and the Goddess (1955) Huxley appears, at last, to have effected a compromise between his convictions of evil and his human sympathies. Ape and Essence, notwithstanding its optimistic conclusion, is a bitter work arising out of the abyss of fear and descriptive of the greatest degradation and unholiness which it is possible to conceive of. Lower than man in Ape and Essence it is not possible to go, even in fantasy. The Genius and the Goddess shows warmth and sympathy for contemporary humanity, where Ape and Essence shows revulsion and disgust. Poole is a caricature of the young John Rivers in The Genius and the Goddess, and the world in which he finds himself is a caricature. There is nothing of caricature in the later book, and very little of satire, except in the mildest sense. Rivers is quietly sardonic rather than satiric in his telling of this bit of his autobiography.

A handsome, inhibited mother's boy, a prig and innocent, Rivers at twenty-eight, comes to work with Henry Maartens, the 'genius', and live in his house. Maartens is, in all but intellect and sexual appetites, an infant living

'symbiotically' on his wife Katie, the 'goddess' -who is described by Rivers as 'incarnate maternity'. The plot of the story is slight, the implications are not. The young assistant falls in love with his master's wife. They deceive him. She, for her sins, dies in a motor accident. But within this time-worn framework Huxley creates a vision of contemporary life that, while it has not the stature of a 'great' novel, has that which is often more satisfying - a quality of veritas in caritate that is missing in nearly all his other works. For The Genius and the Goddess, though limited in scope, achieves something near perfection in its portrayal of a small group of people face to face with the problem of middle class morality versus the undeniable facts of existence. 'In the raw,' says John Rivers at the start of the book, 'existence is always one damned thing after another, and each of the damned things is simultaneously Thurber and Michelangelo, simultaneously Mickey Spillane and Thomas à Kempis. The criterion of reality is its intrinsic irrelevance.'[16] And the irrelevance is to 'The Best that has been Thought and Said'. One remembers Denis in Crome Yellow wearily noting that in the world of ideas all was clear, but in life all was embroiled and obscure. This irrelevance of life to ideas comes as an apocalyptic and shattering revelation to John Rivers when the fact of his adulterous love affair with Katy Maartens crashes head-on into the fact of his being the means of saving Henry Maartens's

life. Their affair is simultaneously the saving Grace of God and the breaking of the Seventh Commandment, simultaneously a miracle of resurrection and 'the manifestation of lust in the context of adultery'.

What is the answer. 'One can only record the fact that, on the verbal level, morality is simply the systematic use of bad language.'[17] says John Rivers twenty-five years later. In another context he suggests that what we need is a language that does not separate in idea what is always inseparable in fact: a language that can 'express the natural togetherness of things'.[18]

Katy's way of dealing with the difficulty is simple - she accepts the facts of existence and resolutely refuses to talk about them:

> Good or bad, language was entirely beside the point. The point, so far as she was concerned, was her experience of the creative otherness of love and sleep. The point was finding herself once again in a state of grace. 19

But Katy is a goddess, an Olympian. Rivers is but a man, and cannot accept in silence the fact that by restoring to Katy, through physical love, the grace she needs to keep Henry alive, his betrayal of his master has been a good thing. He makes her listen, at last, to his tale of moral anguish. Her only answer is amusement:

> 'You can't bear it,' she teased. You're too noble to be a party to a deception !... Think of me, for a change, think of Henry ! A sick genius and the poor woman whose job it's been to keep the sick genius alive and tolerably sane. His huge, crazy

> intellect against my instincts, his inhuman denial of life against the flow of life in me. It wasn't easy, I've had to fight with every weapon that came to hand. 20

And that is the nearest that Katy ever comes to an explanation. And the nearest that Huxley ever comes. Rivers still wonders if it would have been better to come out into the open and call a spade a spade:

> Maybe it would. Or maybe it wouldn't.... One must never forget that the most implacable wars are never the wars about things; they're the wars about the nonsense that eloquent idealists have talked about things - ...And what's in a word? Answer: corpses, millions of corpses. And the moral of that is, Keep your trap shut,...In silence, an act is an act is an act. Verbalized and discussed, it becomes an ethical problem, a casus belli, the source of a neurosis. If Katy had talked, where, I ask you, should we have been? In a labyrinth of intercommunicating guilts and anguishes. 21

If the book has a moral, it is this: 'Keep your trap shut' and, as John Barnack had the unexpected wit to say, leave the problem of evil to your metabolism.

Huxley, after all his wanderings to the further reaches of consciousness, has come back to the 'obvious' that Philip Quarles predicts for all intellectuals who go far enough in their questings. 'Least said, soonest mended' is one aspect of Huxley's obvious. Another, the complete aspect, is spelled out by John Rivers:

> One reads all the fictions of the sociologists, all this learned foolery by the political scientists.... But actually there's only one solution, and that's expressible in a four-letter word, so shocking that even the Marquis de Sade was chary of using it.... L-O-V-E. Or if you prefer the decent obscurity of the learned languages, Agape, Caritas, Mahakaruna. 22

Chapter Four: Notes

[1] Aldous Huxley, Time Must Have a Stop, Collected Edition, London: Chatto and Windus, 1953, p. 238.

[2] Ibid., pp. 246-247.

[3] Ibid., p. 247.

[4] Ibid., p. 278.

[5] Ibid., pp. 290-292.

[6] Ibid., p. 171.

[7] Aldous Huxley, Ape and Essence, Collected Edition, London: Chatto and Windus, 1951, p. 25.

[8] Ibid., p. 39.

[9] Ibid., p. 54.

[10] Ibid., pp. 69-70.

[11] Ibid., pp. 89-90.

[12] Ibid., p. 93.

[13] Ibid., p. 99.

[14] Ibid., p. 148.

[15] Ibid., p. 149.

[16] Aldous Huxley, The Genius and the Goddess, London: Chatto and Windus, 1955, p. 7.

[17] Ibid., p. 94.

Chapter Four: Notes (contd.)

18 Ibid., p. 53.

19 Ibid., pp. 103-104.

20 Ibid., pp. 106-107.

21 Ibid., pp. 102-103.

22 Ibid., p. 24.

V

In the Autumn of 1960 Huxley's Collected Essays[1] appeared, compiled and with a preface by the author. The collection consists of forty-seven essays published between 1923 and 1960. Huxley has arranged the essays in four sections. The titles of the subdivisions are indicative of the wide range of his interests. Section I deals with 'Nature', 'Travel', and 'Love, Sex, and Physical Beauty'; Section II, with 'Literature', 'Painting', 'Music' and 'Matters of Taste and Style'; Section III, with 'History' and 'Politics'; and Section IV, with 'Psychology', 'Rx for Sense and Psyche' and 'Way of Life'.

In the preface Huxley quotes Lawrence to the effect that the novelist is superior to the saint, the scientist, the philosopher and the poet because they deal only with bits of man and 'Only in the novel are all things given full play.' He counters this by saying:

> What is true of the novel is only a little less true of the essay. For, like the novel, the essay is a literary device for saying almost everything about almost anything. 2

We may agree with his conclusion without admitting the validity of his premises, for it is entirely un-true that the things that are 'given full play' in Huxley's novels are equally forceful and stimulating when presented within the limits of the essay. If we were given the choice between consigning to the flames Crome Yellow, Antic Hay, Point

Counter Point and After Many a Summer, and some twenty volumes of essays there is no doubt that the essays would have to go. But this is not to say that we should not mourn the loss.

Huxley as an essayist, as a sort of latter-day Bacon, has taken the whole of knowledge as his province and shown a competence in analysis and criticism that has gained him a place as one of the foremost thinkers and critics of this century. His range of interest, alone, sets him apart in an age of specialization, and makes almost any utterance he gives worthy of attention if not of acceptance. With authority and clarity he explains to the nation everything from bio-chemistry and aesthetics to metaphysics. To assess his competence to do this would require the services of an army of Academicians. It would be more than presumptuous to assume that because he always writes with complete assurance, his assurance is justified. On the other hand it is equally difficult to know when his assertions are illegitimate. The Art of Seeing (1943) incurred the disapproval of the medical profession who condemned him as a charlatan and a misguided know-it-all. But medical men are traditionally conservative, as a body, and intolerant of any poaching on their preserves.

In questions of aesthetics it is a little easier, though not much easier, to judge. Huxley has written much about music, both in his novels and in his essays. It is reassuring to note that the American conductor, Leonard

Bernstein, after making the point that writers in general 'tend to put their feet in their mouths whenever they part lips to speak to music' and indicating 'the rarity of intelligent musical talk, even among first-class writers', can say:

> Huxley's description of part of Beethoven's Op. 132 in Point Counter Point is unforgettable, as is his paragraph on a Mozart quintet in Antic Hay. [3]

Of the rare non-musicians who can talk intelligently about music Bernstein names four: Plato, Shakespeare, Thomas Mann and Aldous Huxley, though he might, indeed, have added E.M. Forster.

Of the forty-seven essays in Collected Essays about a third represent Huxley's work of the last five years, the others that of the years from 1923-1950. It is a fairly representative sampling though the essays on pacifism are not included and one may also look in vain for the essay on Lawrence called 'On the Ship' from Beyond the Mexique Bay. It might have served as a healthy antidote to the rather fulsome praise in 'D.H. Lawrence'. There is no example, either of the essays written for Swami Prabhavananda's Vedanta and the West, the magazine of the Vedanta Society, but the inclusion of one in the recent anthology What Vedanta Means to Me [4] gives the lie to the possible suggestion that Huxley prefers not to disturb the dust on these particular relics. The Collected Essays may serve to introduce Huxley to a new generation of readers; as potted Huxley it is just

adequate to do that. To the Huxley admirer of longer standing it only serves to illustrate once more the futility of trying to put a quart into a pint pot.

The essays from the earlier years, approximately 1923-1936, have all to do with art, music and letters. With the exception of three essays, categorized rather vaguely as 'Way of Life', those which discuss morality, religion, philosophy and ethics date from after the Second World War and represent Huxley's more mature 'perennial philosophy'. The collection, then, may be taken as a fair statement of what he stands for, or by, today.

Huxley's chief attraction, and this almost goes without saying, is his style. But he has in addition a breadth of vision and an open-mindedness unequalled in contemporary letters. In his ability to see so much at once he balances, one against the other, a deep aesthetic sensibility, a knowledge of and respect for science, a rational loathing of the vulgarity into which a too-hurried progress has got the world, and an unsentimental belief that it is possible to repair present evils. If he believes, with E.M. Forster that 'art is the only thing that is not a mess' he nevertheless takes the trouble to point out why and to attempt a number of causes and cures.

In 'Knowledge and Understanding' there is an epitome of what Huxley is usually saying about the 'wearisome condition of humanity':

> ...at least two thirds of our misery spring from human stupidity, human malice and those great motivators and justifiers of malice and stupidity, idealism, dogmatism and proselytizing zeal on behalf of religious or political idols. But zeal, dogmatism and idealism exist only because we are forever committing intellectual sins. We sin by attributing concrete significance to meaningless pseudo-knowledge; we sin in being too lazy to think in terms of multiple causation and indulging instead in over-simplification, over -generalization and over abstraction; and we sin by cherishing the false but agreeable notion that conceptual knowledge and, above all, conceptual pseudo-knowledge are the same as understanding. [5]

These concepts, or some version of them, have formed the basis of his satirical fiction from the beginning. Stupidity, malice, idealism and intellectual sin are the vices which he has attacked collectively and severally for almost half a century.

Huxley's literary criticism, though small in bulk, has the virtue of a rare simplicity of expression combined with an ability to go directly to the heart of the matter. A highly developed aesthetic sensibility, the scientist's distrust of any attempt to make the facts of experience fit an unproven a priori judgement and a knowledge of the literature of languages and traditions other than his own fit him to see a literary work in its historical and cultural context and to distinguish any faulty hypothesis from the work's efficacy as art.

While paying homage to Wordsworth's 'exquisitely acute and subtle intuitions of the world' he condemns his attempt to 'simplify them into a comfortable metaphysical unreality.'[6] The defects of the Wordsworth-Meredith

adoration of nature are two:

> The first...is that it is only possible in a country where Nature has been nearly or quite enslaved to man. The second is that it is only possible for those who are prepared to falsify their immediate intuitions of Nature....'Let Nature be your teacher,' says Wordsworth. The advice is excellent. But how strangely he himself puts it into practice ! Instead of listening humbly to what the teacher says he shuts his ears and himself dictates the lesson he desires to hear....In his youth, it would seem, Wordsworth left his direct intuitions of the world unwarped.... As the years passed, he began to interpret them in terms of a preconceived philosophy. Procrustes like, he tortured his feelings until they fitted his system. 7

Huxley's method of making his initial point, subsequently developed in a more seriously critical vein, is vigorous and amusing; sometimes deliberately flippant, always subtly satisfying. In 'Wordsworth in the Tropics' he begins:

> In the neighborhood of latitude fifty north...it has been an axiom that Nature is divine and morally uplifting.... The Wordsworthian who exports this pantheistic worship of Nature to the Tropics is liable to have his religious convictions somewhat rudely disturbed. Nature, under a vertical sun, and nourished by the equatorial rains, is not at all like that chaste, mild deity who presides over the Gemüthlichkeit, the prettiness, the sublimity of the Lake District. The worst that Wordsworth's goddess ever did to him was to make him hear
>
> 'Low breathings coming after me, and sounds
> Of undistinguishable motion, steps
> Almost as silent as the turf they trod;'
>
> was to make him realize, in the shape of 'a huge peak, black and huge,' the existence of 'unknown modes of being.' He seems to have imagined this was the worst Nature could do. A few weeks in Malaya or Borneo would have undeceived him. 8

And we hear, perhaps, echoes of Mr. Scogan giving one of his extemporary discourses over the port and cheese. For the style is at once familiar and learned, witty with the ease

of long practice and polite with the politeness of one who assumes his hearers are familiar with everything he says, though he knows, of course, that they are not.

Huxley can range over a half dozen or ten topics within as many pages without ever losing sight of the main issues. he writes in 'The Olive Tree'[9] of - olive trees. With infinite grace he touches on tree-worship, Chaucer, the connexion between oil and the mystical ecstasy, the mongrel origins of the English nation, Scandinavian mythology, English landscapes and the landscapes of the equator, eighteenth -century English painting, French impressionist painting, land erosion in Provence, - and never takes his eyes or his mind off the olive trees. It is a virtuoso performance without the slightest hint of vulgar exhibitionism, although Huxley himself has claimed that there is a vulgarity inherent in the very putting of pen to paper.

In 'Vulgarity in Literature' Huxley makes a very satisfactory analysis of this ticklish problem of what does and does not constitute literary bad taste. Since he has himself written well of the death of a child, little Philip Quarles in Point Counter Point, his particular reference to Dickens's description of the death of Little Nell is interesting:

> The history of Little Nell is distressing indeed, but not as Dickens presumably meant it to be distressing; it is distressing in its ineptitude and vulgar sentimentality.
>
> A child, Ilusha, suffers and dies in Dostoevsky's

> Brothers Karamazov. Why is this history so agonizingly moving, when the tale of Little Nell leaves us not merely cold, but derisive? Comparing the two stories, we are instantly struck by the incomparably greater richness in factual detail of Dostoevsky's creation.... All that happened round Ilusha's death-bed he saw unerringly. The emotion-blinded Dickens noticed nothing of what went on in Little Nelly's neighborhood during the child's last days....He wanted to be unaware of everything except Little Nell's sufferings on the one hand and her goodness and innocence on the other. But goodness and innocence and the undeservedness of suffering and even, to some extent, suffering itself are only significant in relation to the actual realities of human life. Isolated they cease to mean anything, perhaps to exist. 10

That the criticism is fair is obvious. That the reasoning is accurate and the principle sound Huxley demonstrated in his own classic description of the death of young Philip Quarles[11] which owes its impact to 'richness of factual detail' and which is 'so agonizingly moving'.

Huxley began his literary career as a poet, considered himself, in fact, a poet. Osbert Sitwell, with whom Huxley was well acquainted in those years tells this story:

> ...we met Davies and Aldous Huxley walking towards us,... Aldous looked very tall and young at the side of his elder companion. When we had advanced within greeting distance, Sickert remarked to me, but in a loud voice specially designed to reach them,
>
> 'Look ! Here we have the comparative stature of Prose and Poetry !
>
> I do not think either of them - and Huxley regarded himself at that time mainly as a poet - much cared for this summing up. 11

He was also regarded as a poet by others than himself, for though he suffered sometimes from a tendency to the grotesque in matter and the mechanical in manner, he

could write with spontaneity and enthusiasm and a genuine feeling for sensual beauty. Critical reviews reveal the contemporary opinion that Huxley was a genuine poet. One critic, writing in 1938 goes so far as to say:

> ...Mr. Huxley might yet emerge as the greatest poet of the generation that came of age during the war, and that without having to give us a vast body of poetry. 13

Part of his theory of poetry, if one may presume to call it that, is contained in 'Subject Matter of Poetry' written in 1923. What constitute the legitimate topics with which a poet may concern himself, and out of which poetry can be made, will ever be a vexing question and it is doubtful, indeed improbable, that an answer will ever come that will be satisfactory to anyone other than the author of it. But the debate is interesting even if unprofitable. The main points that Huxley makes in this essay are that 'most of the world's best poetry has been content with a curiously narrow range of subject matter' although 'It should theoretically be possible to make poetry out of anything whatsoever of which the spirit of man can take cognizance', and that though contemporary poets are loudly insisting on their rights to write poetry about whatever they like and in any way they like, no poet has yet appeared who has done anything to widen the range of poetry. Merely to write about the everyday facts of life is to do nothing that Homer has not already done:

> The subject matter of the new poetry remains the same as that of the old. The old boundaries have not been extended. There would be real novelty in the new poetry if it had, for example, taken to itself any of the new ideas and astonishing facts with which the new science has endowed the modern world. There would be real novelty in it if it had worked out a satisfactory method for dealing with abstractions....It is not enough to have written about locomotives and telephones, 'wops and Bohunks;' and all the rest of it. That is not extending the range of poetry; it is merely asserting its right to deal with the immediate facts of everyday life, as Homer and Chaucer did.

In spite of 'that busy and incessant intellectual life which is the characteristic and distinguishing mark of this age',

> A certain amount of the life of the twentieth century is to be found in our poetry, but precious little of its mind. We have no poet today like that strange old Dean of St. Paul's three hundred years ago - no poet who can skip from the heights of scholastic philosophy to the heights of carnal passion, from the contemplation of divinity to the contemplation of a flea, from the rapt examination of self to an enemeration of the most remote external facts of science, and make all, by his strangely passionate apprehension, into an intensely lyrical poetry. 14

Though Huxley has abandoned literature for another realm (even his rare incursions into literary criticism sound like something else today) it is doubtful if, were he to return, he could add very much to this, notwithstanding Eliot and Dylan Thomas and the Yeatsian renaissance.

But perhaps it is unfair to say that he has 'abandoned' literature, unless one uses the word in a Pickwickian sense. Huxley continues to write and if one considered the number of articles written about him, or references to him

in popular magazines during the last five years, especially in America, one would be led to think that he is still one of the foremost literary figures of the time. This is not precisely true. Huxley is still, or again, very much in the public eye, but it is as a philosopher or an inspirational writer, rather than as an artist, that he is primarily regarded by the public at large. Even in 1938 Doris N. Dalglish suggested that the answer to the question 'Who now reads Huxley?' might be 'A queer lot of people who are often essentially incapable of appreciating him as a writer, and perhaps had better not try to.' Today, when Huxley is asked to speak or write it is almost inevitably for the purpose of setting the world straight or for prophesying in the way of Brave New World. One might almost hear him saying, meditatively, with Mr. Propter:

> Take a decayed Christian...and the remains of a Stoic; mix thoroughly with good manners, a bit of money and an old-fashioned education; simmer for several years in a university. Result: a scholar and a gentleman. Well, there are worse types of human being...I might almost claim to have been one myself, once, long ago. 16

And the intimation might be that the life of a prophet, though a good one, has its limitations. The resolution of his inner conflicts has undoubtedly set limitations to the scope of Huxley's artistry. The Genius and the Goddess is but a small flaring up of the flame kindled in Crome Yellow, a reminder of things past rather than a proof of things present. The demise of the old verve is evident

in the later essays as well. Jeremiads on the population explosion and expositions of methods of achieving union with the All-one have their doubtful charm. They are unlikely vehicles for the brilliant, elegant and ironic commentary on the laughable human situation that made Huxley the satiric genius of the twentieth century.

When he chooses to write on something other than the shape of things to come or the necessity of contraception Huxley can still recapture much of the old magic. Adonis and the Alphabet (1956) has its moments of inspired expression, but one grows tired of having to walk around the Buddha's massive shape in order to find the author of Point Counter Point.

In the Huxley Memorial Lecture of 1932, subsequently published as 'T.H. Huxley as a Literary Man', (but not included in Collected Essays)[17] Aldous Huxley examines the literary style of Thomas Henry. What is immediately obvious is that many of the qualities that he admires in his grandfather's writing are almost equally present in his own. Given the following remarks without their context we might assume that it is not T.H. Huxley who is referred to, but Aldous:

> As a controversialist, Huxley was severe, but always courteous....Still, he could be sarcastic enough when he wanted, and his wit was pointed and barbed by the elegance with which he expressed himself....From the neat antithesis to the odd laughter-provoking word - Huxley used every device for the expression of sarcasm and irony.

> In the passages in which his aim was to convey, along with ideas, a certain quality of passion, Huxley resorted very often to literary allusion - particularly to biblical allusion. 18

Richard le Gallienne, writing of the 'meticulous craftsmanship' of the Nineties, deplores the lack of stylistic elegance in twentieth-century prose-writing:

> As Stevenson once prophetically wrote to me:
>
> > 'The little, artificial popularity of style in England tends, I think, to die out; the British pig returns to his true love, the love of the styleless, of the shapeless, of the slapdash and the disorderly.'
>
> We are very much at ease in Zion, and affect the slapdash and the disorderly, if we have it not. 19

There are times, it is true, when one encounters the slapdash in Huxley, when one is brought up short by such a lame conclusion as: 'But better late than never.' (from 'A case of Voluntary Ignorance'), or: '...it is better to have tried and failed to achieve perfection than never to have tried at all.' (from the Preface to Collected Essays), or: 'That is the sixty-four-billion dollar question', (from 'Madness, Badness, Sadness'). These smack of the deliberate facetiousness of the television comic. But the lapses are rare and Huxley, of all modern users of the essay form, is among the least piggish.

We do not find the rich cadences, the balanced rhythmic sentences of Thomas Henry. But we do find the same economy of words, the same refusal to indulge in rhetoric for its own sake and the same way of stating the complex

and the profound with clarity and force. Aldous Huxley's sentences, as a rule, are short, brisk, clipped, dynamic. They give an impression of vigour, quick-mindedness and an eagerness to communicate. But the style, though brisk, does not give one the impression of being shot at with a machine gun. The effect of the whole is of smoothly rhythmical patterns.

Huxley is so in control of his medium that he has no need to resort to rhetorical tricks. Backed by the simple but effective structure, each word in a Huxley sentence is given full play. This does not preclude his making uncommon use of words. One of the devices he often uses to gain a point is to take a word or phrase in common usage and give it an unexpected twist. In 'Maine de Biran' he does this with the word 'shepherd' which ordinarily connotes a bucolic peace:

> History reveals the Church and State as a pair of indispensable Molochs. They protect their worshiping subjects, only to enslave and destroy them....By force of unreflecting habit we go on talking sentimentally about the Shepherd of his people, about Pastors and their flocks, about stray lambs and a Good Shepherd. We never pause to reflect that a shepherd is 'not in business for his health,' still less for the health of his sheep. If he takes good care of the animals, it is in order that he may rob them of their wool and milk, castrate their male offspring and finally cut their throats and convert them into mutton. 20

Huxley is masterly in his use of scientific terms in unexpected contexts. Here is how he describes an El Greco painting:

> ...El Greco's people are shut up in a world where there is perhaps just room enough to swing a cat, but no more. They are in prison and, which makes it worse, in a visceral prison. For all that surrounds them is organic, animal. Clouds, rock, drapery have all been mysteriously transformed into mucus and skinned muscle and peritoneum. The Heaven into which Count Orgaz ascends is like some cosmic operation for appendicitis. The Madrid Resurrection is a resurrection in a digestive tube. 21

Harsh, striking, disconcerting, indubitably Aldous Huxley at his most startling, but one cannot label it 'typical' of Huxley. Compare the conclusion of 'Music at Night', with its evocation of the peace that passes all human understanding:

> Only music, and only Beethoven's music, and only this particular music of Beethoven, can tell us with any precision what Beethoven's conception of the blessedness at the heart of things actually was. If we want to know, we must listen - on a still June night, by preference, with the breathing of the invisible sea for background to the music and the scent of lime trees drifting through the darkness, like some exquisite soft harmony apprehended by another sense., 22

or the mingling of the grotesque and the sublime to produce a feeling of pathos and ineffable yearning in this piece from 'Jaipur', inspired by the joy of an Indian peasant woman when an elephant relieved itself before the doorway of her hovel:

> Our earthquake lurched on. I thought of the scores of millions of human beings to whom the passage of an unconstipated elephant seems a godsend.... Why are we here, men and women, eighteen hundred millions of us, on this remarkable and unique planet? To what end? Is it to go about looking for dung - cow dung, horse dung, the enormous and princely excrement of elephants? Evidently it is

> - for a good many of us at any rate. It seemed an inadequate reason, I thought, for our being here - immortal souls, first cousins of the angels, own brothers of Buddha and Mozart and Sir Isaac Newton. 23

'Contrapuntal simultaneity'. It is Huxley's own phrase, used to describe what he has attempted to achieve in some forty years of writing essays of all kinds on all topics. Whether he has achieved his aim of making the best of all the essays three worlds, moving effortlessly,

> hither and thither between the essays three poles - from the personal to the universal, from the abstract back to the concrete, from the objective datum to the inner experience, 24

is a question to which the answer must inevitably be tinged with the purple of one's own preference. And,

> The limits of criticism are very quickly reached. When he has said 'in his own words' as much, or rather as little, as 'own words' can say, the critic can only refer his readers to the original work of art....25

What is certain is that Huxley, of all living writers, most nearly epitomizes the mind of the twentieth century, in all its multiple and sometimes contradictory aspects.

Chapter Five: Notes

[1] Aldous Huxley, Collected Essays, London: Chatto and Windus, 1960.

[2] Ibid., p. v.

[3] Leonard Bernstein, The Joy of Music, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959, p. 15.

[4] What Vedanta Means to Me: A Symposium, ed. John Yale, New York: Doubleday, 1960.

[5] 'Knowledge and Understanding', Collected Essays, p. 380.

[6] 'Wordsworth in the Tropics', op. cit. p. 9.

[7] Ibid., p. 3.

[8] Ibid., p. 1.

[9] 'The Olive Tree', op. cit. pp. 10-19.

[10] 'Vulgarity in Literature', op. cit. p. 114.

[11] Aldous Huxley, Point Counter Point, Collected Edition, London: Chatto and Windus, 1947, pp. 571-584.

[12] Osbert Sitwell, Noble Essences, London: Macmillan, 1950, pp. 232-233.

[13] Doris N. Dalglish, 'Aldous Huxley's Poetry', The London Mercury, XXXVII (Sept. 1938), p. 438.

[14] 'Subject Matter of Poetry', Collected Essays, pp. 91-96.

[15] Doris N. Dalglish, op. cit. p. 437.

Chapter Five: Notes (contd.)

16 Aldous Huxley, After Many a Summer, London: Macmillan, 1939, p. 19.

17 Aldous Huxley, The Olive Tree, Collected Edition, London: Chatto and Windus, 1947, pp. 46-81.

18 Ibid., pp. 76-77.

19 Richard Le Gallienne, The Romantic '90s, London: Putnam, 1951, p. 137.

20 'Maine de Biran', Collected Essays, pp. 218-219.

21 'Meditation on El Greco', op. cit. p. 147.

22 'Music at Night', op. cit. p. 180.

23 'Jaipur', op. cit. p. 47.

24 'Preface', op. cit. p. vii.

25 'Music at Night', op. cit. pp. 179-180.

A SELECTIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY

This list of books is highly selective. The first section is a list of Huxley's major works published in volume form with the dates of first publication and in chronological order by genre. It does not give separate note of essays published singly as books but subsequently included in full in the volumes listed. The second section is a list of those of Huxley's works which have been used in the preparation of this thesis, in the editions used and listed in chronological order of first publication and by genre. The third section includes books and articles which have been quoted or referred to in the text and other works of criticism and commentary which have been found useful.

1.

POEMS:

The Burning Wheel, 1916; The Defeat of Youth, 1918; Leda, 1920; Arabia Infelix, 1929; The Cicadas, 1931.

NOVELS:

Crome Yellow, 1921; Antic Hay, 1923; Those Barren Leaves, 1925; Point Counter Point, 1928; Brave New World, 1932; Eyeless in Gaza, 1936; After Many a Summer, 1939; Time Must Have a Stop, 1945; Ape and Essence, 1949; The Genius and the Goddess, 1955.

SHORT STORIES:

Limbo, 1920; Mortal Coils, 1922; Little Mexican, 1924; Two or Three Graces, 1926; Brief Candles, 1930.

DRAMA:

The Discovery, (an adaptation of Frances Sheridan), 1924; This Way to Paradise,(a dramatization by Campbell Dixon of Point Counter Point with a preface by Huxley), 1930; The World of Light, 1931; The Gioconda Smile, 1948; The Genius and the Goddess, 1957.

BIOGRAPHIES:

Grey Eminence, 1941; The Devils of Loudun, 1952.

ESSAYS, CRITICISM AND COMMENTARY:

On the Margin, 1923; Along the Road, 1925; Jesting Pilate, 1926; Proper Studies, 1927; Do What You Will, 1929; Holy Face, 1929; Music at Night, 1931; Beyond the Mexique Bay, 1934; The Olive Tree, 1936; An Encyclopaedia of Pacifism, 1937; Ends and Means, 1937; The Art of Seeing, 1943; Science, Liberty and Peace, 1947; Themes and Variations, 1950; Prisons, 1950; The Doors of Perception, 1954; Heaven and Hell, 1955; Adonis and the Alphabet, 1956; Brave New World Revisited, 1958.

ANTHOLOGIES:

Texts and Pretexts, 1932; The Perennial Philosophy, 1946.

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Selected Poems, 1925; Essays New and Old, 1926; Rotunda, 1932; Stories, Essays and Poems, 1937; The World of Aldous Huxley, 1947; Collected Short Stories, 1957; Collected Essays, 1960; On Art and Artists, 1960.

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The Cicadas. London: Chatto and Windus, 1931.

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