

From the very beginning of the industrial revolution He foresaw that men would be made so overwhelmingly bumptious by the miracles of their own technology that they will soon lose all sense of reality. And that's precisely what happened. These wretched slaves of wheels and ledgers began to congratulate themselves on being the Conquerors of Nature. Conquerors of Nature indeed! In actual fact, of course, they had merely upset the equilibrium of Nature and were about to suffer the consequences...Fouling the rivers, killing off the wild animals, destroying the forests, washing the topsoil into the sea, burning up an ocean of petroleum, squandering the minerals it had taken the whole of geological time to deposit. An orgy of criminal imbecility. And they called it Progress...Progress!

Aldous Huxley, *Ape and Essence*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1949. (Orig. 1948), p.93.

*Chapter Four: Some Conclusions.*

We have been gauging throughout this study the legacy which two twentieth-century British authors left behind in some of their works, specifically in relation to science and religion and, more generally, to education, and how the ideas they adhered to played out in the types of fiction they employed. As we have proceeded, the rise and development of the novel in England was summarily covered. It is now necessary to delve deeper into the meaning of the term 'novel' and to locate where six texts by Huxley and Lewis align themselves.

E.M. Forster's *Aspects of the Novel* still offers a useful fulcrum around which to further the discussion. To start with a definition. Quoting a Monsieur Abel Chevalley, Forster posits 'une fiction en prose d' une certain étendue,' adding, 'the extent should not be less than 50,000 words.'<sup>1</sup> Forster continued:

It is bounded by...the opposing ranges of Poetry and of History – and bounded on the third side by a sea – a sea that we shall encounter when we come to *Moby Dick*.<sup>2</sup>

Stating that 'the novel is sogged with humanity,' he closed the chapter naming seven of its aspects: 'The Story; People; The Plot; Fantasy and Prophecy; Pattern and Rhythm.'<sup>3</sup> We examine, then, how Huxley and Lewis fit in with Forster's aspects of narration and characterisation.

Whereas to both the narrative element became a means of educating a secularised public about spiritual axioms, Lewis always accorded it the higher

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<sup>1</sup> E.M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1964. (Originally the Clark Lectures, Cambridge, 1927), p.13.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p.14.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p.31.

position.<sup>4</sup> Drawn to scientific, psychological and socio-philosophical themes. Huxley declared 'the only really and permanently absorbing things are attitudes towards life and the relation of man to the world.'<sup>5</sup>

Whilst the story line relates to duration, in moving on to participants an 'emphasis on value'<sup>6</sup> enters the scene. The function of a novelist is 'to reveal the hidden life at its source,'<sup>7</sup> and an imagined character proves to be 'real when the novelist knows everything about it.' and it 'is explicable.'<sup>8</sup> The subjects of this study were up to something far different to telling a tale for its own sake; nor were they intent on technical modifications or close-up character depiction in the usual sense.

Forster distinguished between 'flat' and 'round' figures, the former also called 'humours...types and sometimes caricatures,'<sup>9</sup> and it is at this juncture that antagonists come down hardest on Lewis and Huxley. Forster was less hostile, arguing that 'flat' characters have their part to play. However, few figures in Huxley or Lewis could be accounted as filled out as are Dostoyevsky's Mitya, Austen's Emma, or Thackeray's Becky Sharp. With Lewis many participants in his trilogy are not even human. In his analysis Forster permitted room for types of fiction 'having gods' and 'the sense of mythology.'<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> C.S. Lewis, 'On Stories,' *Of Other Worlds*, p.3.

<sup>5</sup> G. Smith, ed., *Letters of Aldous Huxley*, p.228.

<sup>6</sup> E. M. Forster, *ibid.*, p.51.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, p.53.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, p.70.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, p.75.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, p.115.

Huxley's fictions are 'sogged with humanity,' albeit *Brave New World*, due to its chosen medium as a utopia, is obviously weakest here. To anyone impatient with *After Many a Summer's Propter*, certainly Jo Stoyte and Sigmund Obispo do not lack credibility. As for *Island*, Will Farnaby is convincingly and minutely dissected and depicted, and the death of Lakshmi is sensitively and maturely handled. Additionally, Huxley and Lewis carried on the romantic legacy, wherein leading characters attain to heroic status. Forster would have given these authors their right to be named novelists, although he might have confined *Perelandra* and *Island* to the fringes of the genre.

Since it has been argued that each of the authors being studied was in his distinct way rooted in Romanticism, connections between them and a few of the leading poets of the Romantic Movement must be mentioned. When Coleridge and Wordsworth jointly published *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) they had altered the course of English versification. Wordsworth initially went along with the pro-science sentiments of the French Revolution. Believing that poetry was the font of, and emanating spirit within, all knowledge, this is what he said about the insertion of scientific material into his craft:

The remotest discoveries of the chemist, the botanist or the mineralogist, will be as proper objects of the poet's art as any upon which he is now employed, if the time should ever come when these things shall be manifestly and palpably material to us as enjoying and suffering beings.<sup>11</sup>

A similar attitude to this was adopted by Huxley. Wordsworth's qualifying 'if' is decisive, for although today's public has been taught more science, the majority are still not passionate about its purer forms but are very interested in the products which

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<sup>11</sup> Quoted in A. Huxley, 'And Wanton Optics Roll the Melting Eye,' *Music at Night*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1955, p.28.

technology offers. Wordsworth recognized another side to the scientific enterprise, and in 'The Tables Turned' he posits 'We murder to dissect.'<sup>12</sup> Whereas the artist would paint a flower or praise it, the botanist prefers to cut it open and explore its parts.

Blake held that whilst Nature was to be interpreted and moulded by the human intellect and imagination, this task fell to creative artists rather than to meddling scientists or one-dimensional intellectuals, and Keats had written:

Philosophy will clip an Angel's wings,  
Conquer all mysteries by rule and line,  
Empty the haunted air, and gnomed mine –  
Unweave a rainbow.<sup>13</sup>

Whilst it is 'philosophy' that gets the blame here, 'scientists' might equally have been implicated because it is their shared rationalist mind-set that Keats was objecting to. This tends to rob existence of mystery and to reduce the realm of elves and goblins, nymphs and goddesses to a barren field to be filled up with superfluous formulae and dull equations.<sup>14</sup> As a literary Romantic who embraced the role of science Huxley was, then, an atypical and fairly original twentieth-century figure.

Lewis and Huxley partially opened themselves up to attack by preferring satire to tragedy and, ultimately, prophetic vision to both. To Huxley, the tragic mode is overrated because it is 'something that is separated out from the Whole Truth.'<sup>15</sup> In

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<sup>12</sup> W. Wordsworth, 'The Tables Turned,' Line 28. This poem is the source for Huxley's calling science and art 'those barren leaves.'

<sup>13</sup> J. Keats, 'Lamia, Part II,' Lines 234-7, H. Buxton Forman, ed., *The Poetical Works of John Keats*, Oxford University Press, 1946, p.190.

<sup>14</sup> In A. Huxley, *Those Barren Leaves*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1972, someone punctures poetic enthusiasm by declaring that the clouds are formed 'by the earth's excrementitious dust hanging in the air,' p.82.

<sup>15</sup> A. Huxley, 'Tragedy and the Whole Truth,' *Music at Night*, p.15.

*Brave New World* John's incomplete perception of Lenina and his poor understanding of the varieties and vicissitudes of love and desire leads him to suicide. After taking Lenina to be a chaste Juliet, John turns on her with the fury of a becrazed Lear and the outrage of a vindictive Othello. Meanwhile Propter ridicules those 'silly and squalid themes of *Phèdre*, or *Othello*, or *Wuthering Heights*, or the *Agamemnon*,' assured that a successful satire 'was much more deeply truthful, and, of course, much more profitable' (p.133) than any tragedy. Nevertheless, Propter's view that art was often 'the mental equivalent of alcohol and cantharides' (p.131) casts a shadow on the entire aesthetic enterprise.

After discovering hallucinogenics, above all important for their ability to dissolve the subject-object distinction, Huxley waxed more severe on tragedy. In *Island* the contented locals stage a revamped version of Sophocles' celebrated cycle and in their *Oedipus in Pala* the outcome is positive. When the mourners chant 'Death, death, death, death,' the boy replies 'But life knows more than one note,' whereupon the girl joins in, 'Life can sing both high and low' (p.246).

Notwithstanding the observation that tragedy is not requisite to Palanese life, what of its relevance to their literature? Farnaby's new estimation of this art does not bode well since it is

Incompatible with human integrity, incompatible with philosophical truth, incompatible with individual sanity and a decent social system, incompatible with everything except dualism, criminal lunacy, impossible aspiration and unnecessary guilt.

(*Island*, p.177).

The proper finale to the romance is a happy one. In *Perelandra* Weston was unsuccessful with his mirror trickery and his attempt to have the Green Lady see herself as an ill-fated tragedian fails, and, retaining her innocence, she is indeed a

heroine. Jane Studdock is similarly too honest to let herself turn into a commandeering villain in the manner of Queen Jadis in *The Magician's Nephew*,<sup>16</sup> and so saves her husband. Living is a serious business, yet it is also in Dante's phrase 'a divine comedy' and akin to *Perelandra*, *That Hideous Strength* finishes on a note of trans-earthly sublimity.

Literature usually necessitates the forces of good and evil battling it out; however not everyone rates action so highly. Huxley said of himself 'My own mind is entirely non-dramatic,'<sup>17</sup> and near the completion of *Out of the Silent Planet* Ransom professes that 'Those quiet weeks, the mere living among the *hrossa*, are to me the main thing that happened' (p.181).<sup>18</sup>

Whilst Lewis expanded the boundaries of 'romance' and 'science fiction,' Huxley's texts can be harder to categorise. He referred to *After Many a Summer* as 'a phantasy but built up of solidly realistic psychological elements, a wild extravaganza, but with the quality of a most serious parable.'<sup>19</sup> Both were primarily concerned with the presentation in prose of serious ideas, particularly religious and ethical ideas, and on how intellectual concepts affect firstly, individuals, and consequently the social units they inhabit. However, sometimes they failed to adequately embody their thoughts, and so were guilty of telling rather than showing. Mentioning *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* Lewis argued:

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<sup>16</sup> Similarly, in *The Lord of the Rings* Galadriel was tempted to use 'her' ring to turn herself into a great and tragic ruler, but refused to.

<sup>17</sup> G. Smith, ed., *op.cit.*, p.456.

<sup>18</sup> W.H. Lewis, ed., *Letters of C.S. Lewis* states 'As Dr Johnson said, "to be happy at home is the end of all human endeavour,"' p.262.

<sup>19</sup> G. Smith, ed., *op.cit.*, p.440.

You may define the novel either so as to exclude or so as to include them. The best definition is that which proves itself most convenient.<sup>20</sup>

The essentials as to what Lewis and Huxley thought in regard to ‘science’ and ‘belief’ must be restated. Neither had a problem with science, a certain kind of experience-based knowledge, *per se*. However, technology is such specialised, mechanical learning applied to material reality and leads to severe alterations in human and non-human domains. Furthermore, technology is the product of an assured but partial understanding of the nature of things, is not ‘value-free,’ and needs to be stabilised with additional factors. And it is intimately tied up with political power, power by the few over the mass of people, and over Nature. Since the Industrial and subsequent revolutions, incessant mechanisation in theory and practice had delivered goods and services but not genuine democracy. As the lives of citizens had been moulded and technicised by the State, a shift in power relations from the old oligarchies to new elites had occurred. Huxley wrote:

If...a small number of people have power over the majority and oppress it, every victory over Nature will inevitably serve only to increase that oppression.<sup>21</sup>

Believing in a just and reasonable Creator who had made a rationally apprehendable universe, Lewis asserted ‘the physical sciences, then, depend on the validity of logic just as much as metaphysics and mathematics.’ It was therefore necessary

To abandon the distinction between scientific and non-scientific thought and realize that the proper distinction is between logical and non-logical thought.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> C.S. Lewis, ‘On Science Fiction,’ *Of Other Worlds*, p.62.

<sup>21</sup> A. Huxley, *Science, Liberty and Peace*, p.5.

<sup>22</sup> C.S. Lewis, ‘De Futilitate,’ *Christian Reflections*, p.62.



Lewis coined 'bulverism' to implicate the illogical manoeuvres of those starting from a questionable basis. Antagonists to reason, or at least to one's own reasonings, avoid logical discourse by beginning with the premise, 'Assume that your opponent is wrong, and then explain his error.'<sup>23</sup>

Both discerned the centrality of evolution to many areas of contemporary thought and how its bastardised offshoot, evolutionism, sought to invalidate idealism as well as casting doubt on genuine science. Their quarrel was not with the scientific theory of evolution; rather the conclusions social planners and speculative authors drew from it. Notably, it implied a continuous progression toward human, even cosmic, perfectibility. The gist of Huxley and Lewis's contestations aligned itself with Karl Popper's argument<sup>24</sup> that in grasping at more-than-humanness the outcome is mostly less-than-human. In a switch of the letters of the anagram the word 'gods' turns into 'dogs', which is virtually what happened at the N.I.C.E's Belbury feast. There, as the celebrating continues, the language of these erudite technocrats and bureaucrats and their lackeys degenerates into sub-human gibberish.

As for the peoples' unwitting submission to scientism, in the year 2006 this is frequently in evidence. Knowing virtually nothing about scientific theories or discoveries, and totally unfamiliar with the methodology or the limitations of scientific knowledge, the average citizen shows such an extraordinary subservience to the propagators of scientific spiel that it matches our ancestors' over-confidence in the abilities of religious professionals. Thus, as if proffering conclusive proof on the

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<sup>23</sup> C.S. Lewis, 'Bulverism,' *God in the Dock*, p.273.

<sup>24</sup> K.R. Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1962. (Orig. 1945).

merits of any matter whatsoever, he or she summons up the unquestionable and expected infallibility of the one authority, and today's fickle public still fatuously pays homage to – 'science.' Or, often as not, some bit of semi-digested psychobabble which, to the half-educated and the ill informed, passes for solid scientific fact.

Huxley and Lewis, whilst more scientifically astute than the populace at large, had less faith than they do in the integrity and wisdom of scientists. They maintained that without an appropriate spiritual, or at least ethical grounding, like everyone else, the individual scientist remained purblind, and the nation foredoomed, in that the following equation applied:

Self-obsessed human apes + highly sophisticated but  
environmentally disastrous technologies = imminent  
disaster.

On a daily basis Lewis remained shy of new inventions. He preferred train-travel to owning a vehicle, was uninterested in newspapers and television, and lamented the substitution of the cinema for reading as a popular pastime.<sup>25</sup> Together with Tolkien he would have rated calligraphy, runic inscriptions and illustrations by hand above what computers currently offer.

Huxley was equally suspicious about some of the ends the sciences were made to serve but he was more welcoming to science itself and would have been as fascinated by the Internet as he was by the internal combustion engine. His works reveal a high degree of scientific curiosity and comprehension and a considerable insertion of scientific fact, numerous and sophisticatedly applied. Nonetheless, Huxley was ever ready to undermine the overweening confidence of scientists and was astounded by the 'lack of realism' shown in their refusal to accept different modes of knowing, and wrote of how they

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<sup>25</sup> C.S. Lewis, 'On Stories,' *Of Other Worlds*, p.16.

assert that the theories which work in the particular category of phenomena which they have chosen, arbitrarily, to consider must work in all categories.<sup>26</sup>

The novels which follow *Eyeless in Gaza* witness that Huxley had crossed a divide, to come down on the side of those who regard mysticism as superior to the sort of knowledge spelt out by positivism or by aestheticism. Like Lewis, then, although he assumed as right the empiricist methodology taught by British thinkers from Bacon to Russell, he was more interested in metaphysics than in physics, and in ethics than in inventions.

To come to grips with the enormity of that which the two accused secularism of, a cartographical illustration may be helpful. Whilst the majority of Australians dwell in eastern regions, Western Australia has the largest land mass and its people complain of their interests suffering neglect. This notwithstanding, no one denies that Western Australia exists and the Continent would be diminished by its non-entity. To Lewis and Huxley this is precisely where secularists are at fault. Truth is one and indivisible, yet atheistic humanism reduces the size of the whole, and then into the vacuum left by the denial of the spiritual rush feeble substitutes. Furthermore, from the larger perspective, the irreligious attitude had hitherto been in the minority, and indeed represents an aberration from the norm. Hence they thought it their duty to help restore ancient and eternal standards. And had not Socrates taught that learning is largely *anamnesis*, a recollection?

Plato was a metaphysician owning the poetic impulse and he wrote well, and in this Lewis was a Platonist. In particular, Plato's notion that the earthly realm was only a shadow or copy of something more substantial reoccurs in Lewis's fiction,

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<sup>26</sup> G. Smith, ed., *op.cit.*, p.325.

such as in Puddleglum's challenge to the witch-queen of Underland.<sup>27</sup> Still, Lewis's theology was more systematic than Plato's and his poeticised theology is a sermon as well as a song. Huxley shared Aristotle's emphasis on *this* world, and admitted to his own inability to appreciate the mythological.<sup>28</sup>

Politically speaking, Lewis opposed theocracy, and Huxley's *Ape and Essence* and *Grey Eminence* reflect the same antipathy. Democracy they supported as a workable enough option, but both upheld the view of democracy's founders that human nature is, as Lewis put it, 'bent' and self-willed, a belief secularists reject. Huxley had always deferred to the quest of the few over the many and alleged that numerous problems were traceable to the compliance of rulers and subjects alike: that civilised societies are composed of 'a small class of rulers, corrupted by too much power, and of a large class of subjects, corrupted by too much passive and irresponsible obedience.'<sup>29</sup> By temperament they were closer to the aristocratic than the democratic sensibility, and Lewis averred:

"democracy" or the "democratic spirit" (diabolical sense) leads to a nation without great men, a nation mainly of subliterates, morally flaccid from lack of discipline in youth, full of the cocksureness which flattery breeds on ignorance, and soft from lifelong pampering.<sup>30</sup>

In the 'other' sphere Lewis accepted hierarchy unconditionally and in the trilogy Maleldil is at the apex of creation, *Oyéresu* are his foremost servants, and humans are but one *hnau* species standing midway between *eldila* and a host of

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<sup>27</sup> C.S. Lewis, Chapter Twelve, 'The Silver Chair,' *The Chronicles of Narnia*.

<sup>28</sup> G. Smith, ed., *op.cit.*, p.935.

<sup>29</sup> A. Huxley, 'Nature of the Modern State,' *Ends and Means*, p.58.

<sup>30</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Screwtape proposes a toast*, p.155.

creatures not granted speech or sentience. Huxley eschewed external deities and mythological beings and in his terran hierarchy *human* spiritual giants deserve respect and a hearing.

Whereas Lewis was an orthodox Protestant accepting of segments of Paganism, and upheld the *Tao* as evidence of ethical agreement within divergent paths, citing Christ's incarnation and divinity as the point of departure, he remained closed to inter-religious ecumenism. As Adey identified, Lewis's 'mere Christianity' amounted to 'the Pauline and Augustinian scheme of salvation,' and, he opined, 'remains essentially static, a case, theologically speaking, of arrested development.'<sup>31</sup> Convinced that what is needed nowadays is an enlarged spiritual consciousness taking into account every genuine religious expression, Adey put forward Lewis's erstwhile student, Dom Bede Griffiths, as the more astute and synchronising figure.<sup>32</sup> In addition, Lewis's opposition to women priests is but a single factor that does not endear him to many female readers.<sup>33</sup>

Huxley passed through Hinduism to arrive at Buddhism, absorbing elements of Taoism and Zen along the way. Buddhism, being atheistic, matches in this aspect the outlook of many secular scientists, yet its ethical tenets stand closer to the Sermon on the Mount, and it sees the material world as but a product of Mind. Oriental persuasions allowed him to accept those unifying factors found in every religion, and

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<sup>31</sup> L. Adey, *C.S. Lewis's "Great War" with Owen Barfield*, University of Victoria, Canada, 1978, p.121.

<sup>32</sup> Author of *A New Vision of Reality: Western Science, Eastern Mysticism and Christian Faith* (1959), he lived in India for years and – although a Benedictine monk – underwent substantial changes in consequence.

<sup>33</sup> See C.S. Lewis, 'Priestesses in the Church,' *God in the Dock*, pp.234-9. Doubtless many women find his short story, 'The Shoddy Lands,' *Of Other Worlds*, pp.99-106, offensive.

this is also the belief of the perennial philosophy. Nevertheless, Huxley overlooked religious and cultural differences, was silent as to certain codes, for example, Confucianism, and hostile to Judaism.<sup>34</sup> It might be added that he said little regarding conversion experiences of the kind recorded by William James.<sup>35</sup>

Lewis was a confessed dualist,<sup>36</sup> and Huxley a monist, and whereas the former believed in reason and imagination, the latter was less sure about the validity of rational apperception and more persuaded as to the claims of intuitive cognition and mystical experiences. And, in spite of his reservations as to the relationship between spirituality and the arts, not merely literature but music, painting and architecture meant much to Huxley. In *Point Counter Point* Spandrell begs Rampion to listen to a recording of Beethoven's *A minor Quartet* because, 'It proves all kinds of things – God, the soul, goodness – unescapably' (p.428). Elsewhere Huxley affirmed:

The most perfect statements and human solutions of the great metaphysical problems are all artistic, especially, it seems to me, musical.<sup>37</sup>

Lewis would have been shocked by the stimulants Huxley advocated. Huxley held it to be strange how

Belloc and Chesterton may sing the praises of alcohol (which is responsible for about two thirds of the car accidents and three quarters of the crimes of violence) and be regarded as good Christians and noble fellows,

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<sup>34</sup> C. Holmes, *Aldous Huxley and the Way to Reality*, p.145.

<sup>35</sup> W. James, *Varieties of Religious Experience: a study in human nature*, Routledge, N.Y., 2002.

<sup>36</sup> W. H. Lewis, ed., *op.cit.*, p.301.

<sup>37</sup> G. Smith, ed., *op.cit.*, pp.324-5.

whilst anyone suggesting ‘less harmful shortcuts to self-transcendence’ was categorised as corrupting and criminal.<sup>38</sup>

Rebecca West compared the last couple of chapters of *Brave New World* to the ‘Grand Inquisitor’ section in *The Brothers Karamazov*.<sup>39</sup> Holmes, meanwhile, concluded that

as a product of the artistic imagination *Island* is a failure. But as a frankly didactic statement about cosmic truth and the nature of man *Island* is a challenging and courageous vision.<sup>40</sup>

He agreed with Robert Hutchins who designated Huxley one of ‘the great teachers of our era.’<sup>41</sup>

Fifty years ago Tolkien wrote of ‘the most widespread assumption of our time; that if a thing can be done, it must be done.’<sup>42</sup> Recently a former professor of theoretical physics at Cambridge and later a Dean there urged us ‘to beware of the technological imperative; we must be ethically alert.’<sup>43</sup> Lewis’s ethic was, in the main, restricted to *hmanu*. It was left to Huxley to extend the Hippocratic Oath to every vestige of creation, and he often bade scientists to strive together to ward off environmental disasters.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> G. Smith, ed., *op.cit.*, p.701.

<sup>39</sup> R. West, D. Watts, ed., *Aldous Huxley: The Critical Heritage*, p.201.

<sup>40</sup> C. Holmes, *op.cit.*, p.180.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*, p.199.

<sup>42</sup> H. Carpenter, ed., *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, p.246.

<sup>43</sup> J. Polkinghorne, ‘Adelaide Festival of Ideas,’ Elder Hall, S.A. Heard on *ABC Radio National*, 21/7/05, p.m.

<sup>44</sup> See, for example, A. Huxley, *Science, Liberty and Peace*, pp.62-3.

Well might Professor Diggory Kirke decry the failings of the 'fifties education system, and Propter denounce the pedagogic pretensions of Dr Mulge. In Britain hosts of undisciplined, semi-literate youth like those featured on the BBC television series,

*The Bill*, cry out:

We don't need no education  
We don't need no thought control.<sup>45</sup>

Desiring to raise education standards but unimpressed by much of what was taught and researched, Huxley and Lewis might have half agreed with the chant of these youths. So there is that delightful scene in *Prince Caspian* where Gwendolen quits her dreary school and its unimaginative mistress to join the revellers in Aslan's romp.<sup>46</sup>

From *Island* comes this succinct commentary:

What are boys and girls for in America?  
Answer: for mass consumption.  
Whereas in Russia...Boys and girls are for  
strengthening the national state.  
What are Palanese boys and girls for?  
For actualization, for being turned into  
full-blown human beings.

(*Island*, pp. 201-2).

There is no University of Pala as such. Learning is regarded as a wide-ranging and life-long process, however some go abroad for specialist studies. According to the principal, Mr. Menon, all Pala can do is lead the change to a truly progressive and wholistic educative model 'hoping against hope that the example of a nation that has found a way of being happily human may be imitated' (p.211). In interrelated essays Arthur Koestler spoke of two sorts of dissenters who wish to alter the status quo: the Commissar (or revolutionary) who seeks external change, and the Yogi (or saint) who

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<sup>45</sup> Written and sung by leading British rock band Pink Floyd. 'Another Brick in the Wall, Part II,' *The Best of Pink Floyd*, EMI. London, 1979.

<sup>46</sup> C.S. Lewis, 'Prince Caspian,' *The Chronicles of Narnia*, p.408.



calls for change from within. Koestler concluded, 'neither the saint nor the revolutionary can save us; only the synthesis of the two.'<sup>47</sup> In *Island*, by concentrating on *houyhnhms* rather than *yahoos*, Huxley portrayed a number of such balanced saviours, ordinary but extra-ordinary human success stories living co-operatively with their kind.

The Palanese had achieved what Propter had only planned for and dreamed of, and their society rested upon a high measure of economic self-sufficiency. Similarly Lewis wrote:

A man is happier, and happy in a richer way if he has 'the freeborn mind.' But I doubt whether he can have this without economic independence, which the new society is abolishing. For economic independence allows an education not controlled by the Government.<sup>48</sup>

Some of Orwell's predictions from *Nineteen Eighty-Four* have come to pass and the omnipresent eye of Big Brother stares down on citizens via millions of security cameras. Nonetheless, it is Huxley's subtler, more colourful and less obviously sinister sort of nightmare that rings truer nowadays. In today's hedonistic world where happiness is equated with having endless 'goods' and being inanely busy, the massively conditioned populace, mesmerised by the illusion of 'democracy,' are the willing, and often merry, slaves to consumerism. The biggest 'joke' of all is that these 'consumers' actually think that they are free. Huxley had prophesied that

A government which is able to fill every home with suitably propagandist pictures as well as speech and print, will probably be able, within wide limits, to manufacture whatever kind of public opinion it needs.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> A. Koestler, *The Yogi and the Commissioner: and other essays*, Hutchinson and Co. Ltd., London, 1965, p.232.

<sup>48</sup> C.S. Lewis, 'Is Progress Possible?' *God in the Dock*, p.314.

<sup>49</sup> A. Huxley, 'Individual Work for Reform,' *Ends and Means*, p.157.

Thanks to increasing urbanisation and centralisation, a compulsory education system devoted to the secular gospel, and the dependence on the power grid for everything, people are now precisely what John Savage in *Brave New World* said of the Londoners; ‘babies. Mewling and puking.’ And as was John, contemporary free spirits ‘are exasperated by their bestial stupidity’ (p.171). In brief, mainstream Westerners actually exist as Susila put it in *Island*, ‘somewhere else...in some other time, some other home-made imaginary universe’ (p.96).

Although readers and viewers are drawn to gratuitous violence and sexual fantasies and in art and life want to ‘play parts that would allow them to satisfy their appetites or their will to power,’<sup>50</sup> Huxley went on pointing out workable alternatives. He said that ‘literary example is a powerful instrument for the moulding of character’,<sup>51</sup> and so, whilst never his strong point, he took his characterisation seriously. Even in *Island* there are a number of interesting minor figures who are not dull, smug, or wooden.

Since these two authors sought to influence their readership by the portrayal of individuals of the calibre of Ransom and Propter, surely it does not go amiss to ask whether they themselves exemplified the standards they preached? Chad Walsh refers to Lewis as ‘a whole man and a loveable one’<sup>52</sup> and Kathleen Raine wrote of ‘the freshness and joyousness with which he carried his learning,’<sup>53</sup> and enjoyed his company. Owen Barfield drew attention to Lewis’s *outstanding* humility after fame

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<sup>50</sup> A Huxley, ‘Writers and Readers,’ *The Olive Tree*, p.33.

<sup>51</sup> A. Huxley, ‘Education,’ *Ends and Means*, p.209.

<sup>52</sup> C. Walsh in J. Gibb, ed., *Light on Lewis*, p.117.

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.*, p.102.

and popularisation,<sup>54</sup> whilst Neville Coghill stated, 'Genius is formidable and so is Goodness; he had both.'<sup>55</sup> Finally, Warren Lewis recorded his 'universal and sympathetic neighbourliness to everyone' and his financial generosity to the needy.<sup>56</sup>

To the West Jesus Christ encapsulates the quality of divine love, and in the East Buddha represents the zenith of compassion. In their humbler incarnations Lewis aspired to be Christ-like and Huxley to imitate Gautama's path. If Huxley was in his fiction prone to a lack of charity, nevertheless as an existential thinker he was, in terms of the French literature of the 'fifties and 'sixties, nearer to the vital glow found in Camus than to the morbid atmosphere sounded in Sartre. Notwithstanding which, until *Island* there reigns in the Huxleyan *opus* an emphatic *contemptus mundi* which some find offensive.

Holmes claimed that the Huxleys' friends referred to Aldous's 'gentleness, to his kindness, sweetness and benevolence.'<sup>57</sup> Yehudi Menuhin testifies that he 'was a man in whom wisdom never destroyed innocence. He was scientist and artist in one.'<sup>58</sup> Re-meeting him in 1948, Cyril Conolly noted how Huxley 'no longer seemed merely a "clever man" but a "good one,"' adding, 'I know no-one more desperately concerned about the state of the world.'<sup>59</sup> Just prior to his demise Phyllis Nichols

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<sup>54</sup> 'Introduction,' *ibid.*, p.XIII.

<sup>55</sup> *ibid.*, p.66. 'Memoir' pp.20-1.

<sup>56</sup> W.H. Lewis, ed., *op.cit.*

<sup>57</sup> C. Holmes, 'Preface' X, *op.cit.*

<sup>58</sup> S. Bedford. *op.cit.*, Vol II, p.269.

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.*, p.103.

reported of his ‘detachment from all worldly passions and struggles,’ the description she left of Huxley matching his own of Bruno Rontini toward his end.<sup>60</sup>

Lastly, to fast forward events a few decades and ask, ‘how might Huxley and Lewis rate to postmodernists?’ Dismissive of the larger narratives told by, for instance, Christianity, Marxism and Social Utopianism as discredited or no longer relevant; suspicious of the dogmas of any single ideology: not tied to an ethical anchor, postmoderns can hardly be expected to welcome anyone’s assertions as to ultimate truth. On the other hand, the subjectivist, relativist approach taken by postmoderns means they should be less dismissive of Huxley and Lewis than was Leavis.

Theorists and critics have their own motives, and a few years back Brian Richardson accused recent literary historians of ‘an all-too-simple tale of dynastic successions.’<sup>61</sup> Consequently, romance is seen as supplanted by realism, which was superseded by modernism, this in turn replaced by postmodernism. Richardson reached a different conclusion as to the practice of twentieth-century literature:

A more accurate, rhizomatic model shows instead five distinct, significant narrative poetics – realism, postmodernism, high modernism, expressionism and romance – that continuously fluctuate, battle against, merge with, and interanimate each other dialogically each decade.<sup>62</sup>

Lewis, and at least in *Island* Huxley, chose the older vehicle of romance to convey their messages, and since readers have never tired of romance it seems

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<sup>60</sup> *ibid.*, p.319. Refer to this thesis, p.94.

<sup>61</sup> Brian Richardson, ‘Remapping the Present: The Master Narrative of Modern Literary History and the Lost Forms of Twentieth-Century Fiction,’ *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol. 43, No.3 (Autumn, 1997), p.291.

<sup>62</sup> *ibid.*, p.304.

destined to survive and be periodically reenergized. As for those promoting the fallacy of dynastic successions, they are responsible for a profound error attacked by Lewis and Huxley – a concealed evolutionism. In an illuminating 1969 essay Bernard Bergonzi noted ‘a strongly evolutionist view about the novel built into our criticism,’<sup>63</sup> then later on Richards exposed ‘the cultural imperative of “what is newer, is therefore better.”’<sup>64</sup>

These two novelists wrote mainly to promulgate knowledge about supersensible realms neglected by secularism. Although neither was capable of definitively proving the existence of divinities, or a God, of other worlds or an after-life (is anyone?), taken together Lewis’s notion of a *Tao* embedded in the fabric of the cosmos, and Huxley’s evidence of *metanoia* as catalogued by exemplary mystics, present a pretty convincing case that something grander than the mere clash of purposeless atoms is occurring around and within us. Or maybe this is only so to any who have, in Propter’s words, in *After Many a Summer*, ‘bought your ticket to Athens’ (p.88).

Disgruntled by fiction devoid of unifying ideals or collective standards, John Gardner attacked postmoderns as failing ‘to recognise and try to deal with the inexorable conflict at the heart of all free society,’<sup>65</sup> the struggle between personal freedom and social order. Calling such a practitioner ‘a modern Narcissus whose neo-

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<sup>63</sup> ‘Realism, Reality, and the Novel: A Symposium on the Novel,’ Bernard Bergonzi; Malcolm Bradbury; Ian Gregor; Barbara Hardy; Frank Kermode; Mark Kinkead-Weekes; David Lodge; Tony Tanner; Paul Turner; Park Honan. *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (Spring, 1969), p. 204.

<sup>64</sup> B. Richardson, *op.cit.*, p.293.

<sup>65</sup> D.J. Cahill, ‘Moral Crossroads,’ *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, Vol, 13, No.3, (Spring, 1980), A Review of John Gardner’s, *On Moral Fiction*, Basic Books, New York, 1978, on p.324.

Romanticism is marked by self-indulgence and moral weakness,<sup>66</sup> to Gardner fiction is 'a convincing and honest but unverifiable science, (in the old sense, 'knowledge'),' and as well he believed, 'it is precisely because art affirms values that it is important.'<sup>67</sup>

We bring to a close this discussion with a quotation from a prophetic poet who avowed that the potency of eternal verities always ranks above the look-at-me mannerisms of whatever is the current ephemeral enthusiasm. Aware that secular constructions are culpable of breaking the first of Moses' commandments, 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me', Kathleen Raine reminded her audience:

Every civilization except perhaps our own has borne witness in its art to its knowledge and experience of a universal and unanimous tradition of spiritual wisdom. The art of the present time testifies not to knowledge of, but ignorance of this wisdom, by which all great ages have lived and died, and which a new generation is now it seems beginning to rediscover.<sup>68</sup>

Disconcertingly, Raine blames segments of the Church and the University for their complicity in this apostasy. Fifty years ago Lewis made reference to the 'literary industry'<sup>69</sup> with the rise of English departments in the new, redbrick institutions. With serious scientific issues confronting modern societies such as the use of nuclear energy, genetic engineering, nanotechnology, robotics, the huge budget N.A.S.A. consumes; more than ever the contribution of the humanities, the 'values factor' is needed. Then, as in former epochs, the everlasting stories of self-transcendence may replace the kind which appealed to Jeremy Pordage and to Will Farnaby before his

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<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*, p.324.

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*, p.325.

<sup>68</sup> K. Raine, *Blake and the New Age*, Allen and Unwin, London, 1979, p.51.

<sup>69</sup> C.S. Lewis, 'Unreal Estates,' *Of Other Worlds*, p.93.

regeneration; the cleverly composed, but inherently meaningless, tales so familiar to the current, life-endangering dispensation.

Presently, the divide in this country separating these literary critics and scholars from a discerning section of the reading public cannot pass unnoticed. Although their texts have frequently been published, try finding these in second-hand bookstores. However, the two authors appear in all sorts of places. Not long ago Lewis was featured on *ABC Television's* 'Compass' programme, and a few months later the same channel showed the 1950 film, *Prelude to Fame*, loosely based on Huxley's short story 'Young Archimedes.' Then, *Radio National's* 'Book-reading' for this May-June was *Brave New World*.

Literary giants, Huxley and Lewis not only strongly believed that the study of outstanding literature should play a central part in the education of the individual and the community; their own forcible compositions extended the range of the literary legacy they inherited.

*Epilogue*

As the twenty-first century proceeds and the ravishing of the entire planet intensifies, the likelihood is that Earthlings will be forced to take – or still will refuse to take – such actions that shall result in one of two outcomes. These, in the words of a duo of twentieth-century storytellers of the prophetic kind, are

Either:

Humanity, in its desire for comfort, had overreached itself. It had exploited the riches of nature too far. Quietly and complacently, it was sinking into decadence, and progress had come to mean the progress of the Machine... But there came a day when, without the slightest warning, without any previous hint of feebleness, the entire communication-system broke down, all over the world, and the world, as they understood it, ended.

E.M. Forster, 'The Machine Stops' (1909)  
*The Collected Short Stories*, Penguin,  
 Harmondsworth, 1956, pp.138; 142.

Or:

Private improvement was to be the preliminary to public improvement. If the king and the doctor were now teaching one another to make the best of both worlds – the Oriental and the European, the ancient and the modern – it was in order to help the whole nation to do the same. To make the best of both worlds – what am I saying? To make the best of *all* the worlds – the worlds already realised within the various cultures and, beyond them, the worlds of still unrealised potentialities.

Aldous Huxley, *Island*, p.129



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