

As the servants of the machines are becoming a privileged class, the machines are going to be enormously more powerful. What's their next move?

J.R.R. Tolkien, Letter to Christopher Tolkien,
30/1/1945 in H. Carpenter, ed., *The Letters
of J.R.R. Tolkien*, Houghton Mifflin Co.,
Boston, 1981, p.111.

I shall argue here the proposition that the regulation of technology is the most important intellectual and political task on the American agenda. (Technology is the American theology, promising salvation by material works).

Wilbur H. Ferry, ‘Must We rewrite the
Constitution to Control Technology?’
Saturday Review, Santa Barbara, California,
March 2, 1968.

Chapter One: The origins and intentions of this thesis.

Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* stand amongst the foremost socio-political and anti-Utopian narrative texts of the twentieth century. A half century onwards, when the increasingly huge and questionable shadow of science, and especially its technologically-induced, anti-Nature presuppositions, along with the ubiquitous utilization of technology's by-products in every sphere of Western existence, have led to massive ecological upsets, these prophetic books are no less relevant. Particularly is this so in a period when, evoking the old catch-cries of freedom, democracy and security the government is actually increasing the number of laws eroding basic liberties long fought for.

A late 'seventies graduate in philosophy and history as well as literature, I have long delved into conceptual thinking, into how ideas are initiated or taken up by different individuals and communities in various periods and how these affect, and are affected by, the literary arts. From the literary point of view these concerns can best be witnessed within the frame of the essay and the novel. The pertinent problem is just where the expository manner of the essay ends and the dramatic characteristics of the novel begin. Hence it may be asked whether the above reputedly tract stories are entitled to be classified as novels.

On mentioning these musings to my B.A. (Hons) Supervisor, John Sprott Ryan, who knew I was enthusiastic about J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and had often read C.S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia* to family members, he suggested that I look into what he considers a major fiction published between the two dystopias and one dealing with similar themes, Lewis's *That Hideous Strength*. This was the third in a trilogy which is variously slotted into such inter-related genres

as ‘speculative fiction’ or ‘science fiction’ and ‘romance’ or ‘adult fantasy.’ I agreed that these volumes were significant indeed and decided that, since I had already read a large part of Orwell’s works, it would prove more fruitful to take on a fresh area of study. Lewis was not shy in putting himself forward as a committed, even militant, Christian and I was curious as to what he had to say, through the medium of imaginative prose, to an age committed to secularism, and to the supposedly scientific premises that had helped to downgrade an earlier religious supremacy. The 2005 release of the feature film version of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, with a similar treatment to be accorded the rest of the Narnian tales, means Lewis should be newsworthy for years to come, and in the U.S.A. he is hailed as a stalwart of religious orthodoxy. But is his theology to be taken seriously in the twenty-first century?

Having been previously exposed to *Brave New World* and a handful of his essays, my interest in Aldous Huxley grew when I chanced upon the essay collection *On the Margin* and discovered that he thought the relations between literature, science and philosophy were ‘the most important and the most interesting of the subjects which may, theoretically, be made into poetry, but which have, as a matter of fact, rarely or never undergone the transmutation.’¹ Whereas these terms, ‘science’ ‘philosophy’ and ‘novel of ideas’ will be identified as the thesis develops, it is taken for granted that ‘poetry,’ by extension, includes any creative writing of value.²

I recalled, too, how Huxley’s image had been brought to public attention in connection with broader cultural concerns. There he stood on the cover of my favourite rock group, the Beatles’, revolutionary 1967 album, *Sergeant Pepper’s*

¹ Aldous Huxley, *On the Margin*, Chatto and Windus, London., 1923, p.27.

² It is essential to point this out since Huxley held that ‘at least 99.8% of the literary production of this age – as of all other ages, for that matter – is purest cat-piss,’ G. Smith, ed., *Letters of Aldous Huxley*, London, Chatto and Windus. 1925, p.307.

Lonely Hearts Club Band, and another successful rock outfit, The Doors, had named themselves after Huxley's *The Doors of Perception*.³ In London in the early 'seventies a friend had lent me this booklet and we agreed that the author seemed a sort of Western-style Buddhist, and had a vast knowledge about, and was an ardent supporter of, the arts. Additionally, Huxley thought that the hallucinogenic substances then in vogue could speed up a person's educative process and help to bring about a better society.

It is well to remember that until the recent rise in secularism the world-stage was dominated by religious models of reality. Animist and pagan beliefs informed the long ages of pre-history; then, for the past three to four thousand years, two interconnected religious expressions have achieved precedence in their respective hemispheres. In the West this amounts to the Judaic-Christian-Islamic continuum, and in the East there is the legacy of Hindu-Buddhist-Taoist traditions.

At my original *alma mater*, Flinders University, in a decade that witnessed liberal humanism combine with Marxist-Leninist scientific materialist assumptions to pour rationalist scorn on any religious outlook whatsoever, a few undergraduates were happy to study ancient and medieval, as well as modern, philosophy. They were also fortunate in being able to undertake what may have been the seminal course in oriental religions in any Australian university. Huxley appears as a solitary figure and the problem many critics have had is simply that they are usually ignorant of or misinformed about his brand of spirituality. With a background in these generally unfamiliar branches of conceptual thought, this researcher has at least a greater

³ The title of this text owes its origin to Blake's 'If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is, infinite,' 'The Marriage of Heaven and Hell,' Plate 14, Lines, 15-16, A. Ostriker, ed., *William Blake: The Complete Poems*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1977.

chance than many literary scholars to come to grips with difficulties surrounding Huxley's interpretations of Eastern schools of thought, as well as what Lewis's understanding of these was.

Whereas in the early 'eighties the Cold War was in full swing, a few years later the U.S.A. was its decisive victor, Marxism was almost universally abandoned and Flinders University was offering degrees in theology. The ideological background had suddenly shifted and capitalism was being attacked by a growing 'alternative movement' espousing 'consciousness' and personal change.⁴

Nowadays the war of ideas has assumed both the shape of an international showdown between Islam and Christendom and a struggle within nations which has fundamentalist forces pitted against liberalism. The increasing movement of African, Asian and Middle-Eastern immigrants and refugees to secular lands like Australia has meant that religious issues and standards are respectable enough to rejoin the ongoing discussion of what it means to be human, and to be modern. Because there exists a pressing need for inter- and cross-cultural dialogue, these two spiritually-orientated authors should have something to contribute today.

Both writers esteemed William Wordsworth highly and, similarly, thought of themselves as teachers or educators with important messages to impart in a period of rapid change, extreme violence and social turmoil. (Whilst utilizing a prose format they adopted the prophetic voice assumed by the leading Romantic poets, and their place in the formidable Romantic Movement is a side issue to be raised in this survey). Re-entering the academy in the so-called post-modern era, and taking into account the vast shift differentiating this from the modernism of my earlier career, I

⁴ This study is deeply indebted to June Deery's *Aldous Huxley and the Mysticism of Science*, St. Martins Press, Inc., New York, 1996. Relevant here is its Chapter Seven, 'Huxley and the New Age.'

sought to investigate whether their use of the novel is legitimate or desirable. As there are critics who contest the right of these two authors to be called novelists at all, it was hoped that some further light would be shed on that will-o'-the-wisp genre the French call *roman*. The study was, too, to amount to a 'rounding off' of some connected matters pursued in my previous thesis and similarly covers the half-century in English letters commencing with the outbreak of World War One.

A thesis is also a personal odyssey and the thesis writer had to learn to handle radical changes in the education process. Not only did this mean acquiring basic computer skills, but the research was undertaken at the University of New England in the School of English, Communication and Theatre, which comprises a number of distinctive approaches. The year of my re-entry into the system collided with the introduction of the mandatory course in cultural and critical studies, a plus to anyone long marginalized in literary studies for possessing a healthy interest in philosophy and the history of ideas. Since different approaches are offered as valid, on occasion their full range will be brought in to illumine points in what is, essentially, a piece of literary scholarship.

The texts under investigation are Huxley's *Brave New World*, *After Many a Summer* and *Island* and Lewis's *Out of the Silent Planet*, *Perelandra* and *That Hideous Strength*. Aware that much textual explication has capably and frequently been carried out before, I especially want to focus on how, generally speaking, the larger ideological concerns are handled by these two writers and how, specifically, key scientific and religious ideas and attitudes relate to characterization in these six imaginative volumes. In helping to elucidate the nature of these somewhat overlooked texts, (at least in Australia) a few comparisons or contrasts have been made in passing

with a leading figure who significantly forged their views. In Huxley's case this was D.H. Lawrence, while in Lewis's the friend and colleague was J.R.R. Tolkien.

Lastly, I believe there is more than ever a need for research that concentrates on broad fields of enquiry and on difficult topics. Wary of what is merely exotic or fashionable, such research can focus on those pre-eminent thinkers and artists often facing neglect, who matter at this momentous juncture in world history. I hope it will be shown in the following pages that Aldous Huxley and C.S. Lewis have every right to take their places as subjects worthy of serious literary and philosophic investigation in the humanities and social science courses in the universities of the twenty-first century.

Where is the Life we have lost in living?
Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?

T.S. Eliot, '*Choruses from the Rock*.'
The *Complete Poems and Plays of T.S. Eliot*, Faber and
Faber, London, 1969, p.147, Lines 14-16.

Chapter Two: Part One: Biographical Introduction.

Born near Godalming, Surrey, on July 26, 1894, into a famous literary and scientific family, Aldous Leonard Huxley is situated amongst the great twentieth century European thinkers. He has been identified as ‘pre-eminently a writer that university students should be reading’¹, a polymath², a ‘philosophe’³ and a ‘pundit’.⁴

An aristocrat by disposition, and close to the upper classes by connection, his pedigree included such luminaries as his paternal grandfather, Thomas Henry Huxley, ‘the most famous promoter of Darwinism and a prime mover in the official separation of religion and science’.⁵ Leonard, Aldous’s father, was an editor, scholar and a master at the renowned Charterhouse school. Meanwhile, his Oxford educated mother, Julia Arnold, founded her own school, she being ‘the granddaughter of Dr. Arnold of Rugby, niece of Matthew Arnold, daughter of the Rev. Thomas Arnold and...sister of Mrs. Humphrey Ward, the novelist’.⁶

¹ A.E. Dyson, ‘Aldous Huxley and the Two Nothings,’ *Critical Quarterly* 3, (1961), p.309.

² Paul Wiley, ‘Aldous Huxley,’ *Contemporary Literature*, Vol 15, No. 1, 1974, p.148, says ‘Turning manfully from the microscope to the macrocosm, he became that rather un-English phenomenon, a savant, or as George Woodcock terms it more precisely, a polymath.’

³ Frank Kermode, *Partisan Review*, Summer 1962, xxix, pp. 472-3 said ‘he is essentially *philosophe* rather than novelist.’ Quoted in D. Watt, ed., *Aldous Huxley: The Critical Heritage*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1975, p.454.

⁴ N. Murray, *Aldous Huxley: An English Intellectual*, Little Brown, an imprint of Time Warner Books, London, 2002, p.8.

⁵ J. Deery, *Aldous Huxley and the Mysticism of Science*, St. Martin’s Press, Inc., N.Y., 1996, p.3.

⁶ Sybille Bedford, *Aldous Huxley: a Biography 2 Volumes*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1973, 1974, Vol One, p.2.

Even in such illustrious company, Aldous Huxley stood out. A cousin recalled, ‘when he was five or six *everybody knew that Aldous was different.*⁷ He had two older brothers and a younger sister. The eldest boy, Julian, who went on to an outstanding career as a biologist, teacher and populariser of science, was Aldous’ life-long friend. The second son, Trevenen, committed suicide in 1914, shocking and grieving the younger brother. Aldous experienced a happy, prosperous and well informed childhood, yet this had also been marred by his mother’s death from cancer in 1908. A major enthusiasm was science, and Bedford claimed ‘how naturally Aldous’s mind vaulted between the two cultures’.⁸ He looked toward a future in medical research, as late as 1925, professing:

If I could be born again and choose what I should be in my next existence, I should desire to be a man of science... even if I could be Shakespeare, I think I should still choose to be Faraday.⁹

In 1911, a third tragedy struck. An eye disease called *keratitis punctata* left him temporarily blind and made him draw upon all available inner resources: he learnt Braille, how to type and how to move about unaided.

1912 saw Aldous enter Balliol, Oxford, to commence a Bachelor of Arts, to graduate with First Class Honours in English literature. For a while he lodged in the

⁷ *ibid.*, p.3.

⁸ *ibid.*, p.30.

⁹ A. Huxley, *Along the Road: notes and essays of a tourist*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1925, p.223.

household of the eminent professor, John Scott Haldane,¹⁰ whose daughter speaks of Aldous's 'picking up science from my father'.¹¹

Huxley's earliest literary ambition was to be a poet, and his first verse collection, *The Burning Wheel*, came out in 1916. Richard Church observed how 'evidence of a resolute spirit, stated at the very beginning of his career, is a kind of key signature to all his writings,'¹² since in the titular poem, amidst the flux and chaos of existence, a familiar symbol of stability, the Buddhistic wheel, is evoked. Intimidated by war and social disintegration, the writer longs to return
 To the motionless centre, there to rest.¹³

World War One profoundly shook Huxley's faith in human nature; nor could he find any solace in the Church. Nevertheless, in the poem 'By the Fire' from his collection, *The Defeat of Youth and Other Poems* (1918), he professes:

I know
 Dimly, that there exists a world,
 That there is time perhaps, and space
 Other and wider than this place.¹⁴

The young thinker had begun to open up to the existence of worlds other than the one bound by the laws of mechanical operations.

¹⁰ John Scott Haldane, 1860-1936, British physiologist. It is to be seen how C.S. Lewis took part in controversies with his son, John Burdon Sanderson Haldane, 1892-1964, a geneticist and populariser of scientific ideas.

¹¹ Cited in S. Bedford, *op.cit.*, p.52.

¹² R. Church, 'Introduction,' D. Watt, ed., *The Collected Poetry of Aldous Huxley*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1971, p.7.

¹³ *loc.cit.*, p.8

¹⁴ *loc.cit.*, p.63.

Huxley owed a fair measure of his success to the long and happy union he had with Maria Nys whom he married in 1919. The birth of Matthew, the Huxleys' only child, in 1920, may have helped his father turn to imaginative prose as a means of earning a supplementary wage. Certainly Huxley had already bemoaned the contemporary lack of prose-writers¹⁵ as against the number of would be poets, as well as perceiving that his own style of poetry was not in fashion.

It is necessary to bring into the discussion someone whom Huxley decided was 'one of the few people I feel real respect and admiration for.'¹⁶ David Herbert Lawrence changed Huxley's views about the war and from a desire to enlist his thought evolved toward pacifism. Huxley's shift from working in the medium of verse to that of prose may in part be attributed to Lawrence's taking the social role of the writer extremely seriously. Jerome Meckier's perceptive study¹⁷ brings out both the mutual admiration and the tensions in the relationship which saw these unique artists come together, then grow apart.

They met in 1915 and this friendship was at its height from 1926 to the year Lawrence died, 1930, and is relevant here regarding two issues which perennially absorbed Huxley. The first is that constantly occurring theme in literature, the persistent friction between the spirit and the body; the second is the divergent responses which the two had towards scientific endeavour.

¹⁵ From G. Smith, ed., *Letters of Aldous Huxley*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1969. 'But what we want is men who write prose,' p.112.

¹⁶ A. Huxley 'D.H. Lawrence,' *The Olive Tree and other essays*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1936, p.231. The essay was published as an 'Introduction' to *The Letters of D.H. Lawrence*, ed., A. Huxley, W. Heinemann Ltd, London, 1956.

¹⁷ Jerome Meckier, 'Huxley's Lawrencian Interlude: The 'Latin Compromise' that failed,' *Aldous Huxley: Satire and Structure*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1969, Chapter Four.

From ‘First Philosopher’s Song’ in Huxley’s fourth book of verse, *Leda* (1920) come lines that assume Darwinian, materialist premises:

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.¹⁸

This is the sort of image of the spirit’s servility to the flesh one expects from attitudes like Gnosticism, and it is so pervasive in Huxley that John Atkins stated ‘The outstanding characteristic of Huxley’s writing, for many people, lies in his horrified fascination with the human body and its physical functions.’¹⁹ The same dilemma occurs in *Crome Yellow*, often considered ‘a Peacockian novel of manners.’²⁰

Huxley’s attack on Victorian and Edwardian mores continued in *Those Barren Leaves* (1925), wherein a great deal of the author’s sceptical outlook is put into the mouth of Cardan, a learned scientific materialist who was modelled on Bertrand Russell.²¹ After his fiancée’s death by food poisoning, Cardan asserts, ‘the spirit itself is only an accidental exuberance...has no significance; there is only the body’.²² However Calamy and Mary Thriplow deny Cardan’s dogma and set out in their fashions to find another way to his.

Literary historians usually divide Huxley’s career into three periods. First, the decade around 1916 to 1926, the years when the aesthetically inclined and non-

¹⁸ D. Watt, ed., *The Collected Poetry of Aldous Huxley*, p.86.

¹⁹ J. Atkins, *Aldous Huxley: A literary study*, John Calder, London, 1956, p.70.

²⁰ A.E. Dyson, *op.cit.*, calls it ‘in the satiric line of Peacock,’ p.294.

²¹ For the identity of some of the characters in British novels of the period refer to A. Bold and R. Giddings, *Who was really who in fiction*, Longmans Group, London, 1987.

²² A. Huxley, *Those Barren Leaves*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1972, pp.281-2.

committed critic of everything and everyone was eager to *épater les bourgeois* and scoff at or slander all conventions. Secondly, from about 1926, (in which year Lawrence is favourably portrayed as Kingham in the novella *Two or Three Graces*,) until about 1932, the publication date of Huxley's most well-known text, *Brave New World*, he attempts to accept and promote the Lawrentian vision of psychic unity. Then, from 1936 till his death Huxley lived as a spiritual believer. Essential to these middle years is *Point Counter Point* (1928), where we find that Calamy's attempt to live as a religious acolyte has been abandoned for the *élan vital* gospel of Mark and Mary Rampion; read for these, D.H and Frieda Lawrence, whose integrity helps to alter the make-up of the emotionally feeble Philip Quarles, that is to say, Aldous Huxley. Philip is mightily impressed by Mark because

he lives more realistically than other people... his opinions are lived and mine, in the main, only thought. Like him, I mistrust intellectualism, but intellectually.²³

Aldous Huxley was a major satirist; in Jerome Meckier's words, 'With the possible exception of Evelyn Waugh...the great prose satirist of the century.'²⁴ (In agreement, P.E. Fichow contended: 'He is primarily a satirist of the type which Northrop Frye describes as "Quixotic" or "Menippean"²⁵). In the essay collection, *Do What You Will*, Huxley, preaching the gospel of Lawrence, attacked Pascal, Wordsworth, Shelley and Baudelaire as, in their different ways, all lop-sided

²³ A. Huxley, *Point Counter Point*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1971, pp. 321-2.

²⁴ J. Meckier, *op.cit.*, maintains 'Huxley agrees with William Hazlitt as opposed to Henry Fielding that the proper object of ridicule is egotism, not affectation,' p.17.

²⁵ P.E. Fichow, *Aldous Huxley and the art of satire: a study of his prose fiction to Brave New World*, Unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1965, interprets Frye as meaning that Huxley was involved in 'the setting of ideas and generalizations and theories and dogmas over against the life they are supposed to explain.' (So says the thesis abstract in D.A. I cannot claim to have read the rest).

personalities ill at ease in their bodies. He particularly savaged Jonathan Swift, maintaining that:

Like so many of the Fathers of the Church, Swift could not forgive men and women for being vertebrate mammals as well as immortal souls.²⁶

Some of Swift's misanthropic utterances such as 'The bulk of your natives (are) the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that Nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth,'²⁷ could equally have been written by a Huxley who often appeared more friendly to his fellows in his non-imaginative texts than in his narratives.

It is necessary with the notion of 'novel of ideas' requiring explanation, to come to grips with what Huxley meant by 'counterpoint.' Normally a musical term, the author used a viewpoint against viewpoint methodology when displaying events or characters, and by juxtaposing and simultaneously examining various facets of a single item hoped to give a complete picture of reality. Huxley was thinking of how this was accomplished in the symphony or in Cubism, and he had attempted the more difficult task of achieving something similar in the novel. It all pointed to the application of relativity to the practice of fiction, and the most complete example of it in Huxley's prose is the entire third chapter of *Brave New World*. June Deery made these claims of it:

Counterpoint...reflects not just a new physical theory about time and space, but the cultural situation of multidisciplinarity. It is promoted as a way of coping with and represent increasingly specialized and distinct views of reality...which simultaneously occupy the cultural stage²⁸.

²⁶ Aldous Huxley, 'Swift,' *Do What You Will*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1931, pp.100-1.

²⁷ J. Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1967, p.173.

²⁸ J. Deery, *op.cit.*, pp.31-32.

Philip Quarles reveals his experimental plan to investigate reality by the ‘Multiplicity of eyes and multiplicity of aspects seen,’ and does this with ‘religious eyes, scientific eyes, economic eyes, *homme moyen sensuel* eyes,’²⁹ This passage gives an example of what Quarles was attempting

Summer after summer, from the time when Shakespeare was a boy till now, ten generations of cooks have employed infra-red radiations to break up the protein molecules of spitted ducklings; (“thou was not born for death, immortal bird,” etc.) One sentence, and I am already involved in history, art and all the sciences.³⁰

Quarles demonstrates the irony of existence by juxtaposing incidents that occur simultaneously, and as he tossed out a host of notions and characters, Huxley’s style in these early novels seems to imply an acceptance of a democracy of beliefs and life-styles. However, despite identifying with this pluralistic – and to today’s critics – post-modern outlook, Quarles regards the Rampions as superior beings, and theirs is the sole successful story in the book. The ‘novel of ideas’ becomes, in fact, Huxley’s one dominating idea, the need for self-enlightenment.

Somewhere between 1930 and 1934 Huxley shook off Lawrence’s grip on him. He had never felt comfortable with the hostility toward science that Lawrence has the anti-rational Rampion profess.³¹ In 1930 he wrote to G. Wilson Knight, ‘I agree, that the life business isn’t enough...Lawrence’s books oppressively visceral.

²⁹ A. Huxley, *Point Counter Point*, p.196.

³⁰ *ibid.*, pp.250-1.

³¹ In one of Rampion’s paintings H.G. Wells’s evolutionary outline of history is challenged by Rampion’s opposed view which sees the pre-Roman Etruscan civilization esteemed and his contemporaries ridiculed, *Point Counter Point*, pp.212-14.

One longs for the open air of intellectual abstraction and pure spirituality.³² By November 1932 he had put forward a belief that he stayed with:

What is needed now, I feel, is an acceptable philosophical system which will permit ordinary human beings to give due value both to Lawrence's aspect of reality and to that other aspect, which he refused to admit the validity of – the scientific, rational aspect.³³

Thereafter, Huxley's confidence in scientific endeavour, whilst constantly tempered by his assessment of methods and goals, and harbouring a suspicion of the motives or the creations of many scientists themselves, sees science receive more respect than it had during this middle period. Correctly identifying Lawrence as Huxley's greatest challenge, especially as regards science and reason, Meckier claims Huxley

discovered he was not by any means a... worshipper of the phallic consciousness, that his intellect and erudition would always take precedence over his emotions and intuitions, that he would approach even a subject as enigmatic as mysticism with as much rationality as possible. His answer to Lawrence's opposition to science, for example, is ultimately a demand for more science of a higher quality.³⁴

The sixth prose fiction, *Eyeless in Gaza* (1936) and that essential essay collection, *Ends and Means* (1937), sees the third and most controversial period of Huxley's career commence. A minor writer, Gerard Heard, opened Huxley up to the possibility of non-Western religious forms. Nevertheless, Huxley never became a fully-fledged follower of anyone, nor did he stay long with any group or movement, for his innate scepticism combined with a despairing view of human nature was kept

³² G. Smith, ed., *op.cit.*, p.353. See, too, pp.349-50, all dated 1931.

³³ *ibid.*, p.365.

³⁴ J. Meckier, *op.cit.*, pp.122-3.

alive by his encounters with similarly minded ‘Socratic gadflies’ as Jiddu Krishnamurti.³⁵

In 1937 the Huxleys moved permanently to the USA, a change of address which incurred the sarcasm of C. Day Lewis and Stephen Spender,³⁶ amongst others. Aldous was charged with abandoning the war effort and his acceptance of Oriental outlooks was seen as another variant on escapism.

In *Has Man a Future?* Bertrand Russell said, ‘One of the troubles of our age is that habits of thought cannot change as quickly as techniques, with the result that, as skill increases, wisdom fades.’³⁷ Aware of the encroachment of scientific inventions on every facet of modern life, Huxley believed that the serious writer should discuss issues of science in his or her works. As an astute thinker having many interests, he welcomed knowledge, including scientific knowledge, for its own sake. Yet his acceptance in middle age of a spiritual consciousness underlying reality made him increasingly focus on the effects of thought on individual and collective behaviour. Huxley had often referred to scientific matters, but from now on the weight of his literary output favoured essays, lectures and expository non-fiction over novels. From the 1940’s two volumes offered sustained accounts of scientific subjects: his *The Art of Seeing* (1942) is a justification of the Bates method of eye training, whilst more general issues are covered in *Science, Liberty and Peace* (1946). Succeeding years gave four titles presenting in-depth analysis on scientific matters. These are: *Brave New World Revisited* (1958), *Island* (1962), *Literature and Science*

³⁵ Jiddu Krishnamurti, (1895-1986), was a non-theistic Indian spiritual thinker who fled from the expectations of the Theosophical Society that he would assume the mantle of a World Messiah.

³⁶ See, D. Watt, ed., *op.cit.*, ‘Introduction,’ p.19.

³⁷ B. Russell, *Has Man a Future?* Chatto and Windus, London, 1960, p.15.

(1963) and *The Human Situation* (1978), this latter originally having been a 1959 lecture series.

The early 'fifties saw Huxley undergo renewed faith in the human struggle. Nevertheless, his means of settling into a state of (qualified) peace with the order of things won him many foes, especially since, along with essentially sound academics, the Harvard psychologists Doctors Timothy Leary and Richard Albert, he was amongst those mental pathfinders to imbibe mind-altering substances such as L.S.D., psilocybin and mescaline. Indeed, with a colleague and fellow researcher into these inner adventures, Henry Osmond, Huxley coined the word 'psychedelic.'³⁸ In two booklets, *The Doors of Perception* (1954) and *Heaven and Hell* (1956), Huxley not only talked openly and knowingly about these stimulants, he also advocated their usage. At first he commended them as pragmatic solutions to conditions such as alcoholism and schizophrenia. Later he recommended them as almost necessary and fairly convenient by-products provided by a scientific age to help melt away those solid thought-walls built by an age of avid materialism and so awaken what he looked upon as the massively conditioned and basically lost masses enslaved by a technocracy which serves the minority.

Huxley's willingness to learn always included a receptiveness to unusual, 'para' or 'alternative' ways of knowing, and he had delved into the Alexander and Bates methods, yoga and meditation, and unfamiliar practices in diet and nutrition. A year after Maria's death in 1955, he married a woman whose means of livelihood

³⁸ Refer to Laura Archera Huxley, *This Timeless Moment: A Personal View of Aldous Huxley*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1969, p.134. Note, too, this entry from *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd Edition, Vol XII, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989, *psychedelic*, 'Proposed by H. Osmond in a letter to Aldous Huxley early in 1956,' see G. Smith, *Lett. of Aldous Huxley* (1969), 795.

embraced a pair of his keenest interests. Laura Archera was a professional musician and a therapist involved with old and recent treatments.

In her biography of her husband Laura challenged those who thought that the above-mentioned experimentations amounted to foolishness and irresponsibility.³⁹ She recorded that during the years 1953 to 1963 Aldous 'had about ten or twelve chemically induced psychedelic experiences,'⁴⁰ rather small beer when counted against Leary's intake. The biographer testifies to what Aldous saw as the unique contribution of these hallucinogenics:

Along with many scientists, he considered the discovery of psychedelics one of the major scientific breakthroughs of the twentieth century, the other two being the splitting of the atom and the manipulation of genetic structures.⁴¹

If the public thought his novel writing was over, Huxley responded the year before he died with his second most celebrated volume, *Island*, about which he admitted:

the weakness of the book consists in a disbalance between fable and exposition. The story has too much weight, in the way of ideas and reflections, to carry.⁴²

Whatever the novelistic status of *Island*, no few authoritative commentators find within its pages an exceptionally coherent, intelligent, wise and sane portrayal of a possible (if highly improbable) social order. Significantly, along with Huxley's final publication, *Literature and Science*, the utopian text recommends an acceptance of,

³⁹ Thomas Mann (1875-1955), German Nobel Prize winning novelist and former admirer lamented after reading Huxley's *The Doors of Perception*, 'that he now has arrived at drugs I find rather scandalous,' D. Watt, ed., *op.cit.*, p.394.

⁴⁰ L. Archera Huxley, *op.cit.*, p.131.

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p.131.

⁴² G Smith, ed., *op.cit.*, p.930.

and collaboration between, those two cultures that Lawrence and the Cambridge scholar who championed him, F.R. Leavis, held to be divergent and irreconcilable directions to take.

Aldous Huxley died peacefully on the day John F. Kennedy was assassinated, 22nd November 1963. June Deery writes of his achievements:

One of Huxley's most attractive characteristics was his courage, a courage that came of insatiable curiosity. He was always opening doors onto the unknown and ignoring signs that warned against disciplinary trespass. At a time when many were taking shelter in specialization, Huxley boldly spoke out as a nonspecialist, as a syncretist... an 'all-purpose intellectual.'⁴³

⁴³ J. Deery, *op.cit.*, p.170.

Such is the world in which we find ourselves – a world which, judged by the only acceptable criterion of progress, is manifestly in regression. Technological advance is rapid. But without progress in charity, technological advance is useless. Indeed, it is worse than useless. Technological progress has merely provided us with more efficient means for going backwards.

Aldous Huxley, ‘Goals, Roads and Contemporary Starting-Point,’ *Ends and Means*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1937, p.8.

Chapter Two, Part Two: On Science and Scientists.

The purpose of this section is to examine how Huxley, a prominent philosophical writer, viewed scientific endeavour in his age, and, specifically, how he inserted scientific information into his 'thirties texts, *Brave New World* and *After Many a Summer*. Since a chronological approach can be valuable, and seeing that Huxley was an accomplished historian,¹ this exercise commences by briefly informing the reader about some of the scientific reference points noted in his early narratives. Next ensues an explication of the technological superstructure found in his first and most famous dystopia,² *Brave New World*, before proceeding to a disclosure of his presentation of science in the fairly standard novelistic example, *After Many a Summer*.

The novel is for a large part concerned with character development and delineation,³ and Huxley was primarily interested in the effects a scientific outlook, education and environment had on individuals.⁴ So it should prove fascinating to attend to a handful of scientists themselves as featured in these two works. Lastly, because his estimation of anything and everything came to depend on its relationship to what he termed 'mystic consciousness,' Huxley's final thoughts on the role of the

¹ As well as having an immense knowledge of the subject he wrote these fascinating historical biographies: *Grey Eminence* (1941) and *The Devils of Loudun* (1952).

² The *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd Edition defines Utopia as 'An imaginary island depicted by Sir Thomas More as enjoying a perfect social, legal, and political system' and Utopian as (b) Having no known location; existing nowhere,' Vol xix pp. 370-1. Dystopia means the opposite to this.

³ E.M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1964, in discussing the components of the genre, grants only 'people' two entire chapters.

⁴ A reference to the 1946 'Foreword' to *Brave New World*, Panther Books, London, 1977, p.9. As is quoted on p.32 of this thesis.

sciences as they appear in the eutopian⁵ volume, *Island*, will be reserved for part three.

Before this, however, an etymological matter must be raised, as well as a slight digression which allows some background material that should help to throw light on the nature of the huge changes that helped shape the modern consciousness.

Huxley (and as will be seen, Lewis) were well aware that words have continually shifting meanings, and this is certainly the case with ‘science’. *The Oxford English Dictionary* informs that it derives from *scire*, the Latin verb ‘to know’, and that the ‘scientist’ was simply ‘the knowledgeable person.’ The more specialized sense of the noun came later, and in the Middle Ages, when theology was held up as the supreme science, the term could be interchangeable with ‘philosophy,’ ‘religion,’ or ‘art’. It is also imparted that in those days

The ‘seven liberal sciences’ was often used synonymously with the ‘seven liberal arts’ for the group of studies composed by the Trivium (Grammar, Logic, Rhetoric) and the Quadrivium (Arithmetic, Music, Geometry, Astronomy).⁶

To provide an example of this more general use of ‘science’ in early English literature – and by one who helped forge and direct the language – we may turn to ‘The Franklin’s Tale’ by Geoffrey Chaucer. When he wrote ‘Particular sciences for to lerne,’⁷ it has to be recalled that Chaucer was far from using the term in its present

⁵ Of Eutopia The *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd Edition, has ‘First used by Sir T. More or his friend Peter Giles...A region of ideal happiness or good order,’ Vol V. p.444.

⁶ *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd Edition, Vol. XIV, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989, p.648.

⁷ Geoffrey Chaucer, ‘The Franklin’s Tale,’ Line 1122, *The Canterbury Tales*, J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd., London, 1981, p.321.

restricted sense of empirical science, the precise meaning of which will unfold as we proceed.

At the time of Shakespeare's writing the vaguer meaning was still in use. So, in the opening scene of *Measure for Measure*, when the Duke admits to his courtier, Escalus's, superior 'science'⁸ as regards the act of governing, the appropriate synonym is 'knowledge'. Huxley frequently referred to Shakespeare, and, significantly, in *Brave New World*, John Savage, one of the two men who are familiar with the Bard's works, is as scientifically illiterate as would have been the majority of the audience at *The Globe* theatre. Unfamiliar with what it signifies, John tells the World Controller, 'Shakespeare and the old men of the pueblo had never mentioned science.'⁹

Big ideas have severe consequences, and the classical revival which fuelled the Renaissance had led to a new found emphasis on humanity rather than divinity, on this world, as much as on the next. The rise of Protestantism reinforced this, and also supported the dignity of the individual as against the authority of the collective, notably the Church. Gradually, with thinkers like Réné Descartes, then Diderot and Voltaire, in France promoting the rights of reason over tradition, and across the Channel John Locke and David Hume laying down the empirical basis for modern scientific methodology, the foundation-stones of the current era were being laid. With its separation from theology, and supposedly from any metaphysic whatsoever, science as we now know it was rapidly taking shape and expanding its influence.

⁸ W. Shakespeare 'Measure for Measure,' I. 1, 5, *The Complete Signet Classic Shakespeare*, Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc., N.Y., 1972, p.1143.

⁹ A. Huxley, *Brave New World*, p.180.

As R.H. Tawney makes clear, the success of Protestantism in Europe was largely responsible for the rise of secularism, and, its doubtful credentials: wealth, fame and success as obvious signs of Divine favour.¹⁰ It led as well to the political and economic ascendancy of the middle-classes and the commencement of the use of machinery in everyday functions. These changes could not help but affect the art of story-telling, and to this we next briefly turn.

Before the shattering of epistemological certainties by the aforementioned critical thinkers, most people took the commonsense view that doubtless the world investigated, weighed and measured by scientists solidly and objectively did exist, and in this Daniel Defoe and Jonathan Swift were no exception. Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) is often held to be the first novel proper, and its hero is a sensible lower-middle-class fellow whose practical inventive knowledge is his real key to survival.

Swift penned *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) recognized as one of the great Utopian texts; a form that stretched from Plato's *Republic*, through (Sir) Thomas More's *Utopia* to William Morris's *A Dream of John Bull* and beyond. To Dean Swift, the world was to be understood by means of reason, although people themselves were hardly reasonable. In his portrayal of *houyhnhnms* he showed his preference for these thoughtful and civilized creatures over the sub-rational, animalistic, *yahoos*. These latter closely resembled his own species in 'making no other use of reason than to improve and multiply...vices.'¹¹ As with Swift, Gulliver

¹⁰ Refer to R.H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, J. Murray, London, 1926.

¹¹ J. Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1972, p.327.

was chiefly a writer 'for the noblest end, to inform and instruct mankind.'¹² Although ethics were his goal, Swift was not immune to the attractions of learning, and Part III of his fantasy-homily brings in scientific matters.

Swift's satire did not go unnoticed by Huxley, whilst Jean-Jacques Rousseau was to have a huge influence on European culture. Indeed, he helped to form the modern sensibility, contemporary theories of education, and affected what was henceforth to be portrayed in the novel. Richard Church proposes of Rousseau that

In his *Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761) and *Emile* (1762) he set the argument which was to constitute so enduring an inquiry into the questions of the individual versus the State, rank in opposition to merit, inner virtue as against convention, and all the other worked up antinomies many of which are problems of our own day.¹³

Having thus glanced at the philosophical, historical and fictional roots of the Victorian age into which Huxley was born, we turn our attention to his own connections with science as this is seen in his stories.

Huxley's initial forays into prose on matters scientific appeared in *Limbo* (1920)¹⁴. In the playlet 'Happy Families' evolutionary theory gets a comical slant in that a plant changes itself to resemble a scent-dispensing machine in order that visitors drop in a coin, thus unwittingly causing its pollination. Meantime, 'Eupompus gave spleandour to art by numbers' lays bare the author's main focus even at this stage, which was not on science *per se*, so much as on how it influences the human situation. It is also a parable exposing the excesses of a type of person he both

¹² *ibid.*, p.342.

¹³ R. Church, *The Growth of the English Novel*, Methuen and Co., Ltd., London, 1968.

¹⁴ A. Huxley, *Limbo*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1920.

approved and was highly suspicious of – the eccentric.¹⁵ Grown obsessive about figures, Eupompus gave up other visual forms, painted numbers alone, slew a couple of his followers, the Philarithmics, then suicided. Eupompus has allowed himself to become unbalanced, and taken over by abstractions can no longer function in the real world; a warning Huxley was often to repeat.

Probably the most charming and constructive of these science-influenced short stories is one from the collection, *Little Mexican* (1924). ‘Young Archimedes’ tells of a prodigy, the sweet and unassuming boy, Guido, who can not only identify outstanding music, he also composes complex piano pieces. Guido has, too, the ability to prove Pythagoras’ theorem, ‘not in Euclid’s way, but by the simpler and more satisfying model which was, in all probability, employed by Pythagoras himself.’¹⁶ Huxley was proposing that there are ways of knowing besides the rational, logical methods approved of by the scientific model; intuitive cognition, for example.

The supposed inevitability and nobility of the march of science under the banner of ‘progress’ afforded Huxley occasions for producing a steady flow of satire and sarcasm. Albert Einstein, famous for his relativity theory proposed in 1905, looms largely throughout the fictions, but is not always granted the respect usually afforded him.¹⁷ In *Crome Yellow* his profound theory gets dropped casually and

¹⁵ Huxley’s two-fold attitude was typically expressed in his 1930 story *The Claxtons*. Whilst Herbert’s health excesses are ridiculed he is also allowed to maintain, ‘if it hadn’t been for the cranks...you’d be beating children and torturing animals and hanging people,’ A. Huxley *Collected Short Stories*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1969, p.374.

¹⁶ A. Huxley, ‘Young Archimedes,’ *Collected Short Stories*, p.246.

¹⁷ A. Huxley, *Ape and Essence*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1949, had identical Einsteins on opposing sides of a national conflict; they are literally kept on leashes by baboons in military uniforms. So genius serves the powerful, pp.28-39.

flippantly into conversation, a hostess proposing, 'This Einstein theory. It seems to upset the whole starry universe. It makes me worried about my horoscopes.'¹⁸

In the first three novels his chief concerns were the physical and mathematical disciplines, particularly the implications of their recent findings as to epistemology and ontology. David Bradshaw stresses the mutual influences on each other by Aldous and J.W. N. Sullivan during the twenties, maintaining that whilst Huxley was enthusiastic about the metaphysical credentials of Eddington, Jeans, Schrodinger and Planck,¹⁹ predominately it was Sullivan who showed his friend 'the compatibility between the mystical-idealistic bent of his own mind and the mind of the new physics'.²⁰

The philosophy of science is brought up in *Those Barren Leaves*, in an exchange between the seeker Calamy and the secular humanist, Cardan. Whereas Calamy thinks they live in a fascinating age and is excited by recent changes to 'what we've hitherto regarded as the most sacred scientific truths' (p.35), unsettled by a reversal in paradigms, Cardan asserts:

I made my entry in the late fifties -- almost a twin to *The Origin of Species*...I was brought up in the simple faith of nineteenth-century materialism; a faith untroubled by doubts and as yet unsophisticated by that disquieting scientific modernism which is now turning the staunchest mathematical physicists into mystics.

(*Those Barren Leaves*, p.35).

¹⁸ A. Huxley, *Crome Yellow*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1960, p.52.

¹⁹ (Sir) Arthur Eddington, 1882-1944. British mathematician and astrophysicist.

(Sir) James Jeans, 1887-1946. British mathematician, astronomer and physicist.

Erwin Schrödinger, 1887-1961. Austrian physicist and the father of wave mechanics.

Max Plank, 1858-1947. German physicist; proposed quantum theory in 1906.

²⁰ D. Bradshaw, 'The best of companions: J.W.N. Sullivan, Aldous Huxley and the new physics,' *The Review of English Studies, New Series*, Vol 47, No. 187, 1966, p.368.

Huxley assumed that the latest findings wrought by physics pointed away from a simplistic and reductive to a complex and supersensible conception, and that this altered just about everything, including behaviour.²¹ So to this Pyrrhonian aesthete frequently accused of superficiality or escapism, science had already been given its due in current discourse and also presented itself as an essential weapon to anyone wanting to undermine accepted conventions. From a young age, then, Huxley spoke often, with keen intelligence, and much wit and enthusiasm on scientific subjects, and included in both his fictions and non-fictions famous and less familiar scientists, along with their works; he drew inferences from scientific and technical data; he related presuppositions underlying scientific notions, and explained ethical and sociological factors to be deduced from these. To quote June Deery:

most of the canonized writers of this period made little direct reference to contemporary science in their work. Only the partial science of Freudian psychoanalysis was quickly and almost universally adopted...Huxley was, in this regard, a significant exception and his career provides an interesting point of departure for studies of interdisciplinary relations in this period.²²

Calamy turned his back on the cock-sure sciences and the boastful arts; both are henceforth ‘barren leaves’ on the tree of life. Moving along to *Point Counter Point*, fierce denouncements of currently respected spokesmen and symbols are staple fare from the mouth, pen and paintbrush of Mark Rampion. Rampion’s desired archetypes are those ‘atavismuses...Intelligent primitives’ (p.107), such as William

²¹ In A. Huxley, *Time Must Have a Stop*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1945, philosopher of science Paul de Vries posits of the revolutionary outcomes of Einstein’s theory that it ‘brought back idealism, integrated mind into the fabric of Nature, put an end for ever to the Victorian’s nightmare universe of infinitesimal billiard balls,’ p.86.

²² J. Deery, ‘Introduction,’ pp.1-2, *Aldous Huxley and the Mysticism of Science*, St Martin’s Press, Inc., N.Y., 1996.

Blake because he had harmonized ‘Reason, feeling, instinct, the life of the body’ (p.108) within himself. In contrast, Rampion contends that the contemporary outlook, disrespectful toward the physical, is forged by ‘barbarians of the intellect’ (p.108) and that our races’ shortcomings stem from ‘Jesus’s and Newton’s and Henry Ford’s disease’ (p.121). From the negatively inclined yet mentally astute Maurice Spandrell comes a critique of the biologist Illidge, containing this analysis of that communist’s half-baked and outmoded mental configurations:

he’s committed to nineteenth-century materialism... You’ve got to believe that the only fundamental realities are space, time and mass... He’s sadly worried by Einstein and Eddington. And how he hates Henri Poincaré. How furious he gets with old Mach! They’re undermining his simple faith. They’re telling him that the laws of nature are useful conventions of strictly human manufacture.

(Point Counter Point, p.158).

Around this date Huxley located what he thought was the specific problem plaguing capitalism, and the thesis he set forth is the premise for his next title, *Brave New World*, an entirely different affair to the four regular novels preceding it. Qualities especially found from the American experience were given in an essay entitled ‘Revolutions’:

Now that not only work, but also leisure has been completely mechanized; now that, with every fresh elaboration of the social organization, the individual finds himself yet further degraded from manhood towards the mere embodiment of a social function; now that ready-made, creation-saving amusements are spreading an ever intenser boredom through ever wider spheres, – existence has become pointless and intolerable.²³

Could there be a more suitable springboard from which to launch an investigation into that book which has become a virtual by-word for a type of horrific

²³ A. Huxley, ‘Revolutions,’ *Do What You Will*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1931, p.225.

future to be avoided at all costs, *Brave New World*? In the ‘Foreword’ to the 1946 edition the author states its theme ‘is not the advancement of science as such; it is the advancement of science as it affects human individuals’ (p.9). He announces that the three fields of enquiry that concern him are ‘biology, physiology and psychology,’ since ‘it is only by means of the sciences of life that the quality of life can be radically changed’ (p.10). Neither extremist ideologies nor advanced weaponry were as significant as supposed, Huxley argues, because ‘this really revolutionary revolution is to be achieved...in the souls and flesh of human beings’ (p.10). The unprecedented change Huxley meant is the complete subordination of each self to the purposes of the State. Several ideas raised in the text had been covered the preceding year in the collection, *Music at Night*, where Huxley had warned that as specialization is the order of the day citizens ‘will come to be valued more and more, not as individuals, but as personified social functions.’²⁴

In *Brave New World*, within the bounds of a benign totalitarianism everyone is merely a productive and consuming socio-economic unit, and from the moment of birth, or rather ‘decanting’, in a non-organic environment a totally conditioned member of the herd, or referring to creatures actually more insect than animal, the hive. These streamlined citizens are accustomed to a sixty year allotted span during which each want receives its speedy gratification, with no-one feeling left out or used, and even death is treated, not as an occasion for emotional release or reflection, but for muzak and sweet treats. Knowing no alternative, the inhabitants are a recent sort of slave ‘who do not have to be coerced, because they love their servitude’ (p.12).

²⁴ A. Huxley, ‘On the charms of history and the future of the past,’ *Music at Night; and other essays*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1955, p.97.

The theme of this book is the quest for happiness, and in this Benthamite²⁵ heaven nearly everyone is continuously happy; leastwise happy as totally unaware and stupefied conformists can be.

Huxley stated in a letter dated May, 1931, ‘I am writing a novel about the future – on the horror of the Wellsian Utopia and a revolt against it.’²⁶ Whilst *Brave New World* started as a parody of Wells’s *Men like Gods* (1923) and he also borrowed ideas from Bertrand Russell’s, *The Scientific Outlook* (1931), after the Huxleys’ visit to America in 1926 he saw the automobile manufacturer Henry Ford hell-bent on a similar mission, and in Huxley’s mind a link was formed between Ford’s gigantic car plants and Wells’s lunar ant-hills. James Meckier points out that, although having written it during the summer of 1931, Huxley had presented the essentials of his vision in a 1929 ‘Preface’ he contributed to a text on education by J.H. Burns.²⁷ There Huxley is shown suspicious of trends that unquestionably glorified and promoted the sciences. Also seeking its sources, Peter Firchow asked:

Was Joseph Needham right in maintaining that Huxley borrowed from Bertrand Russell’s *The Scientific Outlook*, a judgment later echoed by H.V. Routh’s *English Literature and Ideas in the Twentieth Century* (1946) and expanded by Philip Thody?²⁸

Chapters One to Three are vital in conveying the theoretical underlay as well as the mechanics of the place, and contain episodic disclosures as to how the present

²⁵ Jeremy Bentham, 1748-1832. The father of utilitarianism, a doctrine formed on ‘the greatest happiness of the greatest number’ principle in social organization.

²⁶ G. Smith, ed., *op.cit.*, p.348.

²⁷ J. Meckier, ‘A neglected Huxley “Preface:” His earliest synopsis of *Brave New World*,’ *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 1979, pp.1-20.

²⁸ P. Firchow, ‘Science and Conscience in Huxley’s *Brave New World*, *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 16, No.3, 1975, pp.304-5.

state of things arose. Readers are introduced in the opening paragraph to a central feature here, the building housing the CENTRAL LONDON HATCHERY AND CONDITIONING CENTRE, under the dominion of a World State having as its motto: ‘COMMUNITY, IDENTITY, STABILITY’ (p.15). On the ground floor a laboratory in which white overalls, rubber gloves and microscopes spell out a scientific function, the light – ‘frozen, dead, a ghost’ (p.15) – signifies an inherent lifelessness. Novice alpha students who will form the next generation of technicians and administrators are being given a tour by the Director of Hatcheries and Conditioning or D.H.C. and ‘in this year of stability, A.F.632’, (p.16) by indicating the incubators, the Director plunges into expounding biology and the step by step procedures of the Fertilizing Room.

The given hierarchy is divided into five grades: at the top are the alphas and betas performing more cerebral functions, and below them the lowly gamma, delta and epsilon workers. The State decides how many of each caste is needed to keep things running efficiently, then manufactures the required number. The need to take standardization to its limits has resulted in a process given the appropriately dreadful name, ‘bokanovskification’ (p.17). The Director assures listeners that ‘Bokanovsky’s Process is one of the major instruments of social stability,’ and is ecstatic as he paints a verbal picture of ‘ninety-six identical twins working ninety-six identical machines’ (p.18). It is amazing that Huxley set his anti-utopia so far into the future, but so it is, and although indefinite bokanovskification is impossible, a typical conformist, Henry Foster, assures the Director that the centre can better the record of seventeen thousand embryos from a single ovary.

The conveyer belt moves on into the Bottling Room where fertilized eggs are bottled and labelled before proceeding to the Social Predestination Room. Nine

months later, rather than being born, the tampered with specimens are ‘decanted’. Some embryos have been predestined to tolerate certain climatic conditions, others are so fashioned to put up with chemicals they will have to handle, and seventy five percent of females are sterilized; so-called ‘freemartins’ (p.22). Already readers are struck with a world that the majority of them find alien, perverse and repulsive. Not that any possible imagined descendants of ours would be aware of this since, in the words of the Director:

that is the secret of happiness and virtue – liking what you’ve *got* to do. All conditioning aims at that: making people like their unescapable social destiny.

(Brave New World, p.24).

Psychology is the branch of the social sciences high-lighted in chapter two, and the INFANT NURSERIES. NEO-PAVLOVIAN CONDITIONING ROOMS (p.27) evokes a figure who is no stranger in Huxley’s writings. Ivan Pavlov (1849-1936) was a Russian physiologist renowned for training dogs to respond to certain stimuli, notably to the ringing of a bell. In 1958 Huxley had published a sort of expository prose follow-up to the original. Appropriately entitled *Brave New World Revisited*, Pavlovian experiments conducted in Huxley’s era are dealt with in its seventh chapter.²⁹ All the same, in the on-going ‘nature versus nurture’ debate familiar in cultural studies the assumption that education is everything and which so sums up the teachings of the behaviourists, goes back to the mechanist and utilitarian ideas of the Frenchman, Claude Adrien Helvétius (1715-1771). This futuristic State has assumed that Helvetius was right, and given a blank slate to work upon completely fashions its own end product.

²⁹ A. Huxley, ‘Brainwashing,’ *Brave New World Revisited*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1960, pp.87-96.

An indoor scene starts peacefully enough. A delta group are attended by nurses putting out bowls of roses and illustrated volumes on the floor. Then, when crawling toddlers reach these the Head Nurse pushes a lever which activates terrifying sirens and alarms. With the release of electric shock waves, this is the result:

There was something desperate, almost insane, about the sharp spasmodic yelps to which they now gave utterance. Their little bodies twitched and stiffened; their limbs moved jerkily as if to the tug of unseen wires.

(Brave New World, p.28).

It is not that the rulers are sadistic; rather, as economic factors pre-dominate straightforward and unprofitable pleasantries cannot be tolerated. As with reading, an appreciation of flowers is ‘gratuitous’ and a love of nature ‘keeps no factories busy’ (p.29). In an essay, ‘Obstacle Race’ Huxley commented:

Economic necessities easily and rapidly become moral virtues, and the first duty of the modern consumer is not to consume little...but to consume much...Asceticism is bad citizenship; self-indulgence has become a social virtue.³⁰

The D.H.C. reaches the topic of hypnopaedia, and telling how its principle has been discovered brings up the name George Bernard Shaw, ‘one of the very few whose works have been permitted to come down to us’ (p.31). Huxley had little patience for Shaw,³¹ and preferred the contents of a literary work to the cult of the artistic personality, and Shaw is mentioned as ‘speaking, according to a well-authenticated tradition, about his own genius’ (p.31). Shaw gains respect in what is a totalitarian and technological system, and Malcolm Muggeridge was not alone in

³⁰ A. Huxley, ‘Obstacle Race,’ *Music at Night*, p.107.

³¹ From G. Smith, ed., *op.cit.*, ‘I have never found him very interesting. Did he, after all, ever know anything about human beings?’ p.651.

pointing out that Shaw was a notorious apologist for Stalinism. Additionally, Shaw despised ordinary humankind and preferred to dream of 'supermen' in futuristic socialist states.

Hypnopaedia is a more refined and effective teaching tool than is electric shock therapy and is utilized as an aid in instructing the intellect, the D.H.C. informing that, slightly altered, a different outcome, a 'moral education' (p.32) results. It amounts to brainwashing whilst one sleeps; the D.H.C. insisting that this ethical instruction 'ought never, in any circumstances, to be rational' (p.32); should contain 'words without reason' (p.33). Children are thus more easily taught than their elders,³² but, so thorough and universal is the conditioning all save a handful succumb. The Director claims:

at last the child's mind *is* these suggestions, and the sum of the suggestions *is* the child's mind...The adult's minds too – all his life long. The mind that judges and desires and decides – made up of these suggestions...*our* suggestions!
(Brave New World, p.34).

Examples of such training centre around two fundamentals, elementary class-consciousness and elementary sexual play. Eugenics may amount to a questionable field of research, and although I daresay Huxley would have been appalled by how it was exploited by Nazis and Stalinists, he did not entirely disapprove of it in theory.³³

Chapter Three displays a stylistic device by which the writer evokes an image of what was a rare method of transport in those days. Although lacking Lawrence's deep intuitive feeling for nature, Huxley was successful enough in his

³² A. Huxley, 'Hypnopaedia,' *Brave New World Revisited*, p.129.

³³ Refer to A. Huxley, 'A Note on Eugenics,' *Proper Studies: the proper study of mankind is man*, Chatto and Windus, London (Orig. 1927), 1949, pp.272-82. Huxley's was a common position at the time.

naturalistic descriptions when he wanted to be. Yet often his farcical inclinations proved the stronger, and so his naturalistic paragraph ends, ‘the air was drowsy with the murmur of bees and helicopters’ (p.35). To those who propose that Huxley showed scant sympathy toward literary technique,³⁴ chapter three should be a rewarding read. Breaking up into three conversations taking place concurrently in the same building, it brings to mind today’s habit of surfing the net or television channels.

The patterns of behaviour accepted by these – in John’s eyes – ‘Maggots’ (p.168) and ‘less than human monsters’ (p.171) stand in opposition to sexual codes and customs taken for granted. Infants, too, are encouraged to be sexually active and to treat partners as but temporary objects of mutual pleasure. As for nuclear and extended families, these, along with parenthood, monogamy, natural conception, as well as abstinence, celibacy and romantic love are dismissed as retrogressive or perverse.

Making his entrance and taking over the teacher’s role, one of the ten World Controllers, Mustapha Mond, begins with chronology. ‘You all remember,’ he asks, ‘that beautiful and inspired saying of our Ford’s: History is bunk’ (p.38) God is gone, and a god of materialism, Henry Ford, reigns in His place. Thus, Ford has delivered a pretty conclusive blow to the past. Huxley believed Ford was right, ‘up to a point,’³⁵ Huxley’s own point is that what is accounted history *is* largely worthless. He did not, however, agree with Ford when he went too far in this direction. Huxley explained:

Bunk: for how can even serious and philosophical history be enlightening? History is the account of people who lived

³⁴ J. Deery, *op.cit.*, pp.171, 178 cites a few of these.

³⁵ A. Huxley, ‘On the charms of history and the future of the past,’ *Music at Night*, p.89.

before such things as machine tools and joint-stock banks had been invented.³⁶

If Huxley called this outlook ‘Fordism,’ we shall see C.S. Lewis considered something similar his enemy, too, only he called it ‘chronological snobbery.’ Still, whilst wary of Ford’s infamous maxim, one cannot help thinking how Huxley was not too hard on the man for the simple reason that in this thing Huxley remained a youth at heart – riding around in fast and costly cars was ever a pleasure to him.³⁷

Having delivered the expected platitudes, Mond lays stress upon the rulers’ ‘supreme aim: ‘Stability...No civilization without stability. No social stability without individual stability’ (p.44). An elementary means of ensuring this end is the daily ingestion of the stimulant *soma*, about which more shall be said in the next chapter. For the present, without giving readers any forthcoming in-depth explanation, hints are dropped of how this social order came about. Democracy has been discarded as unsound, the sole recognition of equality being of the physico-chemical kind (p.47). Meanwhile, slogans and catch-cries that endorse consumerism – ‘Ending is better than mending’ or ‘I love new clothes’ (p.51) – have replaced sound policy or passionate artistic expression. This is a place filled with the artificial: for example, ‘Pregnancy-Substitute’ (p.41); ‘morocco-surrogate’ (p.50); and ‘real acetate silk’ (p.101).

The biggest losers in this world are the human attributes of intellect, emotions and will. As for the elders, whilst once they ‘used to renounce, retire, take

³⁶ *ibid.*, p.92.

³⁷ In A. Huxley, *Eyeless in Gaza*, Vintage Classics, London, 1994, to the Huxley-like Anthony Beavis a rail journey is ‘a kind of sacrament’ since ‘the male soul, in immaturity, is *naturaliter ferrovialis*.’ p.75.

to religion, spend their time reading, thinking – *thinking!*’ thanks to ‘progress’ they now

work, the old men copulate, the old men have no time, no leisure from pleasure, not a moment to sit down and think...are safe on the solid ground of daily labour and distraction.

(Brave New World, p.54).

Interestingly, radio, newspapers and television have not disappeared from the seventh century A F, whilst newer mediums include ‘the feelies’ (p.38), Synthetic Voice and Music (p.61) and the Scent Organ (p.177). An injection of humour into the grim atmosphere of the tale sees Huxley evoking some scientific allusions when naming these sports: ‘Centrifugal Bumble-puppy’ (p.35), ‘Riemann-surface tennis’ (p.58) and ‘Elevator Squash’ (p.86).

In spite of its dominance over every aspect of its citizens lives, the rule of the Machine hardly equates with perfection. Notwithstanding that the ageing process has been checked, the dream of current genetics has not been realized, and sixty years is the maximum life-span. Further inadequacies are in evidence. John is told that the doctors cannot rejuvenate his mother, and it is gradually disclosed that there are a few remaining diseases to conquer. As for Huxley’s own blatant omissions, in the 1946 ‘Preface’ he admitted, ‘One vast and obvious failure of foresight is immediately apparent. *Brave New World* contains no reference to nuclear fission.’³⁸ Furthermore, the oversight surrounding Bernard’s beginnings is the first testimony that the system has not suppressed every vestige of mortal culpability. There are others: George Edzel has long ears, and Benito Hoover is considered ‘too hairy’ (p.55), and distracted, Lenina fails to administer a vaccination, and so an Alpha-Minus ‘was to die of

³⁸ A. Huxley, ‘Preface,’ *Brave New World*, p.9.

trypanosomiasis' (p.152). Yet the severest failings of this stultifying paradigm are that, somehow, it manages to turn out rebellious heretics like Bernard Marx and Helmhold Watson.

Despite the scientific sounding over-gloss, it can be maintained that as free and unrestricted thought and research does not exist, no real scientist is present. In this grim-hued polis there are no conceptual reference points, no metaphysic of science, and a language to deal with its material has not been invented. A stasis has set in: the notion of science as a forward-moving, open-ended enquiry is absent, and no questioning or debate occurs. As for the social sciences: these relate to conditioning and so do not rank as serious disciplines. Mond thus avers, 'Every discovery in pure science is potentially subversive' (p.180), before confessing that he had once started doing some 'unorthodox cooking, illicit cooking. A bit of real science' (p.181). Well informed, and suitably qualified as a physicist, the Controller knows what is happening; and admits:

all our science is just a cookery book, with an orthodox theory of cooking that nobody's allowed to question, and a list of recipes that mustn't be added to except by special permission from the head cook.

(Brave New World, p.181).

This is why he forbids for publication a paper entitled 'A New Theory of Biology' (p.143). Supposedly, 'pure' science sets out to unravel the mysteries of the universe, and its practitioners are keen to assert that the empirical way of knowing, the drawing of hypotheses from repeated observable experiences, is less subjective, less loaded with irrational or emotional entanglements, than areas of enquiry like art or religion. Opposed to these presumptions, Huxley argued that, whatever supporters of the scientific-materialistic view-point, for instance as set out by A.J.Ayer in his *Language, Truth and Logic* (1936), professed about objectivity and neutrality, the

assumptions held by the limited ‘filter’ through which facts are interpreted, are decisive. As he put it:

the powers of every mind are strictly limited; we have our inborn idiosyncrasies, our acquired sentiments, prejudices, scales of value; it is impossible for any man to transcend himself.³⁹

Nothing is as innocent or as value free, then, as initial appearances may presume, or as Huxley averred so frequently ‘One can never have something for nothing.’⁴⁰ Also, although a positive outcome is desired, the ends do not justify the means.

In addition, increasingly mechanized, expensive and requiring highly skilled specialists to keep it running, modern science equates essentially with technology; that is with the assertion of power over, the alteration and dominance of Nature by humans in a profound fashion. Furthermore, power is not exercised by the will of any genuine democracy; rather it is wielded by a small urban élite possessing the necessary mental equipment and mechanical skills.

Huxley was surprised at the hold authority figures have over the public; at how the semi-educated admire famous scientists or their academic equivalents even when unfamiliar with their area of study or their private affairs. As a serious thinker using for his own purposes a particular genre where character delineation is of primary interest, Huxley sought to portray specimens of that type known as scientists, asking along the way whether we are right in assigning to them the place they are granted in today’s hierarchy. In the main readers get glimpses of the workaday world

³⁹ A. Huxley ‘Introduction,’ p.xvii, *Proper Studies*.

⁴⁰ A. Huxley, ‘Comfort,’ *Proper Studies*, p.297. In *After Many a Summer*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1965. (Orig.1939). Boone reflects on what Propter ‘had said about nobody ever getting something for nothing,’ p.181.

of a few scientists, but the larger share of the focus is on how they act in their off-duty moments.

After finishing *Point Counter Point* French *homme des lettres* André Maurois affirmed, ‘Huxley has joined the company of the greatest novelists,’ and continued:

the greatest originality of Huxley’s lies in the fact that he is the only living novelist with a solid scientific culture, so assimilated that it has transformed his whole conception of the world.⁴¹

There the aristocratic Edward Tantamount, – a figure based loosely on Huxley’s brother Julian⁴² – receives fairly sympathetic treatment. Nonetheless, Tantamount remains under-developed in certain essentials, and his spouse looks for erotic fulfillment in the embrace of John Bidlake. Of Edward it is reported:

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.

(Point Counter Point, p.25).

On a positive note, Tantamount came early amongst Huxley’s imagined scientists to take into account issues such as population expansion, pollution and soil erosion, and massive resource wastage the world over.

To turn now to characterization within the pages of *Brave New World*. If the novel is largely concerned with people possessing at least the minimum ability to evaluate, and so make distinct choices, few in this world are human at all. As for the Bokanovsky Groups, acclaimed ‘the foundation on which everything else is built...the gyroscope that stabilizes the rocket plane of state on its unswerving course’ (p.178), they are much less human. It is the uniform hideousness of a swarm of such

⁴¹ D. Watts, ed., *op.cit.*, pp.186-7.

⁴² Or perhaps J.B.S. Haldane? See J. Deery, *op.cit.*, p.35.

deltas that causes *l'étranger*, the outsider and visitor, John Savage, a Reservation Indian, in a hospital for the terminally ill when he is visiting his mother, to loathe this sub species of mortal kind.

Somehow, and for the sake of dramatic action it is an imperative, a few *do* rebel. Bernard Marx and Helmholtz Watson, together with John and Mustapha Mond, are the sole (partially) complete human beings in the metropolis and the last named is hardly going to permit the others to protest. Anyone found dissenting is exposed, humiliated and ‘an enemy of Society, a subverter...a conspirator against Civilization itself’ (p.123) is sent into exile.

Spending the bulk of his hours ‘by himself’ (p.46), Marx is thought odd and anti-social. Rumour has it that in a pre-decanting accident someone had ‘put alcohol into his blood-surrogate’ (p.47). A physically poor specimen owning ‘a melancholy face’ (p.55), Marx is unpopular. His truancy takes in ‘walking and talking’ (p.78) in the Lake District, and an over-attachment to, and possessiveness regarding Lenina. Having sensed this society produced ‘Adults intellectually and during working hours...Infants where feeling and desire are concerned’ (p.82), Bernard regards his fellows as adolescents and wants them to grow into ‘adults all the time’ (p.82). Marx’s acts of rebellion stem not from genuine motives as much as from a twisted craving for acceptance and he finishes up a broken-down turncoat, begging not to be exiled, insisting ‘it was the others’ (p.181) fault.

Employed by the ‘Bureaux of Propaganda and the College of Emotional Engineering’ (p.61) – appropriately in Fleet Street – Helmholtz Watson is physically and morally stronger than Marx; his problem is ‘A mental excess...too much ability’ (p.62). Having just arrived at this awareness he was looking for the X factor which

would give vitality to his stale routine. Whilst ready to agree that he was competent enough at his writing, Watson complains to his colleague:

It's not good enough for the phrases to be good; what you make with them ought to be good too... Words can be like X-rays... You read and you're pierced...(But) can you say something about nothing?

Brave New World, p.64.

Helmholtz is preferring solitary reflection to self-indulgence, and Bernard is impressed by his magnanimity toward himself, for this is not merely a by-product of *soma* talking. Now at his ease Watson feels 'as though I were just beginning to have something to write about...to use that power I feel I've got inside' (p.147). Watson ends up accepting the fate of banishment, and is non-plussed at being sent to the Falkland Islands, believing 'one would write better if the climate were bad' (p.183-4). He, at least, has grown to prefer, and is allowed to become, an actual *human* being.

Preferring a smooth running termites' nest to the colourful uncertainty that was Shakespeare's or Huxley's England, Mustapha Mond chooses not to heed any wayward promptings by his inner voice. Although in agreement that John and Linda's visit to London was 'a matter of sufficient scientific interest' (p.117), the text's sixteenth and seventeenth chapters lay bare the extent of both the science, or rather scientism he tolerates, and of his own lack of integrity. Whilst agreeing that Shakespeare's poetry is more beautiful and meaningful than Watson's, he retorts 'You've got to choose between happiness and what people used to call high art' (p.177). Social cohesion rates for this ruler above true science or authentic art, and he prefers the way of 'Our Ford' who 'did a great deal to shift the emphasis from truth and beauty to comfort and happiness' (p.183) to Huxley's own heroes. The irony is that, having swapped dynamism for stagnancy, and sacrificing actuality to the dream

of uninterrupted happiness, Mond admits, ‘What fun it would be...if one didn’t have to think about happiness’! (p.144).

Within the gilded walls of this vacuous domain, ‘Man as a moral, social and political being is sacrificed to *homo faber*, or man the smith, the inventor and forger of gadgets.’⁴³ *Brave New World* got its title from Miranda’s exclamation in *The Tempest* (V,1,183). But unlike the innocent Miranda departing for what she hopes are the delights of town and court, John has been soured by the city experience, and to Bernard’s asking as to why he is ill replies, ‘I ate civilization’ (p.193). Raised in a natural, if primitive, environment and striving after a greater vision, such as offered by Shakespeare, John sees these creatures for what they are. Uneducated in the liberal arts and sciences, not possessing any critical or imaginative faculties, recognizing no categorical imperative save to mindlessly conform to the suggestions of a meaningless Establishment they are, for all practical and higher purposes, useless.

Huxley believed in the far-reaching effects of ideas,⁴⁴ and several of his least favoured scientists, along with their purported ideological ‘props,’ are parodied in names accorded to alphas. These include: Pavlov (p.27), Shaw (p.31), Trotsky (p.36), Wells and Freud (p.41), Engels and Bakunin (p.72); all left-wing identities. Still, Rothschild (p.71) and the ubiquitous Ford stand in for large-scale capitalism, whilst Benito Hoover (p.55), a composite of Italy’s dictator and of an American president, allows the author a double-barrelled opportunity to lampoon both sides of the political divide.

⁴³ A. Huxley, *Science Liberty and Peace*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1947, p.17.

⁴⁴ A. Huxley, ‘Beliefs and actions,’ *Music at Night*, p.76 said, ‘The thing that gives people courage is ideas.’ Save for Watson, the subjects of this State, without any ideas to challenge them, are sleep-walking.

After initial hiccoughs, including getting banned in Australia,⁴⁵ *Brave New World*, sometimes slotted into the science fiction genre, went on to financial and critical acclaim. Given the capabilities of today's technologies someone may soon make it into a successful feature film. Anyone valuing its vital message can be thankful it was never turned into a musical stage-play, as Huxley had planned in the 'fifties.⁴⁶

Along with George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1948), the discerning consider it the greatest dystopian imaginative volume constructed in the twentieth century. This is what Huxley had to say after reading Orwell's celebrated work. Praising it as 'fine' and 'profoundly important,' in a 1949 letter to Orwell he continued:

My own belief is that the ruling oligarchy will find less arduous and wasteful ways of governing and of satisfying its lust for power, and that these ways will resemble those which I described in *Brave New World*.⁴⁷

In his turn, Orwell was not impressed by Huxley's analysis, saying, that although it 'was a brilliant caricature of the present (the present of 1930), it probably casts no light on the future.'⁴⁸ Orwell could not believe that such a society would last long because its ruling class lacks credibility. That Orwell's nightmare stands closer to Stalinism, and Huxley's to the more subtle horrors inherent in many present Western states, is evident from how events have disclosed themselves with the collapse of

⁴⁵ G. Smith, ed., *op.cit.*, pp.416-7

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p.821.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p.604.

⁴⁸ D. Watt, ed., *op.cit.*, p.333.

communism, and the growth of a single super-power, much of which receives advance exposure in *Brave New World Revisited*.

In closing this discussion, a number of critical comments have been assembled. Joseph Needham, biochemist and scholar, defended Huxley's biology in this text as 'legitimate extrapolations from existing facts,' and recommended it to any who look to 'science alone' as a panacea.⁴⁹ Bertram Russell decided 'We like adventure, self-determination, and power more than we like happiness,' yet thought Huxley's prophecies 'all too likely to come true.'⁵⁰ Huxley had, of course, intended his book as a warning, and implicit in the frontal quotation by Nicholas Berdiaeff,⁵¹ is a wariness of proposed 'perfect' communities. Not merely is it a matter of finding that promised paradises turn out to be, in a recent novel on the subject's terms, 'boring',⁵² this is also alien to human standards and sensibilities. Nature, and the human dimension bound up with it, is not 'perfect' in the sense that pure mathematics is, and any attempt to impose such a flawed supposition from above will result in inhuman or subnormal manifestations below. Hence Huxley recommended an abandonment of abnormal expectations, and a return to the territory deserving to be dealt with in the boundaries of the novel, that, of, in Berdiaeff's words, 'une société non utopique, moins "parfaite" et plus libre.' This society cannot entirely remove itself from its organic roots, anyhow, and the success of the artificial birthing process

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 204-5.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, pp.211-2.

⁵¹ Nicholas Berdiaeff, 1874-1948. A Russian religious philosopher who combined mysticism with social improvement. The quotation is from his *Freedom and the Spirit* (1927).

⁵² Yolande Miller in David Lodge, *Paradise News: a Novel*. Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1991.

depends on ‘flaps of fresh sow’s peritoneum’ (p.19) and ‘massive doses of hog’s stomach extract and foetal foal’s liver’ (p.22).

Two contrary opinions were given by one who resembled Huxley in achieving fame as a novelist possessing scientific credentials, C.P.Snow. From 1933, and apparently prior to familiarity with *Brave New World*, Snow enthused over Huxley’s having ‘the best intellect of any considerable writer that I can remember reading’ and speaks of his ‘becoming an English institution.⁵³ Later Snow avowed, ‘I am profoundly out of sympathy with *Brave New World Revisited* and *Brave New World* and, I fancy, with any further attempts of his to rationalize his views on the social condition of men.’⁵⁴ Previously, and predictably, Wells had accused Huxley of ‘treason to science’ and of having ‘no right to betray the future.’⁵⁵ Devotees of scientism kept up the offensive and, on the heels of Huxley’s scathing attack on the pretensions of science to meliorate the human situation as set down in *Ape and Essence*, the liberal Catholic priest Teilhard de Chardin, also a paleontologist, put forth an identical critique.⁵⁶ As for de Chardin’s promotion of evolution, Huxley questioned his notion of teleology and his ever upwardly evolving ‘emergent God’ in *The Perennial Philosophy*.⁵⁷

Soon Huxley’s spiritual beliefs will be investigated, so perhaps its is fitting we close this survey by allowing a quotation from that man of science, and of letters, who was the type of high-minded Victorian intellectual Aldous admired, his

⁵³ D. Watt. ed., *op.cit.*, pp.223, 226.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p.426.

⁵⁵ ‘Introduction,’ *ibid.*, p.16.

⁵⁶ ‘Introduction,’ *ibid.*, p.26.

⁵⁷ A Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1946, p.38.

grandfather, T.H.Huxley. In a favourite passage of Huxley's in a letter from the elder to Charles Kingsley the younger Huxley revealed his deference to veracity, whatever its manifested form.

Science seems to me to teach in the highest and strongest manner the great truth, which is embodied in the Christian conception of entire surrender to the will of God. Sit down before fact like a little child, and be prepared to give up every preconceived notion.⁵⁸

In the opening scenes of *After Many a Summer* Huxley mocks not so much the failures but the successes of two centuries of intense technological effort. 'And what is it all for?' he might have asked. 'I mean to say, the tales of ancient heroes and the Word of the Gospels has been exchanged and not to obtain a ticket to Elysium or a glimpse of the Holy Grail. Hence the result is 'Gum, not God', and instead of the poetic vision found in William Morris's *Well at the World's End* we have this substitute dreaming: 'At every corner there was a drug-store' (p.10). Or looked at from Huxley's perspective another standard drug on sale, 'the newspaper' (p.10) with its grubbier, everyday dramas and its advertising promises.

In a letter Huxley asked and answered, 'What about America? Words fail one.'⁵⁹ Arriving in California from England to sort out the Hauberk Papers which had come into the hands of his temporary employer, millionaire businessman Jo Stoyte, is one more amongst Huxley's upper middle class learned sceptics, Jeremy Pordage. Chauffeur-driven through Los Angeles, Pordage notes the abundance of advertising bill-boards and smiles at the erratic juxtaposition of their wares. Jeremy learns that

⁵⁸ Quoted in A. Huxley, 'Integrate education,' *The Human Situation: Lectures at Santa Barbara*, 1959, ed. P. Ferrucci, Chatto and Windus, London, 1978, pp.7-8. See, too, his 'T.H. Huxley as a literary man,' *The Olive Tree*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1936, pp.46-81.

⁵⁹ G. Smith, ed., *op.cit.*, p.326.

here where oil is a life-line, 'Super-Super' (p.11) petrol is owned by Stoyte: likewise the finance corporation across the road. Obviously the inference is that modern science is in league with big business, and that these exist in a desolate landscape.

Pordage is appalled as well as intrigued as they pass through 'Mile after mile...and the suburban houses, the gas-stations, the vacant lots, the churches, the shops went along with them, interminably' (p.13). Not that the U.S.A stood alone in manufacturing burgeoning industrial or suburban waste-lands and vulgar tourist traps, and Jeremy writes to his Mother about 'this unfinished Bournemouth indefinitely magnified' (p.12). Yet it is hard to beat a race who, utilizing the low, or sub-art, form of the billboard can declare in the same mouthful these absurd and paradoxical statements:

GO TO CHURCH AND FEEL BETTER ALL THE
WEEK.
WHAT IS GOOD FOR BUSINESS IS GOOD FOR YOU.

as well as:

JESUS IS COMING SOON.
YOU TOO CAN HAVE ABIDING YOUTH
WITH THRILLPHORM BRASSIÈRES.

(After Many a Summer, p.14).

How does one translate such tomfoolery? Two conflicting products are in the marketplace here, the promise of heaven and the earthly fountain of youth, and whereas up until recent decades logic assured that you could not have both, in the never never land of Hollywood one can somehow get – well, whatever. Recalling Evelyn Waugh's similar purpose in *The Loved One* (1948), the author saves his sharpest barbs for a major Stoyte investment, the hideous and inappropriately 'sexed up' 'BEVERLY PANTHEON, THE PERSONALITY CEMETERY' (p.15). In this and ensuing examples, scientific endeavour brings to pampered and unworthy persons every trivial pursuit and titillation possible. Worse – this unholy Hollywood haven of

Mickey Mouse and fast pseudo-food is what our once great and noble civilization (for as is customary with cultural Romantics Huxley was liable to be over generous to the past)⁶⁰ is rapidly transforming itself into.

The plot revolves around the efforts of Stoyte's physician, Dr Sigmund Obispo, to find an elixir to bring longevity, perhaps immortality, to his employer. Considering Huxley's penchant for that which is physically repulsive, the required means turns out to be by ingesting large amounts of the guts of aged carp. Science is called upon to cater to dubious demands and this is doubly worrying once it is made clear that this candidate for terran immortality would spend his extension of grace in his usual deluded and self-aggrandizing manner. If characteristic of collusion between life and literature in the Huxley story, a letter around this time recommended to a correspondent a treatment he had been helped by. It amounted to a course of colonic irrigation plus 'the receiving of two injections of a vaccine prepared from the pathogenic organisms found in the faeces,'⁶¹ and is the sort of strange sounding physic that leaves critics suspicious of Huxley's reasoning – and his taste.

Another illustration of Huxley's handling of scientific information is apparent in his quirky presentation of mathematics. A disproportionate amount of space is devoted to a powerful contrast separating 'the universe of perfected geometrical beauty' (p.214) of the woman within the bounds of a Vermeer canvas and the insane antics of an enraged Jo Stoyte plotting murder. It appears to be an instance when the abstracted domain of mathematics is preferable to the squalid realm where human emotions reign. What readers make of this cerebral distraction from Uncle

⁶⁰ David Daiches, 'Aldous Huxley,' *The Novel and the Modern World*, University of Chicago Press. Chicago, 1939 referred to him, post-1936, as adopting 'a romantic view which will not require to be tested by the facts,' D.Watt, ed., *op.cit.*, p.306.

⁶¹ G. Smith, ed., *op.cit.*, p.402.

Jo's actions is uncertain, but devoting considerable space to this at a critical point in the plot does at least allow the suspense to mount up.

Stoyte is the egotistical go-getter who uses science, as he uses everything else, merely as a means to gaining wealth and power, and clashes with an old friend, William or Bill Propter's alternative energy devices and plans. Whereas Bill, and Aldous, stood for self-sufficient communities utilizing beneficial and small-scale machinery,⁶² Jo is the successful representative of large-scale capitalist industrialism.

Was June Deery correct in asserting that although Huxley

indulges in some shop-worn images, he does not perpetuate the most ingrained image of the obsessive, out-of-control scientist who is driven by the dark side of his nature (as in Faust, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Frankenstein, or Dr. Strangelove).⁶³

The present task, then, is to delve into the doings of that scientist in Huxley's imaginative prose receiving his most sustained and penetrating coverage – Dr. Sigmund Obispo, and see what is said about science through him.

Readers have sufficient reason to be on their guard when first introduced to 'Dark-haired and dapper, glossily Levantine, Dr. Sigmund Obispo.' (p.44). The reference is, of course, to the renowned Austrian-Jewish psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, seemingly as obsessed as Obispo with middle-class sexual mores, and never a Huxley favourite. Whilst prepared to admit in his texts many examples of an Oedipus complex in play, Huxley also saw Freudianism as excusing bad behaviour:

Justification by psycho-analysis – the modern substitute for justification by faith... No wonder if whole generations had risen up to bless the name of Freud!

⁶² Many of Propter's notions on social planning had been set down more systematically in A. Huxley, *Ends and Means*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1937, especially chapter VIII: 'Decentralization and Self-Government.'

⁶³ J. Deery, *op.cit.*, p.36.

(*After Many a Summer*, p.157).⁶⁴

Also, Huxley was prone to a mild form of anti-Semitism.⁶⁵

To the sultry Miss Maunciple, Obispo is good-looking, having a face ‘so insultingly sarcastic and at the same time so flatteringly concupiscent (p.44). Whilst ‘rude’ (p.44) he is also funny, playful and at ease with himself and his wants; at his own jokes Obispo usually breaks ‘into a peal of startlingly loud metallic laughter’ (p.49). Using grand gestures, he is able to translate Spanish easily, and so earns cultural credits with Jeremy Pordage – and with his creator. However, yet he gives himself away. Obispo, ‘self-consciously the aristocrat’ (p.49), shows the least estimable features of that class, and it is this assumption of authority by a usurper in disguise that offends.

He attacks the concept of God, calling this ‘pure imagination,’ and religion ‘drivel’ and just ‘a string of words’ (p.49). Desirous of bringing to his audience’s attention those meanings hidden behind the community’s adopted word signs,⁶⁶ and wanting to evoke the sheer concreteness and pleasure of language itself, Huxley anticipated later post-structural and other theorists. So he would have agreed when Obispo lets loose his volley on ‘people getting so excited about them they’ll murder

⁶⁴ A. Huxley, *The Human Situation*, has it, ‘In orthodox Freudian theory there is much more concern with what may be called the negative side of the unconscious than with the positive,’ p.152.

⁶⁵ Noted as early as ‘Chawdron,’ *Collected Short Stories*, p.315. See, too, *Antic Hay*, p.213. Also note Stoyte’s use of the offensive term ‘kike’ on p.46. P. Bowering, *Aldous Huxley: a Study of the Major Novels*, Athlone Press, University of London, 1968, has this to say, ‘Huxley and Lawrence were accused of fascist tendencies...both favoured the leader-principle,’ p.93.

⁶⁶ See, for example, G. Smith, ed., *op.cit.*, p.657, and Propter’s aside on language, pp.129-35. In his *Adonis and the Alphabet*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1956, Huxley wrote ‘Without language we should merely be hairless chimpanzees... Possessed of a high I.Q. but no language, we should be like the Yahoos of *Gulliver’s Travels*,’ p.10.

their neighbours for using a word they don't happen to like' (p.50). He would equally have been wary of a Pordage who held that their meanings counted for little and that scholarship came down to having 'a lot of fun...just scrabbling about in the dust-heaps' (p.50).

High-mindedness and idealism, altruism and service to the needy – these are qualities Obispo avoids and despises. In admitting that he does what he does for pleasure and profit, notwithstanding that he is prepared to hide behind such phrases as 'science and progress, science and happiness, even science and ultimate truth' (p.50), he is at least forthright. If Pordage is the mild, suburban English variant on the theme of the intellectual sceptic, Obispo is the full-blown cosmopolitan and aristocratic version, and whilst his education is Old World European, his mannerisms and his vulgarity are New World American.

Part One, Chapter Five, of this novel contains the lengthiest concentration on science and scientists found in Huxley's imaginative texts, and considerable space is allowed to quasi-realistic evidence on Obispo's researches, with an equal amount spent on the doctor himself. It is learned that he prefers research to running a practice, the latter being thought of as simply idiotic, and he is not ashamed to admit that 'nothing but economic pressure would ever have driven him to do it' (p.51). Akin to almost every Huxleyan bad-guy scientist, he abuses animals, and in his case a reference is made to 'experiments with monkeys in Brazil' (p.51). Obispo enjoys his freedom to act as he pleases, and this consists, too, in seducing (behind his employer's back) Jo Stoyte's 'Baby,' (p.40) Virginia, who proves to be anything but virginal. Fluent in French, "Sig" offers to translate erotic passages from the Marquis de Sade, and introduces her to a less salubrious side of French civilization.

Huxley's references can be obscure or cryptic, and launching into the subject of life extension, these names get dropped: 'Brown-Séquard and Voronoff' (p.55) and 'Metchnikoff' (p.57); enough to leave a large part of his readership either baffled, or curious and reaching for encyclopedias. Uninspired by romantic love, and never one to obfuscate his hedonistic intentions Obispo owns up to enjoying 'sensuality for its own sake' (p.114), and standing up for 'facts' (p.115), even in the sphere of everyday affairs, gives himself an excuse to con Jo and seduce Virginia. He is convinced that sexuality is for experimentation and people are there to play all sorts of physical, emotional and mental games with, and the following encapsulates the type of physiology this expert and specialist (p.115) represents. To an average repressed but decently raised bourgeois woman Obispo:

proceeded, systematically and scientifically, to reduce this unique personality to a mere epileptic body, moaning and gibbering under the excruciations of a pleasure for which you, the Claude Bernard of the subject, were responsible and of which you remained the enjoying, but always detached, always ironically amused, spectator.

(After Many a Summer, p.116).

To Virginia 'what he actually did had been rather thrilling,' yet she remains unsure about 'the way he did it' (p.145). Still, whilst toying with the naïve but genuine *amour* presented to her by Boone, Virginia gives in to Obispo's seductive charms and thereafter is full of guilt. Her choice is simply a matter-of-fact outcome, for into several works Huxley put what he thought was a given in comprehending the vagaries of human nature. In Anthony Beavis' diary it is written:

Five words sum up every biography. *Video meliora proboque; deteriora sequor.* Like all other human beings, I know what I ought to do, but continue to do what I know I oughtn't to do.

(Eyeless in Gaza, p.10).

Which means, obviously, that whereas as a scientist Obispo may be exceptional, as a person he is bound to be a lot less successful than he or we imagined him to be.

Barely concealing his contempt, Obispo manipulates his employer by means of spurious diagnoses and feeds him with sedatives, all the while keen to make more money out of him by cracking the longevity code. With his treatment of Stoyte in mind, Obispo, who had read ‘Milton’ (p.206) and ‘Pascal’ (p.243), sums up where the combined effects of a prolonged training in the humanities and sciences had led him:

Dante and Goethe to teach you what to do. And the professor of pharmacology to show you how to put the old buzzard into a coma with a pinch of barbiturate.

(After Many a Summer, p.148).

Huxley long sought a synthesis between what was referred to as ‘the two cultures,’ and approved of the educational programme at M.I.T. for attempting to achieve this. All the same, he could see why Buddhism accounted right motivation and right livelihood amongst its ethical fundamentals. Anything is open to abuse, or can be utilized for beneficial purposes, and eccentric scientists like Obispo can choose to end up the salt or the shite of the earth.

Despite Obispo’s enticements and his self-confidence, Virginia says of Stoyte, ‘He’s a better man than you’ll ever be’ (p.148), and brands Obispo ‘a lousy ape-man’ (p.149). To Jo, Sigmund is facetious, shows ‘a calculated and malignant contempt’ toward himself and is ‘an indespensible evil’ and a ‘loathsome little kike’ (p.46). Significantly, Obispo’s movements are described: ‘It was as though the man were simultaneously his own ballet and his own audience,’ and Stoyte is upset since, ‘However terrific the applause it was always merited’ (pp.46-7). As for Jeremy, he writes of Obispo’s being ‘always more bumptious than ever. Not one of my favourite characters’ (p.155).

Having, with Pordage's unraveling of the Hauberk Papers, come to realize the reasons why the Fifth Earl of Gonister had lived so long, Obispo prepares to depart for England with his boss and Virginia, especially once Pete became the victim of Obispo's scheming and Jo's jealousy. Unconcerned over Pete's fate, the doctor faced the terrified killer Stoyte 'with the expression of wolfish good-humour which was characteristic of him in any situation where the joke was at all embarrassing or painful' (p.222). And for a considerable sum of money and a large tract of land he helps clear Stoyte of any responsibility in this drama.

Driving out of London, singing snatches of opera, Obispo is content over recent events because financial independence means not having 'to waste his time on a lot of sick people who ought to be dead' (p.236). Arriving at the house where the Earl and his housekeeper hide away, Obispo's maxim 'Nothing is ever anybody's fault. Even constipation' (p.244) to the girl he lies to and bribes, stands in opposition to Huxley's belief in personal choice and right motivation.

The last we see of Huxley's least likeable, though in the worldly sense, most successful, representative scientist occurs in the closing scene. Once Stoyte suggests that the treatment may yet be worth undertaking, Obispo 'went on looking at him in silence; then threw back his head and started to laugh again' (p.251). Laughter can be medicinal, but unfortunately his is a sinister and savage sort of laughter, the kind howled out in the depths of night by parasitical species of dogs such as jackals or wolves (pp. 222, 237). In addition, Jeremy notices that Obispo was 'someone who took no interest in you except as an animal' (p.56). Despite Obispo being the caricature of a worthwhile scientist, in bringing in Boone to complete the picture. Huxley was affirming that scientists could be likeable and remarkable as well as despicable and dangerous.

June Deery, having graduated in both scientific and humanities subjects, whilst certain that Huxley was amongst the earliest authors writing in English to recognize the importance of recent scientific discoveries and to include these in his fiction thought, too, that he ‘fundamentally misunderstood some of its ideas and their larger import’.⁶⁷ For example, when, in *The Genius and the Goddess*, Maartens dismisses Euclidean geometry as ‘the classical example of reasoning based upon a vicious circle’ (p.38), and proposes that Euclid’s model has been replaced by that of George Riemann, Deery avers:

again Huxley exaggerates...To Huxley, the overthrow of Euclid is yet another disturbing move away from the *a priori* obvious to the *ad hoc*. But he is wrong to conclude from this basis that *all* geometries have therefore been shown to be merely arbitrary creations or ‘products of the human spirit.’⁶⁸

Euclid’s conception may not be ‘absolute reality’ as mathematicians once thought, however if Huxley concluded that Einstein’s General Theory of Relativity (1916) made Euclid redundant, and also that it inferred that mental constructs are merely arbitrary creations, he was wrong. For one could as easily see Euclid and Riemann’s descriptions as valid, and as complementary in producing a total picture of reality.

The opinions of a character in a novel has no necessary connection to an author’s beliefs, however Deery cites several similar cases and builds up a convincing argument that Huxley, like the rest of us, was prone to mental excesses, and to mood swings and could twist fact to suit fiction. Thus his idea of humans aging into foetal apes in *After Many a Summer*, elicits this response:

⁶⁷ J.Deery, *op.cit.*, p.59.

⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p.61.

while it is true that human beings mature more slowly than other mammals and that neoteny does occur in some life forms, there is no evidence that older humans become more ape-like. At best, Huxley's depiction is a highly speculative extrapolation.⁶⁹

Unlike Lawrence, Huxley was usually prepared to engage in correspondence on any subject under the sun on material he spoke intelligently about, had close friendships with a number of researchers and academics, and at the close of his career Huxley himself was a temporary professor at several universities. Nonetheless, despite his willingness in rational moods to admit various benefits brought by science, he was seldom excited by its grander claims, notably whenever it put itself forward as a panacea to every problem.

Furthermore, he contended that whilst they were no worse than any other professional body, since the bulk of humankind were yet fumbling along the road to discovering its essential self, scientists were likewise no better. Certainly the scientific quest could have disturbing effects on his equanimity, such as was the case when in 1952 he visited a Naval research station situated in the desert. Called China Lake it boasted an artificially constructed town of:

twelve thousand inhabitants, mostly Ph.D's...directed exclusively to the production of bigger and better rockets. It was the most frightening exhibition of scientific and highly organized insanity I have ever seen.⁷⁰

Huxley's intense preoccupation with scientific matters is visible in almost everything he wrote and, as is confirmed in his penultimate easy collection on the subject, *The Human Situation*, spills over into judgments on different topics, for example, aesthetics. From the chapter appropriately entitled 'More Nature in Art' he

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, p.59.

⁷⁰ G. Smith, ed., *op.cit.*, p.645.

contends that the problem with much contemporary verse is its desire to ‘use abstract phraseology to escape from the concrete, factual descriptions of natural things into descriptions of some aspect of our technological civilization.’⁷¹ Huxley would have been aware that artists were often receptive to technical innovations, and that Impressionism owed a large measure of its success to the recent availability of chemical-based paints on the market. To him, that was allright, and what he objected to was this. Whereas formerly science had created tools to serve human purposes, with the ubiquitous success of technology further challenges had been brought into the equation, and the end result was that people were increasingly functioning in machine-like ways.

Whatever his observations, Huxley finished the text on a positive note, pleased to live in an age that has witnessed ‘one of the great discoveries of modern times – the working hypothesis, which has replaced the idea of the dogma or the doctrine,’ and which we can ‘be perfectly prepared to alter as new facts appear.’⁷² His final thoughts on the role of the so-called ‘two cultures’ were yet to be written, and before closing this section, what Huxley spelt out in his 1963 essay, *Literature and Science* must be dealt with.

The terse first sentence, ‘Snow or Leavis?’ sums up its argument. Huxley continued, ‘The bland scientism of *The Two Cultures* or, violent and ill-mannered, the one-track, moralistic literarism of the Richmond Lecture.’ As he so frequently was forced to do, Huxley chooses a third way, ‘a more realistic approach’⁷³ than the

⁷¹ A. Huxley, *The Human Situation*, p.40.

⁷² *ibid.*, p.253.

⁷³ A. Huxley, *Literature and Science*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1963. These quotes are all from p.5.

others. However, before proceeding it is necessary to present readers with the antagonists he took on.

C.P. Snow (1905-80) was a Cambridge Ph.D in physics, a university science instructor, high-ranking Civil Servant and a successful novelist. His most acclaimed non-imaginative work, published as *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution* was originally a 1959 Rede Lecture delivered at his campus in which, after contrasting the cultures of scientists and literary intellectuals, he offered means to overcome this blatant dichotomy. His suggestions aroused the ire of F.R. Leavis (1895-1978), critic, academic and co-editor of the influential literary magazine, *Scrutiny*. Replying to Snow, whom here and elsewhere he detested as a literary non-entity,⁷⁴ in his 1962 Richmond Lecture, *Two Cultures: The Significance of C.P. Snow*, Leavis postulated that, because science lacked cultural and human abundance, these claims were spurious, and there was actually but one culture. The debate and the issues it raises are newsworthy, if scarcely original, for they had been well covered by Matthew Arnold and T.H. Huxley almost a century earlier, as Huxley himself brought up.

Early in the piece Huxley distinguished his two main terms from each other:

In the present context, science may be defined as a device for investigating, ordering and communicating the more public of human experiences. Less systematically, literature also deals with such public experiences. Its main concern, however, is with man's more private experiences, and with the interactions between the private world of sentient, self-conscious individuals and the public universes of 'objective reality,' logic, social conventions and the accumulated information currently available.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Refer to F.R. Leavis, *Two Cultures: The Significance of C.P. Snow*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1962, p.54.

⁷⁵ A. Huxley, *ibid.*, pp.7-8.

Furthermore, the territory appropriated by the two disciplines differs radically. Whereas the realm ‘with which literature deals is the world into which human beings are born and live and finally die,’⁷⁶ the professional scientist inhabits:

not the universe of given appearances but the world of inferred fine structures, not the experienced world of unique events and diverse qualities, but the world of quantified regularities.⁷⁷

Huxley has a lot to say on the medium employed by both disciplines, language, making clear the specialized use of words by practitioners in these two fields:

The scientist’s aim...is to say one thing, and only one thing, at a time. This, most emphatically, is not the aim of the literary artist. Human life is lived simultaneously on many levels and has many meanings. Literature is a device for reporting the multifarious facts and expressing their various significances.⁷⁸

Once again, then, Huxley put forward his theory of the novel, that it was a place where a multiplicity of views was brought together, and the complex presentations of life afford by quantum and relativity theories allowed a more sophisticated and less dogmatic interpretation of events.

Notwithstanding the easy-going and entertaining fashion in which Huxley handled his subject, there is much wisdom in the text, and the author’s didactic intent is confirmed in the final passage. Huxley rejects Leavis’s either/or response, and offers instead a both/and synthesis. Saying ‘Thought is crude, matter unimaginably subtle,’ he advises and uplifts with:

⁷⁶ *ibid.*, p.10.

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, p.11.

⁷⁸ *ibid.*, p.14.

That the purified language of science, or even the richer purified language of literature should ever be adequate to the givenness of the world and of our experience is, in the very nature of things, impossible. Cheerfully accepting the fact, let us advance together, men of letters and men of science.⁷⁹

Let us, then, summarize our findings thus far. Huxley had expected his audience, without being specialists in any department of scientific enquiry, to be able to recognize major scientific players, the general nature of their theories, and to apprise themselves of what implications these could have for individuals and the groups to which they belonged. The twentieth century, he argued, necessitated this attitude and such material was as worthy of inclusion in fiction as was painting and politics, sculpture or the ups and downs of relationships. Certainly the three novels under scrutiny testify to the depth and width of Huxley's scientific enthusiasms. They also show that with and after these texts the scientific fields that chiefly interested him were biology, psychology and ecology.

In *After Many a Summer*, as in *Eyeless in Gaza*, there is one successful scientist who is also a genuine mystic, and one apprentice to serve the sage. Propter is more of a philosopher of the sciences than was Miller, but used and promoted environmentally friendly gadgets. It is only with *Island*'s publication that, along with specialists in every scientific field, virtually everyone is expected and is taught to become bridges between scientific and various other types of knowledge.

Huxley believed that, since we pass our days in a body bound by the laws of space and time, as long as it did not hinder any higher calling our physiology should be affirmed. Yet science plays its part in the provinces of the phenomenal, a transient and illusory realm, and Huxley was sure that underlying and interacting with this there existed the noumenal. Propter had averred, 'Most of us live on the mechanical

⁷⁹ *ibid.*, p.99.

level, where events happen in accordance with the laws of large numbers' (p.231) and although he did not negate the scientific his own quest involves supplementing this level of reality with another. What precisely this amounted to forms the substance of the succeeding section.

To cast off the idiot Questioner who is always
questioning,
But never capable of answering; who sits with a sly
grin
Silent plotting when to question, like a thief in a cave
Who publishes doubt & calls it knowledge; whose
Science is Despair,
Whose pretence to knowledge is Envy, whose whole
Science is
To destroy the wisdom of ages to gratify ravenous Envy.

W. Blake, *Milton: Book the Second*, Plate 41, Lines 12-17,
A. Ostriker, ed.,
William Blake: The Complete Poems, Penguin,
Harmondsworth, 1977, p.604.

Chapter Two, Part Three: On Belief and Mysticism

This chapter begins by saying a few words on Huxley's religious upbringing before proceeding to a brief overview of the development of his religious conceptions. Then, following a short account of how religion, and how spiritually inclined figures are handled in the first four novels, a presentation of what passes for ideological belief in *Brave New World* is proposed. Next, the role of William Propter, the sage and mystic in *After Many a Summer* will be reviewed, along with the meaning of the term 'mysticism'. Thereafter, the vision Huxley set out in his most ambitious work, *Island*, will be examined.

Although not regular churchgoers, Huxley's parents held to Christian ethics and baptized their children in the Church of England. Huxley lost any sympathy for traditional faith at an early age and in August 1918 wrote that he could not accept the idea of 'a personal god who occupies himself with human politics'¹.

If Huxley's adult life, a life spent professionally as a writer active in at least a half a dozen genres – verse, short stories, novels, plays, screenplays, journalism and essays – may be divided into three distinct but not disconnected periods, so his engagement with spirituality testifies to an early, middle and later declaration.

Huxley's first decade in print, spanning 1916 to 1926, reveals a pose typical of clever youths of his irreverent generation: that of a desire to break away from mental and social boundaries. While no militant atheist, and almost as suspicious of secular self-confidence, Huxley mostly avoided rational debate with any opposition of substance. From an early age Huxley's doubts were challenged by Blaise Pascal,

¹ G. Smith, ed., *Letters of Aldous Huxley*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1969, p.158.

who increasingly captured his attention.² However, at this stage Huxley can safely be pronounced an agnostic whose epistemological assumptions rested upon the claims of modern science rather than those of religion. He agreed with Matthew Arnold's supposition in *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) that high culture would satisfactorily replace organized worship.

From around the mid-'twenties, and noticeably after the Huxleys' travels in lands not dominated by the West, he started to meet religious conviction with a greater degree of openness. Huxley had always been primarily interested in behaviour, in how ideas affect the individual and the collective in practice, and he felt increasingly uncomfortable in an era of spiritual emptiness and dubious morality. These concerns were raised in *Jesting Pilate* (1926), a text which evinced Huxley's entrance into Eastern theology. Although wary of the Orient's excessive other worldliness, and appalled by its poverty³, he saw a correlation between the central ethical standards of the major Western and Eastern religious traditions. So, whereas he claimed travel reveals human diversity, he also acknowledged that

it brings an equally strong conviction of human unity...Religions and moral codes...are almost endlessly varied. But a oneness underlies that diversity...the values are everywhere and in all kinds of society broadly the same.⁴

² *ibid.*, p.245. A 1925 letter stated, 'Pascal...a tried companion.'

³ A. Huxley, *Jesting Pilate: the Diary of a Journey*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1948 (Orig.1926), thought India 'depressing' (p.159), saying 'One is all for religion until one visits a really religious country. There, one is all for drains, machinery and the minimum wage,' p.214.

⁴ *ibid.*, p.290.

Huxley added: ‘Our sense of values is intuitive. There is no proving the real existence of values in any way that will satisfy the logical intellect.’⁵

However, the situation was complicated since from 1926 until 1930 Huxley was under the influence of Lawrence’s personality. Promoting an amoral Life-force, Lawrence was suspicious of most religious forms, hostile to science, and was a modern pagan. In the place of secularism’s ‘no gods’ Huxley, his quasi-disciple, pushed the credo of polytheism, many gods, and goddesses too, and in *Do What You Will* (1929), the stress is on divine immanence rather than transcendence. Huxley also laid bare his preference for the unsystematic theology of Pericles’ Athenians over the theism and the cultural productions of the Hebrews⁶. With *Beyond the Mexique Bay* Lawrence’s ghost was pretty well exorcised and, remaining grateful for his friend’s emphasis on the sheer physicality of existence, Huxley passed beyond what he called Lawrence’s ‘mystical materialism.’⁷

Let us look back to religious elements in *Crome Yellow* (1921). Henry Wimbush, proprietor of Crome, the country estate where the action is set, owns the aristocrat’s privilege to reject the parvenu standards of the bourgeoisie, particularly its adherence to the Protestant work ethic⁸. Examples of spurious religiosity are numerous in the text, and Huxley gently pokes fun at spiritualists and séance frequenters and moves us to laughter with the amusing tale of the three Lapith sisters.

⁵ *ibid.*, p.290.

⁶ A. Huxley wrote in ‘One and Many,’ *Do What You Will*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1931, ‘we may be pardoned for wishing that the Jews had remained, not forty, but four thousand years in their repulsive wilderness,’ p.18.

⁷ A. Huxley, ‘D.H. Lawrence,’ *The Olive Tree*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1936, p.216.

⁸ Regarding ‘work,’ Rampion in *Point Counter Point*, says, ‘it just distracts the mind...Work’s simply a drug’ (p.219). See, too, Gumbrial Jnr, in *Antic Hay*, p.9.

'too frail, too spiritual for this world. They never ate, they were always so pale...talked much and lovingly of death...frequently swooned' (p.118) caught in the act of feasting surreptitiously.

An ontological problem that pre-occupied Huxley is set forth in the opening scene of *Antic Hay* (1923). Theodore Gumbrial Junior, a young teacher, is seated in his school's chapel absorbed in 'very troublesome thoughts' (p.4). His difficulty, and a possible solution to it, are stated thus:

God as a sense of warmth about the heart, God as exultation, God as tears in the eyes, God as a rush of power or thought – that was alright. But God as truth, God as $2+2=4$ – that wasn't so clearly alright. Was there any chance of their being the same? Were there bridges to join the two worlds?

Antic Hay, p.4.⁹

Gumbrial Junior dismisses the possibility because 'Rev. Pelvey, M.A. foghoring away' presented what was a 'hardly believable' (p.4) option. Meanwhile, Theodore's father, 'An atheist and an anti-clerical of the strict old school' (p.4) receives sympathetic treatment, but the warmest accolades are reserved for his wife since 'he felt the active radiance of her goodness' (p.5).

Those Barren Leaves, (1925) concludes with Calamy's rejection of science, creative endeavour and the social graces for a contemplative retreat in the manner of Henry Thoreau's *Walden* (1854). To sceptical visitors Calamy puts in a word for those he is attempting to emulate:

they've generally been men of the highest intelligence. Buddha, Jesus, Lao-tze, Boehme... Swedenborg... Sir Isaac Newton, who practically abandoned mathematics for mysticism after he was thirty. No it's not fools who turn

⁹ In *Point Counter Point* Lord Gattenden, Edward Tantamount's brother, phones him to ask his opinion on his new mathematical 'proof of the existence of God,' p.140. But Huxley was not convinced by any scholastic, rational 'proofs' and sought his solutions elsewhere.

mystics. It takes a certain amount of intelligence and imagination to realize the extraordinary queerness and mysteriousness of the world in which we live.

Those Barren Leaves, p.312.

Calamy further proposes how ‘the axes chosen by the best observers have always been startlingly like one another’ (p.318). Huxley had already begun to set down the foundation stones of his apologetic, and it comes as no surprise when, contrary to received opinion in some quarters, Clyde Enroth argued of Huxley’s career that ‘it displays the consistent development of tendencies discoverable even in the earliest novels’¹⁰.

Calamy, nonetheless, was left to his own devices and in Huxley’s fourth novel the model of individual success was Mark Rampion. Like Blake, Rampion is a mythology-wielding and iconoclastic poet dwelling in London’s midst whilst ceaselessly denouncing its over-rationalism and its materialism. Rampion, (read; Lawrence) describes the deity he believes in as:

in the very body, in the blood and bowels, in the heart and skin and loins. God’s the total result, spiritual and physical, of any thought or action that makes for life, of any vital relation with the world. God’s a quality of actions and relations – a felt, expressed quality.

(Point Counter Point, p.425).

In *Brave New World*, religious elements make their presence known in three places. What passes as religious observance in this society is encapsulated in Chapter Five in the depiction of the ‘Solidarity Service’ (p.70) attended by Bernard Marx. A different, and minor, religious outlook is encountered by Marx and Lenina Crowne in Chapters Seven and Eight when they visit the Indian reservation. Then, in Chapter

¹⁰ C. Enroth, ‘Mysticism in two of Aldous Huxley’s early novels,’ *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol 6, No 3, (Oct., 1960), p.123.

Seventeen, having given reasons of State for rejecting authentic art and science, Mustapha Mond explains why no room for any meaningful belief is allowed.

In ‘Pippa Passes’ Robert Browning penned a couplet that, although celebrated, signifies to doubters a trite optimism:

God’s in his heaven –
All’s right with the world.¹¹ (ll. 7-8)

God’s place has, in the year A.F. 632, been appropriated by the famous car manufacturer, Henry Ford, and Browning’s lines are parodied in the maxim ‘Ford’s in his flivver’ (p.45), this referring to a humble automobile. The machine, then, is omniscient here, and in assembly-line fashion, people are made in Its image.

As far back as *Proper Studies* (1927) Huxley had mounted an offensive against fundamental modern assumptions which, originating in eighteenth century Europe, form the foundations of the kind of social order found in *Brave New World*. Huxley denied the doctrine of the intrinsic goodness of human nature, and the assumptions that people are both rational and equal. Instead, Huxley accepted the, or a, notion of original sin as a given¹², and held that, due to its psychological insights, Catholicism ‘is probably the most realistic of all Western religions’¹³. He thought also that the run-of-the-mill citizen, in his terms, *l’homme moyen sensual*, was ridiculous, and he looked to the exceptional minority as the protagonists of mankind. In this narrative there is in the end only one hero, the successful non-conformist Helmholtz Watson, but offstage there are also those island colonies in which ‘All the

¹¹ W.E. Williams, selected by, *Browning’s poems*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1954.

¹² A. Huxley, ‘The Idea of Equality,’ *Proper Studies*, wrote, ‘The doctrine of Original Sin is, scientifically, much truer than the doctrine of natural reasonableness and virtue...is a familiar and observed fact,’ p.19.

¹³ A. Huxley, ‘The Essence of Religion,’ *ibid.*, p.186.

people...who've got independent ideas of their own. Everyone...who's anyone' (p.182) get on with their renegade activities undisturbed.

In the 'Essence of Religion' Huxley acknowledged two kinds of spiritual endeavour and confessed his preference. Claiming that, whilst the majority want 'a formalized social religion, an affair of rituals, mechanical observances, mass emotions,' his was a purely solitary as well as a non-aligned approach¹⁴.

In *Brave New World*, (1932), the public rites Bernard takes part in each fortnight are the sort the populace can identify with. For one thing, the ritualized service asks for few sacrifices and no commitment, and does not punish anyone with Inquisitions, or pogroms, or incite anyone to fight a war over fixed opinions. Imitating Christ's Last Supper, twelve disciples gather around a table, except here an equal number of males and females are seated, and their sharing is of a carnal kind. In place of the sacramental foods, bread and wine, participants indulge in *soma*, a substance extolled as having 'All the advantages of Christianity and alcohol; none of their defects,' and enabling partakers to 'Take a holiday from reality whenever you like, and come back without so much as a headache or a mythology' (p.53). Aided by repetitious songs, chants and hypnotic drumbeats, the small self is subsumed into some 'Greater Being,' this, perhaps, equivalent to August Comte's idea of a secular State religion replete with symbols, rituals and mass gatherings?¹⁵

In addition, from *Proper Studies*, (1927) the essay 'The Substitutes for Religion' lists contemporary alternatives to Christianity and three of these – 'Ritual', 'The Religion of Sex' and 'Business' – feature prominently in *Brave New World*. The solidarity service Marx joins in on essentially exists to help keep the state running

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p.178.

¹⁵ August Comte, (1798-1857), known as the founder of sociology and Positivism.

smoothly, and the chief benefactor is its economy. The peak of the ceremony is reached when the twelve engage in orgiastic coupling. Orgasm, Huxley stated elsewhere, is the easiest means of transcending the ego, and so offers for many the nearest thing to a mystical experience¹⁶. There is, too, this factor to take into account: 'As political and economic freedom diminishes, sexual freedom tends compensatingly to increase.'¹⁷

Religious icons and habitations once familiar have been appropriated or subverted to newer purposes. The cross has been shorn down to form a 'T', a further reference to the automobile giant, London's Westminster Abbey has been turned into a 'cabaret' (p.68), and St. Paul's Cathedral is similarly desecrated (p.71). Meanwhile, private prayer or solitary meditation are not mentioned, and not a single denomination or cult flourishes.

The 1946 'Foreword' gave the author a chance to express what he deemed the book's major flaw:

The Savage is offered only two alternatives, an insane life in Utopia, or the life of a primitive in an Indian village, a life more human in some respects, but in others hardly less queer and abnormal.

(Brave New World, p.7).

The visitors' initial impression of the reservation in Malpais, New Mexico, – 'dirt... piles of rubbish, the dust, the dogs, the flies' (p.93) – hardly inspires confidence in the Indians, and seen covered in paint and feathers and having dances that culminate in acts of obviously enjoyed self-flagellation, they are judged by the outsiders as violent, inferior and retrogressive. Additionally, they not only lack grace; possessing more

¹⁶ G. Smith, ed., *op.cit.*, p.620.

¹⁷ A. Huxley, 1946 'Foreword', *Brave New World*, p.14.

brute cunning than intelligence and wisdom, and their narrow xenophobia has them keep John and Linda distant from their own people.

Nevertheless, John is grateful for a thing the elders taught him, and which the sophisticated urbanites cannot know: the existence of the dualistic principle in the cosmos. These Indians, their religion composed of pagan and Christian elements, believe in 'Earth Mother and Sky Father...Ahaiyuta and Marsailema, the twins of War, and Chance; of Jesus and Pookong, of Mary and Etsanatlehi' (p.108). Yet John is only part Indian, for he has learned English, and has discovered *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*.

The paucity of the monolithic city's mindset is accentuated when set beside Shakespeare's traditionally rooted vision as voiced by one who had assimilated and exudes its elementary force. Armed with the Bard's judicious mix of romanticism and realism, John, at least, tries to develop into what these smug 'locusts' and 'grasshoppers' (p.203) could never be; neither unreflecting insects nor programmed automatons – rather a mature and many-sided *human* creation. However, whereas Shakespeare moved beyond the chaos of the great tragedies to arrive at the harmony evinced in the late romances, the Savage ends up a suicide case. The Lawrentian primitive is challenged by a rationalistic technocracy, and, lacking the mental equipment and the emotional stamina to make sense of and handle it, perishes 'an animal at bay,' and an 'ape' (p.203), which is at least to stand higher than an insect.

The World Controller, Mond, is familiar with Thomas À Kempis's *The Imitation of Christ* and William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, as well as works by Huxley favourites, Cardinal Newman and Maine de Biran¹⁸, but has

¹⁸ Thomas À Kempis, 1379/80-1471: English theologian and writer. This devotional work of his has been one of the most influential ever.

chosen to disregard their contents. Having another agenda, he explains: 'industrial civilization is only possible when there's no self-denial. Self-indulgence up to the very limits imposed by hygiene and economics' (p.190). Huxley maintained that stupidity amounted to mental sloth and went as far as to accuse 'those who are shocked by truth are not only stupid, but morally reprehensible'¹⁹. Therefore, Mond's disavowal of what is, is a slap to the face of every spiritual master's admonishment to look for an answer beyond the horizons of the sensational and the material.

The brave new world has obliterated virtually all limitations imposed by nature on humanity, and also overrides any necessity for anyone to turn to the supernatural. The State offers personal and national peace, and unlike in religious ages war has been banished, as have hunger, loneliness and homelessness. Yet John rejects their ways as 'too easy,' and tells Mond that he and the rest need 'something with tears for a change. Nothing costs enough here' (p.191). Accepting the inherent cosmic duality, this heretic affirms an alternative:

I don't want comfort. I want God, I want poetry, I want real danger, I want freedom, I want goodness. I want sin...I'm claiming the right to be unhappy.

(*Brave New World*, p.192).

The rebel is dissatisfied, and he dies, but our sympathies lie with John and with Helmholtz rather than with the others in their cosy and purposeless nest.

Before turning away from *Brave New World*, one final point is to be raised. It might be asked, 'Why doesn't the system produce alpha elites alone?' Well, firstly,

William James, 1842-1910. American philosopher and psychologist, leader in the Pragmatist movement.

John Henry Newman, 1801-1890. Influential English churchman and man of letters.
Maine de Biran, Marie-François-Pierre, 1766-1824. French statesman and empiricist philosopher considered by some to be the father of existentialism.

¹⁹ A. Huxley, *Vulgarity in Literature*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1930, p.21.

the State only wants a small number of potentially subversive 'A' grade citizens around²⁰. A second reason is given in the story of the failed experiment on Cyprus. In 'A.F. 473' (p.179) a colony of alphas alone had managed within six years to almost wipe themselves out. As hypnopaedia had reminded Lenina Crowne on countless occasions, 'Everyone works for everyone else. We can't do without anyone' (p.67). Yes, and everyone is conditioned to remain unacquainted with what Mond hints at, the possibility:

that the goal was somewhere beyond, somewhere outside the present human sphere; that the purpose of life was not the maintenance of well-being, but some intensification and refining of consciousness, some enlargement of knowledge.
(*Brave New World*, p.144).

During the 'thirties, three of Huxley's fictions were published and the second, *Eyeless in Gaza*, (1936) is a *roman à clef* in which the lead actor Anthony Beavis, largely a projection of Huxley at the time, interacts with family members in the form of Brian and Mrs. Foxe, and rubs shoulders with Peace Pledge Union activists such as Dick Sheppard and eccentric healers, namely F.W. Alexander and Dr. J. McDonagh²¹.

Grown tired of his own separation from his fellows, and ready to start changing, Beavis is propelled forward in this endeavour on meeting Huxley's first imaginatively successful mystic, James Miller, 'M.D., Edinburgh' (p.447). Encountering this Quaker and/or Buddhist guide, Beavis is overwhelmed by his bluntness, his calm self-assurance and his psychological astuteness. Miller insists that their meeting was the result of laws of cause and effect on a plane analogous to the

²⁰ See A. Huxley, 'Notes on Liberty,' *Music at Night*, p.88.

²¹ As regards these personalities, see S. Bedford, *Aldous Huxley: a Biography*, Volume One, pp.308-13.

physical, and then pointing out some of Beavis's faults, urges him, in a disinterested fashion, to work on himself. Miller is a student of yoga, a pacifist, and embodying the maxim attributed to Zen, 'you are what you eat,' recommends natural therapies. Citing 'chronic intestinal poisoning' and 'stooping' as evidence of inner deterioration, he advises 'a course of colonic irrigation...and a proper diet. No butcher's meat' (p.450).

Sceptics like Staithes and the communists Ekki and Helen, alarmed by Miller's 'perpetual twinkle' (p.461), dismiss him as a reactionary. However, having witnessed the doctor's Ghandian example in warding off an opponent's abuse, Beavis, despite doubts, decides to follow his gospel of unconditional love and unreserved co-operation. The book closes on an affirmative note, with Beavis certain that whatever was to happen as he made his stand 'all would be well' (p.504). Thus he has carried to its conclusion the task set down in his diary on 8th April, 1934:

how to combine belief that the world is to a great extent illusory with the belief that it is nonetheless essential to improve the illusion.

(Eyeless in Gaza, p.69).

Somewhere between 1932 and 1935 Huxley's searching reached a crisis point, and some sort of conversion occurred. Unusually brilliant, exceptionally educated, and pressured by dynastic responsibilities, he was prone to descend into those nether regions Keats bemoaned in *Ode to a Nightingale* (1820):

Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs²².

Perhaps in an attraction of opposites Huxley needed that supra-rational space that mysticism grants as a counterweight to his exceptionally lucid and logical mind.

²² H. Buxton Forman, ed., *The Poetical Works of John Keats*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1946, p.231.

Bedford recorded of *Eyeless in Gaza*, 'it was the blue-print, as it were, of what Aldous set out to discover and to be...the expression of the nobler hypothesis.'²³

'An Enquiry into the Nature of Ideals and into the Methods employed for their Realization,' the subtitle to *Ends and Means*, appropriately summed up its theme. The three final chapters reveal something new. Calling himself a 'rational idealist' (p.234) the author is now a convinced, and a very committed, advocate of an anti-secular attitude; theorizing about religion has given way to an *engaged* position.

Huxley's outlook seems unusual at first, for, as June Deery explains it is at this period bound up with the Indian Hindu Vendanta system, and 'he was particularly interested in Shankara's ninth-century nondualistic, impersonal and non-theistic system'.²⁴ Deery relates, too, how Huxley met and thought highly of 'Swami Prabhavananda. Huxley often visited the Swami's centre, though he did not sign up to be a disciple.'²⁵ At the risk of oversimplification, Huxley promoted the concept that there is at the centre of the world's six or seven higher or ethically directed religions a field of unifying spirituality, a Ground of all Being, and that anyone who so desires can experience this.

Arguably mysticism remains amongst that most fuzzy-headed group of nouns, and, too, is often connected to what is disreputable in a scientific age. Yet that mystic experiences occur, and can have far-reaching consequences, is on record. As an antidote to lack of clarity here, Evelyn Underhill's formidable study of the subject is invaluable, and this is how she defines the term:

²³ S. Bedford, *op.cit.*, p.324.

²⁴ J. Deery, *Aldous Huxley and the Mysticism of Science*, p.102.

²⁵ *ibid.*, p.105, In *After Many a Summer* readers get a glimpse of a 'Swami Yogalinga, founder of the School of Personality,' (p.233).

Mysticism, in its pure form, is the science of ultimates, the science of union with the Absolute, and nothing else...the mystic is the person who attains this union, not the person who talks about it. Not to *know about*, but to *Be*, is the mark of the real initiate.²⁶

An experiential, a scientific basis has been given for mysticism, nevertheless whatever else it implies, the mystical attitude usually connotes a world-view in opposition to what scientific and secular premises stand for.

William Propter, Huxley's spokesman in the final 'thirties text, *After Many a Summer*, (1939) is the second of his convincing practical mystics. The edition being used lacks the full title of the original, *After many a Summer dies the Swan*, but the four lines standing at the front of the narrative link the theme of Huxley's text with that of *Tithonus* (1860)²⁷. In Tennyson's poem the goddess grants Tithonus immortality but fails to add eternal youth, whilst in the novel the Fifth Earl, devolving as he ages, turns into a foetal ape.

Before investigating Propter's function directly, and by way of contrast, it is proposed that we look at those two other religiously inclined characters in the text, Jo Stoyte and Virginia Maunciple. Representing large-scale capitalism, Stoyte is an example of that fear and guilt-ridden would-be-believer a popular evangelist once identified as 'having enough religion to bug, but not enough to bless, him.' Devoted to Mammon and 'Progress' (p.110), when he is in dire straits Stoyte repeats as a mantra the prime article of faith of his late wife's Christian Science: 'God is love. There is no death' (p.32). Extra formulative influences on his soul were 'a Sandemanian,' and 'a Plymouth Sister' (p.36); members of strict sects not famed for

²⁶ E. Underhill, *Mysticism; A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness*, Methuen, London, 1911, p.72.

²⁷ T.H. Warren, ed., *Poems of Tennyson, 1830-1870*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1946, p.729.

tolerating artists or free-thinkers. Their chief legacy to Stoyte is the angst induced in him by the quotation that presided over his infant cot: ‘It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the Living God’ (p.36).

Unsettled within, driven by his ego, Stoyte hides his dearth of authentic spirituality behind loyalty to the demi-god, business. He is pleased, too, to be noticed doing charitable works and endowing colleges and universities. Notwithstanding his generosity to patients in the Stoyte Home for Sick Children where a nurse describes him as ‘like a great big kid himself’ (p.31), in a re-arrangement of the anagram Santa, Stoyte can easily metamorphise into a veritable Satan. When overcome by jealousy he shoots to kill the harmless Boone then, typically, buys his chance to avoid prison by handing over money and property to Obispo in exchange for a falsified autopsy. Possessing an unsavoury father-cum-lover attachment to Virginia Maunciple, Stoyte’s bombastic and crass repulsiveness is made bearable in the light of Propter’s compassion, kindness, and amiable but piercing humour.

As for Miss Maunciple, her native Catholicism appears intense and colourful when measured against Stoyte’s bleak, insincere and somewhat perverse Puritanism.²⁸ But, Maunciple’s hatred of natural functions, including breast-feeding and procreation give her away (p.74) whilst her duplicity and her eagerness to be exploited in a debauched manner by Obispo make a mockery of her assumed faith. Hers is a spurious, movie star style religiosity bound by habit, ignorance and a low cunning in trying to supplicate her idol, the Virgin she clearly does not resemble.

Not at all religious, Pete Boone is Huxley’s current representative of secular humanist premises and is an idealist committed to science and to the Republican

²⁸ A Huxley, ‘To the Puritan all things are impure,’ *Music at Night*, particularly savages ‘Grundyism’ (p.114).

cause in the Spanish Civil War. Admirable and helpful, he is another extremely educated yet easily susceptible adolescent, and his ignorance of Maunciple's ruses and his failure to see through Obispo go against him. In spite of this he is a genuine seeker and probably the character in the book likeliest to receive Propter's brand of enlightenment. Boone was at least capable of perceiving that 'the only person he knew who could make some sense out of the absurd, insane, diabolical confusion' (p.186) of the world was Bill Propter.

In Jeremy Pordage's case when introduced to Propter he notices:

a subtle face, in which there were the signs of sensibility and intelligence as well as of power, of a gentle and humorous serenity no less than of energy and strength.

(After Many a Summer, p.21).

Propter, devoid of any ill-will, begins to critique Pordage's character, and his profession, and labelling him 'a scholar and a gentleman,' adds 'there were worse types of human being' (p.21). Admitting to having 'been one myself, once, long ago' (p.21), Propter gains the other's respect on relating that he was the author of *Short Studies in the Counter Reformation*.

To Pordage's 'I'll be damned!' Propter returns, 'We mostly are... Damned. In the psychological sense of the word' (p.22). Having baffled Pordage enough to leave him 'simultaneously annoyed by the man's indiscretion and touched by his friendliness' (p.22), Propter expresses sympathy for his former schoolmate Jo Stoyte, reviled when young as 'Slob, or Jelly-Belly' (p.22). After a few comments on saints and saintliness Propter departs leaving Pordage feeling 'bewildered and reassured' (p.23).

Aside from Miss Maunciple's 'He scares me a bit, but I like him' (p.71), Propter does not appear again until the eighth chapter of Part One when, as if to compensate for his absence, the author turned over almost the whole of Chapters

Eight to Twelve to his presence, and to his preaching. It is this, Propter's inorganic connection to the plot, that critics have seized upon. As early as 1940 Thomas Merton reviled Propter as 'the dullest character in the whole history of the English novel,' and one whose 'interminable philosophizings...impede the movement of the story.'²⁹

In a more temperate vein, Edgar Johnson proposed:

Intellectually, Propter's connection with the story is quite clear: he is the commentator on its passions, and as such its most important character. Organically, however, his connection is tenuous indeed; he stands utterly alone.³⁰

Propter's philosophisings are far from dull, and the novel genre is large enough to accommodate serious and very intelligent discourse, even though this, as Huxley foretold, would appeal to but a tiny minority.³¹

Seated outside his humble abode on his ten acre plot, Propter contemplates the essence of being human, to endorse Cardinal Bérulle's (1575-1629) definition:

C'est un néant environné de Dieu, indigent de Dieu, capable de Dieu, et rempli de Dieu, s'il veut.' A nothingness surrounded by God, indigent and capable of God, filled with God, if he so desires.

(After Many a Summer, p.76).

He follows this with Johann Tauler's (1300-1361) conception of the deity: 'God is a being withdrawn from creatures, a free power, a pure working' (p.76).

Propter connects these formulations by proposing that the finite can come into contact with the Infinite, and so be liberated from the bondage of mortality. The phrase he fastens on in this connection, '*If* he so desires,' leaves him stung by 'a

²⁹ T. Merton, 'Huxley's Pantheon,' D. Watt, ed., *op.cit.*, p.323.

³⁰ E. Johnson, 'Amor Dei in Hollywood,' *ibid.*, p.330.

³¹ In A. Huxley, *Point Counter Point*, Quarles thought, '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 percent of the human race,' p.299.

sudden, rather bitter sadness' (p.76) in having to admit how few choose this freedom. Even when they do, many flounder since 'right knowledge is hardly less rare than the sustained goodwill to act on it' (p.76). Then, thinking along the lines of an idea propounded by Ludwig Fuerbach (1804-72), known for humanistic theologizing in *The Essence of Christianity* (1841), Propter asserts that if the Creator was merely a projection of the mentality and aspirations of limited men and women, the majority would always opt for the 'God of battles, the God of the chosen people, the Prayer-Answerer, the Saviour' (p.76).

Propter passes from reflections on general suffering to 'the concrete and particular miseries of the day' (p.77), his own immediate problem being Hansen's, Stoyte's land agent's, exploitation of the itinerants. Hansen is stupid, mean and prejudiced and his toadying bolsters Stoyte's empire-building hooliganism. What is particularly disturbing about Hansen however is his ordinariness. The agent is 'a very decent, kindly man' (p.77). He also represents 'all those civil servants and statesmen and prelates who go through life spreading misery and destruction' (p.78).

Analysing how difficult it is for another kind of restricted soul, the head of the Kansas family, to rise above his social station and self-perpetuated limitations, Propter (meaning 'Proper') lends the unfortunates a cabin, gives them vegetables grown in his garden, a 'skinned and gutted' (p.79) rabbit for their table and advises, 'ignorance and stupidity are no less severely punished by the nature of things than deliberate malice' (p.79). The worst offence committed by the malcontent fruit-picker 'had been to accept the world in which he found himself as normal, rational and right' (p.80).

Huxley held that the general conduct of affairs on Earth, personal or political, was definitely *not* right. In fact, *l'homme moyen sensuel*'s understanding of

what matters is so distorted that a complete overhaul of his/her perceptual apparatus is needed. That is to say, the fundamental human change required is psychological, and its outcomes are anti-tribal. Elsewhere he stated:

The aim of the psychiatrist is to teach the (statistically) abnormal to adjust themselves to the behaviour patterns of a society composed of the (statistically) normal. The aim of the educator in spiritual insight is to teach the (statistically) normal that they are in fact insane and should do something about it.³²

Propter's point, as was Huxley's, was that if at root we are diseased, so shall be everything we touch, and if we are insane, unless we heal ourselves, all we do will be tainted by madness. The Huxley who wrote *Antic Hay* and *Brave New World*, too, had reveled in what he regarded as humanity's obvious irrationality and insanity. In the 1946 'Foreword' he admitted that the choice he offered in 1932 between two types of madness 'was one that I found amusing and regarded as quite possibly true' (p.7). He went on to say that in spite of sanity being a 'rare phenomenon,' he now hopes 'to see more of it' (p.8).

Propter stands for what is wholesome and balanced, and he is an instigator of change in a positive direction. His bugbear is that whilst everyone should undergo *metanoia*, how many want to? Propter does not let his expectations rise too high, and so concludes that 'it might be possible' (p.82) to lead the Kansas worker to a more realistic understanding of the world and his place in it. Published on the brink of World War Two, it is hardly surprising that Propter's confidence to get through to the majority is a lot lower than Miller's. Propter is completely separate from the mainstream, and whereas Miller radiates an extravert joy, Propter emanates a quiet sadness.

³² A. Huxley, 'The Education of an Amphibian,' *Adonis and the Alphabet and other essays*. Chatto and Windus, London, 1956, p.33.

The theme of *After Many a Summer* is individual liberation, a far different thing to our contemporary cult of individualism. To Propter, 'Bondage is the life of personality, and for bondage the personal self will fight with tireless resourcefulness and the most stubborn cunning' (pp.82-3). When Boone arrives, Propter starts enquiring about the assistant's experiments, goes on to observations concerning mutability, then suddenly insists that the great evil confronting everyone is 'Time' (p.86). He re-formulates the problem as 'craving and time – two aspects of the same thing; and that thing is the raw material of evil' (p.90). Continuing, Propter states the obverse, 'Because potential evil is *in* time, potential good isn't' (p.90). It rests, instead, in eternity.

What requires emphasizing here is a notion so central to Huxley's thought that careful elucidation is needed. From *The Olive Tree* (1936), the short 'Time and the Machine' distinguishes itself in helping us to comprehend humanity's strange and shifting interaction with duration and its opposite. To begin with:

Time, as we know it, is a very recent invention. The modern time-sense is hardly older than the United States. It is a by-product of industrialism – a sort of psychological analogue of synthetic perfumes and aniline dyes.³³

Furthermore, if requisite to 'the factory, and its dependent, the office,'³⁴ formerly, 'Pre-industrial people know time in its daily, monthly and seasonal rhythms.'³⁵ The result of a fixation on clocks, companion pieces to 'Industrialism and urbanism'³⁶ is:

'We have a new consciousness; but it has been purchased at the expense of the old

³³ A. Huxley, 'Time and the Machine,' *The Olive Tree*, p.122.

³⁴ *ibid.*, p.122.

³⁵ *ibid.*, p.124.

³⁶ *ibid.*, p.124.

consciousness.³⁷ Once again, as Boone recalled Propter saying, no one ever got ‘something for nothing’ (p.181).

Telling Boone he prefers a correlation between words and what they represent, Propter contends, ‘That’s why I’m interested in eternity – psychological eternity. Because it’s a fact’ (p.87). Accordingly, this key-word, ‘eternity’, has to have removed from it any reference to everyday meaning, that is as everlasting duration, and instead be equated with a less familiar definition:

- 4. In expressed or implied contrast with *time*
- (a) In metaphysical sense (cf Eternal 1 (b)):
timelessness; existence with reference to which the relation of succession has no application.³⁸

Within the boundaries of English literature the most sustained and authoritative account of this conception may be encountered, as Huxley was aware, in *The Complete Works of William Blake*. But as it is inadvisable to approach Blake without suitable guidance, and as this is a visual age, a straight-forward means of coming to the core of what is being entertained here is to turn to a remarkable film, and so a brief excursion into a film released in 1991, and directed by Bruce Beresford, *The Black Robe*, can be justified.

Set in Canada in the 1640’s the film begins with a group of Indians sitting watching a cuckoo-clock and waiting for the bird to announce the hour, then when it does so, the Indians notice that suddenly the whites’ camp turns into a hive of activity. Later two Indians, one who travels with the whites, and another who has never met them before meet, and the second asks the first if the strangers are intelligent. The other replies “No,” and gives for his reason the fact that they seem

³⁷ *ibid.*, p.124.

³⁸ *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd Edition, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989, Vol. V, p.418.

enslaved to a mechanical device. To those who dwell in the broader acreage of eternity, they who live by the clock seem enthralled in lesser, time-restricted realms.

There being ‘only one God and one beatific vision’ (p.127) Propter proposes what he thinks the sole adequate alternative to Time’s enslavement, the union of the separate soul with the Absolute. Bringing together and commenting on the teachings of various Western and Eastern religious teachers, sages and saints, Huxley returned to the essence of their expositions, that which has been called the *philosophia perennis*. Huxley described the perennial philosophy as

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 transcendent Ground of all being – the thing is immemorial and universal.³⁹

Instead of a future heavenly realm, Propter substitutes eternity in this world, which is to say the ontology of place has given way to the psychology of time, in its aspect here of timelessness. Meanwhile, Stoyte’s reinterpretation of the heavenly is merely a desire to extend indefinitely his mortality on earth, whilst he owns a mind-state that is hellish.

Propter knocks down each intellectual and ethical argument the biologist, Boone, raises in defence of secular humanism. Dismissive of scientific endeavour as but one more time-bound operation, Propter goes on to ridicule its frequent productions: ‘Better planes, better explosives, better guns and gases,’ (p.92) all of which leads to increased fear and hatred.’ Propter, therefore, cannot share Boone’s ‘optimism about science,’ and asserts that even its benign applications can lead to

The multiplication of possessable objects, the invention of new instruments of stimulation; the dissemination of new

³⁹ A. Huxley, ‘Introduction,’ p.1. *The Perennial Philosophy*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1946.

wants through propaganda aimed at equating possession with well-being and incessant stimulation with happiness.

(*After Many a Summer*, p.93).

In his turn Boone, a highly trained scientist, is certain that, whilst Propter's diatribes seem odd, he is clearly no fool, concluding that he had to love

the disquieting old man; loved him for what he did and, above all, for what he so admirably, and, in Pete's experience, uniquely was – disinterestedly friendly, at once serene and powerful, gentle and strong, self-effacing and yet intensely, *there*, more present, so to speak, radiating more life than anyone else.

(*After Many a Summer*, p.101).

Similarly impressed by Propter's record, his 'few shortcomings and many merits,' Stoyte had settled close by to him 'even though, in practice, there was almost nothing that Bill could do or say that didn't annoy him' (p.105).

Propter attempts to engage Stoyte's interest by enthusing over a solar device that 'Abbot of the Smithsonian had been working on' (p.108). Furthermore, the elder's use of 'electrically operated tools' (p.119) shows that rather than being a Luddite he aims to combine the mechanical with his version of the spiritual. If we have grown accustomed to such phrases as 'small is beautiful,' sentiments familiar to today's world of environmental concerns and Kyoto agreements were rarer in decades when people's faith in science was stronger. However, Propter's hope of reaching the masses is more guarded than was Miller's, and he claims 'if I do my work and its reasonably good, there'll be a few people who will want to collaborate with me. That's all' (p.122).

In conversation with Pordage, Propter continuously returns to the testimonies of saints and mystics who view things very differently to scientists and to rationalistic philosophers. Agreeing that Kant's *Ding an sich* is 'unknowable by the *personal* human mind,' Propter continues, 'If you choose to climb on to the level of eternity,

the *impasse* no longer exists' (p.128). Since Pordage is biased toward experientially based science, Propter replies that the science of mysticism is likewise founded on factual evidence: 'You can go and find out what it means for yourself, by first-hand experience' (p.136). Additionally, whilst Propter is an isolated figure, he is not alone in his witness and Boone recalls that when he lay wounded in Gerona the nursing sister who attended him had

always seemed to be secretly happy, not because of anything that was going on around her, but because of something inside, something extraordinary and beautiful behind her eyes that she could look in at.

(After Many a Summer, p.180).

Paul Gannon asserted, 'Unfortunately Propter is too good to be true, and his intrusions upon the scene tend to inhibit rather than enhance the value of the novel'.⁴⁰ Others find Propter's evangel so unsympathetic they refuse to give him a hearing, and at best echo Pordage's evaluation that 'when he dismounts from his hobby-horse what excellent company he is!' (p.155). A.E. Dyson contended that:

Instead of the Nothing of Mrs. Viveash's boredom, we have the Nothingness of Mr. Propter's God: a very dubious exchange we might think, in that Mrs. Viveash is at least conscious that her Nothing is an emptiness, whereas Mr. Propter thinks that his Nothing is everything there is.⁴¹

Dyson's unhelpful judgement can be refuted on theoretical and practical grounds. To begin with, for anyone arriving from Christian or secular positions, various meanings and allusions in Eastern theological systems can be as difficult to

⁴⁰ P. Gannon, *Monarch Notes and Study guides*, Thor Publications, Inc., New York, 1965, pp.8-9.

⁴¹ A.E. Dyson, 'Aldous Huxley and the Two Nothings,' *Critical Quarterly*, 3 (1961), p.307.

ascend as is Everest, and misunderstandings and misinterpretations abound.⁴² Thus, if Dyson was referring to an absence in Propter's ontology, it seems, as is the case with Gnostics like Shelley or Yeats, or Blake, a misnomer simply to brand Huxley an atheist. The Buddha refused to discuss such matters, and with its evasive 'neti, neti – not this, not that,' Vedantism believes itself large enough to accommodate both personal and impersonal notions of the Godhead.⁴³ The second rebuttal is embarrassing to Dyson, for it returns us to the text itself. Huxley was not interested in ideas alone, rather in how they influence character, and whereas it is plain that Viveash has little to recommend her, it is obvious Propter has plenty. It is, then, easier to agree with Bowering's remark, 'perhaps the most successful and likeable of all Huxley's men of goodwill.'⁴⁴

Huxley wrote: 'nothing is harder than to make a really good, crystalline character interesting. Anyone can draw devils; but angels are another matter'.⁴⁵ Blake had made a similar observation about Milton's *Paradise Lost*, when he claimed readers were most interested in, and sympathetic to, the figure of Satan.⁴⁶ From

⁴² This is certainly the case with Peter Kreef's, *Between Heaven and Hell: A dialog somewhere beyond death*, InterVarsity Press, Illinois, 1982. In this booklet Huxley, C.S. Lewis and John F. Kennedy, in an after-life, discuss the ultimate meaning of things. But Kreef allows Lewis by far the greater part of the discourse, and he, along with the author, cannot put aside his pre-conceptions long enough to give Huxley a hearing.

⁴³ See R.N. Dandekar, 'Vedanta,' M. Elrade, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol. 15, MacMillan Publishing Co., New York, 1987, pp.207-14, and Ninian Smart, 'Indian Philosophy,' P. Edwards, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. 3, MacMillan Publishing Co., New York, 1967, pp. 155-169.

⁴⁴ P. Bowering, *op.cit.*, p.150.

⁴⁵ G. Smith, ed., *op.cit.*, p.278.

⁴⁶ W. Blake, 'The Marriage of Heaven and Hell,' Plate 5, Lines 20-23, in A. Ostriker, ed., *op.cit.*, p.182.

another angle, Huxley thought ‘Dante was the only man, I suppose, who’s ever succeeded in making unmitigated goodness seem interesting’.⁴⁷

To refer to Dante Alighieri leads invariably to Huxley’s penultimate full-length novel, *Time Must Have a Stop*, (1944) which he called ‘a piece of the *Comédie Humaine* that modulates into a version of the *Divina Commedia*’.⁴⁸ The quality of goodness, difficult enough to portray in literature, is even harder to arrive at in life, and it is asked whether artistic accomplishments are over-rated, and artistic endeavour is not merely a distraction from the task of living better. As an example of incongruities between word and deed, Bruno Rontini cites Dante following his uplifting ‘e la sua volontate è nostra pace’ by ‘giving vent to his rancours and vanities’ (pp.246-7). However, since Buddhism considers any kind of anger to be a sin, whilst Judaeo-Christianity reserves a space for righteous anger, the alleged discrepancy may be Huxley’s.

Time Must Have a Stop is an important work and with its theme suitably summed up in Hotspur’s lines,

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.⁴⁹

poses a deep threat to professional writers. Since eternal values are said to supercede time-bound ones, and because wisdom rates higher than thought or creative expression, the depiction of Bruno Rontini was Huxley’s attempt to alter his stress on

⁴⁷ G. Smith, ed., *op.cit.*, p.322.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, pp.498-9.

⁴⁹ W. Shakespeare, *Henry IV, Part One*, V, iv, 79-81, in S. Barnet, ed., *The Complete Signet Classic Shakespeare*, Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc., New York, 1972, p.676.

what was ultimately significant. For whilst Rontini cannot write nearly as well as Dante, or even the novel's poet-prodigy, Sebastian Barnack, having achieved mystical union, he is the real hero. Rontini's example causes Sebastian to choose discipleship over literature. Sick and dying, yet still unbroken, of his mentor Sebastian says:

at the end, Bruno had been no more than a kind of thin transparent shell, enclosing something incommensurably other than himself – an unearthly beauty of peace and power and knowledge.

(Time Must Have a Stop, p.307).

Not only is chapter thirty the text's 'Epilogue', but it appears also to be the author's farewell to the novel, especially when, with (Saint) Thomas Aquinas in mind, Sebastian proffers this disclaimer: 'some God-centred saints have condemned art, root and branch. And not only art – science, scholarship, speculation' (p.287).

Critics have often attacked Huxley's lack of interest in character delineation, but just as he was capable in rendering by Obispo and Propter's performances in *After Many a Summer* potent examples from each end of the moral spectrum, so in *Time Must Have a Stop* he showed his strength lay in portraying Bruno, Eustace and Sebastian. Therefore, I must agree with Deery's assertion that these two works 'pay more heed to traditional novelistic techniques like plot and characterization than did earlier novels'.⁵⁰

An examination of *Island* (1962) affords the opportunity to assess whether Huxley's final foray into imaginative prose deserves to be regarded as, to quote a critic who did respect Huxley's intellect and his essays, 'one of the worst novels ever written' along with a plea that he refrained from attempting another.⁵¹ Or, instead, the fair-minded reader comprehends why another eminent critic attested that it ranks

⁵⁰ J. Deery, *op.cit.*, p.126.

⁵¹ Frank Kermode, 'Partisan Review,' 1962, D. Watts, ed., *op.cit.*, p.453.

'among the true philosophical novels where real people act and are acted upon and discuss,' concurrently, many serious issues confronting everyone.⁵²

The tale of someone shipwrecked on an island is hardly original yet what is related about Huxley's eutopian isle certainly is unique. The threadbare plot can be told in a few paragraphs whereupon the author could get on with his proselytizing purpose. For there is no way of disguising the obvious: Huxley had always been, and from the mid-thirties definitely was, a didactic author. As well educated as most professors, but without a University Chair to occupy, and a successful novelist as well as essayist, he believed that both within and outside of the Academy quality writing could play an important educative role, and he saw himself as a teacher and social analyst rather than as an entertainer.

Island was created, then, to reveal not the noble savage of history or of daydreams, instead to show an idealized people living harmoniously and purposively in concord with idyllic surroundings; an ennobled, highly conscious and peaceful race having at least a slight possibility of materializing at some future date on this planet. Additionally, the text is an attempt in imaginative prose form to depict the values and culture of those existing in the elevated realm of psychological eternity; those who, whether or not they ever come into their own in future days, are in fact credible to anyone in contact with what William Blake called the Divine Imagination.

Island's 'hero' is a self-divided, emotionally cold and socially aloof middle class Englishman needing healing and salvation. William Farnaby is travelling about trying to forget his betrayal of Molly, his wife's, trust to spend time with a mistress, Babs, of whom he is not especially fond, a situation inadvertently causing Molly's death. His dilemma is the by now familiar Huxleyan one of a person, against his

⁵² Cyril Conolly, 'Sunday Times,' 1962, *ibid.*, pp.448-9.

better judgement, doing something he or she regards as wrong, but going on and doing it all the same. Farnaby had just visited the country of Rendang-Lobo (here shortened to Rendang), and after looking around decided to sail alone one day. He had got caught in a storm, then managed ‘by sheer miracle’ (p.12) to land slightly hurt on the neighbouring island of Pala. The name offers a clue to deciphering the author’s ultimate religious statement in fiction, for Pala is a *mot à double entente* signifying both Pali, a language many Buddhist texts are scribed in, and Bali, that easy-going Hindu-Buddhist-Christian-Animist community that tourists take delight in visiting.

Washed ashore, Farnaby immediately and frequently hears, the command, ‘Attention’ (p.7), together with another oft-repeated bird cry, ‘Here and now’ (p.11). These cries serve to bring about an effect comparable to that instilled by meditation, mantras and Zen koans;⁵³ a feeling of at-one-ment with everything. Participants of these religious practices, being opened up to accepting irrational modes, including the notion of paradox, are brought to an absorption in the existent moment, and so are able to elude the sovereignty of the rational mind and let go of past anxieties and future hopes. Ostensibly travelling the region in his professional capacity as a journalist, Farnaby is an emissary for Joe Aldehyde, a wealthy businessman wanting to exploit Pala’s oil reserves. How and why this grubby anti-hero called Will Farnaby comes to renounce his self centred thoughts and habits so as to respect, admire and wish to emulate his friendly hosts is the setting around which Huxley – and to a readership that expected this – took his book to its calculated, polemical conclusion.

⁵³ *Koan*. A Japanese Buddhist term meaning a paradox that is put to a monk to stimulate his thinking.

Lying helpless on the beach Farnaby confronts the results of his infidelity with ‘the most scientific objectivity, the most inadmissible frankness,’ (p.9). And so, incidentally, the writer has again brought a scientific trope into the narrative. Farnaby recalls the ambivalent aspect of Babs’s ‘strawberry-pink alcove’ which was it turns life’s ‘Sacred Heart’ or its ‘Essential Horror’ (p.9) – death at the centre of things. However, those mynah bird calls mentioned above, plus a further re-interation ‘Karuna’ (‘compassion’), lead his thoughts back from the past to relax into the odd newness of a land where ‘Anything was possible’ (p.13).

Farnaby is a highly educated unbeliever and so his appeal, ‘for God’s sake’ (p.14) to the native sibling youngsters who rescue him is a facetious request, as is his later declaration, referring to the beginning of Samuel Butler’s *Erewhon*, ‘As luck would have it, Providence was on my side’ (p.22). The local children are Mary Sarojini and Tom Krishna MacPhail and what the girl replies could have come straight from the mouth of Huxley himself, ‘Which God?...There are such a lot...I don’t really like any of them...I like the Compassionate One’ (p.14). At once Mary assumes the mantle of mature nurse and psychologist and helps her patient get rid of those snakes and cliff heights that frightened him.

Introduced to the children’s grandfather, Dr. Robert MacPhail, who suggests their guest’s hyena laugh distorts his appearance, the accused answers ‘I’m the man who won’t take yes for an answer’ (p.20). He also speaks of hating his father, born significantly, in Bloomsbury, and an ardent Liberal (p.19), and an alcoholic barrister and political journalist who was emotionally distant from him. As well, he despised his mother, ‘the daughter of an archdeacon’ (p.20) and a High Anglican. Recalling the deadly ‘NO’s’ affixed to female sexual areas in *Ape and Essence*,⁵⁴ Farnaby’s strident

⁵⁴ A. Huxley, *Ape and Essence*, p.46.

negativity goes against the grain of that most potent oriental symbol, the OM. Standing on the one hand for Brahma, the Creator God in the Hindu trilogy, the OM also represents a defiance of chaos and formlessness; is a resounding ‘Yes’ to the Cosmic Order. And without any doubts as to their own essential rightness, these gracious people try to help Will become positive too. Farnaby is as weak imaginatively as he is in will and purpose, and so ‘our’ anti-hero is described as having:

The physique of a Messiah. But too clever to believe in God or be convinced of his own mission. And too sensitive, even if he were convinced to carry it out.

(Island, p.29).

Consequently he is unhappy but unfortunately ‘rather proud’ (p.29) of wallowing in negativity.

Robert MacPhail introduces Farnaby to Vijaya, his assistant at the Agricultural Experimental Station where they work, and to a temporary visitor ‘studying soil science and plant breeding’ (p.22), Murugan Mailendra. Dr MacPhail treats Farnaby with antibiotics and also asks his daughter-in-law Susila to ‘raise his resistance and give the *vis medicatrix naturae* a chance’ (p.29). Thus both allopathic and alternative medical systems are employed in this scientifically knowledgeable society. To one who confesses he is but travelling ‘*From hell to hell*’ (p.31). Susila brings Farnaby to a restful state by means of her musical voice and her ‘chanting it seemed, out of some other world’ (p.32) and images she evokes of Nature at its best. After which the patient notices ‘How silent the world had become’! (p.34), and silence together with inspired music were high-points in Huxley’s spiritual schema.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ A. Huxley, ‘The rest is silence,’ *Music at Night*, said ‘After silence that which comes nearest to expressing the inexpressible is music,’ p.19.

Dr. Robert hands Farnaby a booklet entitled *Notes on What's What, and on What Might be Reasonable to Do About What's What* (p.38). It was penned by the Old Raja, the great-grandfather of Murugan and the grandson of the man, 'the Raja of the Reform' (p.38), who along with Dr. Robert's great-grandfather, Andrew MacPhail, originated modern Pala. The Old Raja had consolidated the founders' good works and the current generation was improving upon and refining the process.

The Buddha avowed: 'I show you suffering and the cessation of suffering', and whilst Huxley's earlier narratives vividly portrayed the first part of this formulation, with and after *Eyeless in Gaza* each fiction additionally proclaims the same suggested solution. The central message of the Buddha is summed up in his Four Noble Truths: The truth of suffering, the cause of suffering, the end of suffering and the Eightfold Path leading to the cessation of suffering.⁵⁶

Self-recovery is found in that sphere of heightened consciousness where the past and future are unwelcome and so the *Notes* begin, 'Nobody needs to go anywhere else. We are all, if we only knew it, already there' (p.38), a restatement of Christ's, ' the Kingdom of Heaven is within.' Next, with the assertion about 'the Manichee I think I am' transcending polarities to arrive at 'the blessed experience of Not-Two' (p.38), a familiar Huxley theme is introduced. Furthermore, spirituality must be raised on a foundation of scepticism, particularly as concerns the limitations of language, and it is written, ' In religion all words are dirty words' (p.39), and word-zealots are liable to be given a soapy mouth-wash.

Notes II is concerned with ethics and starts off, 'knowing who in fact we are results in Good Being, and Good Being results in the most appropriate kind of good

⁵⁶ Refer to Malcolm Eckel, 'Buddhist Philosophy,' L. Jones, Editor-in-Chief, *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Second Edition, Macmillan Reference, New York, 2005.

doing' (p.39). Nevertheless, right actions without self-knowledge and correct motive never suffice because 'the merely good' are 'just pillars of society' (p.39) and in the long run are as destructive as they are constructive. In the manner of Socrates, Jesus and Buddha, Huxley sought to strip away all masks and half-truths as he got to the core of what the quality of goodness is. As for the Palanese ideal, it is to attain that elsewhere unheard of social order where 'most good doing was the product of Good Being and therefore constantly appropriate' (p.39).

The third section of *Notes* commences by renouncing the exclusive paths of 'The Yigin and the Stoic – two righteous egos,' and stands up for 'A moment of clear and complete knowledge' (p.39) of the self-as-it-is, asserting that one's 'relation to *all* experiences' constitutes 'the only genuine yoga' (p.40). It is also averred '*The more a man knows about individual objects, the more he knows about God*' (p.40). This axiom by Baruch Spinoza takes us back to the spiritual neophyte Calamy's similar insistence on the recognition of the infinite in the finite.⁵⁷ Now, if being and doing originate in the same source, the moral outlook of the Palanese must identify with one of Socrates' great maxims, 'Virtue is knowledge.' And since they stand in accord with a second Spinoza saying 'Virtue is its own reward.' the Palanese have the unenviable task of convincing the surly Farnaby that here are desirable reasons for modifying his behaviour. Lastly, belief, defined as 'the systematic taking of unanalyzed words much too seriously' is to be forsaken in favour of faith, 'the empirically justified confidence in our capacity to know who in fact we are' (p.40).

Island's seminal extensive survey of the sciences takes place in a conversation between Farnaby and the forthcoming Raja, Muragan Mailendra, one 'too whole-heartedly concerned with himself to be able even to simulate the slightest

⁵⁷ A. Huxley, *Those Barren Leaves*, p.288.

interest in anyone else' (p.40). He is the ally, accomplice and possible lover of Colonel Dipa, Rendang's leader; this latter 'dictator' and 'gangster' assured he 'is doing the will of Allah' (p.23). Impressed by Redang's oil wealth, Mailendra wants his island modernized. Planning to spend a quarter of oil revenues on his mother's foundation, 'World Reconstruction' (p.45), the lad informs Farnaby 'the remainder will go into an intensive programme of industrialization' (p.46). Murugan is eager to buy the latest in Soviet weaponry and 'a big insecticide plant' (p.46) for his nation, and consumer items like motorcycles and much more of what is displayed in his favourite reading material, the *Sears, Roebuck and Co.*, catalogue, for himself. Unlike his forefathers and his soon-to-be subjects Mailendra harbours no enthusiasm toward genuine scientific research and equates science with technical and military advancement and technological goodies. Vain in the assumption that his cargo-cult mentality signifies a progressive outlook, he accepts the less admirable aspects of Communism and Capitalism, thus opting for a 'Continuing Revolution' which would simultaneously do away with the current 'set of do-nothing conservatives' (p.47) in government, whilst coveting the fruits of materialism. Driven by his ego, possessing slim inner resources, Mailendra is a warrior and would-be conqueror frustrated by happy and wise poets and pacifists.

His 'hundred kilograms' (p.49) mother is a superb example of those brash and questionable religious self-confidants Huxley lampooned throughout his career. Serving the deity Koot Hoomi, the Rani is a sort of evangelical Theosophist fixated on *brahmacharya*,⁵⁸ but her other-worldly ravings cannot hide her common grasping after power and wealth. Farnaby instantly perceives her true nature:

⁵⁸ *brahmacharya*. Purity of life, particular of a sexual kind, celibacy. In confirming the meaning of these terms in the *OED*, 2nd edition, the researcher was surprised at how often the entries of Oriental terms are attributed to Huxley's writings.

here-albeit clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful – was another of Joe Aldehyde's breed: a female tycoon who had cornered the market, not in soya beans or copper, but in Pure Spirituality, and the Ascended Masters, and was now happily rubbing her hands over the exploit.

(*Island*, p.53).

In contrast to Krishnamurti's choosing, the Rani is not going to throw away her opportunity and is pleased to relate the precise hour when 'the Master came to me...Came in Person, came in Glory' to reveal 'the Appointed Instrument' (p.53). Of course, neither Farnaby nor his creator took any notice of such assertions. The novel covers that terrain wherein individual rights and responsibilities remain paramount, and the solitary artist or thinker does not care to kowtow to a collective will at the beck and call of any fixed ideology, be this Fascism, Communism,⁵⁹ State Capitalism or 'the World-Wide Crusade of the Spirit' (p.53). Obsessed by her mission, the Rani is another of the 'clutching and devouring mothers' (p.57) frequently found in Huxley's stories and her prohibitions have resulted in a son petrified of heterosexual erotic encounters and at odds with his subjects' contentment. Keen to move in elevated social circles, the Rani reveals a character in denial of the Palanese propensity toward 'sincerity, truthfulness, humility, selflessness' (p.55). Despising their interest in 'Hypnotism and Pantheism and Free Love' (p.59), she prefers Aldehyde's shrewd business acumen and his likewise 'addiction to Spiritualism' (p.60).

⁵⁹ For Huxley's response to these note in *Ends and Means*, 'Essentially all the new moralities, Communist, Fascist, Nazi or merely Nationalist, are singularly alike. All affirm that the end justifies the means...All justify the unlimited use of violence and cunning,' p.283.

Having dealt blows against Farnaby's lacklustre doubt and the Rani's facile optimism, the author's next task was to present an option that actually made sense. The 'Frontispiece' to *Island* has this bit of practical advice from Aristotle:

In framing an ideal we may assume what we wish, but should avoid impossibilities.

In a conversation involving the ambassador Mr. Bahu, Farnaby and Radha Appu, a trained biologist and nurse, further Palanese first principles enter the picture. Speaking upon human nature, the woman states: 'I've never met anybody from the outside who wasn't a mental case' (p.65). Bahu calls Farnaby 'a schizoid' and himself 'a paranoid' (p.65), similar 'victims of the same twentieth-century plague...the Grey Life' (p.65), that enervating disease so forcibly spelt out by Camus in his *La Peste* (1947). The ambassador warns Radha to avoid being too rational or over-positive since 'Pala is a small island completely surrounded by twenty-nine hundred million mental cases' (p.68) ready to kill self-integrated exceptions to their rule.

The ensuing segment allows the visitor to ascertain Palanese attitudes to the science of medicine and considering how they hold that every field of knowledge is inter-related and is connected to an objectively existent Ground of Being Huxley's position as regards scientific matters in general is here made clear. Radha dismisses the Western medical model as not primitive but

fifty percent terrific and fifty percent non-existent. Marvellous antibiotics – but absolutely no methods for increasing resistance, so that antibiotics won't be necessary. Fantastic operations – but when it comes to teaching people the way of going through life without having to be chopped up, absolutely nothing.

(Island, p.67)

Since a popular adage of ours is 'prevention is better than cure,' these methods are especially questionable. A second accepted proverb claims 'the proof of the pudding is in the eating,' and, whilst most Palanese are healthy and at peace, the nurse tells of visiting doctors who smoke incessantly and psychiatrists who focus on neurotic symptoms alone and to whom 'the physical fronts don't exist' (p.69). Pouring scorn on Freud's attentiveness to the negative unconscious, she is amazed at the Westerners' disinterest in 'the life-force or the Buddha Nature' (p.69). To these foreigners 'a normal human being is one who can have an orgasm and is adjusted to his society' (pp.69-70). In a short space, Appu has succinctly put her finger on what Huxley regarded as the absurdity of modern medicine. Although it understands the mechanics of the body and can perform amazing feats on it, from the perspective of a complete picture of the human organism it is wholly inadequate. Likewise, by denying the spirit-soul its place in the scheme of things, the secular world-view which informs the sciences is not entirely false, but it is definitely incomplete.

As did Underhill,⁶⁰ Huxley distanced himself from those greedy to obtain special occult gifts, or siddhis⁶¹ as distractions from the main goal, individual liberation. Certain, too, that everything is open to abuse, he agreed with T.S. Eliot 'that meditation requires a metaphysical or theological background,'⁶² although whilst he made such pronouncements he avowed, 'I am not a religious person...not a believer in metaphysical propositions, not a worshipper or performer of rituals, and

⁶⁰ E. Underhill, *op.cit.*, pp.161-2.

⁶¹ *siddhis*. Another Sanksrit term. In Indian and Tibetan religion, a collective noun for magical powers acquired by certain practices. From A. Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy*, 'Most of the great theocentric saints and spiritual teachers...deplored them,' p.116.

⁶² G. Smith, ed., *op.cit.*, p.405.

not a joiner of churches.⁶³ Orthodox Christianity left him cold, but the same could have been said for his reaction to *any* conventional interpretation of the spiritual.

However, this did not have him joining the liberal Christian camp and in *After Many a Summer* Propter maintained that ‘liberal theology had nothing in common with Christianity or any other realistic religion.’⁶⁴ The loquacious Dr. Mulge, a D.D., receives short shrift from the practical sage. In Huxley’s novels the characters of a liberal persuasion – Francis Burlap in *Point Counter Point*, Mrs. Foxe in *Eyeless in Gaza*, Daisy Ockham and the professional theologian who ignores Rontini’s advice in *Time Must Have a Stop* – is each a half-good and inadequately grounded failure. If anywhere in Christendom Huxley would have found a niche amongst theologies containing a substantial dose of existentialism, or been placed in the company of the heretics with Blake and Tolstoy. C.M. Holmes notes affinities with Paul Tillich,⁶⁵ Karl Jaspers,⁶⁶ and Rudolph Bultmann and Dietrich Bonhoeffer,⁶⁷ whilst Huxley’s own favourites included William Law, Eckhart and the mystical elements in Wordsworth’s verse.⁶⁸

⁶³ *ibid.* p.811.

⁶⁴ A. Huxley, *After Many a Summer*, p.199.

⁶⁵ C.M. Holmes, *Aldous Huxley and the Way to Reality*, Indiana University Press, Indiana, 1970, pp.92, 148.

⁶⁶ *ibid.* pp.89, 115.

⁶⁷ *ibid.* p.117.

⁶⁸ He particularly liked the celebrated ‘Immortality Ode.’ In ‘A Wordsworth Anthology,’ *On the Margin*, Huxley questioned the poet’s ‘dim faith in the existence of a spiritual world’ (p.155), which Wordsworth meant to former generations. Then, in ‘Wordsworth in the tropics,’ *Do What You Will*, he pointed out that Nature is not always akin to ‘that chaste, mild day of the Lake Districts,’ p.113.

The *philosophia Perennis* takes account of Christian teachings and has a high regard for Jesus Christ, but any creed, cult or identity must, by its nature be subsumed under a grander, non-denominational umbrella. If pre-disposed by his upbringing to Western cultural values, religion-wise Huxley was more at home amongst Hindu and Buddhist theologies. These latter admit a variety of paths to Godhead and that ‘New Testament’ of India, the *Bhagavad Gita*, enumerates three religious expressions: *karma yoga*, the way of action and works; *bhakti yoga*, the way of devotion; and *jnana yoga*, the way of knowledge. Huxley saw himself as walking the latter path, and as he aged he increasingly moved away from anthropomorphic constructions in favour of what is regarded as the world’s foremost secular religion, Buddhism.

All the same, he learnt from many other sources and Huxley’s eclecticism is a contributing factor to why more settled people stay shy of one who, while often aspiring to the heights of Parnassus, had his feet squarely planted on terra firma. Further difficulties revolve around ideological pre-suppositions. Buddhism does not appear to be a positive sounding religion, as is witnessed in *Island* by what Ranga has to relate concerning the acceptance of Western-style contraceptives by the traditional Palanese. He informs Farnaby that ‘begetting is merely postponed assassination. Do your best to get off the Wheel of Birth and Death’ (p.84), if possible refraining from adding to the population. At which point we are brought back to Huxley’s own most pressing problem, the distaste for humanity that the old gentleman in the railway carriage shares with Gumbrial, Junior.⁶⁹ The Palanese take demography seriously, but perhaps Farnaby, and Huxley, just do not like or understand people.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ A. Huxley, *Antic Hay*. ‘What disgusts me is the people. The number of them...And the way they breed...Like maggots...Millions of them,’ p.213.

⁷⁰ From the *London Magazine*, August 1955. John Wain asked ‘What on earth had the type of sex relationship described in *After Many a Summer* to do with the life of a

Hinduism and Buddhism share a similar spiritual platform, however there are two metaphysical distinctions which are of interest here. Whereas Hinduism is for the most part theistic, Buddhism is not, and it stresses ethics rather than doctrine. Secondly, Hinduism accepts the soul as a separate, abiding entity whilst Buddhism, contemporary psychology and post-modern literary criticism usually do not. Hence, unorthodox Eastern as well as Western thinkers, along with atheistic scientists and New Age pagans, have all endorsed aspects of Huxley's eclectic quest.

Ranga tells Farnaby their outlook is largely Tantrik,⁷¹ 'so you don't renounce the world or deny its value' or 'escape into a Nirvana apart from life.' (p.75) He thinks Eastern superior to Western philosophy because it 'is pragmatic and operational. Like the philosophy of modern physics – except that the operations in question are psychological and the results transcendental.' (p.76) Useful operational devices used by these natives are 'yoga or dhyana, or Zen – or, in certain special circumstances, *maithuna*.' (p.76)

This latter, open to the entire population save the very young, is a method of natural birth-control and a set of *tantrik* exercises that lead to 'a sexuality diffused throughout the whole organism.' (p.77) Sexually satisfied on a level unknown to brave new worlders, whose erotic encounters are transient and meaningless, the Palanese, committed to love and awareness in everything they do, endorse a spirituality based on openness and generosity, but commitment too. Consequently

normally poised human being?' and Peter Quennell accused Huxley of allowing 'no intermediate stage between the ecstatic and the repulsive.' Refer to John Atkins, *Aldous Huxley: a literary study*, John Calder, London, 1956, p.70.

⁷¹ *Tantra*. Comparatively recent strain within Hinduism and Buddhism which emphasizes magical rites and mysticism. In a 1961 letter Huxley wrote 'Pure perceptual receptivity is the basis, incidentally, of many Tantrik exercises aimed at preparing people for self-transcendence into cosmic consciousness,' G. Smith, ed., *op.cit.*, p.902.

they are content to call their place ‘paradise’ (p.77) found.⁷² Unconvinced, the caustic Farnaby mocks, ‘What shall we do to be saved? The answer is in four letters’ (p.79).

Not having been imposed upon by the Religions of the Book – Judaism, Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism – they are ‘still Buddhists or Shivaites – that is, when we’re not Tantrik agnostics...With Mahâyâna⁷³ trimmings’ (p.82) Susila is proud of their achievements:

No Alcatrazes... No Billy Grahams or Mao Tse-tungs or Madonnas of Fatima. No hells on earth and no Christian pie in the sky, no communist pie in the twenty-second century. Just men and women and their children trying to make the best of the here and now, instead of living somewhere else, as you people mostly do, in some other time, some other home-made imaginary universe.

(*Island*, p.96).

Outsiders, she adds, cannot be blamed as they have not been taught how to put their beliefs into practice, and she says this to a Farnaby, who was very aware how short his own actions fell from his desired ideals. It is a common theme of Huxley’s and in *Island* the source of the dilemma is ascribed to ‘The man who invented Christianity – St Paul’, with his ‘the good that I would...I do not; and the evil that I would not, that I do’ (p.96). Furthermore, Susila confides how she recently had studied the history of the Christian faith, exclaiming, ‘What a horror!’ (p.97). Her advice is both to have a full communion with, and stay detached from, the world of flux and changing fortunes, situations and personalities. Tired of his ‘less than human’ (p.98) occupation

⁷² Huxley’s initial interest in sexual liberation may have been sparked by Bertrand Russell. However *Island*’s sophisticated sexual mores are indebted to tantra and to the heterodox nineteenth century Oneida Community, the same mentioned in the text (p.77) and in *Ends and Means*, pp.129-30.

⁷³ *Mahâyâna*. Buddhism developed in two directions, Theravâda and Mahâyâna. The former considers itself faithful to the Buddha’s original teachings and is restricted to the few, is the ‘lesser vehicle.’ The latter, the ‘greater vehicle,’ is open to everyone.

as an ‘entomologist’ studying ‘maggots’ (p.100), Farnaby asks his instructor ‘Will you help me?’ (p.107).

The onslaught on Christianity continues in the biographical details of Andrew MacPhail, the Scottish half of the instigators of modern Pala. A family situation dominated by strict Calvinist parents turned him into an atheist, and Dr. Robert brands his upbringing ‘applied sadism...in the service of an ideal...the expression of a religious conviction’ (p.115). Continuing, he makes a link between ontological beliefs and disciplinary action

Wherever little boys and girls are systematically flagellated, the victims grow up to think of God as ‘Wholly Other’...Wherever...children are brought up without being subjected to physical violence, God is immanent...among Buddhists and Hindus education has always been non-violent. No laceration of little buttocks – therefore *Tat tvam asi*, thou art That, mind from Mind is not divided.

(*Island*, pp.115-6).

Instead of Farnaby’s choice, a tale told by ‘an idiot’ or ‘a Calvinist.’ Susila affirms a story told by ‘Somebody, for a change, completely sane’ (p.119), indeed, an entire race of somebodies.

Turning to scientific matters, the Palanese have a choice as to supplementing *maithuna* with condoms, and ‘had built the first superphosphate factory east of Berlin’ (p.83). They endorse practices such as ‘Deep Freeze and Artificial Insemination’ (p.187) to improve their stock, but this is never compulsory. Furthermore, Ranga’s diagnosis that human folly or ignorance are in a different causal relationship to givens like ‘gravity or the second law of thermo-dynamics’ (p.81) reveals a considerable scientific education. In fact Ranga is about to depart to study biochemistry at Manchester University. The Palanese are uninhibited when it comes to embracing unorthodox medicine, and Andrew MacPhail’s actual model in

such matters was spelt out in a letter by Huxley.⁷⁴ All the same, no panacea exists, and there being no single cause or solution to human problems, a number of factors must be accounted for. So

Science is not enough, religion is not enough, art is not enough, politics and economics are not enough, nor is love, nor is duty, nor is action however disinterested, nor, however sublime, is contemplation. Nothing short of everything will really do.

(Island, p.132).

Murugan is not interested in any of this and prefers the *Sears and Roebuck* catalogue given him by Dipa. In a re-writing of the *Genesis* myth of Adam and Eve and the serpent Farnaby observes:

The tree in the midst of the garden was called the Tree of Consumer Goods, and to the inhabitants of every under developed Eden, the tiniest taste of its fruit...had power to bring the shameful knowledge that, industrially speaking, they were stark naked.

(Island, p.134).

The citizenry are self-sufficient within and reject the beads and baubles of consumerism, but their future head of state covets boy's toys and his hero is a bellicose Colonel. Farnaby sarcastically tells Mailendra to distribute what is to be referred to as 'The Newest Testament' (p.143) because the catalogue will have the people 'clamouring for Progress – oil wells, armaments, Joe Aldehyde, Soviet technicians' (p.135). To this the other bemoans the Palanese penchant for 'Toadstools'! (p.135), mycology being one science they study avidly.

Disclaiming the term 'dope', Dr. Robert substitutes 'the *moksha*-medicine, the reality-revealer, the truth-and-beauty pill' (p.136), something by means of which

⁷⁴ For James Esdaile, the originator of magnetic passes as an anaesthetic technique. G. Smith, ed., *op.cit.*, p.850.

even the young and uninitiated ‘can catch a glimpse of the world as it looks to someone who has been liberated from his bondage to the ego’ (p.137). While many discoveries have yet to be made, in the meantime, ‘All one can do is to accept the facts and concoct hypotheses’ (p.138) and discard or re-evaluate any that are disproved or are superseded. Ranga asserts that the fungi do ‘something to the silent areas of the brain which opens some kind of neurological sluice and so allows a larger volume of Mind’ (p.138) to pass into the ingester. Once again, then, the Palanese, adverse to compartmentalization, take into account a unified field of knowledge, and this, basing itself on fact and experiment, accepts scientific and religious experience whilst denying a space to dogma and the supernatural. Ranga also asserts that, if what the stimulant affords proves to be merely epistemologically subjective, ‘it’s still the most important thing that ever happened to you’ (p.139).

To confirm this teaching, Farnaby is invited to a temple service replete with familiar trappings – priest, prayers, incense and chanting – where young folk passing into adolescence receive their inaugural dose of the revered mushroom. Called ‘a religious ceremony’, the event ‘includes an actual experience of the real thing’ (p.159), neither a proposition nor a promise, but, rather, ‘a state of being’ (p.160) open to verification by participants. Despite ritual and symbolism the aim is far different to the worship or propitiation of objectively existent deities. In the Hindu pantheon, Shiva serves as the god who directs the intertwined processes of creation and destruction, but these Gnostic Shivaites offer themselves ‘to Shiva – in other words, to their own Suchness visualized as God’ (p.162). Dr. Roberts concludes his sermon by enquiring what his audience will do with their revelation, hoping they might dedicate themselves ‘to the business, not at all as usual, of being what you are in fact’ (p.169).

Returning to *Notes*, Farnaby reads what separates divergent philosophies of science:

Tunes or pebbles, processes or substantial things?
 'Tunes,' answer Buddhism and modern science.
 'Pebbles,' say the classical philosophers of the West.
 Buddhism and modern science think of the world in terms of music.

(*Island*, (pp.171-2).

By including such discussions Huxley widened the scope of the novel and as well as helping the scientifically ignorant to become acquainted with scientific material he allowed over-confident secularists to feel less embarrassed by, and less hostile to, theological issues and credentials. It was the same Huxley who, himself capable of discoursing adequately on most topics, opened a way for the popularising of these difficult notions, the fruit of which is seen in companion texts such as Robert Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* (1974) and Fritjof Capra's *The Tao of Physics* (1975).

When Farnaby is awaiting his initial taste of the eye-opener, Mrs. Rao warns him that it should be treated cautiously, and taken as a sweetmeat rather than as regular food. Vijaya elaborates:

In theological terms...the *moksha*-medicine prepares one for the reception of gratuitous graces – pre-mystical visions or the full-blown mystical experiences. Meditation is one of the ways in which one co-operates with these gratuitous graces.

(*Island*, p.184).

Huxley's *The Doors of Perception* and *Heaven and Hell* were written to explain and justify his researches with psychedelics. However, he never promoted any substance as a substitute for normative mystical experiences, a point Sybille Bedford⁷⁵ and

⁷⁵ S. Bedford, *op.cit.*, Vol II, pp.161-2.

Laura Huxley⁷⁶ are at pains to make clear. Huxley himself states this in the first of these booklets,⁷⁷ re-enforcing this with ‘Visionary experience is not the same as mystical experience. Mystical experience is beyond the realm of opposites,’ in the second.⁷⁸ Familiar with the histories of Coleridge and de Quincey, and wary of Leary’s exuberance,⁷⁹ Huxley remained half-suspicious of these enchantments, and was certainly no advocate of drug-induced hedonism in the manner of William Burroughs. Huxley was admittedly a poor visualizer, and mescaline changed that. It also freed him from

the world of selves, of time, of moral judgments and utilitarian considerations... of self-assertion, of cocksureness, of over-valued words, and idolatrously worshipped notions.⁸⁰

Practically everyone hankers after temporary respites from regular habits, but ‘if one always saw like this, one would never want to do anything else.’⁸¹

A few years previous to *Island* Huxley had attested to two kinds of religious knowing, ‘the religion of immediate experience’ and ‘the religion of symbols...knowledge about the divine rather than direct acquaintance with it.’⁸² In a parallel manner to other meditations, hallucinogenics help one reach the former state, and their insights are more profound than those of abstract thought or petitionary

⁷⁶ L.A. Huxley, *op.cit.*, p.135.

⁷⁷ A. Huxley, *The Doors of Perception*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1956, p.58.

⁷⁸ A. Huxley, *Heaven and Hell*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1954, p.52.

⁷⁹ T. Leary’s *The Politics of Ecstasy*, Paladin, N.Y., 1970, became for many the Bible of L.S.D. advocates.

⁸⁰ A. Huxley, *The Doors of Perception*, p.27.

⁸¹ *ibid.*, p.26.

⁸² A. Huxley, ‘Man and Religion’, *The Human Situation*, p.199.

prayer, he thought. *Island* reassesses and reverses the largely negative reaction to *soma* in *Brave New World*. Both communities aim for happiness; however, whilst those Londoners set out for temporary escapes that do not result in higher outcomes, these Palanese use the *moksha*-medicine to discover and/or to reconnect with ‘Suchness.’

When a parrot lands on Vijaya’s shoulder, Farnaby remarks that the people get on very well with their birds. The island setting deserves at least to be called an earthly semi-paradise populated by quasi-vegetarian pacifists who like to live. Vijaya rightly opines.

Pala is probably the only country in which an animal theologian would have no reason for believing in devils. For animals everywhere else, Satan, quite obviously, is *Homo sapiens*.

(*Island*, p.186).

Farnaby is gaining a clearer understanding of why these people hold their island home to be paradise realized, yet he is still divided in his loyalties and like Murugan, he is an opportunist out for his own material ends, to wit, to earn enough easy money so as to have the leisure to write and to temporarily avoid working.

Huxley’s unofficial vocation, especially in and after middle age, was that of a spiritual educator, and we see in him some of the staunch qualities of his Victorian ancestors. *Island* is, in the format of the novel, the culmination and distillation of decades of intellectual struggles and effort. Although Huxley often wrote upon pedagogic matters, two earlier examples from his writings are relevant to this text, and the essentials proposed in them remained the same to his death. As far back as the long essay ‘Education’,⁸³ he had expressed dissatisfaction with contemporary principles of education and proposed different ideals. For a start, he discounted the

⁸³ A. Huxley, ‘Education,’ *Proper Studies*, pp.89-138.

value of his own liberal education, one which prepared the young for life by a rigid training in intellectual disciplines, but was disconnected from material things and vital experiences. To give the reader an idea of what Huxley was getting at, of the kind of abstracted, non-learning that resulted in adolescent adults, we may take this example from *Island*. In an exchange between Farnaby and Mary Sarojini, when the girl is shocked that a grown up has never seen anyone giving birth or dying and asks how he ever learnt anything, the other replies, 'we never got to know things, we only got to know words' (p.240). In the essay Huxley set down his first principles and these inform the Palanese method of instruction:

A perfect education is one which trains up every human being to fit into the place he or she is to occupy in the social hierarchy, but without, in the process, destroying his or her individuality.⁸⁴

The 'Foreword' to *Brave New World* had suggested a third possible social order to the two originally portrayed and, speaking broadly, *Island* is the fictional expression of that alternative. The template upon which the narrative's action unfolds in 1946 was identified thus:

economics would be decentralist and Henry-Georgian, politics Kropotkinesque and co-operative. Science and technology would be used as though, like the Sabbath, they have been made for man, (not as at present and still so in *Brave New World*) as though man were to be adapted and enslaved to them. Religion would be the conscious and intelligent pursuit of man's Final End, the unitive knowledge of the immanent Tao or Logos, the transcendent Godhead or Brahman.

('Foreword,' *Brave New World*, pp.8-9).

He added that this society's *Weltanschauung* would be 'a kind of High Utilitarianism, in which the Greatest Happiness principle would be secondary to the Final End principle' (p.9).

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, p.136.

In *After Many a Summer* Propter proposed in exchange for the Benthamites' postulates 'A utilitarian with a difference...Bentham crossed with Eckhart, say, or Nagarjuna' (p.117). Propter also wants a system that 'will give the fewest possible opportunities for unfortunate people, like Jo Stoyte, to realize their potentialities' (p.121). In Pala the elders weed out potential diabolists, and 'Peter Pans' (p.151) such as Hitler, and 'Muscle Men' (p.152) like Stalin are encouraged to excel physically in a rich and varied education where 'climbing's an integral part of the school curriculum' (p.156).

Further cures in *Island* for then current socio-political problems include decentralizing government and semi-self-sufficient communities based on the Jeffersonian democratic model and encouraging rural life-styles and the widespread use of renewable energy systems. Palanese education testifies to a deep and broad psychological, as well as physiological awareness, and a restatement of Sheldon's three types⁸⁵ is mentioned along with psychoanalytic techniques employed by Laura Huxley. The aim of all this is pragmatic, 'turning out good human beings' (p.91) and a central part of each child's training is located in the local 'M.A.C. – a Mutual Adoption Club' (p.90). The neurosis undergone by members of today's nuclear family is claimed to be resolved by these, in which the child is raised in an average of twenty households. However, the quickest and most intimate of lessons – for it teaches one to love and to know oneself and to connect with the essence of creation – can be delivered by a single dose of the *moksha*-medicine. So, we next examine how Farnaby's ultimate, trans-rational voyage changes him.

⁸⁵ Dr. William Sheldon classified individuals into endomorphic, mesomorphic and ectomorphic (Huxley's) types, and Huxley thought Sheldon's scheme invaluable.

Before taking his final step Farnaby has to cease wallowing in negativity, and, talking of his worst fears and of his strongest objections to her faith, he details to Susila the death of his beloved redsetter Tiger, ‘the Incarnation’ (p.233) of friendliness in his grey household, and of how his dear, generous Aunt Mary was brought low by the Cosmic Joker and the Grim Reaper. The logical outcome to him of witnessing intense and pointless suffering has to be ‘No’ and he argues:

Yes is just pretending, just positive thinking. The facts, the basic and ultimate facts, are always no. Spirit? No! Love? No! Sense, meaning achievement? No!

(Island, p.235).

To which Susila, agreeing that these questions cannot be met on the level of reasoning, suggests

stop all your pro-ing and con-ing (that’s the Buddha’s advice) and get on with the job...Everybody’s job – enlightenment. Which means, here and now, the preliminary job of practising all the yogas of increased awareness.

(Island, p.236).

Farnaby at last makes the decision to quit siding with Aldehyde and the Rani’s party and to further leave his old self behind. Meanwhile, in a touching scene that shows a softer side to the author, and which parallels Huxley’s commitment to Maria when she lay dying,⁸⁶ Dr. Robert helps his wife Lakshmi cross over death’s threshold.

Farnaby reacted smuttily to the ‘f-’ verb, but to many the foulest four letter noun in the English language is ‘drug’ and in Chapter Fifteen, one almost entirely devoted to Farnaby’s trip, a controversial, even illicit, subject is tackled. To the aspirant burdened by enormous doubt the sole sufficient remedy is to have a direct and unitive experience of the ‘Yes’ principle. Having gradually arrived at sympathy with the islanders, a break through is needed and the new-found revelatory substance

⁸⁶ See S. Bedford, *op.cit.*, Volume Two, pp.185-6.

allows Farnaby to instantly empathize with whatever is best in their scheme of things.

After ingesting mushrooms he is soon noticing discrepancies, separating kitchen clock measurements and

the heart of a timelessly present Event, of a Now that changed incessantly in a dimension, not of seconds and minutes, but of beauty, of significance, of intensity, of deepening mystery.

(Island, p.263).

So we are brought back once again to the author's concern with time and its opposite.

His eyes closed, 'There was only this experienced fact of being blissfully one with oneness' (p.263). Susila replies, 'Eckhart called it God...Felicity so ravishing, so inconceivably intense, that no one can describe it' (p.264). When Susila puts J.S. Bach's *Fourth Brandenburg Concerto* on the gramophone, to Farnaby it's as if he is hearing it anew and he calls it 'a pure datum – no, a blessed donum' (p.266). He realizes that he 'hadn't wanted to take yes for an answer in any field but the aesthetic' (p.266) and is forced to admit 'Eternity...Believe it or not, it's as real as shit' (p.267). Furthermore, to those directly in contact with Absolute Reality there must be a reversal in precedence to that given in the opening to John's Gospel, 'In the beginning was the Word.' To the mystic, this means that 'at the end, not in the beginning – came the word' (p.270). Just as to Huxley life precedes literature, so experience comes before theory. Impervious to doubt, at this stage Farnaby declares that he has found the 'yes' he had longed to acknowledge and 'The answer was just plain God – the God one couldn't possibly believe in, but who was self-evidently the fact confronting him' (p.271).

Notwithstanding this acceptance, Farnaby had been forewarned that the *moksha*-medicine can take ingesters to frightening places and the grotesque image of a pair of copulating mantises, the female devouring the male's head as they mate.

then the couple being eaten by a darting lizard, returns him to his fear of death and distaste for life. Assisting him to exit his impasse Susila says

the Void won't do you much good unless you can see its light in *Gongylus gongyloides*. And in people...Which is sometimes considerably more difficult.

(Island, p.278).

Arriving at the summit of these travels Farnaby exclaims, ‘God is love. What manifest nonsense! And yet it happens to be true’ (p.280). His eyes filled with tears of joy he quotes Huxley’s favourite line by Blake, ‘Gratitude is heaven itself’ (p.283), to which Susila returns, ‘And all the more heavenly...for being heaven on earth and not heaven in heaven’ (p.283).

In spite of Farnaby’s contentment in the Eternal Now, realism is about to assert itself over romanticism, and modernist tendencies will swiftly uproot ancient traditions. In that lesser geography, framed by watches and weapons, the inevitable occurs and the brute forces led by Dipa invade the tiny, cosmic principality. Farnaby’s affirmations remain, however, since ‘Disregarded in the darkness, the fact of enlightenment remains’ (p.286). However, as against Western, linear notions of time pagan and oriental conceptions are cyclical, and the final call-to-arms in *Island*, that of the mynahs spruiking ‘Karuna’ and ‘Attention’ (p.286), leaves behind a hope that their plea may yet be taken up by the majority as it has been by the minority dwelling in psychological eternity.

William Farnaby has successfully completed his mission and his author has convincingly shown a believable character undergoing unique happenstances. The culture of democracy is over-flowing with unsavoury and inconsequential anti-heroes, and a writer who started delineating such failures eventually featured in his prose exceptional types capable of moving the reader. Huxley fore-grounded a figure who is

a pioneer of humanity, a sharply intuitive and painfully practical person: an artist, a discoverer, a religious or social reformer, a national hero, a “great active” among the saints...They are our ambassadors to the Absolute.⁸⁷

As for general opponents of his intoxicant of preference, the final ironic sentence as delivered by John Rivers in *Ape and Essence* should silence their egos.⁸⁸ Also, according to Deery, R.C. Zaehner, once Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics at Oxford, tried psychedelic stimulants to see whether these could lead to a full mystical experience. He concluded that they did not lead to the theistic experience Zaehner thought necessary. Actually, Huxley who did not look for evidence of a creator, had another agenda altogether.⁸⁹

As in *Brave New World*, so in *Island* the objective is personal happiness and social coherence; however, there is this immense difference. Whereas the former citizens, unknown to themselves, are conditioned slaves, the Palanese are certain they are ‘as perfectly free...as it is possible to be’ (p.58). Bahu agrees there is nothing intrinsically wrong with Pala’s aims, they are simply ‘out of context’ and ‘irrelevant’ to the present situation. Isolated eutopias may have been possible once but

about 1905...in less than a single generation the world completely changed. Movies, cars, aeroplanes, radio. Mass production, mass slaughter, mass communication, and, above all, plain mass.

(Island, p.58).

Pala, Bahu continues, has to change because in a technological age it is impossible to remain separate and to be thus obstinate amounts to ‘sheer *hubris*; it’s a deliberate

⁸⁷ E. Underhill, *op.cit.*, p.414.

⁸⁸ From A. Huxley, *The Genius and the Goddess*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1955, ‘Drive carefully... This is a Christian country and it’s the Saviour’s birthday. Practically everybody you see will be drunk,’ p.128.

⁸⁹ J. Deery, *op.cit.*, pp.108-9.

affront to the rest of humanity' (p.59) and to God. Consequently Pala needs must act as madly and as badly as everyone else. Now, whilst playing his part as a herald of Elysium splendours, Huxley spoke upon earthly matters and he knew that, arrayed in their various uniforms, the Rani, Murugan, Dipa and Bahu is each there to make sure that heaven is to be sought anywhere except in the here and now. Believing that although *metanoia* is open to everyone few ever choose this, Huxley wrote:

Every great religious leader has been profoundly pessimistic about society at large and men and women as they are... Many are called, few chosen... On the other hand, they have been profoundly optimistic about the potentialities of individuals and very small associations of such individuals.⁹⁰

Often those refusing any chance of success to terrestial paradises use, like Dipa, God as 'an alibi' (p.72) to cause havoc to happier people whilst they build up their worldly wealth. Fiction has a habit of following fact and in Queensland thirty years ago the Puritan Protestant Premier, Joh Bjelke-Petersen, a devotee of the sham gods 'development' and 'progress,' ordered police and military units to destroy a Pala-like community near Cedar Bay and cart off its inhabitants to face court in Cairns. Their crime? Refusing to be 'normal' Australians, which is to say they were Nature-respecting, life-lovers instead of exemplary consumers who stick to cities and do the bidding of the authorities. Mustapha Mond would have left the Cedar Bay squatters in their 'Reservation'. Propter might have applauded their decision. The Palanese would probably welcome them into their community.

Understandably, those who prefer novels of action or experimentation, as well as readers who do not share Huxley's philosophical or theological postulates,

⁹⁰ G. Smith, ed., *op.cit.*, p.444.

will not feel comfortable with *Island*. As Wayne Booth acknowledged, it nevertheless is part of a rich heritage:

Properly placed within that other, non-Leavisionian 'great tradition' – works like *Gulliver's Travels*, *Candide*, *Rasselas*, *Erewhon* using fictional devices to provoke thought – *Island* can command full attention and respect...it is one of those very rare birds, an affirmative Utopia – not a projection into the future of how bad things are now, but a discovery in the present of how good they might be.⁹¹

Cyrill Connolly also understood the strength of what is more a vision than a novel, and explains the difficulties Huxley faced and asks whether he succeeded. The author is writing a novel which is alive in its own form, about

a religious Utopia and a religion with which neither Christians nor agnostics, in fact the bulk of his readers, will sympathise...an exceptionally adult novelist and his technique is at the service of his lucid intelligence...unlike D.H. Lawrence's Utopias, or indeed anybody else's. Mr. Huxley's makes sense.⁹²

It may be debated who was the greater novelist, but as to who attained to a more comprehensive, positive and sophisticated outlook on life, the benign and expansive Huxley must rate above the angry, and limited, Lawrence. And if Huxley's Palanese were far superior to Lawrence's primitives, Huxley cogently pointed out the other's deficiencies, saying that despite his gifts and strengths, 'they availed him nothing in relation to 'enlightenment', 'salvation', 'liberation.' Nothing burns in hell except self-will' and Lawrence's 'self-will of heroic, even of Titanic proportions' made him suffer and left him 'nothing but a great man.'⁹³ Elsewhere he speaks of the difference between 'Nature and Animal Eternity' and 'Grace and Spiritual Eternity'

⁹¹ W. Booth, 'Yale Review,' June 1962, D. Watt, ed., *op.cit.*, pp.451-2.

⁹² C. Connolly, 'Sunday Times,' April 1962, *ibid.*, pp.446-8.

⁹³ G. Smith, ed., *op.cit.*, p.559.

and contends that Lawrence's error was 'to equate the two eternities; whereas in fact they merely occupy analogous positions on the ascending spiral of life.'⁹⁴

In *Brave New World*, when Mond brought up 'religion', John Savage admits he had 'no words' to explain his religious sentiments adding, 'Not even in Shakespeare' (p.185) were these to be found. A short paper dictated on his deathbed, *Shakespeare and Religion*, was Huxley's last prose statement and there he says that, in spite of Shakespeare's considerable and varied presentation of religion in his plays, details of his personal beliefs and practices are but scantily documented. The poet's own views are difficult to locate until the period of the late romances wherein activities take place 'in an atmosphere of acceptance, of forgiveness, of a conviction that...God's in his heaven and all's right with the world.'⁹⁵ Furthermore, in Prospero's departing speech, the wizard was 'enunciating the doctrine of Maya. The world is an illusion, but it is an illusion which we must take seriously...Our business is to wake up.'⁹⁶ Next, those lines by Hotspur cited previously are quoted, and Huxley's final words to his public recommend that the individual 'must learn the regular cultivation of a mood of timelessness, of the sense of eternity.'⁹⁷

To summarize Huxley's depiction of religion and religious figures in the three texts examined. Even in those early narratives when he was subscribing to irreligiosity and exposing clerics and spiritualist frauds Huxley was already questioning the dominant intellectual scepticism and its over-confidence in science.

⁹⁴ *ibid.* p.620.

⁹⁵ A. Huxley, 'Shakespeare and Religion,' *Huxley and God: Essays*, Harper-Collins, London, 1992, p.6. Retrieved on <http://www.sirbacon.org/links/huxley2.htm>.

⁹⁶ *ibid.* p.8.

⁹⁷ *ibid.* p.9.

Lawrence's vitalism offered him one escape-hatch, but Nature-worship and pre-scientific civilizations were not what he wanted. Nonetheless, he did ask for strong and meaningful values and of *Brave New World* Dame Rebecca West avowed that, whereas his previous novels had been 'a fuss about nothing,' here was his 'most accomplished novel' and 'the most serious religious work written for some years.'⁹⁸ Huxley refined his outlook as he personally underwent a transformation during the 'thirties, and although he never left his agnosticism behind he added a non-denominational faith founded on mystical experience, and this is his definitive link between what we call religion and science. Mr. Propter is a rare figure in twentieth-century literature, and comparable in its visionary qualities to Morris's *News from Nowhere* (1890), *Island* is a unique book about an exceptional people. In these texts and elsewhere Huxley showed himself to be a penetrating linguist and analyst of words and his placement of Sanskrit and other foreign religious terms expanded the available vocabulary of English and also aids closer cross-cultural ties and (what is increasingly necessary) inter-religious dialogue.

Huxley, then, added to the expansion of his century's intellectual and spiritual legacies. He was also part of the Western tradition of artistic romanticism and B.S. Rutland concluded in a thesis on Huxley and Waugh that

they both came to embrace a romanticism earlier rejected in order to combat the sterility and barbarism they felt to be pervasive elements in the modern world.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ R. West, 'Daily Telegraph,' February 1932, D. Watt, ed., *op.cit.*, p.197.

⁹⁹ B.S. Rutland, *Evolving Moral Stance in the Novels of Aldous Huxley and Evelyn Waugh*, Unpublished Ph.D thesis, Florida State University, 1986, D.A. Number 8625-791.

Yes, he was a modernist in his interest in psychology and the life sciences, but an open acceptance of the spiritual other and of visionary faculties place him with the romantics, as was the writer we next investigate.

If *War and Peace* represents novelistic excellence *Island* falls well short of the mark. But Huxley never claimed to be an outstanding novelist¹⁰⁰ and he expected to be met by the dull strictures of formalists and dogmatists. Nevertheless, if an author is to be judged on the amount of consciousness in his or her possession, and on the ability to present a superlative vision in clear and logical terms, then Huxley is unique and *Island* is a first rate achievement of its kind. As he said in his own defence, ‘if we weren’t all so busy trying to do something else, we *could*, I believe, make this world a place fit for fully human beings to live in.’¹⁰¹

In his *Craft of the Novel* Colin Wilson referred to Lewis’s science-fiction antecedent, David Lindsay, as having ‘once made a convenient division of novels into those that describe the world, and those that try to explain it’,¹⁰² maintaining that English novelists have usually adopted the former model. In an age obsessed with trash and trivia, in literature as in life, we trust it has been shown why a greater emphasis on the less popular type of fiction is necessary. As a leading proponent of a proselytising sort of imaginative prose fiction for just over four decades, Huxley deserves a larger audience, especially in our leading institutions of learning.

¹⁰⁰ G. Smith, ed., *op.cit.*, p.600.

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*, p.944.

¹⁰² Colin Wilson, *The Craft of the Novel*, Ashgrove Press, Bath, 1986, p.63.