Recontextualising Huxley

Grzegorz Moroz

Recontextualising Huxley: Selected Papers

Białystok 2017

Reviewed by
Prof. **Katarzyna Więckowska**, UMK, Toruń

Composition, cover design: Ewa Frymus-Dąbrowska

Front cover: Eric Pape, *Aldous Huxley* (1929)

**Published with the financial support
of the Faculty of Philology,
University of Bialystok**

ISBN 978-83-7657-210-9

Wydawnictwo PRYMAT, Mariusz Śliwowski,
ul. Kolejowa 19; 15-701 Białystok,
tel. 602 766 304, 881 766 304
e-mail: prymat@biasoft.net, www.prymat.biasoft.net

For Bernfied Nugel

*

I wish to express my thanks and gratitude for the following publishers for allowing me to publish in this book my articles they have published before:

Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku

"Failure in the Inter-cultural Communication in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*", in: *Language, Society and Problems of Intercultural Communication*, ed. by K. Bogacki, H. Miatluk, L. Sereda, Białystok 2005.

"Good or evil? The semantics of the body in *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan* by Aldous Huxley" w *Semantic Ralations in Language and Culture*, ed. by Krzysztof Bogacki and Anna Miatluk, Białystok 2006.

"Culture and Literature as Inter-Disciplinary and Holistic Concepts in Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* and Aldous Huxley's *The Perennial Philosophy*", in: *Interdisciplinary Perspectives in Foreign Language Teacher Education*, ed. by K. Bogacki, B. Głowacka, D. Potocka, Wydawnictwo Białystok 2008.

Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Finansów i Zarządzania w Białymstoku

"*Brave New World* Re-revisited", in: *Edukacja dla Przyszłości*, t. II, red. by J.F. Nosowicz, Białystok, 2005.

Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego

"William Sheldon's Varieties of Human Physiques and Temperaments in the Writings of Aldous Huxley", in: *PASE Studies in Literature and Culture*, ed. by M. Cieslak, A. Rasmus, Łódź 2008.

LIT Verlag

"From Centrifugal Bumble-puppy to Free Climbing: Representations of Sport in *Brave New World*, *Eyeless in Gaza* and *Island*", in: *Aldous Huxley, Man of Letters: Thinker, Critic and Artist: Proceedings of the Third International Aldous Huxley Symposium, Riga 2004"*, ed. by B. Nugel, U. Rasch, G. Wagner, Muenster; LIT Verlag, Münster 2007.

Peter Lang Verlag

"From a Theodrome to the Dance of Shiva-Nataraya—Recycling Aldous Huxley's Views on Circularity in Nature and Culture", in *A culture of Recyling/Rycycling Culture*, ed. by W. Kalaga, M. Kubisz, J. Mydla, Frankfurt am Main 2011.

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

"Of Death and Grief, John The Savage, Aldous Huxley and D.H. Lawrence w *Culture and the Rights/Rights of Grief* , red: Z. Białas, P. Jędrzejko, J. Szołtysek, Newcastle upon Tyne 2013.

"Aldous Huxley, the Great War and Pacifism", in: *Re-Imagining the First World War: New Perspectives in Anglophone Literature and Culture*, ed. by A. Branach-Kallas, N. Strehlau, Newcastle upon Tyne 2015.

Contents

Preface

This selection of articles is the result of my scholarly interest in the works of Aldous Huxley, which goes back more than fifteen years. This interest has been kept going thanks to two key factors: my constant fascination with Huxley and his *oeuvre*, and the support of the Aldous Huxley Society and its members, many of whom have become my friends. Over the last fifteen years I have attended almost twenty conferences during which I have presented papers on various aspects of Aldous Huxley's writings. Some of these papers have been published, mostly in various post-conference volumes, and some remain unpublished. I have decided to publish a selection of these papers as a tribute to Aldous Huxley and as an attempt to disseminate Huxley scholarship. These papers were written for conferences devoted to a very wide range of themes and topics, but with Huxley's width of erudition it has always been relatively easy for me to select Huxley's texts, or fragments of texts, which have (in my opinion) dealt with the theme of a given conference from a unique, Huxleyan perspective. When I started putting these papers together I realized that an interesting change of focus was being

accomplished: when put into one book, these papers seem to re-focus on Huxley as a writer and thinker, and I hope that this phenomenon is not merely the result of my wishful thinking.

My book on Huxley starts with three articles devoted to various aspects of Aldous Huxley's most acclaimed novel *Brave New World*. The fourth paper, apart from *Brave New World*, uses *Eyeless in Gaza* and *Island* as the material for analysis. Then I have placed seven other papers devoted to such diverse, generically and thematically, texts of Huxley as: *Eyeless in Gaza*, *Island*, *The Perennial Philosophy*, *Antic Hay*, *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan*, *Point Counter Point*, *Beyond the Mexique Bay* and *Along the Road*.

"Failure in Inter-cultural Communication in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*" was presented at a conference devoted to the issues of inter-cultural communication held in Grodno, Belarus. It was my first paper written on Huxley, and I have decided to put it first in this selection, even though from today I would approach this topic quite differently.

The article "Brave New World Re-revisited" differs from all the other texts in this volume as it is not an academic research paper but a description of the seminar course on *Brave New World* I designed in 2003 and taught to a group of twenty M.A. students at the English Department of the University of Białystok in the winter term of 2004/2005. The course received favourable opinions from students, who voiced them in the questionnaires I gave them during the final, fifteenth meeting with them. This course, together with the M.A. Diploma Seminar on Aldous Huxley

which I ran at my University during the academic years 2001/2003 (eight M.A. dissertations on different aspects of Huxley's *ouvere* were completed), are examples of my inclination to 'teach/preach' Huxley to my students. At the moment of writing this Preface—October 2017—I am in the middle of an M.A. Diploma Seminar devoted to the analysis and evaluation of translations into Polish of canonical, and non-canonical, works of fiction and non-fiction originally written in English. Three out of twelve students have decided to devote their dissertations to translations of Huxley's fiction into Polish (*Brave New World*, *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan* and selected short stories will be their focus).

The paper "Of Death and Grief, John the Savage, Aldous Huxley and D.H. Lawrence" was presented during the conference "Culture and the Rights/Rights of Grief" organized by the University of Silesia. The most direct influence for writing it came from Jerome Meckier's and David Leon Hidgeon's articles (published in *Aldous Huxley Annual*, vol. 7 and vol. 8, respectively), revealing new vistas for the understanding of the ways in which John the Savage, the protagonist of *Brave New World*, may have been constructed in the summer of 1931.

"From Centrifugal Bumble-puppy to Free Climbing: Representations of Sport in *Brave New World*, *Eyeless in Gaza* and *Island*" attempted to probe into an area previously unexplored by Huxley scholars: that of his representation of sport in fiction. Huxley has been perceived by many scholars and critics as an epitome of an intellectual—after all, his third biography, the one written by Nicholas Murray,

is entitled *Aldous Huxley: An English Intellectual*—and he definitely was not an 'English sportsman'. But as sport was, has been, and is so important in British culture, it is not surprising that Huxley's intellectual curiosity made him create some really insightful depictions of sport in his key novels.

"Culture and Literature as Inter-disciplinary and Holistic Concepts in Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* and Aldous Huxley's *The Perennial Philosophy*" was written for a conference on "Interdisciplinary Perspectives in Foreign Language Teacher Education". It was the result of the convergence of my interests in the history of the academic discipline I have been involved in for all my professional life, that is English Literature, and more specifically with the changing ideologies and methodologies involved in teaching it, with my interests as a Huxley *aficionado*. When I was reading Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) as a foundational text for what was much later to be called the 'Liberal Humanist' period in literary studies, I was struck by the similarities of many of its concepts and ideas with the concepts of ideas presented in the book I happened to know very well, *The Perennial Philosophy* (1945), written by Matthew Arnold's great-nephew.

"From a Theodrome to the Dance of Shiva-Nataraya: Recycling Aldous Huxley's Views on Circularity in Nature and Culture" was written for a conference entitled "A Culture of Recycling/Recycling Culture". The theme of cycles and recycling allowed me to look at the nature and depth of philosophical and literary changes Huxley himself

and his fiction, as well as non-fiction underwent between the early 1920s and the 1960s. To show the differences and some paradoxical similarities between 'early' and 'late' Huxley I focused on his second novel *Antic Hay* (1923)—and on his last one—*Island* (1962). The key period of Huxley's 'spiritual conversion' in the mid 1930s—the period which is responsible for the 'ideological' hiatus between *Antic Hay* and *Island*—was approached through the analysis of the chosen fragments from his non-fiction and fiction.

The title of the paper "William Sheldon's Varieties of Human Physiques and Temperaments in the Writings of Aldous Huxley" probably suggests to all but a tiny group of Huxley scholars that the paper is concerned with some long forgotten classification of human physiques and temperaments proposed by a scholar equally long forgotten in the writings of a writer who would have almost been forgotten if it was not for his novel *Brave New World* and his personal experiments with drugs connected with his predilection for intertextual titles, that would be later utilized by one Californian rock musician, whose untimely death put him and his band *The Doors* in the pantheon of pop culture. When, quite recently, I was finishing the translation into Polish of *Brave New World Revisited*, the collection of essays with which Huxley 'complemented' his dystopian novel *Brave New World*, I realized, once again, how deeply embedded Sheldon's categories were in Huxley's thinking and writings, and how much the fact that human beings as a species are so varied, and that there exist extreme endomorphs, mesomorphs and ectomorphs living in

bodies which display extreme versions of, respectively, viscerotonia, somatotonia and cerebrotonia, was crucial for Huxley in his construction of the idea of freedom; as freedom for all human beings, regardless of their diverse temperaments.

"Good or Evil? The Semantics of the Body in *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan*" was presented at a conference on "Semantic Relations in Language and Culture". While writing it I attempted to ponder the ways in which Huxley was philosophizing about the human body at the end of the 1930s, that is shortly after his 'mystical', 'spiritual' turn.

The paper entitled "Aldous Huxley, the Great War and Pacifism" was written for the conference "Re-Imagining the Great War" organized in September 2014 by the University of Toruń, a hundred years and a month after the beginning of the conflict. It aimed to show Huxley's attitude to pacifism during the Great War, two decades before Huxley decided to join the Peace Pledge Union of Reverend Dick Shepherd and became a pacifist activist. Drawing mostly from Huxley's letters written at the time, I tried to re-imagine and re-create his way of thinking and motivations in that period, as well as the influence on his thinking and motivations his visits to and life in Garsington Manor—the informal centre of British pacifism during the second part of the Great War—had on Huxley, the writer *in spe*.

The two final essays were presented relatively recently, and have not been published so far. The paper entitled "*Howards End* and *Point Counter Point* as the 'Condition of England Novels'", in a slightly altered form, was delivered

by me at a conference "The World of E.M. Forster—E.M. Forster and the World" which was organized by the E.M. Forster International Society in Olsztyn in September 2016. I approached two important novels: E. M. Forster's *Howards End* and Aldous Huxley's *Point Counter Point* from the perspective of the concept of the 'Condition of England novel'. My main argument in this paper was that Huxley's construction of the character of Everard Webley (and his Brotherhood of British Freemen) could be read as an answer to the optimistic vision for the future of England which Forster constructed at the end of his *Howards End*, where England's future rests on the hope of its ability to "breed yeomen" once again.

The PowerPoint version of the essay "Aldous Huxley's *Along the Road*, the Traditions of the Grand Tour and the Anti-Tourist Discourse" was delivered by me during the Sixth International Huxley Symposium that was held in the beautiful Andalusian town of Almeria in April of 2017. Because the general theme of the conference was "Huxley in Europe", I focused on *Along the Road*, Huxley's first travel book and the book which is, perhaps, most closely of all Huxley's texts, connected with Huxley's representation of Europe and his extensive travels on the continent in the first half of the 1920s. I approached Huxley's essays gathered in *Along the Road* from the perspective of the Grand Tour narratives and from the perspective of the anti-tourist discourse which developed when the Grand Tour itself became too popular for some of the 'Grand Tourists', who started to believe that other 'tourists' around them were not so 'grand'. In this essay I have tried to answer one key

question: "What kind of anti-tourist was Aldous Huxley anyway?" I also could not restrain myself from re-telling a story about Huxley's essay from *Along the Road* entitled "The Best Picture", and about the effect it had on an officer in the British 8th Army, Tony Clarke. It was while researching this essay that I read about Clarke and his decision not to shell the Tuscan town of Sansepolcro, and although it may not be connected very directly with Huxley as an anti-tourist writer, it seemed too powerful for a Huxley *aficionado* to disregard in the text devoted, after all, to *Along the Road* together with its "Best Picture" essay.

I sincerely hope that this collection of essays will help to keep the interest in Aldous Huxley and his works alive and that they will offer new insights leading to new interpretations of his novels and travel books.

Radziucie, October 2017.

Failure in Inter-cultural Communication in *Brave New World*

In this article I would like to deal with failure rather than success in inter-cultural communication; the failure presented by Aldous Huxley in his novel *Brave New World,* which was published for the first time in 1932. I fear that today the dystopian fiction of Huxley is not less but more 'real' than it was then, and so are the possibilities of similar failures. The failure in this novel occurs between the culture of the World State of the year A.F. 632 and the culture of John the Savage. It is versed and dramatized through quotes from yet another culture—that of *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*. Before presenting this failure, let me briefly draw the key characteristic features of these cultures.

The culture of the World State presented in *Brave New World* is, as Peter Firchow observed—in *The End of Utopia* (1979)—a logical extension of the trends that had been fostered by the so-called revolutions that had shaped and influenced Western civilization: the American, French, Russian and Fordian revolutions, to name them in

chronological order.[1] The society of Brave New World is affluent and stable. There are no wars, no racial or social conflicts, not even conflicts within families, as families have been abolished and children are first hatched in factories and then brought up by the state through neo-Pavlovian conditioning and hypnopediac indoctrination. Fun and pleasure are the key principles, and these are provided through a variety of popular entertainments such as: various games (from Elevator Squash to Centrifugal Bumble-puppy), feelies (multi-media and multi-sensory films), promiscuous sex (treated in a purely recreational manner as sex is devoid not only of the procreational but also of the love angle) and, last but not least, soma, a drug which gives, according to the world state copywriters, "all the advantages of Christianity and alcohol; none of their defects;"[2] a drug universally taken by all the members of the world state whenever they are not playing games, watching feelies, working or sleeping. There are no strong feelings in the world state, and all its members regularly take V.P.S.—which stands for Violent Passion Surrogate. Mustapha Mond, the World Controller for Europe, explains: "Regularly once a month. We flood the whole system with adrenalin. It's the complete physiological equivalent of fear and rage. All the tonic effects of murdering Desdemona and being murdered by Othello, without any of the inconveniences" (*BNW*, 187). Mustapha Mond brings Shakespeare into this conversation because he addresses John the Savage, the only other human familiar

---

1 Peter Firchow, *The End of Utopia*: *A Study of Huxley's* Brave New World (Lewisburg, 1979), 9-36. Hereafter, *EU*.

2 Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (Harmondsworth, 1973), 53. Hereafter, *BNW*.

with the works of the Bard. Shakespeare is banned in the World State. When John insists that *Othello* is better than feelies, the Controller agrees:

> Of course, it is [...] But that's the price we have to pay for stability. You've got to choose between happiness and what people used to call high art. We've sacrificed the high art. We have the feelies and the scent organ instead. (*BNW*, 173)

John the Savage knows Shakespeare by heart but also by accident. An old edition of *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* was the only book they had at home. His mother Linda, a castaway from the Brave New World, living with him in the Indian reserve in New Mexico, gives it to him saying: "I looked at it and it seems to be full of nonsense. Uncivilized. Still, it'll be good enough to practise your reading on" (*BNW*,108). John's father Pete is Indian, and thus John, as a half-caste, is discriminated against and forced to live on the outskirts of this Indian community. But, paradoxically, it is his solitude and suffering that make him into a kind of 'noble savage', and thus, even if he does not always comprehend the complexities of Shakespeare's verse, his nobility and strong passion make him a worthy mouthpiece of the Bard's poetry unleashed by Aldous Huxley against "Community, Identity, Stability"—the World State's motto and its values. Of course, while the representation of the World State is Huxley's debate with and criticism of the four 'forward' looking revolutions mentioned earlier, the introduction and representation of John the Savage is a part of Huxley's answer to and discussion with the 'backward' looking concepts; one of the

'noble savages' of Jean-Jacque Rousseau, and that of the strengths of the 'primitive man' of Huxley's good friend, David Herbert Lawrence, who strongly influenced Huxley's thinking and writing in the 1920s and the early 1930s.

John, unlike many other outsiders in Utopian or Anti-Utopian fiction, for example, from Butler's *Erewhon,* H.G. Wells' *Man Like Gods,* or Huxley's own last novel *Island*, is not thrown into the 'other world' to be merely guided through it and in turn guide implied readers. His role in the structure of *Brave New World* is far more crucial, dynamic, dramatic; in other words, it is Shakespearean.

Huxley knew Shakespeare by heart and not by accident. His social background and his reading English Literature at Oxford ensured this. He loved and admired Shakespeare. He used passages from Shakespeare as the titles of his own works of fiction: *Mortal Coils* (1920) (his first collection of short stories), *Brave New World* (1932), *Time Must Have a Stop* (1944), *Ape and Essence* (1948), and non-fiction *Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow* (1964). A quarter of a century after the first publication of *Brave New World* he wrote a collection of essays to comment on the prophetic and dystopian aspects of this novel. The essays were published in 1958 as *Brave New World Re-visited*. In the essay entitled "Education for Freedom" Huxley was involved in a fierce argument about the role of 'the Great Men' in History. Huxley was arguing in favour of the importance of great individuals in shaping and changing the course of History, against such 'sociologically' oriented scholars as B.F. Skinner or Herbert Spencer. Huxley relied on his erudition and a quote from William James to defend

his position; a quote which characteristically uses one "W. Shakespeare" as the epitome of the Great Man:

> Can it be that Mr. Spencer holds the convergence of sociological pressures to have so impinged upon Stratford-upon-Avon about the twenty-sixth of April 1564, that a W. Shakespeare, with all his mental peculiarities, had to be born there? [...] And does he mean to say that if the aforesaid W. Shakespeare had died of *cholera infantium*, another mother at Stratford-upon-Avon would needs have engendered a duplicate copy of him, to restore the social equilibrium.[3]

His final piece of writing, written when he was dying of cancer in November 1963, is an essay entitled "Shakespeare and Religion". Here is a key paragraph from this essay, his final homage to the Bard:

> True enough, the poet penned no memoirs; he merely left us *Shakespeare of Complete Works.* Whatever else he may have been, the author was a genius-of-all-trades, a human being who could do practically anything. Lyrics? The plays are full of lyrics. Sonnets? He left a whole volume of them. Narrative poems? When London was plague-ridden and the theatres, as hotbeds of contagion, had been closed, Shakespeare turned out two admirable specimens, *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucretia.* And then consider his achievements as a dramatist. He could write realistically in the style of a dispassionate and often amused observer of contemporary life: he could dramatize biographies and historical chronicles; he could invent fairy stories and visionary fantasies; he could create (often out of the most unpromising raw material) huge tragic allegories of good and evil, in which almost superhuman figures live their lives and die their often sickening deaths. He could mingle sublimity with pathos, bitterness with joy and peace and

[3] Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World and Brave New World Revisited* (London, 1973 [1932] [1958]), 363.

> love, intellectual subtlety with delirium and the cryptic utterances of inspired wisdom.[4]

It is little wonder, then, that when Huxley wanted to "[c]ry havoc, and let loose the dogs of war" (*Julius Cesar*, act III, scene 1) of his own war against the World State, he used Shakespeare's lines to do so. The number of direct quotes and more or less indirect allusions to quotes from Shakespeare in *Brave New World*, which is, after all, a very short novel, almost a novella, is around fifty. And many of them are pivotal to the structure of the novel, perhaps none more than the quote from Act V of Shakespeare's last play, *The Tempest.*

Miranda, the beautiful daughter of Prospero, has been brought up on an enchanted and desert island, and she has seen very few people in her life. Therefore, when she suddenly sees a whole group of aristocrats and their servants, wearing their glamorous clothes, she exclaims: "O wonder! How many goodly creatures are there here! How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world, That has such people in it!" (*The Tempest*, act V, scene l).When, in the middle of the novel, Bernard promises to take John the Savage from the reserve, John is overcome with joy and expectation, and he repeats Miranda's words with the same idealistic fervour. But whereas Miranda's vision is never put to the test in *The Tempest*, John's in *Brave New World* is put to the severest of tests. And much later, after his mother's death, while watching Delta workers in hospital who are queuing up for their daily dose of soma:

---

[4] Aldous Huxley, "Shakespeare and Religion", www.sirbacon.org, retrieved 20.03.2004. [1963].

> The Savage stood looking on, “O brave new world, O brave new world [...]” In his mind the singing words seemed to change their tune. They had mocked him through his misery and remorse, mocked him with how hideous a note of cynical derision! Fiendishly laughing, they had insisted on the low squalor, the nauseous ugliness of the nightmare. (*BNW*, 166)

There are two main bones of contention between the philosophies of the World State and of John the Savage. One is family, the other is restraint. In the World State children are hatched rather than born, and words like ‘father’ and ‘mother’ have become taboo words. When a brilliant World State amateur dissident, professional copywriter and social engineer Hemholtz Watson, listens to *Romeo and Juliet* read by John, he is deeply moved by the beauty of Shakespeare’s poetry and by the strengths of Shakespeare as “a marvellous propaganda technician” (*BNW*, 146) but he cannot help breaking into an "explosion of uncontrollable guffawing” after these lines of Juliet:

> Is there no pity sitting in the clouds,
> That sees into the bottom of my grief?
> O sweet mother, cast me not away!
> Delay this marriage for a month, a week;
> Or, if you do not, make the bridal bed
> In the monument where Tybalt lies...
> (*Romeo and Juliet*, act III, scene 5)

The hiatus between these two (or three) cultures is presented by Huxley in the form of Hemholtz’s indirect monologue:

> The father and mother (grotesque obscenity) forcing the daughter to have someone she didn't want! And the idiotic girl not saying that she was having someone else whom (for the moment, at any rate) she preferred! In its smutty absurdity the situation was irresistibly comical. He had managed, with a heroic effort, to hold down the mounting pressure of his hilarity; but 'sweet mother'... and the reference to Tybalt lying dead, but evidently uncremated and wasting his phosphorus on a dim monument, were too much for him. He laughed and laughed till the tears streamed down his face [...] (*BNW*, 147)

But the conflict over restraint leads to more than guffawing and laughter over family and marriage; it leads to John's suicide. The World State is a culture of consumption without any restraints. All branches of its economy, including sports and ether entertainments, are geared towards more consumption. The key slogans in the world state are "the more stitches, the less riches", and "ending is better than mending". The more you consume and throw away, the more the economy is spinning. It is also true of the consumption of sex. Thus, when Lenina Crowne and John the Savage fall in love with each other it is not the feud between the Capulets and Montagues or Hamlet's indecision that leads to tragedy, but the hiatus in Lenina's and John's concepts of what love is. For Lenina love is sex, without any restraints and problems; recreational sex devoid of procreation and any deep feelings. It is probably best expressed in the lyrics of a pop song they listen to together:

> Hug me till you drug me, honey,
> me, honey, snugly bunny,
> Kiss me till I'm in a coma,
> Hug Love's as good as soma (*BNW*, 133)

Lenina wants sex while John wants restraint. He wants to prove that he is worthy of love; that his is the real love and not mere lust. He wants obstacles. When Ferdinand fell in love with Miranda, her father Prospero put him to the test: he made him carry logs. Ferdinand, the heir to the throne of Naples, bore it bravely and told Miranda: "There be some sports are painful, but their labour delight in them sets off: some kinds of baseness are nobly undergone, and most poor matters point to rich ends" *(The Tempest:* act III, scene 1). John repeats these words to Lenina and stresses that he wants to undergo something noble, like for example, sweeping. The hiatus between the cultures is shown in her answer that it is not necessary at all, as there are Epsilon operated vacuum cleaners. When she still insists on having sex, he remembers Prospero's words addressed to Ferdinand: "If thou dost break her virgin knot before all sanctimonious ceremonies may with full and holy rite" *(The Tempest,* act IV, scene 1), Lenina can comprehend neither the key words nor the key concepts behind these words. But John wants to take this challenge and answers himself with Ferdinand's answer to Prospero: "The murkiest den, the most opportune place the strongest suggestion our worse genius can, shall never melt mine honour into lust" (*The Tempest,* act IV, scene 1). Lenina's flat is definitely a "most opportune place", and by refusing to have sex with her there and then, he prevents his honour melting into lust; even though she has no idea what "honour" (and/or "marriage") is. Her answer is to strip her clothes off in front of him, and when he is about to relent it is Prospero's words warning Ferdinand of the power of desire that preserve John in his

restraint: “The strongest oaths are straw to the fire in the blood; be more abstemious, or else [...]″ (*The Tempest*, act IV, scene 1).

When John fell in love with Lenina he described her beauty with the words Romeo used to describe Juliet:

> O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!
> It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night
> Like a rich jewel in an Ethiop’s ear
> Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear.
> (*Romeo and Juliet,* act I, scene 5)

There and then in Lenina’s flat, when she is totally confused as to his intentions and emotions and yet still desires him, his attitude changes and he pushes her away and finds more words from Shakespeare, this time to hurt her. “Whore! Impudent strumpet!”. (*Othello*, act IV, scene 2) These are the words that Othello addresses to Desdemona when Iago’s diabolic plan takes root. In *Brave New World* there is no Iago, but it is the difference between cultures that sends John away from Lenina on a downward spiral to suicide in a Surrey lighthouse.

Is there anything we can do to prevent Brave New World from becoming real? To prevent the cultures of Shakespeare and our own popular culture from growing further and further apart? On the universal level not much, but this should not discourage us from trying hard on our local level(s). Close reading of *Brave New World* with our students looks like a good starting point.

Brave New World Re-revisited

I believe it is worthwhile, and for quite a few reasons, to design and run a course on Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World;* a course for students of English departments teacher training colleges and universities. Such students are usually exposed to survey courses in English/British Literature, courses of various lengths and various combinations of lecture/seminar ratios, but in such courses lectures are usually general outlines with historical and literary backgrounds presented, and numerous canonical writers and works mentioned in, almost always, a brief manner. Seminars, on the other hand, are usually designed on one novel or one poet per meeting basis, thus ensuring quite a superficial contact with literary canonical texts. Then, sometimes, there are options, such as seminars on more specific and detailed themes. This paper presents a blueprint for a seminar consisting of thirty teaching hours to be run on *Brave New World.* It was directed to students of the 'videotic' age and thus of limited literary competence. What follows is a description of a course I taught in the academic year 2004/2005.

I believe *Brave New World* is excellent for such purposes for a variety of reasons. First of all, it is definitely part of the canon of English Literature and of world literature. It was selected as one of the fifty novels in 'Kanon na koniec wieku', ('The canon for the end of the century'), a joint project of key Polish publishers (unfortunately in the very bad translation of Bogdan Baran). It was number 56 on the list of "100 Best Novels Written in English" published by *The Guardian* in 2003.

But, unlike many canonical works it is a relatively short novel, merely some two hundred pages long, making it more handy and more feasible for less literary students to read through. Furthermore, it is written in straightforward, simple English (apart from some fifty Shakespearean quotes). Yet, it is a powerful novel in the sense of its huge predictive, prophetic powers. It traces the key developments of Western civilisation and takes them to logical and often horrible conclusions, many of which we can see unfolding in front of us at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Thus, we steered away from strictly literary into more general political, social and economic dimensions. So, on the one hand, we are going to probed the depths of intertextuality and polyphony while tracing the origins of numerous Shakespearean quotes, or comparing Mustapha Mond's position with that of the Grand Inquisitor in Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *Brothers Karamazov*, while on the other hand, we are going to compared Huxley's World Society with our 'global village'.

The inspiration for the title of this paper, of course, came from Aldous Huxley and his collection of essays entitled *Brave New World Revisited.* Huxley revisited his Brave New World in 1958, twenty-six years after the publication of the novel. And this course was planned as a re-revisit of it, almost fifty years later and more than seventy years after *Brave New World* was launched into the world. I planned fourteen meetings, ninety minutes each, to fit into a standard thirty teaching hour course (one meeting to spare).

I will start with a survey of additional sources that were used throughout the course, and comment on their suitability and ways of using them.

Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World Revisited* (1958).[1] There are twelve essays/chapters in this collection, some of them (e.g. chapter VI "*The Arts of Selling"* or chapter VIII "*The Chemical Persuasion")* closely correspond with the main themes of the meetings (8. Consumerism and 11. Drugs, respectively). The others are not so closely related. I expected one student to read one essay at the beginning of the course, each student a different one, and bring the conclusions from it to a seminar discussion whenever applicable.

Michael Sherborne, *York Notes: Brave New World, Aldous Huxley (*1988).[2] The book contains a very useful, relatively brief but adequate glossary to the text. Students

---

1 Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World and Brave New World Revisited; A Chatto Twin,* with an Introduction by Syblille Bedford, (London 1973 [1958]).

2 Michael Sherborne, *York Notes: Brave New World, Aldous Huxley,* (London, 1988).

were advised to use it on their second, more 'literary' reading of the text. Apart from this, the book contains good, even if at times basic, chapters on: Critical Approaches, Textual Analysis, Background (social, literary, scientific), and Critical History and Broader Perspectives. These chapters served as one of the starting points for the final essay students wrote at the end of the course.

Peter Edgerly Firchow, *The End of Utopia: A Study of Aldous Huxley's Brave New World* (1984).[3] The most authoritative monograph on *Brave New World* by a great Huxley scholar. It served not only as a springboard for the final essays, but it also help us to deal with most of the themes (in particular entertainment, family life, utopia/dystopia, revolutions, and escapes to the past)

Apart from *Brave New World*, each student was expected to read one more work (or a large part of it) of Aldous Huxley, so that they could bring them to the discussion at focal points. The key title here is, of course, *Island* (1962), Huxley's last book, his 'positive utopia', a book which is an answer to, a polemic with, and often an extension *of Brave New World.* About half of the students chose *Island* as their additional book and comparisons between these two novels were made during most meetings. Another strong option was Huxley's other dystopian novel *Ape and Essence* (1948). It was chosen by three students. The views presented there were of much importance at most meetings (with the exception of 4. Shakespeare, and two

[3] Peter Edgerly Firchow, *The End of Utopia: A Study of Aldous Huxley's Brave New World* (Lewisburg, 1984).

final meetings on the film and the translations of the novel into Polish). Other Huxley's works to choose from included: *The Perennial Philosophy* (1945), *The Doors of Perception and Heaven and Hell* (1954).

Encyclopaedias—with this sort of project and with the sorts of themes to be discussed, the extensive use of encyclopaedias was essential. It seemed that the internet encyclopaedias (or CD-ROMs, then still in use), were more appropriate for this project, than 'traditional' encyclopaedias like *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, because their entries, although more basic, are also clearer, and the students could quickly probe deeper any time they came across underlined links. Seminars 5-13 were thus scheduled to be conducted in a computer lab with access to the internet. In the case of the remaining seminars, the use of encyclopaedias was minimal. Using encyclopaedias may also be perceived as a truly Huxleyan move. The quote from Nicholas Murray's biography of Huxley will explain my point:

> In another pleasantly witty piece on what books one should take on a journey, Huxley talks about one of his most curious obsessions—with the *Encyclopaedia Britannica.* "I never pass a day away from home without taking a volume with me," he confesses. "It is the book of books. Turning over its pages, rummaging among the stores of fantastically varied facts which the hazards of alphabetical arrangement bring together, I wallow in my mental vice." Bertrand Russell joked that one could predict Huxley's subjects of conversation provided that one knew which alphabetical section of the *Encyclopaedia* he happened to be reading at the time. Huxley even constructed a special carrying-case for it on his journeys.[4]

[4] Nicholas Murray, *Aldous Huxley: An English Intellectual* (London, 2002), 147-148.

What follows is a brief description of each seminar:

1. Huxley's family and social background

This was an introductory meeting when students were told to read the full text of *Brave New World* and asked to write a 300-word review-essay on it. Most of these mini-essays proved to be quite satisfactory. They did not use any secondary sources, and the review was considered a starting point to the course. Then a general introduction to the life and work of Aldous Huxley followed. The form of the presentation was an old fashioned lecture illustrated with slides and photos. Utopian and dystopian themes, as well as his life-long fascination with science and his strong involvement in the betterment of mankind were amplified.

2. The review, overview

Students read their reviews and then were asked to comment on them. Later a large brainstorming activity on identifying the main themes of the novel showed me that students were quite involved in the project and identified almost all key themes.

3. The world in 1931, onomastic names

The point of this seminar was to present the geo-political and socio-economic situation of the world at the beginning of the 1930s, when Huxley was writing his novel, with the focus on the situation in Europe and the U.S.A. The second part of the seminar was devoted to identifying, 'explaining', and putting into appropriate contexts the key 'meaningful names' appearing in *Brave New World*, such as

Mustapha Mond, Benito Hoover, Polly Trosky, Lenina Crowne, and Bernard Marx to name just a few names connected with politics, but we also dealt with names of scientists, philosophers, such as Joanna Diesel, Riemann surface tennis, and Jean-Jacques Habbillubah. Wikipedia.com was used extensively.

4. Shakespeare and *Brave New World*

Huxley inserted over fifty shorter and longer quotes from Shakespeare in his text. They come from a variety of plays, such as the relatively less well known *King John* and *Troilus and Cressida,* but also from *Hamlet* and *Macbeth.* Yet, it is clear that the three plays which are most extensively quoted and crucial for the interplay between Shakespeare and *Brave New World* are *Othello, Romeo and Juliet,* and *The Tempest.* The plot of these was outlined before a regular scan for Shakespeare's quotes started and the discussion of their significance and counter-point role followed. As students seemed to be not very well read in Shakespeare's plays this activity did not go particularly well.

5. Politics, globalisation, capitalism/communism

The nature of the World State was analysed in the context of a comparison with, to a lesser extent, the world politics of the early 1930s, but mostly with the present situation in world politics. Globalisation and its supporters and enemies are to be outlined and their equivalents located in *Brave New World* (and other writings of Huxley). Then, the notion of to what extent the World State is an extension

of capitalist and/or communist ideologies and practices was viewed. Some students got really agitated during this discussion, some praised Huxley for his prophesying talents.

6. Religion

The alternatives presented in *Brave New World* were outlined as they appear in the text: the state religion of the Brave New World Community Songs, Orgy-porgy, Mustapha Mond's pragmatic view (confronted and compared with that of the Grand Inquisitor of Dostoyevsky's *Brothers Karamazov)*, the Reservation's blend of Native American religion and Christianity. These were compared with Huxley's later views as depicted particularly in *The Perennial Philosophy* and in *Island.*

7. Revolutions and escapes to the past

This is an extension of the seminar on the politics in *Brave New World*, but the key theme here is Huxley's polemic with the ideas and ideologies of four revolutions: the French, the American, the Russian and the technological (Fordian) one. The motto "Community, Identity, Stability" and other key features of the World State were discussed in the light of the utopian, 'forward-driven', progressive ideologies that have been raised by Western civilisation over the last two-hundred-and-fifty years. These 'utopias' were contrasted with the 'backward driven' ideologies presented by Huxley in *Brave New World*, mostly in the chapters describing the Reservation, and also in the characterisation of John the Savage.

8. Consumerism

This is the aspect that *Brave New World* is probably most often remembered by and quoted from. It is not only the slogans—like 'the more stitches, the less riches' or 'ending is better than mending'—which were analysed, but the key role of consumerism in the social, moral and economic life of the World State. These were compared with the developments of consumerism in Western civilisation over the last seventy years. We watched some fragments of a documentary film entitled *Brand New World* directed by Andrzej Wójcik and Ewan McGregor which addressed the issues of consumerism in the contemporary world and took Huxley's *Brave New World* as a starting point.

9. Art/Entertainment

The reasons for the ban on history and 'high' culture in the World State were analysed. All *Brave New World* games and sports were described and compared with the development in amateur and professional sport in the twentieth century. Then, "the feelies" were described, analysed and compared with the films made at around the time of the publication of *Brave New World*, as well as the state-of-the-art Hollywood productions.

10. Sex and family life

The reasons and causes for the promiscuity in the World State were located in the text and discussed; hatching was compared with cloning. The second large area for discussion during this seminar was the family life, or rather

the lack of it, in the World State. This was compared with the development of family relationships in the U.S.A and Europe over the last eighty years. Huxley's positive utopian views from *Island*, with the hybridization of the micro-cultures, as well as the yoga of love were presented and compared.

11. Drugs

Soma, the drug of the World State, was described in the context of its role in the life of individuals and social life. This was contrasted with Huxley's views on drugs as presented in *The Doors of Perception* and *Heaven and Hell*, the former had been read by one student, the latter by two. The differences and similarities with *moksha*-medicine from *Island* was also explored. Chapter VIII of *Brave New World Revisited* was also discussed in this context.

12. Utopia versus dystopia

During this seminar the utopian and dystopian tradition in literary fiction were dealt with, and *Brave New World* will be viewed in this context. Particular attention was drawn to the comparison with the positive technological utopias of Jules Verne and H.G. Wells. Zamyatin's *We* and Orwell's *1984* were other important texts to be compared with *Brave New World*. Huxley's own utopian solutions: from the introduction to *Brave New World*, from *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan* or *Island*, as well as his other dystopia *Ape and Essence* were summarised and briefly analysed.

13. Polish Translations of *Brave New World*

Two Polish translations of *Brave New World* exist. Stanisława Kuszelewska translated it just after the book was published, and her translation appeared in 1933 (second edition 1935). Bogdan Baran's translation (first published in 1988) has been used in various editions published by "Muza". These two translations were compared with each other as well as with the original text. Translation of culture-bound items; hypnopediac slogans, poems and fragments from Shakespeare was given priority.

14. *Brave New World*, the 1998 TV film

This film, directed by Leslie Libman and Larry Williams, with the screenplay written by Dan Mazur, is one of a couple of adaptations of *Brave New World* (the other one was a 1980 NBC film, which was also shown on the BBC). Many elements from the book were discarded, and in many ways the film is a comment not so much on the general extension of trends feared by Huxley, but a comment on the American media, and political and social life in the 1990s.

I taught this course on Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and Brave New World to a group of twenty M.A. students at the University of Białystok. It was a very rewarding experience for me and for most of the students as I learnt from the feedback session conducted during the last meeting.

Of Death and Grief, John the Savage, Aldous Huxley and D.H. Lawrence

In Chapter XIV of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* John the Savage visits his dying mother, Linda, in the Park Lane Hospital for the Dying, "a sixty-story tower of primrose tiles."[1] Chapter XIV is crucial in the novel's construction as it directly leads to the climatic Chapter XV, which depicts the Savage's final disillusionment with "the beauteous mankind" inhabiting "the brave new world", the riot he causes during the distribution of the daily dose of *soma*, and his arrest. What follows in quick succession is the dissolution of the plot in the final three chapters: the key conversation with Musapha Mond, the World Controller, the forced exile of Helmoltz Watson and Bernard Marx (mentors of John the Savage in the World Society), and finally John the Savage's voluntary retreat to the lighthouse in Surrey and his suicide.

The Savage's rebellion is spurred first by the indifference with which his mother's death is treated by both the medical staff and the group of young, uniformed

[1] Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World and Brave New World Revisited* (London, 1987),. 177. Hereafter, *BNW*.

visitors to the hospital undergoing a session of "death conditioning", and later by the physical proximity of a crowd of similarly uniformed, twinned, identical, grown up Deltas who are shown, from the Savage's perspective, and through Huxley's use of free indirect speech, as maggots: "Like maggots they had swarmed defilingly over the mystery of Linda's death. Maggots again, but larger, full grown, they now crawled across his grief and his repentance" (*BNW*, 188).

The Savage's grief, which is tied to such emotions as repentance and remorse, as well as his ability to perceive the death of his mother as "the mystery", make him definitely more human and humane than the indifferent "khaki mob" (*BNW*, 185) of the World State citizens. Yet, at the same time, the manner in which he handled the Savage's grief shows the extent to which Huxley was critical of the "primitive" alternative to the "pneumatic bliss" of the World State. The Savage's grief makes him more human, but at the same time it makes him as far removed from Huxley's ideal of "sanity" as the dystopian brave new world. The analysis of the presentation of Linda's death and the Savage's ensuing grief could and should be placed in the context of Huxley's personal and literary development in areas which were crucial to him throughout his life and his literary career: fear of death and trying to overcome it through *ars moriendi*, the art of dying.

In the foreword to *Brave New World* in 1946, fourteen years after the novel's first edition was published, Aldous Huxley remarked that the most serious defect of his story was that the Savage was 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" (*BNW*, 6). In 1946 Huxley suggested "a third alternative" that he would offer the Savage if he were to re-write the novel:

> Between the utopian and the primitive horns of his dilemma would lie the possibility of sanity—a possibility already actualized, to some extent, in a community of exiles and refugees from the Brave New World, living within the borders of the Reservation. In the community economics would be decentralist and Henry-Georgian, politics Kropetkinesque and co-operative […] 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. And the prevailing philosophy of life would be a kind of Higher Utilitarianism, in which the Greatest Happiness principle would be asked and answered in every contingency of life being. How will this thought or action contribute to or interfere with, the achievement, by me and the greatest possible number of other individuals, of man's Final End? (*BNW*, 6-7)

This is perhaps the most succinct description of the main foundations of what Huxley was to refer to as the 'positive Utopia' (to differentiate it from the 'Negative Utopia' of the World Society; Huxley did not use the term 'dystopia,' which is 'standard' these days in Anglo-Saxon literary criticism). Huxley had already included some elements of the Positive Utopia in his earlier novel *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan* (1939), while portraying William Propter's attempts to set up his little community in California. But it was only in his last novel *Island* (1962) that this project was drawn in detail and in a multi-dimensional perspective.

One important dimension of the Positive Utopia depicted in *Island* is the way the society of Pala copes with the problem of death and dying. Huxley's presentation of the death of Lakshmi might be viewed as the model enactment of *ars moriendi*, the art of dying of a person in "conscious and intelligent pursuit of man's Final End".[2]

Lakshmi's death scene in *Island*, similarly to Linda's in *Brave New World*, comes in the climatic Chapter XIV, but it leads not to grief, despair and suicide as with John the Savage, but to Will Farnaby's embarking on the path to spiritual Enlightenment. Unlike *soma* drugged Linda, Lakshmi dies in full consciousness; she is helped by her husband Robert and her daughter-in-law Susila. Robert encourages her: "Let go now, let go. Leave it here, your old worn-out body, and go on. Go on, my darling, go on into the Light, into the peace, into the living peace of the Clear Light" (*I*, 285). While Susila explains to Will Farnaby:

> Going on being aware—it's the whole art of dying […] We help them to go on practicing the art of living even while they're dying. Knowing who in fact one is, being conscious of the universal and impersonal life that lives itself through each of us—that's the art of living, and that's what one can help the dying to go on practicing. To the very end. Maybe beyond the end. (*I*, 295)

The last six chapters of *This Timeless Moment* (1968), written by Aldous Huxley's wife, Laura Archera Huxley, provide a testimony of how strongly Aldous himself followed what he had been preaching in *Island*, when he was dying of cancer in 1963. The presentation of Lakshmi's

---

[2] Aldous Huxley, *Island* (New York, 2002 [1962]), 231. Hereafter, *I*.

death might also be viewed as Huxley's "third alternative" on dying and grief (or its lack) to the 'utopian and primitive' ones tackled in *Brave New World*, the alternative he was not able to provide in 1932 when he was writing this novel.

The issues of death, fear of dying and grief were central in most of Huxley's novels written in the period of the thirty years between 1932 and 1962, between *Brave New World*, the negative utopia and *Island*, the positive utopia. Apart from the two 'perennial philosophers', William Propter in *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan* (1939) and Bruno Rontini in *Time Must Have a Stop* (1944), the characters were totally unprepared for the experience of death, dying in fear, self-pity and self-grief: Linda in *Brave New World*, Brian Foxe in *Eyeless in Gaza*, Eustace Barnack in *Time Must Have a Stop*, Kate Martens in *The Genius and the Goddess*, and Will Farnaby's aunt Mary in *Island.* In *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan* the main theme of the novel is Jo Stoyte's fear of death, which pushes him to spend his millions on desperate projects to avoid it, even if it means following the Fifth Earl of Gonister in his diet of raw carp's guts, living in a dungeon, and devolving into a big monkey.

Interesting possibilities for the interpretation of Huxley's critical attitude to both "the utopian and primitive" horns of the dilemma in Chapter XIV of *Brave New World*, the chapter describing Linda's death and her son's grief, open up when the parallels between the character of John the Savage and the person of David Herbert Lawrence, the celebrity novelist, are revealed and exposed. William York Tindall, back in 1956, attested that "[t]he savage from New Mexico who dies a martyr to H.G. Wells in *Brave New*

World (1932) is Huxley's […] portrait of Lawrence."[3] But it was only recently that Jerome Meckier, the renowned Huxley scholar, threw more light on these issues in his article "On D.H. Lawrence and Death, Especially Matricide: *Sons and Lovers, Brave New World,* and Aldous Huxley's Later Novels."[4]

Aldous Huxley and D.H. Lawrence met for the first time for tea in London in 1915. At that time they were both aspiring members to the 'Garsington Group'. The meeting was in fact suggested by Lady Ottoline Morrell, the mentor of the group and owner of Garsington Manor. But their closer acquaintance and later friendship came only in the second half of the 1920s in Italy, where both the Huxleys and the Lawrences were leading the wandering lives of voluntary, artistic exiles. The two couples met regularly, spent winter holidays together in the Italian Alps, and finally, in February 1930, the Huxleys came to help in Vence, on the French Riviera, where D.H. Lawrence was dying of tuberculosis. (He died on 2 March 1930). In the first phase of the friendship Huxley was impressed by D.H.L's boundless energy and his 'philosophy of blood', with its claim of the supremacy of body over soul, of instinct over intellect, and of primitive state of (pre)consciousness over modern spirituality. The character of Mark Rampion in Huxley's major novel *Point Counter*

---

[3] William York Tindall, *Forces in Modern British Literature, 1885-1956.* (New York, 1956), 173.

[4] Jerome Meckier, "On D.H. Lawrence and Death, Especially Matricide: *Sons and Lovers, Brave New World,* and Aldous Huxley's Later Novels", *Aldous Huxley Annual, Volume 7* (2007) 185-222. Hereafter, *Death*.

Point (1928), who is the only man of (any) integrity in this panoramic novel—not excluding the introvert novelist Peter Quarles, Huxley's *porte-parole*—is thought by the majority of Huxley scholars to be based on D.H. Lawrence. Huxley himself admitted that "Rampion is just some of Lawrence's notions on legs. The actual character of the man was incomparably queerer and more complex than that."[5] In contrast, D.H. Lawrence thought that Mark Rampion was "a gas-bag and a bore" (*AH*, 202).

Jerome Meckier argued that Huxley's anti-Lawrentian, satirical bias in the handling of Linda's death and the Savage's grief in Chapter XIV of *Brave New World* was mostly the result of Huxley's disillusionment with the discrepancy between Lawrence's life philosophy and his miserable and ignoble death in Vence, which Huxley witnessed. Huxley was writing this chapter in the summer of 1931, almost a year and a half after Lawrence's death. Before his death, at one point, Lawrence allegedly "grabbed" the wrists of Maria, Huxley's wife, and exclaimed: "don't let me die" (*Death*, 192), as was related by Meckier, who was quoting Brenda Maddox from her book *D.H. Lawrence: The Story of a Marriage*. In fact, these words were quoted first by Sybille Bedford, Huxley's first biographer. They come from a letter of Maria Huxley to Rosalind Rajogopal of 27 February 1943. "Lawrence grasped my two wrists with his hands and said, 'Maria, Maria, don't let me die'" (*AH*, 224). It should be noted, though, that the part of her letter that immediately followed (also quoted by Bedford,

[5] Sybille Bedford, *Aldous Huxley: A Biography, Volume I* (London, 1973), 202. Hereafter, *AH*.

but not referred to by Meckier) contains a different image of D.H.L's death: "But he was more peaceful a little later; he was interested in the material phenomenon, I think. He told me he saw himself, his head, just there, next to me, and that he knew he would die" (*AH*, 224). Bedford also quotes from a letter written by Aldous to his brother Julian on 3 March, 1930, a day after D.H.L's death: "he settled off to sleep—to die quietly at 10.15 […] He went so quietly at the last."(*AH*, 225).

Jeremy Meckier has perceptively analyzed parallels between the death of Linda, and the grief of the Savage, and the death of D.H. Lawrence's mother Lydia the fictional rendering of it in *Sons and Lovers* as well as the corresponding grieving of D. H. Lawrence himself and Paul Morel, respectively. What I would like to suggest is an alternative explanation of Huxley's critical attitude to D.H. Lawrence and his philosophy of blood. In fact, Huxley expressed it explicitly in the ending of his 1934 travel book *Beyond the Mexique Bay*. There, in the final passage, on board a ship returning home, Huxley's persona rereads Lawrence's *Plumed Serpent*. The persona points to Lawrence's "extraordinary powers"[6] of description but mostly to the following discrepancy: in the ending of *The Plumed Serpent*, the main character, Kate, "stayed immersed in the primitive blood of Mexico, but Lawrence went away" (*CEIII*, 605). Huxley summed it up in this way:

---

[6] Aldous Huxley, *Complete Essays, Volume III, 1930-1935* (Chicago, 2001), 605. Hereafter, *CEIII*.

> Lawrence deliberately cultivated his faith in the blood; he wanted to believe. But doubts, it is evident, often came crowding in upon him. The questioning voices had to be shouted down. But the louder he shouted the less he was able to convince his hearers. Art is convincing only when it springs from conviction. (*CEIII*, 606)

In Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* (1913), also in Chapter XIV, Paul Morel gives his mother, who is dying of cancer, her remaining morphia pills "crushed to powder" in her milk.[7] Brenda Maddox calls *Sons and Lovers* "a story of matricide. Paul Morel kills his mother."[8] Maddox writes that in 'real life' Lawrence begged the family doctor to give his mother "something to end it. The doctor left behind the sedative bottle and Lawrence and his sister fed their mother an overdose." (*DHLM*. 65) Whereas Linda in *Brave New World* is overdosed on *soma*, the World State's improved version of morphia and cocaine. When the Savage was taken to her bed in a Galloping Senility ward, he "shuddered as he looked" (*BNW*, 178). Linda was watching the semi-finals of the South American Riemann-Surface Championships, "vaguely and uncomprehendingly smiling. Her pale, bloated face wore an expression of imbecile happiness." (*BNW* 178).

Jerome Meckier observed that whereas "Gertrude Morel's agonies are pitiful: Huxley makes Linda's grotesque" (*Death*, 186). Meckier presented an intertextual and Freudian angle to the influence of D.H. Lawrence and Chapter XIV from *Sons and Lovers* on Huxley's Chapter XIV in *Brave New World*:

---

[7] D.H. Lawrence, *Sons and Lovers* (Oxford, 1995 [1913]), 444.

[8] Brenda Maddox, *D.H. Lawrence: The Story of a Marriage* (New York, 1994), 65. Hereafter, *DHLM*.

> In *Hamlet*, Queen Gertrude, Mrs Morel's namesake, inadvertently poisons herself by drinking from the cup that Claudius, her husband, intends for her son. The prince suspects that his uncle murdered his brother (Hamlet's father) and married his brother's widow (Hamlet's mother) to become king. Deep down, he resents his uncle for doing what he would like to have done himself: kill his father and sleep with his mother. When Paul Morel gives his mother a fatal "sleeping draught", Lawrence wants readers to think that Paul's Oedipus complex is on a par with the Prince of Denmark's mother-fixation. (*Death*, 186)

When John the Savage lived with his mother at Malpais (in the Reservation located by Huxley in the area in the south-west of the U.S.A inhabited by Pueblo Indians, so prominent in Lawrence's fictional and non-fictional writings), he was given by Popé, his mother's lover, a copy of *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*. John learned the book by heart and followed the advice from *Hamlet*: he waited till the mother's lover was "drunk asleep […] in the incestuous pleasure of his bed", and then grabbed the meat knife and stabbed Popé.

> At the climax of Shakespeare's revenge tragedy, four corpses litter the stage; "two cuts on Popé's left shoulder" are all John can inflict. Huxley undercuts Lawrence's tragic conception of Paul Morel as a modern Hamlet with John's childish attempt to imitate the pensive prince. (*Death*, 186-187)

In a Galloping Senility ward the dying, hallucinating Linda thinks she is in bed with Popé. "'Popé!' She murmured, and closed her eyes. Oh, I do so like it, I do […]" (*BNW*, 182). John tries to explain to his mother who

he really is, but she repeats: "Pope!"(*BNW*, 182). It is then that:

> Anger suddenly boiled up in him. Balked for the second time, the passion of his grief had found another outlet, was transformed into a passion of agonized rage.
>
> "But I'm John!" he shouted. "I'm John!" And in his furious misery he actually caught her by the shoulder and shook her. (*BNW*, 182)

At this moment Linda recognized him, uttered the word "John!" (*BNW*, 182). And a bit later:

> Her voice suddenly died into an almost inaudible breathless croaking: her mouth fell open; she made a desperate effort to fill her lungs with air. But it was as though she had forgotten how to breathe. She tried to cry out—but no sound came: only the terror of her staring eyes revealed that she was suffering. Her hands went to her throat, then clawed at the air—the air she could no longer breathe, the air that, for her, had ceased to exist. (*BNW*, 182)

John summoned the nurse shouting: "Quick! Quick! […] Quick! Something happened. I've killed her. […] then fell on his knees beside the bed and, covering his face with his hands, sobbed uncontrollably" (*BNW*, 183).

Linda's death and John's grief may at first glance appear more human than the indifference of the citizens of the Brave New World with which they are surrounded, but in the end these two alternatives turn out to be equally removed from the *ars moriendi* practiced by Huxley's fictional perennial philosophers and, later, by Huxley himself. Aldous Huxley died of cancer in his home in Hollywood, California on 22 November, 1963, the very day

on which John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Austen, Texas, and Clive Staple Lewis died in The Kilns, his house on the outskirts of Oxford. Huxley's wife, Laura, guided him to death and later recounted this experience in her book celebrating her life with Aldous:

> Aldous died as he lived, doing his best to develop fully in himself one of the essentials he recommended to others: *Awareness* […] He seemed—somehow I felt he knew—we both knew what we were doing, and this had always been a great relief to Aldous. I have seen him at times during his illness upset until he knew what he was going to do, then, decision taken, however serious, he would make a total change. This enormous feeling of relief would come to him and he wouldn't be worried at all about it. He would say let's do it, and we would do it, and he was like a liberated man. And now I had the same feeling, a decision had been made. Suddenly he had accepted the fact of death; now, he had taken his *moksha*–medicine in which he believed, Once again he was doing what he had written in *Island*, and I had the feeling that he was interested and relieved and quiet […]
>
> "Light and free you let go, darling; forward and up. You are going forward and up; you are going toward the light. Willingly and consciously you are going, willingly and consciously, and you are doing this beautifully; you are doing it so beautifully—you are going toward the light—you are going toward the light—you are going toward the greater love—you are going forward and up. It is so easy—it is so beautiful. You are doing it so beautifully, so easily. Light and free. Forward and up. You are going toward Maria's love with my love. You are going toward a greater love than you have ever known. You are going toward the best, the greatest love, and it is easy, it is easy and you are doing it so beautifully".[9]

[9] Laura Huxley, *This Timeless Moment: A Personal View of Aldous Huxley* (Berkeley, 2000), 295-306.

Aldous Huxley's transformation from a Pyrrhonic sceptic to a mystic took place over two or three years in the middle of the 1930s. The process can be traced in his novels: *Eyeless in Gaza*, *After Many a Year Dies the Swan*, and *Time Must Have a Stop*—as well as in his non-fiction, particularly in *Ends and Means* and in *Perennial Philosophy*. This transformation was a long and complex process; at the same time intellectual and spiritual. Central to it were Huxley's earlier experiences of the death of members of his family and friends; deaths that were filled with fear, terror and grief. These experiences spurred Huxley on in search of *ars moriendi* and led to his abandoning philosophical scepticism and embarking on a path towards his own version of perennial philosophy. From this perspective, D.H. Lawrence's experiment with the 'philosophy of blood' may be seen as one of the hypotheses explored by Huxley—albeit only in the intellectual dimension—but eventually found severely wanting, not least because of his, and his wife Maria's, assistance at Lawrence's deathbed in Vance.

From Centrifugal Bumble-puppy to Free Climbing: Representations of Sport in *Brave New World*, *Eyeless in Gaza* and *Island*

Aldous Huxley's life-long quest for 'the Godhead', 'the Ground' made him concentrate much more on the spiritual than the corporeal. But, as he wrote in *Eyeless in Gaza*, "mind-body is indivisible except in thought"[1] and in his fiction as well as non-fiction we are offered numerous representations of the human body in action. We get them in "realistic" novels set in Britain before the Great War or between the wars, like in *Crome Yellow* or *Eyeless in Gaza*; sport is also an integral part of the 'non-realistic' dystopian society presented in *Brave New World*, as well as in the 'utopian' Pala depicted in *Island*.

As one of Huxley's biographers, Dana Sawyer, observed, the marriage of Aldous Huxley's parents Leonard and Julia "was more than a marriage of two people; it was the marriage of two great Victorian families, the Huxleys and the Arnolds; [...] who though not of the 'noble blood';

[1] Aldous Huxley, *Eyeless in Gaza* (New York, 1964), 255. Hereafter, *EG*.

nonetheless constituted the intellectual aristocracy of the British Empire."[2] Being born at that time and that place meant that he entered the system of British public schools, with its emphasis on the role of sports and particularly team games in the education of the new generations of the British Empire élite. Aldous Huxley went first to Hillside School and then to Eton. This was the heyday of public school games, whose role in élite education had been growing steadily since the 1850s. By Edwardian times they were so pivotal in the system that as Richard Holt observed in *Sport and the British*:

> Although in principle sport was not supposed to be compulsory, in practice it was. Refusing to play took even more courage than participating. Games were the core of a kind of inclusive culture that sociologists nowadays identify with 'total institutions' like army barracks or prisons from which there is no escape and where an individual eats and sleeps, works and plays in collective isolation.[3]

Huxley was not much of a sportsman, and most people familiar, or vaguely familiar with his biography, would probably put it down to problems with his eyes that led to his near blindness in the summer of 1911; problems that continued to trouble him for the rest of his life. But these problems apparently did not begin till the winter of 1911, when Aldous was 17, and long past his Hillside days. To try to explain Huxley's lack of success in sport I would like to turn to the theory of personality and its correlation with the

---

2 Dana Sawyer, *Aldous Huxley: A Biography* (New York, 2002), 22.

3 Richard Holt, *Sport and the British: The Modern History* (Oxford, 1997), 97. Hereafter, *SB.*

corporeal constitution which was presented by Dr. William Sheldon, and which Aldous Huxley took extremely seriously and wrote about copiously, mostly in his non-fiction, to explain such diverse phenomena as people's inability to communicate with one another due to extreme somatotonia[4] or different religious dispositions.[5] Sheldon's theory also seemed to be able to explain why most of us have no chance at all of success at the competitive level in most sports. In his article published in *Harper's Magazine* Huxley wrote: "For example, less than ten out of every hundred are sufficiently mesomorphic to engage with even moderate success in the more strenuous forms of athletics. Hence the almost criminal folly of encouraging all boys, whatever their hereditary make-up, to develop athletic ambitions."[6] Sports physiologists today use terms like slow or fast twitch muscle predominance and/or kinesthetic intelligence to explain why most of us have no chance of becoming top athletes no matter how much we dream of it, try, or are pushed to do so.

Let me start with *Brave New World* (1932). Sport there is not such an important part of the educational, character and team spirit formation process as it was, has been and still is perceived by most nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first century British, American or Australian educators; it is reduced to the role of entertainment; a distraction from

---

4 See Aldous Huxley, *The Doors of Perception* (New York, 1990), 14.

5 See Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy* (New York, 1945), 150-151.

6 Aldous Huxley, "Who Are You?" in *Harper's Magazine 189* (1944), 515.

reality. Aldous Huxley, in his *Brave New World Revisited* (1958), states:

> A society, most of whose members spend a great part of their time not on the spot, not here and now and in the calculable future, but somewhere else, in the irrelevant other worlds of sport and soap opera, of mythology and metaphysical fantasy, will find it hard to resist the encroachments of those who would manipulate and control it.[7]

And a little earlier in the same paragraph the popular game World State Centrifugal Bumble-puppy is recalled, together with Huxley's other coinages for popular entertainment:

> In *Brave New World* non-stop distractions of the most fascinating nature (the feelies, orgy-porgy, centrifugal Bumble-puppy) are deliberately used as instruments of policy, for the purpose of preventing people from paying too much attention to the realities of the social and political situation." (*BNWR*, 280)

Sport is a distraction and an entertainment, but also a part of the World State capitalist economy. When the Director of the Central London Hatchery and Conditioning Centre takes his students to the Infant Nurseries, Neo-Pavlovian Conditioning Rooms and shows them babies treated with electric shocks while being shown pictures of books and flowers, he concludes: "We condition the masses to hate the country [...] But simultaneously we condition them to love all country sports. At the same time, we see to it that all country sports shall entail the use of elaborate

---

[7] Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World Revisited* (London, 1987), 280. Hereafter, *BNWR.*

apparatus. So that they consume manufactured articles as well as transport. Hence those electric shocks."[8] Later on, while watching a game of Centrifugal Bumble-puppy the Director says:

> "Strange to think that even in Our Ford's day most games were played without more apparatus than a ball or two and a few sticks and perhaps a bit of netting. Imagine the folly of allowing people to play elaborate games which do nothing whatever to increase consumption. It's madness. Nowadays the Controllers won't approve of any new games unless it can be shown that it requires at least as much apparatus as the most complicated of existing games." (*BNW*, 35)

That is the view of the capitalist theory of economics, but it seems that Huxley's creativity in presenting 'the consumer sports' in practice was restricted mostly to linguistic coinages: thus, golf becomes "Obstacle Golf" and "Electro-magnetic Golf"; tennis is "Riesman Surface Tennis", squash becomes "Escalator Squash", cricket becomes simplified to "Centrifugal Bumble-puppy"; we are not given the exact rules or see characters actually participating in any of these sports. The idea of sport as a spinning wheel for the transport industry as well as the manufacturing industry is perhaps envisaged just once, in the fragment when Lenina Crowne is flying with Henry for a round of Obstacle Golf:

> Lenina looked down through the window in the floor between her feet. They were flying over the six kilometre zone of parkland that

[8] Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (Harmondsworth, 1972), 30. Hereafter, *BNW*.

> separated Central London from its first ring of satellite suburbs. The green was maggoty with foreshortened life. Forests of Centrifugal Bumble–puppy towers gleamed between the trees. Near Shepherd's Bush two thousand Beta-Minus mixed doubles were playing Riesman-surface tennis. A double row of Escalator-Fives Courts lined the main road from Notting Hill to Willesden. In the Ealing stadium a Delta gymnastic display and community sing was in progress. (*BNW*, 58)

Looking at this problem from the perspective of the beginning of the twenty-first century, it should be acknowledged that tennis, golf and squash are still popular, and in some cases even more popular in Western societies and keep sports gear manufacturers busy. But in the meantime other sports have appeared that are much closer to the World Inspectors' ideals of consumption, namely sports like windsurfing, mountain biking and, more than anything else, alpine skiing—a sport that is popular with people from all layers of society, be they members of Royal families, celebrities, executives and top politicians or simple working-class people. They buy or rent expensive gear which is outdated technologically after two or three seasons, although it is often still in mint condition. Apart from skiing equipment it requires skiing clothes and accessories; as well as lifts, *pistes*, pensions, hotels, restaurants, discos, air-planes or motorways and petrol. In 2002 Austria alone made around ten billion euro from the skiing industry.

In Britain, A. Adonis and S. Pollard tell us in *A Class Act*:

> Every sport has its class labels. Ascot is for toffs, the Grand National for 'the people"; Cowes is for debs, rugby league for

> miners [...] Next are sports such as cricket and golf which attract 'all sorts'. Although the 'sorts' are segregated between municipal golf courses and Wentworth Golf Club, for instance—when they do mix there can be trouble.[9]

They do not mix in the Brave New World, either: "Beneath them lay the buildings of the Golf Club—the huge lower-caste barracks and, on the other side of a dividing wall, the smaller houses reserved for Alpha and Beta members" (*BNW*, 65); so that they can enjoy their social, nineteenth hole, separately. It seems that there is no class distinction in the two types of golf: Obstacle and Electro-magnetic; "What were you playing this afternoon? Obstacle or Electro-magnetic?" (*BNW*, 70), Bernard Marx is asked by Morgana Rothschild and "blushingly he had to admit that he had been playing neither" (*BNW*, 70). Golf in the Brave New World is played by men and women together.

So is tennis, as we have seen in the fragment quoted above: "two thousand Beta-Minus mixed doubles were playing Riesman-surface tennis"; and the impression created by "two thousand Beta-Minus mixed doubles" is that of the popular lower middle class; while in Britain for a long time mixed doubles was the only game in which men and women participated together and tennis as such was a game that "bridged the upper and middle classes together". Going down the social ladder we had in the same fragment a "Delta gymnastics display" in "the Ealing stadium'; this is the only activity/sport for the bottom classes of Brave New World society; and it seems to reflect the socially low

[9] Andrew Adams, Stephen Pollard, *A Class Act: The Myth of British Classless Society* (Harmondsworth, 1998), 229.

position of gymnastics in Britain at the beginning of the twentieth century, which is probably best summarized in the slogan of the times: "games for the classes; gym for the masses" (*SB,* 118).

But it seems that in the Brave New World they have one game for the masses, or at least for the masses of children:

> The Director and his students stood for a short time watching a game of Centrifugal Bumble-puppy. Twenty children were grouped in a circle round a chrome steel tower. A ball thrown us so as to land on the platform at the top of the tower rolled down into the interior, fell on a rapidly revolving disk, was hurled through one or other of the numerous apertures pierced in the cylindrical casing, and had to be caught. (BNW, 35)

Huxley takes a simple, traditional game of bumble-puppy and converts it into Centrifugal Bumble-puppy, which becomes a sort of simplified and mechanised cricket; with the socially more prestigious aspects of cricket, that is bowling and batting, being taken over by the Centrifugal Bumble-puppy towers; and catching being left for the entertainment of children. We do not learn if the children playing Centrifugal Bumble-puppy are Alphas or Deltas or Epsilons, and there is no other moment in the novel that this game is played. So its low social status is not directly stated but only implied, as is the case in the passage quoted above from *Brave New World Revisited*, where Huxley puts Centrifugal Bumble-puppy alongside other entertainment for the masses, such as orgy-porgy and feelies.

If we jump to the other end of the social spectrum, we will find that the sport with the highest social status is

Elevator squash. Again, as is the situation with Centrifugal Bumble-puppy, this status is presented in a rather implicit way. Thus, when Bernard and Lenina, on their way to the reserve, stay overnight in a hotel in Santa Fé, Lenina considers this hotel so posh and excellent that she is unwilling to go on and says "I almost wish we could stay here. Sixty Elevator-Squash Courts [...]" and at this moment Bernard interrupts her with "There won't be any in the Reservation" (*BNW*, 85).

Bernard Marx and Watson Helmholtz are both Alpha-Plus intellectuals; they get together because they feel alienated from their own class; Bernard because he, by some fault in his Hatchery-production, lacked 'bone and brawn' and is eight centimetres shorter than the average height for his caste; Watson, for very different reasons: "This Escalator-Squash champion, the indefatigable lover (it was said the he had had six hundred and forty different girls in under four years), this admirable committee man and best mixer had realized quite suddenly that sport, women, communal activities were only, as far as he was concerned second bests"(*BNW*, 62). This opinion about "second best" may be a truly individual intellectual fad of Watson, but the narrator's list of his honours is clearly supposed to reflect the hierarchy of the Alpha-Plus values. It is not his intellectual skills as a committee man, and not even his top lover status (and we are in an ultra-promiscuous society), but his being the Escalator-Squash champion that comes first on the list. And somehow, his status of great lover and committee man may be seen as a result of his squash mastery, a game requiring more 'bone and brawn' than most

ball games; a game, to use Sheldon's terminology, for the extreme mesomorphic somatotonics to win, and for the Alphas (and maybe Betas) to play.

There are two distinct, if short, representations of spectator sports in *Brave New World*. In the first, the Savage visits his dying mother Linda in the hospital.

> Linda was lying in the last of the long row of beds, next to the wall. She was watching the Semi-Finals of the South American Riemann-Surface Tennis Championship, which were being played in silent and diminished reproduction on the screen of the television box at the foot of the bed. Hither and thither across their square of illuminated glass the little figures noiselessly darted, like fish in an aquarium—the silent but agitated inhabitants of another world. (*BNW,* 157)

Nowadays, when the All England Cricket and Lawn Tennis Club has just announced that it is going to spend millions of pounds on building sliding roofs over some of the Wimbledon courts in order to please TV broadcasters unhappy with frequent coverage distractions due to rain, Huxley's predictive, almost prophetic skills should be stressed. But it can be argued whether the second passage representing sport is even more prophetic, or if his sardonic jibe at masculine hegemony in the English upper middle class backfired and has become true now, with women competing in world championships in sports like boxing, kick-boxing, weight-lifting and wrestling. After all, there is quite a long discussion between Lenina Crowne and Bernard Marx on where to go on their first date: "In the end she persuaded him, much against his will, to fly over to Amsterdam to see the Semi-Demi-Finals of the Women's

Heavyweight Wrestling Championship" (*BNW*, 77). This episode could be traced to Nicholas Murray's biography, where he writes: "The Huxleys were starting to enjoy Paris, however, and sampling some of its pleasures, which included a Lesbian bar featuring 'a wrestling match between two gigantic wrestlers'."[10]

Sport in the Brave New World may look trivial and childish (Centrifugal Bumble-puppy), and yet because it distracts people from living in the here and now and sends a considerable part of the economy spinning, it is compulsory and can lead to very ominous consequences. Bernard Marx considers Electro-magnetic golf a waste of time. His partner Lenina Crowne finds it even difficult to conceive what is meant by this, "Then what's time for? asked Lenina in some astonishment" (*BNW*, 77) and he prefers walking in the Lake District, which is one of the reasons the Director of the Central London Hatchery and Conditioning Centre exclaims:

> By his heretical views on sport and *soma*, by the scandalous unorthodoxy of his sex-life [...] he has proved himself an enemy of Society, a subverter, ladies and gentlemen of all Order and Stability, a conspirator against Civilization itself. For this I propose to dismiss him with ignominy from the post he has held in this Centre; I propose forthwith to apply for his transference to a Sub-Centre of the lowest order. (*BNW*, 121)

Extreme mesamorphs became captains of their English public schools' First Elevens, as did Mark Staithes in Huxley's *Eyeless in Gaza*, or champions in Elevator Squash,

[10] Nicholas Murray, *Aldous Huxley: An English Intellectual* (London, 2003), 218.

as did Watson Helmholts in *Brave New World*, which elevated their positions within their own class considerably. Weak ectamorphs and endomorphs, preferring walks in the Lake Districts, as did Brian Foxe in *Eyeless in Gaza* or Bernard Marx in *Brave New World*, found it extremely difficult to make their way in their respective societies.

In *Eyeless in Gaza* there are no direct representations of sports, but many passages show how the central role of sport in the British public school system affects key characters like Anthony Beavis, Mark Staithes or Hugh Ledgwidge. Anthony Beavis, who is usually assumed to be, to a large extent, a *porte-parole* of Huxley himself, reports to his father in a letter from Bulstrode dated 26 June 1903: "We had two matches yesterday, first eleven v. Sunny Bank, second v. Mumbridge, we won both which was rather ripping. I was playing in the second eleven and made six not out" (*EG*, 134).This passage corresponds quite well with the account of Aldous's cousin, Gervas Huxley from Hillside: "By 1905 or 6 he was quite as strong as I was. He was never an athlete but enjoyed games—he was scorer for our cricket eleven and in our last year he and I helped to make up a highly unprofessional halfback line in the soccer team—and he was a tremendous walker and climber and very keen on it."[11] But making six not out for the second team was still a long way from Mark Staithes, a mesomorphic captain of the first eleven, whose thoughts about Anthony Beavis are reported by the narrator in this way:

---

[11] Sybille Bedford, *Aldous Huxley: A Biography* (New York, 1975), 54. Hereafter, *Bedford.*

> Looking round the table, Mark Staithes saw that that wretched, baby-faced Benger Beavis wasn't laughing with the rest, and for a second was filled with a passionate resentment against this person who had dared not to be amused by his joke. What made the insult more intolerable was the fact that Benger was so utterly insignificant. Bad at football, not much use at cricket. The only thing that he was good at was work. Work!" (*EG*, 40)

Many years later, long after their school days Mark and Anthony become friends. When their common lady friend, Miss Pendle, learns that they were at school together she asks Anthony what sort of boy Mark was then, Anthony answers: "He bullied me a good deal" (*EG*, 219), and then adds "Being so good at football he had a right to bully me" (*EG*, 220). Now, Anthony can afford to be clearly ironic about this sport/bullying syndrome, but in *Eyeless in Gaza* we can also see real trauma caused by it. Even long after schooldays Hugh Ledwidge, who was much worse at sports than Anthony, cannot bear to face "their reminiscences of how he had funked at football; of how he had cried when it was his turn, at fire-drill, to slide down the rope; of how he had sneaked to Jimbug and had then been made to run the gauntlet between two lines of them, armed with wet towels rolled up into truncheons" (*EG*, 121).

However, sport in *Eyeless in Gaza* is shown to have some positive potential as well. Football may be a curse for non-mesomorphic students at public schools at home, but at the same time it is seen by Dr. Miller as the best British export. Games, he claims, "are the greatest English contribution to civilization [...] much more important than parliamentary government, or steam engines, or Newton's Principia. More important even than English poetry. Poetry

can never be a substitute for war and murder. Whereas games can be. A complete and genuine substitute" (*EG*, 389-390). And although Mark Staithes derides the idea of substitutes as such, Dr.Miller insists on teaching football to the Indians and organizing matches between villages as a substitute for vendettas. (see *EG*, 380)

Yet, it is not through games or competitive sports that Huxley's characters are allowed to attain bliss. In Helen Amberley's case it is achieved through dancing:

> Dancing she lost her life in order to save it; lost her identity and became something greater than herself, lost her perplexities and self-hatreds in a bright harmonious certitude; lost her bad character and was made perfect; lost the regretted past, the apprehended future and gained a timeless present of consummate happiness. She who could not paint, could not write, could not even sing in tune, became while she danced an artist; more than an artist; became a god, the creator of a new heaven and a new earth, a creator rejoicing in his creation and finding it good. (*EG*, 166-167)

Similarly, Anthony Beavis, who takes Helen on a boat-ride, displays grace and mastery: "He lifted his trailing punt pole and swung it forward with a movement of easy grace, of unhurried and accomplished power [...] trailed for a moment, then gracefully once more, easily, masterfully was swung forward" (*EG*, 153). Much later, in his diary, Anthony stresses awareness and control, causing the mind-body dichotomy to collapse: "Skill acquired to getting to know the muscular aspect of mind-body can be carried over to the exploration of other aspects. There is increasing ability to detect for any given piece of behaviour [...] Re-educate. Give back correct physical use" (*EG*, 223). Huxley

then was clearly walking briskly on the path leading to *The Perennial Philosophy* and *Island*.

In *Island* there are no games. Sports, or to be more precise, physical activities that are supposed to keep us sane, fit and healthy are gardening and mountain climbing; incidentally both stereotypically perceived as exquisitely British. Mountain climbing was the favourite outdoor activity of Victorian and post-Victorian intellectuals and gentlemen. It has a wide range of forms; from walks in the Lake District, via the climbing of Snowdon and the Matterhorn, to George Leigh Mallory's three Mount Everest expeditions dressed in tweeds and home-knits, and his death there so near its summit in 1924. Huxley, in a 1961 London interview, admitted that after the problems with his eyes "many things that I liked doing, like mountain climbing and so on, became difficult or impossible to me" (*Bedford*, 15). In *Those Barren Leaves* Francis Chelifer describes an Easter Sunday climb of Snowdon with his agnostic father, who "considered a walk among the mountains as the equivalent of church going"[12] peaking (pun intended) during the recitation of the passage from Wordsworth's the *Prelude*. In *Island* "climbing is an integral part of the school curriculum."[13] One of its goals is to channel the excessive energy of extreme mesomorphs, but the main one, the one that makes it as crucial part of Pala's initiation rite, is beautifully described in this way:

---

[12] Aldous Huxley, *Those Barren Leaves* (New York, 1925), 125.
[13] Aldous Huxley, *Island* (New York, 2002), 91. Hereafter *Island.*

> Danger deliberately and yet lightly accepted. Danger shared with a friend, shared consciously, shared to the limits of awareness so that the sharing and a danger become a yoga. Two friends roped together on a rock face. Sometimes three friends or four. Each totally aware of his own straining muscles, his own skill, his own fear, and his own spirit transcending the fear. And each, of course, aware at the same time of all others, concerned for them, doing the right things to make sure that they'll be safe. Life at its highest pitch of bodily and mental tension, life more abundant, more inestimably precious, because of the ever-present threat of death. But after the yoga of danger there's the yoga of the summit, the yoga of rest and letting go, the yoga of complete and total receptiveness, the yoga that consists in consciously accepting what is given as it is given, without censorship by your busy moralistic mind, without any additions from your stock of second-hand ideals, your even larger stock of wishful fantasies. You just sit there with muscles relaxed and a mind open to the sunlight and the clouds, open to the distance and the horizon, open in the end to that formless, wordless Not-Thought which the stillness of the summit permits you to divine, profound and enduring, within the twittering flux of your everyday thinking [...] And now it's time for a second bout of the yoga danger, time for a renewal of tension and the awareness of life in its glowing plenitude as you hang precariously on the brink of destruction. Then at the foot of the precipice you unrope, you go striding down the rocky path toward the first trees. And suddenly you're in the forest, and another kind of yoga is called for—the yoga of the jungle [...] (*Island*, 202-203)

And Huxley ends this memorable paragraph with the words:

> And not merely a reconciliation. A fusion, an identity. Beauty made one with horror in the yoga of the jungle. Life reconciled with the perpetual imminence of death in the yoga of danger. Emptiness identified with self-hood in the Sabbath yoga of the summit. (*Island*, 203)

Island is often perceived as Huxley's utopian vision merging philosophies of East and West; nowhere, I think, is this blend more apparent than in the passage quoted above.

From the yoga of mountain climbing one may profitably turn to another extremely important, if not equally epiphanic yoga, the yoga of gardening. The Palanese concept of the advantages of gardening are explained to Will jointly by Vivaja and Dr. Robert in Chapter 9. When Will comments that they "dig and delve" (significantly, the Chaucerian phrase used here by Huxley) in the form of a "Tolstoy act" Vivaja replies "Certainly not. I do muscular work, because I have muscles; and if I don't use my muscles I shall become a bad-tempered sitting addict" (*Island*, 173). To which Dr. Robert adds:

> With nothing between the cortex and buttocks [...] Or rather with everything—but in a condition of complete unconsciousness and toxic stagnation. Western intellectuals are all sitting-addicts. That's why most of you are so repulsively unwholesome. In the past even a duke had to do a lot of walking, even a moneylender, even a metaphysician (*Island,* 173)

And when asked by Will if they treat it as a form of therapy, Dr. Robert answers: "As prevention—to make therapy unnecessary. In Pala even a professor, even a government official, generally puts in two hours of digging and delving each day" *(Island,* 174).

Seen from today's perspective of keeping fit, the Palanese recipe for physical wellness leading to holistic wellness more than fulfils the 1970s sports physiologists' famous formula 3x30x130, which tells us that in order to keep our cardio-vascular systems in shape we should all do

three times a week for 30 minutes physical exercise that elevates our heart rates to approximately 130 beats per minute. I checked my heart beat with a heart monitor while digging my mother's garden; hard digging does that, but I have foreseen two problems here: one is that in the temperate zone digging and delving are very seasonal activities which cannot be performed over long spells of time; the other was presented in the letter of Maria Huxley written on 4 May 1935 from France: "But what is more comic still is that Aldous has decided to take violent exercise for the sake of his health and that that exercise is the most concisely found in the form of gardening. So he digs every spare inch of the ground and causes havoc all round him to the despair of the gardener" (*Bedford*, 298).

Culture and Literature as Inter-disciplinary and Holistic Concepts in Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* and Aldous Huxley's *The Perennial Philosophy*

This text attempts to probe into the inter-disciplinary, holistic philosophy of culture and literature that can be traced during the first period of teaching English Literature as an academic discipline at the end of the nineteenth century, particularly as it is presented in a seminal text by Matthew Arnold—*Culture and Anarchy* (1869). The inter-disciplinary, holistic aspect of this text is compared with another important text and another *summa*—with Aldous Huxley's *The Perennial Philosophy* (1945).

Ever since I started teaching English Literature to trainee teachers of English, I have been interested in the history of the teaching of it as an academic subject, and also in its role, position and relationships with other disciplines that are and have been part of the curricula of the departments of English and teacher training colleges in Poland and many other countries. The immediate inspiration for writing this paper came when I was reading a book by an

American professor of English Literature, Robert Scholes. The book is entitled *The Rise and Fall of English, Reconstructing English as a Discipline* (1998) and it is a fascinating history of teaching English Literature as an academic discipline, mostly in the USA. In this book Scholes quotes a passage from William Lyon Phelps's *Autobiography with Letters*, published in 1939. This passage was so crucial to the book that it is inscribed on the cover of the first edition. Phelps is the epitome of an English Literature teacher. He taught at Yale from 1892 to 1932. The quoted passage reads:

> I shall never forget the afternoon in my father's house when I read *Maud* for the first time. I entered the room one kind of man and left it another kind of man [...] I shall always be grateful to this poem, for it was the means of my conversion; I escaped from the gall of bitterness and the bond of Philistine iniquity, into the kingdom of light. And after all, it is a great poem.[1]

"Philistine iniquity" and "kingdom of light"—I knew that these phrases came from the writings of Matthew Arnold. So I started to inquire about the role Arnold played in these 'conversions' of the early generations of professors of English Literature.

If one were to order the computer to run the highest frequency word check on the texts dealing with the teaching of English literature, one could expect the name Matthew Arnold, with the derivative adjective Arnoldian, to be in one of the top positions on the list. Matthew Arnold (1822–1888)

---

[1] Quoted by Robert Scholes in: *The Rise and Fall of English. Reconstructing English as a Discipline* (New Haven and London, 1998), 12.

was a Victorian man of letters, a poet, an essayist and a literary critic, and although he died before English Literature was established as an academic discipline at British or American universities, his influence on the ways it has been taught ever since can be clearly seen in all the great debates and controversies in the field; starting with the first one, the contest between the so called amateurs (or moralists who tended to turn to Mathew Arnold as their master) and the so called professionals (or philologists). The contest was fought at universities on both sides of the Atlantic at the turn of the twentieth century and ended with a draw at American universities and with a clear win of amateurs at British ones as their opponents, the philologists, were disqualified for being far too Teutonic in origin for the dominant social mood of the Great War.

Culture and Anarchy was first published in book form early in 1869, although its parts/chapters/essays had been published earlier in periodicals. The first of them, "Sweetness and Light", was the farewell lecture of Arnold as the Professor of Poetry at Oxford University in 1867 after two terms in office at Oxford University. J.D. Jump, Arnold's biographer, rightly calls the book "a lay sermon on the disadvantages of 'doing as one likes'."[2] "Doing As one Likes" happens to be the title of the second chapter of the book. The third one is entitled "Barbarians, Philistines, Populace", and contains Arnold's critical division of English Victorian society into three layers: the aristocracy, Arnold's own middle class, and the working class. Arnold himself had imported the term 'Philistines' from German, where it

[2] J.D. Jump, *Matthew Arnold* (London, 1977 [1955]), 377.

had been used for the first time in Jena in 1693 at the funeral of a student killed in a skirmish between 'town and gown', and the 'gown' speaker based his sermon on a phrase from the Book of Judges, which is repeated four times "Philister, uber dir Simson," Philistines over You, Samson.[3] The term 'Philistines' is still sometimes used these days, even though the class system in Britain has evolved so much over the last one hundred fifty years; the other two have been less successful in the meanings Arnold attached to them, and the term **"**Barbarians" is in fact deceptively misleading, a misnomer expressing Arnold's contempt for 'the masses'.

There are three more chapters in *Culture and Anarchy*, but it is the first one, "Sweetness and Light", that I would like to concentrate on. Arnold devotes it to culture, but his understanding of the term is extremely idiosyncratic. As Trilling and Bloom point out:

> He does not use it, as anthropologists and sociologists later came to do, to refer to the totality of a society's institutions, beliefs, arts and modes of behaviour. Nor does he use it in the more restricted sense in which it signifies the general intellectual and artistic activity of a society.[4]

Arnold himself tells us that the term 'culture' was a misnomer in Victorian Britain:

---

[3] See, e.g., Władysław Kopaliński, *Słowniki mitów i tradycji kultury* (Warszawa, 1985), 284.

[4] Lionel Trilling and Harold Bloom, *The Oxford Anthology of English Literature; Volume V: Victorian Poetry and Prose* (New York, 1973), 203.

> The culture which is supposed to plume itself on a smattering of Greek and Latin is a culture which is begotten by nothing so intellectual as curiosity; it is valued either out of sheer vanity or ignorance, or else as an engine of social and class distinction, separating its holder, like a badge or title, from other people who have not got it. No serious man would call this *culture*, or attach any value to it, as culture at all.[5]

Culture, according to Matthew Arnold, is: "a study of perfection" (*CaA*, 45), and the whole lecture/chapter "Sweetness and Light" is his elaboration of this definition. While reading it, I discovered quite a few striking similarities (and some differences as well) between Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* and Aldous Huxley's *The Perennial Philosophy*, published in 1945, seventy-six years later. It should be added here that apart from the 'spiritual' connection between Aldous Huxley and Matthew Arnold, there was also a familial one. The marriage of Aldous's parents Julia Arnold and Leonard Huxley was, according to Aldous's biographer Dana Sawyer, "more than a marriage of two people; it was the marriage of two great families; the Arnolds and the Huxleys."[6] Matthew Arnold was Julia Arnold's uncle and thus Aldous's great-uncle; Matthew Arnold died six years before Aldous's birth.

Arnold was extremely critical of the 'mechanical' and 'utilitarian' Victorian Britain and its institutions; and so was Huxley of what became of it seven decades later; and for both of them it is the de-humanising pressure of this civilisation on the individual self that is most dangerous; its

---

5 Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy* (Cambridge, 1990 [1869]), 43. Hereafter, *CaA*.

6 Dana Sawyer, *Aldous Huxley: A Biography* (New York, 2002).

pop music and pop literature that bombard our souls with empty words and 'muzak' and make it so much harder to embark on a voyage to perfection. Arnold wrote:

> The idea of perfection as an *inward* condition of the mind and spirit is at variance with the mechanical and material civilization in esteem with us, and nowhere, as I have said, so much in esteem as with us. (*CaA*, 49)

Both Arnold and Huxley were very critical of organised religions in general and organised Christian denominations in particular as vessels on which one might embark on a voyage to perfection.

> And when we rely as we do on our religious organisations, which in themselves do not and cannot give us this idea (of beauty, harmony and complete human perfection) and think we have not enough if we make them spread and prevail, then, say, we fall into our common fault of over-valuing machinery. (*CaA*, 55)

These words by Arnold may be matched with Huxley's quote in *The Perennial Philosophy* from his favourite religious reformer, William Law:

> Now religion in the hands of self, or corrupt nature, serves only to discover vices of a worse kind than in nature left to itself. Hence are all the disorderly passions of religious men which burn in worse flame than passions only employed about worldly matters; pride, self-exaltation, hatred and persecution, under a cloak of religious zeal, will sanctify actions which nature, left to itself, be ashamed to own.[7]

---

[7] Quoted by Aldous Huxley in: *The Perennial Philosophy*(New York, 1945), 243. Hereafter, *PP*.

Yet, they both look back with strong nostalgia to the early days of the English Reformation; "Renascense", as Arnold calls it, and both are deeply critical about the ways which it had turned out ever since. Arnold insisted: "The Reformation was strong, in that it was an earnest return to the Bible and to doing from the heart the will of God as there written" (*CaA*, 140). But he quickly added that "the attitude of mind of Protestantism towards the Bible in no respect differs from the attitude of mind of Catholicism towards the Church" (*CaA*, 140). While Huxley wrote in 1945:

> Choosing Luther and Calvin instead of the spiritual reformers who were their contemporaries, Protestant Europe got the kind of theology it liked. But it also got, along with other unanticipated by-products, the Thirty Years' War, capitalism and the first rudiments of modern Germany.(*PP*, 249)

Both of them had, as their favourite religious thinkers, eighteenth century Englishmen. With Huxley it was William Law (1686–1761), from whose *Serious Call*, *The Spirit of Love* and *The Spirit of Prayer* we get in the whole text of *The Perennial Philosophy* twenty-seven different quotations. With Arnold it was Thomas Wilson (1663–1755), bishop of Sodor and Man, whom he quotes slightly less copiously but always as key points in his arguments. In the opening passages of the Preface he wrote:

> But Bishop Wilson's *Maxims* deserve to be circulated as a religious book, not only by comparison with the cartloads of rubbish circulated at present under this designation, but for their own sake. [...] To the most sincere ardour and unction, Bishop Wilson unites,

> in these *Maxims*, that downright honesty and plain good sense which our English race has so powerfully applied to the divine impossibilities of religion, by which it has brought religion so much into practical life, and has done its allotted part in promoting upon earth the kingdom of God. (*CaA*, 4-5)

Now, I would like to turn to the central part of the similarities between Huxley's definition of the term 'the perennial philosophy' and Arnold's definition of the term 'culture'. Huxley wrote in the Preface:

> Philosophia perennis—the phrase was coined by Leibniz, but the thing—the metaphysics 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. Rudiments of the Perennial Philosophy may be found among the traditionary lore of primitive peoples in every religion of the world, and in its fully developed forms it has a place in every one of the higher religions. (*PP*, :vii)

And in the first chapter he described three separate gates leading to the perennial philosophy:

> The lower gate is that preferred by strictly practical teachers--men who, like Gautama Buddha, have no use for speculation and whose primary concern is to put out in men's hearts the hideous fires of greed, resentment and infatuation. Through the upper gate go those whose vocation it is to think and speculate—the born philosophers and theologians. The middle gate gives entrance to the exponents of what has been called "spiritual religion"— the devout contemplatives of India, the Sufis of Islam, the Catholic mystics of the later Middle Ages, and, in the Protestant tradition, such men as

> Denk and Franck and Castellio, as Everard and John Smith and the first Quakers and William Law. (*PP*, 1)

And then he proposed to describe in detail the middle gate, "the central" one as he called it later. I believe that Arnold's 'culture' has, in his system, the same central, pivotal function as Huxley's middle gate. As has been mentioned earlier, 'culture' was for Arnold "a study of perfection", and he added that there was no better motto for it than the one taken from Bishop Wilson's *Maxims*: "To make reason and the will of God prevail" (*CaA*, 45). What followed was Arnold's key comparison of culture and religion:

> And religion, the greatest and most important of the efforts by which the human race has manifested its impulse to perfect itself—religion, that voice of the deepest human experience—does not only enjoin and sanction the aim which is the great aim of culture, the aim of setting ourselves to ascertain what perfection is and to make it prevail; but also, in determining generally in what human perfection consists, religion comes to a conclusion identical with that which culture—culture seeking the determination of this question through *all* the voices of human experience which have been heard upon it, of art, science, poetry, philosophy, history as well as of religion, in order to give a greater fullness and certainty to its solution— likewise reaches. Religion says: *The Kingdom of God is within you*; and culture, in like manner, places human perfection in an *internal* condition, in the growth and predominance of our humanity proper, as distinguished from our animality. (*CaA*, 47)

Similarly to Huxley, Arnold comes to the conclusion that the perennial philosophy/culture with its stress on the

'internal condition', on the fact that the Kingdom of God is within us, goes beyond religion as we usually perceive it:

> But, finally, perfection—as culture, from a thorough disinterested study of human nature and human experience learns to conceive it—is a harmonious expansion of *all* the powers which make the beauty and worth of human nature, and is not consistent with the over-development of any one power at the expense of the rest. Here culture goes beyond religion, as religion is generally conceived by us. (*CaA*, 48)

Both Huxley and Arnold first went 'inward', to look for the Kingdom of God within us; but with both of them the ultimate movement was the social one. Huxley started with contemplation and ended up with the chapter entitled "Contemplation, Action and Social Utility"; Arnold started with "reading, thinking, observing" and ended up with:

> The great men of culture are those who have had a passion for diffusing, for making prevail, from carrying from one end of society to another, the best knowledge, the best ideas of their time; who have laboured to divest knowledge of all that was harsh, uncouth, difficult, abstract, professional, exclusive, to humanise it, to make it efficient outside the clique of the cultivated and learned, yet still remaining the *best* knowledge and thought of the time, and a true source, therefore, of sweetness and light [...] they worked powerfully to diffuse sweetness and light, to make reason and the will of God prevail. (*CaA*, 70-71)

"Sweetness and Light" is the most idealistic, holistic and interdisciplinary chapter of the book. Later, however, Arnold got so terrified of anarchy, of some nebulous revolution generated by the populace, that he was prepared to hand over the supremacy, superiority of the internal

power, to some external institutions. He was so fed up with Englishmen doing what they liked, which is so different from what Arnold would have liked them to do, that he was ready to hand over all the key powers to the state. He had travelled extensively in France and Germany to get acquainted with the educational systems there; systems that he considered superior to the English one. But his strongest feelings were for the state as the institution that could curb the individualist, non-disinterested tendencies of Barbarians, Philistines and Populace. He believed that it was culture that made people decide in this way:

> We want an authority but we find nothing but jealous classes, check and a deadlock; culture suggests *the State*. We find no basis for a firm State-power in our ordinary selves; culture suggests one to us in our *best self* (*CaA*, 95-96).

Arnold also suggested introducing one more 'continental', external institution—that of Academia, to wield power and pass judgements in the sphere of literature, just as the State should be doing elsewhere. These two institutions, the State and Academia, were extremely non-perennial, and here Arnold diverged from Huxley, who was far more sceptical about the susceptibility of such institutions to corruption, and he found the solution with his favourite perennial, William Law:

> In all the possibility of things there is and can be but one happiness and misery. The one misery is nature and creature left to itself, the one happiness is the Life, the Light, the Spirit of God, manifested in nature and creature. This is the true meaning of the words of Our Lord. There is but one that is good and that is God. (*PP*, 181)

The holistic, inter-disciplinary, quasi-religious and quasi-philosophical approach to English Literature characteristic of Matthew Arnold and the first generation of English Literature professors started to be replaced in the 1920s and 1930s by more and more 'rigid', 'methodological', 'technical' and 'academic' ways of teaching the subject. Its philosophical universality was finally questioned in the 1960s by scholars perceiving literature from the various 'ideological' perspectives of psychoanalysis, Marxism, feminism, structuralism and some other 'isms'. As a result, English Literature lost its central position in the education of students of English; while literature and literary studies have been perceived more and more as a sub-discipline in quickly growing (and much more inter-disciplinary) departments of cultural studies. From this perspective both Matthew Arnold and Aldous Huxley, with their holistic and idealistic concepts of Culture and Literature—as explained in texts like *Culture and Anarchy* and *The Perennial Philosophy*—remain two important British men-of-letters representing the high standards of the literary discourse in the period before 'Theory' and 'isms'; the period now retrospectively referred to as 'Liberal Humanism'.[8]

[8] See, e.g., Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* (Manchester, 1995).

From a Theodrome to the Dance of Shiva-Nataraja: Recycling Aldous Huxley's Views on Circularity in Nature and Culture

I would like to begin re-cycling Aldous Huxley's views on circularity in nature and culture with two contrastive images from two of his novels, one written at the beginning and the other at the end of his career as a novelist. *Antic Hay* is his second novel and was published in 1923, and *Island* is his final novel, published a year before his death in 1962. *Antic Hay* opens in this way:

> Gumbril, Theodore Gumbril Junior, B.A. Oxon, sat in his oaken stall on the north side of the School Chapel and wondered, as he listened through the uneasy silence of half a thousand schoolboys to the First Lesson, pondered, as he looked up at the vast window opposite, all blue and jaundiced and bloody with the nineteenth century glass, speculated in his rapid and rumbling way about the existence and the nature of God.[1]

Gumbril is the second, after Denis Stone from *Crome Yellow,* in the long succession of Huxley's characters portrayed in a usually more than less denigrating manner

[1] Aldous Huxley, *Antic Hay* (New York, 1965 [1923]), 3. Hereafter, *AH.*

bearing more or less direct similarities with Huxley himself. Gumbril is a disheartened and disgruntled public school teacher, as Huxley was at Eton from September 1918 to February 1919. But what is more important is that Gumbril is a sceptic and an agnostic. So, when Reverend Pelvey booms that "the Lord our God is one Lord," we encounter this flippant, theologically philological free indirect speech:

> Our Lord; Mr Pelvey knew, he had studied theology. But if theology and theosophy, then why not theography and theometry, why not theognomy, theotrophy, theotomy, theogamy? Why not theo-physics and theo-chemistry? Why not the ingenious toy, *the theotrope or wheel of gods?* Why not *a monumental theodrome*? (*AH*, 3) (my italics)

Gumbril's long, 'in service' speculations about "the existence and the nature of God," which meander beyond good and evil or "merely below them," through the painful memories of the death of his mother who was good, "not nice, not merely *molto simpático [...]* but good," end with the conclusion: "But this was nonsense, all nonsense. One must think of something better than this" (*AH*, 4-6). And so he does; the hardness of oaken benches, combined with the length of Reverend Pelvey's service and Gumbril's own inborn 'boniness' bring about the realization that "The real remedy, it suddenly flashed across his mind, would be trousers with pneumatic seats. For all occasions; not merely for church going" *(AH*. 7).

On the strength of the hope in the commercial success for what becomes known as "Gumbril's Patent Small Clothes" Gumbril Junior quits his history teaching job and goes to London. He fails to make any money on his trousers,

which is by no means the only failure in the novel, a novel about which Keith May observed:

> The shape of *Antic Hay* suggests a diagram of futility, a wheel at whose centre the hero cannot stay. Gumbril begins on the circumference, and the wheel is moving very slowly, a treadmill.[2]

The futility of modem life after the Great War, its 'waste land' aspect, is highlighted again in the final chapter of the novel, with the recurring motif of Shearwater, a scientist pedalling on his stationary bicycle. Today, when pedalling on a stationary bike, at home or in some fitness or wellness centre, is generally considered to be one of the best cardio-vascular aerobic exercises, pursued by millions and regularly included in New Year resolutions by many millions more, the 'vicious circular' aspect of it is probably not so obvious and clear to us, but this is how Huxley represented it in the final chapter of his book.

This may also be viewed as one more prophetic clue by Huxley, alongside the genetic engineering or virtual reality entertainment of *Brave New World.* Shearwater's stationary bike ride with instruments to gauge different physiological indicators presages our modern stationary bikes which calculate virtual speed, distance, calorie expenditure, wattage and other vital data:

> On the nightmare road he remained stationary. The pedals went round and round under his driving feet, the sweat ran off him. He was escaping and yet he was also drawing nearer. (*AH,* 280-281)

Forty years later, long after his rejection of scepticism and Pyrrhonism, and after becoming a devout pacifist and a

---

[2] Keith May, *Aldous Huxley* (London, 1972), 48.

'perennial philosopher', Huxley wrote his final novel, *Island*, a 'positive utopia', as it is usually known, to distinguish it from (his) 'negative utopias' or 'dystopias'—*Brave New World* and *Ape and Essence. Island* presents an 'ideal' society living on the island of Pala in the Indian Ocean, a society based upon a happy blend of what Huxley considered to be the best in European empiricist philosophy, with various strands taken from Eastern religious and Eastern philosophical tradition.

As far as the Eastern tradition is concerned, most of the ideas in operation on Pala are taken from Buddhism, particularly Mahayana Buddhism. Buddhism was closest to Huxley's 'perennial philosophy' because it is the least assertive in its attitude to a personal God, Gods, and deities, and closest to the ideas of an impersonal Godhead and the divine Ground; ideas which are pivotal in Huxley's *Perennial Philosophy* (1945). But in one of the crucial scenes in *Island*, the initiation into manhood (womanhood) ceremony at the very centre of it, we encounter a Hindu God—Shiva.

Huxley's recipe for the initiation ceremonies for the young boys and girls is to first take them for some free-climbing and then give them four hundred milligrams of revelation, in other words "two firsthand experiences of reality, from which any reasonably intelligent boy or girl can derive a very good idea of what's what."[3] And while "the revelation's," the *moksha*-medicine's, the drug's effect lasts, the boys and girls look at the small representation, an image of Shiva-Nataraja, the Lord of the Dance:

---

[3] Aldous Huxley, *Island* (New York, 2002 [1962]), 189. Hereafter, *I.*

> Look at his image [...] look at it with these new eyes the *moksha*-medicine has given you. See how it breathes and pulses, how it grows out of brightness into brightness even more intense. Dancing through time and out of time, dancing everlastingly and in the eternal now. Dancing and dancing in all the worlds at once. [...] In *all* the worlds. And first of all in the world of matter. Look at the great round halo, fringed with the symbols of fire, within which the god is dancing. It stands for Nature, for the world of mass and energy. Within it Shiva-Nataraja dances the dance of endless becoming and passing away. It's his *lila*, his cosmic play. Playing for the sake of playing, like a child. But the child is the Order of Things. His toys are galaxies, his playground is infinite space and between finger and finger every interval is a thousand million light-years. Look at him there on the altar. The image is manmade, a little contraption of copper only four feet high. But Shiva-Nataraja fills the universe, is the universe [...] He dances because he dances, and the dancing is his *maha-sukha*, his infinite and eternal bliss. (*I*, 204-206)

In *Island*, *moksha*-medicine, a hallucinogenic, mind-expanding drug, is to be used sparingly, once every year, to give people an hour or two of "enlightening and liberating grace"(*I*, 208) so that they live full of attention, realizing all the time that they are part of that circular dance of Shiva-Nataraja. And Shiva becomes, in a nicely ironic way, a representation of that opening concept from *Antic Hay*, a "theotrope," "wheel of Gods," of monumental "theodrome." We have the stark contrast of two religious ceremonies or services for the young. In *Antic Hay*, Anglicanism, and more generally Christianity, are *passé;* a set of habits, rituals and wisdom that permits and helps the construction of the playful concept of the theodrome, a concept which is rejected as "nonsense", while the real remedy becomes

pneumatic trousers. In the utopian *Island* Shiva-Nataraja as a theodrome, a circular, eternal dance, remains a goal towards understanding which, towards the realization of which, all the Palanese social arrangements, techniques and opportunities are directed.

To trace the utopian ideas of *Island* it is useful to return to the origin of some of the (strangely similar but) dystopian ideas of *Brave New World.* Throughout the 1920s and early 1930s, Huxley's sceptical and gloomy views on culture and civilization grew even more sceptical and gloomy. This process, discerned both in Huxley's fiction and in his non-fiction, is traced in detail in Robert S. Baker's *The Dark Historic Page: Social Satire and Historicism in the Novels of Aldous Huxley 1921–1939.* It is perhaps best summarized in the following passage:

> He [Huxley] came to regard the post-war society of the twenties and thirties as a fundamentally historicist culture, in which Hegelian notions of idealist history, Wellsian and Shelleyan ideas of historical progress, and what Huxley regarded as Marxist "modern" romanticism combined to create a bewildering ideological landscape, one that he traced back to the intellectual excesses of the romantic period. All of these thematic categories intersect in Huxley's exploration of ideological historicism, an analysis of a set of interrelated ideas such as "historical process," or more fundamentally, the prevailing tendency "to regard historicalness as a value."[4]

Although overtly debunking 'the grand historical narratives', especially those with the ideas of historical,

[4] Robert S. Baker, *The Dark Historic Page: Social Satire and Historicism in the Novels of Aldous Huxley, 1921–1939* (Madison, 1982), 5. Hereafter, *DHP*.

linear progress, Huxley occasionally returned to what he referred to as "historical undulations", wavelike pattern(s) of development, with "troughs" and "crests" or, as a character from *Point Counter Point*, Mark Rampion, saw it, with "peaks" and "declines" (*DHP*, 137). Most of Huxley's critics agree that *Brave New World* is a projection into the future of the trends and "undulations" that he saw in Europe and America at that time. The problem of history in *Brave New World* is solved in a simple way: Henry Ford's slogan 'history is bunk' is adhered to, history is banished, and the historical process is halted. "Carefully controlled society involves an immersion in the present in which Pavlovian conditioning, Marxist collectivism, Fordean technology, and a calculated indulgence of Freudian infantile appetitiveness combine to rigidly stabilize society and undermine the concept of linear progress" (*DHP*, 139). The 'here and now' of *Brave New World* is a sort of stupefying limbo, not the blissful eternity of the 'mystic' *Island*, and the reality of it is to be escaped from, numbed by a daily dose of a drug called *soma*, which is, in turn, so different and yet also so ironically similar to the positive, mind expanding *moksha*-medicine of the utopian *Island.*

In order to discover some of the reasons for this radical shift in attitude to the problem of 'here and now' and timelessness, let us now examine an essay on time that is part of Huxley's travel book *Beyond the Mexique Bay* (1933). The genre of the travel book, with its loose and episodic structure which encourages digressions, is suited to Huxley's erudite essayistic style, and the essay on time is just one of quite a few, but one which is particularly

important from our time-oriented perspective. Visiting Copan—the ruins of the ancient Maya culture—enables Huxley to discourse on the time cycles Maya priests created, and this fosters a series of more general remarks about the nature of time and the human perception of it.

The temples, pyramids and stairways in Copan were erected and enlarged to celebrate the elapse of significant spans of time. The Mayas had a sacred 'year' of 260 days, but they also used much longer cycles; Katun, a cycle of 7200 days and even 144,000 days. It is also probable that they used larger units of 288,000 days, and even of more than 1800 million days. Huxley believed that such a pre-occupation with time must have been the result of a series of personal accidents. A man is born to whom, for whatever reason, time is an obsession. He has the intellectual mastery to transform time into comprehensible quantitative terms. He is also in a position to influence others and make disciples. A tradition is formed, as was the case with the Maya; but in some other cultures, such as the ancient Greeks, despite its plethora of accomplished mathematicians and philosophers, it was equally 'natural' to ignore the subject.

But at the core of the problem is the psychological truth that time as such is unbearable:

> Any possible conception of time must be depressing. For any possible conception of time entails the recognition and intimate realization of the flux of perpetual perishing; and to be made aware of the flux—the flux in relation to one's own being; worse, as a treacherous and destructive element of that being—is intolerable. Regular, one, undifferentiated, time goes sliding beneath and through life, beneath and through its various pains and pleasures,

> its boredoms and enlightenments and seemingly timeless ecstasies—always the same mysterious lapse into nothing. The realization of it is, I repeat, intolerable. Not to be borne [...] Time is unbearable. To make it bearable, men transform it into something that is not time, something that has the qualities of space.[5]

Then Huxley discusses at some length the techniques we use to spatialize time. He lists nature, with the marching of heavenly bodies, the regular recurrence of hunger, desire, sleep, days, nights, and seasons onto which men have grafted all kinds of arbitrary systems of their own. Next he moves to artistic techniques "for parcelling up the continuous flux" and "bending the irreversible flux into the semblance of a circle", and also "those biological and social devices for dulling men's awareness of the flux—habit and its social equivalent, routine" (*CE*, 558). Huxley then tackles religion, which exploits the calendar with its feasts and ceremonies, as well as the time-transmuting arts of music, poetry and dance. And finally he moves to the philosophical and mystical concept that time is an illusion and eternity the only reality. In 1933, at the time of writing *Beyond Mexique Bay,* he does not accept this doctrine as true:

> But even if true—and personally I should like it to be true—the doctrine is not very efficacious against the obsessive consciousness of duration. For an illusion which is shared by all living beings, at any rate on our planet, is for all practical purposes indistinguishable from reality [...] In the mind of the chronologist, the musician, the common creature of habit and routine, time has been transformed, by a variety of different processes into the likeness of a circle. The

[5] Aldous Huxley, *Complete Essays: Volume III* (Chicago, 2001), 556-557. Hereafter, *CE.*

> mystic goes one further and contracts the circle to a point. The whole of existence is reduced for him to *here, now.* Time has been spatialized to the extreme limit. But, alas, when he emerges from his ecstasy, he finds the current still flowing—realizes that it has been flowing even while he imagined that he had altogether abolished it. The flux may be an illusion, but it is an illusion always and inescapably there. (*CE*, 560)

As we have seen in *Beyond the Mexique Bay,* Huxley's attitude to mysticism is sympathetic, but he clearly distances himself from it. In the quoted fragment, "he should like it to be true", while in a different fragment, when discussing the dangers inherent in the rise of nationalism in the early 1930s, he advises world educators to introduce "mythology and a world view which shall be as acceptable to the New Stupid as nationalism and as beneficial as the best of the transcendental religions" *(CE,* 502).

Huxley theorized the human inability to bear the flux of time and the desire to convert it into space; his explanation also included the 'mystic leap' he was to take later himself. Looking at this problem from a different perspective and relying on different notions, we could well explain Huxley's wrestling with the notion of time in terms of 'nostalgia'. As Svetlana Boym informs us:

> In a broader sense nostalgia is a rebellion against the modem idea of time, the time of history and progress. The nostalgic desires to obliterate history and turn it into private and collective mythology, to revisit time like space, refusing to surrender to the irreversability of time that plagues the human condition.[6]

---

[6] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York, 2001), XV.

That Huxley was, however, already undergoing a process of 'mystical' conversion can be deduced implicitly from his later fiction. The conversion from Pyrrhonism to mysticism is best described in fiction in the novel *Eyeless in Gaza* (1936). There, another Huxley-like main character, Anthony Beavis, undergoes such a change as a result of a very long sequence of events, and one of the culminating stages of his conversion is meeting the first of Huxley's fictitious 'perennial philosophers', Dr Miller, while trekking in Central America around 1933 (his origins could be traced to Dr Mac Phail from *Beyond the Mexique Bay*) "the head of the United Fruit Company's hospital [...] (whose) professional reputation stands very high, but it is his kindness and his wisdom that have made of him the universal godfather of Guatemala" (*CE*, 471).

The new Huxley was preaching pacifism at the social level, and became an active member of the Peace Pledge Union. He wrote, among other things, a collection of essays entitled *Ends and Means* (1937), warning in vain that it is impossible to achieve good ends on all levels, individual and social, while using bad means. On an individual level he became an advocate of the mystic eternal 'here and now' against the temporal flux. This conviction is clearly depicted even in his titles, but also, to a much greater extent, in the themes of the books he was to write during the coming years.

In the novels *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan* (1939) and *Time Must Have a Stop* (1944), as well as in his non-fictional summa *The Perennial Philosophy*, he began contrasting the pathetic attempts of unregenerate men and

women to prolong their lives in fear-ridden temporal flux with the blissful contemplation of the eternal 'here and now' experienced by his fictitious mystics: John Propter and Bruno Rontini, as well as by the historical mystics and saints of all the religious traditions quoted and analysed in *The Perennial Philosophy*. The importance of the eternal, blissful 'here and now' for Aldous Huxley after his 'conversion' in the mid-1930s was described in great detail much later by his second wife, Laura Archera, long after the death of Huxley. *This Timeless Moment*—that is how she titled her book about their life together.

Summing up, it should be emphasized that in Aldous Huxley's writings, both in his fiction and non-fiction, we can detect a clear, complete turn in his views and attitudes. Most central and most astonishing is the radical shift in his views on circularity in nature and culture. The young, flippant, witty, erudite Huxley toyed and juggled with many Western and Eastern philosophical ideas; among them was the mystical idea of the bliss of 'here and now', of the circularity of time, and of the convergence of this cycle to a single point. At that time it was just an idea like many others, to play with both philologically and ideologically, to have sympathy for but to reject it as a Pyrrhonic, an ultra sceptic, should reject all non-sceptical ideas. After his 'conversion' in the mid-1930s it became, to use a circular metaphor, a hub in the wheel around which Huxley's 'perennial philosophy' revolved.

William Sheldon's Varieties of Human Physiques and Temperaments in the Writings of Aldous Huxley

Throughout his life Aldous Huxley read voraciously and widely. Huxley's biographer, Nicholas Murray, retells the joke Bertrand Russell used to crack that one could predict Huxley's subjects of conversation provided that one knew which alphabetical section of the Encyclopaedia Britannica he happened to be reading at the time.[1] The breadth of his reading found its numerous reflections in his writings: in his letters, newspaper articles, essays, short stories, plays and novels. In the late 1920s and in the 1930s one of the key areas of his interest was psychology and its recent developments. He was generally critical and suspicious of psychoanalysis, of Sigmund Freud and of Carl Gustav Jung. It was the research of the German psychologist Ernst Kretschmer that convinced him much more, and of whose fundamental book *Physique and Character* (1921*)* he wrote in one of his letters: "very interesting and, to judge by

[1] Nicholas Murray, *Aldous Huxley: An English Intellectual* (London, 2002), 174-175.

one's own casual experience, full of truth,"[2] but it was the influence of an American psychologist, William H. Sheldon, that proved to be much more profound and long lasting.

Aldous Huxley became extremely enthusiastic of Sheldon's theory, and he would return to it in his fiction as well as non-fiction in various contexts and for various purposes. This theory features in most of Huxley's works between *Ends and Means* (1937) and his final novel *Island* (1962). In "Religion and Temperament" his contribution to *Vedanta for the Western World* (1948), a collection of essays published by Christopher Isherwood, Huxley wrote:

> In our own day a number of new essays in classification have been attempted—those of Stockard, of Kretschmer, of Viola, and more satisfactory and better-documented than all the rest, of Dr. William Sheldon, whose two volumes on *The Varieties of Human Physique* and *The Varieties of Temperament* are among the most important of recent contributions to the science of Man.[3]

In an article written for *Esquire* (May 1956) he wrote even more emphatically,

> "The proper study of mankind is man". And yet, though men have been studying themselves since the dawn of civilization, it has remained for Dr. Sheldon and his fellow workers to make the first genuinely scientific classification of human differences. The earlier attempts in this field were either fantasies like the pseudo-sciences of physiognomy and phrenology, or inadequate like the nineteenth-

---

2 Aldous Huxley, *Letters of Aldous Huxley*, ed. by Grover Smith (New York, 1969), 390.

3 Aldous Huxley. *Complete Essays VI*, ed. Robert S. Baker and James Saxton (Chicago, 2002 [1948]), 283. Hereafter, *CEVI*.

> century anthropometry or the rough-and-ready classifications of Kretschmer, Jung and Stockard. (*CEVI*, 174)

With his zeal for "the science of Man", conviction in the underlying truth of Sheldon's theories, and his master skills in essay writing, Huxley became an even better mouth-piece of Sheldon's theories than Sheldon himself, and one can find numerous proofs for such a statement in his articles, essays, longer non-fiction (*The Perennial Philosophy*, *Vedanta for the Western World*) as well as in his fiction (*Time Must Have a Stop*, *Island*).

Sheldon's theories were the result of fifteen years of research carried out on several thousand men. They were presented in two classical studies: *The Varieties of Human Physique* (1940) and *The Varieties of Temperament* (1942). In the former he posited three main bodily constitutional traits, which he named: endomorphy, mesomorphy and ectomorphy. In the latter he posited three main temperamental traits: viscerotonia, somatotonia and cerebrotonia, and presented a highly positive correlational analysis of the relationship between physiques and temperamental traits. Barbara Engler, in her book *Personality Theories*, thus evaluated Sheldon's achievement:

> Sheldon's research is firmly grounded in empirical studies and validating evidence. His introduction of continuous variables rather than discrete categories represents a distinct advance over the earlier typologies [...] but [...] nevertheless, even if we agree that there is a correlation between physique and temperament, we have no causal relationship between the two. A correlation is a measure

> of covariance; it does not inform us about causes and effects [...] This is one reason why his theory has not been widely adopted.[4]

Huxley, however, as has been shown in earlier quotes, believed Sheldon's theories to be not only fundamentally true, but, as his first biographer Sybille Bedford wrote, he always regarded Sheldon's research as "the first serious advance in the science of Man since Aristotle."[5]

Huxley gave the fullest account of Sheldon's theories in a long article published in "Harper's Magazine" in 1944. It was entitled "Who Are You?" and was published with pictorial comments by James Thurber. Huxley thus summarized Sheldon's three main traits of physique:

> Endomorphy is a factor which, when predominant, expresses itself in a tendency for anabolism to predominate over catabolism, which often results in soft and comfortable roundness of physique. At school the extreme endomorph is called Slob or Fatty. By middle life he or she may be so enormously heavy as to be practically incapable of walking. The endomorphic physique is dominated by its digestive tract. Autopsies show that the endomorphic gut is often more than twice as long and weighs more than as much as the intestine of a person in whom there is an extreme predominance of the ectomorphic constituent.
>
> Predominant mesomorphy expresses itself in a physique that is hard and muscular. The body is built around strong heavy bones and is dominated by the extraordinarily powerful muscles [...] It is from the ranks of extreme mesomorphs that successful boxers, football players, military leaders and the central figures of the more heroic comic strips are drawn.

---

4 Barbara Engler, *Personality Theories: An Introduction* (Boston, 1985), 252-253.

5 Sybille Bedford, *Aldous Huxley: A Biography*, (New York, 1975), 427.

> The extreme ectomorph is neither comfortably round nor compactly hard. His is a linear physique with slender bones, stringy unemphatic muscles, a short and thin-walled gut. The ectomorph is a lightweight, has little muscular strength [...] His body is built around [...] a relatively predominant and unprotected nervous system.[6]

Then Huxley presents the connection that Sheldon made between physique and temperament:

> Endomorphy, mesomorphy and ectomorphy are correlated very closely with specific patterns of temperament—endomorophy with the temperamental pattern to which Sheldon gives the name of *viscerotonia*, mesomorphy with *somatotonia* and ectomorphy with *cerebrotonia* [...]
>
> Conspicuous among elements of the viscerotonic pattern of temperament are relaxation in posture and movement, slow reaction, profound sleep, love of physical comfort and love of food. With this love of food for its own sake comes a great love of eating in company, an almost religious feeling for the social meal as a kind of sacrament. Another conspicuous trait is love of polite ceremony, with which goes a love of company, together with indiscriminate amiability and marked dependence on, and desire for, the affection and approval of other people [...]
>
> The somatotonic individual stands and moves in an assertive way, loves physical adventure, enjoys risk and loves to take a chance. He feels a strong need for physical exercise, which he hugely enjoys and often makes a fetish of [...] He loves to dominate [...] and since he is congenitally insensitive to other people's feelings [...] he can easily become a ruthless bully and tyrant [...]
>
> The cerebrotonic is the over-alert, over-sensitive introvert, who is more concerned with the inner universe of his own thoughts

[6] Aldous Huxley, "Who Are You?" *Harper's Magazine* 189 (Nov. 1944), 514-515. Hereafter, *WAY*.

> and feelings and imagination than with the external world [...] In posture and movements, the cerebrotonic person is tense and restrained [...] Cerebrotonics are extremely sensitive to pain, sleep poorly, and suffer from chronic fatigue [...] Alcohol, which increases the relaxed amiability of viscerotonics and heightens the aggressiveness of the somatotonic, merely depresses the cerebrotonic and makes him feel thoroughly ill. (*WAY*, 517-519)

Huxley knew, of course, that Sheldon's constitutional and temperamental traits are in the great majority of individuals combined fairly evenly, and "that extreme and unbalanced predominance of any one factor is relatively uncommon" (*WAY*, 515). Yet, while introducing Sheldonian views in his fiction and non-fiction, Huxley almost exclusively presented the extreme constitutional and temperamental types with their extreme differences. It is important, I believe, to have in mind that Aldous Huxley was an extreme cerebrotonic ectomorph himself. This was clearly one of the key factors for Huxley's enthusiasm for Sheldon's theories. When reading and writing about the features of extreme cerebrotonia and/or ectomorphy he must have found them true and convincing for himself.

In the same year, 1944, when "Who Are You?" was published, Huxley's novel *Time Must Have a Stop* appeared. William Sheldon is not mentioned by name, but his theories can be clearly recognized in the ways Huxley presents the three main characters of the novel: Eustace, Sebastian and John Barnack. They are portrayed as a viscerotonic endomorph, a cerebrotonic ectomorph and a somatotonic mesomorph, respectively. In this paper I would like to concentrate on only one of them, Eustace, and to use him as an example of Huxley's application of Sheldon's theory in

his fiction. Sheldon used twenty most important traits to characterize each of his types. Sheldon wrote about viscerotonics:

> There is the strong suggestion of a certain flabbiness or lack of intensity in the mental and moral outlook [...] The personality suggests lack of purpose beyond the elementary biological purposes. The relaxed protrusion of the lips (V-1) often brings to mind the picture of infantilism.[7]

Alice, Eustace's sister, sees him in this way:

> And the face was like a loose rubber mask sagging from the bones, flabby and soft and unwholesomely blotched [...] The damp, mobile looseness of that mouth, its combination of senility and babyishness, of the infantile with the epicurean.[8]

One of the key features of an extreme viscerotonic, according to Sheldon (*VT*, 43) is connected with sleep:

> *The Deep Sleep Characteristic*. Sleep is deep, easy, undisturbed [...] There is a great love of sleep, and the individual frequently becomes a sleep glutton, indulging in more than he needs. (*VT*, 43)

An appropriate fragment in *Time Must Have a Stop* about Eustace runs as follows:

> Eustace woke up, that Saturday morning, at a few minutes before nine, after a night of dreamless sleep, induced by nothing stronger in the way of narcotics than a pint of stout taken at midnight [...] Waking was painful, of course. (*TMHS*, 63)

---

7 William Sheldon, *The Varieties of Temperament* (New York, 1942), 42. Hereafter, *VT*.

8 Aldous Huxley, *Time Must Have a Stop* (New York, 1944), 39. Hereafter, *TMHS*.

Sheldon finds the specific attitude to death to be another key feature of extreme viscerotonic endomorphs:

> People in whom this trait is predominant usually do not like to contemplate the idea of death. They have a strong aversion to death, and are nearly always found not to have made peace with it. (*VT*, 48)

Eustace, when confronted with death, is deeply troubled; the only way he can deal with it is a desperate attempt at rationalising it:

> No less silly was thinking about death. So long as one was alive, death didn't exist, except for other people. And when one was dead, nothing existed, not even death. So why bother? (*TMHS*, 128)

There are quite a few more of Sheldon's viscerotonic traits, such as "Love of Physical Comfort" or "Need of People When Troubled" which are very distinctly attributed to Eustace, but Sheldon's influence in *Time Must Have a Stop* extends far beyond the physiques and temperaments of its characters. Similarly to Sheldon, Huxley used the traits to explain sociological phenomena of great impact. I agree with Matej Muzina's remark about Eustace Barnack that he is one of quite a few of Huxley's characters "who are either made fun of or even caricatured to express the views he [Huxley] himself holds true to all seriousness."[9] Eustace makes quasi-humorous images of viscerotonia, somatotonia

[9] Matej Muzina, "Aldous Huxley and W.H. Sheldon's Psychology of Constitutional Differences", *Studia Romanica et Anglicana Zagrebiensi* 40 (1975). 101.

and cerebrotonia in terms of an Old Man of Moldavia, an Old Man of Corsica and an Old Man of Port Royal; the historical paradigms for them are Confucius, Napoleon and Pascal. Eustace elaborates in this way:

> If I had the knowledge [...] I'd write an outline of world history. Not in terms of geography, or climate, or economics, or politics. None of these is fundamental. In terms of temperament. In terms of the eternal three-cornered struggle between the Old Man of Moldavia, the Old Man of Corsica and the Old Man of Port Royal. (*TMHS*, 123)

Eustace's evaluation of European history over the last few centuries closely resembles Huxley's diagnosis from a book published a year later, *The Perennial Philosophy*. Meanwhile, in *Time Must Have a Stop* Eustace's (and presumably Huxley's own) brief account of the last two centuries is presented in this way:

> And recently the Old Men of Port Royal had begun to be treated as badly as those of Moldavia. Nobody read Bentham anymore; but equally nobody now read à Kempis. Traditional Christianity was in the process of becoming almost as discreditable as Epicureanism. The philosophy of action for action, power for the sake of power, had become an established orthodoxy. "Thou hast conquered, O go-getting Babbitt". (*TMHS*, 123-124)

The Perennial Philosophy (1945) is Huxley's *summa* of the major world's religions' mystical aspects. Here, he compared and showed fundamental similarities between the ways in which the mystics of Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Christianity and Islam wrote and spoke about their experiences and their effects upon themselves and the world

at large. Huxley applied Sheldon's concepts to show the differences of our religious experiences as a result of constitutional/temperamental differences. In the chapter entitled "Religion and Temperament" he explained Bhagavad Gita's classification of paths to salvation in these terms:

> The path of devotion is a path naturally followed by the person in whom the viscerotonic component is high. His inborn tendency to externalize the emotions he spontaneously feels in regard to persons can be disciplined and canalized, so that a merely animal gregariousness and a merely human kindliness become transformed in charity—devotion to the personal God and universal good will and compassion towards all sentient beings.
>
> The path of works is for those whose extroversion is of the somatotonic kind, those who in all circumstances feel the need to "do something". In the unregenerate somatotonic this craving for action is always associated with aggressiveness, self-assertion and the lust for power. For the born *Kshatriya*, warrior-ruler, the task [...] is to get rid of these fatal accompaniments to the love of action and to work without regard to the fruits of work, in the state of complete non-attachment to self [...]
>
> Finally, there is the way of knowledge, through the modification of consciousness, until it ceases to be ego-centred and becomes centred in and united with the divine Ground. This is the way to which the extreme cerebrotonic is naturally shown.[10]

Huxley makes it clear that these are ideals, so hard and rarely to be achieved. Then, he claims that the task of the construction of an

> all-embracing system of metaphysics, ethics and psychology is a task that can never be accomplished by any single individual with one particular kind of constitution and temperament and therefore

[10] Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy* (New York, 1945) 152-153. Hereafter, *PP*.

> capable of knowing only according to the mode of his own being. Hence the advantages inherent in what may be called the anthological approach to truth. (*PP*, 153)

In his last book, the utopian *Island*, published in 1962, twenty-seven years after *The Perennial Philosophy*, Sheldonian typology becomes even more crucial; it becomes one of the cornerstones of education. Mr Menon, Pala's Under-Secretary of Education, explains:

> "We begin," said Mr. Menon, "by assessing the differences. Precisely who or what, anatomically, biochemically and psychologically, is this child? In the organic hierarchy, which takes precedence—his gut, his muscles, or his nervous system? How near does he stand to the three polar extremes? [...] How great is his inborn wish to dominate, or to be sociable, or to retreat into his inner world?"[11]

And then comes the practical application of Sheldon's typology in Pala's utopian educational system:

> When we have the answers, we sort out all the shyest, tensest, most over-responsive and introverted children and assemble them in a single group. Then, little by little, the group is enlarged. First, a few children with tendencies towards indiscriminate sociability are introduced. Then one or two little muscle men and muscle women—children with tendencies towards aggressiveness and love of power. It's the best method we've found, for getting little boys and girls at the three polar extremes to understand one another. (*I*, 253)

In *Time Must Have a Stop* and *The Perennial Philosophy* the major world calamities and conflicts of the

[11] Aldous Huxley, *Island* (New York, 2002 [1962]), 249-250. Hereafter, *I*.

last two centuries are blamed, to a large extent, on the increased role the mesomorphic Babbitts and Stalins have been recently playing in history. In *Island* their driving aggressiveness is transformed into what Huxley calls 'the Way of Disinterested Action', the redirection of power, which in the case of extreme mesomorphs means, among many other measures, more wood chopping and rock climbing.

Huxley presented the outline of Sheldon's typology in *Ends and Means* in 1937, three years earlier than Sheldon presented it in print himself. As we have just seen, it was still extremely crucial for him in 1962, the year he published his last novel, *Island.* The influence of Sheldon's theories on Aldous Huxley as a novelist, as an essayist and as a thinker can also be discerned on other levels. Sheldon's influence started at the end of the 1930s, and it coincided with the long process of Huxley's conversion from the witty, agnostic Pyrrhonist of the early novels (from *Crome Yellow* to *Brave New World*) to the more and more devout mystic (the first traits of whom may be found in *Eyeless in Gaza*, and then all the way from *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan* to *Island*). Huxley, an extreme cerebrotonic ectomorph himself, was convinced and reinforced by Sheldon's typology (and also by Hindu and Buddhist ones), which predicated that, in religious terms, his path to transcendence led through contemplation. And he followed this path more rather than less eagerly for the rest of his life.

From the perspective of an extreme cerebrotonic ectomorph, the idea of the *tabula rasa* of John Locke and J.B. Watson was totally ridiculous and incredible, as Huxley

argued, for example, in the essay "Where Do You Live". Disregarding psycho-physical heredity was to Huxley an elegant oversimplification of very learned intellectuals "determined [...] to force the rich confusion of given reality into the pigeonholes of a tidy and elegant simple theory" (*CEVI*, 175). People, or at least, people showing extreme traits in any of the three triangular points of Sheldon, are viewed by Huxley as islands. "Between the island universe, inhabited by individuals at the extremes of human variation there is almost no communication [...]" (*CEVI*, 175). The hereditary psycho-physical differences were for Huxley a fundamental fact, yet his post-war writings may be seen as attempts to bridge the gaps between people perceived as islands and archipelagos of islands. This is particularly well seen in *Island*, his final novel.

Finally, Sheldon's influence on Huxley may also be viewed as an instance of the latter's fascination and intellectual curiosity with the radical and non-orthodox theories and experiments on mind/body relationships. On a grand scale, the whole mystical aspect of Huxley's thinking and writings might and should be viewed as such. But there are also other examples. In the mid-thirties Huxley trained hard under F.M. Alexander to differentiate between the proper and improper habits of using our bodies; usages which, according to F.M. Alexander (and Huxley), condition our minds in very direct ways. Then, at the end of the thirties, in California, he trained his extremely poor eyesight according to the very unconventional method of Dr. W.H. Bates. This method was also strongly based on the assumption of a strong body/mind relationship. As a result,

he was able not only to go around, but even to read without glasses for the rest of his life, and Bates' method is described in detail in Huxley's only 'scientific' book *The Art Of Seeing* (1943). His famous (notorious?) experiments with mescaline in the fifties, which he described in *The Doors of Perception*, grew out of the same conviction of the strength of psycho-physical relationships.

Good or Evil?
The Semantics of the Body in *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan*

After Many a Summer Dies the Swan is often accused of being a weak novel because it is so strongly didactic, with unequivocal distinctions into black and white, good and evil. Good equates with eternity, timelessness, whereas evil equates with time. Time is described by Mr. Propter, the perennial sage of the novel, as "the medium in which evil propagates itself, the element in which evil lives and outside of which it dies [...] time is evil."[1] Mr. Propter is eternity's advocate in the novel. As Keith May observed:

> Nearly a quarter of the novel provides both an analysis of the various stupidities and wickednesses which are manifested in the other three quarters, and positive recommendations as to how to improve the quality of life.[2]

In this paper I would like to look into the ways in which the human body is represented in the 'perennial' part of the

---

1 Aldous Huxley, *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan* (New York, 1965 [1939]), 82. Hereafter, *AMS*.

2 Keith May, *Aldous Huxley* (London, 1972), 143. Hereafter, *AH*.

novel (which, as May rightly noted, comprises "nearly a quarter of the novel"); to look into the troubled border between body and mind, or to use Huxley's terminology, between animal and human levels of existence. Because of space limits I will refer to the "stupidities and wickednesses" described by Huxley in "the other three quarters" of the novel only to the extent that they are closely connected with the body/mind dilemma. I hope to explore more fully the fear of death/longevity parable that is the central theme of *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan* elsewhere.

Mr. Propter is not a Manichean, at least in theory; he admits that both flesh and spirit 'are good', or, to be more exact, "are capable of being good". In his perennial philosophy there are three levels of existence, and good can exist only on the lower and higher levels, not on the middle one, the human level.

> On the lower level, good exists as the proper functioning of the organism in accordance with the laws of its own being. On the higher level it exists in the form of a knowledge of the world without desire or aversion; it exists as the experience of eternity, as the transcendence of personality, the extension of consciousness beyond the limits imposed by the ego. Strictly human activities are activities that prevent the manifestation of good on the other two levels. (AMS, 93)

So it is, according to Propter, the middle, human level, with our egos and personalities, desires and cravings where good does not and cannot exist. And it is the human level that strongly interferes with the other two. On the one hand, with our cravings and desires we interrupt the physiological, animal level; the level of animal grace. "We worry and

crave ourselves into high blood pressure, heart disease, tuberculosis, peptic ulcer, low resistance to infection, neurasthenia, sexual aberrations [...]" (*AMS*, 93). In fact, according to Propter, whose philosophy is very 'Puritan' in this respect, all human sexual behaviour is in this or that way aberrant as it is mostly self-conscious and dominated by words, memories, wishes and judgements: "This meant that there was no one type of human sexuality that could be called 'normal' in the sense in which one could say that there was a normality of vision or digestion. In *that* sense, all kinds of human sexuality were strictly abnormal" (*AMS*, 176). On the other hand, it is the same human level of craving that prevents us "from realizing the spiritual and timeless good that we're capable of as potential inhabitants of eternity" (*AMS*, 94).

Thus, according to Propter, the escape from the human level is the escape from craving and time. It is the escape to the levels of animals and spirits, to the levels of "physiology and disinterested consciousness" (*AMS*, 113). His diagnosis and plans are succinctly presented in this way:

> At present [...] the world we've made for ourselves is a world of sick bodies and insane or criminal personalities. How shall we make this world safe for ourselves as animals and as spirits? If we can answer that question, we've discovered what to do. (*AMS*,113)

Repeatedly, in *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan*, Huxley shows sick bodies and criminally insane personalities, both in the California of the late 1930s and historically in Europe, in the Hauberk Papers, which Jeremy Pordage brought to California to sort out. Even Propter in

his preaching concentrates mostly on explaining the nature of evil. There are very few moments when he tries to answer the key question he has asked himself, and these answers are mostly given at the social, not individual level. Propter warns continuously about the good intentions of politicians, romantics and revolutionaries who bring more evil and suffering than good. He himself advocates a form of local, Jeffersonian democracy—a system that is to make the world safe for animals and spirits. He explains the advantages of this system in this way:

> You must have a system that reduces the amount of fear, greed and hatred and domineering to their minimum, which means that you must have enough economic security to get rid at least of that source of worry. Enough personal responsibility to prevent people from wallowing in sloth. Enough property to protect them from being bullied by the rich, but not enough to permit them to bully. And the same thing with political rights and authority—enough of the first for the protection of the many, too little of the second for the domination of the few. (*AMS*, 114)

Such a social and economic system, plus small, local workshops, plus small solar power generators are to be the foundations of the utopian economy presented as the alternative to the global, corporate capitalism described with gloomy details elsewhere in the novel. But these small voluntary, local communities are presented not as goals in themselves, but as means for the personal transcendence from the human level to that of animals and/or spirits. Such a system is to be far more 'transcendence friendly' than any other existing system. Huxley was to return to the 'positive utopia' in his last novel, *Island*, where the socio-political

system is very similar to that of Mr. Propter from *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan*. In *Island*, however, the whole complex system comprising of and combining education and religion is presented at great length. It does not guarantee the automatic, universal transcendence of individuals, but it definitely solves the two main problems of human beings as presented in *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan*: our sexuality and our fear of death.[3] In Huxley's 1939 novel we get no positive answers on the key, individual level.

Or, rather, we get one, but it is so general that it becomes nebulous. After discussing 'two horns of the dilemma' of the impossibility to talk of eternity in the—on the one horn—language of everyday experiences and—on the other—the language of philosophy, Mr. Propter announces that there is a way out: "The practical way. You can go and find out what it means for yourself by first-hand experience" (*AMS*, 119). And then, warns that the way goes up and that there are no elevators and "there's an awful lot of stairs" (*AMS*, 119).

Mr. Propter seems to be there, at the top; he does not admit it directly and Huxley does not show the steps taken. We learn that once, a long time ago, he was "the William Propter", the scholar and the gentleman and the author of *Short Studies in the Counter-Reformation*, which happen to

[3] I am not concerned here with the practicability or the applicability of Huxley's ideas from *Island*. For an interesting discussion of these problems see the final part of the paper by Keith M. May: "Huxley's Marriage of Heaven and Hell" in: *Now More Than Never: Proceedings of the Aldous Huxley Centenary Symposium, Münster 1994*. ed. by Bernfried Nugel (Frankfurt am Main, 1995), 335-346.

be one of the favourite books of another scholar and gentleman of the novel, the Englishman Jeremy Pardage. So, the starting point for both of them was similar. They both read "Sankara and Eckhart, the Pali texts and John of the Cross, Charles de Condran and the Bardo and Patanjali and the Pseudo-Dionisius" (*AMS*,95). Jeremy had read them "and been moved by them into wondering whether he oughtn't to do something about them; and, because he had been moved in this way, he had taken elaborate pains to make fun of them, not only to other people, but also and above all to himself" (*AMS*,95). Jeremy is one of the main characters of the book, and "the infinite squalor" resulting—Huxley's readers are shown to believe to a large extent—from his attitude to the teachings of mystics, is presented with clear relish. Jeremy is clearly someone who Huxley thought he might have become himself had things gone slightly differently, and was thankful that they had not. At the level of the body he is diagnosed personally by the evil and perceptive Dr. Obispo:

> no more than middle-aged, but already bald, already long sighted and short winded, already more or less edentate, incapable of prolonged physical exertion; chronically constipated (could you deny it?); your memory already not so good as it was; your digestion capricious—your potency falling off, if it hadn't, indeed, already disappeared for good. (*AMS*, 50)

Jeremy, like all the other characters in *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan*, lives imprisoned in the cage of his egoistic desires and fears. Jeremy likes his gilded cage, his little exquisite scholarly articles, his relationship with his domineering mother, his voyeuristic readings of de Sade,

and, most of all, "the infinite squalor" of his bi-weekly visits to prostitutes in Maida Vale.

Propter's way, unlike Jeremy's, is not shown in the novel. Nothing between the writing of *Short Studies* and his wish to go "the practical way" of yesteryears and the Mr. Propter of 1939, a sage bent on setting up his community among the madness of a corporate capitalist world gearing up towards total war. Mr Propter serves in the novel as the antithesis to both Dr. Obispo and Jo Stoyte, two impersonations of different aspects of madness; but whereas their ways down are richly illustrated, Propter's way up is not shown. Propter speaks as if he has gone the animal and the spiritual ways but Huxley gives no evidence that he has really achieved this or if he is still on his way up many stairs. *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan* only shows what his way is not.

Mr. Propter's way is different from the way of Molinos. Twenty-seven crates of the Hauberk Papers, which Jeremy researches in Jo Stoyte's castle, contain mostly documents of human folly and madness, but spread among them are also original writings of a seventeenth century Spanish quietist mystic, Manuel Molinos. When jocularly prompted by Jeremy that Molinos's papers are Propter's "cup of tea", Propter replies:

> My cup of tea. But not my favourite blend. There was something not quite right about poor Molinos. A strain of—how shall I put it?—of negative sensuality. He enjoyed suffering. Mental suffering, the dark night of the soul—he really wallowed in it. No doubt, poor fellow, he sincerely believed he was destroying self-will; but without his being aware of it, he was always turning the

> process of destruction into another affirmation of self will. Which was a pity [...] because he certainly did have some first-hand experience of reality. (*AMS*, 120)

But Huxley never reveals what Propter's favourite blend of tea really is and how he has happened to discover it. The version of Propter's perennial philosophy is far stricter and more 'Puritan' than the later versions put forward by Huxley in *The Perennial Philosophy* (1945). There Huxley posits three different 'gateways' to eternity depending on our frame of mind. In *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan* Propter explains: "there are a million wrong tracks and only one right—a million ideals, a million projections of personality, and only one God and one beatific vision" (*AMS*,119). We are shown quite a few of these projections, some of them in close relation to the notion of the human body.

While showing the psychosomatic relationships and the improper use we make of our bodies, Propter elaborates:

> Craving even prevents us from seeing properly [...] The harder we try to see, the graver our error of accommodation. And it's the same with bodily posture; the more we worry about doing the thing immediately ahead of us in time, the more we interfere with our correct body posture and the worse, in consequence, becomes the functioning of the entire organism. (*AMS*,93-94)

Let us concentrate for a while not so much on the wrong uses people make of their bodies but on the language that Huxley used to describe them. On the one hand, we have "seeing properly" and "errors of accommodation". On the other, "the correct body posture". The first two terms are

crucial to the method of sight correction designed by the American H. E. Bates. Huxley, at the time of writing *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan*, had already started training six times a week with the Bates method, and his eyesight was improving on an almost daily basis, and was to remain so for the rest of his life. Sybille Bedford, Huxley's friend and ultimately a biographer, referred to it as a "Private Miracle,"[4] but it was an extremely hard-earned miracle: it took Aldous "the daily hours spent on learning those simple practices, the vigilance, the submission, the tough perseverance. Not to strain, not to stare, is as hard to learn for an urban adult as turning cart-wheels; harder [...]" (*BAH*, 375). In 1943 Huxley finished and published *The Art of Seeing*, a book enthusiastically describing the ways and effects of the Bates' method.[5] 'The correct body posture', in turn, was a key term in F.M. Alexander's method. Again, Huxley had some first-hand experience of this method; he had trained with F. M. Alexander in 1935 in London, and Alexander's method is described at some length and advocated in *Eyeless in Gaza* (1936). These are quite different methods based on different assumptions, yet there is a fundamental similarity between them. They both promote the escape from evil and craving by strengthening the links with the physiological, animal level of man's

---

4 Sybille Bedford, *Aldous Huxley: A Biography* (New York, 1975), 374-375. Hereafter, *BAH*.

5 During the Third International Aldous Huxley Symposium held in Riga in August 2004 Anthony Attenborough conducted two extremely interesting workshops entitled "Aldous Huxley and *The Art of Seeing:* His Understanding and Practice of the Bates Method" and "*The Art of Seeing* in the Classroom".

existence, which as noted before, in *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan*, is described as the level of good. Therefore, it seems extremely strange that these methods are not in any way put forward in the seventy pages of Mr. Propter's preaching, and all we get in the novel is the faint, negative, linguistic echo of them.

There is one more interesting aspect of Huxley's treatment of the border between the middle human level of craving and evil and the lower animal level of good. Huxley shows that there are many wrong, false steps down to the animal level. As Keith May put it:

> The signs, billboards, and buildings of Hollywood, seen in the first chapter by a consummately un-American Jeremy Pordage, offer and crudely mix a variety of substitutes for the animal and spiritual spheres. Church, cemetery, restaurant and lingerie shop are equated as things to be sampled or consumed. Moreover, the supposedly carnal offerings of the billboards [...] are as far removed from the simply carnal as the spiritual offerings [...] are from the truly spiritual. (*AMS*, 145-146)

In the same way, Virginia Maunciple's life in the present is shown as only a 'burlesque' version of life in 'timeless eternity'; hers is a life in 'mindless eternity', which becomes a caricature of 'upward self-transcendence' as is her apparent lack of craving for things. Similarly, her sex with Dr. Obispo is a caricature of 'the lower self-transcendence' into the animal level. Their love-making, induced by some translations from de Sade's *Cent-Vingt Jours de Sodome*, do result in perfectly animal like, graceful workings of the body and a lack of self-consciousness, but

the morning-after awakenings bring a new and miserable pain in time.

The border between the human and animal levels is also probed in numerous simian references in the novel. Keith May was right when he admitted that the whole point was not made explicit. His interpretation is that through monkey references we are shown

> that man differs radically from other animals not in the great scope of his consciousness as such, but in the fact that this greater scope includes the ability to be conscious of consciousness. The man who most exercises this ability, which points the way of 'essence' as opposed to 'ape', is the man who least leans towards monkeyhood. (*AH*, 155)

In the final scene in the vaults of Gonister, the ape-like fifth Earl of Gonister, two hundred and one years old at the moment (thanks to a diet of carps' guts), rapes his almost equally old servant and partner. The earl is described by Dr. Obispo as a "foetal ape", a foetal ape which has had time to grow. This scene is a contrastive extension of a scene early in the novel when Victoria and Pete go feeding baboons in Jo Stoyte's Californian 'neverland'. The old he-baboon, sexually jealous of his partner, is distracted for a minute by carrots and potatoes; the young male quickly sees his chance and engages in copulation with the female. At this moment: "Virginia clapped her hands with pleasure "Aren't they cute!" she cried "Aren't they *human*!" (*AMS*, 64, italics original).

Huxley was to return to his simian parallels in his later dystopian novel *Ape and Essence* (1949), and there as well "ape" stands for the opposite of "essence", the "eternal

Nature of Things". Also, in *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan*, apes are denied "lower animal" status and animal grace. They are "cute", and thus they become "human". We should remember here that for Mr. Propter, "human" is the most negative of adjectives; it connotes craving and desire, fear of death and abnormal sex. By their "cuteness" they lose their "animality" and become "human", and even their sex becomes abnormal. So apes become caricatures of living on the purely physiological, animal level, and it is their sexual drive in connection with their "cuteness" that is responsible for such a state of affairs. Huxley's puritanical anti-sexism has reached its height; it is not only human beings that are incapable of "normal sex"; apes seem to be incapable of it as well, at least on the level of the consciousness of the narrator of the novel. And the longer we live in time, the more like "foetal apes" we will become.

Aldous Huxley, the Great War and Pacifism

Huxley and Pacifism

Aldous Huxley's name is often associated with pacifism. And there are a few reasons for this situation. In the autumn of 1935 Huxley joined the Reverend Dick Shephard's peace organization, the Peace Pledge Union (established in 1934), and on 3 December 1935 he gave his first address on pacifism at the Friends' House in London. Huxley became one of the movement's 'sponsors', together with such famous pacifists as Bertrand Russell, Rose Macaulay and Siegfried Sassoon. Huxley's version of pacifism was revealed and argued for in three texts, differing in length and generic features, but united in philosophy and argumentation. In 1936 Huxley published a thirty-page-long pamphlet entitled "What Are You Going to Do About It? A Case for Progressive Peace". *Ends and Means*, published in 1937, is a book of essays extending and elaborating on the ideas from the 1936 pamphlet. Whereas, *Eyeless in Gaza*, published in 1936, is a complex, multi-layered novel with one of its main subplots presenting the conversion of its main character Anthony

Beavis, to a very large extent Huxley's *porte-parole*, from a radical, Pyrrhonic sceptic to an ardent pacifist. In 1937 Huxley, together with his friend and mentor Gerald Heard, disappointed with the lack of success of the pacifist cause in Europe, went to the USA on a tour of lectures to promote pacifism there. Huxley did not return to Europe, but settled in California and continued to support pacifism for the rest of his life, particularly in fiction, both in the anti-utopian *Ape and Essence* (1948) and in the utopian *Island* (1962). The Peace Pledge Union still exists, and on its website one may read about Huxley's role as one of the Union's intellectual leaders. However, the claim made on the website of the Peace Pledge Union (Peace Pledge Union 2015) that "Huxley was a lifelong pacifist"[1] seems to be an exaggeration, because his views prior to his 'pacifist conversion' of 1935 had been far from pacifist orthodoxy.

In this article I am going to trace Huxley's views on war, pacifism and patriotism during the period of the Great War. I argue that in that period, despite the fact that Huxley was a frequent guest and later on a lodger in Garsington Manor, the informal centre of British pacifism during the second part of the Great War, his views on pacifism and conscientious objectors, understanding and sympathetic as they were, remained intellectually detached and largely non-committal. The views on pacifism which Huxley had during the years 1916–1918 will be analysed in the context of his family and educational background, as well as in the light of the conflict between the Huxleys as members of the establishment

[1] Peace Pledge Union. www.ppu.org.uk/people'hucley1.html., retrieved 15.01.2015.

supporting the ‘responsible middle class’ and as members of the intellectual elite and cutting edge intellectuals of the British Empire.

Aldous Huxley’s Intellectual Background

Aldous Huxley was born on July 26, 1894 near Godalming, in Surrey, England. He came from a family thought of as ‘intellectual aristocracy’ of the British Empire. His father Leonard Huxley’s father was Thomas Henry Huxley, a great zoologist and comparative anatomist. He was a staunch populariser and supporter of Darwin’s theory, and was known as ‘Darwin’s bulldog’, the author of *Evidence of Man’s Place in Nature* (1863), and the man who in 1869 coined the term ‘agnosticism’, being representative not only of his own, but his fellow Victorian scientists’ and thinkers’ rational doubts about the nature of religion(s). His mother Julia Arnold Huxley’s father was Tom Arnold, known as Thomas Arnold the Younger, the literary scholar and author of *A Manual of English Literature* (1862) and her uncle was Matthew Arnold, the great Victorian critic, poet and a man of letters. With such a lineage and the serious approach which Victorians had for education, it is not surprising that Aldous was educated thoroughly: first at Preparatory School at Hillside (1903–1908), then at Eton (1908–1911). In the spring of 1911, Aldous had to leave Eton because of serious eye trouble. He was diagnosed with *keratitis punctata*, and was nearly blind for eighteen months. When his eyesight improved at the end of 1912 he started to prepare for Matriculation. In October

1913, Aldous entered Balliol College, Oxford in order to read English Literature. He spent the blissful academic year 1913–1914 being chaperoned by his cousin Gervas Huxley and his older brother Trevenen (Trev); reading, going to not more than two lectures a week, typing essays for his tutor R.J.E. Tiddy, staying in the room in the college overlooking Broad street, being fascinated by the syncopation of jazz, and playing in amateur theatricals.[2]

When the students in Oxford broke up for the vacation in June 1914, they did not expect that what was to be called 'the long nineteenth century' was to come to an abrupt halt in August 1914. Garvas Huxley much later remembered that "[w]hen we broke off for the long vacation, none of us took the slightest interest in world politics, none of us imagined a future with a war" (quoted in *AH*, 48). The initial enthusiasm for the war in Britain, stirred by the media, was such that the whole generation of young, educated Britons, the generation of Rupert Brooke (whose famous poem from this period "The Soldier" perhaps best recreates this war enthusiasm) was "going off to war with their noble young heads in the air" (quoted in AH, 53). T.S. Eliot, who got a scholarship to Merton College, Oxford at that time noted in his memoirs:

> The last able-bodied British undergraduates were passing from the O.T.C. to the trenches and beyond the Rhodes scholars from America and the Commonwealth there were hardly any left except those who like Aldous were wholly unfit for military service. (quoted in *AH*, 52)

---

[2] Sybille Bedford, *Aldous Huxley: A Biography, Vol. I, 1894–1939* (London, 1973), 43-45. Hereafter, *AH*.

Sybille Bedford, Huxley's protégée, a friend and the first (and most thorough) biographer, testified that Aldous tried to enlist himself "but was of course rejected by every recruiting office" (*AH*, 53). Bedford also noted that at the beginning of the Great War Aldous' attitude to it was "neither original nor extreme. He easily spoke of Boches and Huns though never without his pinch of detachment" (*AH*, 53). This detachment but also irony could be detected in most of the letters Huxley wrote at that time. Here is an excerpt from a letter to his brother Julian (who at that time was working in America) written on February 1, 1915:

> Quite a considerable proportion of my acquaintance, including Gervas and Jack Haldane are now out at the front, the rest anticipates going in the spring, I suppose. I suggest that the war be over in September, in order that the relics of them may come back for the Michaelmas term. But as I expect this is going to be a Thirty Years War, I regard the prospect as unlikely. This argle-bargling about who began the damned thing is most undignified. It is, of course, axiomatic that the Germans are lying about it [...] but still, it is for the historian of 2000 to settle that question, for us to extirpate the vipers.[3]

The Military Service Act, Conscientious Objectors, and Garsington Manor

The initial opposition to the Great War in 1914 in Great Britain was limited to small groups of syndicalists, anarchists and Marxists. The opposition to the war grew

[3] Aldous Huxley, *Letters of Aldous Huxley, ed. by Grover Smith* (New York, 1969), 65-66. Hereafter, *LAH*.

steadily throughout 1915 and intensified in 1916 after conscription was introduced. Garsington Manor, a Tudor mansion with extensive gardens and a farm, a few miles north-west of Oxford, owned by Philip and Ottoline Morrell, became the centre of the pacifist opposition to the War.

The British Army during the first eighteen months of the Great War was a volunteer army, but after the initial 'conscription boom' of late 1914, the number of volunteers started to fall, while the huge numbers of soldiers being killed in action in 1915, especially during the Battle of Neuve Chapelle and the Second Battle of Ypres, forced the British government to introduce conscription. The Military Service Act of 27 January 1916 brought conscription into effect. Every unmarried British male subject aged between 18 and 41 was called to arms (another act of May 1916 extended conscription to married men, and that of 1918 raised the recruitment age to 51).[4] The Military Service Act included a Schedule of Exceptions which specified six categories of men who did not have to enlist. The sixth category included "Men who hold a certificate of exemption or who have offered themselves for enlistment since 4 August 1914 but been rejected" (*LLT*). Even though Aldous Huxley fell into this category, he was regularly called for medical examinations every six months till the end of the war, and was deemed not fit for any military duties on all occasions. The Military Service Act passed on 27 January 1916 came into effect on 2 March 1916 (*LLT*). The Act

[4] The Long, Long Trail. "The Long, Long Trail: The British Army in the Great War of 1914–1918.", retrieved 17.12.2014. www.1914-1918.net. Hereafter, *LLT*

made it possible to make an application before the appointed date of 2 March 1916 to a Local Tribunal for the issue of a certificate of exemption. One of the four grounds for exemption was "conscientious objection to the undertaking of combatant service" (*LLT*).

On 5 December 1915, during Huxley's third and final year in Oxford Aldous was brought for lunch to Garsington Manor by his friend Desmond MacCarthy and introduced to the hosts as the grandson of Thomas Henry Huxley. In a letter to his father Aldous reported:

> I had an amusing day on Sunday—going out to Garsington for luncheon to the Philip Morells, who have bought the lovely Elizabethan manor there. Lady Ottoline, Philip's wife is a quite incredible creature—arty beyond the dreams of avarice and a patroness of literature and the modernities. She is intelligent but her affectation is overwhelming. Her husband the MP, is a conceited ass, very amiable, but quite a buffoon. (*LAH*, 86)

During the Great War Garsington Manor became a haven for two quite distinct, but at the same time partly convergent groups: artists and conscientious objectors. The former included the artists from the famous Bloomsbury Group, who usually came from London for the weekends. This informal group included Virginia and Leonard Woolf, John Maynard Keynes, E.M. Forster and Lytton Stratchey. The 'artistic' group was extended by the young protégées of Lady Ottoline: David Herbert Lawrence, Katherine Mansfield and Aldous Huxley himself. The latter group included the conscientious objectors, who had been fined and given sentences of forced manual agricultural labour. In order to comply with their sentences as conscientious objectors they

lived in separate lodgings, away from the Manor. This group included Bertrand Russell, Mark Getler and Clive Bell. Mark Gertler, the painter, and Clive Bell, the art critic 'straddled' both groups.

Between his first visit in December 1915 and September 1916 Huxley went to Garsington Manor regularly for the weekends, and in September 1916, following his graduation from Oxford in June and a two-month spell when he worked as a temporary schoolmaster at Repton, he moved into Garsington and lived there till April of 1917. For seven months Huxley 'sentenced' himself to the manual work on the farm, work to which his friends, the conscientious objectors, had been truly sentenced by the tribunals. Huxley pruned trees and cut wood, which was later used for heating in the Manor House. However, unlike the conscientious objectors, Huxley lived in the Manor House, and not in the cottages nearby. (*AH*, 73-84)

Huxley on Pacifism and Conscientious Objectors, 1916–1918

There is no doubt that the Garsington period had a profound effect on Huxley's artistic and intellectual development. Many years later Huxley was to remark: "I had the extraordinary fortune to meet a great many of the ablest people of my time" (quoted in *AH*, 69) and: "The meeting of all these people was of capital importance to me" (quoted in *AH*, 70). He in particular remembered the influence of the Bloomsbury group (Virginia Woolf, Vanessa Bell and Maynard Keynes), as well as Bertrand

Russell and Roger Fry. However, in the period between 1916 and 1918 Huxley did not adopt the radical pacifist stance of Mark Gertler or Bertrand Russell, even though he sympathized (albeit quite equivocally) with the stance of conscientious objectors. For instance, in a long letter to his brother Julian (who was still working in America) dated 31 March 1916, while discouraging him from coming home to fight, Huxley expressed nostalgia for the old 'heroic' type of war fought by gentlemen and officers:

> I cannot help thinking that it would be unwise to come home. There is very little to be done unless one means to fight; and in these days when one can't get commissions it is impossible to fight with the elegance and efficiency which in the old days, as an officer, were within one's reach. (*LAH*, 97)

He finished the letter with the following declaration:

> The longer this war goes on, the more one loathes and detests it. At the beginning I should have liked very much to fight; but now if I could (having seen all the results), I think I'd be a conscientious objector, or nearly so. (*LAH*, 97)

Therefore, Huxley detested the war at this point, but he also made two reservations in one sentence about his stance as a (possible) conscientious objector: "I think" at the beginning of the sentence and "or nearly so" at its end. A similar attitude of sympathy but also clear intellectual detachment and reservation could be detected when Huxley reported in his letters cases of conscientious objectors. It was in a letter to his father dated 2 March 1916 that Aldous reported his first visit to the Oxford tribunal. It was the very

day on which the Military Service Act came into operation, and with it the tribunals to hear the cases of those claiming conscientious objection to the war. The letter made it clear that the audience's and his own sympathies "were largely with the objectors", but also that he retained the position of a detached observer, far from the fervour of the activists:

> I went today to listen to the judgments of the Oxford tribunal, which was dealing with appeals against conscription [...] Conscientious objectors were not so disgustingly hectored as they seem to have been in London—but the tribunals are far from treating them with the respect to which they are entitled both by the Act and by ordinary good feeling. There was one very funny case of a friend of mine at Magdalen, a Quaker, who was before the court today. He objected to war work of any kind, combatant or non-. They gave him exemption from combatant only, making the statement that they had no power to give absolute exemption, which is the most complete lie. And as this man knew his Act he was able to prove they were liars, scoring heavily—at which, it was interesting to note, there was general applause among the audience—sympathy being largely with the objectors. (*LAH*, 92)

In the same letter Aldous related what he called "a very good article in the *Nation*" entitled "How to make the War unpopular" (written by Sir John Simon) "which shews that the petty tyrannies and the wholesale attempts to cheat men into the army are doing a world of harm"(*LAH*, 92). Huxley expanded Simon's argument:

> They seem to be deliberately sending the conscription notices to every one, in the hope that the weaker, less-educated and unprotected—tho' passed unfit since Aug. 16th—may be bamboozled somehow into believing their exemption null and void and may be dragged—without medical exam—into the army. The

> whole thing enormously decreases popular sympathy with the war. It may of course lead to an earlier demand for peace, which will be good—but on the whole it seems thoroughly bad—distracting people's minds from the real ends and by domestic injustice vitiating the belief in the justice of any of our actions. (*LAH*, 92)

In another letter to his father, written a week later, on 10 March 1916, Aldous continued to show his interest in how the local tribunal in Oxford was handling the cases of conscientious objectors:

> Great excitement prevails now in Oxford on account of the arrest under the Defence of the Realm Act of an undergraduate at John's, by name Kaye, née Kaufman. He is a German Jew, son of a naturalized Britisher. He came before the tribunal the other day to apply for exemption on the grounds of conscientious objection to war [...] he being an international socialist. His case was not heard, because the military representative leapt up and made a Philippic against him, bringing up the fact that his real name was Kaufman, that he was the son of a naturalized German, the he was a Jew, that he had often been to Germany and finally [...] though perhaps it was a little bathetic [...] that he was a member of the Fabian Society. On the grounds of his being of alien extraction he declared that the army did not want him [...] (*LAH*, 92–93)

In the further part of the letter, Huxley reported that John Kaye was arrested and awaited trial. He speculated that the case could not rest on the distribution of the pamphlet/manifesto of the No-Conscription Fellowship, which Kaye had distributed and which was thought to do harm to recruiting. After all, Huxley stated this document "had been passed by the Press Bureau [...] which could hardly be treated as treasonable under the circumstances" (*LAH*, 93). It was more likely, Huxley speculated, that he

had had communication with the German socialists, "in which case he is completely done for" (*LAH*, 93). He went on to describe John Kaye as a man "born with a passion for intrigue, like the Earl of Shaftsbury. He used to make plots and counter-plots in every society of which he was a member, intriguing with infinite elaboration merely for intriguing's sake, not because it led to anything" (*LAH*, 93). Huxley concluded the long witty description of Kaye with a more general prediction:

> He is quite an amiable creature and I am sorry for him; but he has very much brought it on himself and has made a lot of unnecessary mischief. What I fear is that we shall have a bundle of articles from the *Daily Express* and the papers of its kind. There was a great utterance in the *Morning Post* today about the Universities where it was said that so called intellectuals were no more than a set of Pro-Germans [...] and so forth, ad nauseam. The popular arguments against the Germans consist merely in a series of nick-names, like Hun and so forth; and if anyone dares to suggest that there may be some way of ascertaining the truth other than by calling names that appeal merely to passions, he is instantly stamped as a supporter of the enemy. The sentimental honeymoon of hate has gone on long enough; it is time we settled down to thinking reasonably about each other. (*LAH*, 93)

In fact, the way this final petition "to stop the sentimental honeymoon of hate" is phrased makes the dual interpretation of the "we" who are supposed "to settle down to think reasonably" possible. One is we, the Brits versus the Germans, the other is we the 'intellectuals' and 'liberals' versus jingoistic patriots with their *Morning Posts and Daily Expresses*. Each alternative seems to be feasible in lieu of

what Huxley was writing on the developments of the moods connected with the war at that period.

Conclusion

Now we have an even longer perspective than that of the year 2000, the perspective Huxley, while the Great War still rumbled on, thought was appropriate for objective analysis of its causes. From this perspective we could speculate that his poor eyesight probably saved his life, for if he had been accepted as physically fit for military service in August 1914, the odds against his staying alive would have been very long. The fact that he was rejected on numerous occasions as totally unfit for military service meant that he was on the one hand allowed, and on the other, forced to live the life of a civilian. By the time conscription was introduced at the beginning of 1916, Huxley was under the influence of Garsington's mostly pacifist artists and intellectuals. However, as we saw in the fragments of his letters written to his father and brother Julian, he did not accept a radical pacifist perspective, and, although he sympathised with the cause of conscientious objectors, he never fully identified with them, remaining intellectually detached and aloof; happy to adopt the pose of a Pyrrhonic sceptic he was to remain till his pacifist conversion in the middle of 1935. His seven-month spell as a lumberjack in Garsington Manor may be considered as an act of solidarity with the conscientious objectors forced to do manual, agricultural work. It should be noted, however, that he did not 'sentence' himself to life in one of the

cottages, together with the conscientious objectors, and stayed in the Manor House. Once again we have the case of support, but not whole hearted support. When the initial enthusiasm to join and fight at the beginning of the war wore off, Huxley might have started to consider his eyesight a blessing in disguise. Yet, in those days a young intellectual and idealistic member of the 'responsible class' could not reveal his individually egoistic luck. On the other hand, his moral code must have kept him away from identifying with the conscientious objectors (even if he had seriously considered it), for after all he was not called for arms, so he did not have to conscientiously object to this fact. And, therefore, Huxley's poor eyesight made it possible for an inexperienced undergraduate to proceed through the Great War on the unique path of development in the direction of a detached novelist of ideas who was to become an author of *Crome Yellow*, *Antic Hay* and *Those Barren Leaves*.

Howards End and *Point Counter Point* as the 'Condition of England Novels'

This paper is an attempt to analyze some key similarities and differences between E.M. Forster's *Howards End* (1910) and Aldous Huxley's *Point Counter Point* (1928) from the perspective of the concept of the 'Condition of England novel' and the extent to which these two novels may be treated as such. Both *Howard's End* and *Point Counter Point* are complex, panoramic novels concerned with the representations of British society from two different sides of the Great War. Obviously, the scope of this paper is too small to deal with all the major issues touched upon by Forster and Huxley in their novels. I have decided to look into the paratexts of titles and opening epigrams of *Howards End* and *Point Counter Point*, which in both novels have powers of overarching synecdoche. I have also selected one key theme in *Howards End*, namely Forster's treatment of the young son of Helen Schlegel and Leonard Bast in the context of 'metropolitan pastoral myth' and re-birth of yeomanry as the representation of Forster's hopes for the future of Britain. I also propose to read the character of Everard Webley from *Point Counter Point* as Huxley's

answer to the hopes embedded in the closing chapters of *Howards End*; to look at Webley's life, deeds and miserable end as Huxley's skeptical answers from 1928 to Forster's high hopes of 1910. And lastly, I will also look into Huxley's own hopes for intellectual integrity being placed in the character of Mark Rampion (generally considered to be based on Huxley's friend, D.H. Lawrence), and show how Huxley himself was to change his mind about Rampion.

David Lodge, in his paper on E.M. Forster's *Howards End* entitled "Forster's Flawed Masterpiece", stated: "*Howards End* is often called a 'Condition of England novel'".[1] At this point it should be noted, however, that critics (including David Lodge himself) use this term in two clearly different ways, and that Aldous Huxley's *Point Counter Point* also meets the requirements for this sort of novel, although it has rarely been perceived from such a perspective. The term 'the Condition of England novel' is derived from the phrase 'the condition of England question' that was first used by Thomas Carlyle in an 1843 essay "Past and Present" (FFM, 142). The first, more restrictive, understanding of the term 'the Condition of England Novel' was used in the context of the early Victorian novels written in the period 1844–1860 which were concerned mostly with the contrast between the 'Two Nations' of Britain, the rich and the poor, as famously described in book Two, Chapter Two, of Benjamin's Disraeli's 1845 novel *Sybil or the Two Nations*:

---

[1] David Lodge, "Forster's Flawed Masterpiece", in *Consciousness and the Novel: Connected Essays* (Cambridge, Mass., 2002), 142. Hereafter, *FFM*.

Two nations; between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts, and feelings, as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets; who are formed by a different breeding, are fed by a different food, are ordered by different manners, and are not governed by the same laws: the rich and the poor.[2]

The irreconcilability of the two nations of Britain was the main theme of the 'Condition of England novel' which was established in British literature in the 1840s and, according to David Lodge, included, apart from Disreali's *Sybil*, also his *Coningsby* (1844), as well as Gaskell's *Elizabeth Mary Barton* (1848) and *North and South* (1855), and Charles Dickens' *Hard Times* (1854) (FFM, 142).

However, it was David Lodge himself, in his much earlier paper (first published in 1966) entitled "*Tono Bunguay* and the Condition of England", who presented a less restrictive, wider definition of the 'Condition of England novel' (wider because it did not rely on the clear dichotomy of the rich and the poor and was not restricted to the Victorian novels of the 1840s and 1850s only).

> The Victorians had a name for this kind of undertaking in fiction "the Condition of England novel". This description (Condition of England Novel) was often applied to novels which sought to articulate and interpret, in the mode of fiction, the changing nature of an English society in an era of economic, political, religious and philosophical revolution.[3]

---

[2] Benjamin Disraeli, *Sybille or the Two Nations* (Rockville, 2004 [1845]), 145.

[3] David Lodge's 1966 essay "*Tono-Bungay* and the Condition of England" was reprinted in: David Lodge, *Language of Fiction: Essays in Criticism and Verbal Analysis of the English Novel*

Therefore, it is not so much the binary opposition between the rich and the poor, but "the changing nature of an English society" in the era of a revolution of some kind (and one may claim that English society, as well as any other society, is incessantly undergoing a revolution of some kind) that makes the novel 'the Condition of England' type, in this wider, less restrictive sense. Paradoxically, this understanding of the term 'the Condition of England novel' could be derived directly from Carlyle's 1843 "Past and Present" essay, in which it is the spiritual crisis of the Nation, rather than the material poverty, which was/is at stake.

> The condition of England question, on which many pamphlets now are in course of publication, and many thoughts unpublished are going on in every reflective head, is justly regarded as one of the most ominous, and withal one of the strangest ever seen in this world. England is full of wealth, of multifarious produce, supply for human want in every kind; yet England is dying of inanition. (Quoted in *TBC*, 230)

Lodge, in his later essay on E.M. Forster, pointed out that the social and economic situation in Britain at the beginning of the twentieth century, that is in the Edwardian period, was very different (in the positive sense) to early Victorian Britain and the 'hungry forties'. In the year 1909, when Forster was writing *Howards End*, C.F.G Masterman, Fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge and a Liberal Member of Parliament since 1906, wrote a series of articles for *The Independent Review* which he published in the

(London, 2002), 227-258. This particular quotation comes from page 230. Hereafter, *TBC*.

following year as a book, entitled *The Condition of England*. Lodge speculated that "Forster would certainly have read Masterman's work, as it appeared in serial form and was evidently influenced by it" (FFM, 142). Masterman claimed that the brutal, life-threatening poverty of 1840s was not abolished thoroughly, but that it was greatly reduced

> A proportion of population is raised well above the privations of poverty larger than ever before in history […] It is rather in the region of spirit that doubts are still disturbing [...] Is the twentieth century to advocate a scheme of life which will in itself provide a consolation in the loss of the older faiths, and redeem mankind from a mere struggle for the apparatus of material pleasure? (quoted in *FFM*, 143)

E. M. Forster in *Howards End*, and H.G. Wells in *Tono-Bungay*, as well as (almost two decades later) Aldous Huxley in *Point Counter Point*, all attempted to answer this fundamental question raised by C.F.G. Masterman. What seems to distinguish the 'Condition of England novel' in this twentieth century, post-Victorian version of the term, from other novels written in this period is the focus not on individuals, but on 'English society', and therefore a focus which is more 'sociological' than 'psychological'.

Any comparative analysis of Forster's and Huxley's fiction should take into account the very similar social background of their authors. They were both born (Forster in 1879, Huxley in 1894) into the social class described by Dana Sawyer, an American biographer of Huxley, as "a class within a class—that is the governing upper middleclass—who, though not of 'noble blood' nonetheless constituted the intellectual aristocracy of the British

Empire."[4] Forster graduated from Cambridge, Huxley from Oxford, and their paths crossed many times, first in Garsington Manor, the haven of British liberal intellectuals and pacifists during the Great War, and after the war in London, as both of them had close intellectual and personal connections with the Bloomsbury Group. Almost two decades and the trauma of the Great War separate the publication of E.M. Forster's *Howards End* and Aldous Huxley's *Point Counter Point.* However, the fact that they received similar education and lived in the same intellectual circle of influences could account for some striking parallels between their novels.

Their university education equipped them with the sociological (or to be more precise quasi-sociological, or amateur sociological) tools to analyze British society, but their 'Bloomsbury elitism' restricted the spectrum of their social observations and literary representations. In each of these novels there is only one character—Leonard Bast in *Howards End* and Frank Illidge in *Point Counter Point*—of working class background. Yet, even these, originally working class, characters are both socially 'upwardly mobile', Bast, a clerk, aspires to the middle-class through his literary and musical interests, while Illidge, thanks to school grants, becomes a scientist. While introducing Leonard Bast as a character, the narrator of *Howards End*, shows a similar mixture of wit, frivolity as well "contempt and compassion"[5] which Huxley was to afford to his

[4] Dana Sawyer, *Aldous Huxley: A Biography* (New York, 2002), 22.

[5] This quotation refers to—in the hope of being a small tribute—the book about Huxley and his novels in the 1920s and the first half of

working class characters from *Crome Yellow* to *Eyeless in Gaza*:

> We are not concerned with the very poor. They are unthinkable, and only to be approached by the statistician or the poet. *This story deals with gentlefolk, or with those who are obliged to pretend that they are gentlefolk.*
>
> The boy, Leonard Bast, stood at the extreme verge of gentility. He was not in the abyss, but he could see it, and at times people whom he knew had dropped in, and counted no more […] His mind and his body had been alike underfed, because he was poor, and because he was modern they were always craving better food. Had he lived some centuries ago, in the brightly coloured civilization of the past, he would have had a definite status, his rank and his income would have corresponded. But in his day the angel of Democracy had arisen, enshadowing the classes with leathern wings […] and proclaiming 'All men are equal—all men that is to say, who possess umbrellas,' and so he was obliged to assert gentility, lest he slipped into the abyss where nothing counts, and the statements of Democracy are inaudible.[6] (italics mine)

This fragment reveals not only Forster's fear of the abyss (that is the Edwardian 'underclass'), but also an unwillingness and unease when dealing with people like Leonard Bast. At the same time it makes fun of the weaknesses of Democracy. And it is the aloofness and ironic wit of the narrator that are also striking. David Bradshaw describes Forster's narrator from *Howards End* in the following way:

1930s—by David Bradshaw, *The Hidden Huxley: Contempt and Compassion for the Masses* (London, 1994). David Bradshaw died on 11 August 2016.

6 E.M. Forster, *Howards End*, (Harmondsworth, 1989 [1910]), 58. Hereafter, *HE*.

> Time and again, he turns audaciously from story-telling and underscores his sizeable presence in the text, either by making direct reference to himself or by assuming the flamboyantly characterful yet oddly effacing, frequently skittish yet withal rather earnest, here sagacious there facetious, at times magniloquent and often magnificent, maxim-wielding yet far from emphatic manner which is the hallmark not just of Forster's companionable narrators but also (if to a lesser extent) the signature style of his essays, lectures, broadcasts, reviews, and criticism. In *Howards End*, however, Forster's unmistakable voice is particularly audible.[7]

Bradshaw goes on to remark "that obtrusive narrators are more or less absent from modernist literature, unless their function, like Marlow in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902), is to draw attention to their own untrustworthiness. But the narrator of *Howards End* is both conspicuous and (it seems) dependable, his chatty ubiquity only reinforced by his frequently quirky diction" (*BHE*, 152).

Barbara Rosecrance voiced a similar opinion about the importance and reliability of Forster's narrator from *Howards End*:

> The narrator's techniques of omniscience and engagement are familiar, but his voice goes further in self-dramatization, in manipulation of the reader, in the frequency and length of intervention than in any other Forster novel. The tendency of the narrator to step out of the action to formulate its larger significance also reaches its height in *Howards End*. No other Forster narrator establishes so personal a hegemony.[8]

---

[7] David, Bradshaw "*Howards End*", in *The Cambridge Companion to E.M. Forster*, ed. by David Bradshaw (Cambridge, 2007) 151-152. Hereafter, *BHE*.

[8] Barbara Rosecrance, *Forster's Narrative Vision* (Ithaca, 1982), 131.

Following Bradshaw's and Rosecrance's assessment of the narrator of *Howards End* (and in particular, his hegemony, reliability and trustworthiness), it is quite safe to assume that the ironic treatment of the ways (liberal, modern) Democracy works ("leathern wings" of the angel of Democracy, the fact that one needs to possess an umbrella, to be regarded as equal), clear in the long quoted fragment when Leonard Bast is introduced, as well as his nostalgic musings of the organic Golden Age that is long gone ("had he lived some centuries ago, in the brightly coloured civilization of the past, he would have had a definite status, his rank and his income would have corresponded") might be taken as being in agreement with Forster's own opinions and with the key message of his novel, which, as I see it, may be briefly and coarsely put in this way: the progress of modernity, with its shallow Democracy, urbanization and industrial civilization could be stopped and reverted by the process of 'connection' ("only connect" is an epigraph of the novel) between the artistic and idealistic element in the society (Schlegels) with the potent, practical, expansive, Empire-building element (Wilcoxes). That this 'connection' can be accomplished in Howards End, an old seat of yeomen, a social class long extinct in English society. And that the last wish/will (or whim as her own family decided to see it at the time of her death) of Ruth Wilcox (Henry Wilcox's wife and the representative of extinct yeomen) to give Howards End (the house she brought to the Wilcox family as her dowry) to Margaret Schlegel should at last be fulfilled. And it is in Howards End and through Howards End that Margaret Schlegel ultimately 'connects', herself

with Henry Wilcox, as well as with her sister Helen and Helen's baby, fathered by (the now late) Leonard Bast.

This key social message is also conveyed by Forster through two paratexts which are also examples of a synecdoche[9] the title—*Howards End*—and the epigraph—'Only connect'.

The title is not obvious to a reader at first, although its meaning is slowly revealed, starting from the opening lines of Chapter One:

One may as well begin with Helen's letter to her sister.

> *Howards End, Tuesday*
>
> *Dearest Meg,*
>
> *It is not going to be what we expected. It is old and little, and altogether delightful—red brick.* (*HE,* 19)

The flamboyant opening line, "One may well begin with Helen's letters to her sisters" is often used by critics to show the off-handed, aloof attitude of Forster's hegemonic narrator (and, by extension, of Forster himself). In the second line we have the heading of Helen's letter with the customary name of the location from which it is written—Howards End. And the meaning of the first sentence of the letter "It isn't going to be what we expected. It is old and little, and altogether delightful—red brick" can be comprehended only when the reader learns about the Schlegels and the Willcoxes and their acquaintance. As is often the case in Forster's prose, it is foreign travel which brings members of disparate social

[9] For example, David Bradshaw stated: "Howards End, can be treated as "a synecdoche of England as a whole, as some critics have argued" (*BHE,* 166).

classes together. The idealistic, artistic and literary Schlegels had met the industrious and imperialistic Wilcoxes while visiting Germany as (cultural) tourists: "We met the Wilcoxes on an awful expedition that we made from Heidelberg to Speyer" (*HE*, 22). Margaret Schlegel explains this 'social misalliance' to her cousin Aunt Juley. And it is only then that the opening sentence of Helen's letter starts to make sense: the Schlegel sisters were invited by the Wilcoxes to pay the visit in their household and they expected it to be a posh and grand residence of the *nouve-riche*, rather than an 'old and little and altogether delightful' household of yeomen's ancestry.

Howards End, a household, and *Howards End* a novel, are nostalgic projections of E.M. Forster's happy memories from his childhood when he lived with his family in a house called Rooksnet in Hertfordshire near Stevenage, back in 1880s, when it was still a rural area, though suburban Greater London was even then fast encroaching. Forster's ten-page-long Appendix, entitled "Rooksnest", is at the same time a detailed, down to earth description of the house, its neighbours and neighbourhood, and an emotional return to the place of adolescent happiness. Forster's attitude to Rooksnet/Howards End and its surroundings was typical of his generation. "The novel registers a feeling that was widespread amongst Forster's contemporaries, identifying the national character of the country with its rural landscapes, and looking to England's future in terms of the pastoral

harmony that might be found there."[10] From the perspective of many critics since that time, at least of Raymond Williams, "the pastoral harmony" from this quotation is nothing more than "the metropolitan 'pastoral' myth".[11]

While 'Howards End's' synecdoche could best be explained in terms of the nostalgia for rural England, which is, perhaps, nothing more than this 'metropolitan pastoral myth', the "only connect" epigraph could be understood in terms of 'liberal guilt'. As Daniel Born claimed: "[t]hrough Margaret and Helen, Forster succeeded in delineating the most comprehensive picture of liberal guilt in this century."[12] It is Margaret's guilty conscience of being a member of the leisured class—who lives a comfortable and artistic life, does not work, lives off the capital accumulated by earlier generations, consumes lavishly while producing or creating nothing—that fosters her (pun intended) to change her opinion about the Wilcoxes, whom at first she considers philistine. By the middle of the novel she tries to convince her sister Helen:

> If Wilcoxes hadn't worked and died in England for thousands of years, you and I couldn't sit here without having our throats cut. There would be no trains, no ships to carry us to literary people about in, no fields even. Just savagery. No—perhaps not even that. Without their spirit life might never have moved out of protoplasm.

---

10 "In the Abyss: Class and Culture in Howards End", (no name of the Author) http://www.english.cam.ac.uk/cambridgeauthors/class-and-culture-in-howards-end/, retrieved 30.06.2016.

11 See, for example, Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London, 1973).

12 Daniel Born, *The Birth of Guilt in the English Novel: Charles Dickens to H.G. Wells* (Chapel Hill, 1995), 120.

> More and more do I refuse to draw my income and sneer at those who guarantee it. (*HE*, 177-178)

Later in the novel she argues with Miss Avery that Wilcoxes keep not only Howards End, but that "they keep England going" (*HE*, 268).

Paradoxically, Margaret's (and the narrator's) growing admiration for the robust, energetic and virile Wilcoxes is accomplished along with the presentation of the artistic and liberal and artistic Schlegel sister, which is far from wholeheartedly positive. David Bradshaw, having listed about twenty 'slips' and 'faults' in Helen's and Margaret's behaviour, concludes:

> With their professed interest in theosophy (pp. 158, 257, 323), socialism, feminism, and egalitarianism, and their liberated disdain for society's petty conventions, Helen and Margaret's progressive credentials could not be more blatant. From a modern-day perspective, however, they harbour a number of less open-minded attitudes and an aptitude for gross insensitivity which make them seem at times anything but advanced or enlightened. (*BHE*, 155)

The improbably optimistic ending of *Howards End* constructed by Forster, the ending which 'connects' Wilcoxes and Schlegels (and Basts) in Howards End is offset only by a rare fragment of the novel, where the focalization is not from Margaret's, but from Leonard Bast's perspective. As Leonard walks from Hilton to Howards End to meet Helen and his own final end, he steps into the country:

> Here men had been up since dawn. Their hours were ruled, not by a London office, but by movements of the crops and the sun. That

> they were men of the finest type only the sentimentalist can declare. But they kept to the life of daylight. They are England's hope. Clumsily they carry forward the torch of the sun, until such time as the nation sees fit to take it up. Half clodhopper, board-school prig, they can still throw back to a nobler stock, and breed yeomen.
>
> At the chalk pit a motor passed him. In it was another type whom Nature favours—the Imperial. Healthy, even in motion, it hopes to inherit the earth. It breeds as quickly as the yeoman and as soundly; strong is the temptation to acclaim it as a super-yeoman, who carries his country's virtues oversees. But the Imperialist is not what he thinks or seems. He is a destroyer. He prepares the way for cosmopolitanism, and though his ambitions may be fulfilled the earth that he inherits will be gray. (*HE*, 314-315)

However, despite Leonard Bast's separation of hard working men and Imperialists, the novel's final message, for all the critique of modernity, or rather because of it, radiates hope constructed around the (super)yeoman of the future—Helen's baby with Leonard Bast, growing under the guidance of the Schlegels and Wilcoxes in pastoral Howards End.

Point Counter Point's paratexts of the title and the initial epigraph may also be treated as synecdoches. The term 'point counter point' is a technical term from music theory, where it is a type of exquisite harmony. One of the most perceptive Huxley critics, Peter Firchow, lucidly explained Huxley's use of it:

> […] because the purpose of musical counterpoint is obviously to achieve harmony, Huxley's literary counterpoint is therefore a misnomer, though from the point of view of satire the name is most appropriate, since it is precisely out of the dissonance that the satire arises: where there ought to be harmony and significant contact,

> there is only discord and meaningless noise. To reveal this discord and noise is one of the basic functions of this technique in the early novels.[13]

Huxley took the epigraph from a poem, "Mustapha", written by an Elizabethan poet and courtier, Fulke Greville:

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

Another prominent Huxley critic, Jerome Meckier, pointed out the nature of *Point Counter Point.*

> Half a dozen years after *Ulysses* […] Huxley challenged experimentation not only as a literary activity but also as an attitude towards life, a way of living […] Although experimentation seemingly was imperative in a post-war period of collapsed values and discredited ideas, characters in *Point Counter Point* are compelled to search for answers when their author believes there are none. Their futile experiments are made lamentably laughable. Huxley constructed a complicated experimental novel in which the experiments its characters undertake have either failed or seem likely to turn out badly.[14]

Of a dozen or so key middle-class characters panoramically demonstrating 'the Condition of England

---

[13] Peter Firchow, *Aldous Huxley: Satirist and Novelist*, (Minneapolis, 1972), 95.

[14] Jerome Meckier, "Aldous Huxley and Experiment: The Case of *Point Counter Point"* Aldous Huxley Annual, Volume 14 (2014), 179.

question' a few years after the Great War, it is the character of Everard Webley, the charismatic leader of British Freemen, a para-military, para-Fascist organization that has, in my opinion, strong (and critically ironic) connections with Forster's idealized super-yeoman growing up in pastoral Howards End. Webley, virile and energetic in his speech at the Hyde Park meeting, similarly to Forster's narrator rejects the idea of Democracy for yet another myth located in the past:

> The British Freemen are uniformed in green. Theirs is the livery of outlaws. For outlaws they are in this stupid democratic world. Outlaws proud of their outlawry. The law of the democratic world is quantity. We outlaws believe in quality. For the democratic politicians the voice of the greatest number is the voice of God; their law is the law that pleases the mob. Outside the pale of mob-made law, we desire the rule of the best, not the most numerous.[15]

In the novel, Webley is murdered by Maurice Spandrell, the nihilist, and Frank Illidge, the communist. All these ideologies are vehemently condemned by Mark Rampion, a D.H. Lawrence-like, an anti-Modern writer and painter, and perhaps the only character of moral integrity in *Point Counter Point*:

> They all believe in industrialism in one form or another, they all believe in Americanization. Think of the Bolshevist ideal […] They're all equally in a hurry. In the name of science, progress and human happiness! Amen and step on the gas. (*PCP*, 303)

---

[15] Aldous Huxley, *Point Counter Point: A Novel* (Harmondsworth, 1955 [1928]), 338. Hereafter, *PCP*.

However, for all Huxley's fascination with Rampion/Lawrence and the power of his 'religion of blood', anti-Modernist arguments, Huxley himself remained a pyrrhonic skeptic, to a large extent like Philip Quarles, his *porte-parole* in *Point Counter Point*. And it was some time after the novel was published that Huxley was to re-assess his opinion about Lawrence's integrity. In *Beyond the Mexique Bay*, the travel book published in 1934, four years after Lawrence's death, Huxley wrote:

> And yet, in the end [of *The Plumed Serpent*] we are asked to renounce daylight and fresh air and immerse ourselves in "the grand sea of the living blood" […] We cannot accept the invitation. Lawrence's own incomparable descriptions of the horror of the unadulterated blood have made it impossible. It was impossible even for himself, he could not accept his own invitation. The facts of his life are there to prove it. Kate [heroine of *The Plumed Serpent*] stayed, immersed in the primitive blood of Mexico, but Lawrence went away.[16]

Howards End and *Point Counter Point*, through their metaphorical titles and initial epigrams—'only connect' and 'wearisome condition of humanity', a fragment from Fulke Greville's poem—may be viewed as indicative of two contrastive modes of the British novel in the first decades of the twentieth century. Forster's novel, written a few years before the Great War, exudes hope for the future, the possibility of 'connection' between at least some of the diverse social groups. Huxley's novel, written a few years after the Great War, is—similarly to other, 'Modernist' novels of this period, such as James Joyce's *Ulysses* or

[16] Aldous Huxley, *Collected Essays, vol. III* (Chicago, 2001), 606.

Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dallaway*—grounded in pessimism. Part of this pessimism is conducted through the character of Everard Webley, a character who may be seen as Huxley's answer to Forster's hope of the re-creation of Britain's glory through the return to Howards End.

Along the Road: The Traditions of the Grand Tour and Anti-Tourist Discourse

I would like to argue that Aldous Huxley's *Along the Road* (1925) can best be described with the help of the analytical tools developed by scholars who have tried to make sense of and present the social project known as the 'Grand Tour' from the perspective of conventions and modes of writing which were representations of real educational journeys undertaken in Western Europe since the dawn of the Grand Tour in the second half of the eighteenth century till the 'belated' Grand Tourists of our times. It is Richard Lassells's *An Italian Voyage*, published in 1670, in which the term 'Grand Tour' was used for the first time.[1] Lassels recommended young aristocratic gentlemen to undertake a "Grand Tour of France and the Giro of Italy"; his book is perceived by Grand Tour scholars as the first literary representation of the Grand Tour. The Grand Tour developed into an ideological project for young aristocrats, who after their graduation from Oxford and

[1] Richard Lassels, *An Italian Voyage, Or a Compleat Journey Through Italy* (London, 1697 [1670]), n.p. Hereafter, *IV*.

Cambridge were sent, usually with a guardian, to Europe to be exposed "to the treasured artefacts and ennobling society of the Continent".[2] The Grand Tour became slightly more 'democratic' during the second half of the eighteenth century, with the sons of merchants following in the wake of young aristocrats.[3] The tour quickly had its well established itineraries, with some possible alternative variations which led the tourists to the Netherlands, German university towns or to Switzerland.

However, the most important destinations, without which the entire enterprise would lose its purpose, were Paris and Italy (especially Rome, Florence and Venice). The former was thought the natural habitat of the refined manners and gracious behaviour necessary to civilised men; as Lord Chesterfield put it in his famous letters of advice to his teenage son: "It must be owned that the Graces do not seem to be natives of Great Britain [...] Since barbarism drove them out of Greece and Rome, they seem to have taken refuge in France".[4] The latter was not only "Nature's Darling" to the visitor from colder northern lands, as Lassels (*IV*, 1) called it, but the home of classical civilisation, both

---

2 James Buzard, "The Grand Tour and After (1660-1840)", in The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing, ed. by Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs, (Cambridge, 2002), 38. Hereafter, *GTA*.

3 This is the period and social context in which the phenomenon of 'snobism' was born. Non-gentry graduates of Oxbridge (who were listed in the college list with the abbreviation "s.nob", for 'sine nobile', a person of no 'noble' title), followed their 'noble'. 'mailed' colleagues onto the Grand Tour.

4 Earl of Chesterfield, The Letters of Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield, with the Characters, vol. I, ed. John Bradshaw, (London, 1926), 171.

in its original (ancient Roman) and its recreated (Renaissance) manifestations. (*GTA*, 39)

During the Napoleonic wars, as France and large parts of Italy were outside the bounds of the British, alternative routes started to be 'constructed'. For example, Lord Gordon Byron's Grand Tour, undertaken in the years 1809-1811, led through Portugal, Spain, Greece, Albania and Turkey. After the fall of Napoleonic France Western Europe was open to British visitors once again. They started to return to Grand Tour itineraries in increasingly bigger numbers. It was much later, on 5 July 1841, that the first 'package tour' was organized by Thomas Cook, and later this date started to be regarded by historians and sociologists as the date of the birth of modern mass tourism. But there were enough British 'tourists' in Venice in 1816 for Lord Gordon Byron to comment in the third Canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage.*

I stood / Among them, but not of them—in a shroud / Of thoughts which were not their thoughts, and still could, / Had I not filed my mind, which thus itself subdued.

These lines are often quoted as being foundational for an anti-tourist stance/discourse. James Buzzard, in his *The Beaten Track* and in "The Grand Tour and After (1660-1840)", showed the development of anti-tourist discourse in the Post-Napoleonic and Victorian periods:

> Post-Napoleonic visitors to Europe, whether or not they intended to write texts based on their journeys, were subjected to the twin pressures of feeling both one of a crowd and late on the scene, surrounded by 'hordes' of fellow-tourists and at pains to find

> anything new to say about the hallowed sites now open to them. (*GTA*, 49)

Buzzard relied on Erving Goffman's[5] concept of the 'rôle distance' to describe the scope of anti-tourist strategies deployed by 'belated' Grand Tourists:

> Through varieties of what the sociologist Erving Goffman has called the 'rôle distance', modern travellers and travel writers identified themselves as anti-touristic beings whose unhappy lot it was to move amidst and in the wake of tourists, *for one of whom they might even be mistaken*; on the increasingly beaten path of Continental travelling, self-differentiation, not imitation became a guiding purpose. Romantic authors such as Germaine de Staël, Lord Byron, William Hazlitt and Samuel Rogers provided prototypes and models for these efforts. (Buzzard 2002, 49).

By the mid Victorian period William Wetmore Story, an American ex-patriot who lived in Rome, noticed ironically "every Englishman abroad carries a Murray for information and Byron for sentiment, and finds out by them what he is to know and feel at every step".[6] Thus, the devices which started as a rebellion, the 'rôle distancing' of

---

[5] As far as the distinction tourist/traveller is concerned apart from Goffman a scholar who is responsible for the now general treatment of it as 'constructed' rather than describing 'true' and/or 'real' differences was Jonathan Culler in "The Semiotics of Tourism" (1988). Culler wrote in the opposition to scholars, like Daniel Boorstin—"From Traveller to Tourist: The Lost Art of Travel" (1961)—or Paul Fussell—*Abroad: British Literary Traveling Between the Wars* (1980)—who saw tourist/traveller dichotomy as representing the 'real' differences between these two groups.

[6] William Wetmore Story, *Roba di Roma, vol. 1* (London, 1863), 7.

late Romantic poets like Lord Byron or Samuel Rogers, or travel writers of that period, like William Hazlitt, soon became "the distinguishing features of a new type of conformity, a new role" (*GTA*, 50).

In the late Victorian period there appeared a travel book which introduced some novel forms of anti-tourist strategies, Samuel Butler's *Alps and Sanctuaries of Piedmont and Canton Ticino* (1881). As Clarence Zdanski saw it, *Alps and Sanctuaries* is "more than a signpost in the history of anti-tourism. It challenges the intellectual foundations of the structured Continental tour by encouraging the traveller to see for himself rather than 'by the book'"[7] "An essentially anti-tourist stance emerges not only in scattered remarks about the few Englishmen Butler saw during his travels, but also in his critique of predictable reactions to canonical vistas, monuments and works of the masters" (*SBL*, 229). Butler's anti-tourism can be best seen in the choice of the region described and in the ways he challenged the authority of guidebooks of the period—Murrays and Baedekers—and of the institutionalized art criticism with its judgements and canons. In *Alps and Sanctuaries* Butler wrote of Italian art— however, not about Florence, Venice or Rome—but about the art of 'Sacri Monti' in Piedmont; and in his idiosyncratic gesture he famously consigned "Raffaelle, along with Plato, Marcus Aurelius Antonius, Dante, Goethe, and two others, neither

[7] Clarice Zdanski, "Samuel Butler, Local Identity and the Periodizing of Northern Italian Art: The Travel Writer-Painter's View of Art History", in *Samuel Butler, Victorian Against the Grain: A Critical Overview*, ed. by James G. Paradise, (Toronto, 2007), 230. Hereafter, *SBL*.

of them Englishmen, to limbo, as the Seven Humbugs of Christendom."[8]

More than thirty years after Butler, Huxley, in *Along the Road*, described with only thinly disguised pride his own stepping 'off the beaten track' in Italy, and instead of describing the visit to the Uffizi Gallery in Florence with Botticelli's "Primavera" Huxley went on to describe his 'travails' on the mountain country roads of Tuscany to visit Sansepulcro (with its "Best Picture in the World"), Arezzo and Urbino in the footsteps of Pierro della Francesco.

Although most of the anti-tourist strategies Huxley displayed in *Along the Road* can be traced back to the Romantic and Victorian travel narratives of Lord Byron, Samuel Rogers, William Huzlitt or Samuel Butler, the whole mixture is clearly unique, 'Huxleyan'. In the following sections three distinct categories of 'anti-tourist' strategies deployed by Huxley in *Along the Road* will be analysed separately, even though in Huxley's travel book they are often intertwined. Firstly, Huxley's direct attack on the 'vulgarity' of tourists in the "Why Not Stay at Home" essay will be discussed. Secondly, his attack on the 'artefacts' of the 'Tourist Industry', such as tourist guide-books, will be dealt with, and thirdly we will approach Huxley's own art criticism showing the depth and width of his knowledge about art and his predilection for personal, idiosyncratic judgements.

Huxley's direct anti-tourist attack on 'tourists' and their motives comes in the first essay of *Along the Road*, entitled

---

[8] Samuel Butler, *Alps and Sanctuaries of Piedmont and Canton Ticino* (Gloucester, 1986 [1881]), 156.

"Why Not Stay at Home?", and its echoes reverberate throughout the volume in a point-counter-point manner. The only non-orthodox aspect of Huxley's anti-tourist attack is the terminology: for Huxley, in "Why Not Stay at Home", eschews using the "traveller" versus "tourist" dichotomy—which was the norm—and insists on using the words "tourist" and "traveller" as synonyms, and therefore his binary opposition is between "traveller" and "genuine traveller" (alternatively, and somewhat confusingly, "genuine travellers" are also referred to in this essay as "travellers born" and "travellers-for-travelling sake"). Of "travellers", who are in standard anti-tourist discourse referred to as 'tourists', he writes:

> call such people travellers because they do not stay at home. But they are not genuine travellers, not travellers born. For they travel not for travelling's sake, but for convention's. They set out, nourished on fables and fantastical hopes, to return, whether they avow it or not, disappointed. Their interest in the real and actual being insufficiently lively, they hanker after mythology, and the facts, however curious, beautiful and varied, are a disillusionment. It is only the society of their fellow-tourists, with whom they conspire, every now and then, to make a little oasis of home in the foreign wilderness, coupled with the consciousness of a social duty done, that keeps them even moderately cheerful in the face of the depressing facts of travel.[9]

The "genuine traveller", on the other hand:

> is so much interested in real things that he does not find it necessary to believe in fables. He is insatiably curious, he loves

[9] Aldous Huxley, *Along the Road*: *Notes and Essays of a Tourist*, (New York, 1989 [1925]), 15-16. Hereafter, *AR*.

> what is unfamiliar for the sake of its unfamiliarity, he takes pleasure in every manifestation of beauty [...] (*AR*, 16)

Huxley expands his argument by stating, tongue in cheek, that "[f]or the born traveller, travelling is a besetting vice. Like other vices it is imperious, demanding its victim's time, money, energy and the sacrifice of his comfort" (*AR*, 17). And in the second part of "Why Not Stay at Home" travelling as a vice is compared to, in a frivolous way, reading as a vice: "[l]ike all other vicious men, the reader and the traveller have a whole armoury of justifications with which to defend themselves." (*AR*, 18) This flippant essay, describing different types of travellers in a detached, third person, 'objective' narration, shifts rapidly in the final paragraph to a subjective, personal statement of Huxley's persona:

> With me, travelling is frankly a vice. The temptation to indulge in it is one which I find almost as hard to resist as the temptation to read promiscuously, omnivorously and without purpose. [...] Deplorable weakness! I try to comfort myself with the hope that even my vices may be of some profit to me. (AR, 19-20)

Huxley's "Why Not Stay at Home" is a fine example of the anti-tourist discourse, with its classical, anti-tourist arguments. In the first part of his essay Huxley carefully distinguishes two different aspects of modern 'cultural' tourism, which clearly show its foundations in the Grand Tour as an ideological project with two 'musts': the refined manners of Paris and the Arts (as epitomized by Florence, Rome and Venice). In the first part of his essay Huxley mocks modern tourists exactly along these two lines: "Gay

Paree" (*AR*, 11), and also Monte Carlo, which represent "Life", while Florence and Rome represent "Art" (*AR*, 13):

> But Paris and Monte Carlo are not the only resorts of pilgrimages. There are also Rome and Florence. There are picture galleries, churches and ruins as shops and casinos. And the snobbery which decrees that one must like Art—or, to be more accurate, that one should have visited the places where Art is to be seen—is almost as tyrannous as that which bids one visit the places where one can see Life. (*AR*, 13)

The sights in France, Italy, Germany and other Western European countries which had been visited by the Grand Tourists of the eighteenth century were revisited by the 'mass tourists' of the Victorian period. And one of the hallmarks of this 'Industry' were travel guidebooks (then known as "Hand-books for Travellers"). The first 'modern' guidebook, entitled *A Hand-book for the Travellers on the Continent*, was published by John Murray in 1836. Murray's handbooks, with their characteristic red covers and gold lettering, quickly became the epitome of this new, 'tourist age'. By the end of the century, when they sold the business, they had produced over 400 titles and editions.[10] In 1861 the first English edition of Karl Baedeker's guidebook appeared on the British market, and 'Baedekers' would gradually overcome John Murray guidebooks to the extent that it was the term a 'Baedeker' and not a 'Murray' which started to be used in English generically to mean a 'guidebook'.

Guidebooks served occasionally as a suitable point of criticism and departure for Victorian, class-oriented art

[10] (http://digital.nls.uk/jma/topics/publishing/handbooks.html), retrieved 19.07.2017.

critics and travel writers. For example, John Ruskin, in his famous *Mornings in Florence* (1875-1877), constructed his narrative in the first chapter, entitled "The First Morning: San Croce" in opposition to the phrase "Your Murray's Guide tells you [...] but"[11] or "Mr. Murray tells you [...] but" (*MF*, 10). Ruskin's own narration points at the errors and mistakes in Murray's guidebooks and foregrounds his own erudition and expertise as an art critic. It is worth mentioning that *Mornings in Florence* is a *sui generis* guidebook, for although, unlike the Murrays or the Baedekers of this period, it did not provide information on hotels, restaurants and transport, it is a 'cultural' guide, leading the implied readers, 'culture tourists', through the key art sights of Florence on six morning tours.

Huxley's essay entitled "Guide-Books" from *Along the Road* is a fine example of an anti-tourist discourse with a camp twist. Huxley admits to have been using guide-books regularly, and generally he has not been happy with them:

> How often have I cursed Baron Baedeker for sending me through the dust to see some nauseating Sodoma or drearily respectable Andrea del Sarto! How angry I have been with him for starring what is old merely because it is old! And how I have hated him for his lack of discrimination! (*AR*, 43)

It is perhaps to be expected that an essay on guide-books by someone disposed in such a strong anti-tourist manner as Aldous Huxley was in the middle 1920s should start with the following declaration:

---

[11] John Ruskin, *Mornings in Florence: Being Simple Studies of Christian Art for English Travellers* (Orpington, 1875), 3, 6. Hereafter, *MF*.

> For every traveller who has any taste of his own, the only useful guide-book will be the one he himself has written. All others are an exasperation. They mark with asterisk the works of art which he finds dull, and they pass over in silence those which he admires (AR, 43).

Along the Road, at least in its "Places" and "Works of Art" parts, is such a 'personal' guide-book of Huxley, whereas in the "Guide-books" essay he not only exposes the comic aspect of guide-books he considers bad, but through the survey of old guide-books raises the key issue which runs through all the essays: his critique of the lack of 'historicism' in contemporary, Modernist, art criticism.

On the issue of guidebooks Huxley states (in a truly camp manner): "The only literary guides I enjoy are the really bad ones—so bad that their badness makes, so to speak, a full circle and becomes something sublime" (*AR*, 46). Huxley's examples which follow illustrate not so much Huxley's persona's erudition, but his ease with foreign languages. One of the examples about a "sixth-rate Venus rising from the Sea" (*AR*, 47) is in Italian, another, a description of Dijon, is in French, but there is also one in English: "In any town it is always worth taking a look at the local guide. If you are lucky, you will find one in which a train is called 'Stevenson's magic babe'" (*AR*, 47).

In the "Guide-Books" essay Huxley approaches the fundamental issue, the one to which he later returns to in "Breughel", the issue that aesthetic and moral values are not universal. Huxley begins with the paradoxical statement: "An early Murray is a treasure. Indeed, any volume of European travels, however dull, is interesting, provided that

it be written before the age of railways and Ruskin" (*AR*, 48). And then he proceeds with his main argument:

> It is delightful to read on the spot the impressions and opinions of tourists who visited a hundred years ago, in the vehicles and with the æsthetic prejudices of the period, the places you are visiting now. The voyage ceases to be a mere tour through space: you travel through time and thought as well. They are morally wholesome reading too, these old books of travel; for they make one realize the entirely accidental character of our tastes and our fundamental intellectual beliefs. It seems to us axiomatic, that Giotto was a great artist; and yet Goethe, when he went to Assisi, did not even take the trouble to look at the frescoes in the church. For him, the only thing worth seeing at Assisi was the portico of the Roman temple. (*AR*, 48-49)

The importance of Huxley's claim from this fragment "of the accidental character of our tastes and our fundamental intellectual beliefs" is dealt with later on in this paper when his critique of Modernist art criticism is dealt with. At this point it is worth noting that in his "Guide-books" essay Huxley was not a purist when dealing with travel literature in the generic sense, as he 'collapsed' different travel writing genres in his argument: the guide-book, at the beginning of his argument, when he stated "an early Murray is a treasure"; a travel-book, when he discussed Goethe's tastes as described in his *Italienishe Reise* or Byron's "Romaunt", a travel epic, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, when he comments on a well known fragment from Canto IV: "But we cannot quite agree with Byron when he says 'Such as the Great of yore, Canova is to-day" (*AR*, 49). In fact, the later part of the "Guide-books" essay is not on "guide-books" in the sense of 'Murrays' or

'Baedekers' but on travel books (and novels). Huxley describes his favourite readings 'guiding' him during his extensive Italian and French journeys: Stendhal, Balzac, Veuillot, Peter Young, Miss Berry, Lady Mary Montagu, "Bible-selling Borrow", William Beckford ("the perfect dilettante") (*AR*, 52) and Dr. Charles Burney's *The Musical Tours in Europe*.

In the last part of his "Guide-books" Huxley gets distracted from the theme of guide-books even more, when he approaches the nature of changes that Italy had undergone from the eighteenth century. The topic of guidebooks returns in *Along the Road* later on in the essay "The Best Picture in the World".

Huxley's 'rôle distancing' from hordes of tourists in Europe, the hard core of his anti-tourist strategy is his expertise and erudition in all areas associated with so-called High Culture: with Literature, Music and the Visual Arts. In *Along the Road* this expertise is confirmed by the regularity with which Huxley challenges professional experts' views and theories. Huxley's critique of professional art critics in *Along the Road* is not concentrated in one specific essay on this issue, but is spread out throughout all four essays in the parts entitled "The Works of Art": "Breughel", "Rimini and Alberti", "Conxolus", "The Best Picture", "The Pieran Spring", but also throughout some essays from other parts, such as "Guide Books", "The Palio at Siena" and "Views of Holland". Huxley did not 'personalize' his attack on contemporary professional art criticism, nor did he challenge specific theories and/or their aspects; but the target of his attack must, nevertheless, have been clear to

most implied readers. The fundamental doubt Huxley raises regularly in *Along the Road* about Modernist critics is their insistence on 'form' and the disregard of 'content'. In one of the opening paragraphs of "Breughel" Huxley writes explicitly: "Fashion changes and the views of art with it. At the present time it is fashionable to believe in form to the exclusion of content" (*AR*, 139). The formalists' bias is ridiculed as Huxley further develops his argument:

> The admirers of Giotto [...] contrive to look at the master's frescoes without considering what they represent or what the painter desired to express. Every germ of drama or meaning is disinfected out of them; only the composition is admired. The process is analogous to reading Latin verses without understanding them—simply for the sake of the rhythmical rumbling of the hexameters. (*AR*, 141)

Huxley's attack on the aesthetic extremism of 'formalists' seems to be directed specifically at theories on the visual arts as promoted by two professional art critics, Roger Fry and Clive Bell, both of whom were prominent members of the Bloomsbury Group. Huxley used to meet all the members of the Bloomsbury Group when he, after his graduation from Oxford, was living in Garsington Manor during the later stages of the Great War, and when members of the Bloomsbury Group came regularly from London for weekends and for longer sojourns. Roger Fry was a co-editor (1909–1919) of *The Burlington Magazine*, the first scholarly periodical devoted to art history in Britain. He also organized the first Post Impressionist (it was also Fry who coined this term) exhibition at London's Grafter Galleries. In a series of essays—of which "An Essay in Aesthetics (1910) is considered the most influential—Fry promoted the

idea that the formal properties of paintings are more crucial than the "associated ideas" conjured in the viewer by their representational content. Fry's ideas inspired Clive Bell, a friend of his, to construct his theory of 'significant form'. Bell formulated it in his book *Art* (1914); it was "to describe the idea that the form of an artwork or forms within an artwork can be expressive, even if largely or completely divorced from a recognizable reality."[12]

Huxley's own erudition as an art enthusiast (and amateur art critic) must have grown considerably as a result of meetings with Bloomsbury 'theoreticians' and 'practitioners' of the visual arts such as Fry, Bell or artists who remained on the fringes of the Bloomsbury Group, such as Mark Gertler. It was not only in the essays published in *Along the Road* that Huxley challenged the 'formalist bias' or the professional bias of High Modernist critics such as Fry or Bell. He did it consistently throughout the 1920s and 1930s in his newspapers articles and essays (which were later put together in such collections as *On the Margin* (1923), *Proper Studies* (1927), *Do What You Will* (1929) and *Music at Night* (1931). In his fiction he poked fun and mocked their artistic poses and vanities; for example, in the portrayal of the character of Gombauld in *Crome Yellow* (1921), who is thought to have been based on Mark Gettler[13], or Rodney Clegg from "Two or Three Graces" (1926),

[12] http://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/s/significant-form, retrieved 19.07.2017.

[13] Sarah MacDougall, *Mark Gertler* (London, 2002), 155.

whose cynicism might, perhaps, be attributed to any of the Bloomsbury painters.

But the uniqueness of Huxley's position in *Along the Road* extended far beyond the personal allusions to Bloomsbury artists. Huxley was able to transcend the limitations embedded in the 'universalizing' aesthetic theories grounded in Burke and Kant which lay at the basis of the theory of Bell's 'significant form'. It was Huxley's erudition and perceptiveness that allowed him to challenge the radical formalist theories of the High Modernists. Having exposed the radical change of attitude to paintings which had taken place within two generations between Landseer and Matisse, Huxley stated:

> These historical considerations should make us chary of believing too exclusively in any single theory of art. One kind of painting, one set of ideas are fashionable at any given moment. They are made the basis of a theory which condemns all other kinds of painting and all proceeding critical theories. The process constantly repeats itself. (*AR*, 140)

In this period Huxley's extensive reading led him to consider these "historical considerations", not only in the area of the history of art, but history in general, and this, in turn, led to his "provisional acceptance of historicist relativism and the necessity for each epoch 'to think its own thoughts'".[14]

Huxley's views on art depicted in *Along the Road* place him a long distance away from 'liberal humanist' criticism,

[14] Robert S. Baker, *The Dark Historic Page: Social Satire and Historicism in the Novels of Aldous Huxley, 1921–1939.* (Madison, 1982), 9. Hereafter, *DHP*.

with it 'universal' claims, which predominated at that period, and much closer to the 'Theory', or in other words, to many 'post-modern theories' which regard such notions as gender identity, the individual self, or the issue of art itself as fluid, unstable, socially constructed and contingent things, and not as solid essences.[15]

It would, perhaps, be difficult to disagree with George Woodcock that "Breughel" is "one of the best essays of *Along the Road*,"[16] for it is extremely well written and well structured. The first, theoretical, part offers a lucid critique of the Modernist/Formalist obsession with form and the exclusion of 'story', or 'literature'. And in the second part Huxley argues convincingly why Peter Breughel should be considered a major painter, and what had prevented this from happening.

> There is one painter against whom, it seems to me, theoretical prejudice has always most unfriendly told. I mean the elder Breughel. Looking at his best paintings I find that I can honestly answer in the affirmative all the questions which a critic may legitimately put himself. He is highly competent æsthetically; he has plenty to say; his mind is curious, interesting and powerful; and he has no false pretensions, is entirely honest. And yet he has never enjoyed the high reputation to which his merits entitle him. This is due, I think, to the fact that his work has never quite squared with any of the various critical theories which since his days have had a vogue in the æsthetic world.

---

[15] For the key distinctions between "Liberal Humanism" and "Theory" see, for example, Peter Barry Peter *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* (Manchester, 1995)

[16] George Woodcock, *Dawn and the Darkest Hour: A Study of Aldous Huxley* (Montreal, 2006 [1972], 89.

> A subtle colourist, a sure and powerful draughtsman, and possessing powers of composition that enable him to marshal the innumerable figures with which his pictures are filled into pleasingly decorative groups (built up, as we see, when we try to analyse his methods of formal arrangement, out of individually flat, silhouette-like shapes standing in a succession of receding planes) Breughel can boast of purely æsthetic merits that ought to endear him even to the strictest sect of the Pharisees. Coated with this pure æsthetic jam, the bitter pill of his literature might easily, one would suppose, be swallowed. If Giotto's dalliance with sacred history be forgiven him, why may not Breughel be excused for being an anthropologist and a social philosopher? To which I tentatively answer: Giotto is forgiven, because we have so utterly ceased to believe in Catholic Christianity that we can easily ignore the subject matter of his pictures and concentrate only on their formal qualities; Breughel, on the other hand, is unforgivable because he made comments on humanity that are still interesting to us. From his subject matter we cannot escape; it touches us to closely to be ignored. That is why Breughel is despised by all up-to-date *Kunsterforschers*.
>
> And even in the past, when there was no theoretical objection to the mingling of literature and painting, Breughel failed, for another reason, to get his due. He was considered low, gross, a mere comedian, and as such unworthy of serious consideration. (*AR*, 147-149)

Huxley is making judgments which he presents as personal, and therefore tentative, provisional, subjective, with phrases like: "it seems" and "I think", but at the same time he lucidly describes Breughel's merits as a painter: that he was both a master of "composition", "form" and "æsthetic merits"; in other words of "painting", but also of content, story; in other words of "literature". And it is the latter which earns him the 'positive' label of "anthropologist and social philosopher".

The topography of museums containing Breughel's best paintings reveals the extent of the Huxleys' 'Grand Tour' travels in Europe after they had settled in Italy in 1923: Antwerp, Brussels, Paris, Madrid, Naples and Vienna. All three biographers of Aldous Huxley stressed the extent of the travel undertaken by the Huxleys in the years 1923-1925 (that is in the period when the essays from *Along the Road* were written), after their settling down in Tuscany in 1923. Their own car (a 10hp Citroën) enabled them to travel freely and over long distances in Italy, France, Austria, Germany, Belgium and Spain. Most of these journeys were undertaken in the 'Grand Tour' spirit of educational trips, but they also travelled a lot to St. Trond in Flanders, where Maria's family lived. While traversing central Europe from northern Italy to St. Trond they went through Vienna on several occasions.

> In the Vienna galleries are collected more than a dozen of his pictures all belonging to his last and best period, The Tower of Babel, the great Calvary, the Numbering of the People at Bethlehem, the two Winter Landscapes and the Autumn Landscape, the Conversion of Saint Paul, the Battle between the Israelites, the Marriage Feast and the Peasants' Dance—all these admirable works are here. It is on these that he must be judged. (*AR*, 150)

And when Huxley, finally, pronounces his judgements, he sticks to the division between "æsthetic merits" and "literature". The former are enumerated using the example of Breughel's landscapes. Huxley presents Breughel as a master of studies of snow and winter landscapes, and also reveals some features which he finds wanting: "Breughel's

method is less fundamentally compatible with the snowless landscapes of January and November. The different planes stand apart a little too flatly and distinctly. It needs a softer, bloomier kind of painting to recapture the intimate quality of such scenes as those he portrays in these two pictures" (*AR*, 152). The final assessment of Breughel's 'mature' landscapes comes from a clearly 'mature' art critic, confident with his tools: they are "the most beautiful sixteenth-century landscapes of which I have any knowledge. They are intensely poetical, yet sober and not excessively picturesque or romantic. Those fearful crags and beetling precipices of which the older painters were so fond do not appear in these examples of Breughel's maturest work" (*AR*, 153). Huxley valued Breughel highly for the realistic but moving representation of Flemish folk:

> He exhibits them mostly in those moments of orgiastic gaiety with which they temper the laborious monotony of their daily lives: eating enormously, drinking, uncouthly dancing, indulging in that peculiarly Flemish scatological waggery. (*AR*, 153-154)

Huxley's high praise for Breughel as a painter of Flemish folk seems to be connected with his thorough acquaintance with Flanders, acquired during the visits to his Flemish in-laws. The shortest essay of *Along the Road* is entitled "Patinir's River", and it describes the landscapes along the second largest river of Flanders—the Meuse. This poetic mini-essay is a tribute both to the beauty of the Flemish countryside and the talent of Joachim Patinir, the Flemish Renaissance painter, the inventor of *Weltendschaft* ('the world landscape') type of composition. This tribute to

Patinir is paradoxically twisted; for Huxley describes how he has come to realize that Patnir was the master of re-creation, not of creation. Looking at the Meuse landscape on a rainy day through the window of his little Citroën the narrative persona remarks: "Crags, river, emerald green slopes, dark woods were there, indubitably real. I had given to Joachim Patinir the credit that was due to God. What I had taken for his exquisite invention was the real and actual Meuse" (*AR*, 88)

Subsequently, Huxley moves on to distinguish and praise two other types of Breughel's paintings. On the one hand, the allegorical paintings "'The Triumph of Death' at the Prado, is appalling in its elaboration and completeness. The fantastic 'Dulle Griet' at Antwerp is an almost equally elaborate triumph of evil" (*AR*, 154). Of Breughel's religious paintings Huxley selects "Christ carrying the Cross" to show, as I believe, not only Breughel's, but also his own 'uniqueness of vision'. Huxley argues of Breughel's Calvary that it "is the most suggestive and, dramatically, the most appalling" (*AR*, 155) because it offers the change of perspective from all other Calvaries, where

> Christ is the centre, the divine hero of the tragedy; this is the fact from which they start, it affects and transforms all other facts. Breughel, on the other hand, starts from the outside and works inwards. He represents the scene as it would have appeared to any casual spectator on the road to Golgotha on a certain spring morning in the year 33 A.D.. Other artists have pretended to be angels, painting the scene with a knowledge of its significance. (*AR*, 155-156)

Huxley describes in detail the crowd of spectators in Breughel's Calvary gathering to watch the execution, and it is this 'sociological' rather than 'religious' aspect of the painting that he foregrounds. And the unexpected comment of the narrative persona concerns the critique of "cranky humanitarianism" in Europe, which had led to the situation when "hangings take place in private", which gives the chance to earn fortunes to "titled newspaper proprietors" who sell their "juicy descriptions" of executions "to a prodigiously much larger public" (*AR*, 157).

It is difficult to assess the extent to which this re-evaluation of Peter Breughel and the fact that he is now generally considered one of the key/crucial 'Old Masters' is due to non-professional art critics and 'art enthusiasts' such as Aldous Huxley or W.H. Auden (a 1938 poem "Musée des Beaux Arts") or William Carlos Williams (*Pictures from Breughel and Other Poems* (1962) for which he received the Pulitzer Prize). As far as professional art criticism goes, it was Fritz Grossmann's *Breughel: The Paintings* (1955) which was the turning point, after which the status of Peter Breughel the Elder as a major 'Old Master' has not been seriously challenged.

Huxley's assessment of another 'Old Master', Piero della Francesca, was not as revolutionary and innovative as that of Peter Breughel, for Piero had been deemed a major Renaissance painter long before Huxley's *Along the Road*, both by professional art critics and by 'amateurs'. Huxley's essay on the art of Piero is provocatively entitled "The Best Picture"; the title is provocative because Huxley himself challenges the arbitrary nature of this expression:

> The expression is ludicrous, of course. Nothing is more futile than the occupation of those connoisseurs who spend their time compiling first and second elevens of the world's best painters, eights and fours of musicians, fifteens of poets, all-star troupes of architects and so on. Nothing is more futile because there are a great many kinds of merit and an infinite variety of human beings. Is Fra Angelico a better artist than Rubens? Such questions, you insist, are meaningless. It is all a matter of personal taste. (*AR*, 185-186)

At this moment Huxley starts to turn his argument around and states:

> And up to a point this is true. But there does exist, none the less, an absolute standard of artistic merit. And this is a standard which is in the last resort a moral one. Whether a work of art is good or bad depends entirely on the quality of the character which expresses itself in the work. Not that all virtuous men are good artists, nor all artists conventionally generous. (*AR*, 186)

Huxley's argument may well be true, but it is very difficult to prove even for an essayist of Huxley's skill and erudition. Huxley shows the moral integrity behind Piero Francesco's "Resurrection", a fresco he calls histrionically "The Best Picture" (in the world). Huxley praises Piero Francesco generally for "a natural, spontaneous and unpretentious grandeur" (*AR*, 189); he calls him "majestic, without being at all strained, theatrical or hysterical" (*AR*, 189). He sees in Piero della Francesco a Christian artist, who (from his perspective) transcended Christianity and followed the path of Plutarch's *Lives* with his "worship of what is admirable in man" (*AR*, 189) and the ability to

"praise human dignity" even in his "technically religious pictures" (*AR*, 189).

"The Best Picture" is a summary of Huxley's views not only on what is good, but also on what is bad Art. He goes to some lengths to show what bad art really is, and on the ways of differentiating between two sorts of bad art: "that which is merely dull, stupid and incompetent, the negatively bad; and the positively bad, which is a lie and a sham" (*AR*, 186). Huxley embarks at this point on a discourse he often used in this period, both in non-fiction and in his novels: *Antic Hay* and *Those Barren Leaves.* Robert S. Baker, in *The Dark Historic Page*, described Huxley support for (neo)classical architecture and painting, "disciplined restraint of Wren's art", and disdain for "baroque-romantic style", which "is always associated in Huxley's mind with both violently comic deformation and histrionic emotions" (*DHP*, 67). In "The Best Picture" the brunt of Huxley's critique is directed at the key representatives of 'baroque' style (Bernini) and 'romantic' style (Wagner); In a camp gesture Huxley declares:

> Sometimes the charlatan is also a first-rate man of genius and then you have such strange artists as Wagner and Bernini, who can turn what is false and theatrical into something almost sublime. (*AR*, 187)

In his assessment of Huxley's essay, entitled "The Best Picture?", M.D. Aschlieman pointed out that Huxley was "in good company in his praise" of Piero della Francesca's work, together with: John Addington Symonds in the 1880s, Bernard Berenson in 1902, Kenneth Clark in 1951, and John

Russell in the 1960s. Aschlieman, perceptively I think, put all of these critics in a very distinguished category:

> What the many admirers of the Christian Platonist Piero (and of other great orthodox artists such as Dante, Bach, Shakespeare, and Eliot) may dimly understand, and cling to, is that both religion and idealism—including duty and honor in one's work and daily life—are kept alive by a faith: a faith that we live in a metaphysical and moral as well as a physical universe, that true value ultimately triumphs over inert or brutal fact, that spirit triumphs over flesh—if not here, then hereafter.[17]

I also agree with both parts of Aschlieman's statement about Huxley's essay: "Huxley's own argument is initially interesting and powerful but ultimately oblique and incomplete—oddly so, given that he was one of the best educated, most verbally clever and most sheerly intelligent of major 20th century writers" (*BP?*) In "The Best Picture" Huxley goes astray (as if carried away by his erudition) from the initial theme of the essay, Piero della Francesca's "Ressurection", into general musings on the nature of art and later into a description of other masterpieces of Piero and the *travails* the narrative persona had to live through to get to remote places such as Sansepolcro, Arezzo or Urbino.

Despite its imperfections, Huxley's "The Best Picture" was powerful enough to transform reality; to some extent, at least, because of its 'provocative' title. In 2011, Tim Butcher, in an article entitled "The Man Who Saved the

---

[17] M.D. Aschlieman, M.D. (2013) "The Best Picture?", National Review, http://www.nationalreview.com/article/359094/greatest-painting-m-d-aeschliman, retrieved 15.03.2017. Hereafter, *BP?*

Resurrection", presented the surprising story of Tony Clarke, who was an officer in the British Eighth Army's advance through Tuscany in 1944:

> As the Allied advance continued, his unit took up a firing position near the town of Sansepolcro. Unlike other famous Tuscan towns that are perched on hilltops, it lies down in a Valley […] It was standard then for allied artillery to soften up towns before ground troops went in, and Clarke was the officer responsible for Sansepolcro. His guns dug themselves into their firing pits, his gunners prepared their ammunition stocks. But then some faint bell rang in his mind, a bell belonging to an age far from the madness of war. Clarke—English, gay, art-loving—remembered an essay by Aldous Huxley. The author had not been shy with his superlatives, saying he had discovered what he called the world's "best picture". In fulsome terms, the essay described the incredible power of The Resurrection, a fresco masterpiece by the Renaissance maestro Piero della Francesca. "We need no imagination to help us figure forth its beauty," Huxley wrote. "It stands there before us in entire and actual splendour, the greatest picture in the world." Clarke may not have remembered every detail of the essay but, just as his guns started firing, he remembered one key fact. The Resurrection was located in Sansepolcro. I can only imagine the risk he then took by withholding his order to fire. He later said his commanding officer had come on the radio urging him to get on with it so he had to stall for time, peering at the town through binoculars and assuring his commander that he could see no German targets to go after. It was a brave action. Had Allied infantry been ambushed as they advanced on Sansepolcro, his court martial would have been brutal. But, for the love of art, he kept the guns silent. The Germans fled and the town was liberated the following day without any damage to the 500-year-old work of art.[18]

[18] Tim, Butcher, "The Man Who Saved the Resurrection", BBC News, 24 December 2011.

The story about Tony Clarke's saving of Sansepolcro with Piero's "Resurrection" in 1944 may serve as a fine example of "The Power of Art" type of discourse many artists and humanist are so fond of. It may also serve to illustrate the power of Huxley as an essayist, combining his erudition, camp type of humour and anti-tourist manner of representing his travels.

References

ARNOLD, Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990 [1869].

ASCHLIEMAN, M.D. Aschlieman, M.D. (2013) "The Best Picture?", National Review, http://www.nationalreview.com/article/359094/greatest-painting-m-d-aeschliman, retrieved 15.03.2017.

BAKER, Robert S., *The Dark Historic Page: Social Satire and Historicism in the Novels of Aldous Huxley, 1921–1939*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1982.

BARRY. Peter, *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1995.

BEDFORD, Sybille, *Aldous Huxley: A Biography*, Knopf/Harper & Row, 1975.

BEDFORD, Sybille, *Aldous Huxley: A Biography vol. I*, London, Chatto & Windus/Collins, 1973.

BEDFORD, Sybille, *Aldous Huxley: A Biography vol. II*, London, Chatto & Windus/Collins, 1974.

BORN, Daniel, *The Birth of Guilt in the English Novel: Charles Dickens to H.G. Wells*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina, Press, 1995.

BOYM, Svetlana, *The Future of Nostalgia*, New York, Basic Books, 2001.

BRADSHAW, David, *The Hidden Huxley: Contempt and Compassion for the Masses*, London, Faber & Faber, 1994.

BRADSHAW, David, "*Howards End*", in: *The Cambridge Companion to E.M. Forster*, ed. by David Bradshaw, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, 151-172.

BUTCHER, Tim, "The Man Who Saved the Resurrection", BBC News, 24 December 2011.

BUTLER, Samuel, *Alps and Sanctuaries of Piedmont and Canton Ticino*, Gloucester, Sutton, 1986 [1881].

BUZARD, Buzard, "The Grand Tour and After (1660–1840)", in The *Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. by Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, 37-52.

DISREALI, Benjamin, *Sybille or the Two Nations*, Rockville, Wildside Press, 2004 [1845].

EARL OF CHESTERFIELD, *The Letters of Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield, with the Characters*, vol. I, ed. John Bradshaw, London, S. Sonnenshein & Co, 1926.

ENGLER, Barbara, *Personality Theories: An Introduction*, Boston, Houghton Miffin, 1985.

FIRCHOW, Peter, *Aldous Huxley: Satirist and Novelist*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1972.

FIRCHOW, Peter, *The End of Utopia*: *A Study of Huxley's* Brave New World, Lewisburg, Bucknell University Press, 1979.

FORSTER, E.M., *Howards End*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1989 [1910].

FUSSELL, Paul, *Abroad: British Literary Traveling Between the Wars*, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 1980.

HOLT, Richard, *Sport and the British: The Modern History*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997 [1987].

HUXLEY, Aldous, *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan*, New York, Harper & Row, 1965 [1939].

HUXLEY, Aldous, *Along the Road*: *Notes and Essays of a Tourist*, New York, Ecco Pres, 1989 [1925].

HUXLEY, Aldous, *Antic Hay*, New York, Harper & Row, 1965 [1923].

HUXLEY, Aldous, *Brave New World*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1972 [1932].

HUXLEY, Aldous, *Brave New World Revisited*, London, Chatto & Windus, 1987 [1958].

HUXLEY, Aldous, *Complete Essays: Volume III*, Chicago, Ivor R. Dee, 2001.

HUXLEY, Aldous, *Complete Essays VI*, ed. Robert S. Baker and James Saxton Chicago, Ivor R. Dee, 2002.

HUXLEY, Aldous, *Eyeless in Gaza*, New York, Bantam Books, 1964 [1936].

HUXLEY, Aldous, *Island*, New York, Perennial Classics, 2002[1962].

HUXLEY, Aldous, *Letters of Aldous Huxley*, ed. by Grover Smith, New York, Harper & Row, 1969.

HUXLEY, Aldous, Point Counter Point: A Novel, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1955 [1928].,

HUXLEY, Aldous, "Shakespeare and Religion", www.sirbacon.org, retrieved 20.03.2004. [1963].

HUXLEY, Aldous, *The Doors of Perception*, New York, Harpercollins, 1990 [1954].

HUXLEY, Aldous, *The Perennial Philosophy*, New York, Harper & Brothers, 1945.

HUXLEY, Laura, *This Timeless Moment: A Personal View of Aldous Huxley*, Berkeley, Celestial Arts, 2000.

HUXLEY, Aldous, *Those Barren Leaves*, New York, Avon Books, 1925 [1925].

HUXLEY, Aldous, *Time Must Have a Stop*, New York, Harper & Brothers, 1944.

HUXLEY, Aldous, *"Who Are You?"*, in: *Harper's Magazine 189* (1944), 512-522.

JUMP. J.D., *Matthew Arnold*, London, Longmans, 1977 [1955].

KOPALIŃSKI, Władysław, *Słowniki mitów i tradycji kultury*, Warszawa, PIW, 1985.

LASSELS, Richard, *An Italian Voyage, Or a Compleat Journey Through Italy*, London, Richard Wellington and B, Barnard Lintot, 1697 [1670].

LAWRENCE, D.H., *Sons and Lovers*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995 [1913].

LODGE, David, "Forster's Flawed Masterpiece", in: *Consciousness and the Novel: Connected Essays*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 2002.

LODGE, David, "Tono-Bungay and the Condition of England" in: *Language of Fiction: Essays in Criticism and Verbal Analysis of the English Novel*, London, Routledge, 2002 [1966], 227-258.

MACDOUGALL, Sarah, *Mark Gertler*, London, John Murray, 2002.

MADDOX, Brenda, *D.H. Lawrence: The Story of a Marriage*, New York, Simon & Schuster, 1994.

MAY, Keith, *Aldous Huxley*, London, Paul Ellek Books, 1972.

MAY, Keith, "Huxley's Marriage of Heaven and Hell", in: *Now More Than Never: Proceedings of the Aldous Huxley Centenary Symposium, Münster 1994*, ed. by Bernfried Nugel, Frankfurt am Main, 1995, 335-346.

MECKIER, Jerome, "Aldous Huxley and Experiment: The Case of *Point Counter Point" Aldous Huxley Annual*, Volume 14 (2014), 179-198.

MECKIER, Jerome Meckier, "On D.H. Lawrence and Death, Especially Matricide: *Sons and Lovers*, *Brave New World*, and Aldous Huxley's Later Novels", in: *Aldous Huxley Annual, Volume 7* (2007), 185-222.

MURRAY, Nicholas, *Aldous Huxley: An English Intellectual*, London, Abacus, 2003[2002].

MUZINA, Matej Muzina, "Aldous Huxley and W.H. Sheldon's Psychology of Constitutional Differences", *Studia Romanica et Anglicana Zagrebiensi* 40 (1975), 89-112.

ROSECRANCE, Barbara, *Forster's Narrative Vision*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1982.

RUSKIN, John, *Mornings in Florence: Being Simple Studies of Christian Art for English Travellers*, Orpington, G. Allen, 1875.

SAWYER, Dana, *Aldous Huxley: A Biography*, New York, Crossroad Publishing, 2002.

SCHOLES, Robert, *The Rise and Fall of English. Reconstructing English as a Discipline*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1998.

SHELDON, William, *The Varieties of Temperament*, New York, Harper & Brothers, 1942.

SHERBORNE, Michael, York Notes: Brave New World, Aldous Huxley, London, Greener Books, 1988.

STORY, William Wetmore, *Roba di Roma, vol. I*, London, Chapman & Hall, 1863.

TINDALL, William York, *Forces in Modern British Literature, 1885–1956*, New York, Vintage, 1956.

TRILLING, Lionel and Harold Bloom, *The Oxford Anthology of English Literature; Volume V: Victorian Poetry and Prose*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1973.

WILLIAMS, Raymond, *The Country and the City*, London, Chatto & Windus, 1973.

WOODCOCK, George Woodcock, *Dawn and the Darkest Hour: A Study of Aldous Huxley* Montreal, Black Rose Books, 2006 [1972].

ZDANSKI, Clarice, "Samuel Butler, Local Identity and the Periodizing of Northern Italian Art: The Travel Writer-Painter's View of Art History", in: *Samuel Butler, Victorian Against the Grain: A Critical Overview*, ed. by James G. Paradise, Toronto, Scholarly Publishing Division 2007, 223-250.

Index