



DICHOTOMY AND SYNTHESIS:
ALDOUS HUXLEY'S SEARCH FOR INTEGRATION

KIRPAL SINGH, B.A. Hons (1973, S'PORE), M.A. (1976, S'PORE)

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University of Adelaide

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DECLARATION

I declare that to the best of my knowledge this thesis does not contain any material of others which is not duly acknowledged.

KIRPAL SINGH

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Abstract

The basic aim is to examine Aldous Huxley's search for integration as revealed in his poetry, short stories and novels. Existing studies have usually failed to stress the centrality of this theme in Huxley's work or have explored it in a very limited manner. Further, most critics have tended to ignore the relevance of the poetry and the shorter fiction when discussing this aspect of Huxley's work.

The search for integration provides a fundamental unity to all that Huxley wrote. The need for the search arose out of an inability to come to terms both with himself (i.e. the various aspects of his own nature) and with his environment (i.e. the prevalent ethos). At the heart of this inability is the conflict which centres on Culture and Anarchy. Huxley's background and education instilled in him a deep respect for Culture. But he soon realised that Culture had bred a malaise from which he must escape. The alternative was Anarchy, plentiful in energy but wanting grace. The need for an acceptable synthesis forced Huxley to explore various methods of living.

In the final analysis Huxley finds his rest in "the perennial philosophy"; a philosophy which, for him, exemplified a viable solution to the problems of living. Critics have accused Huxley of having deserted art for a pseudo-mystical posturing of his beliefs. The thesis questions this and attempts to demonstrate that Huxley's work gains both in strength and vision as his hold on reality becomes firmer and more unified. Huxley's adoption of Vedantic-Buddhism, ridiculed in the west, is particularly of interest for it highlights an attempt to synthesise a very sensitive western intelligence with a very tolerant and enlightened eastern way of life. In the end it is the search rather than the doctrine which yields most fruitful study and it is on this that the main argument of the thesis is centred.

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A NOTE ON THE TEXT: ABBREVIATIONS

For convenient pagination of books frequently referred to, the following abbreviations have been used. Please see the Bibliography for full publication details.

Works of Aldous Huxley (Unless marked with an * the page references are to the Collected Works, published by Chatto & Windus, London, from 1947 onwards).

<u>CY</u>	-	<u>Crome Yellow</u>
<u>MC</u>	-	<u>Mortal Coils</u>
<u>AH</u>	-	<u>Antic Hay</u>
<u>TBL</u>	-	<u>Those Barren Leaves</u>
<u>JP</u>	-	<u>Jesting Pilate</u>
<u>PS</u>	-	<u>Proper Studies</u>
* <u>ENO</u>	-	<u>Essays New and Old</u>
<u>PCP</u>	-	<u>Point Counter Point</u>
<u>DWYW</u>	-	<u>Do What You Will</u>
<u>BC</u>	-	<u>Brief Candles</u>
<u>MN</u>	-	<u>Music at Night</u>
<u>TP</u>	-	<u>Texts and Pretexts</u>
<u>BNW</u>	-	<u>Brave New World</u>
<u>OT</u>	-	<u>The Olive Tree</u>
<u>EG</u>	-	<u>Eyeless in Gaza</u>
<u>EM</u>	-	<u>Ends and Means</u>
<u>AMNS</u>	-	<u>After Many A Summer</u>
<u>GE</u>	-	<u>Grey Eminence</u>
<u>TMHAS</u>	-	<u>Time Must Have A Stop</u>
<u>PP</u>	-	<u>The Perennial Philosophy</u>
<u>AE</u>	-	<u>Ape and Essence</u>

- TV - Themes and Variations
- DL - The Devils of Loudun
- DP - The Doors of Perception and Heaven and Hell
- BNWR - Brave New World Revisited
- AA - Adonis and the Alphabet
- *GG - The Genius and the Goddess
- *LS - Literature and Science
- *HS - The Human Situation
- CP - The Collected Poetry of Aldous Huxley, ed. Donald Watt.
- *Letters - The Letters of Aldous Huxley, ed. Grover Smith

Others

- SB - Aldous Huxley: A Biography by Sybille Bedford
- MV - Aldous Huxley 1894 - 1963: A Memorial Volume, ed. Julian Huxley.

TO MY TEACHERS

INTRODUCTION

The life and work of Aldous Huxley present the literary critic with the formidable task of integrating what is an essentially diverse literary output and career into some acceptable framework within which they can be cogently and meaningfully discussed. His prodigious intellect, his ceaseless curiosity, his sensitive responses, his sober reflections, all contribute to an unrelenting search to find, in his words, the "minimum working hypothesis" which would allow man to come to terms with himself.

The search manifests itself most powerfully at an intensely personal level. Born at a time when the ethos of western civilisation was undergoing rapid transformations, and educated in the early years of this century when the old accepted modes of thought and behaviour were being radically questioned and altered, Huxley was from an early age made aware of the precariousness of his situation as a member of one of England's most distinguished families.

This "precariousness" is characterised chiefly by Huxley's awareness that human existence is riddled with conflicts which produced in man a bifurcation of being. Consequently, man becomes frustrated and his spirit restless. The goal of life, therefore, becomes the search for an acceptable synthesis by which this schism in man's being is satisfactorily overcome or resolved. Once the synthesis is achieved, man is free to lead an integrated existence; an existence which allows him to live in peace with himself and with the world.

(ii)

The basic aim of this thesis is to study Huxley's search for integration as revealed in his poetry, short stories and novels. The search for integration, it is suggested, provides an adequate frame of reference within which his varied and instructive literary output can be meaningfully discussed. This approach posits an essential and basic underlying unity by emphasising the centrality of this theme to the entire work.

The need for such an emphasis - and the justification for this re-examination of Huxley's work - arises because existing criticism does not appear to be sufficiently appreciative of the nature and the value of much that Huxley is about. Critics have tended to use Huxley's work either to debunk or to glorify a certain attitude towards life without really involving themselves with what is perhaps the most crucial aspect of his work: namely, his fundamental need to transcend himself by finding a way of escaping from the limits of acute self-consciousness. Because self-consciousness is primarily an intellectual activity Huxley's daunting intellectual prowess only reinforced the difficulty; he embarked on a desperate search to go beyond mere intellect without compromising or abnegating its value.

The more influential critics have had remarkably little sympathy with this basic preoccupation of Huxley. More often than not he has been dismissed as a dilettante; as a writer who quite astonishingly and brilliantly captured the peculiar tone and atmosphere of the nineteen-twenties but one who, ultimately, does not deserve to be placed alongside our century's front-rank writers. Having been

viewed as a writer alienated from love of life or civilisation, there is a marked suspicion of his work. His own handicap, namely an alarming intellectual capacity which made it very difficult for him to relate to others on an equal footing, is seen to be a major impediment to his understanding of reality. In a sense therefore, it is tacitly assumed that there exists a "credibility gap" between what he tells us about the nature of reality and what reality really is. Because Huxley finds very little to applaud in human existence, he is cast aside as a misanthrope; as a person who has deliberately betrayed his own kind. Many readers see in his writings (especially those for which he is generally renowned - those of the early period prior to 1936) a horrible denunciation of life performed with the precise, sharp apparatus of the master surgeon who knows exactly what he is about regardless of the patient's protestations. He is seen to perform an operation without anaesthetic. He thus becomes a kind of savage cerebralist who distorts reality to suit his purpose. Given his supreme intelligence such a blatant assault on the human race is felt to be doubly perverse and repugnant.

Generally, therefore, the consensus of critical opinion has been that Huxley, while being historically important, does not possess the literary significance to merit much detailed critical attention. He is noted for his ironic and satiric thrusts at various shortcomings peculiar to the upper class intellectual. But almost precisely because of his brilliance as a satirist he is severely taken to task. G.S. Fraser has written that "satire has never been ranked by critics among the noblest of literary forms, and there is

perhaps a general feeling that the character of the satirist, like his presentations of his victims, has something deformed or distorted about it."¹ Huxley's reputation very ably testifies to the truth of Fraser's comment. Only very recently, indeed, has there been a genuine revival of interest - no doubt connected with the more general revival of interest in the nineteen-twenties and thirties - and critics are slowly beginning to consider his work worthy of serious study.²

Moreover, most critical studies of Huxley have tended to neglect (or even ignore) the poetry and the short stories; preferring to focus exclusively on the novels with a view, usually, of demonstrating their deficiency.³ Starting with David Daiches's influential attack in 1939⁴ critical opinion has for a long time persisted in pointing

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1. G.S. Fraser, The Modern Writer and His World, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964, pp. 103-104.
 2. For a good overall discussion of Huxley's reputation the reader is referred to Donald Watt's excellent "Introduction" in Aldous Huxley: The Critical Heritage, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975, pp. 1-36.
 3. An exception however, must be made of Charles Holmes's book, Aldous Huxley and the Way to Reality, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970, and George Woodcock's Dawn and the Darkest Hour: A Study of Aldous Huxley, London: Faber and Faber, 1972. Both Holmes and Woodcock give some attention to the poetry and the short stories and in the process make some valuable comments on a few thematic links which these unduly neglected areas of the Huxley canon provide with the novels. However, they make little attempt to suggest a fundamental unity which connects the earlier works with the later achievements. Moreover, because Holmes is chiefly interested in studying Huxley's artistic postures in relation to his metaphysics, and Woodcock in wanting to perform the more ambitious job of placing Huxley in the context of modern literature, their books do not offer a framework within which this unity can be properly examined.
 4. David Daiches, The Novel and the Modern World, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939, pp. 188-210.

out the derivativeness and inadequacies of the novels without a just appraisal of either Huxley's own concerns in the novels or their relationship to Huxley's other creative works. Not surprisingly, a recent review-article on his work laments this bias and calls for a sustained analysis of the complete oeuvre through exploration of his specific theme.⁵ The present study is a modest attempt to redress this situation by suggesting that Huxley's entire work represents, from start to end, an intellectual response to the need for integration: life and personality are seen to posit dichotomies which necessitate an acceptable synthesis.

(iii)

The key concepts employed in the thesis may be briefly explained. 'Dichotomy,' 'synthesis,' and 'integration' are inter-related as well as inter-dependent in terms of their meanings. 'Dichotomy' implies a division or a conflict which, by its presence in man's being, undermines man's attempts to attain harmony. 'Synthesis' refers to the method or resolution by which man tries to eliminate dichotomy so as to achieve harmony of existence. And 'integration' is the final state in which this harmony is fully realised. The search for integration, therefore, is the search for a means through which conflict and division in human existence is successfully eradicated so as to allow man to lead an integrated existence. In Huxleyean phraseology, this search culminates when

5. Jerome Meckier, "Housebreaking Huxley: Saint versus Satirist," Mosaic, Vol. 5, No. 4, 1972, pp. 165-177.

point is in absolute harmony with counterpoint; ape with essence. Prior to integration point and counterpoint, ape and essence are in opposition.

According to Huxley, dichotomy is present at two distinct, but interrelated, levels: the inner and the outer. At the inner level, dichotomy manifests its opposites within the self. Man is seen to be split from within his own nature and therefore in need of coming to terms with his own self. The contradictions and conflicts which trouble him are intrinsic and are products of a divided whole. The problems arising out of the clash between such polarities as love and lust, instinct and reason, for instance, may be said to be symptomatic of a dichotomy within one's own being.

At the outer level, the dichotomy, more akin to traditional alienation, manifests itself chiefly in the discontinuity between self and the outside world. Assuming that the inner self is intact man has still to arrive at a happy integration with his surroundings. Frequently, even the undivided self becomes aware of a discrepancy between its own perception of reality and what actually constitutes reality. Here the difficulty resulting from the confrontation between self and the other, appearances and reality, for example, inhibits man's integration with his environment.

From a different point of view, these two levels, the inner and the outer, may be appropriately termed the private and the public respectively. Because man is not an island unto himself (even though he may often imagine himself to be one) the public and private worlds are constantly merging. Hence, the question of community is one of the most pressing questions which Huxley's search

for integration impels him to explore.

(iv)

As has been said, Huxley's search for integration is self-centred in a very fundamental sense. He repeatedly states that everything he writes is aimed at self-realisation:

Each book is an attempt to make things clear to myself so far as I had gone at the time it was written. In that sense they are all provisional.⁶

Primarily, what matters to Huxley is his own desperate need to come to terms with himself and with the world. He feels alienated from his fellow human beings and is unhappy about it. An early poem of his records this sense of unease in an amusing manner:

While I have been fumbling over books
And thinking about God and the Devil and all,
Other young men have been battling with the days
And others have been kissing the beautiful women.
They have brazen faces like battering-rams.
But I who think about books and such -
I crumble to impotent dust before the struggling,
And the women palsy me with fear.
But when it comes to fumbling over books
And thinking about God and the Devil and all,
Why, there I am.
But perhaps the battering-rams are in the right of it,
Perhaps, perhaps.....God knows.

(CP , p. 69)

Significantly, the poem is entitled "The Life Theoretic." Huxley is completely at home in the realm of the theoretical; his amazing intellectual capacity - he has been called "congenitally an intellectual of intellectuals"⁷ - at once places him above most

6. J.W.N. Sullivan, Contemporary Mind: Some Modern Answers, London: H. Toulmin, 1934, p. 141.

7. J.B. Coates, "Aldous Huxley" in Writers of Today, ed. Denys Val Baker, London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1946, p. 2.

people. This superiority is of course, problematic. As the poem shows, Huxley is obviously conscious of his own inadequacy beside the "battering-rams." But it is telling that beneath the unmistakable element of envy present in the poem there is also an unmistakable element of self-digust. What exasperates Huxley is the knowledge that well-informed, serious-minded individuals like himself "crumble to impotent dust" when confronted with practical action while their inferiors (young men with brazen faces) suffer no such anxieties. This dilemma grows into a very real and deep-seated philosophic issue as Huxley matures.

Though the intensely "private" aspect of the dilemma may well be unflattering to many of his readers, it does not detract from the validity which Huxley's work has for man in our century. On the contrary, it can be safely said that Huxley crucially exemplifies one important type of modern intellectual: the type who knows his predicament, is unhappy because he knows too much and is indecisive because he is too self-conscious. In Eyeless in Gaza (1936) Huxley apprehends this creature as exhibiting the Hamlet-syndrome. The problem itself (as Huxley recognises) is neither peculiarly modern nor particularly unique. What makes a detailed study of the issue as it is treated by Huxley worthwhile and relevant - apart from the essential task of establishing an underlying unity of all his work - is the urgency with which he characterises the problem.

This leads Huxley to investigate diverse ideas with the hope of eventually arriving at a satisfactory answer to the problem from which he suffers acutely. Because his writings are basically imaginative extensions of ideas, their appeal is bound to be narrow

and occasional. Huxley himself is aware of this and says as much in Point Counter Point (1928). His kind of writing, he states, embraces only those people who are comfortably at home with ideas. For a while ideas seem to provide the answer to man's otherness because of the temporary sense of community they help to establish between intelligent individuals. Huxley is quick to realise, however, that this condition rules out all but 0.01 per cent of the human race. Nevertheless, this 0.01 per cent frequently represents intelligent, well-educated persons who are preoccupied with thinking about existence. Though they may appear to be an exclusive set, their actions contain implications for many others who may not come directly within Huxley's ambit. Gradually Huxley moves away from the cocktail party of ideas to embrace a spiritual outlook in which ideas assume only a secondary position. After Eyeless in Gaza he does not appear to be too much interested in ideas per se. This could partly account for his subsequent decline as a novelist because the novel of ideas requires, above all, "an eclectic faith in the democracy of ideas."⁸ From Eyeless in Gaza onwards, his novels tend to become mainly expositions rather than dramatisations of ideas.

This artistic weakness notwithstanding, Huxley's influence on the intelligentsia of our time hardly requires comment. Not only has he been hailed as a major apostle of the "lost generation" (in Gertrude Stein's pregnant phrase) but his writings have left an indelible mark on the countless numbers who read him with fervour

8. Frederick J. Hoffman, "Aldous Huxley and the Novel of Ideas," Forms of Modern Fiction, ed. William Van O'Connor, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1959, p. 199.

and zest. Jocelyn Brooke, among others, states:

For those who, like the writer of the present essay, were growing up during the 1920's, Aldous Huxley seemed unquestionably the most stimulating and exciting writer of the day.... (He) was gay, 'sophisticated' and (for those days) agreeably shocking; but more important, for his young readers, was the impact of an alert, penetrating and widely-ranging intelligence. By comparison, most other contemporary writers seemed stuffy, unenlightened, and old-fashioned.⁹

Though several readers have been sharply critical of Huxley, none, it appears, has considered him to be irrelevant. Unfortunately, his relevance has not always been accorded the attention it merits.

(v)

One of the more curious features of Huxley's work is that though he realised the futility of a purely intellectual search for meaning in the world almost at the start of his literary career, he did not stop this search himself. In an interview recorded in 1926, Huxley stated:

One generally finds that people who have tried to analyse the world in exclusively intellectual terms, end by discovering what everybody knows, almost by instinct, from the beginning.¹⁰

"To analyse the world in exclusively intellectual terms": the statement sums up the greater part of Huxley's own burden. Try as he may he finds it very difficult and cumbersome not to impose an intellectual understanding of reality. His penchant for objectivity

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9. Jocelyn Brooke, Aldous Huxley, London: Longmans (British Council 'Writers and Their Work' Series), 1954, pp. 5-6.
10. Y. Maraini, "A Talk with Aldous Huxley," The Bermondsey Book, 3 (June 1926), pp. 76-77.

profoundly affects his awareness because it tends to overlook the fact that reality is Janus-faced: that there is an objective as well as a subjective to what is perceived. To synthesise the objective with the subjective, in fact, becomes one of Huxley's most difficult problems as he moves towards his goal in the search for integration.

This anxiety to synthesise two equally valid modes of human experience may be thought of as Huxley's need to harmonise within his own self the two disparate family syndromes he inherited as a product of a Huxley-Arnold alliance. Stated simply, he seems to have inherited the need for an objective, rational, scientific understanding of phenomena from his paternal grandfather, the illustrious Thomas Henry Huxley. And from the Arnolds - both Thomas and Matthew - he seems to have acquired that peculiar zeal for an essentially religious outlook of life which sanctified subjective experience. This twin inheritance seems to clamour in Huxley for a viable integration.

Almost as an affront to both the Huxleys' faith in reason and the Arnolds' faith in Providence, the First World War literally thrust itself upon Huxley's growing maturity.¹¹ All the pre-suppositions which had accorded man security and confidence for his thoughts, behaviour and destiny, were forced to undergo revision in the face of the ignominious experiences. The first years of the peace that followed only saw Yeats's things falling apart and Eliot's

11. For a brief but interesting account of the changes brought by the war, see John Montgomery, The Twenties, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1970.

wasteland. Mankind had witnessed tragically the erosion of its tightly held beliefs in progress; its energy was dissipated; its optimism crushed and its hold on life undermined.¹² As Virginia Woolf was sadly to record, the generation to which Huxley belonged

had nothing settled to look at; nothing peaceful to remember; nothing certain to come. During all the impressionable years of their lives they were stung into consciousness - into self-consciousness, into class-consciousness, into the consciousness of things changing, of things falling, of death perhaps about to come. There was no tranquility in which they could recollect.¹³

In the light of all these, the search for integration (or for meaning) becomes all the more incumbent and we find Huxley fumbling through book after book to arrive at a satisfactory destination.

(vi)

It may appear from the above that like Colin Wilson's "outsiders" Huxley is an existentialist.¹⁴ No doubt certain affinities are only too obvious. Like the existentialist, Huxley

12. The war, however, was not the sole agent of this disintegration of life. Several other intellectual movements and ideological battles contributed to and enhanced man's sense of precariousness. Marxism, which rooted man in history as a being torn in economic strife, psychology, which gave explanations for man's irrational actions, physics, which reversed the materialistic concept of the universe, several branches in philosophy - phenomenology, logical positivism, existentialism - all challenged man's understanding of himself and of the universe. For a general discussion of these matters, see Colin Wilson's The Outsider, London: Pan Books, 1956, and his Beyond the Outsider, London, Pan Books, 1966.
13. Quoted in K.B. Ramamurty, Aldous Huxley: A Study of His Novels, Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1974, p. 2.
14. Colin Wilson has tried to show as much in The Strength to Dream, London: Sphere Books, 1976, pp. 197-217.

sees man as a being subject to great anxiety because of his essential isolation and an inherent schism. This view is hinted at in his earliest writings but not developed until he came to write the major novels. Basically, Huxley's work seems to endorse the existentialists' analyses of life. His protagonists (often closely resembling himself) experience the anguish, difficulty and abjection common to the existentialist hero and even, on occasion, the morbidity associated with the experience. Like Camus's Sisyphus Huxley is again and again pushing his rock up the hill only to find it rolling down again. For Huxley to achieve integration, the rock perhaps must stay at the top; but so pernicious is the power of the dichotomy which pulls the rock down that this equilibrium is seldom realised.

A related problem highlighted by Huxley's integrated heroes - that they become boring, self-absorbed individuals - is in many ways parallel with the Sisyphus story: what is Sisyphus to do if the rock did not roll down? He would, perhaps, have to sit contentedly at the mountain-top reunited with the gods, but divorced from labouring man. Anthony Beavis, at the end of Eyeless in Gaza, does take a positive step to involve himself in worldly affairs, but the main thrust of the Miller-philosophy as preached in the novel is not dramatised and we are left wondering if Anthony does really succeed in combining satisfactorily his pacifist ideas with the world at large. Even in Island (1962), we know the problem remains; the integrated inhabitants of this paradisaical state do not appear to lead very exciting lives. Unlike Camus' Meursault, however, the Huxley hero does not exhibit nihilistic tendencies; nor is he usually

bothered about authenticating his existence by some gratuitous act.

Thus though Huxley has affinities with existentialists, he is not, at heart, an existentialist. Accepting the existentialists' understanding of life for the most part, Huxley does not recommend their conclusions. In Huxley's world, man discovers his being in awareness and light; life is lived not so much in bad faith as in conflict, often self-inflicted, which forces man to rethink his situation. The quality of existence is determined by the level of integration which man has achieved both within and without his own self. In the early works, death is commonly seen as being meaningless but it does not invalidate the search for a synthesis between essence and existence. In the latter works, death is seen not as an absolute end to existence but merely as a passing-on, a different stage in existence. Thus in Island, Lakshami is aided in her death because she is being liberated from the shackles of bodily existence. The ultimate integration is integration with what Huxley, following the Tibetan Bhador (The Tibetan Book of the Dead), calls the Clear Light of the Void. The existentialist writers, concentrating on man as matter, do not usually entertain these thoughts because the spirit has no real place in their scheme of things.¹⁵

(vii)

If Huxley is not strictly an existentialist, but shares many existentialist sentiments, it may, perhaps, be useful to label him a

15. An exception, however, has to be made of the thought of existentialists such as Soren Kierkegaard and Karl Jaspers whose theological bent admit of spiritual concerns.

creative skeptic. The label has, further, the kind of illustrious history with which Huxley feels comfortable. According to Margaret Wiley - from whom the label is taken - a creative skeptic is one who follows broadly the teachings of Pyrrho, a Greek thinker of the 4th Century B.C. The basis of creative skepticism is summed up in the following passage:

In his search for truth Pyrrho emphasised three key words: issosothenia, epoche and ataraxis. By issosothenia he meant the necessity of balancing every statement by its opposite if one is to approximate the truth. Just as an isosceles triangle has two equal sides, so the structure of truth must contain balanced opposites. One may, for example, state that all Indians are essentially spiritual-minded, but it will be necessary at once to counter this with the statement that all Indians are essentially materialistic and let this apparent contradiction work in one's mind until through the attempt to reconcile these opposites something close to the whole truth emerges. Epoche, meaning suspension of judgment, follows naturally from the balancing of opposites. There is little temptation to make snap judgements if one is always self reminded that there is probably an equal amount of truth in the opposite of each statement he makes. The purpose of practising these two techniques of truth-seeking was to insure ataraxis, that peace of mind which skeptics were seeking along with Stoics and Epicureans, although by way of a different road.¹⁶

The skeptic, therefore, is a person with an open, inquiring mind. He yearns to obtain the truth by considering as many angles as possible. In this way he hopes to arrive at an understanding of life which will not be subject to the charge of exclusiveness. Huxley, in his recognition of a dichotomy in human nature and in human existence, and in his search to transcend this dichotomy by discovering a synthesis which will lead to integration, embraces the

16. Margaret Wiley, Creative Skeptics, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1966, pp. 11-12.

Pyrrhonist philosophy quite ably. It even gives him a healthy outlook on life: without loss of integrity and without undue compromise, Huxley can examine human actions and existence with the aim of arriving at the desired state of healthy integration. In this sense, skepticism is not a personal quirk, but an attitude which furnishes the mind with an apparatus to understand the world better. Joseph Conrad, in a letter to fellow-novelist John Galsworthy, eloquently stated the cause of skepticism:

The fact is you want more skepticism at the very foundation of your work. Skepticism, the tonic of minds, the tonic life, the agent of truth - the way of art and salvation.¹⁷

To describe Huxley as a creative skeptic is not to impose any exclusive frame of reference on his work but rather to suggest a tradition to which his inclinations belong almost naturally. As Wiley admirably shows in her book, creative skepticism has attracted the attention of seminal thinkers throughout the world in all ages; a random list would include the names of Sextus Empiricus, Nicholas of Cuse, Montaigne, Donne, Pascal, Blake, Coleridge, Emerson, and several other outstanding men of letters. As an aside, it is interesting to note that most of these thinkers eventually adopted a mystic or pseudo-mystic posture in their efforts to understand reality. For Huxley, consciously or unconsciously, creative skepticism provides the inspiration and the tool to answer the challenge posed by the paradoxes of life and personality.

This challenge consists primarily of the profuse opposites,

17. Life and Letters of Joseph Conrad, ed. H.F. Marrot, London, 1935, p. 129. Quoted in Wiley, op. cit., p. 7.

each equally valid, which swarm in the thinking mind. Huxley constantly discovers disparities and paradoxes which dictate human behaviour and thought. "Reality," he writes in 1927, "is so immeasurably complicated that it is impossible for us to comprehend it synthetically in entirety." (PS, p. 35). Such an attitude necessarily breeds a certain skepticism; a feeling that because there appears to be no absolute in life, certainty is irrevocably threatened. With Huxley, however, skepticism does not degenerate into an unwonted bitterness; while Huxley is bemused by the incredulousness of life, he is rarely contemptuous of it. He does not hate life - though he often finds it difficult to adore it.

(viii)

That Huxley remains critically involved with the search for integration throughout his career is, in no small measure, related to his being a creative skeptic. Time and again he expresses his awareness that integration is a most difficult state to attain and the process to attain it most arduous. For Huxley to achieve integration is, in a sense, to become a saint, to achieve self-transcendence but not through self-denial. While many feel the urge to do this, few actually succeed. The integrated man is one who, like a saint

knows that every moment of our human life is a moment of crisis; for at every moment we are called upon to make an all-important decision - to choose between the way that leads to death and spiritual darkness and the way that leads towards light and life; between interests exclusively temporal and the eternal order; between our personal will, or the will of some projection of our personality, and the will of God. (PP, p. 53)

The question is a perplexing one. Huxley frequently draws attention to the difficulties of translating or communicating Reality through the medium of language. That Man's knowledge should be the product as well as the limitation of language troubled him a great deal. In The Doors of Perception (1954) he states

Every individual is at once the beneficiary and the victim of the linguistic tradition into which he or she has been born - the beneficiary inasmuch as language gives access to the accumulated records of other people's experience, the victim in so far as it confirms him in the belief that reduced awareness is the only awareness and as it bedevils his sense of reality, so that he is all too apt to take his concepts for data, his words for actual things. (DP, p. 22)

This leads him to advocate the use of such drugs as mescaline because through his own experiments he knows how liberating the effects of their correct applications can be. Mescaline, by loosening barriers that inhibit clear perception, enable the person taking it to be in empathy with his environment in a deep experiential way, so that for a few fleeting hours, at least, he and his world are actually co-existent. It is this experience, rather than the state of the person under the drug, that is valuable. The experience is both "Hell and Heaven" but the awakening of the consciousness to a different order of reality is of inestimable value. Almost in anticipation of his critics Huxley writes:

I am not so foolish as to equate what happens under the influence of mescaline or of any other drug, prepared or in the future preparable, with the realisation of the end and ultimate purpose of human life: Enlightenment, the Beatific Vision. All I am suggesting is that the mescaline experience is what Catholic theologians call 'a gratuitous grace', not necessary to salvation but potentially helpful and to be accepted thankfully, if made available. To be shaken out of the ruts of ordinary perception, to be shown for a few timeless hours the outer and the inner world, not as they appear to an animal obsessed with survival or to a human being obsessed

with words and actions, but as they are apprehended, directly and unconditionally, by Mind at Large - this is an experience of inestimable value to everyone and especially to the intellectual. (DP, pp. 61-62)

Like Blake - from whom he took the titles for the two major essays on the drug experience - Huxley yearns to find the means whereby linguistic knowledge can be meaningfully synthesised with non-linguistic (i.e. intuitive) knowledge so as to give a better insight into reality. Such a synthesis is a pre-requisite for integration; only through it can the inner/outer dichotomy be successfully resolved. However, he finds the task almost insurmountable. Though an incredibly verbal man, he realises that most utterances about existence are mere distractions from the total reality.

An abstraction can never be true. To abstract is to select certain aspects of reality regarded as being, for one reason or another, significant. The aspects of reality not selected do not thereby cease to exist, and the abstraction is therefore never a true, in the sense of a complete, picture of reality. (PS, p. 35)

If abstractions are useful (and Huxley feels that they are) it is because they impress upon us how incomplete the picture of reality which they present is.

In the light of this, Truth really remains unknowable. What is needed, therefore, is tolerance and humility; the capacity to admit that beyond the knowable (i.e. through reason, logic, science, language) is the unknowable. His attraction to the religious beliefs of the Orient - especially Buddhism - is consequently not surprising. Oriental religious philosophy, more than the single-minded creeds of the Occident, have always placed a heavy stress on the paradoxical nature of human existence. To get beyond this

paradox (i.e. to transcend dichotomy) is the final aim of eastern religion. The aim is usually realised through an acceptance of the doctrine of "non-attachment": the doctrine which preaches full participation in life without the consequential subjugation impelled by the exactitudes of living. Huxley admires the mystics of the west - personages like William Law, St. Theresa, Boehme - precisely because they, like their eastern counterparts, come to the same conclusion in the matter of resolving the inherent dichotomy of existence. To "find the way of being in this world while not being of it" is Huxley's ultimate answer to the search for integration (MV, p. 175). With this formulation he allies himself with all those thinkers who have eventually come to the conclusion that unless and until man is capable of accepting Reality without becoming a victim of it, man remains pitifully trapped in the web of his own being.

(ix)

The present study was initially prompted by a desire to examine the nature of literary consciousness and social action through an investigation of the work of five writers: William Morris, Samuel Butler, H.G. Wells, Aldous Huxley and C.P. Snow. Preliminary reading, however, very soon diverted attention to Huxley for he, more than any of the others, seemed to exemplify crucially the predilection peculiar to the sensitive and inquiring mind. The fact that his work did not only present an insight into the relationship between literary consciousness and social action but actually highlighted the whole question by manifesting itself at an

intensely personal level lent to it an added fascination and appeal. As if to qualify even more pre-eminently for exclusive focus, Huxley's involvement with Oriental (particularly Indian) philosophy - and its aberrant criticism at the hands of those who had not sufficiently understood it - posed the challenge which had to be met. As the study developed, its present framework began to emerge in a fairly coherent and consistent way.

Of paramount importance, at least for purposes of this thesis, is the understanding that a writer should finally be judged not merely on grounds of his artistic achievement but more importantly, perhaps, from the point of view of his contribution to human sanity. In an age when we are becoming only too accustomed to both the psycho-analytic couch and the violence of misdirection, Huxley's work offers a salutary lesson for those of us who are prepared to learn. He may not be a great artist, he may not even be a very original thinker, but his work incisively highlights some very pertinent problems facing the modern intellectual. A detailed study of the work assists us in understanding better not only his own predicament but also many aspects of the malaise which is behind the modern intellectual's peculiar paralysis of spirit.

One fundamental element constituting human greatness must surely be the integrity with which a man confronts his most basic anxieties. For Huxley, these reside in his search for integration and he confronts them with admirable courage and conviction. It is an understanding of this confrontation, the search, which is central to our estimate of the man. Huxley's writings are mainly evolutionary in nature. Apart, perhaps, from some of the very early poems, each

new book that Huxley writes brings him a little closer to his goal. It will be our task to review this progress and to try to determine the viability of the answers Huxley arrives at.

Interestingly for us, Laura Archera, Huxley's second wife, has published the manuscript of a novel which Huxley was working on before his death in 1963. In this unfinished manuscript, Huxley is still bothered by the question of dichotomy. "Every life," he writes, "is a set of relationships between incompatibles."¹⁹ For a man who is literarily obsessed with the problem of "incompatibles" both life and criticism can be unnecessarily severe. This thesis aims to be neither conclusive nor exhaustive. It is primarily an exploratory study hoping to arrive at a better understanding and interpretation of Huxley's writings. The guiding principle in the thesis is one supplied by Huxley himself. In writing about readers and critics he states

It is foolish as well as ungrateful to criticise an author for what he has failed to achieve. The reader's business is with what the writer has done, not with what he has left undone. (ENO, p. 118)

19. Laura Archera Huxley, This Timeless Moment: A Personal View of Aldous Huxley, London: Chatto & Windus, 1969, p. 213.



CHAPTER 1

THE POETRY

(i)

Aldous Huxley's search for integration seems to have begun early. Like many writers he began his literary career by writing poems. But unlike the poetry of an early Eliot or an early Yeats, Huxley's poetry does not reveal that promise of greatness, that strength and originality of composition which we associate with real poets.¹ Though clever and competently written, with few exceptions, Huxley's poetry shows him in a very imitative light. The poetry, therefore, is mainly of evidential value. It documents interestingly his formative years and offered him a medium through which he could express his changing moods and ideas. In this sense the poetry acts as a safety-valve, a means to articulate the anxieties and misgivings of a sensitive, erudite youth. In quality the poetry is mostly weak and commonplace. It is the ideas in the poetry which concern us. Like most therapeutic verse the poetry provides a crucial index to a troubled, divided, consciousness.

Huxley's first serious excursions into writing took place during the First World War. Unable to enlist because of his near blindness, he seems to have used the opportunity to live the life of a learned poet. But much of his early poetry is steeped in

1. Harold Munro, though, considered Huxley to be "among the most promising of the younger generation of contemporary poets."
See Some Contemporary Poets, London: Leonard Parson, 1920, p. 124.

romantic sentiment and strikes the reader as being manufactured rather than created. Several of the poems reflect a dreamy yearning for the idyllic, though there are a few poems which highlight the here-and-now with all its pain and suffering. It becomes clear that like most young people Huxley is at this youthful stage vacillating between ideal states and real states; not quite knowing how to resolve the differences. In some poems he hints at solutions, but mostly they are not convincing. His conflicts are more eloquent than his syntheses: he appears to relish the tensions.

Huxley's predilections may be explained in part by reference to his personal life and in part to events directly related to the War. As we know (Sybil Bedford, pp. 46-47), his brother Trevenen, to whom Huxley was deeply attached, committed suicide just when the first rumblings of the great War began to sound. The suicide had a profound effect on Huxley; in a letter of August 1914 he wrote to his cousin, Gervas Huxley, that

There is - apart from the sheer grief of the loss - an added pain in the cynicism of the situation. It is just the highest and best in Trev - his ideals - which have driven him to his death - while there are thousands, who shelter their weakness from the same fate by a cynical, unidealistic outlook on life. Trev was not strong, but he had the courage to face life with ideals - and his ideals were too much for him. (Letters, pp. 61-62)

This letter is very revealing. Given the experience, Huxley was already beginning to anatomise the situation, clinically, mentally. His intellect was beginning to get the better of him. In some ways this is not surprising. Within about seven years (between the ages of thirteen and nineteen) Huxley had suffered three very painful experiences: his mother's death by cancer in 1908, the onset of his near-blindness by an attack of keratitis punctata in 1910, and

Trevenen's suicide in 1914. Much of the disturbance found in his work may well be due to this sequence of tragic events. That it should show in his poetry is to be expected; he had not yet gained the maturity to transform the "cynicism" into a creative skepticism. Where, in the poetry, the ideal is juxtaposed with the real, the ideal is usually found wanting. The difficulty provides much of the satiric thrust which makes the early poetry both delightful and limiting.

The War made matters worse. Huxley was cut off from many of his closest friends. This left him in a certain isolation. Books at Oxford provided him with the companionship he humanly lacked. Soon, however, news came of deaths of friends and acquaintances and of the horrible atrocities committed in the glorious name of nationalism. Huxley began to become familiar with twists of fate both at the personal and impersonal level. The immense impact of the War destroyed any remaining belief in the goodness of human nature and in man's capacity to tolerate differences of opinion and ideology. The cynicism which had had its birth in personal experiences was now reinforced by events of an altogether different magnitude.

Huxley's anxiety at this stage is significant for the light it sheds on his subsequent writings. In a letter to his brother Julian dated September 1916 he expresses concern about the more insidious results which threatened to follow from the War: "...we shall have a generation of creatures incapable of thought or of action, victims of the incredible anarchy that others brought about." (Letters, p. 113). We know from Huxley's own novels and from other writers of the period how, for a time, Huxley's fears were uncannily realised.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that when he is beginning to publish his first poems, there should be an uncertainty of direction and response. The private and the public emotions do not tally.

(ii)

The uncertainty and confusion of values of the War period is reflected in its poetry. In England the most popular and celebrated poets at first were Rudyard Kipling, Alfred Noyes and Henry Newbolt, later, Rupert Brooke and Edward Thomas. As C.K. Stead shows in his book The New Poetic,² poets like Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, W.B. Yeats, struggled to survive. As a member of the intellectual vanguard, Huxley was aware of the literary movements of the time. His early poems reveal a marked French influence. Like T.S. Eliot (and others) he turned to Laforgue, Rimbaud, Baudelaire.³

Huxley was also fascinated with the life and work of John Donne. Part of Laforgue's great appeal for him lay in the fact that Laforgue was, in many ways, like Donne. In a letter of October 1915 Huxley says,

I have discovered one of the great poets of modern times...not that he is either great or particularly modern; but let that pass; he is interesting and amusing and intensely young, which is all that matters...and that is a mannikin called Laforgue. A philosophic lyricist; he pleases me by his affinity with Donne, intense intellectuality, intense passion concealed and restrained, intense sadness. (Letters, p. 81).

2. C.K. Stead, The Poetic, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967.

3. Cf. Derek P. Scales, Aldous Huxley and French Literature, Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1969.

If Laforgue's poetry is characterised by a "violent alternation of opposites" (Letters, p. 76), the work of Donne shows a unified sensibility about which Eliot has so astutely written.

The fact that Huxley was strongly drawn towards both Laforgue and Donne is itself telling: like Laforgue Huxley hovers between various alternate states and like Donne he yearns for the integrated state. Huxley's earliest poetry is full of inconsistencies and contradictions.⁴ The abundant presence of ambiguity emphasises only too sharply the problems and paradoxes which engaged Huxley.

Only a few poems during these early years manage to transcend purely personal relevance. Most provide ample evidence of the conflicts raging in Huxley's mind and map the territory which was to concern him all his life. The real versus the ideal; the conflict between love and lust, flesh and spirit; the nostalgia for equilibrium as opposed to continuous hum-drum activity; the quest for beauty and the awareness of an ugly reality: these are just some of the issues which Huxley raises. Given his early inclination towards mysticism - "One cannot escape mysticism; it positively thrusts itself, the only possibility, upon one" (Letter to Julian dated December 1915; Letters, p. 88) - and the bewildering environment which he confronted, it is only natural that his poetry also voices some of the more pertinent problems which he elaborates upon in his later works.

Alexander Henderson, in his study of Huxley's work, made two

4. Charles Holmes, "The Early Poetry of Aldous Huxley," in Aldous Huxley: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Robert E. Kuehn, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1974, pp. 64-80.

interesting observations about Huxley's poetry. First, Henderson noted Huxley's use of scientific knowledge. Huxley's poetry, said Henderson, was "the poetry of a man who is as moved by a scientific idea as by a human emotion."⁵ This is true; in many of his poems Huxley employs scientific imagery for effect. This device, used also by others, for instance, William Empson and Conrad Aiken, relies, however, on a shared understanding of the poetic subject and its diction. The appeal is to the "high-brow,"⁶ those who are well-informed, cultivated and abreast with the latest in scientific and intellectual thought. To the untutored a "shock element" is invariably present and this can both attract and repel. As the "two-culture" controversy pointedly reveals, not everyone who reads poetry appreciates or even understands basic science. (Huxley himself laments the neglect of science among modern poets and contributes his voice to the two-cultures debate in Literature and Science, 1963).

Henderson's second observation was that Huxley, as a poet, was very much like Donne. This is an important comparison. Both Huxley and Donne reveal a remarkable kinship in their commitment to, and at the same time, their detachment from, world affairs. Both poets dramatise their personal problems; both shock their readers; both

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5. Alexander Henderson, Aldous Huxley, London: Chatto & Windus, 1935, p. 225ff.
 6. Maurice Barring defined the "high-brow" as "the people who read Greek for fun and who can write Latin verse as easily as some people can guess crossword puzzles, who remember the history they have read and who can quote Thucydides and Lucretius, and can do a quadratic equation, and addition and subtraction in their heads and can count their change at a booking office." Maurice Barring Restored, ed. Paul Horgan, London: Heinemann, 1970, p. 116.

incorporate contemporary technical knowledge; both appear burdened by contradictory impulses and both strive toward a mystical consummation.

Upon graduating from Oxford in 1916 (with a First in English) Huxley triumphantly writes: "Comparing small things with great, I think I am rather like the incomparable John Donne." (Letters, p. 112). However, where Donne succeeds convincingly in transforming personal images into universal issues and ultimately finds the harmony he craves, Huxley, rarely manages to achieve this. He seems to have been a peculiarly outstanding example of the "dissociation of sensibility" which, according to Eliot, characterises the bulk of poetry written after Donne's age. In so much of Huxley's verse, thought and feeling are not satisfactorily fused; the dissociation becomes emblematic of the personality. The poetry remains narrowly private; though every writer, of course, willy-nilly reflects at least some aspects of the prevalent ethos.

Having sketched, quite summarily some of the background against which Huxley's poetry can be usefully studied and having proffered some generalisations about it, we can now proceed to the poems themselves. In the context of this thesis, one of the most important poems turns out, curiously enough, to be also one of the first that Huxley published. "Home-Sickness" appears in Oxford Poetry 1915, and provides a most interesting antecedent for a study of Huxley's subsequent work.

Frou-Frouery and faint patchouli smells,
 And debile virgins talking Keats,
 And the arch widow in accordion pleats,
 Artfully fringing with the tales she tells
 The giggling prurient.
 Life nauseous! Let the whole crowd be sent

To the chosen limbos and appropriate hells
 Reserved in memory's blackest stagnancy.
 Back, back! No Social Contract! From the teats
 Of our old wolfish mother nature drink
 Sweet unrestraint and lust and savagery.
 Feel goat-hair growing thick and redolent
 On loin and thigh; look back
 And mark the cloven hoof-marks of the track
 You leave, then forward eyes again; no wink,
 Lest for an instant you should miss the sight
 Of moony floating flanks and haunches white
 Flashed by your fleeing nymph girl through the leaves.

The very opening lines of the poem⁷ betray Huxley's tendency to verbalise. The ostentatious and the pompous allusions are characteristic of the early Huxley. The implied disgust is vociferous: "how can the intelligent, cultivated human spirit contend with the gross, animal sensuality of modern society?" The disgust is not merely sexual either; it hints at the anarchy which threatens to destroy culture. The nausea of life; the vulgarity largely centred in women; and the decadent cult of the uncouth which find expression in the poem, are themes which Huxley constantly returns to.

The uncertainty of theme and atmosphere is also significant. The dichotomy between the traditional, puritanical outlook and the apparently modernistic hedonism is not so much explored as hastily dismissed. Though we are urged to lust and savagery, the "goat-hair growing thick and redolent" undermines the urge. Likewise, though the "debile virgins talking Keats" remind us of Eliot's women talking of Michaelangelo, the line does not arouse the contempt which Eliot's calculated rhythm forces us to accord his pretentious sophisticates. Admittedly, the difference is one of quality and not

7. The poem reminds one, for example, of the verse of Norman Lindsay, an avante-garde poet of early twentieth century Australia.

kind. Huxley is clever and uses clever words, but his cleverness fails to convince. This is why the opposition which is erected - that between Culture and Nature, between civilised behaviour and barbaric instinct - does not engage us. Huxley's cultivated intellectualism does not allow Nature's savagery to have any real power. The poem is thus not a very successful realization of his preoccupations, though it does state them.

This inability to dramatise successfully an emotion or an attitude is common in much of Huxley's early verse. It could, perhaps, account for his indefinite position as a poet. And yet, even "Home-Sickness" contains that element of naughty-cheekiness which some readers find attractive in his work. The poem has vigour and a defiant quality which show Huxley's attempt to moralise even if there is no obvious remedial motive. Huxley has not quite decided what, really, is the issue at stake; nor has he decided on how the issue is to be adequately resolved. We get the impression that beneath the lustre of the words and the wry, undergraduate humour, there is a pervasive sense of unease; a feeling that the writer is grappling with something larger than is stated. Huxley's subsequent writings fail to prove otherwise.

(iv)

Huxley's first volume of poems, The Burning Wheel, was published in 1916 by Basil Blackwell in a Series called "Adventurers All, a Series of Young Poets Unknown to Fame." The poems in this first volume hint at several themes he was to explore in the novels.

Among Huxley's major personal, inner, dichotomies is that

between activity and stillness, commitment and withdrawal, action and contemplation. We have earlier noted how, when his heroes achieve integration through mysticism, there is an inclination to opt out of active participation in life and submerge into states of contemplation. Thus to take an early novel as an example to illustrate the point, at the conclusion of Those Barren Leaves (1925) for instance, we are left wondering if Calamy will ever again get involved in the kind of active living from which he has pulled out. We tend to suspect not. This problem is treated in various poems in The Burning Wheel. In "Escape" (Collected Poetry, p. 25) the poet seeks the "quietitude of stones" and a "sleep born of satisfied desires." But "The Choice" (CP, p. 29) rejects such passivity and advocates a more vigorous state. Here the poet wants to lie where "there's noise enough to fill/The outer ear" in order to "shake myself clear/Out of the deep-set grooves/Of my sluggish being."

"Contrary to Nature and Aristotle" (CP, p. 25) candidly admits this dichotomy between activity and passivity as being innate and describes how the two impulses are jointly manifested:

One head of my soul's amphisbaena
Turns to the daytime's dust and sweat;
But evenings come, when I would forget
The sordid strife of the arena.

And then my other self will creep
Along the scented twilight lanes
To where a little house contains
A hoard of books, a gift of sleep.

Its windows throw a friendly light
Between the narrowing shutter slats,
And, golden as the eyes of cats,
Shine me a welcome through the night.

The Grecian reference in the opening stanza emphasises the continuity of the problem of the dual-personality and serves to suggest that the

problem is neither modern nor private. The mythic double-headed serpent looking in both directions simultaneously provides a unique image of the two states Huxley is positing. It also anticipates the Jekyll and Hyde two-in-one type of existence which Huxley advocated at one phase in his career (Cf. Do What You Will, 1929, pp. 226-227). The poem almost gives away the central plot of "The Farcical History of Richard Greenow" (Limbo, 1920) where the protagonist, Greenow, is caught up with routine work in the day time and mysteriously writes popular novels at night. Just as there is the impression that the poet here welcomes the "hoard of books, a gift of sleep" which come to him at night, so in the later story Richard Greenow is initially glad to be taken over by his alter-ego Pearl Bellairs. In both there is a strong hint that the self prefers to be passive; to be acted upon rather than to act. However, as the story shows, but the poem does not, such preference can only bring at most a temporary peace. The title of the poem is puzzling: are we to take it that Aristotle, represented by the "dust and sweat" is counteracted by Nature's "scented twilight lanes" which lead to sleep? Is it an opposition between Aristotelian extremes and means? The contrariety suggested is not sufficiently elaborated; we do not really know what it is that is contrary to both Nature and Aristotle.

More successfully, "The Burning Wheel" (CP, pp. 15-16) attempts to portray the complexity inherent in the paradox of stillness-in-activity and activity-in-stillness. The poem is one of the few that relate themselves to the world at large. The opening lines describe the craving for peace which the prevalent mood evoked without any direct reference to the War:

Wearied of its own turning,
 Distressed with its own busy restlessness,
 Yearning to draw the circumferent pain -
 The rim that is dizzy with speed -
 To the motionless centre, there to rest,
 The wheel must strain through agony
 On agony contracting, returning
 Into the core of steel.

The wheel of steel is a startling symbol in the context. It combines the familiar mythico-religious overtones (the wheel as the Wheel of Fortune) with the invention that inaugurated the technological revolution (the wheel as a symbol of progress). Huxley must have been conscious of the multi-layered meaning of the symbol he had used. At one level the wheel represents man's longing for the mandalic "oneness" and for the grasp of the mystery of life. It suggests man's desire to come to peace within himself. At another level it alludes to man's ability to shape his environment with the implements of his own making. Wrought into the symbolism, however, is the suggestion that the wheel has to come full circle: that man cannot check the tide of time. The opening passage with its weighty, dragging words ("Wearied," "distressed," "yearning") produces almost the literal strain in which the wheel is engaged in its quest for stillness.

But this quest for stillness, this strife of the turning wheel to come to rest is frustrated by the ceaseless flux of activity:

the yearning atoms, as they grind
 Closer and closer, more and more
 Fiercely together, beget
 A flaming fire upward leaping,
 Billowing out in a burning,
 Passionate, fierce desire to find
 The infinite calm of the mother's breast.

Only for a few brief moments is "All bitterness lost in the infinite/
 Peace of the mother's bosom." The achieved state of peace (symbolised

by the flame sleeping like Christ) has to contend with death which comes "creeping in a tide/Of slow oblivion." If man remains oblivious of his environment for too long, he suffers a kind of oblivion, a death which cuts him off from everything around him. If the flame does not move, if it is not activated, it will go out; and so, out of fear of its own death, it "Wakes from the sleep of its quiet brightness/And burns with a darkening passion and pain." And the wheel begins its journey once more; once again yearning for the tranquillity of stillness.

"The Burning Wheel" provides Huxley with a powerful metaphor for the search for integration. The poem dramatises an eternal clash of values: between what Patrick White in our own time has so aptly termed "the fiend of motion" and "the nostalgia for permanence."⁸ It encapsulates the realisation that life is an endless cycle of births, deaths and re-births. In Eliot's Four Quartets the peace of "the still point of the turning world" - that state of an integrated existence - is reserved for the saints; ordinary human beings have to be content with "the unattended moment/The moment in and out of time." Huxley yearns for the peace of the integrated state, but realises that it could be self-consuming. Like the "mole-soul" of "Mole" (CP, pp. 17-19) which "tunnels on through ages of oblivion" to find that the beauty which he discovers can only be momentarily enjoyed because beauty belongs to a world which is unnatural to his own survival, so the wheel must continuously turn and turn lest it cease altogether. Man, Huxley seems to be implying,

8. Patrick White, The Tree of Man, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961, pp. 13-14.

cannot remain in a state of prolonged passivity without becoming hopelessly inert. Like the burning wheel man is caught in the strife between activity and stillness. The knowledge that the conflict cannot be successfully resolved heightens the attendant restlessness.

"The Burning Wheel" in several ways captures the emotional atmosphere of the War years when men, involved in ceaseless activity, longed for the tranquillity of undisturbed existence. More importantly, it relates very directly to Huxley's own search for integration, and looks forward to the mystic or pseudo-mystic position which he came to adopt in his later years. The symbolism of the "burning wheel" and the struggle it represents achieves a fuller meaning in the later novels where the protagonists are engaged in a ceaseless pursuit of harmony both within themselves and within the world. In this respect it is interesting to observe that "The Burning Wheel" stands out as a rather odd poem in Huxley's first collection for it differs markedly from the rest of the poems, particularly in its seriousness of tone. Most of the other poems strike one as being light-hearted; poetic exercises for the restless intellect rather than serious treatments of themes dear to Huxley's heart.

One other poem that merits attention in The Burning Wheel is that entitled "Two Realities" (CP, p. 20):

A yellow wagon passed with scarlet wheels
 And a yellow body, shining new.
 "Splendid!" said I. "How fine it feels
 To be alive, when beauty peels
 The grimy husk from life." And you

Said, "Splendid!" and I thought you'd seen
 That waggon blazing down the street;
 But I looked and saw that your gaze had been
 On a child that was kicking an obscene
 Brown ordure with his feet.

Our souls are elephants, thought I,
 Remote behind a prisoning grill,
 With trunks thrust out to peer and pry
 And pounce upon reality;
 And each at his own sweet will

Seizes the bun that he likes the best
 And passes over all the rest.

We have seen how dichotomy can exist at two inter-related though distinct levels. At one level the disharmony is within ourselves; at another level it exists between us and our relationship to our surroundings. "Two Realities" though commonplace, highlights this latter type of dichotomy - that which proves problematic because reality is not as we imagine it to be. The poet's attempt to share his joy at watching the yellow waggon passing by is frustrated because his companion responds to an entirely different action - that of a child kicking away at some excreta. The failure of communication between the two persons in the poem reiterates the alienation between the man and the woman of another poem (Cf. "The Walk," CP, pp. 34-38). Huxley is recognising the possibility of different perspectives; but not those which accentuate failures of relationships. Undesired perspectives arise not out of a wish to express an essentially selfish viewpoint. In "Two Realities" this basically selfish nature of human beings is given its beastly symbol in elephants, anticipating his late habit of zoologising human beings. The schism between self and the other becomes especially powerful when the other happens to be one's companion.

Talking at cross purposes is a device that Huxley uses very

effectively in his novels. In Crome Yellow (1922), and After Many A Summer (1939), for example, breakdown in communications accounts for much of the irony and comic satire. Huxley is conscious that polite replies with no real intention to communicate obscure genuine exchanges between human beings. Avarice, the selfish aim to set oneself above others, to grind one's personal axe, disturbs Huxley, for how can relationships harmonise if one party is continuously missing the other's point? The conclusion of the sonnet "If that a sparkle of true sunshine be" (CP, p. 30) juxtaposing the ridiculous with the sublime sums up the hiatus aptly;

Souls have been drowned between heart's beat and beat,
And trapped and tangled in a woman's hair.

The dichotomy between self and others, reality and appearance, is yet to achieve a synthesis.

And yet we may be excused if we pointed a finger at the poet of "Two Realities," for part of the problem, surely, is the vagueness of what is communicated. In the poem, the poet's words "How fine it feels/To be alive; when beauty peels/The grimy husk from life" hardly indicate to his listener the object of his own delight. His fault was to take for granted that his companion would be seeing what he was seeing. This is, admittedly, a small point but often the lack of specification and clarification accounts for much of the barriers that are erected between self and others. As we shall see, the characters in Huxley's novels constantly talk at a tangent precisely because what is being talked about is not made sufficiently clear.

Other poems in The Burning Wheel treat a variety of themes which Huxley takes up again in his more mature work. "The Ideal

"Found Wanting" (CP, p. 27) records a loud dissatisfaction with the conformity and mindless superficiality of worldly life. "Damn the whole crowd of you! I hate you all" says Huxley, only to realise that he is not exempt from the rebuke either. A cynical juxtapositioning of secular with religious considerations underwriting the dichotomy between world indulgence and spiritual transcendence finds its presence in "The Doors of the Temple" (CP, p. 16). In "Darkness" (CP, p. 17) the poet confesses that his soul has never known the presence of God but was intimately familiar with "the many twisted darkneses/That range the city to and fro." This poem seems to be a variation of the theme "God made the Country and man made the town," for it serves as a brutal reminder of the many vices which civilisation has to offer, and documents a romantic longing to find acceptable answers to the riddles of life. Huxley seems to be constantly plagued by the clash between the ordinary, earthly comprehension of life (Knowledge) and the higher, mystical insight which brings contentment from an intuitive illumination (Understanding). That is, perhaps, in some ways the ultimate dichotomy: how to reconcile knowledge with understanding?

The poetry hints at Huxley's awareness of the problem but does not seem to offer any viable solutions. Huxley felt profoundly unhappy with most of the poems in The Burning Wheel stating that reading the book was for him "like going through my own private Morgue where every alcove is occupied by a corpse of myself. And that's only the corpse which could be showed in public." (Letters, p. 112). This revealing confession speaks of the slightness of these early poems. They are elegant and polished, but too much

wrought with a desire to arrest rather than explore, state rather comprehend, know rather than understand.

(v)

By the time he published The Defeat of Youth and Other Poems (1918), Huxley had formed an opinion about what poetry ought to be. Towards the close of 1917, Huxley is writing to his father:

I find that more and more I am unsatisfied with what is merely personal in poetry. What one wants, it seems to me, is this: first, to receive one's impressions of outward things, then to form one's thoughts and judgements about them, and last to re-objectify those thoughts and judgements in a new world of fancy and imagination.
(Letters, p. 137)

This formulation, though apparently utilising what Eliot had said in his theory of the poet's impersonality, is still interesting for the aim which Huxley wants to realise in his own poetry. He strives to attain this goal but we find his imagination continuously impeded by his intellect,⁹ and the chief weakness discerned in The Burning Wheel, namely the inability to transcend the personal relevance, manifests itself again in The Defeat of Youth.

Though Huxley makes no radical shifts from the postures adopted in The Burning Wheel, some of the poems in The Defeat of Youth, while illustrating his continuing struggle with the nature of a dichotomous existence, qualify this struggle by recognising new factors. Many of the poems in this volume critically probe the multi-faceted

9. Virginia Woolf, in reviewing The Defeat of Youth and Other Poems stated that Huxley "is better equipped with the vocabulary of a poet than with the inspiration of a poet." Watt, p. 39.

natures of love and lust. Thus, in "The Alien" (CP, pp. 60-61) Huxley says that lust is love's twin-brother; that the opposition between lust and love stems from within us.

We seemed alone: but another
Bent o'er you with lips of flame,
Unknown, without a name,
Hated, and yet my brother.

Love and lust are hard to distinguish. As Anthony Beavis, the tortured hero of Eyeless in Gaza discovers, the borderline between pure love and perverse longings is very elusive.

Perhaps the love-lust dichotomy is an artificial one. In Huxleyean terms lust is an end in itself; it can serve no good. Love, on the other hand, opens possibilities for a more complete and wholesome understanding of reality. Even if the object of love is corrupt, love has the power to effect good. Huxley treats this theme at length in The Genius and the Goddess (1955) but "Relevation" (CP, p. 66) documents an early poetic statement:

At your mouth, white and milk-warm sphinx,
I taste a strange apocalypse:
Your subtle taper finger-tips
Weave me new heavens, yet, methinks,
I know the wiles and each iynx
That brought me passionate to your lips:
I know you bare as laughter strips
Your charnel beauty; yet my spirit drinks

Pure knowledge from this tainted well,
And now hears voices yet unheard
Within it, and without it sees
That world of which the poets tell
Their vision in the stammered word
Of those that wake from piercing ecstasies.

Love, therefore, opens the gates for a newer, fuller, understanding of life. Opposed to this is the theory that love can also bind and enslave the lovers. "Love is infinite discontent/With the poor lonely

life of transient things." Huxley tells us in another poem (CP, p. 42).

Only a metaphysical theory about the universe seems to resolve this conflict:

One spirit proceeds
Through change, the same in body and soul -
The spirit of life and love that triumphs still
In its slow struggle towards some far-off goal
Through lust and death and bitterness of will. (CP, p. 42)

Though the "one spirit" has to contend with "lust and death and bitterness of will," its eventual triumph is a guarantee of hope. In "Sonnet V" we are told how the "one spirit" helps to untie apparent opposites:

the soul is wrought
Of one stuff with the body - matter and mind
Woven together in so close a mesh
That flowers may blossom into a song, that flesh
May strangely teach the loveliest holiest things
To watching spirits. (CP, p. 43)

And even if the "one spirit" is only a metaphysical hypothesis (we recall the Shelley of "Adonais"), Huxley insists that

Truth is brought to birth
Not in some vacant heaven: its beauty springs
From the dear bosom of material earth. (CP, p. 43)

Despite the insistence, however, we feel on reading the whole of the opening sequence of Sonnets in The Defeat of Youth that Huxley is not really discovering any solutions to his problems. Rather his probings yield newer dichotomies; or at least new factors which complicate the dichotomies already discovered. Thus the tensions induced by pain and joy, love and lust, duty and desire, speech and silence intensify the need for peace and integration. He searches for a place "beyond the laughter and weeping/That brood

like a cloud on the lands of man." (CP, p. 53). In this ideal place, envisioned as a reef,

the body shall be
Quick as the mind; and we shall find release
From bondage to brute things; and joyously
Soul, will and body, in the strength of triune peace,
Shall live the perfect grace of power unwasted. (CP, p. 53)

And yet, even as he is idealising the "strength of triune peace" we realise how the conflict between love and lust is beginning to take on added significance. Lust is tied up with "brute things" whereas love, by implication, is a release from these. Huxley seems to be building up a vast theory about love and lust in terms of materialism versus spirituality. But the "magical reef" remains distant, inhabiting the realms of fancy rather than imagination. Though the final state of integration of "soul, will and body" is conceptualised, it is not convincingly dramatised; we remain skeptical of this intellectual hypothesis. In his last novel, Island, Huxley returns to this idea and actually attempts to show how soul, will and body can function harmoniously.

The poems in The Defeat of Youth which deal with Huxley's desire to escape the harsh realities of the world re-introduce the familiar dichotomy of commitment and withdrawal. Interestingly, in "Stanzas" (CP, pp. 72-73) the intellect is castigated for making a slave of the human spirit and inhibiting its freedom. For someone as intent on intellectual pursuits as Huxley to adopt such an attitude indicates mistrust of his own situation. So he wishes he were a "pure angel" so that eventually, "Beyond all thought, past action and past words, / I would live in beauty, free from self and pain." This, we remember, is what the "burning wheel" longed for

too; the desire to achieve the peace of the saints. Huxley develops and elaborates this withdrawal theme in his well-known theory of non-attachment (taken from Buddhism) which he postulates in The Perennial Philosophy (1946). Whereas in the poems the craving for withdrawal is not much more than a wishful and romanticised longing for escape, in the more thorough theory of the perennial philosophy it becomes a way of living in this world without becoming weary of it.

The poems dealing with escape generally reveal uncertainty of purpose and direction. Most of them seem to be derivative, particularly of the romantic poets. The lack of authenticity in the poems confirms the suspicion that Huxley is not as yet able to convert, successfully, an intellectual idea into genuinely realised emotion. He several times confessed that his life was chiefly one of intellectual preoccupations. Writing to a couple in 1942, he stated:

My life has been uneventful, and I can speak only in terms of being and becoming, not of doing and happening. I am an intellectual with a certain gift for literary art, physically delicate, without very strong emotions, not much interested in practical activity and impatient of routine. I am not very sociable and am always glad to return to solitude and the freedom that goes with solitude. This desire for freedom and solitude has led not only to a consistent effort to avoid situations in which I would be under the control of other people, but also to an indifference to the satisfaction of power and position, things which impose a servitude of business and responsibility. (Letters, p. 473)

And in Point Counter Point (1928) the portrait of Philip Quarles is a fairly accurate description of Huxley himself. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the early poetry we should find so much indecision with regard to the subject of participation in worldly

affairs. "The Life Theoretic" (CP, p. 69) is an early admission that compared to other young men of his age (who were either struggling to live or enjoying the charms of women) Huxley is content to be merely thinking. This disdain for practical activity shows itself again in "Topiary" (CP, p. 70). Here the disdain turns almost into contempt when Huxley sees no reason why the earth should be inhabited by so many ugly people. His response to the situation is to be

a fabulous thing in a fool's mind,
Or, at the ocean bottom, in a world that is deaf and blind,
Very remote and happy, a great goggling fish.

The comfort obtained by becoming a "great goggling fish" is the satirist's answer to a universe which prohibits composite understanding. The stance is to create distance between self and others and to rationalise one's non-participation in the activities of those around. "Others" are seen to be merely foolish or unnecessarily irksome; and one's disdain seems justified by the superiority of one's own situation. The result is the brash young man writing verses for his own delectation; one who has not had time to be mellowed by experience.

Can the answer to a mind riddled with these over-whelming problems of existence (for the very persistence and consistency with which Huxley writes about the problem leaves little doubt it troubles him) be a projection of its own ideal onto reality? Not, however, by refusing to acknowledge existing reality (like the woman in the poem "The Walk," CP, pp. 34-38) but by a more rigorous process of making oneself the centre of all activity. In "Scenes of the Mind" (CP, pp. 74-75) Huxley assumes a god-like posture:

Inhabitants of mine own thought,
 I look abroad, and all I see
 Is my creation, made for me;
 Along my thread of life are pearled
 The moments that make up the world.

In a satiric vein, Huxley can claim that reality is self-created. This allows him to say that he has seen all there is to see and knows all there is to know. "I have seen God in the cataract" he declares. But how serious is this new-found pantheism? Has it been a genuine conversion or is Huxley merely toying with yet another intellectual pose he may have picked up through reading Wordsworth, among others? The question is important and is probably confirmed by Huxley's vagueness and lack of clarity (as revealed in his poetry) about his own self and about the world. The only definite attitude at this stage appears to be Prufrockian: hesitant, undecided and pseudo-philosophic:

And life recedes, recedes; the curve is bare,
 My handkerchief flutters blankly in the air;
 And the question rumbles in the void:
 Was she aware, was she after all aware? (CP, p. 64)

(vi)

If The Defeat of Youth does not give any serious indication as to the direction Huxley is taking in his search for integration, the next collection of poems, Leda (1920), contributes little to improve the situation. Leda, once again emphasises Huxley's continuing involvement with the questions he has raised in the earlier volumes. It may be that he has enmeshed himself in the traps of wanting to seek a solution to problems which were fundamentally beyond satisfactory solution. In Leda Huxley's treatment

of his subject matter becomes more ironic and sometimes betrays a playful self-mockery. But irony also reveals a deep perturbation which Huxley's sensitivity finds hard to conceal. Leda presents a disturbed personality; but one seething with a dubious energy at wanting to posit an order on to the universe.

The title-poem of the collection (CP, pp. 83-98) retells the ancient myth with the stress laid on the events leading to Leda's rape rather than the rape itself. Good and evil are counterpoised but the implication is that Leda (symbol of Good) willingly chooses to embrace Jove (symbol of Evil) because she is vulnerable to pity - the emotion Jove has cunningly aroused in her by his plotting. By her unthinking sensuous caresses Leda encourages Jove in his evil intentions:

Couched on the flowery ground
 Young Leda lay, and to her side did press
 The swan's proud-arching opulent loveliness,
 Stroking the snow-soft plumage of his breast
 With fingers slowly drawn, themselves caressed
 By the warm softness where they lingered, loth
 To break away.

Huxley seems to be saying that there is an inherent susceptibility in human nature itself; that in our good-naturedness we fall victims of evil. (Coleridge makes a similar comment in "Christabel" where Geraldine is able to seduce the innocent Christabel because of the latter's vulnerability to pity). It would appear that evil has within it an aspect that appeals irresistibly to the good. Through re-enacting the Leda-myth Huxley probes the dichotomy of good and evil in a complex way, but, unfortunately, suggests no synthesis. For the moment, an important lesson to be derived from the myth lay

in Jove's plotting to achieve his goal. The end was important but the means adopted (i.e. Jove's appeal to Leda's complexion) shed perhaps, more light on the governing impulse. Though Leda is implicated, she is the innocent sufferer whose goodness has been cunningly exploited by the lusty Jove. The poem is, from this point of view, a dramatisation of ends and means. For Huxley "the means employed determine the nature of the ends produced" (EM, p. 9). Thus, corrupt means beget corrupt ends; no amount of rationalising can excuse Jove his grossness. But the poem is a sober warning that good can be, and frequently is, weak and vulnerable.

Most of the other poems in Leda, while being entertaining enough, do not appear to develop Huxley's quest for identity any further than the previous poems. The "First Philosopher's Song" (CP, p. 105), for instance, contrasts men with apes and states that "Mind fabulous, mind sublime and free!" is man's big advantage over apes. Nevertheless Huxley admits the continuity of evolution because the "Mind issued from the monkey's womb." In the novels Huxley focusses his attention quite centrally on this man-animal dichotomy, exploring its many ramifications as manifested particularly in the clash between man-reason and animal-instinct. The famous "Fifth Philosopher's Song" (CP, p. 106), however, satirises the theory of evolution and suggests that inferior human beings who somehow triumph in the battle of survival ought, in self-disgrace, to be dead. The "Second Philosopher's Song" (CP, p. 106) takes as its gospel Pliny's assertion that in drowning a man faces upwards and a woman downwards. Thus, a woman committing suicide would leave

men to "weep upon your hinder parts." The discrepancy leads Huxley to make a ridiculous Panglossian comment:

'Tis the Lord's doing. Marvellous is the plan
By which this best of worlds is wisely planned.
One law He made for woman, one for man:
We bow the head and do not understand.

While Voltaire may have enjoyed the dart let off in his memory, the poem (with its ugly rhyme) does precious little to enhance any new point of view.

Again and again Huxley appears to be satirising without effect. Thus God is mocked in the "Ninth Philosopher's Song" (CP, p. 107), religion in "Jonah" (CP, 102), love in "Male and Female Created He Them" (CP, pp. 100-101) and the mediocrity and fragmentary nature of contemporary existence in "Soles Occidere Et Redire Possunt" (CP, pp. 110-127). The laconic tone, the uneven quality of the writing, and the marked uncertainty of attitude suggest that Huxley has not made much progress since The Burning Wheel. It is not to be wondered at that when Huxley showed Leda to Eliot for an opinion, Eliot could not offer much enthusiasm in response to the poetry. (Memorial Volume, p. 30). Apart from the title-poem and one or two of the "Philosopher's Songs" there is really little in the book that merits serious attention.

(vii)

In 1931 Huxley published his final volume of poetry. The Cicadas and Other Poems came after Huxley had received recognition as a novelist and essayist of stature. Regrettably, the poems in this last volume do not reflect the kind of development which we may

rightly expect from a writer growing into full maturity. It can be safely assumed that for Huxley poetry did serve mainly as a safety-valve; allowing him to articulate his moods and conflicts as and when this became necessary. The fact that the years 1916-1920 were his most prolific in poetic output indicates the extent to which Huxley was at this time undergoing a crisis of direction. He sought for a solution to the apparent inconsistencies he found rampant both within and without but to little avail. By and large the poetry remains mainly tentative, verging even on the farcical, though it very importantly records the many alternations he underwent. However, though he did not publish any more poetry after 1931, it is interesting to observe that his novels like Peacock's (even up to the last, Island in 1962), usually contain verses written with the same clever charm we associate with the earlier poetry. It is evident that after 1931 Huxley had become too much a man of the world to devote himself to the exacting task of poetry with the passion which the form demanded.¹⁰ Also, one suspects, that by this time he had probably realised that his true creative forte was not really poetry but a special type of prose fiction - a genre in which he had been acclaimed. Bedford even goes so far as to say that "Leda in a sense was the last of Aldous as a poet." (Bedford, p. 111).

The final collection of Huxley's poetry is very uneven. Some of the poems still deal with issues which by now are only too

10. Cf. Doris N. Dalglish, "Aldous Huxley's Poetry," London Mercury, Volume 38, September 1938, pp. 437-444.

familiarly his; others, a few, hint at changing perspectives. "Theatre of Varieties" (CP, pp. 131-134) catalogues a table of "sins" which Huxley associates with progress. No dichotomy is actually postulated but we seem to get the impression that Huxley prefers the less boisterous, more orderly world of aristocratic, Victorian England with its standards of decency, good manners and good taste. In many of the poems in The Cicadas, Huxley's search for integration seems to take on a veneer of impatience; he cannot stand the hypocrisy and meaninglessness of modern life and is frustrated by the lack of a moral centre. Like Yeats and Eliot, Huxley is convinced that things are falling apart in the wasteland of contemporary civilisation. From his novels of the decade between Leda and The Cicadas we know how he has tried to find a viable means of coping with modern existence without loss of personal integrity; but the task is an onerous one.

A note of nostalgia, therefore, is struck in the poem "Arabia Infelix" (CP, pp. 143-145) where Huxley laments the past which, though full of pain and suffering, was nevertheless alive with activity:

Faithless the cloud and fugitive;
An empty heaven nor burns, nor wets;
At peace, the barren land regrets
Those agonies that made it live.

'Empty heaven' echoes the 'vacant heaven' of Sonnet V in The Defeat of Youth. But in the earlier poem the vacant heaven was compensated for by 'material earth' whereas now even the land is 'barren.' The pathos is reflective of Huxley's painful consciousness that his search has not proved fruitful. He has all along been

tirelessly trying to get away from those agonies which life comprises. Now, however, the agonies are not juxtaposed with escape but with a senselessness which he finds has become the key-note of modern civilisation. In the face of sham and superficiality and boredom (vividly dramatised in several scenes in Antic Hay, for example), any form of activity which confirms man's integrity - such as suffering - is to be welcomed.

Several poems in The Cicadas strike a morose, introspective, note where Huxley seems to be searching within himself for a possible answer to his distress. In "Mediterranean" (CP, p. 155) for instance, Huxley craves for a rescue from the "world of mud" to which his thoughts condemn him:

Oh deliver me
From this defiling death! Moon of the soul,
Call back the tide that ran so strong and deep;
Call back the shining jewel of the sea.

It is a moving poem, a protest against the sterility of life which swarms the poet's imagination and deadens the vitality which once was his. The agonising cry for delivery from the abyss of hopelessness underlines the extent to which the poet has sunk into the "black and hideous shoal" of aridity. And so, while poems like "September" (CP, pp. 153-154), and "Seasons" (CP, p. 154) suggest a kind of positive coming to terms with the burdens of living in a world which has lost the capacity to make one feel wanted and comfortable, the general mood of most of the poems seems to be one of resignation or despair. Huxley feels he has to accept life as it comes or put up his hands in angry impatience.

In the final analysis what one makes of one's life is one's own

decision. The poem "Orion" (CP, pp. 148-152), firmly states that "The choice is ours, the choice is always ours/To see or not to see the living powers/That move behind the numbered parts and times." The individual, therefore, has to make up his or her mind about the state of his existence. "Orion" is a noteworthy poem because in it Huxley shifts the emphasis from what had previously seemed a given state of affairs to man himself. Chance, circumstances and life can only be blamed if one remains blind to the crucial fact of choice; once we make a choice then we have only ourselves to account for. Bravely Huxley asserts:

The choice is always ours. Then, let me choose
 The longest art, the hard Promethean way
 Cherishingly to tend and feed and fan
 That inward fire, whose small precarious flame,
 Kindled or quenched, creates
 The noble or the ignoble men we are,
 The worlds we live in and the very fates,
 Our bright or muddy star.

"The hard Promethean way": the reference is telling. Prometheus, who made men out of clay and stole fire from the gods for human benefit and taught men many skills, had to suffer a prolonged penance for what he did. The Promethean way is hard indeed but it is noble and full of dignity. That Huxley should opt for this long route to self-realisation and affirm the primacy of the human spirit is a most refreshing step in his poetry. Though the "inward fire" with its small precarious flame" reminds us of "The Burning Wheel" in his first collection of poems, we know Huxley has come a long way from the time he constantly doubted himself and could not make up his mind or even assign to it any great importance apart from its intellectual prowess. Though tending to be a sermon, "Orion" marks

a landmark in Huxley's search for integration. By concentrating on the sovereignty of human choice he offers one possible method of arriving at a successful synthesis of life's numerous dichotomies.

One such successful synthesis is provided for in what must be considered the best poem in this last collection of Huxley's verse. "The Cicadas" (CP, pp. 163-165) is Huxley's final poetic testimony. After all the years of turbulent searching he has at last achieved wisdom:

Clueless we go; but I have heard thy voice,
Divine Unreason! harping in the leaves,
And grieve no more; for wisdom never grieves,
And thou has taught me wisdom; I rejoice.

This joyous endorsement of life, attained after a difficult internal struggle and tireless questioning, is born out of suffering poignantly described in the poem. Hearing the shrill cries of the "unseen people of the cicadas," the poet reflects on his own life:

I hear them sing, who in the double night
Of clouds and branches, fancied that I went
Through my own spirit's dark discouragement,
Deprived of inward as of outward sight:

Who, seeking, even as here in the wild wood,
A lamp to beckon through my tangled fate,
Found only darkness and, disconsolate,
Mourned the lost purpose and the vanished good.

Now in my empty heart the cricket's shout
Re-echoing denies and still denies
With stubborn folly all my learned doubt,
In madness more than I in reason wise.

Sybil Bedford has commented that this "serene and luminous" poem is, perhaps, the finest poem that Huxley ever wrote. (Bedford, p. 220). In it he courageously takes stock of his life. The spirit which moves the poem is gently religious, worthy of devotionals. Touchingly Huxley reminds us that life is a hard

taskmaster and that we are ultimately alone in our human endeavour - without guidance, without assistance:

Time passes, and the watery moon-rise peers
Between the tree-trunks. But no outer light
Tempers the chances of our groping years,
No moon beyond our labrinthine night.

Huxley's farewell to poetry is thus graciously and assiduously made.

(viii)

A reading of "The Cicadas" may bring to mind the philosophy of some existentialists. They, too, believe that man is inevitably alone and has to decide on his own destiny. In the famous dictum of Sartre, man is condemned to be free. But where the existentialist often tends to adopt a nihilistic attitude, preferring to forge through life without too much regard for its sanctity, the creative skeptic, like Huxley, battles with his loneliness in order to transcend it through an acceptable synthesis. Where the existentialist projects a meaning for his existence by paradoxically negating its essence, the creative skeptic attempts to resolve paradox by striving for integration. Huxley recognises the deep schism between essence and existence but instead of trying to predicate one to the other (essence to existence) seeks a way to reconcile the dichotomy. It is in this struggle to achieve reconciliation of various dichotomies that the relevance of Huxley's poetry lies.

The final resolution (as evidenced particularly in "The Cicadas" and "Orion") that Huxley seems to have arrived at, though marking a significant step in his over-all search for integration, is, as far as the poetry is concerned, perhaps less important than

the process which leads to this resolution. The chief value of the poetry resides less in its intrinsic strength as in its portrayal of the many dichotomies with which Huxley wrestles before coming to a final statement. On the whole the impression made by a thorough reading of the poems is that Huxley's response to the many problems of existence is not a happy one.¹¹ The collected poetry reads like an odyssey of a man seriously burdened by an overwhelming inner-conflict which prevents his full participation in life.

The crux of the inner-conflict seems to reside in his ability to reconcile his cultured, educated self with the meaninglessness around him. He is constantly longing to get out of culture (of which there is an overload) and into life (which is disruptive); but is hopelessly terrified by the vulgarity. Only the vulgar, the "low-brow" seem to lead authentic lives, but the recognition of this fact disgusts the cultured mind. In a curious fashion, he appears to have inherited his maternal uncle's dilemma: how is Culture to cope with Anarchy? For Arnold, the problem was external to himself; how was England to be saved from the blight of philistinism? For Huxley, the problem is internal; how is he going to transcend the limitations imposed on him by his intellectual superiority and find a means of self involvement with the larger world.

Thus his poetry remains essentially private, even if on occasion it reflects a more general ethos. We had to grant that many of the poems are very competently written and are always readable; a few

11. Cf. Philip Bethell, "The Philosophy in the Poetry of Aldous Huxley," Poetry Review, Volume 24, September 1933, pp. 359-368.

are undoubtedly good. Richard Church writes that to the many qualities Huxley inherited from his illustrious family, he added "a cleanly detached craving for command of the magic of words; the aspiration of a poet." (CP, p. 7). Even if this "magic of words" is displayed only infrequently (as in "The Cicadas," parts of "Leda," some of the sonnets) Huxley's poetry still allows him to criticise several aspects of contemporary existence and, most especially, provides him with a means to voice his own dilemma.

CHAPTER 2

THE SHORTER FICTION

(i)

Nearly all of Huxley's shorter fiction (short stories and novelle) was written in the first one-and-a-half decades of his career. Like the poetry, the stories deal with themes with which he is centrally preoccupied. Unlike the poetry, the stories allow him more room to explore these themes. Where the majority of the poems only state the conflicts which trouble him, in the stories an attempt is made to dramatise these conflicts. The stories relate to reality in a less abstract manner because here we are shown - not merely told - what the lack of integration entails. The various dichotomies with which the stories are concerned are more fully treated, their implications more appreciably demonstrated, and generally there is less of the obvious striving-after-effect which characterises much of the poetry. It begins to become increasingly clear that prose suits Huxley's purpose better than poetry because it gives him scope to test the nature of the dichotomies he writes about within a wider frame of reference. The stories extend an essentially private problem into a social one. It is interesting to study this attempt to become more representative as it helps us to understand better why he both succeeds and fails to capture the public imagination. By attempting to relate his own search for integration to the general conditions of the period Huxley attempts

both to comprehend the private/public dichotomy which plagues him and to find ways and means of solving this problem.

As he surveys a slightly larger slice of life in his stories so we notice Huxley becoming less imitative of other writers. The stories, unlike the poetry, show little sign of direct influence of the major contemporary writers of his time. Huxley's stories are quite different from those of Joyce, Lawrence, Woolf, Forster, Mansfield. An important feature is that the stories are usually not satisfactory aesthetic wholes; they lack the compactness and complexity which characterise those of these other writers. For Huxley the tales act chiefly as a means to continue his search for integration. They serve him better than the poetry, but still do not reflect enough concern with societal issues, though aspects of society are invariably present.

But consistently Huxley appears to need to convince himself that what troubles him troubles others too. While it may be said that several other writers also suffer from a similar need, with Huxley it tends to become an obsession. The personal problem becomes magnified, frequently colouring his perception of reality. This concern to project his own problem onto the world possibly explains, to a large extent, why his stories do not satisfy readers as much as they should. Too much of the author's own presence inhibits a full dramatisation of the conflicts he is probing. Because of his total involvement with the stories, he fails to prune them of the clever, but unnecessary, digressions for which he has such facility. As a result many of the stories become extended anecdotes. The

author's habit of making his stories into sermons - a habit which appears to spring from a deep-seated inner imbalance - spoils the reader's pleasure. This is a weakness, and an unfortunate one. Not being able to participate more whole-heartedly in life, Huxley seems to be compensating by an excessive self-consciousness.

And yet the popularity of his short-story collections (and the sales figures) suggests that the stories contain elements which interest the public. We can easily appreciate the charm of the narrative and the author's ingenuity in plots and characters. There is an imaginative inventiveness which captivates readers by its provocative and entertaining rendering of situations. There is frequently the deliberate tease-and-shock tactic which many readers find appealing. And there is, of course, the topicality of the subject-matter. This last often secures for him the avant-garde, high-brow audience for whom he has an irresistible appeal. The new, university-educated, fashionable intelligentsia which emerged at the end of the War, perpetually found in the stories not only echoes of their own situation but also the same sense of disease which he so acutely analyses and parodies. Though he is chiefly concerned with his own problems, these are universal enough to engage anyone's attention for some time at least. Often the stories revolve around incidents that have been inflated in order to expose some unsavoury aspect of human nature and existence. In trying to locate an acceptable mean between two extremes Huxley frequently exaggerates and even distorts reality. And because the golden mean, the acceptable synthesis, is remote, much of Huxley's energy and skill is taken up by exposing and satirising the shortcomings of human

nature and various human institutions. His gnawing impatience with his own discomfort and insecurity becomes an excuse to ridicule the outside world.

But Huxley possesses an extraordinary ability to create the exact social decor and moral tone of the contemporary period in which his stories are set. This skill, quite incidental to his essential purpose, gives us an invaluable insight into modern Europe. Much of our fascination stems from the vividness with which Huxley displays his awareness of the element of sham behaviour (what he neatly terms "Theatre of Varieties" in his poem of that title) as it obstructs and obscures the real problem of living. Again and again we get the feeling that in searching for his own identity he also highlights the crisis of the modern western intellectual. This crisis consists mainly in the inability to reconcile theoretical knowledge with practical living. For Huxley himself the crisis is stressed both by his family background and his erudition. The promise of intellect is seen to be defeated by the complexities of modern existence. The troubled intellectuals in Huxley's fiction are easily recognisable by their acute consciousness of their incapacity to relate to life. And not only the characters, but the author himself, the intellectual artist, is victim of the same handicap he so savagely satirises. This recognition of the fact that he is himself one of the order of persons he is satirising gives Huxley's work a certain distinction. It may be added though that this self-involvement and guilt also mark the work with an eccentricity which many find irksome.

As in the poetry, Huxley is in the stories searching basically

for coherence in a fragmented world. His tragedy, as we have said, is that his own personality is also fragmented and this prevents a faithful representation of life. The problems that beset him personally find their echoes in the world at large, but because he has not been able to cope with them at a personal level, he cannot usually do more than delight in the echoes. Frequently we get the impression of a writer fully relishing the knowledge that his own identity-crisis is symptomatic. The posture adopted seems to be both tinted and tainted by this knowledge. The search for a meaningful synthesis is for a time arrested. The roving eye enjoys sights of a troubled humanity, and the pen records the schism which is at the root of the trouble. In several stories Huxley seems content merely to probe the dichotomies which reduce man, in Pope's words, to the "jest and riddle of the world." For Huxley, however, the joke has become unpleasant and the riddle painful. This attitude, while leaving many critics deeply troubled,¹ proves excruciating to Huxley himself. But its treatment in literature has to be judicious for even sympathetic readers get bored and tired if the performance is repeated too often. The febrility and nausea can become unduly irritating.

Irony is the commonest device in Huxley's work. However, the irony frequently masks an inveterate impatience. Huxley wants to step into a pulpit and teach us how we ought to organise our minds;

1. See, for example, Margaret Farrand Thorp, "Is Aldous Huxley Unhappy?", Sewanee Review, Volume 38, July 1930, pp. 269-277; John Freeman, "Aldous Huxley," London Mercury, Volume 15, February 1927, pp. 391-400; and Desmond MacCarthy, "Notes on Aldous Huxley," Life and Letters, Volume 5, September 1930, pp. 198-209.

but being a literary man he is aware of the dangers of obvious didacticism and so disguises the moralisms beneath the anecdotes' glitter. Unable to solve the burdens of his own mind, he cannot resist telling others how wrong their lives are. There is a tendency to scold even though the scolding is disguised in some high-sounding philosophy of life. As an early reviewer of his stories commented, "(Huxley's) great defect as a describer of human nature is lack of sympathy. He despises human nature..." (Watt, p. 55). These important characteristics begin to make an appearance in the shorter fiction though it is in the novels that their impression is most worked.

(ii)

Huxley's first volume of stories, Limbo, was published in 1920. According to his biographer,

the book was pounced upon by the high-brows and the literate young who were carried away by the cool bugle of that new astringent voice expressing so essentially the coming postwar mood. (SB, p. 108)

The key-terms in the passage are "high-brows" and "literate young." For those who happened to fall into these two categories Huxley had an irresistible appeal. Most of his work was decidedly "high-brow" for it incorporated the latest in learning and in behaviour. And decidedly the "literate young" were thrilled to find in Huxley frequent echoes of their own situations. The "literate young" included the "new woman" who had gained her sense of freedom and adventure through her education and was, as a result, ready to experience whatever was offered to her by way of social or personal

intercourse. Huxley's "astringent voice" captured various aspects of the new woman's sensibility - particularly in the area of sex - with a deftness which appealed by its very nonchalance. Such up-to-dateness ought not, however, to undermine the significance of the stories themselves.

The "post-war mood" which Bedford speaks of is, in Limbo, basically one of detachment, disenchantment and extreme skepticism. Huxley's attitude is one of intense intellectual awareness but non-committed. Though what he observes is keenly depicted, such depiction is not at the heart of the work. "The Bookshop," for example, contains a strong indictment of the philistinism current at the time, but it ends with a smug moralism:

I often think it would be best not to attempt the solution of the problem of life. Living is hard enough without complicating the process by thinking about it. The wisest thing, perhaps, is to take for granted the "wearisome condition of humanity, born under one law, to another bound," and to leave the matter at that, without an attempt to reconcile the incompatibles.
(Limbo, p. 268)

While the "wearisome condition of humanity" is to haunt Huxley all his life, here it is taken for granted, and no attempt is made to "reconcile the incompatibles." We are not even sure what these "incompatibles" really are. Thus the essential search for integration is bypassed, and Huxley is happy just entertaining his readers with a clever yarn and glib remarks.

And yet we do get the feeling that beneath the comic covering which is present in all the stories in Limbo, is a serious young man disbelievingly commenting upon the pathos of the period precisely because his own sense of identity is dislocated. This may perhaps

explain why Virginia Woolf did not take kindly to Huxley: "We would admonish Mr Huxley to leave social satire alone," she wrote in her review of Limbo. (Watt, p. 42). A firm grasp of reality is a pre-requisite for social satire and this is exactly what Huxley lacks at this stage. His satire smacks of immaturity and betrays a desire to be profound without the compassion or the mellowness which profundity entails. The American reviewer of Limbo was kindlier but even he saw that "It is the sophisticate of Hyde Park that (Huxley) emanates." (Watt, p. 44). Just as the crowds throng in Hyde Park to enjoy the battle of wit, so readers often pounce on Huxley for the sheer pleasure of being "with-it." One usually visits Hyde Park to be entertained rather than informed, and Huxley entertains very well. He writes lucidly and his erudition sparkles. But the fascination wears off. Like Hyde Park, the venue of events and all sorts of free opinion, Huxley's stories become the occasion for us to witness his human monkeys performing their antics with zest and sophistication.

Two stories in Limbo merit special examination for they highlight a variety of factors with which we are concerned in studying Huxley's search for integration. The novella "The Farcical History of Richard Greenow" is described by Huxley as being "a little allegorical farce" about dual-personality. (Letters; p. 170). If the story is allegorical, the allegory's chief subject must, surely be Huxley himself. The question of dual-personality (what we have termed "dichotomy") bothers Huxley constantly; apart from Greenow of this novella, characters like Theodore Gumbril in Antic Hay and Philip Quarles in Point Counter Point embody a dual-

personality with which they cannot successfully cope. As we saw in discussing Huxley's poetry, this divided nature of the human personality proves absolutely frustrating for his quest for a synthesis; the struggle persists without adequate results.

The case-history of Richard Greenow (colloquially referred to as Dick) is not merely another illustration of the schizophrenic personality but is, in its own way, a sensitive and moving account of the process by which a normal personality can be engulfed by the pressures of its more irrational self. The story details the bewilderment with which Greenow apprehends, battles and finally submits to the darker recesses of his psyche. Unable to dominate the surging power of his alter-ego who makes Greenow rich by writing romantic novels under the pen-name of Pearl Bellairs, Greenow is finally destroyed by it. The destruction is complete: if Greenow dies, so does Pearl Bellairs.

This realisation marks a step forward in Huxley's search for integration. Through the characterisation of Greenow Huxley is able to project his own anguish and at the same time examine the implications attending a divided existence. One of the lessons he learnt is that sometimes triumph paradoxically entails defeat. Thus though it is true that the novels written by Pearl Bellairs will live on fictionally, it is also true that her real self will never be known. If Greenow cannot assert his existence, Bellairs cannot assert hers either. Both are caught in a terrible stalemate and the death of one negates both.

Part of the tragedy is explained by the fact that Greenow does not acknowledge his dual personality from the start. Thus his passion

for the doll's house his sister gives him has to be kept a secret:

But of course Dick would never have dreamt of telling anyone at school about it. He was chary of letting even the people at home divine his weakness, and when anyone came into the room where the doll's house was, he would put his hands in his pocket and stroll out.....
(Limbo, p. 3)

The discordant note is already struck: by concealing the truth he is avoiding coming to terms with his split-selves. The consequences of this are that he sets up a barrier between him and the world. As long as this barrier is efficiently maintained, things go ahead on their normal course. Greenow can even afford to rationalise his situation:

He had an orderly mind that disliked mysteries. He had been a puzzle to himself for a long time; now he was solved. He was not in the least distressed to discover this abnormality in his character. As long as the two parts of him kept well apart, as long as his male self could understand mathematics, and as long as his lady novelist's self kept up her regular habit of writing at night and retiring from business during the day, the arrangement would be admirable. The more he thought about it, the more it seemed an ideal state of affairs.
(Limbo, pp. 37-38)

But life, unfortunately, is not an "ideal state of affairs." Though Dick appears to accept his truth, from the world outside this truth is to remain hidden until the final catastrophe. Huxley captures Dick's fate in the very tone of the passage; Dick's complacency, his self-deluding consolation, is not the solution to the complex problem. Pearl Bellairs, his novelist-self is to torment him, and ultimately consume him.

We can interpret the duality of Greenow's existence by applying several of the dichotomies Huxley has alluded to in his poetry. Greenow can be seen as the rational, spiritual self while Bellairs

can be taken to represent the instinctual, materialistic self.² Greenow can be seen as representing a contemplative mode of life, a withdrawal from the world of practical affairs while Bellairs represents action and aggression. We may even say Greenow represents good taste or control whereas Bellairs stands for vulgarity or licence. Whatever specific dichotomies we assign to the hermaphroditic character of Greenow, the fact remains that the dichotomy is not comfortably harmonised.

By withdrawing into his own world of ideas and mathematics, and participating only vicariously in the world through the agency of Pearl Bellairs' novels, Greenow effectively withdraws from humanity. This withdrawal reaches a climax when Greenow cannot bear the sight and smell of the "huddled carcasses that surrounded him" on a train journey. (Limbo, p. 55). In Jesting Pilate (1926) Huxley tells of a similar personal experience while on a train journey in India.

Such abhorrence of humanity underlines a crucial break with reality. As with Huxley in real life and Greenow in fiction, withdrawal has prevailed over involvement. When the war comes Greenow refuses to enlist but instead of going to the prison for his anti-war convictions he chooses to serve partial conscription by working on a farm - much as Huxley himself worked on the farm at Garsington. Greenow is mortified when he finally learns the truth of his degradation and his protest "I am perfectly sane" (Limbo, p. 110) made at the asylum where he is finally committed is the last

2. Philip Thody sees Greenow as spirit and Bellairs as flesh. Cf: Aldous Huxley, London: Studio Vista, 1973, p. 27.

ironic twist in the grotesque chain of events. Paradoxically, while being completely schizophrenic, Greenow is also the person who sees reality most acutely. He sees through the smugness and complacency of the people who surround him and instinctively revolts against the status quo. His plight is that he is incapable of doing anything about the situation other than transverting to his Bellairs self nocturnally. This incapacity and its resultant transversion ultimately destroy him.

Huxley called Greenow's history a "farce." The story is extremely laughable and ludicrous. Huxley's parody on philosophy, psycho-analysis and contemporary literature, for example, is exquisitely handled and we enjoy the skill with which he carries it off. But Greenow's history is also more than merely farcical. It is an important index to Huxley's thinking at this period and serves to link the early poetry with the later prose. Stylistically the story is clumsy in many parts and certainly tedious in its length but it is not without merit. The complexity of this story is revealed by what numerous critics have said about it.

Charles Holmes sees it as an exposure of public school life and as voicing a dissatisfaction with Freudian psychology;³ Woodcock remarks that it parodies contemporary literature;⁴ and Meckier sees in it a Conradian "heart of darkness."⁵ These themes are present, but more relevant perhaps is the fact that viewed against the

3. Charles Holmes, op. cit., pp. 18-19.

4. Woodcock, op. cit., p. 68.

5. Meckier, op. cit., p. 30.

backdrop of war, the story remains a haunting psychological dramatisation of the intellectual-artist dichotomy. Whatever we read into it, however, does not alter the crucial realisation that in it (and through it) Huxley comes very close to his own search for a meaning which would reconcile disparate elements of living.

The other story in Limbo that requires attention is that entitled "Eupompous Gave Splendour to Art By Numbers." The very title is pompous and hints at the farcical nature of the tale itself. Huxley first published this story in 1916; and it contains much of the cleverness which Huxley also put into his poetry of that period. The story itself is trite, revolving around the meaning of the title phrase "Eupompous Gave Splendour to Art by Numbers." And ostensibly its satire seems to have been directed at the various schools of Art (for example, Cubism, Vorticism, Futurism) which were claiming a scientific basis for their art around the time the story was written.⁶ However the story deserves attention because it anticipates the bent of Huxley's mind so early in his career. It also demonstrates the thesis that Huxley's whole life was devoted to finding a viable synthesis between apparently conflicting dichotomies of existence.

Eupompous, the academic Emberlin has discovered, was an ancient Alexandrian portrait-painter, who believed that for art to be allied with reality, it had to have a numerical foundation. This noble ideal, (derived from the metaphysics of Pythagoras), however, became

6. Cf. Peter Firchow, Aldous Huxley: Satirist and Novelist, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1972, pp. 38-39.

pathetic when Eupompous and his followers were reduced to doing nothing but count. This caricature of people pursuing a single aspect of total reality to the exclusion of all other aspects, of mistaking the part for the whole, is a favourite with Huxley. We remember, for instance, the mad pedalling of a stationary bicycle by the scientist Shearwater in Antic Hay. Carried to an extreme of course, it results in the nothing-but ethic of the Brave New Worlders. Little wonder that Eupompous committed suicide (after killing two of his ridiculous followers) once he realised the folly of his mission. But Emberlin threatens to be a modern-day version of Eupompous. The narrator tells us, very soon Emberlin will "be able to compete with the calculating horses on their own ground." (Limbo, p. 209). The calculating horses are not merely show-horses but also the horses of Swift's terrible satire. There is a striking parallel between Swift and Huxley: both are haunted by the gulf between reason and emotion, restraint and passion. And both frown upon humanity for having defeated its own dignity by an unashamed exhibition of its banality.

The narrator (recognisably Huxley himself), while warning Emberlin about the dangers of taking Eupompous too seriously, does not seem to do anything more effective than preach and moralise. In some ways he feeds on Emberlin's plight - for he tells the story with great relish - and is therefore implicated in this unhappy state of affairs. Like Huxley the narrator delights in the eccentricity of erudite findings, moralises on the consequences of an exclusive philosophy of life, but does not appear to be able to provide any constructive alternative. He sympathises but only in

theory.

We recognise in Emberlin certain qualities of character which we can also safely accord the young Huxley. We are told that Emberlin like Huxley, wrote poetry in his early youth but of which he is extremely embarrassed now that he is older and more experienced. Further, Emberlin

exhaled an atmosphere that combined the fantastic speculativeness of the undergraduate with the more mellowed oddity of incredibly wise and antique dons. He was immensely erudite, but in a wholly un-encyclopeadic way - a mine of irrelevant information, as his enemies said of him. (Limbo, pp. 194-195)

Just as in "The Farcical History of Richard Greenow" where Huxley projects the one personality into two halves, so here the narrator and Emberlin both appear to be different facets of the one person. This technique of splitting a total personality into several halves is seen also in "Happy Families," the play included in Limbo in which Aston, the "perhaps too cultured literary man" (Limbo, p. 212) and his brother Cain, the lusty young brute, seem to be two distinct parts of the one person. That Cain should be defeated in the play reveals Huxley's own bias at this stage of his search; he does not seem ready to accept the less cultured aspects of civilisation. We have already seen Huxley use this method in the poem "Contrary to Nature and Aristotle" and we will see it again in the novels. In Those Barren Leaves, for example, the three major male characters - Calamy, Chelifer and Cardan, may be taken to be merely different manifestations of the same individual.

In "Eupompous Gave Splendour to Art by Numbers" Emberlin's folly is of course ridiculed by the narrator. But the narrator also

realises that in Emberlin's company, "you were living no longer in a dull world of jumbled things but somewhere above the hotch-potch in a glassily perfect universe of ideas, where all was informed, consistent, symmetrical." (Limbo, p. 193). This is too Platonic for our comfort and the use of the word "glassily" is significant: perfection excludes the kind of reality we are used to and is therefore somehow unpleasant. And yet we all strive for perfection; this is the paradox of existence. There is something very attractive about Emberlin which we, like the narrator, find irresistible; and yet he degenerates into a mere caricature of a counting horse. If Emberlin could possess some of the practical commonsense of the narrator and the narrator possess some of Emberlin's passion, then, perhaps, we would get our acceptable synthesis.

The story, however, is not optimistic and we are only too aware that Emberlin's passion will drive him mad and that the narrator will continue to inhabit his hum-drum life of mediocrity. Huxley does not seem to be able to convince himself that reality can contain both Emberlin and the narrator, both passion and reason. He is still a victim of either/or thinking; he cannot escape the dualistic mode of thought which creates the dichotomies with which he is wrestling so hard. Without wanting to over-simplify or anticipate, we may say that Huxley's later "conversion" to mysticism arose precisely out of this desire to go beyond dichotomy; to transcend it without obliterating it. But we shall examine that in more detail when we look at the major novels.

As a first collection of stories, Limbo clearly indicates that chasm in Huxley's outlook: on the one hand there is the awareness of

a reality which includes dichotomies, on the other there is the great reluctance to accept this awareness. Huxley is not yet sure how he can best cope with the conflicts, so he blasts at human shortcomings. "Happily Ever After" and "The Death of Lully" both exemplify Huxley's disgust at having to bear with a world in which a corrupt human nature exists. The Marjorie of "Happily Ever After" also signalled the advent of a kind of woman at whose portraiture Huxley was to become adapt in his later works. Marjorie, we are told, possessed "a mixture of contempt and secret envy" by which her betters like Myra Viveash of Antic Hay and Lucy Tantamount of Point Counter Point will organise their unfortunate lives. She is the new woman, cultured and uninhibited but adrift in a meaningless current of social and personal malaise.

"The Death of Lully," based on the life and work of the alchemist Raymond Lully of whom Huxley had read while an Oxford undergraduate, reveals his early interests in mysticism and intimates his later adoption of a quasi-mystical outlook. It also gives us an early glimpse of the ugliness which Huxley finds difficult to accept:

"Why do you touch me?" she asked.
 He made no reply, but turned away from her. He wondered how it would come to pass that people would rise again in the body. It seemed curious, considering the manifest activities of worms. And suppose one rose in the body that one had possessed in age. He shuddered, picturing to himself what this woman would be like when she was sixty, seventy. She would be beyond words repulsive. Old men too were horrible. They stank, and their eyes were rheumy and rosiny, like the eyes of deer. He decided that he would kill himself before he grew old. (Limbo, p. 274)

The horror of the decaying flesh, the prospect of putrefaction with

age, was one side of the coin whose other side promised pleasure and beauty. How to accept the coin in toto is Huxley's problem. He is to return to this question several times later, as in Eyeless in Gaza, for instance, in The Devils of Loudon, and especially in Island. Lully's prescription of the "golden perfection of pure knowledge" (Limbo, p. 290) will be discussed at length by Huxley in his Perennial Philosophy (1946). For the moment, the words of the Captain on whose ship Lully lies dying, remain victorious: "Life is a tangled knot to unravel." (Limbo, p. 292).

In Limbo, the larger theme of integration is toyed with; the several incompatibles are sometimes highlighted in a clever, sophisticated manner and Huxley's virtuosity as a story-teller is not in doubt. What disturbs is the ease with which he is able to dissect personalities into various zoological or botanical exhibits. "I can sympathise with people's pains, but not with their pleasures. There is something curiously boring about somebody else's happiness," Huxley tells us (Limbo, p. 247). This lop-sidedness, betraying an inability to rejoice in life, remains at the heart of Huxley's search for integration.

(iii)

If Limbo left, ironically, the question of integration in limbo, Huxley's next collection of stories, Mortal Coils (1922), published almost immediately after Crome Yellow, does not seem to fare too much better. As a collection, the craftsmanship in Mortal

Coils is superior to that in Limbo,⁷ and Huxley appears to be more relaxed and more confident. This confidence, however, is reflected less in any development of his search for integration than in his refining his art of story-telling.

Huxley's best-known short story, "The Gioconda Smile" appears in Mortal Coils and is justly considered one of the finest stories he ever wrote. This story of love and hate, becomes an intensely gripping psychological drama of jealousy and lust and leaves us wondering about the nature of justice, Divine or human. Mr Hutton, the victim of the smile, at one point in the story ponders on the question of existence:

He began to think with a kind of confused violence. There were the stars, there was Milton. A man can be somehow the peer of stars and night. Greatness, nobility. But is there seriously a difference between the noble and the ignoble? Milton, the stars, death, and himself - himself. The soul, the body; the higher and the lower nature. Perhaps there was something in it, after all. Milton had a god on his side and righteousness. What had he? Nothing, nothing whatever. There were only Doris's little breasts. What was the point of it all? Milton, the stars, death, and Emily in her grave, Doris and himself - always himself.... (MC, pp. 29-30)

"The higher and the lower nature" posit the problem; "himself" is the riddle. In passages such as this Huxley externalises the conflicts which he is at heart confronting. Hutton's predicament is partly the predicament of man in the modern age: Milton had his god, says Hutton, whereas he has nothing. Having broken away from the traditional mores of religious belief modern man cannot find an answer to the kind of questions troubling Hutton. He is alienated

7. Cf. Woodcock, op. cit., pp. 88-89.

both within and without; self-questioning only takes him to the brink of nihilism. It is a kind of despair, this sense of loss, and man appears paralysed by its hold over him. Since no meaningful answers to his problems are forthcoming, man is split; between belief and disbelief; the right act and the wrong impulse; passion and reason. Integration is yearned for, but the apparatus necessary for its achievement do not seem to be present.

When he is charged (wrongly) with his wife's murder, Hutton realises that his earlier nihilistic understanding of life cannot stand. "Confusedly he felt that some extraordinary kind of justice was being done." (MC, p. 58). Here is a man whose character has undergone change and growth. From the merely lustful man out to satisfy his appetites he is now beginning to accept the presence of a higher authority; he is realising that he cannot always have his own way. "In the past he had been wanton and imbecile and irresponsible. Now Fate was playing as wantonly, as irresponsibly, with him. It was tit for tat, and God existed after all." (MC, p. 58). The realisation is not wholesome; it is tainted with skepticism. The higher and lower nature within Hutton has, we feel, received a measure of integration, but the root problem remains unsolved. Hutton dies a wiser and sadder man, but without conviction. Or perhaps Huxley wants to resist the temptation of letting Hutton die with the conviction of his salvation as a punishment for his earlier wantonness? Hutton's grudging admission of Providential justice cannot really be said to represent any elevation of his character beyond the lowest step. More than this Hutton is compelled by external forces to see that the two sides of his nature exist in him;

the change is imposed rather than evolved. Huxley's maturer heroes will take off from where Hutton leaves; the search has to be sufficiently internalised in order to carry the weight of felt conviction. In Hutton, though, we find the primitive beginnings of an attempt to make sense of dichotomy. This attempt is not given enough emphasis; external events seem to be more central than Hutton's inner thoughts. However, we may grant that Hutton is certainly a progression from the naive Greenow. Where Greenow rationalises, Hutton reflects, and the difference is important. Beginning with Hutton and expanding with the main heroes of the novels, we will find the Huxley protagonists intently bent upon reflection rather than rationalisation; bent upon trying to use both heart and head, not the head alone.

In the context of "The Gioconda Smile" critics have been unable to come to a consensus about the role of Janet Spence - the spurned woman who is the real murderer and the person responsible for framing Hutton. While her crime is not to be questioned - in fact her diabolic nature is only too sharply described in the story - there is something to be said for her role in forcing Hutton to examine the meaning of existence and his place in it. She drives the dull moments in Hutton's life to a crisis, as it were, and thereby forces him to confront reality as it really is. Without her frustrated desires, Hutton would not, perhaps, have achieved within him that measure of integration which he does as a result of his trial and subsequent conviction. In several stories Huxley utilised the method of converting the means of an ill-intentioned person to the good ends of another. This method is exquisitely used especially in The Genius

and the Goddess (1955).

Noteworthy also is the fact that we are beginning to realise that for Huxley integration is chiefly an internal process. To the outside world Hutton is the cruel and wicked murderer; but this does not matter. What matters is that within him Hutton has ascended to a new level of understanding which gives him the strength to accept his fate without too much protest. Such an acceptance may, of course, be questioned for its fatalistic overtones, but encapsulated within it is a philosophy of life which Huxley postulates most forcefully in The Perennial Philosophy (1944), a philosophy of accepting life with all its contradictions and ambiguities, paradoxes and conflicts. The ideal person is fully aware of all these but remains undisturbed, resolved in his posture towards a metaphysical theory of existence which postulates that both good and evil are ultimately transcended by human love.

Without wanting to attribute to Hutton that serenity of being which Huxley's gurus in novels like Time Must Have A Stop (1945) talk about, we can still say that Hutton does undergo some essential change of heart. Towards the end of the scene in which he storms out of Doris's room accusing her of believing that he really is the murderer, we are told that Hutton's "mind seemed to soften and dissolve; a great calm descended upon his spirit. He went upstairs to ask Doris's forgiveness." (MC, p. 59). It is this newfound humility which marks Hutton's inner conversion. No longer the arrogant, sinning, "Christ of Ladies" (MC, p. 3), Hutton goes to his death a willing sufferer believing that he is punished not so much

for the murder as for his earlier misdeeds.

The rest of the stories in Mortal Coils do not develop Huxley's basic theme though they revolve around dichotomies which we have seen present in the poetry. Thus in "Green Tunnels" there is the conflict between youth and age, emphasised strongly by the make-believe worlds indulged in by the young and romantic Barbara Buzzcoat and the aged Mr Topes. "Most of one's life," says Topes, "is one prolonged effort to prevent oneself thinking" (MC, p. 192). Like Gumbril in Antic Hay castigating the noisiness of life and yearning for the "quiet places of the mind," Topes recognises the futility of a life devoid of calm. All we can do in a society where vitality has been sapped by ennui is indulge in pointless chatter. Topes, a precursor of the guru-figures we are to meet in Huxley's later fiction, is both implicated and redeemed by his insight. He is quite helpless beyond realising the truth of his situation. Moreover, he is hopelessly in love with Barbara. Now, in Texts and Pretexts (1932) Huxley begins the chapter on Old Age by quoting Thomas Bastard's well-known couplet "Age is deformed, youth unkind;/ We scorn their bodies, they our mind." (TP, p. 141). In "Green Tunnels" this dichotomy between youth and age serves to weave an entertaining, even touching, story of unrequited love; but we are not given a demonstration of its resolution or even an attempt at one. All we know is that the impotency of the old and the naivety of the young are ironically united in a mutual misapprehension of reality. In a later story, "After the Fireworks" (Brief Candles, 1930) Huxley takes up the theme once again; this time making a serious attempt at fusing age with youth through the agency of a sustained

relationship between the naive young woman and a lusty middle-aged writer. But the relationship soon collapses under the strain of domestic living and integration is, again, not achieved. (It is interesting to compare "After the Fireworks" with the novella The Evening of the Holiday (1966) by the Australian novelist Shirley Hazzard. Though Hazzard's story appears to be completely derived from Huxley's, it exudes a warmth and a compassion which Huxley never quite manages. The lack may be attributed to Huxley's insistence on wanting to arrive at the successful fusion we have been discussing, while Hazzard is quite content to let things take their own course).

(iv)

After Mortal Coils Huxley published three more collections of short stories: Little Mexican (1924), Two or Three Graces (1926) and Brief Candles (1930). But by this time the search for integration finds its most articulate presence in the novels. The stories continue to excite and entertain but generally do not add anything of great significance to our theme. There can be little doubt about Huxley's ability to tell a story competently; but beneath the glitter of the well-made story there is little to justify an extended examination. Long stories like "Little Mexican," "Two or Three Graces" and "After the Fireworks" prove tediously long; many of the shorter pieces prove too pat. Increasingly Huxley's energetic thrust seems to be shifting towards the novel where he aims at an even larger canvas than either the poetry or the shorter forms of fiction allow.

An exception, however, has to be made for that moving testimony to the dignity of human nature which Huxley so eloquently and poignantly recognises in the excellent short story "Young Archimedes" (Little Mexican, pp. 271-340). Very rarely does Huxley seem to express genuinely powerful feelings about events in his fiction or poetry, yet in this touching story about the misfortune of genius child, Huxley for once gives way to revealing deeply felt grief:

I felt the tears coming into my eyes as I thought of the poor child lying there underground. I thought of those luminous grave eyes, and the curve of that beautiful forehead, the droop of the melancholy mouth, of the expression of delight which illumined his face when he learned of some new idea that pleased him, when he heard a piece of music that he liked. And this beautiful small being was dead; and the spirit that inhabited this form, the amazing spirit, that too had been destroyed almost before it had begun to exist.
(LM, pp. 337-338)

In Guido's suicide (Guido is the young Archimedes of the story) lies the death of a man who could have changed the world as only geniuses can. Or perhaps he may have had in his mind his brother, Trevenen who committed suicide because "his ideals were too much for him" (Letters, p. 62). Instead of compromising with the demands of the avaricious landlady who had secured him through guile and power, Guido chooses to die, a tragic victim of another's misplaced singularity of purpose. The conclusion to "Young Archimedes" is unique in Huxley's entire fiction: for once, he is able, unabashedly, to give free reign to his emotions:

It was a day of floating clouds - great shapes, white, golden, and grey; and between them patches of a thin, transparent blue. Its lantern level, almost, with our eyes, the dome of the cathedral revealed itself in all its grandiose lightness, its vastness and aerial strength. On the innumerable brown and rosy roofs of the city the afternoon sunlight lay softly, sumptuously, and the

towers were as though varnished and enamelled with an old gold. I thought of all the Men who had lived here and left the visible traces of their spirit and conceived extraordinary things. I thought of the dead child. (LM, p. 340)

Perhaps Huxley experienced the anguish of his own thwarted ambition (he had wanted, after all, to be a medical doctor) when writing about this prodigy of mathematics for whom circumstances prove too much. Young Guido was a case of the born genius foiled by an unsuitable environment. The nurture-nature dichotomy had intervened in the poor boy's life through human avarice. "Young Archimedes" shows a side of Huxley's nature which is generally left hidden in his creative writings, and serves to qualify received notions about Huxley's total alienation from his fellow human beings. If Huxley hated life it is because he was frustrated; because he could not find a viable synthesis between his expectations and the reality around him; because he could not cope with his own divided nature.

When Huxley's Collected Short Stories appeared in 1957, V.S. Pritchett stated in reviewing the volume that the short stories

belong mainly to a period now remote: The last age of rich old hedonists, businessmen (vulgar), intellectuals (incompetent in love), savage hostesses, grumpy artists. The old educated class is seen breaking with Victorian commitment as it loses its sins or its property, and ascending into that captious island of Laputa which floated in sunny detachment above Western Europe between the Wars. As a writer Mr Huxley has always been proficient in every genre he undertook, but it would not be just to judge him by these shorter pieces. He needed space for the great scoldings, for if you hate life, it is best to hate it in a big way. He needed more room for the horrors, the savageries; more room for the kinder and learned comedies. (Watt, pp. 423-424)

As is usual with Pritchett, the criticism is fair, balanced and

perceptive, even if a little severe.⁸ Though it appears in hindsight that Huxley churned out most of his short stories with an eye on the reader's expectations (to shock, to titillate, to excite, to be topical) rather than from an urgency to present a newer stage in his development as a writer, it may be safely stated that the stories do appreciably expand our understanding of the conflicts he is writing about. The stories are still readable, though a little dated.

The conspicuous lack of involvement with the theme of the search for integration in the later volumes is not to be wondered at. Just a month before Little Mexican was published, Huxley had started writing Those Barren Leaves. In a letter to his father disclosing the news, Huxley states:

The mere business of telling a story interests me less and less... The only really and permanently absorbing things are attitudes towards life and the relation of man to the world. (Letters, p. 228)

An understanding of this statement of purpose is essential if we are to sympathise with Huxley's work. More and more, by his own admission, is he going to be concerned with ideas and attitudes rather than with niceties of literary art. In "Nuns at Luncheon" (Mortal Coils, pp. 197-229) he had parodied the art of the glib story-teller and had ably demonstrated how good he himself was in

8. Like Pritchett, many critics have tended to think of Huxley as a life-hater. But this is ill-founded; many eminent men and women of our time have testified to Huxley's love and zest for life. Stephen Spender, for example, says, "... to be with (Huxley) was to be illuminated and comforted. He feared for humanity, but it would be untrue to say that he disliked people. What moved one when one was with him also encouraged one, because he was really charitable and good." (MV, p. 20).

this respect. Now, however, he realises that story-telling in itself is grossly inadequate in the search for integration. What is necessary is a deeper exploration of the methods by which man tries to cope with life. Huxley's stress on words like "attitudes" and "relation" betrays his disinterest in people as people; for him people are mostly embodiments of abstract entities like attitudes and relations.

Naturally this approach to his work makes Huxley sacrifice the human interest in preference to a metaphysical theory. But it is more consistent with the true bent of his mind. As we have seen, from the earliest poems he wrote, it is with abstractions that he is most at home, and it is imperative that he now acknowledges this. Critics have castigated Huxley for deliberately reducing his characters to mouthpieces. If he does this it is because to him the ideas matter more than anything else. Huxley's search for integration from now on will take the form of playing one set of ideas and attitudes against another set and experimenting with various combinations of these in detail in order to explore the synthesis he yearns for. In the poetry and the shorter fiction some semblance of this techniques is present but their length inhibits a full utilisation.

But the poetry and the short stories are important because of the groundwork that they lay. Though Huxley may chiefly appear content to amuse his readers by satirising prevalent modes of existence and by fabricating melodramas around the conflicts that trouble him, the early work still contains grains of his final philosophy. The stories, especially, reveal his disgust with the

fragmentation of civilisation and of the modern personality. He exposes these unwholesome aspects of contemporary life and shows how the new ethos fails to provide any abiding or meaningful alternatives to the value-systems it has eliminated. He remains true to the Socratic ideal that the unexamined life is not worth living. The pity of it is that frequently under Huxley's scrutiny life appears perverse, fermenting and festering with its self-inflicted boils and crippled by the pressure of dichotomies present in human nature.

Deeply troubled by this awareness Huxley embarks on a journey in quest of the whole and harmonious life-style which he thinks will negate this terrible state of affairs. For him this journey is primarily a journey of ideas and he recognises and accepts this. The stories from Little Mexican on become ancillary to the novels and so lose their essential relevance for our study. From Those Barren Leaves onwards, it is in the novels that Huxley's search for integration is most manifestly treated.

CHAPTER 3

THE NOVELS (1)
CROME YELLOW TO THOSE BARREN LEAVES

(i)

Discussions about Huxley's standing as a novelist have become a literary commonplace. Since 1939 when David Daiches pronounced that "Huxley is not novelist"¹ students of Huxley's novels have been engaged in a lively debate concerning the validity of this statement.² Daiches' contention was that Huxley could not be termed a novelist because he paid scant attention to the elements that constitute a novel. To Daiches Huxley appeared to be writing social tracts instead of novels and hence could not, rightly, be called a novelist. We have, however, to distinguish clearly between "interest" and "practice" if we are to see Daiches' charge in perspective.

That Huxley took seriously the novel-form as such is evidenced by the numerous comments which he makes about it both in his fiction and non-fiction. Along with Virginia Woolf and others, he cared little for the kind of "realistic" novels written by people like Bennett, Wells and Galsworthy. In a letter to his father

1. David Daiches, The Novel and the Modern World, op. cit., p. 209. In his revised edition of the book published in 1960, Daiches omits altogether the chapter on Huxley, saying that Huxley is not a novelist in the "strict sense."

2. See, for example, Jerome Meckier, Aldous Huxley: Satire and Structure, op. cit.; Keith May, Aldous Huxley, London: Elek, 1972; and essays such as those by Charles Glicksberg, "Huxley the Experimental Novelist," South Atlantic Quarterly, Volume 52 (January 1953), pp. 98-110, Joseph Bentley, "Semantic Gravitation: An Essay in Satiric Reduction," Modern Language Quarterly, Volume 30 (1969), pp. 3-19.

written in 1924, for example, Huxley writes that "I find it very difficult to understand the mentality of a man like Bennett who can sit down and spin out an immense realistic affair about life in Clerkenwell...." (Letters, p. 228).

Now it may be that his dismissal of such social realism was more due to his snobbish, high-brow attitude than to a genuine concern with the art of the novelist; after all, he did approve of Balzac. The point to note, however, is that much as Huxley may be interested in the form of the novel, this interest remains merely theoretical. Unlike his major contemporaries, Huxley is not really preoccupied with such issues as fictional technique, autonomy of the novel, its characters and values. In practice, therefore, he proves Daiches right: he turned to the novel essentially because it presented him with a suitable medium through which he could carry on his search for integration without the constraints inherent in poetry and the short story. We can put the matter another way and say that while the genuine novelist sees his novel as an end in itself, for Huxley it is only a means to an end. Stephen Spender has said that the cause of dissatisfaction with Huxley's work "may be because we have a sense of the writer as someone who uses his experience to create something we call a work of art, not his art as a vehicle to convey his search for truth." (MV, p. 11). In Huxley's novels, this "search for truth" (what we have termed the search for integration) is carried on with a missionary zeal which frequently over-rides finer aesthetic considerations.

By his own admission Huxley is not a born novelist. Writing to his friend E.S.P. Haynes in 1945, he says,

I remain sadly aware that I am not a born novelist, but some other kind of man of letters, possessing enough ingenuity to be able to simulate a novelist's behaviour not too unconvincingly. (Letters, p. 516)

For the kind of novel he was writing Huxley borrowed the term "novel of ideas" and explained what it meant through the mouth of Philip Quarles:

Novel of ideas. The character of each personage must be implied as far as possible, in the ideas of which he is the mouthpiece. In so far as theories are rationalisations of sentiments, instincts, dispositions of soul, this is feasible. The chief defect of the novel of ideas is that you must write about people who have ideas to express - which excludes all but about 0.01 per cent of the human race. Hence, the real, the congenital novelists don't write such books. But then I never pretended to be a congenital novelist. (PCP, pp. 409-410)

He goes on to admit that a novel of this kind is necessarily a "made up affair" (PCP, p. 410). The centre of attention in this "made up affair" is above all, on the ideas which are expounded. Characters become embodiments of attitudes and the novelist uses them to engage the reader in a mental discussion.³ To benefit and derive the greatest pleasure from his readings of such works, the reader must be prepared to think. The intellect becomes primary for both reader and writer. The emotional experience we associate with the reading of the traditional novel is scarcely present; reading a Huxley novel is basically an intellectual experience. We are struck by the range of his thoughts; almost every topic of intellectual

3. Cf. Frederick Hoffman, "Aldous Huxley and the Novel of Ideas," College English, Vol. 8, No. 3 (1946), pp. 129-139. Reprinted in Aldous Huxley: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Robert Kuehn, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1974, pp. 8-17. Also in Forms of Fiction, ed. William Van O'Connor, op. cit., pp. 189-200.

interest is discussed with a rigorous honesty and we are invited to participate in the discussion less with our imagination than our mind. Anthony Burgess has stated that Huxley equipped the modern novel with a brain.⁴ It is on this "brain's" incessant struggle to come to terms with itself that our focus is directed. In the process we are inevitably given several sharp glimpses into the age which has produced the brain.

In equipping the modern novel with a brain Huxley revived an approach to novel-writing that Peacock has so successfully utilised. Huxley's debt to his master of verbal wit is considerable and one can easily find Peacockian traces in several novels. The method of assembling persons with varied (and often conflicting) outlooks together is basic to the enterprise and from it springs the satiric counterpoints and ironic disjunctions for which both Peacock and Huxley are deservedly well-known. Thus to take but one instance of the similarity, in Peacock's Nightmare Abbey (Chapter VIII) we find the vivacious Marionetta confronting the esoteric Mr. Flosky:

MARIONETTA

I must apologise for intruding on you, Mr. Flosky; but the interest which I - you - take in my cousin Scythrop -

MR. FLOSKY

Pardon me, Miss O'Carroll; I do not take any interest in any person or thing on the face of the earth; which sentiment, if you analyse it, you will find to be the quintessence of the most refined philanthropy.

MARIONETTA

I will take it for granted that it is so, Mr. Flosky; I am not conversant with metaphysical subtleties, but -

4. Anthony Burgess, The New Novel, London: Faber & Faber, 1963, p. 15.

MR. FLOSKY

Subtleties! my dear Miss O'Carroll. I am sorry to find you participating in the vulgar error of the reading public, to whom an unusual collocation of words, involving a juxtaposition of antiperistatistical ideas, immediately suggests that notion of hyperoxysophistical paradoxology.

MARIONETTA

Indeed, Mr. Flosky, it suggests no such notion to me. I have sought you for the purpose of obtaining information...

This disjuncture between Marionetta's purpose in meeting Mr. Flosky and Flosky's discourse on metaphysical subtleties provides much of the satiric thrust and the humour which the reader enjoys. The situation is at once comic and pathetic, for Marionetta is earnestly seeking information on Scythrop's apparent disappearance as Mr Flosky is earnestly trying to communicate the mysteries of his philosophy. What is crucial to the irony of the situation is that both Marionetta and Flosky miss each other's point; they do not really communicate and the scene ends in a farce. Huxley uses this technique for a similar purpose in several of his novels. Thus, for example, in Crome Yellow we find the over-burdened Denis Stone remarking that his conversations with the lively and bright Jenny proceed along "parallel straight lines, meeting only at infinity." Like Marionetta and Flosky, Denis Stone and Jenny are engaged in a conversation which is not really a conversation but the occasion for two separate monologues! Like Peacock, Huxley provides his readers with fun and enjoyment at the expense of his characters. Like Peacock, he deliberately creates farcical situations (we may compare Mr Asterias's fishing for a mermaid in Nightmare Abbey with Edward Shearwater's pedalling the bicycle in Antic Hay) and resorts

to all kinds of digressions which act as interludes (the entry into the world of the dead Eustace in Time Must Have A Stop serves as a highly original variation of this method). According to Northrop Frye, this manner of writing belongs to the tradition of the Menippean satire in which

pedants, bigots, cranks, parvenus, virtuosi, enthusiasts, rapacious and incompetent professional men of all kinds, are handled in terms of their occupational approach to life as distinct from their social behaviour. A modern development produces the country-house week-ends in Peacock, Huxley, and their imitators in which the opinions and ideas and cultural interests expressed are as important as the love-making.⁵

Though this approach is overly cerebral and produces caricatures rather than characters, it has to be said that with Huxley the sense of detachment necessary to a successful practice of the method allows him to examine critically the impediments to his goal of finding a way out of the malaise of twentieth century living. But, unfortunately, in creating this distance between his novels and himself, Huxley has tended to project an image which has discomfited several of his readers.⁶ If we allow that Huxley is "skeptical"

5. Northrop Frye, The Anatomy of Criticism, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957, pp. 310-311.

6. A representative as good as any other for chiding Huxley for this is Lady Ottoline Morrell, whose house at Garsington provided the setting for much of Huxley's early work. She writes: "As I ruminate on Aldous's character - what I feel most clearly is that he is now singularly lacking in the imagination of the heart, which alone would enable him really to understand and enter into the lives of the human beings that he writes about. The tentacles of his intellect are incessantly at work collecting detached facts, collecting stories, scenes; he studies queer oddities and tricks of behaviour. He listens to conversations but he listens and looks as if he were listening and looking at the behaviour and jabber of apes. His attitude is always that of an onlooker, a sad disapproving onlooker, a scientific student of human behaviour." Ottoline at Garsington: Memoirs of Lady Ottoline Morrell, ed. Robert Gathorne-Hardy, London: Faber & Faber, 1974, p. 220.

instead of "cynical" and detached instead of "aloof" we may be close to the truth. His frustration at not being able to find the coherence he is desperately searching for often leads Huxley to portray extremes of human aberrations. His impatience with the dichotomies that bedevil human nature finds relief in an exaggerated caricature of contemporary life.

Like several other writers (Swift being on the whole, a most appropriate one to mention) Huxley has been unremitting in his insistence on seeing reality from one end of the microscope. Under his critical scrutiny all the warts even in the best of persons are disclosed with a magnification that repels. A beautiful or endearing quality is shown to be the mere mask for a vileness that shocks by its perversity. Humans are seen to be no better than cultured apes, performing their roles in a frenzy of singular intentions. Further, this "zoologist of fiction" (PCP, p. 121)⁷ cannot resist astounding his readers by putting his encyclopaedic knowledge into the very fabric of his books. Such an astonishing display of scholarship so felicitously incorporated into the novels only to yield a mockery of homo sapiens upsets most readers and leads them to question Huxley's humanity. He presents chiefly the ugly side of life, and as "human kind/ Cannot bear much reality" we may be excused our recoil.

However, as we shall discover, his uncompromising nature is also his strength. He is not afraid to speak his mind, even if the boldness offends or is singularly exclusive. It is true that when

7. See Doreann MacDermott's essay, "The Zoologist of Fiction: Aldous Huxley", Filologia Moderna, Vol. 37 (1969), pp. 27-45.

he feels that he has found a possible solution to the problem of existence, he is over-eager to preach, and his novels begin to read like tracts. The missionary then takes over from the artist with an enthusiasm that becomes tiresome. But the intensity with which he probes for an answer to his problems and the passion with which he pursues his search, elicit our sympathy.

In exposing and criticising the vices and follies of the upper class intellectual whom he so shrewdly observed, Huxley became a satirist par excellence. "Satire," writes Matthew Hodgart, "has its origin in a state of mind which is critical and aggressive, usually one of irritation at the latest example of human absurdity, inefficiency, or wickedness." He goes on to state that "if the occasions for satire are infinite and inherent in the human condition, the impulses behind satire are basic to human nature."⁸ The satirist assumes a superior pose and humiliates his chosen victims by contemptuous laughter. But his own role is one of the uninvolved, detached observer; he is committed to certain standards of behaviour which he assumes are universally applicable, and his irritation is aroused when these standards are flaunted by those who ought to know better. But the satirist seldom criticises directly; he abstracts and transmutes ordinary, realistic situations, and offers instead a travesty of reality. In doing this he draws our attention to the actuality while at the same time permitting a certain escape from it. In his early novels Huxley's satire is well-

8. Matthew Hodgart, Satire, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969, p. 10.

managed because the tones of gay sparkling irreverence amuse and delight the reader far more than the unpleasant derision. Huxley is able to balance quite finely his anxiety with his amusement. In the later novels, the devastating critique is counterbalanced with the exhilarating spirit with which it is carried out (again reminiscent of Peacock; one thinks of the lampoons at religious zealots in the guise of Mr Toobad). In the later novels, Huxley frequently converts satire into invective, thus losing a certain amount of rapport with his readers. But in fairness to him it must be noted that the later novels are not really meant to be satirical; rather they serve to articulate his "perennial philosophy" in fictional form. If there is any satire present, it is only of incidental interest.

One last point needs to be briefly discussed before we turn to the novels themselves. In his essay "Tragedy and the Whole Truth" (1931) Huxley distinguishes between the two kinds of literary works indicated in the title. Thus Shakespearean tragedy is described as being chemically pure; it selects for highlighting only a few definite aspects of behaviour and neglects others. Because of this, tragedy cannot be wholly truthful; it cannot, for example, talk about "those small, physiological events that decide whether day to day living shall have a pleasant or an unpleasant tone. Excretion, for example, with its power to make or mar the day." (EG, p. 520). Thus tragedy is limited; though within its limitations it is supremely instructive.

On the other hand, books that attempt to tell the Whole Truth are comparatively few. Huxley's text for such a book is Homer's

Odyssey, where the writer does not shirk "the irrelevancies which, in actual life, always temper the situations and characters that writers of tragedy insist on keeping chemically pure." (MN, p. 7). Fielding's Tom Jones is the only book written in Europe "between the time of Aeschylus and the present age" (MN, p. 8) that qualifies the requirements of Whole Truth. Huxley argues, not very convincingly, that the effects of literature that attempts the Whole Truth are longer-lived than that which (like tragedy) only attempts Partial Truth. Though he grants that contemporary writers have become more conscious of the Whole Truth - only because the limitations necessary to write a successful tragedy have become more and more difficult to impose - he nevertheless feels that "The modern artist seems to have gone down; he has reverted to the preoccupations of childhood. He is trying to be a primitive." (MN, p. 219). By this Huxley refers to the tendency on the part of modern writers to switch to a kind of romanticism which sees the ideal life as one in which there is "plenty of sport, noise, machinery, and social agitation." (MN, p. 219). In such art, infantile bravado reigns at the expense of depth of feeling and complexity of thought and behaviour. Huxley wants a more matured art in which the Whole Truth is portrayed without becoming "excessively interested in the raw material of thought and imagination" alone. (DWYW, pp. 168-169).

In his novels Huxley strives to write the kind of literature he has in mind. Though Crome Yellow, his first novel, contains statements about the art of novel-writing (particularly through the mouth of Scogan, the great advocate of "knockespotchianism") it is in Those Barren Leaves that we find an early explicit formulation of

the method Huxley is trying out. "I'm trying to do something new - a chemical compound of all the categories. Lightness and tragedy and loveliness and wit and fantasy and realism and irony and sentiment all combined," he explains through the words of the novelist Mary Thriplow. (TBL, p. 53). This is truly an ambitious programme. Though an attempt is made to "combine all the categories," Huxley's novels focus only on a very select cross-section of people - that 0.01 per cent that have ideas. He attempts to tell the Whole Truth about this select group but is frequently foiled by his obsession with some particular point of view. Further, the "chemical compound" exists essentially only in his characters' minds, with little reference to life at large. The final effect is thus quite different from the intention. As Huxley seems to have realised it himself, people read the novels, "because they're smart and unexpected and rather paradoxical and cynical and elegantly brutal." (TBL, p. 53).

In Point Counter Point - the novel which is usually regarded as being the most experimental in technique - Huxley speaks of the "musicalization of fiction":

A theme is stated, then developed, pushed out of shape, imperceptibly deformed, until, though still recognisably the same, it has become quite different.... All you need is a sufficiency of characters and parallel, contrapuntal plots. While Jones is murdering a wife, Smith is wheeling the preambulator in the park. You alternate the themes. More interesting, the modulations and variations are also more difficult. A novelist modulates by reduplicating situations and characters. He shows several people falling in love, or dying, or praying in different ways - dissimilars solving the same problem... He will modulate from one to the other - as from the aesthetic to the physico-chemical aspect of thing, from the religious to the physiological or financial. (PCP, pp. 408-409).

This is recognisably an extension and a variation of the earlier formulation. By this time Huxley was aware of Edouard's deliberations on the "art of fugue-writing" in Gide's The Counterfeiters.⁹ In Gide's novel, however, we find that the intentions are quite different from those of Huxley. Gide is not writing a "discussion-novel," nor is he primarily interested in using counterpoint as a satiric device; both tactics feature highly in Point Counter Point. Again, Gide's Edouard seems inseparable from the novel he is writing; Huxley's Philip Quarles is not. He represents yet another point of view. It would be wrong to suggest that Huxley simply borrowed the "musicalization of fiction" technique from Gide; intimations of the method are already present in the early work.¹⁰ Thus in the early story "Nuns at Luncheon" (MC, pp. 199-229) we have a situation akin to that of the novelist within the novel in Point Counter Point. Moreover, originality is not merely a matter of technique; the philosophy of life which is expounded in a novel largely affects its structure. Point Counter Point is a novel of ideas in a way The Counterfeiters is not; and to press the comparison is to lose sight of the subtlety of literary creation. In wanting to "musicalize fiction" Huxley wants to insist that life is not, realistically speaking, the linear progression of a single perspective; rather it is a composite mixture of multiple points of view which need to be made known in order that we may better understand the complex layers of meaning inherent in a situation. In this respect, Huxley's contrapuntal approach in Point Counter Point,

9. Andre Gide, The Counterfeiters, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966, p. 171.

10. But for a brief discussion of the issue see Meckier, op. cit., pp. 137-141.

while not, perhaps, being particularly innovative, is nevertheless central to his life-long search for the elusive synthesis by which conflicting dichotomies are resolved through integration.

In "Vulgarity in Literature" (1931) Huxley distinguishes several types of vulgarity. He admits to having been accused of being vulgar himself - especially in his bold descriptions of certain physiological functions (we recall, for instance, little Phil's excursion to the toilet in Point Counter Point) - but states that "The fact that many people should be shocked by what he writes practically imposes it as a duty upon the writer to go on shocking them." (MN, p. 294). This provides Huxley with a rationale for what he seems to be continually doing in his own novels. Admittedly modern psychology makes us less squeamish about actions which our Victorian ancestors considered private and unmentionable. In his desire to render truth truthfully, the modern writer has, no doubt, to describe incidents which may be extremely unpleasant and which readers may find highly offensive. There are, however, limits to the liberties a writer can take. When Huxley allows a dog to fall from an aeroplane onto the roof where a couple are making love, we may rightly accuse him of shocking for its own sake. The reader might well have been spared this horrible incident in Eyeless in Gaza.

This desire to shock, to incorporate gratuitous actions into a novel in order to hammer a "truth" home also constitutes a kind of vulgarity in literature. "For the self-conscious artist," says Huxley, "there is a most extraordinary pleasure in knowing exactly what the results of showing off and protesting too much must be and



then... proceeding, deliberately and with all the skill at his command, to commit precisely those vulgarities, against which his conscience warns him and which he knows he will afterwards regret." (MN, pp. 296-297). Huxley is almost never vulgar in the common sense of the word; but it is not inaccurate to suggest that on occasion he falls into the trap of "showing off and protesting too much." He tends to get away with this because he is mainly writing about ideas, but every so often we get the impression that his novels may have been much better if he had been a little more restrained in pouring forth his erudition and his beliefs. Insofar as the beliefs expressed so insistently in his novels represent his earnest quest for coming to terms with himself and with the world, they may be held to serve an important function (that is, they underline the seriousness of the quest via emphasis) but often they become merely intellectual postures, engaged in for the sake of fortuitous pleasure.

Huxley's novels, like those of most other writers, contain numerous faults but it is not necessary to explore these in great detail, since the main concern here is with the salient features of the novels. Current criticism of the novels remains as ambivalent in its judgement as were the contemporary reviews when the novels first appeared. Huxley has tended to attract somewhat extreme responses with regard to his novelistic techniques and this has invariably led to a blurring of the issues. This important question, however, has only a passing relevance to our study since it is with his ideas, rather than their demonstration, that we are chiefly concerned.

(ii)

Like the first novels of so many writers, Crome Yellow (1921) anticipates Huxley's later novels in several ways. The Peacockian technique with its country-house setting and wit and satire apart, there is the eccentricity of characters and the obsession with human nature's inability to cope with reality which recur consistently in the novels. Several of the characters in Crome Yellow re-appear modified in the later novels and the chief theme - integration - underlines Huxley's perennial preoccupation. The search for integration now appears in a form which will allow Huxley free play of character and environment. Crome Yellow is a short, but remarkable novel; written when Huxley was only twenty-seven years old it highlights several of the problems with which we have seen him wrestling in the poems and the short stories.¹¹ The novel has been related to Eliot's Wasteland and praised for its eloquent portrayal of the post-war mood.¹² Certainly the novel is impressive for its power to evoke an atmosphere of futile living; an atmosphere in which, paradoxically, so much seems to take place and yet we realise that somehow all that takes place is really meaningless and ineffectual. People interact but without making any real contact; nothing that is attempted or performed results in worthwhile permanence. The whole atmosphere is wrought with a kind of decadence

11. Peter Firchow in fact claims that the novel grew out of two stories Huxley had written and published in 1920. See Firchow, op. cit., pp. 48-51.

12. Cf. Marion Montgomery, "Lord Russell and Madame Sesostris," Georgia Review, Volume 28 (1974), pp. 269-282.

which, save for the light comedy of the novel, underlines the malaise of the period. "A futile proceeding. But one must have something to do," says Denis Stone (CY, p. 1), and this effectively sums up the general mood.

Crome Yellow is written from the point of view of Denis Stone, an "agonizingly conscious" (CY, p. 2) young poet-novelist of twenty-three. Denis is recognisably a self-portrait; and the novel is, no doubt, a fictionalised account of what Huxley must have experienced at the Morrell household in Garsington when he was there during the War.¹³ Denis Stone is but the first of a series of novelistic self-portraits; Huxley cannot help but project himself in his work. From Denis Stone through Philip Quarles of Point Counter Point to Will Farnaby in Island, we find Huxley constantly featuring in his novels; appearing as their dominant character through whose perspectives the novels are written. But these self-portraits are not without criticism. In his search for the integrated life Huxley is ever-ready to accept correction and change. He is not afraid to alter his viewpoints or satirise his own shortcomings. Because he is such a sensitive person, we also get Huxley's response to and criticism of our age in the self-portraits. Collectively, the novels represent a modern-day odyssey. It will be our purpose to examine critically the development of the Huxley-hero as he pursues his goal.

13. For a brief discussion of this issue see Sandra Darroch's book, Ottoline: The Life of Lady Ottoline Morrell, New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1975, pp. 216-220. See also, Aldous Huxley, Sybille Bedford, pp. 121-123.

The chief obstacle in Denis Stone's pursuit of his goal - to get Anne to respond to his affections - is what he terms "twenty tons of ratiocination" (CY, p. 24). He is immensely learned, having amassed an incredible amount of facts and quotations from his reading "Great thick books about the universe and the mind and ethics" (CY, p. 24). In the world of ideas Denis is master of himself; it is when it comes to practical living that he flounders. In the world of everyday living the sharp clarity of ideas had little relevance. Life, as he realises, is "horribly complicated," (CY, p. 24) and can only be understood if he rids himself of the burden of his literary education. Unlike Anne, Denis simply cannot accept life as it comes. Because he has "ready made ideas about everything" (CY, p. 24) he cannot take anything for granted. "Beauty, pleasure, art, women - I have to invent an excuse, a justification for everything that's delightful. Otherwise I can't enjoy it with an easy conscience." (CY, p. 25).

"Enjoy" and "easy conscience" betray Denis's vexation. His is the pursuit of pleasure to be reconciled with the higher virtue of ethical responsibility? The question has no relevance for Ivor Lombard who enjoys the embrace of both Anne and Mary without any qualms: "Anne or Mary: Mary or Anne. It didn't seem to make much difference which it was." (CY, p. 117). Nor will the question have significance for one like Scogan for whom the cosmos holds "no ultimate point" (CY, p. 209). Both Lombard and Scogan are presented as being independent of their environment; their most striking characteristic is perhaps their innate indifference to everything

but their own pleasure. For Lombard, pleasure resides in the women he can so easily master and for Scogan pleasure resides in propounding the virtues of Applied Science and the Rational State. Men like Lombard and Scogan appear to have successfully adjusted their lives to the spirit of the age; but we are appalled by their behaviour or by their lop-sided approach to life. Lombard is extremely callous and can have no real feelings of love. His relationship with Mary Bracegirdle means nothing to him. "Crome had been a little incident, an evanescent bubble on the stream of his life; it belonged already to the past." (CY, p. 148). And Scogan, the arch representative of scientific reasoning, must dissect every human being he meets into one of the first six Caesars. (CY, p. 109). Humanity, for him is a vast reservoir of scientific interest.

Denis cannot adjust to life the way Lombard or Scogan do; he is at once far too sensitive and far too imaginative to imbibe even a modicum of their indifference. Their behaviour leaves him aghast. But so, too, does his own behaviour. He wants to possess Anne, to tell her how much he desires her, but lacks the courage to do so. His mind shouts "What I need is you" (CY, p. 26) but "not a sound issued from his lips." (CY, p. 26). Being the incorrigible romantic, Denis lives in the closeted world of books; feeling adequate only when he can quote an appropriate phrase he has memorised. When he is chidden by Anne for quoting once too often, Denis replies, "It's the fault of one's education." (CY, p. 23).

Given Huxley's background it is easy to sympathise with Denis's problem. Sir Julian Huxley records in his Memories how "The Whole

climate of the Edwardian age" fostered a conflict between "instinct and reason."¹⁴ This, essentially, is also Huxley's problem, foisted on to the Denis of Crome Yellow. Gerald Heard has told us how Huxley's descent "both on his father's and his mother's side brought down on him a weight of intellectual authority and a momentum of moral obligations."¹⁵ Denis's "twenty tons of ratiocination" is similar to Huxley's "weight of intellectual authority." Huxley himself confesses that "As a young man I cared supremely for knowledge for its own sake." (Letters, p. 474) and further that "Born a spectator I should make the poorest performer" (JP, p. 236). We know how observant and keen a spectator Denis is and we also know how dismally he fares when it come to performance. The episode of his wanting to help carry the injured Anne in imitation of what he had seen on the cinema provides its own judgement. (CY, pp. 120-121).

The "moral obligations" Heard mentions are revealed in a different guise. Denis has to convince himself that women are "the broad highway to divinity" (CY, p. 25) before he can indulge himself. His moral scruples do not allow him, unlike Anne, to enjoy the pleasant things and avoid the nasty ones. (CY, p. 25). These attributes may not, indeed, constitute "moral obligations" in the sense Heard is using the term, but they do point to a characteristic which can only be accounted for by a rather strict moral education.

14. Julian Huxley, Memories, New York: Harper & Row, 1970, p. 74.

15. Gerald Heard, "The Poignant Prophet," Kenyon Review, Volume 27 (1965), pp. 49-70.

When Denis sees Scogan acting as the fortune-teller at Crome's annual Charity Fair, he wishes he could perform, like Scogan; that is, throw off his conditioned character and take on any role that may be expedient. But this he is not able to do. His participation in the Fair turns out to be a fiasco, with Anne distributing free the poem he has written for the occasion. In a real sense Denis cannot "let go." He cannot summon enough courage to forget himself and live only for the moment; his thinking, his reasoning is constantly intervening and interrupting his actions. This leaves him ineffectual; the product of an overcultured sensibility.

We can argue that the crux of the Denis-Huxley dilemma lies in the clash between culture and anarchy. Huxley's family inheritance included not only the scientific rationalism of Thomas Huxley but also the earnest and rigorous stress on Hellenism as a response to the modern world championed by Matthew Arnold. This conflict is not just one of temperament; it encapsulates an entire attitude of life. Arnold had been distressed by the loss of the "Sea of Faith" and the undermining of political and moral authority by the forces of anarchy. "Anarchy" for Arnold consisted primarily in the "mechanical treatment of the idea of personal liberty."¹⁶ When personal conduct becomes an end in itself and ceases to be an instrument for the attainment of the whole, good, life, then the roots of anarchy have begun to set in. The results of anarchy were confusion and sterility in a profound sense. "Culture," on the

16. Lionel Trilling, Matthew Arnold, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1955, p. 259.

other hand, was a "moral orientation, involving will, imagination, faith" and constituted "the whole personality in search of the truth."¹⁷ The cultured individual seeks to realise his complete humanity without obliterating the crucial difference between means and ends. Culture dictates a whole way of life based on reason and grace; anarchy is its undoing. It is not irrelevant to posit the argument that Huxley, like Arnold, is caught in the conflict between culture and anarchy. Where Arnold manages, not very comfortably though, to get out of the web through an insistence on the revival of Hellenism, Huxley becomes tangled in it. It is very revealing, and not a little touching, that in describing his own precarious existence Huxley quotes the famous lines from Arnold's poem "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse": "I was born wandering between two worlds; one dead, the other powerless to be born, and have made, in a curious way, the worst of both." (Letters, p. 476).

Whether or not Huxley ultimately makes the worst of both worlds is a matter of debate; but Denis certainly does. His culture, if it was an adequate instrument for integrated existence, should not leave him continually on the brink of anxiety and apprehension. Further, Denis's self-sufficiency collapses under the critical eye of Jenny, the deaf keeper of the red note-book. "It put beyond a doubt the fact that the outer world really existed." (CY, p. 174).

Denis is deeply hurt by his discovery of the insight that Jenny has into the characters that people Crome. But he has learnt

17. Ibid., p. 265.

that "The individual is not a self-supporting universe. There are times when he comes into contact with other individuals, when he is forced to take cognizance of the existence of other universes beside himself." (CY, p. 177). The statement is, of course, contrived, but it radically modifies his earlier postulation that "We are all parallel lines" (CY, p. 21). People did make contacts, but the contacts did not always prove desirable.

Denis cannot bring himself to live the way of anarchy - the way of Mary, Anne or Lombard but the very sensibility which prevents him from doing so also betrays his lack. Refuge in books, for example, is acceptable if it helps one to lead a happier life. Thus Henry Wimbush finds fulfilment in researching the exotic history of Crome and living amidst "the pleasures of private reading and contemplation." (CY, p. 205). But then Wimbush lives in the past and cannot really be bothered about the present or the future. Denis is both too young and too contemporary to follow Wimbush; for him it is the present that matters most. Indeed it is because he cannot cope with the present, cannot succeed in his amorous intentions on Anne, that he retreats from Crome.

In Crome Yellow no single character really provides any sane answer to the problem of living. The mistress of Crome, Priscilla becomes wrapt up in "New Thought and the Occult" (CY, p. 8) with her mentor Barbecue-Smith consoling her with his Pipe Lines to the Infinite. The rector, Bidiham, is bigoted and in his orthodoxy becomes a figure of abject ridicule. Gombauld, appears to preserve some measure of integrity by combining his art with frolicksome pastimes. And yet, he, too, has difficulties in relating to people.

His relationship with Anne, for example, is vexed with a savagery which Anne finds distasteful. Anne herself leads a bored and boring existence; her hedonism not providing her with any genuine happiness: "If you only knew how gross and awful and boring men are when they try to make love and you don't want them to make love" (CY, p. 155) Anne tells Gombauld, anticipating her betters - Mary Viveash of Antic Hay and Lucy Tantamount of Point Counter Point. Mary's naive idealism is shattered by Lombard's cruel insensitivity. And Scogan truncates himself from humanity by his extremely skeptical pose. It is a pitiful spectacle to watch, even if it is comically rendered. The world of Crome Yellow is a weary world in which both old and young, men and women, romanticists and realists, have all lost the ability to live wholly and harmoniously. In their dreary existence, the characters in Crome Yellow amplify the ethos which paralysed the western world after the first World War. Huxley's search for integration could hardly prove meaningful in such an environment.

(iii)

Huxley's second novel, Antic Hay (1923) renders the malaise of the period even more forcefully than Crome Yellow. This is largely due to the fact that Antic Hay is a deliberate attempt at portraying the confusion and the meaninglessness rife at the time it was written. Crome Yellow is, in the words of Angus Wilson, "idyllic, pastoral, bucolic"¹⁸ but Antic Hay, as Huxley wrote to his

18. Angus Wilson in Robert Kuehn, op. cit., p. 23.

father, "is intended to reflect ... the life and opinions of an age which has seen the violent disruption of almost all the standards, conventions and values current in the previous epoch."

(Letters, p. 224). That Huxley succeeded in his intention is vouched for by the popularity of the novel. John Montgomery writing about the period, states that Huxley was "probably the most representative writer of his time" and remarks:

Antic Hay, a satirical masterpiece taking its title from one of Marlowe's couplets, was set in post-war London in the years of disillusionment and excess in which the old values were submerged in a tidal wave of cynicism. The characters were portrayed as living a crazy life, artists adrift, intellectuals who had lost their way, women trying to forget their griefs in the pursuit of pleasure. Huxley's rakes and escapists were drawn with such precision and colour that many of his readers thought he approved of their attitude to life.¹⁹

There is in the novel the sense of a heady freedom which reduces the characters to the satyrs of Marlowe's couplet: "My men like satyrs grazing on the lawns/Shall with their goat-feet dance the antic hay." The novel deals the death-blow to Victorian morality - (and to Arnold's Culture) - and superbly portrays the sense of futility which accompanies purposeless pursuits (Arnold's Anarchy writ large).

In Ends and Means (1938) Huxley writes about the "philosophy of meaninglessness" which attracted the young of his time. He comments that the philosophy was "essentially an instrument of liberation" and goes on to say:

19. John Montgomery, The Twenties, op. cit., p. 205.

The liberation we desired was simultaneously liberation from a certain political and economic system and liberation from a certain system of morality. We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom; we objected to the political and economic system because it was unjust. The supporters of these systems claimed that in some way they embodied the meaning (a Christian meaning, they insisted) of the world. There was one admirably simple method of confuting these people and at the same time justifying ourselves in our political and erotic revolt: we could deny that the world had any meaning whatsoever. (EM, p. 273)

The initial rebelliousness marked a strong reaction to the bigotry of Victorian morality. It was protest couched in cynicism:

One 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 theophysics and theo-chemistry? Why not that ingenious toy, the theotrope or wheel of gods? Why not a monumental theodrome? (AH, p. 7)

And yet as Antic Hay so memorably shows, the adoption of the philosophy of meaningless did not yield anything positive. At the close of the novel we come across those often-quoted words that sum-up the tedium of it all:

"To-morrow," said Gumbriel at last, meditatively.
"To-morrow," Mrs Viveash interrupted him, "will be as awful as today." She breathed it like a truth from beyond the grave prematurely revealed, expiringly from her death-bed within. (AH, p. 254)

"It was the manifestly poisonous nature of the fruits that forced me to reconsider the philosophical tree on which they had grown," says Huxley (EM, p. 275). The experiment in licence fails precisely because it becomes devoid of those qualities (such as love, loyalty, fidelity, grace, purpose, faith) which ennoble human existence. At the core of the malady lies the unresolved dichotomy between culture and anarchy, between reason and instinct, between ends and means. Theodore Gumbriel (Denis Stone out to perform) discovers that the

beaver-look can serve him as an excellent means to capture women but remains forlornly aware that it cannot enlarge his sympathies; cannot save him from glorying in the name of earwig.

Denis, in Crome Yellow, had been disquieted at the sight of "Hundreds of people, each with his own private face and all of them real, seperate, alive!" (CY, p. 188) and had indicated a preference for the smell of cows to that of human beings (CY, p. 195). In Antic Hay, the diabolist-sensualist Coleman comments on "seven million distinct and seperate individuals" and wishes he could "lead them all into that great hole of centipedes" (AH, pp. 56-57). A superficial reading of these pronouncements can lead a reader to suspect Huxley of loathing humanity, and he may, up to a point, be correct. But it is important to bear in mind that Huxley is not really endorsing the views of either Denis or Coleman; like Swift's Gulliver, both Denis and Coleman become objects of Huxley's irony and satire. Denis proves a total misanthrope at the Charity Fair; and Coleman's life does not go beyond a sordid debauchery with its "total pointlessness, futility, and above all its incredible tediousness." (AH, p. 186). Gumbril, the man on whom Antic Hay really centres, is horrified at the misery and the exploitation of the masses and ruminates: "Had one a right to be contented and well-fed, had one a right to one's education and good taste, a right to knowledge and conversation and the leisurely complexities of love?" (AH, p. 69). He becomes aware, but not enough to actually venture to do anything to remedy the situation. On the contrary - and the irony is unmistakable - he begins immediately to wallow in

his own love-less plight. Gumbril cannot effect any goodness into the world because he is not himself integrated; until and unless his own problems become settled there is no hope of his curing any problems of mankind.

Gumbril's own problem, reminiscent of Denis's, is basically the familiar one of not being able to fit theory into practice:

No, but seriously, Gumbril reminded himself, the problem was very troublesome indeed. God as a sense of warmth about the heart, God as exultation, God as tears in the eyes, God as a rush of power or thought - that was all right. But God as truth, God as $2 + 2 = 4$ - that wasn't so clearly all right. Was there any chance of their being the same? Were there bridges to join the two worlds? (AH, pp. 7-8)

Because Gumbril cannot reconcile the two-worlds of abstract generalisation and felt-experience, he becomes a skeptic, wanting to exist beyond good and evil. Part of his problem is that he does not have any strong convictions about anything. He professes to be interested in everything but as his father tells him to be interested in everything is the same as being interested in nothing. (AH, p. 20). It is significant that Gumbril, like Denis, puts the blame for his problems on education (AH, pp. 20-21). He feels that his education did not prepare him adequately for the world of practical affairs. To exist as an integrated whole a person needs not only knowledge but also understanding. While traditional education equipped people with abundant knowledge, it did not furnish them with understanding. Huxley's erudite heroes are endlessly groping for understanding; for fathoming life with a spontaneity which gives expression to the fullness of their being. Gumbril, for instance, cannot act spontaneously; he perpetually

hovers between alternatives and allows circumstances to master him. Not being master of his own self, he cannot direct his energies to any meaningful end. Gumbril knows; but because he is too engrossed in the artifice of becoming the Complete Man he cannot possibly understand. Huxley distinguishes between knowledge and understanding in the following way: "Knowledge is acquired when we succeed in fitting a new experience into the system of concepts based upon our old experiences. Understanding comes when we liberate ourselves from the old and so make possible a direct, unmediated contact with the new, the mystery, moment by moment, of our existence." (AA, p. 39). Understanding, unlike knowledge cannot be acquired or inherited. It connotes a readiness to live in the immediate present without undue fuss.

Part of Gumbril's education in understanding is provided by his relationship with Emily. Emily teaches him to accept the present for what it is:

"How unreal it is," Gumbril whispered. "Not true. This remote secret room. These lights and shadows out of another time. And you out of nowhere and I, out of a past utterly remote from yours, sitting together here, together - and being happy. That's the strangest thing of all. Being quite senselessly happy. It's unreal, unreal."

"But why," said Emily, "why? It's here and happening now. It is real."

"It all might vanish, at any moment," he said.

Emily smiled rather sadly. "It'll vanish in due time," she said. "Quite naturally, not by magic; it'll vanish the way everything else vanishes and changes. But it's here now." (AH, p. 153)

The trouble with Gumbril is he cannot act spontaneously; cannot take things as they present themselves. Earlier in the novel we get this revealing passage:

"I never arrange anything," said Gumbril, very much the practical philosopher. "I take things as they come." And as he spoke the words, suddenly he became rather disgusted with himself. He shook himself; he climbed up but of his own morass. "It would be better, perhaps, if I arranged things more," he added. (AH, p. 132)

One of the more sober lessons of the novel is that life does not answer itself to arrangements. The lesson is driven home hard to Gumbril himself when, despite prior arrangement, he is swayed by Mary Viveash not to visit Emily. The broken appointment symbolises the broken relationship; and with it Gumbril's failure to understand, to become whole. Emily, in her good-bye letter to Gumbril, makes the comment: "I saw that you didn't, you couldn't love me in anything like the same way as I loved you. I was only a curious adventure, a new experience, a means to some other end." (AH, p. 188). Emily wanted a wholeness, a commitment for which Gumbril was not prepared. Despite his attempt to become the Complete Man - and it is significant for us to note that in his most joyous moments with Emily he is without his beard - Gumbril remains hopelessly the Incomplete Man that he really is.²⁰ Education in understanding is to be the pivot for the integration of the Huxley-hero. Though attempts in this direction are made in the early novels, it is only from Eyeless in Gaza (1936) onwards - when the familiar guru-figure appears - that Huxley's search for integration becomes a viable educative process. The almost-mystical union Gumbril experiences with Emily during which the past is forgotten; the future abolished;

20. Cf. Marion Montgomery, "Aldous Huxley's Incomplete Man in Antic Hay," Discourse: A Review of Liberal Arts, Volume 3, No. 4 (October 1960), pp. 227-232.

"there is only this dark and everlasting moment" (AH, p. 156) is a fore-runner of the mystical unions that take place in Island (1962) where education in understanding has been perfected to a high degree.

At least one character in Antic Hay is aware of the perils of living by the head alone. The artist Lypiatt vehemently protests that "Life only comes out of life, out of passion and feeling; it can't come out of theories." (AH, p. 78). The irony, as Myra Viveash sees it, is that Lypiatt's own paintings had "no life in them" (AH, p. 78). As in Crome Yellow almost every character in this novel too is treated ironically and exposed as the victim of his own eccentricity. The classic example, of course, is the physiologist Shearwater, peddaling furiously on his stationary bicycle to obtain enough sweat to see what bodily changes could take place due to loss of salt. Shearwater's obsession (mark his name "sheerwater") reduces him to a pathetic caricature; the mad scientist in his laboratory cut-off from the rest of mankind and ridiculed by the pointlessness of his own pursuits. Shearwater's wife Rosie carries on her random affairs being aware only of her pink underclothes. Mercaptan, the fake upholder of culture "What I glory in is the civilised, middle way between stink and asepsis" (AH, p. 47) - retreats from life into his boudoir of decadence where Gumbril's pneumatic trousers have no place because they are "Too Wellsian...too horribly Utopian." (AH, p. 47). Only Gumbril Senior and Mr Boldero retain any integrity; but the former lives in the past (like Henry Wimbush) glorying in the plans of

Christopher Wren and the latter thrives in business. Like the story of Sir Hercules in Crome Yellow which, by a parallel, forces attention on the moral bankruptcy of Crome, the play in Antic Hay (evoking Hamlet) becomes a mocking parody of the ethos which the novel analyses.²¹ Gumbril, the modern Hamlet, in adopting the disguise of the beard and succeeding through it, emblemises the triumph of appearance over reality. When, at one point in the novel, Gumbril begins to meditate on the quiet places in the mind (AH, pp. 146-147) it appears as though he is on the way to realising his true self. But his meditation ends with his thoughts firmly planted on Rosie's pink underclothing. Once again the Huxley-hero has failed to achieve integration; has failed to resolve the dichotomies of his existence.

(iv)

Those Barren Leaves (1925) marks a water-shed in Huxley's novelistic career. As we have noted earlier (pp. 97-98), the novel is an experiment in technique, "a chemical compound of all the categories" (TBL, p. 53). We have also noted how, at the time of writing this novel, Huxley explicitly confessed that "the mere business of telling a story interests me less and less" (Letters, p. 228). Those Barren Leaves was meant to be "a discussion and fictional illustration of different views of life" (Letters, p. 228). This intention is certainly realised. The lives of Mrs Lilian Aldwinkle, Mary Thriplow, Cardan, Chelifer, Calamy, amply illustrate the varied approaches to life that Huxley discusses in the novel.

21. See, also, Frederick Karl, "The Play Within The Novel in Antic Hay," Renaissance, Volume 13 (1961), pp. 59-68.

It is important to observe, however, that none of these individual life-styles (with the doubtful exception of Calamy) prove satisfactory; none of them are adequate for the integrated life Huxley is seeking. But if the desired synthesis is not actually found, the novel still comes very close to providing an answer which Huxley would be increasingly involved with. Where the first two novels only hinted at the possible directions which the Huxley-hero might take to achieve some equilibrium, in Those Barren Leaves Huxley begins to chart the route which he would later come to advocate as being the answer to a harmonious and meaningful existence. In this respect the novel initiates a new stage in Huxley's quest, and the shift toward a more serious preoccupation with the theme makes Those Barren Leaves central to our study.

Now, while it is true, as some critics have observed,²² that Calamy, Cardan and Chelifer are complementary characters and appear as self-portraits of the author, we must, nevertheless, maintain that it is Calamy on whom Huxley's quest is firmly centred. Calamy is the natural follow-up of Gumbriel. Antic Hay ends with Gumbriel, quite bored, vaguely continuing his meaningless existence. Calamy, in Those Barren Leaves, is fed-up with such a life and yearns for something more valuable. "I'm beginning to have had enough of sports, whether indoor or out-door" he tells Cardan. "I'd like to find some more serious occupation." (TBL, p. 70). He admits that his search for this serious occupation is frequently thwarted by an

22. See, for example, Charles Holmes, op. cit., pp. 61-64.

almost irrational inclination to do precisely those things he knows he ought not to. "I don't like running after women, I don't like wasting my time in futile social intercourse, or in the pursuit of what is technically known as pleasure. And yet for some reason and quite against my will I find myself passing the greater part of my time immersed in precisely these occupations. It's an obscure kind of insanity." (TBL, pp. 71-72). He is distressed by his own behaviour and wishes he could find a way by which he could bring more purpose into his life. It is telling that Huxley should describe Calamy's problem as an "obscure kind of insanity." The insanity is both cause and agent, product and victim, of the looming dichotomy between culture and anarchy. It is "obscure" because it is hard to pin-down; it refuses to yield to any simplistic analysis. The origins of the problem (of the dichotomy) are as complex and as vague as are its manifestations. Calamy, like Huxley, is a misfit. Aware of his profound dissatisfaction he becomes anxious about the state of his being. But he cannot yet formulate an answer and so meanwhile continues a non-committal existence at Mrs Aldwinkle's summer palace of the Cybo Malaspina. Cardan and Chelifer serve as the chief foils to Calamy's search. They present two strong variations to the riddle of existence and by their presence help Calamy define his own problem more sharply. Peter Firchow, who has made a study of the novel's nomenclature, writes that "Significantly, Calamy's name is the only one that refers directly to a human being or activity."²³ A "Calamist" is someone

23. Peter Firchow, op. cit., p. 90.

who plays a reed (calamus = reed) and is, therefore, creative. This helps to emphasise and confirm Calamy's centrality in the novel.

The setting of Those Barren Leaves is similar to that of Crome Yellow. At Mrs Aldwinkle's house are gathered some very distinct character types. There is, to begin with, Mrs Aldwinkle herself. She is grotesque and represents culture unsupported by nature. Sophisticated and self-styled custodian of art and culture she thrives on minding other peoples' affairs. "She wanted every one to love, constantly and complicatedly. She liked to bring people together, to foster tender feelings, to watch the development of passion, to assist - when it happened; and Mrs Aldwinkle was always rather disappointed when it did not - at the tragic catastrophe." (TBL, pp. 77-78). She is more dynamic and more complex than Mrs Wimbush of Crome Yellow but both seem to live quite vicariously. Aldwinkle, in particular, has a penchant for meddling in the lives of others and making others feel obliged to her. When Irene, her young niece, decides to marry her lover Hovenden and so escape her patronising, Mrs Aldwinkle tries emotional blackmail as a means to preventing Irene from doing what she has decided. Though we sympathise with her in her loneliness this does not blind us to the streak of perversity which prevents Mrs Aldwinkle from participating wholly in the joys of others. When her designs on the younger men whom she invites to her palace do not bear fruit, she wallows in self-pity. "They're all going, she was thinking, they're all slipping away. First Chelifer, now Calamy. Like all the rest. Mournfully she looked back over her

life. Everybody, everything, had always slipped away from her. She had always missed all the really important, exciting things; they had invariably happened, somehow, just round the corner, out of her sight. The days were so short, so few now. Death approached, approached." (TBL, p. 350). A victim of her own delusions she does not have the esoterics of a Barbecue-Smith to divert her from her sorrows. She thus becomes a pathetic figure; having realised too late that she cannot stay young and amorous forever.

Cardan, of Mrs Aldwinkle's generation and her former lover, is a more refined version of Scogan. He is well-informed, witty, and adds zest and sparkle to the conversations that take place at the Cybo Malaspina. "I made my entry," he recounts,

in the late fifties - almost a twin of The Origin of Species.... I was brought up in the simple faith of nineteenth-century materialism; a faith untroubled by doubts and as yet unsophisticated by that disquieting scientific modernism which is now turning the staunchest mathematical physicists into mystics. We were all wonderfully optimistic then; believed in progress and the ultimate explicability of everything in terms of physics and chemistry, believed in Mr Gladstone and our own moral and intellectual superiority over every other age. (TBL, p. 35)

He feels very skeptical about the modern age where "All's above-board and consequently boring" (TBL, p. 36). Being the thorough-going materialist that he is, Cardan finds it impossible to love anything permanently or deeply. He is a self-acknowledged parasite, having had his full-share of all the appetities. Though he strikes a learned pose, he does not attempt to use his learning to comprehend the essential problems besetting existence. Thus his exposition about the basic differences between the late nineteenth-century serves only to illustrate his remoteness from

the latter. For him life has no meaning beyond the purely materialistic and he finds Calamy's predicament amusing. He is forever poking fun and saying clever things; has no real spiritual convictions and is ready to exploit any situation to his own advantage. Unfortunately for him, his hope of getting wealthy by marrying the idiot Grace Elver is dashed by her sudden and violent death. The joke, for once, turns on him and ironically his materialistic philosophy offers little consolation. All that Cardan can do confronted by Elver's gratuitous death is rationalise even further his already lop-sided view of existence:

But the greatest tragedy of the spirit is that sooner or later it succumbs to the flesh. Sooner or later every soul is stifled by the sick body; sooner or later there are no more thoughts, but only pain and vomiting and stupor. The tragedies of the spirit are mere struttings and posturings on the margin of life, and the spirit itself is only an accidental exuberance, the products of spare vital energy, like the feathers on the head of a hoopoo or the innumerable populations of useless and foredoomed spermatozoa. The spirit has no significance; there is only the body. When it is young, the body is beautiful and strong. It grows old, its joints creak, it becomes dry and smelly; it breaks down, the life goes out of it and it rots away. However lovely the feathers on a bird's head, they perish with it; and the spirit, which is a lovelier ornament than any, perishes too. The farce is hideous, thought Mr Cardan, and in the worst of bad taste. (TBL, p. 334)

This cynicism is Cardan's downfall. His philosophy becomes ludicrous in the face of harsh reality; his hedonism fails to lend him the human supports he needs in order to transcend his simplistic approach to life. Elver's death only hardens him in his belief that ultimately "one's soul should inevitably succumb to one's body." (TBL, p. 367).

Peter Bowering in his study of the novel, claims that "Huxley

had as yet no real answer to Cardan's problem."²⁴ The problem, stated simply, is whether life has a meaning beyond death. Cardan, being a materialist, insists that death cannot be transcended. Huxley's answer to Cardan's problem is, in part, contained in Cardan's own character. There is an existential tinge to Cardan's philosophy aimed at justifying his hedonistic, amoral behaviour. But the nihilism inherent in such a philosophy - a nihilism which breeds its peculiar brand of cynicism - encourages the kind of callousness which Cardan exemplifies. He cannot, for example, appreciate beauty for its own sake; he cannot accept human love and warmth without rationalising these qualities out of human relationships. His attitude towards everything is limited and defined by his selfishness; a selfishness which eventually backfires. Granted that a "real answer" to Cardan's problem was to come only much later, Huxley makes an earnest attempt to formulate an initial answer through Calamy. "Perhaps, if you spend long enough and your mind is the right sort of mind, perhaps you really do get, in some queer sort of way, beyond the limitations of ordinary existence." (TBL, p. 368). The answer is, admittedly, highly qualified and very crude in its phraeseology. But where Calamy is prepared to think hard, Cardan just cannot. His mind is not the right sort of mind. As soon as it begins to think seriously about anything - as distinct from merely rattling on about any subject under discussion - Cardan's mind gets bogged down by its own obsession: death. "Think,

24. Peter Bowering, Aldous Huxley: A Study of the Major Novels, London: Athlone Press, 1968, p. 68.

think; and in the end life itself will lose all its savour; death will corrupt it; the flesh will seem a shame and a disgustfulness. Think of death hard enough and you will come to deny the beauty and the holiness of life" (TBL, p. 286). As Calamy realises, the difficulty with Cardan's thinking is that it has created for itself a dubious dichotomy: that between flesh and spirit. Cardan asserts that one exists at the expense of the other. But in point of fact, what Huxley seems to be implying, is that they co-exist. Cardan's problem here is a remnant of the problem we saw Huxley treating in his early poems. In Calamy's reflections on the subject we discern a shift in Huxley's own outlook. For Calamy, "there's a parallel between the moral and the physical world." (TBL, p. 377). The picture Huxley seems to be approximating is not one of either-or, but both: inclusiveness rather than exclusiveness.

Chelifer offers an interesting contrast both to Cardan and Calamy. He is a poet, apparently sensitive to human emotions and aware of the gulf between intention and act. His affair with Barbara Waters has left him a wiser and a sadder man, as the fragments from his autobiography make clear. "I was learning that it is possible to be profoundly and slavishly in love with someone for whom one has no esteem, whom one does not like, whom one regards as a bad character and who, finally, not only makes one unhappy but bores one. And why not, I might now ask, why not? That things should be like this is probably the most natural thing in the world." (TBL, p. 141). Through his association with the young and lusty Barbara Chelifer he learns the advantages of spontaneous existence. The lesson he learns is salutary: "It was then that I

learned, since the future was always bound to be a painful repetition of what had happened before, never to look forward for comfort or justification, but to live now and here in the heart of human reality, in the very centre of the hot dark, hive." (TBL, p. 145). The enlightened few - the ones who have gained some understanding of life - are for Chelifer, "irrelevant to the great reality, they are lies like the ideals of love, like dreams of the future, like belief in justice." (TBL, p. 150). Armed with such spurious consolations Chelifer continues his existence in "Gog's Court, the navel of reality" (TBL, p. 98). Chelifer is intelligent and his philosophical poise is in some ways more challenging than Cardan's. "No self-respecting man," he tells us, "can either accept unreflectingly or, having reflected upon it, irresponsibly run away from the realities of human life." (TBL, p. 108). But he himself does not accept the realities of Mrs Aldwinkle's motives in inviting him to stay with her. His admission that "My whole life is passed on the switchback; all my life is one unceasing slide through nothing" (TBL, p. 108) puts the final stamp on Chelifer's inability to understand better the nature of reality. Calamy terms him an "inverted sentimentalist," one who loves to gloat over life's horrors without seeing anything of value in existence. (TBL, p. 371). The nearest that Chelifer comes to experiencing life's joy is when he identifies himself spontaneously with the people and the surroundings while gaining consciousness immediately after his drowning. (TBL, pp. 153-159). For the rest he remains sadly entombed in the misguided ethos of the suburban bourgeoisie.

Like Chelifer, the novelist Mary Thriplow also lives a self-conscious double existence based on a desire to experience so-called reality in order to write novels. If Chelifer produces his unbearable, sentimental poems, Mary produces her psychological novels which become "irrelevant because they're written by someone who has ceased to exist." (TBL, p. 7). She feeds on other people's lives, devouring events, incidents and characters to incorporate into her books. It is not surprising that her books should mean so little to her. The elaborate mental process she goes through in preparation to meet Calamy - and the consequent embarrassment at her miscalculations - point to a serious flaw in her personality design and presentation. "Genuineness only thrives in the dark, like celery" she tells Calamy. (TBL, p. 11). Ironically her statement shows her up: she can never be genuine when she is with people. She puts on a mask, plays games and derives the utmost pleasure in obtaining material for her novels through this vicarious means. Her emotions get whipped to a pitch only to be recorded in her notebook. Huxley is unremitting in his denunciation of Mary's artificial existence - she deceives; but her greatest problem is self-deception. Trying to exist simultaneously on two quite incompatible levels - that of a human being involved in a situation and that of a novelist studying and analysing the situation in order to extract material - she fails to authenticate herself. Like Chelifer, she rationalises her position: "The more sensitive one is ... the more necessary it is for one to wear a mask." (TBL, p. 48). But no matter what mask she wears she remains pitifully unhappy. "Being by nature a good deal more acute and

self-analytical than most of the men and women who indignantly castigate their own invertebrate sins, Miss Thriplow was not unaware, while she criticised others, of the similar defect in herself." (TBL; p. 265). To compensate, she "desired to have as much experience, to make as many contacts with external reality as possible.... Thus a love affair with Calamy had seemed to her fraught with the most interesting emotional possibilities."

(TBL; pp. 265-266). Such a self-consciousness is appalling and sure to damn one to misery. Feelings are crippled and relationships dehumanised by such a cerebral approach to life. The human person is made secondary to a theory, a curiosity or to mere appetite. Because such existence is corrupt at the very core, there has to be ceaseless activity to prevent the self from becoming too aware of the real nature of its existence. Towards the end of the novel, Mary Thriplow writes in her notebook: "One must also be passive, must receive. That's what I fail to do. I flutter about, I fill my mind with lumber, I make it impossible for myself to receive" (TBL, pp. 356-357). Insofar as she is a victim of the war - the war which deprived her of her husband Jim - we can sympathise with Mary's problem. But she tries to capitalise on her plight and this is what alienates her from us. Being unable to give any genuine warmth or love, she does not receive any other. She is hurt when she realises Calamy does not love her, but she immediately reduces him to a "pickle, waiting to be consumed whenever she should be short of fictional provisions" (TBL; p. 359). Her frenzied visions of God as a spirit (TBL, pp. 359-360), ridiculously give way in her imagination to the rut into which she has hopelessly fallen: "What

about a story of a dentist who falls in love with one of his patients (TBL, p. 361). What Huxley is implying through Mary is that we cannot harmonise our existence unless and until we can sufficiently appreciate the authentic reality outside ourselves as being important for its own sake. If Mary Thriplow had been less caught-up in her own obsession to play roles, to be a literary vampire, she may have been redeemed.

Thriplow, Chelifer and Cardan are the prime examples of those barren leaves that populate the Cybo Malaspina:

Enough of Science and Art;
Close up those barren leaves;
Come forth, and bring with you a heart
That watches and receives.

(Wordsworth, "The Tables Turned")

The lives of these characters are barren because they can yield no viable meaning for existence. Reality, for them, is a game that has to be played and the chief instrument to play it with is the intellect. In one way or another they minimise the significance of reality rather than enlarge it. They live one-sided lives; distanced from the world around them by their insistence on not recognising meaning beyond themselves, they lead a parasitic existence which denies them any opportunity of becoming integrated human beings. In Huxley's search for integration they represent a retardation rather than a progress.

The character who develops most in Those Barren Leaves is Calamy. As noted earlier, he is the Huxley-hero of the novel on whom the search for integration is centred. Right from the beginning Calamy is aware of the gaps in his life. His travels have only confirmed his belief that something is seriously amiss with

civilisation: "After having been away, as I have, for a year or so, to come back to civilisation and find the same old people doing the same idiotic things - it's astonishing" (TBL, p. 8). He expects changes, but change is possible only when people become genuinely aware of their shortcomings. In the context of Those Barren Leaves only Calamy himself fulfils this requirement necessary for change. "To be torn between divided allegiances is the painful fate of almost every human being." (TBL, p. 57). Though the statement is meant to highlight Irene's conflict, it has a larger relevance, not the least for Calamy. He is very conscious of the conflict that rages within him:

Passion, Calamy was thinking, passion.... One could have enough of it, good Lord! He sighed. If one could say: Never again, and be sure of meaning what one said, it would be a great comfort. Still, he reflected, there was something rather perversely attractive about this Thriplow woman. (TBL, p. 47)

His affair with Mary Thriplow forces him into an initial compromise: "For either you're in love with the woman or you aren't" (TBL, p. 69). He, obviously, is not in love with Mary. For him the relationship is an interesting physiological and psychological excursion. Hence the perversity. Within the depths of his own heart Calamy knows that the relationship is devoid of any real contact. He yearns for the "great secret, the beauty and the mystery" of existence. (TBL, p. 267). He knows, too, like Gumbril of Antic Hay, that to realise his quest "one must abandon oneself completely" to it. "There could be no compromise." (TBL, p. 268). This hard-truth underlines an important step in Huxley's search for integration. Denis in Crome Yellow and Gumbril in Antic Hay had wanted fulfilment

but not without compromise. Denis could not be spontaneous without becoming ludicrous; Gumbril can only succeed with his put-on beard. But Calamy confronts the painful truth squarely: There could be no compromise. Being weak, he carries on the pointless relationship with Mary Thriplow; all the time conscious of his need to free himself from her. He asks the right questions about the "dozen parallel worlds" (TBL, p. 346) that exist simultaneously to confound any naive theories we may have about existence. He even knows the way out of his predictions.

The mind must be open, unperturbed, empty of irrelevant things, quiet. There's no room for thoughts in a half-shut, cluttered mind. And thoughts won't enter a noisy mind; they're shy, they remain in their obscure hiding places below the surface, where they can't be got at, so long as the mind is full and noisy. Most of us pass through life without knowing that they're there at all. If one wants to lure them out, one must clear a space for them, one must open the mind wide and wait. And there must be no irrelevant preoccupations prowling around the doors. One must free oneself of those. (TBL, pp. 347-348)

In another context Huxley refers to Calamy's prescription for the good life as eliminating distractions which impede awareness of higher things.²⁵ What Calamy craves for is understanding as Huxley has defined it. For this end he needs solitude and contemplation; needs to withdraw himself from the meaningless hustle and bustle of life so that he can unravel some of the mystery of existence. This Calamy finally does. He moves out of Aldwinkle's palace and retires into a hill-side cottage from which he can meditate on the secret of existence. John Atkins has reminded us²⁶

25. Cf. Vedanta for the Western World, ed. Christopher Isherwood, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1963, pp. 105-108.

26. John Atkins, Aldous Huxley: A Literary Study, London: John Calder, 1965, p. 128ff.

that in Along the Road (1925) Huxley himself endorses Calamy's move:

Here at the heart of it, I thought, a man might begin to understand something about that part of his being which does not reveal itself in the quotidian commerce of life; which the social contacts do not draw forth, spark-like, from the sleeping flint that is an untried spirit; that part of him, of whose very existence he is only made aware in solitude and silence. And if there happens to be no silence in his life, if he is never solitary, then he may go down into his grave without a knowledge of its existence, much less an understanding of its nature or realisation of its potentialities. (AR, p. 79)

We saw, when discussing Huxley's poetry, that for Huxley solitude and silence were concomitant for a larger understanding of life. The dichotomy between action and contemplation is frequently resolved by the assertion of contemplation at the expense of action. The same thing happens to Calamy. In his retreat from the Malaspina palace, he has opted for the quiet life; the life of an ascetic. The conflict between action and contemplation is not so much resolved as by-passed. Though Huxley's first attempt at a positive solution to the conflict occurs in Eyeless in Gaza (1936), Calamy's posture in Those Barren Leaves reveals a bent in Huxley's thinking which was to play an ever-important role in his later years. The concept of "maya," for instance, makes a definite appearance in the novel, (TBL, p. 368) indicating an early Oriental influence. Calamy's discussion of "reality" in the final pages of the novel also point to a preliminary formulation of the "perennial philosophy" which has today become indistinguishable from Huxley himself. When Calamy is attacked by Cardan about "the bosh your mystics talk about" (TBL, p. 368) Huxley anticipates his critics by making Calamy retort: "How is a man to give an account of something entirely un-

like the phenomena of known existence in a language invented to describe these phenomena?" (TBL, p. 368). Huxley is only too well aware of the limitations which language imposes on human understanding. In The Genius and the Goddess (1955) he discusses the issue at length. And in his Santa Barbara Lectures in 1959 - published posthumously as The Human Situation (1978) - he states: "In one of its functions, it may be said that language is a device for taking mysteriousness out of mystery." (HS; p. 178). Language, therefore, frequently inhibits a clear and precise expression of what is understood. One of the reasons why Calamy does not seem to be able to convince Cardan and Chelifer is because he is handicapped by language. In trying to talk about spiritual things to persons extremely skeptical about them, one is always faced with the problem of communication. As Huxley states in an essay, "From pure sensation the intuition of beauty, from pleasure and pain to love and the mystical ecstasy and death - all the things that are fundamental, all the things that, to the human spirit, are most profoundly significant, can only be experienced, not expressed. The rest is always and everywhere silence." (MN; p. 19). We must, however, add that Huxley constantly strives to sharpen the clarity of spiritual terminology. Another reason why Calamy does not succeed very well in conveying the truths he is fathoming is that he is still not clear in his own mind what he is about; he senses (and we may argue he intuitively knows) that the life he has chosen is far more valuable measured against that of Cardan or Chelifer but is not at this stage able to say precisely why.

We may confidently state that in Calamy Huxley's search for

integration has begun to show signs of that "mystical" apprehension of life which will eventually form the basis of the integrated personality.

In a letter written just after Those Barren Leaves was completed, Huxley states: "The main theme of its is the undercutting of everything by a sort of despairing skepticism and then the undercutting of that by mysticism." (Letters, p. 234). This leaves hardly any doubt as to the position Huxley has arrived at. Calamy's mystical leanings are endorsed and we prepare ourselves for a full-scale exploration of the potentialities latent in such an endeavour. Unfortunately, shortly after the publication of the novel, we find Huxley writing quite sadly to Naomi Mitchison: "I'm glad you liked the Leaves. They are all right, certainly; tremendously accomplished, but in a queer sort of way, I now feel, jejune and shallow and off the point. All I've written so far has been off the point. And I've taken such enormous pains to get off it; that's the stupidity. All this fuss in the intellectual void...." (Letters, p. 242). This repudiation reveals the seriousness with which Huxley attended to his own work. It also displays the deep-seated anxiety from which he suffered. Though the "fuss in the intellectual void" was not just of his own making, Huxley was ever-ready to accept the responsibility for it whenever it occurred in his writings. Bedford tells us that Huxley wrote Those Barren Leaves "during one of the most serene periods of his existence." (SB, p. 153). And yet the novel did not satisfy him. What was at the root of his dissatisfaction? Why did he write it off? For the answer to these questions we must quote at length from an important

letter Huxley writes about three months after Those Barren Leaves was published. The passage we quote shows very clearly that Huxley (like Calamy) was, at this stage of his writing career, confronting the very foundations of his problems and desperately trying to arrive at a synthesis which would validate human existence without undue exactions. As we read the passage we realise how honest and humble a man Huxley could be; and how profoundly he was moved to search for that elusive synthesis - integration - which would rescue man from the slough of his boring existence:

But for me the vital problem is not the mental so much as the ethical and emotional. The fundamental problem is love and humility, which are the same thing. The enormous difficulty of love and humility - a difficulty greater now, I feel, than ever; because men are more solitary now than they were; all authority has gone; the tribe has disappeared and every at all conscious man stands alone, surrounded by other solitary individuals and fragments of the old tribe, for which he feels no respect. Obviously, the only thing to be done is to go right through with the process; to realise individuality to the full, the real individuality, Lao Tszu's individuality, the Yogis' individuality, and with it the oneness of everything. Obviously! But the difficulty is huge. And meanwhile the world is peopled with miserable beings who are neither one thing nor the other; who are solitary and yet not complete individuals; conscious only of the worst part of themselves (that deplorable and characteristic self-consciousness of the present time that examines all that is good and beautiful until it discovers its opposite); and devilishly proud of what they regard as their marvellous independence and their acuteness of spirit. For them love and humility are impossible. And hence everything else of any value is also impossible of achievement. What's to be done about it? That's the great question. Some day I may find some sort of an answer. And then I may write a good book, or at any rate a mature book, not a queer sophisticatedly jejune book, like this last affair, like all the blooming lot, in fact. (Letters; pp. 245-246)

CHAPTER 4

THE NOVELS II: FROM POINT COUNTER POINT TO EYELESS IN GAZA

(i)

Both Point Counter Point (1928) and Brave New World (1932) - generally considered Huxley's most successful novels (cf. Watt, pp. 12-18) - do not, unhappily, advance the search for integration in any fundamental way. What they do, however, is illustrate two extreme modes of existence. Stated simply, these two extremes consist, on the one hand, of an existence dependent on too much choice, and on the other, on no choice. Every single character in Point Counter Point is given the option to determine his or her life, whereas in Brave New World this option is denied. Curiously enough, both novels underline a kind of victimisation, which reduces, rather than expands, the characters' existence. In Point Counter Point, with the possible exception of Rampion, characters become victims of their own individuality; and in Brave New World they become victims of a system. To the extent that an individual is a victim of his own obsessions or a victim of a given system over which he has no control, he remains devoid of the integrated existence which is Huxley's goal. If we use the dichotomy between self and the others as a frame of reference we may argue that in Point Counter Point "self" takes over and in Brave New World "others" take over. The synthesis is not achieved.

Calamy, at the end of Those Barren Leaves, had retreated from society to find an answer to the problem of harmonious living. But

withdrawal is hardly a viable solution. It isolates the individual and hence by-passes facets of living which the integrated person has to take into account. To have assented to Calamy's withdrawal would have been a backward step in Huxley's search, for, after all, withdrawal as a means to a wholesome life had been found to be inadequate even in the early poetry. A synthesis has to be found; and now Huxley attempts this by approaching the problem from a slightly different route. The new route seems to be the examination of the problem of integrated existence from the viewpoint of society rather than the individual. Instead of a retreat there is an immersion: Philip Quarles returns to the London of sophisticates from his journey to India to discover how precarious his situation is vis-a-vis those around him, and John Savage is brought into the Brave New World from his Reservation as part of a formal satiric device for judging society. Both characters feel misplaced and alien to the ethos of the society in which they find themselves. For Philip Quarles the problem is an internal one; he cannot relate comfortably with others because of a conflict in his own nature; the intellect and the emotion strive for supremacy thereby creating a rift in his being. With John Savage the problem is one of accepting the value system of the Brave New Worlders. He finds it impossible to assimilate within his own consciousness (which, unlike Philip Quarles's, is not torn by any internal strife) the reality of what he confronts.

The difficulties experienced by Philip Quarles and John Savage accentuate some of the pertinent issues at this stage of Huxley's search. Brave New World in particular, is important because in it

are portrayed the horrors attendant upon a system in which social and biological engineering are used by the State to create a docile, robot like society oblivious of its own plight. The society of Brave New World does indeed represent a form of integration where the citizens lead a completely blissful existence without the peril of dichotomy. Set against the kind of integrated unity which is Huxley's ideal, however, this form of integration appals and calls for immediate redress. The superficial bliss of an integrated existence dependent for its continuance on sedation ("soma") and ignorance is more terrifying to Huxley than is the non-integrated dichotomous existence of Philip Quarles. Quarles at least has his humanity; the Brave New Worlders have had theirs usurped. Hence John Savage's misanthropy and disgust, even if this consumes him. In Point Counter Point Quarles has at least the benefit of Rampion, who is there to offer a foil to the kind of life that Quarles leads. Through his sermons on the value of "harmonious all-round living" Rampion gains an importance in the novel which has to be understood in the context of Philip Quarles's burden. Where Quarles feels his outlook substantially modified for the better through his relation with Rampion (even though he does not seem able to really emulate Rampion), John Savage feels hopelessly cheated and betrayed by his relationship with Lenina on whom he had relied for some semblance of the humanity he sees abnegated in the Brave New World.

Both Point Counter Point and Brave New World expand the search for integration, taking in a wider frame of reference. They do not, however, bring Huxley any closer to his goal. We sense his acute

restlessness and anxiety at both the personal (Point Counter Point) and the social (Brave New World) level but he seems unable, at this juncture, to suggest any viable alternative to the problem of living. The novels certainly enlarge significantly our understanding of the problem and help us to appreciate better the complex nature of Huxley's search. We may put the matter differently and say that perhaps the search for integration is assisted by the mere fact of defining the extremes of the conflict.

(ii)

Point Counter Point, in particular, highlights Huxley's anxiety. The novel seems to have been begun shortly after Huxley's return from the world trip which he recounts in Jesting Pilate (1926). The trip had been most valuable. "I set out on my travels," Huxley tells us, "knowing, or thinking that I knew, how men should live, how be governed, how educated, what they should believe.... Now, on my return, I find myself without any of these pleasing certainties" (JP, p. 288). His visits to the many lands with their varied cultures had undercut many simplistic notions he may have cherished with regard to the achievement of the good life. But the journey also gave birth to two new convictions: "that it takes all sorts to make a world, and that the established spiritual values are fundamentally correct and should be maintained" (JP, p. 289). He further adds that though "travel brings a conviction of human diversity, it brings an equally strong conviction of human unity" (JP, p. 290). Huxley is here looking at macrocosms; at men against differing backgrounds and discovering their essential

sameness. For a moment the individual quest is shadowed by a larger consciousness, though insight is gained into the process by which the individual will eventually find his answer. "There is all the difference in the world," Huxley writes, "between believing academically, with the intellect, and believing personally, intimately, with the whole living self" (JP, p. 289). This comes at the end of the trip, when he is reflecting on the entire journey. It helps to confirm the new convictions he has arrived at; it foreshadows the understanding - as distinct from knowledge - which he would later advocate. The initial overconfidence and cynicism is mellowed by a new sense of human worth. When he had set out on the journey, he had stated that "moving bits of matter from one point of the world's surface to another" was man's whole activity (JP, p. 3). Now he realises that there is more to existence than the futility implied in that indictment. "Our sense of values is intuitive. There is no proving the real existence of values in any way that will satisfy the logical intellect" (JP, p. 290), Intellect and intuition, knowledge and understanding: Huxley recognises the dichotomy, even affirms their apparent incompatibility. This "truth" had dawned on him through lived experience in the course of his world trip. Hence, Point Counter Point's pre-occupations with integration, instead of beginning where Those Barren Leaves left off, centres, once again, on an intellectual exploration. Calamy's mysticism has, for the time being, been pushed aside.

The first intimations of Point Counter Point come from a letter Huxley wrote to his father in October 1926:

I am very busy and preparing for and doing bits of an ambitious novel, the aim of which will be a show piece of life, not only from a good many individual points of view, but also under its various aspects such as scientific, economic political, aesthetic, etc. The same person is simultaneously a mass of atoms, a physiology, a mind, an object with a shape that can be painted, a cog in the economic machine, a voter, a lover, etc., etc. I shall try to imply at any rate the existence of other categories of existence behind the ordinary categories employed in judging everyday emotional life. It will be difficult but interesting. (Letters, pp. 274-275)

"It will be difficult but interesting." The sentence is revealing. As we noticed earlier, Mary Thriplow in Those Barren Leaves was attempting something similar and yet had been disappointed in her efforts. Philip Quarles, Huxley's self-portrait in Point Counter Point, elaborates on the intention as well as trying to understand the difficulties involved. His "note-book" is full of his reflections and leaves little doubt about his predilections. The novel of ideas which Philip wants to write, for instance, is defeated almost at the moment of conception. Not only because it must be limited to the 0.01 per cent of the population - that percentage which has ideas - but also because it is a made-up affair: "Necessarily; for people who can reel off neatly formulated notions aren't quite real; they're slightly monstrous" (PCP, p. 410). The peculiar "monstrosity" of Point Counter Point itself was seized on by several reviewers when the novel was first published. Louis Kronenberger, for instance, stated:

His people are created statically, they almost never develop, they almost never influence one another, they almost never work together in the interests of a central theme or story. They speculate about life, rail against it, wound and weary one another. That is their function as people. And they call forth in the reader a moral protest against their kind, a moral abhorrence, or dismay, or indignation. That is their function as satire. (Watt, p. 164)

Ironically, Philip is his own best critic; he sees the merits as well as the demerits of the "musicalisation of fiction" which he attempts. In discussing the issue with his wife, Philip admits that the result of "multiplicity of eyes and multiplicity of aspects seen" is "a very queer picture indeed" (PCP, p. 266). Huxley seems to have had no illusions about the difficulties inherent in trying to see reality with "all eyes at once." A certain awkwardness was bound to be present and it is just as well that he acknowledged this. The fact that Point Counter Point has been vehemently discussed since its publication testifies to the novel's success, even if this success has been a problematic one. At least one critic, David Watson, goes so far as to claim that the novel belongs distinctly to the genre of the "modern satiric novel" in which "the techniques of the novel proper become inextricably mixed with those of traditional satire."¹ Whatever the technical achievement of the novel - and certainly the contrapuntal technique employed has received considerable praise - it can clearly be seen that Huxley had embarked on a difficult task. Though begun in 1926, the novel was completed only in May 1928. His letters of the period reveal an intense apprehension about its feasibility, and judging by the internal evidence (chiefly from Philip Quarles's note-book) we know that Huxley had expended a great deal of energy in writing it.

At least some of the difficulty which Huxley experienced in writing Point Counter Point can be attributed to the nature of its

1. David S. Watson, "Point Counter Point: The Modern Satiric Novel A Genre?", Satire Newsletter, Volume 6, No. 2, 1969, pp. 31-35.

content. As most critics of the novel have pointed out, the centre of the stage is occupied by Mark Rampion - the character through whom Huxley propounds (whether accurately or not is quite a different matter) the views of D.H. Lawrence. Rampion provides the index by which all the other characters are measured and thus becomes elevated almost to a novelistic demi-god. Cyril Connolly writes that "It needed all Mr Huxley's skill as a novelist to prevent Point Counter Point from being a shapeless tribute of admiration, in which the other characters were reformed as well."² Gumbriel Junior in Antic Hay had mused on the possibility of following a leader: "It must be pleasant, I should think, to hand oneself over to somebody else. It must give you a warm, splendid, comfortable feeling" (AH, p. 92). But he, unfortunately, "had never met anyone I felt I could whole-heartedly admire or believe in, never anyone I wanted to follow" (AH, p. 92). Using this as evidence, John Hawley-Roberts, has remarked that "as if in answer" to Gumbriel's wish, "along came D.H. Lawrence."³

Now, it is true that Huxley greatly loved and admired Lawrence. He had been so impressed with Lawrence that at their very first meeting he had agreed to become a member of the colony Lawrence thought of setting up in Florida. On another occasion, after a

2. Cyril Connolly, "Under Which King?", Living Age, Volume 341, February 1932, pp. 533-538. See also, G.K. Chesterton, "The End of the Moderns," London Mercury, Volume 27, January 1933, pp. 228-233. Chesterton considers both Huxley and Lawrence as being the two "outstanding talents" of their time but criticises them for embracing a philosophy of life which led them to an impasse.

3. John Hawley-Roberts, "Huxley and Lawrence," Virginia Quarterly Review, Volume 13, 1937, pp. 546-557.

luncheon meeting with Lawrence in 1927, Huxley wrote, "He is one of the few people I feel real respect and admiration for. Of most other eminent people I have met I feel that at any rate I belong to the same species as they do. But this man has something different and superior in kind, not degree" (OT, p. 231). Huxley's brilliant Introduction to the Letters of D.H. Lawrence (1932) which he reprinted in The Olive Tree and Other Essays (1936), reads, in parts, like a rhapsody; an eloquent and lyrical tribute to a great man. "To be with Lawrence was a kind of adventure, a voyage of discovery into newness and otherness.... He seemed to know, by personal experience, what it was like to be a tree or a daisy or a breaking wave or even the mysterious moon itself.... To be with him was to find oneself transported to one of the frontiers of human consciousness" (OT, pp. 232-233). Statements like these leave little doubt about the fascination which Lawrence held for Huxley. The two men became very close after 1926; sharing a mutual fondness. Sybille Bedford writes that "the Huxleys were among the very few people with whom Lawrence did not at one time or another have a quarrel." (SB, p. 179). And, as is well-known, Lawrence died in Huxley's presence: "He was really, I think, the most extraordinary and impressive human being I have ever known" (Letters, p. 332).

Huxley's endearing attachment to Lawrence did not, however, preclude criticism. An early fictional portrait of Lawrence is found in the novella "Two or Three Graces" (1926) where Lawrence appears as Kingham. Even though the Huxley-narrator Wilkes admits that for him Kingham was somehow "deeply significant and necessary"

(TTG, p. 129), he recognises Kingham's many limitations: "A single powerful impression would be allowed to dominate all other impressions. His intellect was put into blinkers, the most manifest facts were ignored" (TTG, p. 12). This allusion to a certain one-sidedness and deliberate perversity in refusing to accept facts which was part and parcel of Lawrence's character, tallies with both the account Huxley gives in his essay on Lawrence as well as with Sir Julian Huxley's recollections of his meetings with Lawrence.⁴ Richard Aldington even credits Huxley with having drawn one of the most accurate portraits of Lawrence in Kingham,⁵ though here we must allow for Aldington's own bias against Lawrence. The point of all this is that while there can hardly be a doubt over the immense influence which Lawrence exerted upon Huxley we must remember that Huxley did not accept Lawrence's views without reservations.⁶ Even when, as is generally supposed, he tried his

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4. "Lawrence often exploded with a snort of impotent rage when we talked about scientific matters. Aldous and I discussed evolutionary and physiological ideas, including the possibility of mankind's genetic improvement. This particularly infuriated Lawrence, who believed that more power exercised by 'the dark loins of man,' greater freedom for our instincts and our intuitions, would solve the world's troubles. His anger was specially directed against myself, as a professional scientist." Julian Huxley, Memories, op. cit., p. 160.
 5. Richard Aldington, Portrait of a Genius But..., London, 1950, p. 395.
 6. For some helpful discussions of the Huxley-Lawrence issue, see, for example, Joseph Bentley, "Huxley's Ambivalent Response to the ideas of D.H. Lawrence," Twentieth Century Literature, Volume 13, 1967, pp. 139-153; K. Bhaskara Ramamurty, "Aldous Huxley and D.H. Lawrence," Triveni, Volume 42, Part 3, 1973, pp. 26-34; and Jerome Meckier, Aldous Huxley: Satire and Structure, op. cit., pp. 78-123.

hardest to endorse Lawrence's views through Rampion in Point Counter Point Huxley succeeded preciously little. This inability to relate satisfactorily with Lawrence may be due to the fact that "to a conventionally brought up young bourgeois (Lawrence) was rather difficult to understand."⁷ For Lawrence himself dismissed Rampion as being "the most boring character in the book - a gasbag," and took Huxley to task for this attempt at "intellectual sympathy."⁸

Within the context of the novel Rampion is presented as the only character who has achieved some measure of coherent living. "Two things," Philip Quarles writes in his notebook, "give me confidence in his opinions about the problems of living. The first is that he himself lives in a more satisfactory way than anyone I know. He lives more satisfactorily, because he lives more realistically than other people.... The second thing which gives me confidence in his judgement is that so many of his opinions agree with mine, which, apart from all questions of vanity, is a good sign, because we start from such distant points, from opposite poles in fact" (PCP, p. 440). Rampion and his wife, Mary, live wholesome lives because they are alive to all the facts of existence; their lives are vibrant with a sense of congruity, a feeling that harmony prevails. Other characters in the novel appear to be only alive to a few facets of existence; selected for convenience or expediency. Rampion has the ability to "smell people's souls" (PCP, p. 133) and

7. Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews, op. cit., p. 174.

8. The Letters of D.H. Lawrence, ed. Aldous Huxley, London: Heinemann, 1932, p. 766. Lawrence also wrote a poem entitled "I am in a novel" rebuking his portrayal as Rampion. See The Complete Poems of D.H. Lawrence, ed. V. de Sola Pinto & Warren Roberts, London: Heinemann, 1964, p. 489.

has all the recipes for harmonious living. He rails against the "horrible unwholesome tameness of our world" (PCP, p. 129) and tells Mary that her people were "victims of your way of living" (PCP, pp. 142-143). This "way of living" which Rampion so utterly detests he labels "barbarism." For him barbarism undermines civilisation because it destroys man's capacity to live an integrated life. Barbarism encourages narrow-mindedness and a misplaced sense of values. Rampion explains:

'Blake was civilised,' he insisted, 'civilised. Civilisation is harmony and completeness. Reason, feeling, instinct, the life of the body - Blake managed to include and harmonise everything. Barbarism is being lop-sided. You can be a barbarian of the intellect as well as of the body. A barbarian of the soul and the feelings as well as of sensuality. Christianity made us barbarians of the soul, and now science is making us barbarians of the intellect. Blake was the last civilised man' (PCP, p. 144; emphasis original).

Thus he is squarely against any philosophy of life which propounds a singular and exclusive system of living. He analyses the ailments of his fellows and concludes that they all suffer from the modern disease. "It's Jesus's and Newton's and Henry Ford's disease. Between them, the three have pretty well killed us. Ripped the life out of our bodies and stuffed us with hatred" (PCP, pp. 161-162). The cure for this disease is to live a balanced life; a life which entails living to the full with the use of every vital organ. For Rampion, "A man's a creature on a tight-rope walking delicately, equilibrated, with mind and consciousness and spirit at one end of his balancing pole and body and instinct and all that's unconscious and earthy and mysterious at the other. Balanced. Which is damnably difficult" (PCP, p. 560). Though extremely difficult, man must nevertheless strive to achieve this balance. Unhappily,

as Rampion looks around him, he sees that "The world's an asylum of perverts" (PCP, p. 564). Thus he labels Burlap as a "pure little Jesus pervert;" Philip becomes "an intellectual-aesthetic pervert;" Spandrell is reduced to "a morality-philosophy pervert" and, when pressed, admits that he is a "worry-about-the-bloody-old-world pervert" but states that his particular perversion is due to the fact that "when you're up against non-human things and people, you inevitably become non-human yourself" (PCP, pp. 564-565).

This last statement leads to a qualification which has to be made if we are to understand Rampion's characterisation fully. Though seemingly offered as an example of the integrated person, Rampion is not, obviously, Huxley's ideal though he may be Quarles's. By his own admission he can be corrupted by the environment. But we may allow that he said this in jest. However, there are too many indications within the novel that suggest Rampion's own limitations. This integrated person is first introduced to us with the words "What I complain of" (PCP, p. 129) and is throughout presented as a complaining, grumbling, intolerant, fellow. Despite his harmonious all-round living, Rampion is seen to be frustrated and restless, a hint perhaps at the superficiality of his own integration. We may, of course, attribute this to his profound dissatisfaction with the state of the world, but it is evident that there is a more serious cause. When at one point of the novel Mary, revealingly, accuses him of being "an absurd old puritan," Rampion's response is quite violent: "The taunt annoyed him, because he knew it was well-founded" (PCP, p. 156). Like the other characters in the novel Rampion had, at least once, been a self-divided creature -

"at war against himself" (PCP, p. 156). Mary had helped him out of his puritanism. But remnants of the habit die hard. At the end of the novel he flies at Mary for goading him about Spandrell's melodramatic actions. He rationalises his loss of temper but the incident reminds one of his earlier inability to tolerate another's actions. Burlap, while reflecting on Rampion's extraordinariness, thinks that "he lacked that extra sense-organ which enables men like St. Francis to see the beauty that is beyond earthly beauty" (PCP, pp. 565-566). Here was another limitation. Rampion, clearly, does not have the makings of a saint, which is Huxley's ideal. And Spandrell, desperately trying to convince Rampion that there is spirituality in music by playing Beethoven's "A Minor Quartet" only succeeds in making Rampion retort "Why can't he be content with reality, your stupid only Beethoven?" (PCP, p. 597). Defeated, Spandrell concludes that "Rampion isn't infallible" (PCP, p. 597). Though Spandrell's self-arranged death gives the lie to Beethoven's heavenly music, his final pronouncement on Rampion contains an important truth. Rampion is not infallible. He has his numerous limitations, the chief of which is his lack to tolerance. Tolerance, which Huxley came eventually to insist was essential for integrated living. In addition - and this is more implicit than explicit - Rampion's humanity-centred faith cannot explain the many "jokes" (gratuitous actions, events, such as the death of little Phil) which fate and God play on men and wreck any hopes for a balanced life. It becomes apparent, at the end of the novel, that in kicking God out of human existence, Rampion somehow fails to transcend his own egoistical self. Both of these flaws - intolerance and egotism -

will have to be eliminated when Huxley finally comes to the end of his search.⁹

In several ways Rampion's inadequacy as the model of integration is suggested through Philip Quarles's numerous ruminations in the novel. It is Philip Quarles, after all, who is the Huxley-hero in search of integration in Point Counter Point. Huxley explicitly admitted that Quarles was a self-portrait;¹⁰ and a study of Quarles's character sheds invaluable light on Huxley's response to Rampion. Quarles's basic problem is by now a most familiar one: in Rampion's apt phrasing, Quarles is a "barbarian of the intellect." He craves for logical demonstrations of facts and experiences; dissects and vivisects people until they lose their significance. Life, for Quarles, becomes an intellectual playground for him to witness and then scientifically analyse. Like previous Huxley-heroes, Quarles is supremely erudite. The comic episode with the Indian Sita Ram, betrays both his natural reticence as well as his social handicap: he fails to relate to people. He smugly asserts that "people don't leave much trace on me. They make an impression easily, like a ship in water. But the water closes up again" (PCP, p. 99). He is quite content to remain the cold, analytical novelist he is. His handicap hits home in his marriage: His wife Elinor realises to her dismay that he had never really given himself to her. "His soul, the intimacies of his

9. For a brief discussion of the problematic nature of Rampion in the novel see also, Peter Firchow, Aldous Huxley: Satirist and Novelist, op. cit., pp. 104-115.

10. See The New York Times, May 6th, 1933, p. 14.

being, he had always withheld" (PCP, p. 103). His inability to love her completely finally drives Elinor to the arms of the fateful Everard Webley. Quarles is hopelessly self-contained; alien to the world of experience:

For in the ordinary daily world of human contacts he was curiously like a foreigner, uneasily not at home, among his fellows, finding it difficult or impossible to enter into communication with any but those who could speak his native intellectual language of ideas. Emotionally he was a foreigner. Elinor was his interpreter, his dragoman. Like her father, Elinor Bidlake had been born with a gift of intuitive understanding and social ease. (PCP, p. 105)

For Quarles people and actions became merely extensions of a theory he held, an abstraction he knew by heart. Being too intelligent he disdained ordinary human social intercourse, relegating this function to his wife. He thrived on being able to make facts fit into a pre-conceived idea or theory: Elinor,

reported her intercourse with the natives of the realm of emotion and he understood at once, he generalised her experience for her, he related it with other experiences, classified it, found analogies and parallels. From single and individual it became in his hands part of a system. She was astonished to find that she and her friends had been all unconsciously, substantiating a theory, or exemplifying some interesting generalisation. (PCP, p. 107)

The wife, aware of Quarles's deficiencies, wishes that "he could break his habit of impersonality and learn to live with the intuitions and feelings and instincts as well as with the intellect" (PCP, p. 108).

The most poignant part about Quarles's lack as a human being is that he knows his weaknesses. For him, the root of his problems revolved around a crises of identity:

But this question of identity was precisely one of Philip's chronic problems. It was so easy for him to be almost anybody, theoretically and with his intelligence. He had

such a power of assimilation, that he was often in danger of being unable to distinguish the assimilator from the assimilated, of not knowing among the multiplicity of his roles who was the actor. (PCP, p. 268)

Aware of his failings, Quarles still cannot come to terms with his identity; he cannot fully realise himself. Viewing the world as a kind of stage and playing multiple roles in it, he becomes exceedingly conscious of his predicament. Try as he might, each new role fails him, leaving him all the more frustrated at this perpetual futility of his existence. Going round and round in circles, Quarles cannot find the centre where his untiring intellect can come to rest.

He had been a cynic and also a mystic, a humanitarian and also a contemptuous misanthrope; he had tried to live the life of detached and stoical reason and another time he had aspired to the unreasonableness of natural and uncivilised existence. The choice of moulds depended at any given moment on the books he was reading, the people he was associating with. (PCP, pp. 268-269)

None of the roles he adopts satisfies him and he continues to live vicariously; obstinately clinging onto a cerebral formulation:

If there was any single way of life he could lastingly believe in, it was that mixture of pyrrhonism and stoicism which had struck him, an enquiring schoolboy among the philosophers, as the height of human wisdom and into whose mould of skeptical indifference he had poured his unimpassioned adolescence. (PCP, pp. 269-270).

Thus though he envies Rampion his all-roundness, and secretly wishes he knew Rampion's recipe for success, he makes no real attempt to alter his own approach to life. He gets bogged down by his intelligence: "One sentence, and I am already involved in history, art and all the sciences" he records in his notebook (PCP, p. 341). The plight is pathetic and quite frightening; indicative of the punishment attendant upon eating too much of the

fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. He cannot even be generous without rationalising his generosity, as the incident of his tipping the cab-driver so pathetically illustrates (PCP, pp. 386-387). For everything said or done, Philip Quarles demands an explanation, an intellectual justification. This is why, in spite of all his envy of Rampion and admiration for Rampion's way of life, he cannot bring himself to follow Rampion's footsteps. He cannot, in short, hand himself over to a leader:

But in point of fact, he reflected, he had never deeply or whole-heartedly admired anyone. Theoretically, yes; but never in practice, never to the point of wanting to make himself a disciple, a follower. He had adopted other people's opinions, even their modes of life - but always with the underlying conviction that they weren't really his, that he could and certainly would abandon them as easily as he had taken them up. And whenever there had seemed any risk of his being carried away, he had deliberately resisted, had fought or fled for his liberty. (PCP, p. 397)

One reason for Quarles's not handing himself over to a leader is that he does not really need one. Or at least he does not need a leader like Rampion. While he agrees about the inestimable value of the life led by Rampion and confesses that his own problem consists of transforming "a detached intellectual skepticism into a way of harmonious all-round living" (PCP, p. 440), he is unable to act on this realisation. Instead, he debunks the things he has been doing all this time, concluding that he has led the intellectual life mainly because it is easy: "It's the substitution of simple intellectual schemata for the complexities of reality; of still and formal death for the bewildering movements of life" (PCP, p. 442). His reasoning leads him to repudiate his "Search for Truth" which he has hitherto taken very seriously: "I regarded the Search for

Truth as the highest of human tasks and the Searchers as the noblest of men. But in the last year or so I have begun to see that this famous Search for Truth is just an amusement, a distraction like any other, a rather refined and elaborate substitute for genuine living" (PCP, p. 443). The candid admission is laudable; it is in many ways the most uncompromising condemnation of his own existence that a Huxley-hero makes. The truth that is underlined - that he has always lived vicariously - is as brutally blunt in its honesty as that which we associate with the lesser characters in a Huxley-novel. It is a sacrificing truth and the wound it makes sinks deep.

It is at this crucial stage of Quarles's self-knowledge that we get one of those rare utterances which consciously or unconsciously betray the deep-seated predicament in Huxley's own personality. "Shall I ever," asks Quarles,

have the strength of mind to break myself of these indolent habits of intellectualism and devote my energies to the more serious and difficult task of living integrally? And even if I did try to break these habits, shouldn't I find that heredity was at the bottom of them and that I was congenitally incapable of living wholly and harmoniously? (PCP, p. 444)

The responsibility is levelled at his heredity; the figures of Thomas Huxley and Matthew Arnold once again come to mind, drawing our attention to the different allegiances which they acknowledged.¹¹ Denis Stone in Crome Yellow and Theodore Gumbril in Antic Hay had blamed their education for their problems; Calamy in Those Barren Leaves blamed his environment; and now Philip Quarles blames his

11. Cf. William S. Ament, "Jesting Huxley Waiting for an Answer," The Personalist, Volume 18, No. 3, July 1937, pp. 254-266.

very genes. The acuteness of the problem is only too obvious. In between writing Point Counter Point Huxley had written the essays which comprise Proper Studies (1927). In the Introduction to this book he wrote, "the powers of every mind are strictly limited; we have our inborn idiosyncrasies, our acquired sentiments, prejudices, scales of value; it is impossible for any man to transcend himself (PS, p. xcii; emphasis added). Man's existence, he seems to be saying here, is almost pre-determined; man is victim of his fate. Little wonder that Philip Quarles evokes the name of St. Augustine - the arch justifier of predestination¹² - in recalling the accident which left him with a "game leg" (PCP, p. 394). For Rampion man determines his own mode of existence; for Quarles existence is frequently determined by factors outside of human control. Hence, as we noted, Rampion has no answers - indeed is even absent from these considerations - for the gratuitous acts which so visibly take place and affect people's lives. Huxley had had personal experience of such gratuitous acts. Thus he could not accept his mother's early death by cancer: "I am sure that this meaningless catastrophe was the main cause of the protective cynical skin in which he clothed himself and his novels in the twenties", writes his brother Julian.¹³ And in a letter to Naomi Mitchinson in 1933, Huxley states, "How senseless psychological and moral judgements really are apart from physiological judgements! And of course I am

12. R.C. Zaehner, Concordant Discord, London: Oxford University Press, 1970, p. 374.

13. Julian Huxley, op. cit., p. 70.

also to a considerable extent a function of defective eyesight. Keratitis punctata shaped and shapes me; and I in my turn made and make use of it" (Letters, pp. 372-373). In spite of Rampion's brave ravings about man's capacity to mould his life according to his wishes, Point Counter Point seems to confirm the belief that "life is a meaningless joke, in which the marvel of Everard Webley's suddenly realised love for Elinor is immediately followed by his murder, and the serenely beautiful evening light in which she drives home is a prelude to the death in agony of her only son."¹⁴ When the novel ends with Burlap and Beatrice having a romp in the bath - "Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven" (PCP, p. 601) - we are still left with the knowledge that Beatrice is soon to suicide.

For Lawrence "The final aim is not to know, but to be."¹⁵ The Rampion-Lawrence of Point Counter Point directs all his energies to propound this philosophy. His dilemma is that he addresses himself to people who, unfortunately for him and his philosophy, know; indeed know too much to embrace without questioning the creed he preaches. For Quarles as for Huxley, the final aim is to know as well as to be. In order to achieve this man has to transcend himself; has to break through the barriers both of heredity, upbringing and environment. Rampion's superiority over the earlier Huxley-heroes - particularly Calamy of Those Barren Leaves - is that, unlike them he does not seek integration by either denying the senses or by escaping from society. He seeks total fulfilment

14. Philip Thody, Aldous Huxley, op. cit., pp. 37-38.

15. D.H. Lawrence, Fantasia of the Unconscious, London, 1922, p. 45.

in society through active living. Within his own parameters he succeeds. But Huxley himself has a wider frame of reference. And though his essays on the Rampionesque life-worshipper's creed collected in the book Do What You Will (1929) read like an extended apology and defence of Lawrence's beliefs, we know that basically Huxley remains unconvinced about the final value of the "balanced excess" which he advocates in the book. Ironically, the life-worshipper's creed is too neat, too logical, to provide men with an adequate faith to live by. It perpetuates a pseudo-scientific heresy that man is "a series of distinct psychological states, a colony of diverse personalities" (DWYW, p. 300) - which ignores the complexity of the wholeness of being which man aspires to. Stripped of an abiding faith, having only momentary inclinations, the life-worshipper's existence becomes fragmentary and superficial. Paying homage to his manifold gods, he really is without any god. Philip Quarles in Point Counter Point explodes the myth that man is sufficient unto himself. Man acts, interacts and reacts: Huxley realises the complexity but is not yet ready to grasp the solution to his problem of integrated living.

Point Counter Point is a massive novel and the foregoing discussion does not pretend to exhaust its content. Huxley used the following quotation from Fulke Greville as the epigraph to the novel:

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?

The novel is one long exemplification of this passage. Through the lives of its many characters we see the familiar dichotomies manifesting themselves, paralysing the ability of men and women to conduct themselves in any unified manner. People are reduced to caricatures in order to penetrate their essential nature; life itself is rebuked for being a hard task-master. No character - not even Rampion - escapes the scathing effect of Huxley's satire; everyone is implicated in this vast human fuge. Frustrated in his own search for integration, Huxley gives the whole world a good bashing. Many of his admirers were incensed by the audacity of his attack. Thus Lawrence, while telling Huxley that "you've shown the truth, perhaps the last truth, about your generation,"¹⁶ wrote in another context:

An English novel like Point Counter Point has gone beyond tragedy into exacerbation, and continuous nervous repulsion. Man is so nervously repulsive to man, so screamingly, nerve-rackingly repulsive! The novel goes one step further. Man just smells, offensively and unbearably, not to be borne. The human stink!¹⁷

The loudness of Huxley's anguish tells of his own confusion and vexation at this stage of his career. Point Counter Point is an agonising departure from the straight-line of Huxley's search; but it illuminates poignantly the excruciating search Huxley is embarked on. Though the novel makes little linear progression in the search, it certainly deepens our understanding of the underlying malady. The search is not actually halted, for the digression serves

16. The Letters of D.H. Lawrence, op. cit., p. 765.

17. D.H. Lawrence, Phoenix, London, 1936, p. 270.

to make clearer the many issues involved in the problem. In this respect, Point Counter Point remains a most instructive book: energetically written and vigorously satirical, it brings to a climax Huxley's meanderings in a world empty of meaning and purpose.

(iii)

If the individuals in Point Counter Point fail to transcend themselves and thereby fail to lead authentic lives, in Brave New World (1932) the very notion of individuality becomes questionable. In Point Counter Point the individuals have choice and several alternatives open to them; their limitations arise out of personal handicaps. In Brave New World, however, choice no longer applies: the alternatives available to persons seeking fulfilment become dubious propositions which mock the very foundations of integrated living. Where Point Counter Point only raises disturbing questions about predestination, leaving each character free to decide for himself on this question, Brave New World literally puts the seal on a pre-determined existence with man playing God. The principle which is joked about in Point Counter Point becomes a nightmarish reality in Brave New World. Here we witness a society in which test-tube babies grow up to function exactly the way their roles have been biologically and socially planned. In order to "provide the necessary critical viewpoint"¹⁸ Huxley creates two misfits within the system. But while Bernard Marx and Helmholtz Watson are

18. John Colmer, Coleridge to Catch - 22: Images of Society, London: Macmillan, 1978, p. 172.

highly critical of the apparently perfect functioning of the Brave New World, they, too, are ultimately reduced to frustrated appendages which buckle before the indomitable will of the State. "Community, Identity, Stability," the motto of this futuristic World State - evoking the slogan of the French Revolution, "Fraternity, Equality, Liberty" - demands nothing less than a total sacrifice of individuality. In this society, modelled after the mass-production-line system initiated by Henry Ford, people become literal cogs in the societal wheel, existing only to perform tasks pre-natally assigned. If, as we earlier noted, integration is denied the characters in Point Counter Point on account of their inability to come out of their narrow-minded individual shells, in Brave New World the search is frustrated by the process which guarantees the survival of the World State. Huxley has moved from one extreme to the other; relentlessly probing the impediments to the good life.

According to Huxley the book was intended as a satirical attack on H.G. Wells's utopian visions: "I am writing a novel about the future," he wrote to a correspondent in 1931, "on the horror of the Wellsian Utopia and a revolt against it. Very difficult. I have hardly enough imagination to deal with such a subject. But it is none the less interesting work" (Letters, p. 348). The specific Wellsian book that Huxley had in mind when embarking on Brave New World was Men Like Gods (1923). However, the projected work, "gradually got out of hand and turned into something quite different from what I'd originally intended."¹⁹ This is true; it would be

19. Writers at Work: The Paris Interviews, op. cit., p. 165, Second Series ed. George Plimpton, New York, 1963, p. 198.

silly to view Brave New World simply as a parody on Wells. The novel is altogether more complex than any clever dismissal of "The Wellsian Utopia ... which often rises from the ruins of civilisation when a functional elite of engineers, scientists and professional men seize control of air-power and form a World Council,"²⁰ and reads like an indictment of the entire ethos ushered in by modern science and technology.²¹ In his Foreword to the 1946 edition of the novel Huxley explicitly stated that

The theme of Brave New World is not the advancement of science as such; it is the advancement of science as it affects human individuals. The triumphs of physics, chemistry and engineering are tacitly taken for granted. The only scientific advances to be specifically described are those involving the application to human beings of the results of future research in biology, physiology and psychology. It is only by means of the sciences of life that the quality of life can be radically changed. (BNW, p. x)

The accent on behavioural sciences - those branches of science which can manipulate and change human behaviour - is only to be expected. As we have seen, the Huxley-hero has always been aware of his problem; he has always recognised his short-comings and has always yearned for integrated existence. His biggest problem has always been the source of anxiety and apprehension. It is on behaviour, therefore, that Huxley now places all the emphasis. But in doing so he unwittingly opened the floodgates of a socialisation process which, through the agency of science and technology, skilfully damned all traces of humanity. The ideal Brave New

20. Mark R. Hillegas, The Future as Nightmare: H.G. Wells and the Anti-Utopians, New York: Oxford University Press, 1967, p. 63.

21. The present writer has examined the theme of technology in Brave New World at length in "Technology and the Modern Novel," unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Singapore, 1976, pp. 85-111.

Worlder is an absolute function, possessing no sense whatsoever of itself as a human being. Thus when John Savage - himself an ironic representation of humanity - falls in love with the Brave New Worlder Lenina, he tragically fails to persuade her that love is a living passion. Because of the way her breeding had been programmed Lenina has no conception of love in the usual sense of the term; she just cannot comprehend what John is saying, let alone sympathise. Like Bernard Marx and Helmholtz Watson who are products of errors in the breeding process, she also becomes one of the ridiculous misfits in the society of the Brave New World. Their ironic presence - ironic because it undermines the State's confidence in the perfectibility of NeoPavlovian Conditioning - only serves to stress the alienation and dehumanisation which has taken place. In Crome Yellow Scogan had anticipated the coming of the Brave New World; a world in which

An impersonal generation will take the place of Nature's hideous system. In vast state incubators, rows upon rows of gravid bottles will supply the world with the population it requires. The family system will disappear; society, sapped at its very base, will have to find new foundations; and Eros, beautifully and irresponsibly free, will flit like a gay butterfly from flower to flower through a sunlit world. (CY, p. 31)

Brave New World is the fictional realisation of Scogan's Rational State.

In spite of its popularity and wide acclaim, Brave New World remains, as Huxley himself acknowledged, an unsatisfactory book. The chief defect of the novel is that "The Savage is offered only two alternatives, an insane life in Utopia, or the life of a primitive in an Indian village, a life more human in some respects, but in others hardly less queer and abnormal" (BNW, p. vii).

Undoubtedly, as readers we are meant to identify with the Savage. He, more than anyone else, challenges the pre-suppositions upon which the Brave New World is built. Brought up in an Indian Reservation and having read the plays of Shakespeare, he provides the major foil to the very irony contained in the novel's title: "O brave new world/That hath such creatures in it" (The Tempest). The creatures of the Brave New World are oblivious of what they have become. Indeed the book postulates a powerful case that happiness can only be achieved negatively, by the elimination of art, science and religion. Almost reviving the old Platonic argument against art, Mustapha Mond, the Resident Controller of Western Europe, explains the rationale behind the suppression of such books as Othello:

Because our world is not the same as Othello's world. You can't make flivers without steel - and you can't make tragedies without social instability. The world's stable now. People are happy; they get what they want, and they never want what they can't get. They're well off; they're safe; they're never ill; they're not afraid of death; they're blissfully ignorant of passion and old age; they're plagued with no mothers or fathers; they've got no wives, or children, or lovers to feel strongly about; they're so conditioned that they practically can't help behaving as they ought to behave. And if anything should go wrong, there's soma. (BNW, p. 180)

Art is not the only thing that is inimical to happiness. "Happiness is never grand" says Mond, admitting that much has to be sacrificed for the sake of peace and stability (BNW, p. 181). The Controllers of the Brave New World have decided that "happiness" is not compatible with "truth"; hence even pure scientific research has to be curtailed. Mond himself paid the price by ceasing to be a physicist. While acknowledging that the very basis and continuity of the Brave New World depended on science, Mond explains that "we

can't allow science to undo its own good work. ...We don't allow it to deal with any but the most immediate problems of the moment" (BNW, p. 186). Expediency is the controlling norm of the society in Brave New World; all other considerations are zealously ruled out. It is surprising that in the circumstances, religion with its hypothetical God, has little or no relevance. A stable "happy" society has no need of a God, explains Mond to the Savage. "Christianity without tears" is the religion the Brave New Worlders enjoy through the use of the all-purpose wonder-drug soma (BNW, p. 195). Art, science and religion, all find their equivalents in the Synthetic Music, Scent Organs, Feelies, Predestinators, Orgy-porgies, Solidarity Hymns, which proliferate the society of the Brave New World. Here "everyone belongs to everyone else" (BNW, p. 31). The index of success is the extent to which all the inhabitants perform their roles without question and participate in the existence pre-defined for them without knowledge or understanding. Expectedly the Savage, who has known "Time and Death and God" (BNW, p. 113), cannot accept the philosophy by which the Brave New World lives and is governed.

The Savage's position, however, contains its own serious drawbacks. In his heroic confrontation with Mustapha Mond, John Savage is forced to admit the brutal realities inherent in the kind of life he wants to lead:

'But I like the inconveniences.'

'We don't,' said the Controller. 'We prefer to do things comfortably.'

'But I don't want comfort. I want God, I want poetry, I want real danger, I want freedom, I want goodness. I want sin.'

'In fact,' said Mustapha Mond, 'you're claiming the right to be unhappy.'

'All right, then,' said the Savage defiantly, 'I'm claiming the right to be unhappy.'

'Not to mention the right to grow old and ugly and impotent; the right to have syphilis and cancer; the right to have too little to eat; the right to be lousy; the right to live in constant apprehension of what may happen tomorrow; the right to catch typhoid; the right to be tortured by unspeakable pains of every kind.'

There was a long silence.

'I claim them all,' said the Savage at last.

Mustapha Mond shrugged his shoulders. 'You're welcome,' he said. (BNW, p. 197)

The Savage's tragic end by suicide lends a cynically triumphant note to Mond's offer. In his search for the good life the Savage is reduced to a pathetic spectacle of primitiveness. His death - and with it the death of any hope of redemption in the Brave New World - signals yet another defeat in Huxley's search for integration. Society, with its tendency to pursue goals without regard to individual worth, stifles - or rather eliminates - any consciousness which even dimly grasps the meaning of a fulfilled life.

Though Brave New World is set in After Ford 632, much of its milieu, Huxley believed, is already with us. In Brave New World Revisited (1958) he goes to great lengths to demonstrate the insidiousness with which contemporary society (and with it modern man) has allowed itself to drift into the kind of envisaged in Brave New World. It is not our business here to assess whether or not Huxley has been proved correct: suffice it to say that the dystopian vision, so classically presented in Brave New World, continues to haunt both readers and writers.²² By the time Huxley wrote Brave New World Revisited he had, of course, arrived at some

22. Cf. John Colmer, op. cit., especially Chapters 11-13.

possible prescriptions for individuals in search of integration. These prescriptions, faintly hinted at and scattered throughout the early novels, come to a climax in Eyeless in Gaza: the novel Huxley wrote after Brave New World.

(iv)

'Poor old creatures!' was Philip's comment when they were once more out of earshot. 'What else have they got to talk about? Too old to want to talk about love - too old and much too good. Too rich to talk about money. Too highbrow to talk about people and too hermit-like to know any people to talk about. Too shy to talk about themselves, too blankly inexperienced to talk about life or even literature. What is there left for the poor old wretches to talk about? Nothing - only God!

'And at the present rate of progress,' said Elinor, 'you'll be exactly like them in ten years from now.'
(PCP, p. 345)

Elinor's tart reply to Quarles in the above passage is curiously fulfilled in Eyeless in Gaza (1936). The Philip Quarles of Point Counter Point who could afford to make the kind of patronising and condescending remarks he makes in the passage quoted appears as a transformed individual in the person of Anthony Beavis - the Huxley-hero of Eyeless in Gaza. Sybille Bedford, in her biography of Huxley, has painstakingly described for us the events which helped to shape this formidable novel. She states quite explicitly that "Aldous projected himself into Anthony Beavis" even if there are (as would be expected) basic discrepancies between the fictional portrait and the real-life author (SB, p. 307). "He was using the novel ... as a means of getting through - find a solution in the novel would be find a solution for his life" (ibid., p. 306). We have noted how both Point Counter Point and Brave New World

represent, in some ways, a departure from Huxley's over-riding theme - the search for integration. We have also observed that in both of these novels Huxley tries very hard to convince himself of a way out of his dilemma but without much avail. Philip Quarles, though enthusiastically carried away by Rampion's creed, remains unconvinced. And John Savage, realising his mission in the Brave New World to be one long exercise in futility, commits suicide. An impasse had been reached: the only way out of this intellectual cul de sac was to examine, once again, some of the basic premises which both Point Counter Point and Brave New World assiduously bypassed.

We recall that Calamy in Those Barren Leaves retreats from the sophisticated society around him in order to explore "a whole universe that can only be approached by way of introspection and patient and uninterrupted thought" (TBL, p. 375). Earlier, in his exchange with Cardan, Calamy admits that he may not find the answer he is looking for through his withdrawal from the world of practical affairs:

'And if I find that it's not my path,' pursued Calamy, 'I shall turn back and try what can be done in the way of practical life. Up till now, I must say I've not seen much hope for myself that way. But then, it must be admitted, I didn't look for the road in places where I was very likely to find it.' (TBL, p. 375)

"I didn't look for the road in places where I was very likely to find it": Philip Quarles looked up to Rampion and sensed an inadequacy; John Savage came into the Brave New World and was absolutely disillusioned. In the worlds depicted in Point Counter Point and Brave New World the "parallel" which Calamy had discovered to exist between the moral and the physical world does not seem to

be present: the dichotomy continues to plague. The fact that Huxley wrote Point Counter Point and Brave New World indicates that Calamy's retreat was not, as we noted, an acceptable answer to the question of integrated living. Integration has to be found within the context of human society, not by opting out of it. In Eyeless in Gaza the Huxley-hero once again finds himself on the frontier of society, but this time armed with a philosophy which approximates to the synthesis which he has been searching for. "Eyeless in Gaza at the Mill with slaves": the epigraph comes from Milton's Samson Agonistes and recalls the Samson episode in the Book of Judges. Just as Samson, deceived by Delilah, and blinded by the Philistines, eventually regains his strength by grinding away at the Mill at Gaza and triumphs over his tormentors, so Anthony Beavis, doing the rounds in a hellish world of meaningless existence, partially reconciles the dichotomy which has been haunting the Huxley-hero. In his triumph Samson destroys; by his discovery Anthony Beavis tries to pacify.

An important aspect of the change that has occurred in Eyeless in Gaza is gleaned from the following passage:

If you call a man a bug, it means that you propose to treat him as a bug. Whereas if you call him a man, it means that you propose to treat him as a man. ...Because if you don't treat men as men, they don't behave as men". (EG, pp. 576-577)

It is Dr Miller who is speaking, trying to convince Mark Staithes that it is wrong to regard human beings as "some kind of rather squalid insects" (EG, p. 574). The point that Miller is making is that much depends on the attitude we assume toward our fellows. As Huxley himself shows in the essay "Words in Behaviour"

(OT, pp. 82-100) the language we use to describe events or people invariably colours our judgements and perceptions of them. The truth of Miller's assertion is easily borne out by recalling Huxley's own practice in the early novels. We remember, for example, Coleman in Antic Hay dismissing people as "centipedes" (AH, p. 57); and Point Counter Point, as Jerome Meckier points out, is like a human zoo in which "It becomes impossible to tell whether these are humans behaving as animals or animals displaying human attributes."²³ What Miller is putting across is a radical change of orientation in the Huxley-world. Increasingly, as we will notice, the "love and humility" which Huxley stated was his fundamental problem after writing Those Barren Leaves will persuade him to regard people with more respect and greater reverence. This is not to say that the novels after Eyeless in Gaza do not make references to man's animal nature. On the contrary, novels like After Many A Summer ~~Days~~ Spring (1939) and Ape and Essence (1948), are full of animal imagery. What is significant, however, is that beginning with Eyeless in Gaza, the Huxley-hero is less eager to dismiss humanity as being merely a vast animal laboratory and more willing to examine those qualities which give life a human dignity and worth.

The change, we must stress, is not merely semantic; it underlines a basic shift in outlook. Thus Anthony Beavis, the Huxley-hero, remembering Mark Staithes' sarcastic retort that "swine will be swine" records in his diary, "But may become human I insisted"

23. Jerome Meckier, "Quarles Among the Monkeys: Huxley's Zoological Novels," Modern Language Review, Volume 68, 1973, pp. 268-282.

(EG, p. 325). The vision has altered. Where the various ways of looking at a hand in Those Barren Leaves (cf. TBL, pp. 343-347) persuades Calamy that there is no connection between the "dozen parallel worlds" in which the hand exists; Anthony's reflections on the "meaning of a face" in Eyeless in Gaza leads him to recognise a basic truth: that there is a connection; that existence is not discontinuous. "And that sad face was not only a symbol, indirectly expressive of my history; it was also a directly expressive emblem of hers. A history for whose saddening and embittering quality I was a least in part responsible" (EG, p. 323). Calamy and Thriplow in the earlier novel had met and separated without really having affected each other; their relationship had been quite meaningless. In Eyeless in Gaze, however, Anthony's relationship with Helen Amberly, serves to elevate both to a higher level of understanding, even though it sometimes appears as though Helen remains skeptical about Anthony's philosophy of loving people:

There was a silence. Helen got up, changed the plates and set a bowl of fruit on the table. 'What is the satisfactory alternative?' she asked, as she helped herself to an apple.

'It begins,' he answered, 'with trying to cultivate the difficult art of loving people.'

'But most people are detestable.'

'They're detestable, because we detest them. If we liked them, they'd be likeable.'

'Do you think that's true?'

'I'm sure it's true.'

'And what do you do after that?'

'There's no "after",' he replied. 'Because, of course, it's a lifetime's job. Any process of change is a lifetime's job'. (EG, p. 606)

Though Helen may not sufficiently appreciate the point Anthony is making, he has no doubts whatsoever that human lives are irrevocably inter-linked. From Crome Yellow to Brave New World the individual

has chiefly existed in isolation; in a vacuum of human relationships grinding his or her own axe in vain. But here the individual comes fully unto his own; the dichotomy between self and others is resolved by the realisation that the "self" and the "other" are only diverse manifestations of life which is basically a unity. "At the surface, the separate waves, the whirlpools, the spray; but below them the continuous and undifferentiated expanse of sea, becoming calmer as it deepens, till at last there is an absolute stillness" is how the novel metaphorically describes the essential oneness of existence (EG, p. 618).

This realisation is not the simplistic one of knowing appearance from reality, though this is important. Rather it marks a profound insight which validates both the appearance (diversity) and the reality (unity). For a long time the Huxley-hero has been mistakenly pursuing only one or the other of these alternatives. Either he has been like Theodore Gumbriel aimlessly inhabiting the world of appearances or like the Savage retreating into his own notions of reality. Either/or: the dualistic conception is real enough so long as one also recognises the underlying unity and does not opt for one alternative at the expense of the other. To persist in admitting only one end of the dichotomy is to delude oneself about the real nature of existence. The polarities which are posited by the dichotomy represent only extremes along a continuum; they do not exist autonomously. "Born under one law, to another bound": Superficially Greville's accurate description of human plight can very easily be used to define the dichotomy of our existence, as indeed the characters do in Point Counter Point. But, at a deeper

level of significance, this "wearisome condition of humanity" which the poet speaks of merely epitomises two opposed but not necessarily mutually-exclusive states. The inherent paradox has to be accepted as a fact of existence. Implicit within the paradox, however, is the solution which has hitherto escaped the Huxley-hero; namely that "the point was in the paradox, in the fact that unity was the beginning and unity the end" (EG, p. 616). Once this truth is grasped, it is easy to see why existence is not discontinuous; why human beings cannot really escape from each other. The "truth" also drives home to Anthony-Huxley that "in spite of occasional uncomfortable intimations that there might be a point" he had spent more than twenty in regarding the whole process as "either pointless or as a practical joke" (EG, p. 616). The novel was published in 1936; exactly twenty years before, in 1916, Huxley had published The Burning Wheel in which his search for integration had so poignantly begun. Here then was a candid admission of his own folly and a severe criticism of his earlier attitudes. Huxley was, in many ways, his own best critic.

The question which inevitably arises is whether we, as readers, are meant to regard "the fact that unity was the beginning and unity the end" as an axiomatic truth. The answer to this difficult question must be both "yes" and "no." The deliberate jumbling of the chapters in the novel, the deliberate disregard for a chronological narrative, is only one attempt at demonstrating that a basic unity operates throughout. This method of presentation - by no means original - works on the philosophic assumption that any given moment

in time is both reminiscent of the past and predictive of the future. Past, present and future, in other words, are inextricably tied up; the present conjoins past and future. Thus Anthony Beavis, in the novel's opening chapter becomes acutely conscious of his past on peering at some snapshots while tidying up his cupboard on his forty-second birthday. He rebels against the association of memories, reversing Wordsworth's sentiments, "I would wish my days to be separated each from each by unnatural piety" (EG, p. 9). But this is exactly what cannot happen: we cannot separate our past from our present or our future. Whether or not our days are tied up each to each by Wordsworth's natural piety is not really the issue. The crux of the matter is that Anthony has to accept his past as a fact. Thus, even if there is no chronology, even if time is, in some sense, artificial, there is still a link, an association, which unites one experience with another. The apparent chaos of the novel's time-sequence therefore, does not negate the basic unity of its structure.²⁴ Much as Anthony himself may detest his past, the novel refuses to compromise with him. It is little wonder that Anthony hates Proust almost as a "personal enemy" (EG, p. 8), since he was the man who supremely demonstrated the power of "rememberance of things past." What the novel seems to be affirming is that despite the apparently linear motion of time there is a timelessness

24. The novel's technique, as any critical analysis of the novel's style immediately makes clear, has been a matter of long-standing debate. See, for example, Pierre Vitroux, "Structure and Meaning in Aldous Huxley's Eyeles in Gaza, Yearbook of English Studies, Volume 2, pp. 212-224; and Margaret Church, Time and Reality: Studies in Contemporary Fiction, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963, pp. 102-119.

in existence by which our actions are united. Thus Anthony's remembrance of Mary Amberly and through her of Brian Foxe's suicide while making love to Helen is not just an accidental occurrence. Beneath the seeming randomness is a discernible pattern which we appreciate once the necessary connections are made clear. Thus Helen is Mary Amberly's daughter and Mary was Anthony's former mistress. It was Mary who had challenged Anthony to seduce Brian Foxe's girlfriend, Joan, just to satisfy a whim. Joan, unfortunately, had fallen seriously in love with Anthony and revealed this to Brian who then suicides at this betrayal both by his girlfriend and trusted friend. The chain of events is thus obviously there, manifesting itself through a psychological association of ideas. Huxley was to extend his explorations of time in Time Must Have A Stop (1945), but in Eyeless in Gaza we can see him hinting at that conception of a "temporal eternity" which was to become an essential ingredient of his perennial philosophy. The integrated life, Anthony discovers, is not one of disembodied states, but one which acknowledges the basic oneness of its existence.

From another angle, this "unity" which Anthony talks about has to be accepted as an act of faith. For beyond the simplistic demonstrations of its truth provided by incidents and events the postulate becomes a metaphysical hypothesis or a mystical insight. Once this happens we move into a realm in which logical proof is absent and arguments for its validity are derived from personal testimonies and historical example. It then becomes incumbent upon us to accept the said unity as an axiomatic truth. We must, however, stress that this does not mean that we as readers have to endorse

the belief; we may choose to accept or reject it depending on whether or not we find it an attractive enough theory about the universe. More important, really, is the fact that Huxley-Anthony believes in it. As readers we are not required to embrace this revelation of the basic unity of all phenomena; what we are asked to do is to accept that Anthony believes in it; believes in it strongly enough to model his total behaviour accordingly. Anthony is at the centre of the conversion, not us. Like most religious or pseudo-religious propositions Anthony's discovery is of a strictly personal nature; it cannot be imposed on others but may be absolutely held by the person for whom it has proved its truth. This means that the theory has a "subjective" validity which need not be subjected to the same test of proof as we would subject a scientific hypothesis. It is not scientific and does not pretend to be so either. Its attempts at persuasion rely chiefly on an intuitive perception, not on objective fact. Where empirical data are summoned they are used to give added weight to the argument, not confirm its basic premise. If there is a flaw in Eyeless in Gaza it is not that Huxley makes Anthony embrace some woolly-headed theory about existence - therefore abandoning his hitherto faith in the supremacy of purely rational thought - but that he tries to preach this theory to his readers. But does Huxley really do this? Does Anthony-Huxley wish to convert everyone else to his way of thinking? The answer is to be found in the manner in which Anthony conducts himself.

In discussing Point Counter Point we noted how disgusted Rampion

felt when he saw people behaving differently from him and how eagerly he wanted to convert them to his way of thinking and being. The striking difference between him and Anthony Bevis (or Miller, whose ideas Anthony practises) is that the latter does not force others to live by his standards; he wishes they would but is human enough to accept them even if they do not. Where Rampion was intolerant and bigoted; Anthony is compassionate and accepting. In a key chapter in the novel we find Anthony himself reflecting on the questions we have here raised:

Remarks by St. Teresa. 'Let us look at our own faults, and not at other people's. We ought not to insist on everyone following our footsteps, not to take upon ourselves to give instructions in spirituality when, perhaps, we do not even know what is it. Zeal for the good of souls though given us by God, may often lead us astray.' To which add this. 'It is a great grace of God to practise self-examination, but too much is as bad as too little, as they say; believe me, by God's help, we shall accomplish more by contemplating the divinity than by keeping our eyes fixed on ourselves.' God may or may not exist. But there is the empirical fact that contemplation of the divinity - of goodness in its most unqualified form - is a method of realising that goodness to some slight degree in one's life, and results, often, in an experience as if of help towards that realization of goodness, help from some being other than one's ordinary self and immensely superior to it. (EG, p. 512)

The major claim that is being made here is that if one cultivates the path of goodness sufficiently in one's own life then one will partake of at least some of the essential goodness of which the divinity is felt to be the sum-total. It is almost a self-evident truth: if we cultivate goodness then we realise goodness. Again the emphasis is on the individual; the authenticity of the claim is only to be checked against one's own experience. Many years before Huxley had written something quite similar in Jesting Pilate:

If we make a habit of Muller and Pepsodent, we do so because they keep us fit. It is for the same reason that we should make a habit of mysticism as well as of moral virtue. Leading a virtuous and reasonable life, practising the arts of meditation and recollection, we shall unbury all our hidden talents, shall attain in spite of circumstances to the happiness of serenity and integration, shall come, in a word, to be completely and perfectly ourselves. (JP, p. 192)

When he wrote this Huxley had not yet believed in the unity of all things (though he had speculated on it in some of the poems in The Defeat of Youth) but did, nevertheless, endorse the efficacy of cultivating good habits. Anthony is very wary of claiming more than he reasonably can. Thus,

No bullet-proof arguments for any of the main cosmological theories. What, then, shall we do? Stick, so far as possible, to the empirical facts - always remembering that these are modifiable by anyone who chooses to modify the perceiving mechanism. So that one can see, for example, either irremediable senselessness and turpitude, or else actualisable potentialities for good - whichever one likes; it is a question of choice. (EG, p. 513)

"It is a question of choice": Anthony has made the choice to try to actualise the potentiality of good. We have earlier seen how one's initial attitude to things almost predetermines our perception of them: thus, if we look at men as human beings we perceive humanity; if we look at them as personifications of animal traits (as for a long time Huxley did), then we perceive only degradation. With Eyeless in Gaza Huxley has begun to see humanity as humanity; he has made a choice.

For Anthony, "goodness" consists in "whatever makes for unity with other lives and other beings" (EG, p. 614). Evil, on the other hand, accentuates diversity and hence makes for separation. He recognises - and this is part of his education - that both good and evil manifest themselves as objective facts. What he feels needs

to be done is to promote goodness and minimise evil; but not by force. Part of the reason for not using compulsion is that we cannot make people good unless they are ready and are willing; it is a slow process.

From one argument to another, step by step, towards a consummation where there is no more discourse, only experience, only unmediated knowledge, as of a colour, a perfume, a musical sound. Step by step towards the experience of being no longer wholly separate, but united at the depths with other lives, with the rest of being. United in peace. In peace, he repeated, in peace, in peace. (EG, p. 618)

The way is clear: proceeding slowly with the intellect we eventually arrive at a point where the intellect gives over to pure knowledge or understanding; the reasoning faculty surrenders to the experiential fact. Huxley had stated in 1931 that "From pure sensation to the intuition of beauty, from pleasure and pain to love and the mystical ecstasy and death - all the things that are fundamental, all the things that, to the human spirit, are most profoundly significant, can only be experienced, not expressed. The rest is always and everywhere silence" (MN, p. 19). The result of the meditative experience is a deep serenity of being during which, to evoke Wordsworth, the burden of the mystery of lightened and we see into the life of things. As Eliot got out of the wasteland chanting shanti, shanti, shanti so Anthony Beavis emerges from his meditation with peace, peace, peace on his lips. To realise the unity of all things with the depths of one's being is the goal at which the Huxley-hero has arrived. It is by no means an original or radically startling goal; hints of it were present in the first poems Huxley wrote. In the poem "The Reef" for example, Huxley wrote:

these are the things
 I search for:- passion beyond the ken
 Of our foiled violences and, more swift
 Than any blow which man aims against time,
 The invulnerable, motion that shall rift
 All dimness with the lightning of a rhyme.

Or note, or colour. And the body shall be
 Quick as the mind; and will shall find release
 From bondage to brute things; and joyously
 Soul, will and body, in the strength of triune peace,
 Shall live the perfect grace of power unwasted. (CP, pp. 4-5)

Anthony Beavis in Eyeless in Gaza strives towards that "triune peace" which will allow him to lead the integrated existence which has been eluding the Huxley-hero all this time.

We have seen that the basic problem of the Huxley-hero has been to relate himself authentically to the world around him; to be able to participate in existence as a whole persona, not as disembodied intellect, or senseless body. Anthony Beavis, in resolving to go out to address a political meeting and talk about pacifism with the fullness of his being has, at last, come as close as it is possible for a person to realise his identity without undue rupture. Prior to his conversion, Anthony has been no different from the earlier Huxley-heroes. His life has been a series of futile adventures where the moral and the physical worlds have been at tangent. Thus, though he himself is aware that his seduction of Joan is merely an egoistical satisfaction with a momentary sensual thrill, he does not own up to this in his meeting with Brian Foxe. And later he refuses to admit his share in Brian's suicide when Brian's mother, Mrs Foxe, admits hers. His affair with Mary Amberly (a remnant of the earlier Myra Viveash and Lucy Tantamount figures) is totally devoid of love and, in effect, he actually despises the

poor woman. Thus when Mary is old and poor and addicted to heroin, all that Anthony can do is to tell her, condescendingly, to accept reality. Only with Helen - and that only after the horrible incident of the falling dog - does he begin to become aware of the emptiness surrounding his life. Part of the explanation for Anthony's existence is manifest in his inability to accept the apparently senseless death of his mother and in his rejection of his father's life-style.²⁵ He thus becomes Hamlet in contemporary setting; unable to reconcile the conflicting sides of his personality. In fact, Anthony, like Hamlet, "didn't have a personality - knew altogether too much to have one. He was conscious of his total experience, atom by atom and instant by instant, and accepted no guiding principle which would make him choose one set of patterned atoms of represent his personality rather than another. To himself and to others he was just a succession of more or less incongruous states" (EG, pp. 147-148). If life allowed such a pat existence to continue indefinitely, Anthony would have no problems. But it did not; life proved to be acrid, forcing him into untenable positions and thereby making him take stock of his life-style. Hence Anthony is compelled to admit the inadequacy of his existence. Even at school he had known that his friend Brian Foxe was superior to him because Brian was more spontaneous and sincere; because Brian acted

25. The autobiographical elements in Eyeless in Gaza led to an estrangement between Huxley and members of his family. Rosalind Huxley, his father's second wife, in particular took strong exception to the treatment of Leonard Huxley in the portrait of John Beavis in the novel. Huxley denied any direct parallels between his father and John Beavis. But traces of his father's mannerisms remain. See, Bedford, pp. 307-308.

naturally and was not ashamed to speak his mind. In a revealing incident centering around Brian's outrage at young Hugh Ledwidge's abuse by his schoolfellows we get an early glimpse into Anthony's dissatisfaction with his own life.

Brian dropped his eyes and his cheeks went suddenly very red. To have to listen to smut always made him feel miserable - miserable and at the same time ashamed of himself.

'Look at old Horse-Face blushing!' called Partridge; and they all laughed - none more derisively than Anthony. For Anthony had had time to feel ashamed of his shame; time to refuse to think about that hole in Lollington churchyard; time too, to find himself all of a sudden almost hating old Horse-Face. 'For being so disgustingly pi,' he would have said, if somebody had asked him to explain his hatred. But the real reason was deeper, obscurer. If he hated Horse-Face, it was because Horse-Face was so extraordinarily decent; because Horse-Face had the courage of convictions which Anthony felt should also be his convictions - which, indeed, would be his convictions if only he could bring himself to have the courage of them. (EG, pp. 81-82; emphasis original)

Where Anthony cowers under pressure Brian does not; hence Brian's triumph was Anthony's failure. It is significant that the first words which we read in Anthony's diary are: "Five words sum up every biography. Video meliora proboque; deteriora sequor. Like all other human beings, I know what I ought to do, but continue to do what I know I oughtn't to do" (EG, p. 12). This reminiscence of Paul's self-chastisement helps Anthony to realise himself: how to be genuinely oneself without the need to camouflage. All throughout his life Anthony has acted too much the intellectual sociologist he is; shrinking from real human intercourse of any sort. Lacking any deeper sense of purpose he is content to lead a hedonistic existence that denies him anything more than a superficial contact with reality. It is noteworthy that when, seeing the falling

dog as a providential sign for him to re-shape his relationship with Helen, Anthony wants to love Helen genuinely, she can no longer bring herself to accept him. The incident underlines a crucial lack of direction in Anthony's life. Lacking within, he has gradually to learn the art of being real. Reflecting on his life at one stage in the novel, Anthony realises that "having spent all his life trying to react away from the standards of his father's universe, he had succeeded only in becoming precisely what his father was - a man in a burrow" (EG, p. 469). In order to actualise himself Anthony has to get out of this burrow and achieve integration through a meaningful participation in life.

The chance to liberate himself from the shackles of his burrowed existence comes when he and his old schoolfellow Mark Staithes decide to go to Mexico to help in an armed rebellion. Mark, the Marxist revolutionary, unfortunately wounds his knee by falling off his mule while trying to ride uphill. Mark's fall symbolises his vanity; being from the start the bully and self-centred individual he is, he now has to reckon with a gangrenous leg. It is at this stage that Dr James Miller comes into the novel and helps to check Mark's gangrene by amputating the wounded leg. It is crucial for us to note that Miller comes to the scene at a moment of crisis. For Anthony the Mexican journey is a lesson in humility; several events that take place help to make him aware of the tenuousness of existence. Thus his observations of the young child suffering from meningitis, his near-encounter with death at the Hotel Tapatlan, and the amputation of Mark's leg serve to highlight the limitations of Anthony's naive belief in a mindless existence. When Miller tells

him that "what we're all looking for is some way of getting beyond our own vomit," Anthony immediately thinks of his own state:

Some way, Anthony was thinking, of getting beyond the books, beyond the perfumed and resilient flesh of women, beyond fear and sloth, beyond the painful but secretly flattering vision of the world as menagerie and asylum. (EG, p. 554)

Moving on from a half-serious dialogue about prayer and proper-dieting, Miller explains to Anthony the Buddhist belief that "every event has its cause and produces its effect," and hence the need to cultivate good personal habits (EG, pp. 555-557). At the end of the initial meeting with Miller, Anthony is left pondering: "Was it possible to be one's own liberator? There were snares; but also there was a way of walking out of them. Prisons; but they could be opened" (EG, p. 563). This is much more affirmative and positive than Philip Quarles's earlier doubt as to whether he could ever break free from the bonds of his heredity and environment. Where the earlier Huxley-heroes blamed circumstances external to them for their lack, Anthony Beavis in Eyeless in Gaza is ready to move beyond excuse and blame to realisation.

The way to integration, Anthony learns at the hands of Miller, is primarily by way of self-knowledge: not knowledge as an abstract generalisation about life and behaviour but knowledge as a full understanding of one's own basic state of being. And it has to be personally learnt, this knowledge, not merely adopted from someone else's experience. Jesus says the same thing when he proclaims, "If any man hear my words, and believe them not, I judge him not" (John, 12:47). Hence Anthony slowly but surely learns the art of self-knowledge; from the simple preliminary steps of being fully conscious

of standing, sitting, walking to the more complicated steps of being spiritually aware of the oneness of existence through meditation. More importantly the specific techniques involved in increasing self-awareness are to be used for "translating good intentions into acts, for being sure of doing what one knows one ought to do" (EG, p. 17). Because the principle behind Anthony's path to self-knowledge is mainly informed by Miller's Buddhism, it not to be surprised at that his instruction follows closely that prescribed in The Dhammapada, the Buddhist text of the path of right action. In this connection, Kathleen Bliss writes that "In Buddhism, what a man makes of his own life by the discipline of his mind over his actions is closely linked with what he feels about all living things: compassion is what he owes to them because he is part of the same totality of life."²⁶ Anthony's acceptance of Miller's beliefs points towards the welcome state of healthy integration.

In the course of his self-knowledge Anthony dawns on the following postulates which he puts across as "empirical facts":

One. We are all capable of love for other human beings.

Two. We impose limitations on that love.

Three. We can transcend all these limitations - if we choose to. (It is a matter of observation that anyone who so desires can overcome personal dislike, class feeling, national hatred, colour prejudice. Not easy; but it can be done, if we have the will and know how to carry out our good intentions).

Four. Love expressing itself in good treatment breeds love. Hate expressing itself in bad treatment breeds hate. (EG, p. 229)

Once again, at the risk of repetition, it is necessary for us to remind ourselves that Anthony's discovery is not binding on us; there

26. Kathleen Bliss, The Future of Religion, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972, p. 176.

is no need for us to believe in these "empirical facts" to appreciate the change that has come into Anthony's life. Suffice that he believes in them and that for him the belief provides a viable means of achieving integration. The "empiricism" of the four "facts" needs be evident to Anthony only, not to us: this must be grasped if we are not to accuse Huxley of either philosophic naivety or psychological ignorance. Through steady contemplation Anthony comes to realise that perseverance, courage, endurance - all fruits of love - are essential for integrated living. He also learns - and here we get positive hints of the philosophy Huxley is to outline in Ends and Means (1937), - that "means determine ends" (EG, p. 325). The Lord Buddha, after all, stresses the primacy of the means adopted in The Dhammapada. It is this realisation which leads him to embrace and propagate the political ideal of pacifism. Huxley's own pacifist pamphlet What Are You Going To Do About It (1936), in which he had spoken about the aims and ideals of the creed, had been published a few months before Eyeless in Gaza. Just as Huxley argues in the pamphlet that violence only breeds further violence, so Anthony deplores the use of violence of any kind. Peace and love is what he believes in; though he is aware that "conventions of hatred and violence" have spuriously restricted the full realisation of these noble aims (EG, pp. 606-607). Even as he prepares to attend a pacifist meeting Anthony is conscious of the danger he may get himself into - having received a threatening note to warn him against speaking. But he realises that he had to "practise what he had been preaching" (EG, p. 609) and so braces himself for the ordeal. The very last words of the novel convey Anthony's confidence in himself;

a strength of mind which no Huxley-hero had previously experienced: "Dispassionately, and with a serene lucidity, he thought of what was in store for him. Whatever it might be, he knew now that all would be well" (EG, p. 620).

Not many critics have appreciated the positive stand, taken for the first time in Huxley's career, in Eyeless in Gaza. Though granting it the status of being Huxley "conversion" novel, they have generally not shown much kindness towards the ideal which Anthony Beavis embraces. Thus Daiches has charged Huxley of "erecting a value which is dependent on nothing positive" and of having mistaken the "subjective for the objective."²⁷ Savage remarks that "as the narrative proceeds, we become aware that (Anthony's) personal discovery of love is turning from its proper object and becoming generalised, at first into hypothetical beneficence for humanity and at last into a cold moralism which derives its sanctions from a peculiarly impersonal metaphysic."²⁸ Even George Woodcock, an ardent admirer of Huxley's, states that because of the "naive confidence in human reason and idealism that swept over us in the Thirties ... we were disturbed and disappointed at what seemed a retreat into obscurantism on the part of one of the writers we most admired."²⁹ Such criticism, impressive and useful for purposes of analysis and discussion, actually appears quite misplaced when one

27. David Daiches, op. cit., p. 208.

28. D.S. Savage, op. cit., p. 145.

29. George Woodcock, Dawn and the Darkest Hour, op. cit., pp. 15-16.

examines the novel closely. Both Daiches and Savage read into the novel their own preoccupations and become unnecessarily personal about Anthony's conversion. Being without sympathy for the creed Anthony embraces, they too hastily dismiss Huxley's sincerity in writing about it. As we have seen, the life-style Anthony has opted for works for him; it gives him the faith he needs in order to lead an integrated existence. And that, surely, should be the major consideration of criticism. It is unfair to accuse an author for not having lived up to our expectations; especially in matters as private as a world-view. We may not agree with the views Anthony Beavis preaches nor are we obliged to do so. But this ought not to minimise their importance for Anthony - or for Huxley. As Woodcock's comments above make clear, much of the irritation with Eyeless in Gaza arises out of a personal let-down of expectations. A writer is expected to be consistent when it is perfectly valid that he change his outlook. A writer is, really, under no obligation to remain consistent for the sake of preserving his admirers. Moreover, the particular creed opted for may sound false because the novel, as a work of fiction, is not sufficiently dramatised; the imagination seems to lag behind prescription. The failure, in this case, is an artistic one and it does not invalidate the answer to the search for integration which Huxley has arrived at. It is true that Miller - a composite figure combining the views of people like F.M. Alexander, Dick Shepperd, J.E.R. McDonagh, Gerald Heard (cf. SB, p. 320) - often strikes one as being a boring mouthpiece for Huxley's own newly-found ideas about living. But once again we have to stress that the weakness is an artistic one; insofar as we are concerned with a study

of Huxley's search for integration such shortcomings do not detract from the paramount importance of Eyeless in Gaza as a most significant landmark in the search.

Two points need finally to be made if we are to place Anthony's answer in perspective. The first is that the path which he has embarked on is an onerous one. As he reflects on the difficulties involved in "learning to use the self and learning to direct the mind," Anthony vainly wishes for "another way out of our difficulties! A short cut. A method requiring no greater personal effort than recording a vote or ordering some 'enemy of society' to be shot. A salvation from the outside, like a dose of calomel" (EG, p. 454). Those critics who accuse Huxley of having opted for an "easy" solution to his dilemma do not seem to appreciate enough the obstacles which lie in the process of a genuine conversion of the sort Anthony is aiming at. Secondly, and more importantly, - almost as if in answer to his critics - Anthony notes that his chosen path could easily become an escapist's rut; hence the need to be constantly on the guard that the path remains a path, not become an end in itself:

Reflect that we all have our Poonas, bolt-holes from unpleasant reality. The danger, as Miller is always insisting, of meditation becoming such a bolt-hole. Quietism can be mere self-indulgence. Charismata like masturbations. Masturbations, however, that are dignified, by the amateur mystics who practise them, with all the most sacred names of religion and philosophy. 'The contemplative life.' It can be made a kind of high-brow substitute for Marlene Dietrich: a subject for erotic musings in the twilight. Meditation - valuable, not as a pleasurable end; only as a means of effecting desirable changes in the personality and mode of existence. To live contemplatively is not to live in some deliciously voluptuous or flattering Poonas; it is to live in London, but to live there in non-cockney style. (EG, p. 503)

In having found a tentative answer to his problem Huxley was not unconscious of the fact that the answer may itself surfeit the more fundamental task of living integrally. Even if we concede that in Eyeless in Gaza Huxley sacrifices artistic achievement for moralistic purpose - thus endangering the moralistic purpose itself, since form and matter are invariably linked - we must still allow Huxley the courage of his convictions. In an age when "the best lack all conviction/While the worst are full of passionate intensity," Huxley's refusal to compromise - even at dear cost to his reputation as a novelist - is to be respected. From now on Huxley will refine the answer he has alighted upon in this novel but the basic stance will remain very much the same. The search for integration has, therefore, in one sense at least, come to an end. The novels after Eyeless in Gaza probe problems associated with the path Anthony Beavis has chosen and seek to expand its relevance beyond the individual, culminating with Island (1962) where Huxley offers a temporary blue-print for an integrated society as a whole.

CHAPTER 5

THE NOVELS III - AFTER MANY A SUMMER to ISLAND

(i)

Before proceeding to discuss the remaining novels it will be useful to recapitulate the main argument of this thesis. The principal question may be stated as follows: is there an overriding theme which provides a unity to Huxley's vast and diverse creative output? The answer to this question is that there is such a theme and it centres on what we have chosen to term Huxley's search for integration. The search involves a resolution of the various dichotomies which Huxley sees as being the major obstacles to a harmonious existence. So far we have attempted to analyse and discuss some of the main dichotomies as they have become evident in Huxley's poetry, short stories and novels. As we have tried to suggest, the purely artistic achievement of Huxley's work is secondary to an objective appraisal of his standing and relevance as a twentieth century man of letters. He is not - and he never pretends to be - more than what he is; namely, an acutely intelligent and sensitive individual possessing a flair for literary expression. He is afflicted by a basic schism at the very heart of his existence. Simply stated, this schism - the paramount dichotomy - revolves around the conflict between knowledge and understanding: between abstract theory and cerebral awareness on the one hand and wholesome experience and intuitive realisation on

the other. We have seen, while discussing specific texts, how heredity, education and environment have played their part, individually and jointly, in shaping this divided life and how Huxley has attempted to transcend these influences in his search for a successful synthesis.

A main part of the argument has been that the chief importance of his work lies in the fact that it furnished him with an acceptable means of coming to terms with himself. More than anything else, his writings serve to clarify and illustrate the problems with which he himself was deeply and seriously concerned. But because he is so consciously disturbed by the riddles of existence - and hence because he so agonisingly searches for an acceptable mode of living - his writings help us to understand better some of the major problems of modern man. A writer's work invariably embodies the ethos of his age, and with Huxley this truism acquires more than nominal significance. In this respect an understanding of his work contributes significantly to our understanding of the age in which he lived.

Up to and including Eyeless in Gaza, the work has been chiefly concerned with the obstacles to integration. With Eyeless in Gaza Huxley seems to have arrived at a solution to his problems and the later novels are mainly demonstrations of this solution. If the answer to the search for integration has not been as successfully rendered as the struggle it is because conflict lends itself more easily to dramatisation than does resolution. Admittedly, the novels after Eyeless in Gaza lack the intensity and the sparkle

of his earlier work. The later novels concern themselves chiefly with the practical application of the answer which Anthony Beavis has intuitively grasped. How to translate the inner knowledge of integrated existence into a workable fact is the question to which Huxley now addresses himself. For Huxley literature was immensely important because it acted as a vehicle for "the expression of general philosophic ideas, religious ideas, social ideas."¹ Viewed from this standpoint the novels beginning with After Many A Summer (1939) are an endless source of ideas. All of them - with the possible exception of Ape and Essence (1948) - function primarily as guides to integrated living. As such they provide a wealth of ideas dealing with several important issues of our time. As novels, however, they are weakened by Huxley's desire to preach. It becomes clear that with them "the moralist began to take precedence over the novelist."²

In 1937, the year following Eyeless in Gaza, Huxley published Ends and Means. This book, even more than The Perennial Philosophy (1945), embodies the philosophy of integrated living which Huxley adhered to, with very minor modifications, throughout the remainder of his life. As the Anthony-Huxley of Eyeless in Gaza realised, means determine ends, and Ends and Means is a book largely devoted to an exemplification of this homely truth. Within the framework

1. Writers At Work: The Paris Review Interviews, op. cit., p. 174.

2. Peter Bowering, Aldous Huxley: A Study of the Major Novels, op. cit., p. 142.

of our study, the end is to achieve integration; and the means to do this, Huxley unequivocally states, is to follow the path of non-attachment:

The ideal man is the non-attached man. Non-attached to his bodily sensations and lusts. Non-attached to his craving for power and possessions. Non-attached to the objects of these various desires. Non-attached to his anger and hatred; non-attached to his exclusive loves. Non-attached to wealth, fame, social position. Non-attached even to science, art, speculation, philanthropy. Yes, non-attached even to these. (EM, pp. 3-4)

Huxley is quick to remind his readers that by making non-attachment his goal, he does not mean to embrace a negative philosophy. On the contrary, for him, non-attachment "entails the practice of all the virtues" (EM, p. 4). Ends and Means, is, in fact, the non-fictional equivalent of Eyeless in Gaza, a book in which Huxley debunks the hitherto "philosophy of meaninglessness" and declares himself to believe in an "ultimate reality." The belief implies a liberation of no small import: "Liberation from prevailing conditions of thought, feeling and behaviour is accomplished most effectively by the practice of disinterested virtues and through direct insight into the real nature of ultimate reality" (EM, pp. 2-3). We have discussed above how the personal problems of the Huxley-hero prevented him from achieving integration in the early work. Now the way out of the dilemma is to denounce the personal self as a limiting factor which has to be transcended if a wholesome life is to be attained. In many ways the solution is a religious one; incorporating the teachings of the divines of many faiths of many ages but devoid of the trappings of an institutionalised creed. Huxley defines religion as

a system of education by means of which human beings may train themselves, first, to make desirable changes in their own personalities and, at one remove, in society, and, in the second place, to heighten consciousness and so establish more adequate relations between themselves and the universe of which they are parts. (EM, p. 225)

In retrospect we can see how the various conflicts which troubled the early Huxley-heroes are now accounted for through the advocacy of a belief which underlines the importance of an all-round personality dedicated to the task of bettering human existence. More than this, as we have seen when analysing Eyeless in Gaza, there is present within the belief in ultimate reality an element of mysticism; an element for which there can only be, at the very best, a private testimony. Anthony Beavis's consciousness of the underlying unity of all things at the end of Eyeless in Gaza presents problems for the unsympathetic reader precisely because it is embedded in an experience which cannot be adequately shared (through language especially) without risk of tedium or ridicule or distortion. We recall Cardan denouncing mystics for the "bosh" they talked about in Those Barren Leaves and we then noted how language was a very unsatisfactory medium for communicating experiences of a mystical nature. To be convincing the belief has to be credible, or at least credibly rendered. But the experience which gives the belief its conviction and upon which it rests, does not appear suitable for fictional treatment. Hence the critic's problem in approaching Huxley's later novels. The way around this difficulty is to proceed by example. This is exactly what Huxley himself resorts to. He evokes the authority of the great mystics, from the anonymous author of The Cloud of Unknowing to Lao Tzu to

Meister Eckhart to Saint John of the Cross, in order to affirm the validity of his belief. He adheres strongly to the statement Calamy made in Those Barren Leaves: "No, it's not fools who turn mystics. It takes a certain amount of intelligence and imagination to realise the extraordinary queerness and mysteriousness of the world in which we live. The fools, the innumerable fools, take it all for granted...." (TBL, p. 370). Huxley asserts that any doctrine "that denies meaning and value to the world as a whole, while assigning them in a supreme degree to certain arbitrarily selected parts of the totality, can have only evil and disastrous results" (EM, p. 274). This latter approach was the problem of persons like Spandrell and Illidge in Point Counter Point who, obsessed with their own narrow-minded doctrines about existence, could not participate wholly and meaningfully in the life around them. The same limitations, we noted, apply also to Rampion who, inspite of his creed of "all-round harmonious living" could not tolerate those who did not conform to his ideals. With Eyeless in Gaza Huxley begins to hold absolutely to such virtues as love, tolerance, humility, compassion, as being values which can only be ignored at peril of man's integrated existence. The super-structure for these values is provided for by the conviction in the "existence of a spiritual reality underlying the phenomenal world and imparting to it whatever value or significance it possesses" (EM, p. 4). The task of the person in search of integration, therefore, is to cultivate the methods by which this "spiritual reality" can be approximately experienced. This will henceforth be the new problem

for the Huxley-hero: from Pete in After Many A Summer to Will Farnaby in Island, he will be educated in the art of spiritual awareness.

It is to be remembered that Huxley insists, in Ends and Means (and elsewhere) that "The only language that can convey any idea about the nature of this reality is the language of negation, of paradox, of extravagant exaggeration" (EM, p. 289). This is not to absolve himself from the repetitive nature of much in the later novels which causes distress among even his admirers.³ Rather it is to reiterate Huxley's constant sensitivity to the fact that "experience of the numinous"⁴ - to use Otto's celebrated phrase - cannot usually be happily transcreated in linguistic terms. The point at issue, of course, is that if such experiences cannot be satisfactorily rendered in fiction then the writer should best avoid trying to do so. One of the major problems of the later novels is that in attempting to dramatise the "undramatisable" they become unnecessarily verbose and didactic.

(ii)

For Huxley ultimate spiritual reality is "impersonal" and he chastises various movements in history, particularly Christianity, for having persistently believed in a "personal" object of devotion:

3. Cf. Keith May, op. cit., p. 143.

4. Rudolph Otto, The Idea of the Holy, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968, p. 4.

All the great religions have taught the necessity of transcending personality; but the Christians have made it particularly difficult for themselves to act upon teaching. They have accompanied the injunction that men should lose their lives in order to save them by the assertion that God himself is a person and that personal values are the highest that we can know. (EM, p. 240)

He goes on to argue at length that this belief in the complete transcendence and otherness of God results in such undesirable practices as dogmatism and intolerance. Alluding to the Bible, he agrees that "the ultimate reality is 'the peace of God which passeth all understanding'" (EM, p. 298). His reluctance to believe in a personal final reality leads him to endorse the Oriental religious postures - such as Vedantic Hinduism and Zen Buddhism - which deny and discourage attempts to anthropomorphise the nature of the final reality. The great religious philosophies of Asia emphasise both the transcendence and immanence of God - if we can use the term to denote the ultimate spiritual reality - and thereby avoid arriving at any dualistic conception of existence.

Moreover, as Professor R.C. Zaehner argues,

Religion for the Hindu or Buddhist...is primarily a matter of experience: it is not so much something to be believed as something to be lived. By belief or faith, too, they do not understand a series of propositions to which assent is given, they mean not only faith in, but contact with a supra-sensory world. Religion for them, is not so much something to be professed as something to be experienced; and such experience, in its higher forms, is usually called mystical experience.⁵

It is this stress on experience of the eastern faiths which attracts Huxley. After all the theoretical excursions which we have seen

5. R.C. Zaehner, Mysticism: Sacred and Profane, London: Oxford University Press, 1967, p. 2.

the Huxley-hero make into various fields of human endeavour, he is now to achieve integration through actual practice in the art of cultivating goodness - "good is that which makes for unity" (EM, p. 303). Sir Julian Huxley tells us how

One of Aldous's major preoccupations was...to achieve self-transcendence while yet remaining a committed social being - how to escape from the prison bars of self and the pressure of here and now into realms of pure goodness and pure enjoyment; how to integrate the warring drives of what he called our 'multiple amphibian' nature into some satisfying total pattern of peace, harmony and wholeness; how to achieve union with that 'something deeply interfused', which pervades existence and makes for righteousness, significance and fulfilment. (MV, p. 24)

The focus is on the actualisation of integrated living. Huxley is constantly striving after that state of being which will be in unity both with itself and with the universe. Because the new philosophy which he embraces proclaims the unity of all things, the desired state is, essentially, one which will give coherence and meaning to an otherwise fragmented existence.

In The Perennial Philosophy Huxley covered a large area of religious, philosophic and mystical thought and confirmed his faith in the basic postulates of the eastern traditions in these matters. We must, however, emphasise that in framing his perennial philosophy he borrowed greatly from the teachings of the major Christian mystics too. His encyclopaedic mind plumbed the depths of universal religious thought and drew from it whatever accorded with the basic attitude he had adopted. If he drew more from the east it is because here he found most sympathy. According to Christopher Isherwood, Huxley was encouraged in his endorsement of

the eastern faiths by the Indian spiritual guru Swami Prabhavananda.⁶ We know from his letters, however, of his abiding interest in mysticism, though in the early years this interest had been purely theoretical and negative. His friendship with Gerald Heard, too, no doubt helped him in arriving at the positive belief in mystical experiences which he enumerates in Ends and Means.

Several critics have expressed dismay and reservation at Huxley's adoption of a mystical posture. The criticism has been all the more severe because of the Oriental features present in such a posture. Douglas Stewart, for example, in a very interesting analysis of Huxley's work, concludes that "In siding with the older religions of the East against Christianity, in seeking a more spiritual and less materialistic religion, Aldous Huxley is dreaming of escape rather than accepting the redemption of 'the whole Creation'."⁷ Likewise Robert Hamilton, while praising Huxley's work for the challenge it affords contemporary man, states that because the truth Huxley found was not "the fullness of Christian truth" there was a "remoteness in his conception of religion that only the Incarnation could completely overcome."⁸ D.S. Savage criticises Huxley for confusing "many" with "unity" and writes: "In

6. George Wickes, "An Interview with Christopher Isherwood," Shenandoah, Vol. 16, Part 2 (1965), pp. 23-52.

7. Douglas Stewart, The Ark of God, London: The Karey Kingsgate Press, 1961, p. 69.

8. Robert Hamilton, "The Challenge of Aldous Huxley," Horizon, Vol. 17 (June 1948), pp. 441-456.

the Huxleyean scheme of things, this world of human experience is utterly alien from the divine reality; there is no possibility in it of movement towards and final reconciliation with that reality; only an isolated, individual escape into a mystical stratosphere is conceivable."⁹ Savage, in fact, offers his own belief: "Briefly, the way of affirmative meaning is not 'mystical' but prophetic; not impersonal but personal; not individual but communal, not monistic but dualistic, not ahistorical but historical."¹⁰

What emerges from a close scrutiny of such criticism is that the critics have failed to grasp both what Huxley is really saying and what the eastern religions have taught and upheld. There is, obviously, a prejudicial element in the criticism. Written by scholars steeped in the Christian tradition (or, like Savage, confirmed in a Marxist-type over-view of history), the criticism is limited by its semantic framework. It is wrong to accuse Huxley of wanting to escape reality by adopting the pseudo-mystical garb of eastern faiths. Neither Buddhism nor Hinduism, as a matter of fact, teaches escape in the ordinary sense of the word. On the contrary, both these religious systems insist on an uncompromising acceptance of reality. A major problem for many critics of these faiths is the interpretation of the basic texts. As Zaehner recognises, the language in which these religions are couched is

9. D.S. Savage, Mysticism and Aldous Huxley, (1947; reprinted 1969), Pennsylvania: Folecoft Press, 1969, p. 19.

10. Ibid., p. 20.

very hard to understand and can easily be misunderstood.¹¹ When the Buddhist speaks of nirvana (liberation) and the Hindu of moksha (release) they refer to a state of spirituality in which existence is co-terminous with the ultimate reality. Though both Buddhists and Hindus believe in the concept of maya (illusory reality) the concept itself does not warrant any naive belief in the non-reality of matter. What maya signifies is that the world is a reality but that this reality is not to be confused with the ultimate reality (or Brahman), the union with which is man's goal. The most crucial episode in the Bhagvad-Gita - the sacred Hindu text - is Krishna's injunction to Arjuna to accept the reality of war (no matter how nasty, meaningless and undesirable this is) and participate in it. And in the teachings of the Buddha, acceptance of this life is more heavily emphasised than any mechanism of getting out of it. Both religions preach acceptance but an acceptance governed by vidhaya (a true understanding of the real nature of reality) as opposed to avidyha (a false understanding of the real nature of reality). The person who cultivates vidyha achieves self-transcendence and lives, thereby, an integrated life. The achievement of vidyha is through the ideal of non-attachment. Again, we have to stress that non-attachment means non-slavishness; not detachment or indifference. Christ himself said as much when he told his followers to be in the world but not of it. Huxley clarifies the position - insofar as it can be so summararily

11. R.C. Zaehner, op. cit., pp. 6-7.

clarified - in his essay "Shakespeare and Religion," the essay he wrote on his death-bed:

The world is an illusion, but it is an illusion which we must take seriously, because it is real as far as it goes, and in those aspects of the reality which we are capable of apprehending. Our business is to wake up. We have to find ways in which to detect the whole of reality in the one illusory part which our self-centred consciousness permits us to see. We must not live thoughtlessly, taking our illusion for the complete reality, but at the same time we must not live too thoughtfully in the sense of trying to escape from the dream state. We must continually on our watch for ways in which we may enlarge our consciousness. We must somehow learn how to transform it and transfigure it. Too much 'wisdom' is as bad as too little wisdom, and there must be no magic tricks. We must learn to come to reality without the enchanter's wand and his book of the words. One must find a way of being in this world while not being out it. A way of living in time without being completely swallowed up in time. (MV, p. 174)

It has been necessary to discuss the basic tenets of the conviction Huxley arrived at with Eyeless in Gaza at some length because of the unfortunate confusion which these have given rise to. Huxley himself several times confessed that he was less interested in the doctrinaire aspects of any religion than with those elements which served to actualise human potentiality in all its fullness. His search for integration eventually brings him to a mystical apprehension of reality as is already present in an early poem like "The Burning Wheel" (CP, pp. 15-16). Though we may grant that he is not always logical or wholly accurate in his arguments¹² it is still to be regretted that the many critics who hastily chastise him for adopting non-attachment as the final

12. Cf. Helen Watts Estuch, "Jesting Pilate Tells the Answer," Sewanee Review, Volume 47 (January 1939), pp. 63-81.

solution do not probe enough the implications and the philosophy which gives this goal its peculiar strength and validity as a way of life. In the following analysis of the later novels we shall be concerned with examining deeper the meaning of this answer.

(iii)

We may begin our discussion of After Many A Summer (1939) by citing A.E. Dyson's famous comments on it:

After Many A Summer has neither the psychological interest of Eyeless in Gaza nor the consistent interest as a fable of Brave New World. What it does provide is the purest expression yet of Huxley's constant dichotomy between flesh and spirit. The human animal becomes simply Yahoo, the human soul simply Houyhnhnm: the one loathsome, the other a devitalised distraction at best. The Buddhism which Mr Propter discourses upon as a "liberation from personality" may strike one as a greater threat to the individual than the machinations of the scientists in Brave New World....¹³

Dyson's shrewd remarks not only help us to focus attention on several important aspects of the novel but also serve to highlight a major dissatisfaction with it; namely, the critics' impatience with Huxley's "religion." For a critic of Dyson's standing to suggest that Propter's Buddhism poses a threat greater than even that envisioned in Brave New World is no small matter. The indictment immediately forces us to consider the basic tenets on which Propter's - and by extension Huxley's - creed rests.

Dyson substantiates his charge by stating that with After Many A Summer we come to a point where "Instead of the Nothing of Mrs

13. A.E. Dyson, "Aldous Huxley and the Two Nothings," The Critical Quarterly, Volume 3 (1961), pp. 293-309. Reprinted in The Crazy Fabric, London: Macmillan, 1965, pp. 166-186.

Viveash's boredom, we have the Nothingness of Mr Propter's God." That Dyson is not alone in his complaints, is evident from the comments made by an earlier critic who claimed that Huxley's "new religion is the rationalist's substitute for suicide. His mysticism is the last resort of a personality too lacking in self-confidence to accept the world on its own terms and so weakened by the moral decay he can vividly sense in others that an aim for nirvana is needed to forestall the collapse of his own defences."¹⁴ The severity of the criticism betrays, in a sense, the critic's unwillingness (or inability) to grant Huxley the answer he arrived at in his search for integration. Both Dyson and Burgum also reveal, unfortunately, an unexamined antipathy toward the new faith which Huxley embraces. To attack the novel on grounds of artistic failure is understandable; after all Propter's discourses do become tedious and the novel does, indeed, lack the vitality of Brave New World. But to accuse Huxley of propounding a personal belief with which the critic has no sympathy shows a lack of charity. In our discussion of the answer which Huxley arrived at in Eyeless in Gaza and which he elaborated in Ends and Means we noted how "non-attachment," "self-transcendence" and "an intuitive grasp of ultimate reality" were the basic premises upon which the integrated life depends. In After Many A Summer Huxley attempts to make clearer what these premises entail. The attempt is not always successful but a sympathetic reading of the novel leads one to

14. Edwin Berry Burgum, "Aldous Huxley and His Dying Swan," Antioch Review, Volume 2 (Spring 1942), pp. 62-75.

appreciate the significance of what Huxley is about. It also makes us understand better why some critical evaluations of it - especially those concerned with Propter's gospel - tend to be misplaced and alien to the spirit in which the book is written.

The main burden of William Propter's belief consists of his endorsement of Cardinal Berulle's answer to the question "What is man?": "A nothingness surrounded by God, indigent and capable of God, filled with God, if he so desires" (AMAS, p. 90). Propter's is a slightly modified version of the Cardinal's words, as Huxley quotes them in The Perennial Philosophy: "What is man? An angel, an animal, a void, a world, a nothing surrounded by God, indigent of God, capable of God, filled with God, if it so desires" (PP, p. 48). The modification, though slight, is significant. In condensing the statement, Propter has unwittingly taken some 'meaning' out of the paradox which underlines the answer. In the Cardinal's original wording, man is not an either/or entity but both angel and animal, void and world, both a "nothing" and a "something" capable of God. By modifying the emphasis Propter has invited the kind of criticism Dyson makes: "Instead of the Nothing of Mrs Viveash's boredom we have the Nothingness of Propter's God." But if Propter has unwittingly invited Dyson's stricture, Dyson has himself unwittingly confused and equated the two kinds of "nothings" he alludes to. The "nothing" of Mrs Viveash in Antic Hay refers to a purposeless existence in which "tomorrow will be as awful as today" (AH, p. 254). The "nothing" of Propter, however, postulates a religious or pseudo-religious definition of man in spiritual terms. Mrs Viveash's nothing does not entertain any paradox; it merely

epitomises the basic emptiness of her life. Whereas Propter's nothingness is a being who is, through paradox, capable of filling himself with God and therefore of authenticating his existence. Thus, for Dyson to have written of the two "nothings" in the same breath is to have patently missed the point. Even if we grant that Huxley has been clumsy in his expression - and therefore risked misinterpretation and ridicule - we must still maintain that Propter's conception of man as a "nothingness surrounded by God" has behind it the force of religion and mysticism while Mrs Viveash's "nothing" speaks only of the ennui and malaise surrounding her futile existence.

This leads us immediately to consider Dyson's other, more damaging, charge: that the Buddhist notion of "liberation from personality" inherent in Propter's teachings, may present a greater threat to the individual than the machinations of the scientists in Brave New World. It is a pity that critics like Dyson have not bothered to identify themselves with the spirit of novels like After Many A Summer. For in failing to reflect more charitably on the precepts which Huxley is trying to put across in these works, these critics have tended to distort the whole basis of Huxley's faith.

At the risk of being simplistic we may begin our reply to Dyson's charge by stating that in Brave New World individuals surrendered - if at all, predestination can allow surrender - their individuality to the State. As a matter of fact there could readily be no threat to individuality in the Brave New World for the sound

and simple reason that individuality there does not exist. Propter's call for the "liberation of personality" has nothing whatever to do with any external frame of reference (as the extinction of individuality has in Brave New World). Liberation of the self, in Propter's scheme of things, is to be pursued by an individual for the good reason that such liberation will result in a better sense of himself as an individual. When Propter-Huxley uses the term "personality" he refers, actually, to what is commonly called "ego" - or man's notion of his own self-ish-ness. Only when man is able to eliminate his self-ishness is he able to realise his self-ness; that is, his totality as a spiritual being. Far from being a threat to individuality, liberation fortifies man's sense of himself by helping him to come to terms with the true nature of his being. Only when man know his self - and spiritual knowledge is a kind of death, the death of ignorance - can man realise his full potential. And there is nothing singularly "Buddhist" about this belief. Zaehner, in analysing the Oriental insistence of "liberation from personality," comes to the conclusion that

the whole of Buddhism and half of Hinduism is summed up in Matthew 16:24-26 and its parallels in Mark and Luke.... In the synoptics, in St. John, in St. Paul, the same message repeats itself: Deny yourself, die to self, face what the Buddhists have always faced with calm and joy, face death, final and complete.... The Buddhist insight that death of self is the only true gateway to an eternal mode of being...is, I should have said, basic to Christianity too.¹⁵

15. R.C. Zaehner, Concordant Discord, London: Oxford University Press, 1970, pp. 206-208.

Thus Propter's call for the liberation from personality would be equivalent to Christ's statement that man must lose his life in order to gain it. No right-thinking Christian would conclude from this that Christ's injunction was a threat to human individuality.

When we realise, therefore, that the notion of liberation from personality implies a transcendence by which man rides himself of "that all-important ego of his as a fiction, a kind of nightmare, a frantically agitated nothingness" (AMAS, p. 98), we get a clearer idea of Propter's conception of integrated living.

Personality, in Propter's terms is a "spatio-temporal cage" (AMAS, p. 271), a prison, which denies man full realisation of himself. It inhibits, in other words, man's capacity to be filled with God conceived as the ultimate reality. Propter himself offers a good illustration of the manner in which personality can obstruct man's reaching out to God:

He had come to this bench under the eucalyptus tree in order to recollect himself, in order to realise for a moment the existence of that other consciousness behind his private thoughts and feelings, that free, pure power greater than his own. He had come for this; but memories had slipped in while he was off his guard; speculations had started up, cloud upon cloud, like seabirds rising from their nesting-place to darken and eclipse the sun. Bondage is the life of personality, and for bondage the personal self will fight with tireless resourcefulness and the most stubborn cunning. (AMAS, p. 99)

Rhythm and imagery help to reinforce Propter's inability to commune with God; the 'light' he had come to enjoy is eclipsed by the intrusive memories of his private self. But because he is aware of these obstacles of personality, and because he has, to some extent, attained the means of transcending it, he is able quite soon, to participate wholly in the meditative experience which links

him, for a time at least, with God:

His vigilance gradually ceased to be an act of the will, a deliberate thrusting back of irrelevant personal thoughts and wishes and feelings. For little by little these thoughts and wishes and feelings had settled like a muddy sediment in a jar of water, and as they settled, his vigilance was free to transform itself into a kind of effortless unattached awareness, at once intense and still, alert and passive - an awareness whose object was the words he had spoken and at the same time that which surrounded the words. But that which surrounded the words was the awareness itself; for this vigilance which was now an effortless awareness - what was it but an aspect, a partial expression, of that impersonal and untroubled consciousness into which the words had been dropped and through which they were slowly sinking? And as they sank they took a new significance for the awareness that was following them down into the depths of itself - a significance new not in respect to the entities connoted by the words, but rather in the mode of their comprehension, which, from being intellectual in character, had become intuitive and direct, so that the nature of man in his potentiality and of God in actuality were realised by an analogue of sensuous experience, by a kind of unmediated participation. (AMAS, pp. 99-100)

Starting with knowledge (an act of the will, an intellectual apprehension) the experience transforms itself into understanding (an intuitive rapport with ultimate reality). The passage quoted above may well be "bosh" to the Cardans of this world; but for those who, like Huxley, strive for inner peace it speaks with an authority quite its own. The repetitions, the parentheses, the extended sentences with their deliberate pauses, underline a definite attempt to communicate the reality of experience. If we are pre-disposed to being skeptical about descriptions of religious experiences, such writing, will, no doubt, not appeal. What Huxley is trying to convey here in metaphoric prose is similar to those "spots of time" which, as Wordsworth so eloquently tells us in The Prelude, alter man's whole consciousness of himself. Whereas

Theodore Gumbril in Antic Hay had merely theorised about those "quiet places in the mind" (AH, pp. 146-147), here Propter is seen to actually achieve the desired calm.

According to Propter liberation from personality is inevitably linked with liberation from "time" (AMAS, p. 109). This is so because personality (the self-conscious I, ego) exists in time and is, in fact, defined by it. Hence one important theme of the novel intimated by its title:

The wood decay, the woods decay and fall,
The vapours weep their burthen to the ground,
Men comes and tills the field and lies beneath,
And after many a summer dies the swan.

Though the story of ill-fated Tithonus in Tennyson's poem provides an ironic twist to the satire of the novel - as George, the hero of Isherwood's A Single Man, tries so desperately to explain to his students¹⁶ - Propter would have frowned upon Tithonus even if he had asked for eternal youth. For Propter "time and craving, craving and time" are "two aspects of the same thing; and that thing is the raw material of evil" (AMAS, p. 108). Hence his dissatisfaction with the experiments in longevity which Pete Boone is carrying out. "The longer you live the more evil you automatically come into contact with" he tells Pete. (AMAS, p. 108). In Propter's vocabulary evil is that which hinders liberation. Because longevity prolongs an obsession with personality (because for him more time means more craving), it is ultimately deemed to be degenerative rather than regenerative in the spiritual sense.

16. Cf. Christopher Isherwood, A Single Man (1964), London: Methuen, 1978, pp. 50-56.

To confirm Propter's conviction, Huxley gives us the melodramatic spectacle of the Fifth Earl of Gonister who attempts to attain longevity by eating raw carp. Not only will swans and carp die after many summers but man, too, will "lie beneath." As a parody of human vanity the Earl becomes, in Dr Obispo's words, "A foetal ape that's had time to grow up" (AMAS, p. 312). The moral is too obvious to require further comment. For Dr Earl the ape has become the essence.

Time, Propter explains, "is potential evil, and craving (like Jo Stoyte's craving for immortality) converts the potentiality into actual evil" (AMAS, p. 109). It is little wonder that Jo Stoyte's elaborate cemetery - the Beverly Pantheon - with its Tower of Resurrection, affords him little consolation. Though the marble scrolls above the entrance to the endless galleries within the Pantheon loudly ask "Oh Death where is thy sting?" (AMAS, p. 13), the very innocent allusion to "his burial ground" by Jeremy Pordage drives Jo Stoyte to a frightful terror of death (AMAS, p. 26). Rather than lose his self in order to find it, Jo Stoyte has employed Dr Obispo to find ways and means of prolonging his life. The life Stoyte leads is itself a bundle of contradictions, vividly proclaimed by the paintings that hang at opposite ends of the big hall of his castle:

At one end of the cavernous room, lit by a hidden searchlight, El Greco's 'Crucifixion of St. Peter' blazed out in the darkness like the beautiful revelation of something incomprehensible and profoundly sinister. At the other, no less brilliantly illuminated, hung a full-length portrait of Helene Fourment, dressed only in a bearskin cape.... Two shining symbols, incomparably powerful and expressive - but of what, of what? That, of course, was the question. (AMAS, p. 38)

The two paintings express the basic schism in Jo Stoyte's life. El Greco's spiritual painting with its aim to "assert the soul's capacity to come, through effort and through grace, to ecstatic union with the divine Spirit" (TV, p. 179) is not compatible with a Rubens' nude, designed for subtle erotic purposes. Though Jo can furnish his house with grand paintings celebrating the life of the spirit, his own life is invariably one of the way of all flesh. His fear of death, of the inevitable decay of his body, haunts him to no end:

'God is love. There is no death.' He waited to feel that sense of inward warmth, like the after-effect of whisky, which had followed his previous utterance of the words. Instead, as though some immanent friend were playing a practical joke on him, he found himself thinking of the shrunken leathery corpses, and of judgement and the flames. (AMAS, p. 39)

The intoxicated warmth which he seeks through futile utterances is hopelessly blighted by visions of hell; death indeed has a dire sting.

Towards the end, Jo is reduced to a pathetic figure of self-pity: In the world he had been reduced to inhabiting, millions were irrelevant. For what could millions do to allay his miseries? The miseries of an old, tired, empty man; of a man who had no end in life but himself, no philosophy, no knowledge but of his own interests, no appreciations, not even any friends - only a daughter-mistress, a concubine-child, frantically desired, cherished to the point of idolatory. And now, this being, on whom he had relied to give significance to his life, had begun to fail him. (AMAS, p. 211)

The uncertain, choppy prose aptly describes his plight. Having nothing substantial to base his life on, Jo has throughout led an aimless hedonistic existence which can proffer him no salvation. The story of his life, acting as a counterpoint to that of Propter's,

amply illustrates Propter's belief that time is potential evil. Wanting to perpetuate his power and his lust, Jo Stoyte falls hopelessly a prey to basic human passions of jealousy and greed. It is not a little ironic that he should kill Pete in a fit of mistaken identity just when Pete is on his way to meditate; after all it is Pete whose experiments in longevity were going to allow Jo to sink "deeper and deeper into the stinking slough" of his personality (AMAS, p. 112). This "inverse" irony furnishes part of the novel's satiric play-about; just as Virginia Maunciple's comment at the copulating baboons - "aren't they cute! Aren't they human" (AMAS, p. 82) - prove apt both in her own seduction by Dr Obispo and in the foreshadowing of her life with Jo on observing later the Earl lust after his old housekeeper.

If the fates of Jo and Virginia confirm Propter's insistence that time is evil (because there is no logical reason why time should be evil), we must not be automatically led to believe that liberation from time is therefore an escape from the sordid realities of living. Indeed, it is people like Jo and Virginia who are constantly searching for ways to escape from their boring existence - Jo with his miscellaneous schemes and designs, Virginia with her romantic escapades. Liberation from time in the spiritual sense - and it is in this sense that Propter is using the term - means freedom from maya, freedom from being under the trap of an illusory reality which blocks perception of the ultimate reality. To be liberated from time is to be free from the shackles imposed by temporality - for it is temporality that ties man down to a slavishness of things. Jo Stoyte is a slave to his possessions

as much as Virginia is a slave to her desires: both enact a bondage in time. Time, says, Eckhart,

is what keeps the light from reaching.... There is no greater obstacle to God than time. And not only time but temporalities, not only temporal things but temporal affections; not only temporal affections but the very taint and smell of time. (PP, p. 217)

A release from time helps man to understand better the true nature of Reality and thereby equips him to lead an integrated existence - an existence which is not confounded by the dichotomous claim of immorality and transience. Nirvana (Nibbana in Pali, nir, meaning out, and vana blown; hence literally 'blownout') is attained when man is able to comprehend reality as it really is so as to blow out false perceptions gleaned through the spatio-temporal cage of his personality. Professor Radhakrishnan states that nirvana is "the goal of perfection and not the abyss of annihilation."¹⁷ It does not mean escape or denial; it refers to a state of awareness which makes possible the filling of man with God. "Through the destruction of all that is individual (selfish) in us, we enter into communion with the whole universe, and become an integral part of the great purpose. Perfection is then the sense of oneness with all that is.... The horizon of being is extended to the limits of reality."¹⁸ Strictly speaking, as Professor Christmas Humphreys so aptly points out, nirvana "cannot be conceived; it can only be experienced."¹⁹ It is a state of

17. Quoted in Christmas Humphreys, Buddhism, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962, p. 128.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

consciousness which frees man from the cravings of time and personality.

If, therefore, instead of time, we let eternity experience itself, "let God be sufficiently often present in the absence of human desires and feelings and preoccupations" the result will be "a transformation of the life which must be lived, in the intervals, on the human level" (AMAS, p. 273). Propter's prescriptions are not meant to seduce people out of their daily lives into a kind of ever-lasting, vague, blissful tranquillity but to help them realise that the here-and-the-now can be more meaningfully experienced if they knew the pitfalls of time and personality.

If time is evil, where does good reside? Propter supplies the answer:

On the level below the human and on the level above. On the animal level and on the level...well, you can take your choice of names: the level of eternity, the level, if you don't object, of God; the level of the spirit - only that happens to be about the most ambiguous word in the language. 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. (AMAS, p. 120)

Though this aspect of Propter's philosophy has been under severe criticism, it does, in its own way, make intelligible sense in the context of Propter's worldview. This, in fact, is where the original wording of Cardinal Berulle's definition of man as "An angel, an animal, a void, a world..." comes in useful. Because

man is both angel and animal he constantly inhabits this "wearisome condition of humanity." When Propter says that good is either "above" or "below" the human level, what he is trying to say is that man cannot make the best of both worlds, he is compelled to go either downwards (like the Earl, like Jo) into an animal existence or to go upwards (like Propter) into an angelic existence. We can respond to Peter Firchow's charge that "According to the strict wording of Propter's principles, the fifth earl of Gonister ought to be commended for having transformed himself, however inadvertently, into a foetal ape"²⁰ by saying that the earl's transformation was unnatural; that he was not naturally an animal - and hence could not abide by the "proper functioning of the organism in accordance with the laws of its own being." Indeed, when we come to think about it, Propter's philosophy allows man only one way out of the problem, to aspire to the level above the human "because there are a million wrong tracks and only one right" (AMAS, p. 154). Logically, of course, the same objection would apply to man becoming an angel as it applies to man becoming animal; but on Propter's terms - and this is where his abridgement of Berulle's words gives his definition of man its peculiarity - man is a nothingness capable of being filled with God. And he ought in consequence to aspire to this spiritual state. At the human level, says Propter, the best that can be done is "preventive": the aim should be to "make this world safe for ourselves as animals

20. Firchow, op. cit., p. 149.

and as spirits" (AMAS, pp. 146-147). And the way to do this is to practise Propter's version of the Jeffersonian democracy (with its tolerant and accommodating quality) which he outlines at various stages in the novel.

In the overall context of Huxley's search for integration this attitude is by far the most uncompromising yet. In being too eager to preach his doctrine of liberation and of good and evil Huxley gets himself into a knotty position - particularly in regard to the dismissal of all ideals as being merely "the projection, on an enormously enlarged scale, of some aspect of personality" (AMAS, p. 110). In the "Appendix" to The Devils of Loudon (1952) Huxley admits of a third category of transcendence - what he calls "horizontal" self-transcendence - which involved working at one's ideals. Here he accords this "sideways" option the utmost importance, saying that "without it there would be no art, no science, no law, no philosophy, indeed no civilisation" (DL, p. 374). By the same token, however, he states that is is such horizontal self-transcendence which leads to war, intolerance and other gross human actions. It is because of this "counterbalancing evil" which invariably is the concomitant product of horizontal self-transcendence - of identification with an ideal, a cause - that Huxley urges the upward way as being the most desirable.

In After Many A Summer only Propter - the self-defined "strategist" (AMAS, p. 119) - seems to come anywhere near the ideal. Though he does not appear to alter visibly the state of

affairs, we are told that Propter was, for Pete at least, "disinterestedly friendly, at once serene and powerful, gentle and strong, self-effacing and yet intensely there, more present, so to speak, radiating more life than anyone else" (AMAS, p. 122). Pete's impression is quite similar to Jeremy Pordage's first sight of Propter as a "subtle face, in which there were the signs of sensibility and intelligence as well as power, of a gentle and humorous serenity no less than of energy and strength" (AMAS, p. 18). Even Jo Stoyte, Propter's old schoolfellow has a grudging respect for him and loves to be in his company (AMAS, p. 127). If, despite the influence Propter so obviously exercises upon the people he comes into contact with, not more people are seen to be converted to his way of thinking it is because of their own inherent weaknesses. Pete, who comes closest to becoming convinced, dies a tragic death: "One's punished for being insensitive and unaware" says Propter, accepting responsibility for Pete's untimely death, "And so are the people one's insensitive about" (AMAS, p. 288). Jeremy Pordage - who reminds one so much of an earlier Huxley - does not achieve integration because he is immersed in his aestheticism and has not bought his "ticket for Athens" (AMAS, p. 105). And Dr Obispo, that other major figure in the drama of the novel, remains too much of a Mephistophilian - an "indispensable evil" (AMAS, p. 50) - to profit from his discourses with Propter.²¹

21. Cf. Bowering, op. cit., p. 149.

It would thus appear that while After Many A Summer provides that "wild extravaganza" and "fantasy, at once comic and cautionary, farcical, blood-curdling and reflective" (Letters, pp. 440-441), which Huxley thought it was, it is, really, more a personal elaboration and clarification of the faith which Huxley was at this time coming to terms with. Though it is a competently written novel, there does appear to be an overdose of the Propter-Huxley Philosophy and this may well fail to engage the reader who is not already in sympathy with its basic credo.

(iv)

Time Must Have A Stop (1944), takes its title from Hotspur's dying speech in Henry IV Part I:

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

In many ways the novel is a logical follow-up of Propter's sermons about time in After Many A Summer. If time is evil, then for good to operate time must, in some sense, have a stop. And it does have a stop, as Sebastian notes, not only as an "ethical imperative and eschatological hope" but also "in the indicative tense, as a matter of brute experience" (TMHAS, p. 292). Too often, Sebastian reflects, time becomes merely the equivalent of a temporal reality which prevents the full realization of good, because it emphasises only the future and the past without giving enough credence to the present. Thus it makes nothing of human thought and human endeavour because it nullifies expectations and

burlesquely mocks man's misplaced faith in progress. "Before or behind, time can never be worshipped with impunity" (TMHAS, p. 292). For good to materialise, time has to be viewed differently: "It is only by taking the fact of eternity into account that we can deliver thought from its slavery to life. And it is only by deliberately paying our attention and our primary allegiance to eternity that we can prevent time from turning our lives into a pointless or diabolic foolery" (TMHAS, p. 292). Reflecting on the same lines of Hotspur's, but in a different context, Huxley writes that time "must have a stop in the individual mind, which must learn the regular cultivation of a mood of timelessness, of the sense of eternity" (MV, p. 175). The accent on "timelessness," "eternity" stresses the belief that the "divine Ground is a timeless reality" (TMHAS, p. 292). Man must, in other words, transcend time, in order to achieve that awareness of ultimate reality which will equip him adequately to face his existence in time. As Huxley puts it, "Temporal conditions will be accepted as satisfactory only by those whose first concern is not with time, but with eternal Reality and with that state of virtually timeless consciousness, in which along the awareness of Reality is possible."²² Or as Eliot says, "only through time, time is conquered." Unlike the dichotomies we have been analysing before, increasingly the new dichotomy plaguing Huxley is that between temporality and eternity. He himself recognises the problem involved: "This particular

22. Vedanta for the Western World, op. cit., p. 96.

problem - the finding of a right relation between the world of eternal reality and the human world of time - is surely one of the hardest of all."²³ Time Must Have A Stop is, largely, an exploration of this "right relation between the world of eternal reality and the human world of time."

Huxley had tackled the problem in his biography of Father Pierre Joseph, Grey Eminence, published three years before the novel. Father Joseph, we are told, had attempted to reconcile the demands of his religion with those of his politics and had failed, tragically. His life focussed "in the most dramatic way the whole problem of the relations between politics and religious insight" (Letters, p. 461). This extraordinary but ill-fated man whose reputation at the Capuchin Seminary made him out to be "the perfect Capuchin and the most consummate religious of his province, indeed of the whole order" (GE, p. 100), fell because "He was lured away from the path of perfection by the most refined of all temptations - the baits of loyalty and self-sacrifice - but of a loyalty to a cause inferior to the supreme good, a sacrifice of self undertaken in the name of something less than good" (GE, p. 283). It would appear that in writing about Father Joseph's plight Huxley abandoned direct participation in worldly affairs - we recall that Grey Eminence was published at the height of World War II - in preference to a mystical route to enlightenment. Integration was denied to Father Joseph because he confused his loyalties. Though

23. Ibid., p. 208.

Huxley himself abstains from endorsing explicitly any opting out of practical life, some critics see Grey Eminence as an escapist's document (Cf. Watt, especially pp. 340-342). And yet pivotal to the book's argument is Huxley's belief that Father Joseph, the arch-politician of the Thirty Years War, is directly lined to the present state of affairs (GE, pp. 17-18). In trying to understand the complex nature of Father Joseph's personality, therefore, invaluable light is cast on many of the major difficulties facing contemporary man.

Just as Grey Eminence can so easily be mistaken as advocating a retreat from the life of practical affairs, so Time Must Have A Stop has been considered as being, of all the novels, "the most otherworldly, the one which breathes most deeply the conviction that there is no hope for the things and creatures of this world."²⁴ Because it is largely concerned with what may roughly be termed "spiritual matters," the novel is deemed to have only a slight human relevance. It is ironic that just when Huxley seems to have found an answer to his problems - by a roundabout course in world religions - his readers tend to ridicule and dismiss his work.²⁵

24. Firchow, op. cit., p. 170.

25. Cf. "If time must have a stop, then the novel can no longer serve any constructive function, for fiction is an art whose locus is in time.... Since (Huxley) is striving so single-mindedly to reach the Nirvana of non-attachment, there is no reason on earth why he should devote his energy to the art of fiction. The rest is silence." Charles I. Glicksberg, "Aldous Huxley: Art and Mysticism," Prairie Schooner, Vol. 27 (Winter 1953), pp. 344-353. Criticism of this sort, no matter how clever or interesting, is both uncharitable as well as ungracious.

The life of the spirit is life exclusively in the present, never in the past or future; life here, now, not life looked forward to or recollected.... No, the life of the spirit is life out of time, life in its essence and eternal principles. (TMHAS, p. 276)

At first reading this appears to be a paradox for how can the life of spirit be both here and now and yet out of time? Anthony Beavis in Eyeless in Gaza had stated that the "point was in the paradox" (EG, p. 616). And yet Sebastian's reflection on the life of the spirit is, really, quite straightforward. When he says that the life of the spirit is "out of time" he means out of the bondage of time. Mrs Mary Viveash in Antic Hay had thought that "time kills everything" (AH, p. 158) but time kills only if we allow it to. Like Eliot, Huxley wants man "to apprehend/The point of intersection of the timeless/With time"²⁶ and in doing so approximate the condition of saintliness. This, of course, is not easy: "Out of ten thousand only one would ever break out of his carapace completely" (TMHAS, p. 101).

Within the context of the novel it is Bruno Rontini, Sebastian's spiritual mentor, who achieves complete liberation. Our very first glimpse of him assures us that Bruno is someone different from the ordinary. Though only a bookseller by profession, Bruno is spiritually mature - he has mastered the art of being non-attached, Huxley's ideal:

26. T.S. Eliot, "Dry Salvages," Collected Poems 1909-1961, London: Faber & Faber, 1963, p. 212.

The noises of the street were loud beyond the window; but inside the little shop there was a core, as it were, of quintessential silence, to which every noise was an irrelevance, and which persisted through any interruption. Seated at the heart of that silence, Bruno was thinking that the crossed L which he was tracing out before the numerals on every fly-leaf stood not only for Lire, but also for Love, also for Liberation. (TMHAS, p. 99)

Noise is counterpoised with silence: Bruno is aware of the noise but not distracted by it. He is both in and out of time. Throughout the novel Bruno is closely associated with the "crystal" image; giving him a luminosity and strength which sooner or later infect all who come into contact with him. Thus Eustace Barnack, Sebastian's Uncle and self-confessed hedonist, remarks that Bruno "always reminds one of those preposterous Anglo-Saxon saints.... But a thoroughly kind, gentle creature...and considering he's one of the Good, not too much of a bore" (TMHAS, p. 109). This is where Bruno triumphs over Propter - who was a bore. Unlike Propter, Bruno does not talk very much, though as Eustace irritatingly notes, "he always had this odd, exasperating gift of knowing things without being told about them" (TMHAS, p. 102). Bruno's essence resides in his being; in his totality of existence. Long after he is dead Sebastian tells his father that Bruno "could somehow convince you that it all made sense. Not by talking, of course; by just being" (TMHAS, p. 305). Through cultivating the habit of non-attachment, through liberation from time and personality, Bruno achieves integration and becomes a kind of model for others to emulate.

It is Sebastian Barnack who learns most from Bruno. Though on his first meeting with Bruno Sebastian had only seen "foolishness in the bright eyes, only bigotry in that thin, bony face" (TMHAS,

p. 108) and though he later returns to Bruno only to get help in retrieving the Degas painting from the obnoxious art dealer Gabriel Weyl, Sebastian very soon acknowledges Bruno's extraordinariness: "He felt profoundly grateful for the man's forbearance. To have had the decency to help without first taking it out on him in a sermon - that was really extraordinary. And he wasn't a fool either" (TMHAS, p. 239). When Bruno had found out the actual details surrounding Sebastian's desire to get the painting back, all he had said was

When I do something wrong...or merely stupid, I find it very useful to draw up - not exactly a balance sheet; no, it's more like a genealogy, if you see what I mean, a family tree of the offence. Who or what were its parents, ancestors, collaterals? What are likely to be its descendants - in my own life and other people's? It's surprising how far a little honest research will take one. Down into the rat-holes of one's own character. Back into past history. Out into the world around one. Forward into possible consequences. It makes one realise that nothing one does is unimportant and nothing wholly private. (TMHAS, p. 238)

Bruno wants to impress upon Sebastian the contiguity as well as the continuity of existence; our actions involve others too.

Though Sebastian's immediate reaction to Bruno's advice is to try to use "the genealogy of offence...the family tree" as justification for his misdemeanours and write a poem about the whole thing, he gradually learns that "Knowledge is proportionate to being" (TMHAS, p. 246). Unless one acts on the knowledge one acquires, one's life remains unauthenticated. The focus, according to Bruno, is the self: one has to change one's self if one wants to effect any good:

(T)here's only one corner of the universe you can be certain of improving, and that's your own self.... So you have to begin there, not outside, not on other people. That comes

afterwards, when you've worked on your own corner. You've got to be be good before you do good - or at any rate do good without doing harm at the same time. (TMHAS, pp. 82-83)

For Sebastian - "the name of fate's predestined target"

(TMHAS, p. 108) - the search for self-realisation, for integration, is an arduous one. Exposed to the confounding influences of his father, John Barnack, a fanatic for misguided principles, "dominating and righteous, hard on others because even harder on himself" (TMHAS, p. 29); of his Uncle Eustace, advocate of "live and let live" (TMHAS, p. 120); of the supremely worldly and sexually perverse Veronica Thwale, "I've always thought that birching had considerable charm" (TMHAS, p. 159); of the pathetic Daisy Ockham, "The Holy Woman...itching with unsatisfied motherhood" (TMHAS, p. 214), poor Sebastian becomes a kind of Dante Junior experiencing hell and purgatory and coming through them with the help of Bruno, his Virgil.²⁷ The allusion is deliberate; the cue being given by Huxley himself; "The book may be described as a piece of the Comedie Humaine that modulates into a version of the Divina Commedia" (Letters, pp. 498-499). So upper-class realism converts into a pseudo-religious allegory; Balzac gives way to Dante. Though the road to integration is long and hard, Sebastian has to undertake it himself: "It can't be done by anyone else.... Other people can't make you see with their eyes. At the best they can only encourage you to use your own" (TMHAS, p. 283).

27. Cf. Jerome Meckier, op. cit., p. 169. See, also, A.K. Tripathy, The Art of Aldous Huxley, Varanasi: Rasmani Tripathy (India), 1974, pp. 111-116.

This is where the "after-life" sections of the novel come into context. Eustace had constantly denied the worth of spirituality and led the existence of one who, endowed with ample luxury and leisure, had only to "go on keeping out of mischief" (TMHAS, p. 53). His existence, therefore, is essentially based on selfishness, and he does not care to seek the consolation of either philosophy or religion. Bruno had tried in vain to persuade Eustace to believe in God, to extend his life into the religious sphere: "God can forgive...your separation so completely that you can be made one with him" (TMHAS, p. 104). Being the self-centred man he is, Eustace cannot see with Bruno's eyes and even disallows himself to be encouraged to "raise the lid" of his self-centred existence (TMHAS, p. 107). Unfortunately for Eustace his good-living gets the better of him sooner than he expected for he dies of a heart attack. Following his untimely death, his mother - the Queen Mother - arranges for several seances after the manner Huxley had described in the play The World of Light (1930).²⁸ As we see Eustace's body-spirit come back, we find it still refusing to identify itself with the light of cosmic consciousness:

To the entreaty of that blue crystal of silence he returned only the explosions of his derision, more and more strident as the light became more tenderly beautiful, as the silence ever more humbly, ever more gently and caressingly solicited his attention. No, no, none of that! (TMHAS, p. 227)

28. The parallel between Time Must Have A Stop and The World of Light also extends to the question of the relationship between father and son. Whereas the relationship between Mr Wenham and his son Hugo in the play seems to be permanently impaired, in the novel there is some hope of reconciliation between Sebastian and his father John.

As in life so in death: Eustace remains trapped within the confines of his own personality, unwilling to let go and participate in the ultimate reality.²⁹

Unlike Eustace, whose appearance in the novel is really to portray an unrepentant selfishness, Sebastian is prepared to "Find out how to become your inner-not-self in God while remaining your outer self in the world" (TMHAS, p. 283). Through his long search he arrives at the formulation of the "Minimum working Hypothesis" designed "For those of us who are not congenitally the members of any organised church, who have found that humanism and blue-domeism are not enough, who are not content to remain in the darkness of spiritual ignorance, the squalor of vice, or that other squalor of mere respectability":

That there is a Godhead or Ground, which is the unmanifested principle of all manifestations.

That the Ground is transcendent and immanent.

That it is possible for human beings to love, know, and, from virtually, to become actually identified with the Ground.

That to achieve this unitive knowledge, to realise this supreme identity, is the final end and purpose of human existence.

That there is a Law of Dharma, which must be obeyed, a Tao or Way which must be followed, if men are to achieve their final end.

That the more there is of I, me, mine, the less there is of the Ground; and that consequently the Tao is a Way of humility and compassion, the Dharma a Law of mortification and self-transcending awareness. (TMHAS, p. 289)

This is the "greater synthesis" of which we had been given a hint in Paul De Vries's wish to become a pontifex minimus (TMHAS, pp. 91-

29. Much of what Huxley writes in the sections dealing with the seances are no doubt borrowed from the Bardo Thodol (The Tibetan Book of the Dead). This however is not directly relevant to our study but the reader is referred to Peter Bowering's excellent analysis of this aspect of the novel. See, Bowering, op. cit., pp. 167-176.

92). But Paul was a trifle pretentious where Bruno, Sebastian's spiritual guru was not; hence Sebastian's success where Paul only theorised in the abstract. The "minimum working hypothesis" is unashamedly religious in spirit³⁰ and is, as Huxley demonstrates in The Perennial Philosophy, derived from the vast and diverse experiences of the religious divines of all ages and cultures, Sebastian - so reminiscent of the early Huxley-heroes like Denis Stone and Theodore Gumbril - has finally achieved some measure of that "inner peace" which is Huxley's own need. We may or may not accept his hypothesis ourselves: to this effect Sebastian accords his own comment: "For the artist or intellectual, who happens also to be interested in reality and desirous of liberation, the way out would seem to lie, as usual, along a knife-edge" (TMHAS, pp. 286-287). Huxley recognises that for many, the "minimum working hypothesis" solves one problem only to give rise to others. But the fact remains that Time Must Have A Stop concludes on an unambiguously positive note; the first time that this has happened in the Huxley canon. It is not surprising, therefore, that Huxley liked it more than any other of his novels.³¹

(v)

The two novels that come after Time Must Have A Stop - Ape and Essence (1948) and The Genius and the Goddess (1955) - deflect

30. Cf. Floyd W. Matson, "Aldous and Heaven Too: Religion Among the Intellectuals," Antioch Review, Vol. 14 (September 1954), pp. 239-309.

31. Writers at Work, op. cit., p. 172.

somewhat from the search for integration which we are examining. They are not personal novels in the way Eyeless in Gaza, for instance, may be described as a personal novel. Rather, they deal with issues which are of a more general interest, Ape and Essence concerns itself with the consequences arising out of an ethics inherent in a complex situation. For a while, at least, the religious-mystic elements which we observed as being behind the resolution of conflict in novels like Time Must Have A Stop are side-stepped in order to render a more immediate comment on what Huxley sees as the disastrous results which accrue when basic values get confused. This is not to deny the presence of religious considerations in these novels but to suggest that the novels do not actively propagate the adoption of the perennial philosophy. In both these works dichotomy, rather than integration, exercises the greatest influence and it is interesting to examine, if only briefly, Huxley's re-entry into the sphere of conflict or unfulfilled existence. Far from escaping the problems of the world through the adoption of his perennial philosophy, Huxley seems to have immersed himself in them! Both Ape and Essence and The Genius and the Goddess are very much centred on worldly problems; the former on a public scale, the latter essentially on a private scale. In writing them Huxley is demonstrating the truth of his conviction that the ideal of non-attachment which he so assiduously propagates in the novels after Eyeless in Gaza is not averse or alien to the immediate reality which manifests itself in terms of particular problems. As a matter of fact, one of the great strengths of the

two novels is their topicality; their concern with issues with which readers can readily identify.

Ape and Essence is set in the California of 2108, a California utterly devastated by The Thing (the Bomb) in World War Three and now populated by baboon-like beings who worship the satanic Belial.³² It is a gruesome setting in which wild sexual orgies, wicked murders, rampant deformities and perverse activities of all description have become a part of life. Humanity, through its own fatal error of mis-using science, has lost all significance and has become reduced to a nightmarish parody of apish existence. Into this setting is brought Dr Alfred Poole, the leader of the scientific team from New Zealand (which, because of its geographical isolation has escaped the cataclysm) that has come on an expedition to explore the ruined wasteland that was America. Much of the novel - written in the form of a film-sequence³³ - revolves around the twin-figures of Dr Poole (the visitor) and the Arch-Vicar and reminds one of the confrontation between John Savage and Mustapha Mond in Brave New World, though Poole is more a pathetic figure with a mother-fixation and the Arch-Vicar a burlesque representation

32. Belial, we know from the Bible, symbolises evil. In Paradise Lost, Milton portrays Belial as a fallen angel. In the satanic Bible we are told that Belial means "without a master" and symbolises arch-egotism and is associated with the baseness of earth. All these meanings and associations are relevant to Ape and Essence.

33. The form of the novel has attracted considerable critical attention. See, for instance, Keith May's analysis of it in Aldous Huxley, op. cit., pp. 177-191. For a general discussion of Huxley's excursions into film-script writing, see Tom Dardis, Some Time In The Sun, London: Andre Deutsch, 1976, pp. 183-215.

of authority. There is a heavy farcical element in Ape and Essence enhanced by Huxley's superb use of parody. Just as many great literary works are echoed in Brave New World so in Ape and Essence the presence of Shelley, Byron, Shakespeare, Webster, Milton, Keats, serves as a backdrop to contrast and compare the present situation with the civilisation that has been irrevocably destroyed. Music and poetry provide faint gleams of hope in an environment completely devoid of any trace of human dignity and worth. The individual person has been wiped out, leaving behind only moronic creatures who are severely controlled by castrated priests dedicated to the worship of Belial, the Lord of the Flies, the Lord of Stink. Huxley is merciless in his depiction of horrors and totally uncompromising in his condemnation of an ethos which has lost the spiritual capacity to see the paralysing effect of confusing means and ends.³⁴ He had warned about this in his non-fiction book, Science, Liberty and Peace (1947) where he deplored the fact that "The most important lesson of history...is that nobody ever learns history's lesson. The enormous catastrophes of recent years have left the survivors thinking very much as they thought before. A horde of Bourbons, we return to what we call peace, having learned nothing" (SLP, p. 25). The ape-man in Ape and Essence behave almost like us save that their sense of everything seems to be grotesquely reversed. It is this similarity between actual history and fictional

34. Huxley's letters of the time show him to be extremely disturbed by the state of affairs in science and politics and how to his mind, ends and means were being confused by those who were in positions of power and authority. See, Letters, especially pp. 551-555.

representation which makes the book such a chilling novel to read; we see the ape in us triumphantly trying to mock-imitate the human in it:

Man, proud man,
Drest in a little brief authority -
Most ignorant of what he is most assured,
His glassy essence - like an angry ape,
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
As make the angels weep.

Huxley uses Isabella's speech in Measure for Measure (and how apt the judgemental allusion) to derive his title and makes the Narrator quote the lines and comment on them (AE, pp. 25-26). Ape and Essence is about the condition of man where he has forfeited his "glassy essence" (his capacity for a spiritual existence) in exchange for the "angry ape" (his baseness). Any hope for integration is denied in an atmosphere where "The chief and of Man is to propitiate Belial, deprecate His enmity and avoid destruction for as long as possible" (AE, p. 68). The irony is telling; evil exhorts against evil while exacting every ounce of obedience through evil. The children recite, almost incantatingly, that

My duty towards my neighbour...is to do my best to prevent him from doing unto me what I should like to do unto him; to subject myself to all my governors; to keep my body in absolute chastity; except during the two weeks following Belial Day; and to do my duty in that state of life to which it hath pleased Belial to condemn me. (AE, pp. 69-70)

Here is a society where a woman is "the vessel of the Unholy Spirit, the source of all depravity" (AE, p. 71); and where "In goes The Phenomenology of Spirit, out comes cornbread. And damned good bread it is" (AE, p. 67); where "It's a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the Living Evil" (AE, p. 119). Huxley spares nothing,

skilfully utilising familiar passages from the Bible and poets and borrowing from the powerful graphic descriptions which H.G. Wells gives us in books like The Time Machine and The Island of Doctor Moreau,³⁵ he posits the picture of a world which allowed itself to be consumed by the two most perniciously dangerous doctrines of Progress and Nationalism:

Progress - the theory that you can get something for nothing; the theory that you can gain in one field without paying for your gain in another; the theory that you alone understand the meaning of history; the theory that you know what's going to happen fifty years from now...the theory that Utopia lies just ahead and that, since ideal ends justify the most abominable means, it is your privilege and your duty to rob, swindle, torture, enslave and murder all those who...obstruct the onward march to earthly paradise.

Nationalism - the theory that the State you happen to be subject to is the only true god, and that all other states are false gods; that all these gods, true as well as false, have the mentality of juvenile delinquents; and that every conflict over prestige, power or money is a crusade for the Good, the True and the Beautiful. (AE, p. 94).

So the Arch-Vicar explains gloatingly to the bewildered Dr Poole:

"The fact that such theories came at a given moment of history, to be universally accepted, is the best proof of Belial's existence" (AE, p. 94). One of the fascinating things about the Arch-Vicar is his candid honesty. When asked by Poole why society continues to worship Belial, the Living Evil, the Arch-Vicar replies, "why do you throw food to a growling tiger? To buy yourself a breathing space. To put off the horror of the inevitable, if only for a few

35. Tom Dardis also draws attention to Huxley's borrowing from W.C. Menzie's Things to Come (1930), the film-version of H.G. Wells's The Shape of Things To Come. See, Dardis, op. cit., pp. 186-187. As far as the present writer is aware no critic has drawn attention to Huxley's obvious debt to the books of Wells mentioned in the text above.

minutes" (AE, p. 99). The desperation is there; it is a vicious circle, an ever-continuing descent into the depths of hell. This is the Mephistophelean Hell from which there seems to be no escape. Even Poole is asked to help in the re-construction of the ruined state:

'Then you've still got trains?' he questions.

'Yes, we've still got trains,' Dr Poole answers, a little irritably. 'But, as I was saying...'

'And the engines really work?'

'Of course they work. As I was saying...'

Startlingly the Chief lets out a whoop of delight and claps him on the shoulder.

'Then you can help us to get it all going again. Like in the good old days before...' He makes the signs of the horns. And in an ecstasy of joyous anticipation he draws Dr Poole towards him puts an arm around his neck and kisses him on both cheeks. (AE, pp. 52-53)

Such unabashed display of affection merely serves to repel the poor Dr Poole who is already shocked by the behaviour of the ape-man. The farcical nature of events taking place in this post catastrophic society of 2108 does not leave any room for complacency. In surroundings which have become parodies of human life and behaviour - where, for instance, Albert Einsteins are led around tied to a leash by baboons and sexual orgies have become ritualised - there can scarcely be any chance of integrated living. The descriptions of infants being killed and thrown away, of people being burned alive, of women with three pairs of nipples, appalled many readers when the book first appeared and convinced them that the "ape" had scored a final victory over "essence" (Watt, p. 26). And yet there is a hint, no matter how small or naive, of eventual recovery. Poole, at first the typical Huxley-hero - shy, inhibited, cerebral - is very soon overcome by his sexual drives and participates

in the animal orgy in the loving arms of the four-nippled Loola. Though "sex has become seasonal, romance has been swallowed up by the Oestrus, and the female's chemical compulsion to mate has abolished courtship, chivalry, tenderness, love itself" (AE, p. 111) Poole and Loola discover through each other some semblance of the old-world love pattern:

And so, by the dialectic of sentiment, these two have re-discovered for themselves that synthesis of the chemical and the personal to which we give the names of monogamy and romantic love. In her case it was the hormone that excluded the person; in his, the person that could not come to terms with the hormone. But now there is the beginning of a larger wholeness. (AE, p. 122)

In their union lies their strength. Here, then, is the note of optimism; a shrill note no doubt but at least one which promises some hope for mankind. Poole and Loola have defied the system; they are "Hots" who, if found out, are buried alive for their monogamistic love. Through their love Poole and Loola affirm their humanity, even if this humanity is flawed and weak.³⁶ Poole is strengthened by Loola's love for him and he is able to resist the tempting offer of the Arch-Vicar "to become one of us" (AE, p. 139). Poole states that Belial, the satanic god whom the people worship, "can never resist the temptation of carrying evil to the limit. And whenever evil is carried to the limit, it always destroys

36. "Huxley's young couple are a new Adam and Eve, only on their way from Hell to Paradise. Unfortunately Huxley's version of the Hell from which they are fleeing is much clearer than his version of the new Paradise to which they are going. The lovers' deep passion finds its lofty expression in some exquisite verses by Shelley. But how can we be sure that the deformities caused by atomic rays will not appear in the children of our blissful young couple?" Margaret Gump, "From Ape to Man and from Man to Ape"; Kentucky Romance Quarterly, Vol. 4 (1957), pp. 177-185. Of course we cannot be sure but the question is, at best, rhetorical.

itself" (AE, p. 148). Hence their escape: Poole and Loola flee from this land of living hell and find themselves at the grave of William Tallis, the supposed author of the filmscript of Ape and Essence. They are heading for Northern California" (AE, p. 152). At Tallis's graveside Poole reads that moving penultimate stanza from Shelley's Adonais:

That Light whose smile kindles the Universe,
That Beauty in which all things work and move,
That Benediction, which the eclipsing Curse
Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love
Which through the web of being blindly wove
By man and beast and earth and air and sea,
Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of
The fire for which all thirst, now beams on me,
Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality. (AE, p. 153)

Human potential is ever-present and as the verse hints in the union of Poole and Loola something of this potential may yet be realised.

The novel thus concludes on an optimistic note.³⁷ Huxley wrote the book as a warning of "what human beings are capable of becoming," of "the degradation we may reach" (Bedford, p. 477). The ironic blissful unity of Brave New World gave way to the horrific unity of Ape and Essence. But where John Savage tragically suicided, Poole and Loola go off into that small community of Hots in Northern California where, perhaps, they will be able to lead wholesome lives. Though Ape and Essence is undoubtedly a chilling book, truth is still stranger than fiction: "Unutterably horrible though they are, the doings of those post-atomic apes of California

37. Thus refuting, for instance, Colin Wilson's claim that the novel "is extremely pessimistic." Cf. Colin Wilson, The Strength to Dream (1963), London: Sphere Books, 1976, p. 212.

don't come near the toll of pain, waste and final human outrage that had already happened in places such as Auschwitz" (Bedford, p. 477). Nor, we may now add, do we witness in this society the kind of mass ritualistic suicide-murder executed by the Reverend Jim Jones of the Spiritual Temple Cult and arch-engineer of the tragedy at Guyana.

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We recall that Propter in After Many A Summer had stated that "good" exists either above or below the human level. In the Propterian scheme of things the human level is sorely trapped in the world of time which is the world of craving. It is not, therefore, possible for human beings to achieve integration unless they achieve that sense of non-attachment which will liberate them from the bonds of their personality. We have noted that "liberation" does not imply "escape" nor does it imply "detachment." Rather, to be liberated is to be able to perceive reality in a manner which keeps one's being intact: liberation frees one from being a victim of existential circumstances.

In The Genius and the Goddess (1955) Huxley attempts to portray one such "liberated" person - the heroine Katy Martens, the "goddess" of the book. Set against her is the totally un-liberated "genius," her husband, the Nobel Prize winning physicist Henry. And between them there is John Rivers, Henry's devoted pupil and Katy's illicit lover, caught in limbo, hovering between passion and duty. Of course the present John Rivers who tells the

story to his friend on Christmas Eve is a mellowed and wise old man remembering the crucial events in his life of some thirty years ago. This gives the novel a maturity which some of the early Huxley novels lack; there is, thankfully, hardly any malicious satire. Though in technique - and to some extent in theme - the novel is very reminiscent of such early stories as "Two or Three Graces" (1926) or "Chawdron" (Brief Candles, 1930) Huxley has come a long way from the detached observer he was.

Henry Martens, the eminent physicist but "the psychological equivalent of a foetus" (GG, p. 41), reminds one of Lord Tantamount in Point Counter Point; Katy is in many ways similar to both Elinor Quarles and Mary Rampion - the stable prop on whom the husbands depend for their social and physical well-being.³⁸ John Rivers (the young pupil and lover is distinct from the older and maturer man of ripened experience) is much like the typical Huxley-hero - intellectually bright but unschooled in worldly affairs. The inter-connections between Henry, Katy and Rivers - the main plot of the novel - provide some very interesting insight into Huxley's attitude towards life at this stage in his search for the final synthesis.

Spiritual grace, animal grace, human grace - three aspects of the same underlying mystery; ideally, all of us should be open to all of them. In practice most of us either barricade ourselves against every form of grace or, if we open the door, open it to only one of the forms. (GG, p. 99)

38. Apparently Katy Martens is modelled after Frieda Lawrence; "I used to know very well a specimen of the breed. This was Frieda Lawrence.... Katy's miracle with Henry is merely a transcription of what I myself saw, thirty years ago... Everything that Katy-Frieda does, she does with her whole heart", Letters; p. 831.

Fropter had allowed mainly only for spiritual grace and animal grace; having had very grave reservations for human grace. Katy Martens in The Genius and the Goddess is presented as being the composite of all three graces; the integrated person whose existence is a harmonious totality. She radiates strength, joy, and peace; acting as a mistress to her egoistical husband she gives him the life and energy he needs in order to score his experimental successes. In exhaustion Katy is not daunted by narrow-minded scruples; upon her return from administering her sick mother, she is ready to revitalise herself through sexual contact with the virginal John Rivers. Her action - shocking to those who are still "attached" to their personalities - needs no justification for she feels no conflict or guilt. Hence her goddess-like stature: "Goddesses are all of one piece. There is no internal conflict in them" (GG, p. 103). Lesser mortals like John need reassurances, rationalisations to salve their pricking conscience. "The lives of people like you and me," says John, "are one long argument" (GG, p. 103). "There is an elementary sexuality which is innocent, and there is an elementary sexuality which is morally and aesthetically squalid.... The sexuality of Eden and the sexuality of the Sewer - both of them have the power to carry the individual beyond the limits of his or her insulated self" (DL, p. 363). Katy's is the innocent elementary sexuality of Den; unriden by guilt and producing that life-giving quality which sustains the dying Henry. "She was a goddess who had temporarily broken down and was finding her way home to Olympus by the road of sensuality" (GG, p. 92). Seldom, if ever, has Huxley been so

sympathetic to sexual behaviour. Though this new realisation that sex can be constructive, that it can regenerate (rather than just degenerate) finds its more mature expression in Island, its presence is powerfully felt in The Genius and the Goddess. Katy has no qualms about a healthy, rejuvenating sexual experience; she welcomes it as a natural process.

But Katy's ripeness has to contend with the inadequacies of those surrounding her. Her husband Henry lives a sordid sexual life, deriving vicarious enjoyment by reading when a woman was not available: "genius kept pornography in a safe" (GG, p. 77). He has no regard for others as persons; they exist merely to serve his wishes and fulfil his desires. Triumphant in his world of scientific expertise, Henry lives a life devoid of any deeper meaning:

And humanity was something in which poor Henry was incapable, congenitally, of taking an interest. Between the worlds of quantum theory and epistemology at one end of the spectrum and of sex and pain at the other, there was a kind of limbo peopled only by ghosts. And among the ghosts was about seventy-five per cent of himself. For he was as little aware of his own humanity as of other people's. His ideas and his sensations - yes, he knew all about those. But who was the man who had the ideas and felt the sensations? And how was this man related to the things and people around him? How above all, ought he to be related to them? I doubt it ever occurred to Henry to ask himself such questions. (GG, p. 71)

Here was a late specimen of the one-sided monster we have already been made familiar with in Huxley's work. And yet, when Henry is soliloquising about all the "appallingly immoral things" that take place between husbands and wives, Rivers comments that "Katy had been his accomplice - not his victim, as at first I had tried

to believe, but his willing and even enthusiastic accomplice" (GG, p. 74). Nevertheless Henry is still a parasite; feeding on others for nourishment. It is ironical that even after Katy is dead Henry lives on "like an overworked clockwork monkey" (we note the beastly reference), pouring forth eloquent "apocalyptic speculations about the bigger and better infernal Machines of future" (GG, pp. 26-27).

If Henry is too wrapped up in himself to worry about ethics and morality and humanity, Rivers is too sensitive to avoid worrying. By his own admission he suffered from a mother-fixation which told him that his virginity was "the most wonderful wedding present a man could bring his bride" (GG, p. 14). "Twenty years of formal education and a lifetime of my poor mother had produced a real monster," states Rivers (GG, p. 44). It is this "learned bumpkin," as he calls himself (GG, p. 44), that loses his sexual virginity and acquires a taste for the sweetness of forbidden fruits. He hungers for the experience but his inhibitions haunt him mercilessly:

I was a divided soul committing a sin all the more enormous for being accompanied by the most ecstatic pleasure. Alternately and even, at moments, simultaneously, I was two people - a novice in love who had had the extraordinary good fortune to find himself in the arms of a woman at once uninhibited and motherly, profoundly tender and profoundly sensual, and a conscience-stricken wretch.... (GG, p. 92)

Beset with dichotomy Rivers cannot find peace within himself.

After his sexual induction Rivers is endlessly agitated; nervously wondering if the truth would out. Against the calm poise of an adulterous Katy he is lost for words to convey his own bewilderment. He torments himself; trying to find an acceptable justification

which would soothe his disturbed conscience:

I had betrayed my master; but if I hadn't, my master would probably be dead. Evil had been done; but good, an enormous good, had come of it. It was a kind of justification. On the other hand how horrible it seems that grace for Katy and life for her husband should be dependent on something so intrinsically low, so utterly vile-base-foul as bodies and their sexual satisfaction! All my idealism revolted against the notion. And yet it was obviously true. (GG, pp. 104-105)

Once again we confront the question of means and ends: superficially, evil means (illicit love-making) had resulted in good ends (Katy's rejuvenation, Henry's recovery) and yet we recall Huxley's admonition that good ends can only be achieved through good means. The point that Huxley seems to be making now is that the goodness and badness of the means employed depends very much on the attendant ethics. Katy, who is in complete possession of herself, makes love without remorse or shame; hence the affair does not trouble her. Rivers, who is not in possession of himself, makes love full of guilt and self-rebuke; hence his conscience pricks him incessantly. As soon as Katy realises that what is essentially a means (that is, her sexual liaison with Rivers) was transforming itself into an end (Rivers wanting to have her singly and wholly - as though he were on a desert island and she his beefsteak), she decides to put an end to it (GG, p. 108). For Katy sex is a unifying thing; renewing her depleted energy and reinvigorating her contact with the environment. But for Rivers it becomes a disruptive element threatening the stability of his prudish, priggish, existence. In other words, whereas for Katy sex is a liberating experience, for Rivers it threatens to become a bonding

experience. Thus her desire to stop the affair is, in her own word, "sensible" (GG, p. 108). Huxley seems to be saying that if means become tainted, then they can no longer serve a useful end; hence they are best terminated. It is only much later in life (the present of the novel's narrative sequence) that John Rivers fully realises and appreciates the invaluable lesson in liberation which Katy tried to teach him.

And finally, in a minor key, there is the young Salome in the making, Ruth Martens, the agent of the final catastrophe. Ruth takes an adolescent longing for John Rivers and becomes hopelessly infatuated:

The pinched anxious look was replaced by a tremulous smile of adoration; the lips parted, the eyes widened and shone. It was as though she had suddenly remembered who I was - her slave and her predestined Bluebeard, the only reason for her assumption of the double role of fatal temptress and sacrificial victim. And tomorrow, if her mother came home, tomorrow it would be too late; the play would be over, the theatre closed by order of the police. It was now or never. She squeezed my hand. 'Do you like me, John?' she whispered almost inaudibly. (GG, pp. 64-65)

The description, with its overt sexual connotations, leaves little doubt as to her promiscuous nature. Jealous of her mother's affair with John (whom she madly desires for herself), she writes a bitterly scathing poem about the adulterous pair "before the bar of God at the Last Judgement" (GG, p. 117).³⁹ Ruth's resentment and hatred drives Katy and John to a final break-up, but before this can happen the tragic accident occurs: both mother and daughter

39. Ruth's poem is published in the Letters, p. 745, from the unpublished script of the play. Huxley tried very hard to adapt The Genius and the Goddess for the stage and succeeded not too badly, though the experience left him quite distressed. Cf. Bedford, especially pp. 609-616.

die in a car crash. John Rivers, left with his own cross of guilt to carry, comments on the end in the following manner:

(I)t was really both kinds of predestination. The Predestination of events, and at the same time the Predestination of two temperaments, Ruth's and Katy's - the temperament of an outraged child, who was also a jealous woman; and the temperament of a goddess, cornered by circumstances and suddenly realising that, objectively, she was only a human being, for whom the Olympian temperament might actually be a handicap. And the discovery was so disturbing that it made her careless, left her incapable of dealing adequately with the events by which she was predestined to be destroyed.... (GG, p. 124)

Thus, even goddesses have limitations and can falter in the face of unexpected events. Left with the terrible memory of the catastrophe Rivers becomes a kind of ancient mariner, utterly shattered by the awareness of his role in the tragedy and longingly waiting for his saving Grace.

If even Katy the goddess becomes tainted with a misplaced sense of her own worth - a sense which leads to her destruction - what are we left with? Gently and unobtrusively worked into the novel is that other goddess, Helen⁴⁰ who saves the distraught Rivers from self-ruin and who subsequently becomes his wife. It is Helen who emerges as the saintly figure in the book; it is she who enables Rivers to become the sadder and wiser man he is in his maturity. Her impact and influence on Rivers is markedly profound; it is she who raises him to a different, superior, spiritual level of understanding: "If you want to live at every moment as it presents

40. There is good reason to believe that Helen is, in part, a portrait of Maria Huxley. Maria was extremely ill when the novel was being written and died before it was published. Though absolute proof is lacking, a close reading of Huxley's biography points quite definitely to the conclusion that he incorporate many aspects of Maria's character into Helen.

itself, you've got to die every other moment. That's the most important thing I learned from Helen" (GG, p. 9). Helen had become mistress of her own existence by living a full, integrated life: "Helen knew how to die because she knew how to live - to live now and here and for the greater glory of God. And that necessarily entails dying too there and then and tomorrow and one's own miserable little self" (GG, p. 10). It was this "own miserable little self" that got into the way of Katy's integrated existence; she could not bear suffering without complaining; she wanted to live every moment but not by dying to it. Hence her charge "Can't you ever think of anything but your own precious self?" Think of me, for a change...." (GG, p. 106). The irony is only too apparent; no wonder Rivers felt, after Katy's outburst that he was "no wiser than I was before" (GG, p. 107). Between Helen and Katy it is Helen who eventually triumphs - even in her death.⁴¹ She manages to realise that "synthesis, a third position subtending the other two" and made "the best of life while she was dying" (GG, p. 10).

Unfortunately, though Helen is obviously an example of the integration Huxley is seeking The Genius and the Goddess does not

41. Keith May comments that "Taking no thought for the morrow and dying in order to live constitutes the proper form of acceptance, so that the example of Helen reinforces the example of Katy"; op. cit., p. 204. May unfortunately misses the point Huxley seems to be making: Helen is what Katy could have become if she were truly integrated, if she could have killed her "own miserable little self." It is interesting to note, in this connection, that several critics - for example, Harold Watts, Peter Bowering - hardly discuss Helen's portrayal in the novel. Cf. "Many intelligent readers and reviewers of the novel failed to see the point of the novel and altogether mistook the identity of the saint.... The error arose partly from slipshod reading, but partly also from the extreme indirectness of the characterisation. Accordingly the ideal of the egoless life lacks inevitability and appears portentuous." S. Nagarajan, "Religion in Three Recent Novels of Aldous Huxley," Modern Fiction Studies, Vol. 5 (Spring 1959), pp. 153-165.

lend itself to any exhaustive analysis of the theme. The lives of Henry, Katy, Ruth, Helen and Rivers provide illuminating variations of the theme - how to achieve integration - but they lack scope. The novel, moreover, does not pretend to enlarge our understanding of Huxley's search, though it helps to clarify further the nature of ends and means.

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Island, Huxley's last published novel, appeared in 1962, just over a year before his death. It is an ambitious work; the fruit of many years of meditative thinking. Time and again he had wrestled with the contrary forces which create a schism in man's being and which therefore prevent a total realisation of the human potential. On occasions, as we have seen, in novels such as Eyeless in Gaza and Time Must Have A Stop, he had come very close to dramatising the synthesis he was desperately looking for. But the synthesis offered had usually been available only to a select few - the Propters and Brunos of the world - the few who were able to liberate themselves from the shackles of the personality. These few were able to attend to every moment of their lives with the fullness of their being and were, in the process, exempted from the agonies of a paradoxical existence. The relationship between the individual and society was indeed one of Huxley's life-long sources of anxiety; again and again he wondered whether integration could be achieved by whole groups of people, not by isolated individuals alone. In a letter written just before the

onset of World War Two, he observes that "Society at large is obviously doomed to a continual process of self-frustration; but for individuals there remain enormous potentialities, both physical and psychological - potentialities which, in the ordinary course of events, remain completely unrealised but which, if one knows how and is prepared to take the trouble, one can realise" (Letters, p. 445).

Huxley was himself always ready "to take the trouble" and was continuously trying to find out how. His determination and success to "see" inspite of his near-blindness; his fortitude and courage in the face of deep personal anguish and loss have become a literary commonplace. To the end of his life he remained stoically faithfully to the Socratic ideal that the unexamined life is not worth living. Writing to his brother Julian on the latter's sixty-eighth birthday - he himself was sixty-one - Huxley observed:

We both, I think, belong to that fortunate minority of human beings, who retain the mental openness and elasticity of youth, while being able to enjoy the fruits of an already long experience.... Most people encapsulate themselves, shut up like oysters, sometimes before they have stopped being undergraduates, and go through life barricaded against every idea, every fresh and unconceptualised perception". (Letters, p. 749)

The message of his gurus in the later novels is always to be open, to be aware, be alive. Huxley we know experienced a good deal of censure for his own openness; his experiments with mescaline and allied drugs did not endear him to his critics (Watt, pp. 27-28).⁴²

42. See also, Zaehner, Mysticism: Sacred and Profane, op. cit., pp. ix-20.

Not that he was unaware of the difficulties faced by individuals who were prepared to adventure into new modes of living. Some fourteen years prior to the publication of The Doors of Perception (1954) he remarked:

I have come to be profoundly pessimistic about great masses of human beings, but profoundly optimistic about individuals and groups of individuals existing upon the margins of society. And there is good reason to believe that their existence there does something to mitigate the horrors which the society forever prepares for itself. One is accused, if one takes this point of view - which, incidentally, is that of all the men to whom humanity looks upon as the founders of religions - of practising escapism. One might as well accuse of escapism the mathematician who does not continually spend his talents and energies on the problem of squaring the circle. (Letters, p. 462)

"Individuals and groups of individuals existing upon the margins of society" the statement is significant and bears directly upon the conception of his last novel, Island.

In the 1946 Foreword to Brave New World Huxley had stated that if he were to rewrite the book he would offer the Savage a "third alternative": "Between the Utopian and the primitive horns of his dilemma," says Huxley, "would lie the possibility of sanity:

In this community economics would be decentralist and Henry-Georgian, politics Kropotkinesque and co-operative. Science and technology would be used as though, like the Sabbath, they had been made for man, not...as though man were to be adapted and enslaved to them. Religion would be the conscious and intelligent pursuit of man's Final End, the unitive knowledge of the immanent Tao or Logos, the transcendent Godhead or Brahman. And the prevailing philosophy of life would be a kind of Higher Utilitarianism, in which the Greatest Happiness principle would be secondary to the Final End principle.... (BNW, p. ix)

This is what he approximates in Island. The book is set on the outskirts of what we may ordinarily term a developed, industrialised civilisation. Pala - the locale of the novel - is a "hypothetical

island between Ceylon and Sumatra" (Letters, p. 850), and appears to have been modelled after Bali, the small Hindu-Buddhist state forming part of present day Indonesia. For the ingredients of the novel Huxley spared no possible opportunity. All the wide reading he had done, all the thinking he had been doing, all the experiences he had gone through, find expression in it. While the novel was still being tidied up he suffered two great serious setbacks: the memorable fire which destroyed everything in his house (save the manuscript of Island which he rescued in time) and on which he wryly commented "I am evidently intended to learn, a little in advance of the final denudation, that you can't take it with you" (Letters, p. 912); and the onset of his cancer. Ronald Clark has observed that "Island, the story of Pala where men had learned how to live, was to be his final major book. All his years of distress, all his experiences and all his learning, now seemed to contribute to this story....⁴³ Huxley himself acknowledged that in writing the book he had picked "a considerable variety of brains";

Greek history, Polynesian anthropology, translation from Sanskrit and Chinese or Buddhist texts, scientific papers on pharmacology, neurophysiology, psychology and education, together with novels, poems, critical essay, travel books, political commentaries and conversations with all kinds of people, from philosophers to actress, from patients in mental hospitals to tycoons in Rolls-Royces - everything went into the hopper and became grist for my Utopian mill.⁴⁴

The result is a rich source of ideas which brings to a climax Huxley's long search for the final synthesis. One of the more

43. Ronald Clark, op. cit., p. 355.

44. Foreword to Laura Archera Huxley's You Are Not The Target, London: Heinemann, 1964.

important concerns of the book is the familiar question of ends and means: "To achieve our noble ends, what are the means which must be employed? Precisely how do we intend to implement our high purposes?... These are the questions to which...I have been trying to find answers."⁴⁵ Almost like an echo of the many-faceted trail Huxley himself traced during his search and found wanting, the beneficent Old Raja in Island had stated:

Science is not enough, religion is not enough, art is not enough, politics and economics are not enough, nor is love, nor is duty, nor is action however disinterested, nor however sublime, is contemplation. Nothing short of everything will really do. (Island, p. 132)

"Nothing short of everything will really do": any charge of escapism or of rationalisations levelled at Huxley's earlier answers must now be mitigated by this ideal. But it is a very difficult ideal to realise and Pala has come near to achieving it through a very long and hard route. And not only this - Pala is kept continuously alert by the ever-present threat from its tyrannical neighbour Rendang. In some ways the island paradise of Pala exists as only a dream can exist. The novel is like a fable and like all fables has a lot to teach us even if some of its features (such as astounding intelligence and wisdom of very small children and the extreme control and vigilance of the mynah birds) strike one as being fantastic. In a touching letter to His Highness the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir, Huxley wrote:

Island is a kind of pragmatic dream - a fantasy with detailed and (conceivably) practical instructions for making the imagined and desirable harmonisation of

45. Ibid.

European and Indian insights become a fact. But alas, inspite of these pragmatic aspects, the book still remains a dream - far removed (as I sadly made clear in the final paragraphs of the story) from our present reality. And yet, if we weren't all so busy trying to do something else, we could, I believe, make this world a place fit for fully human beings to live in. (Letters, p. 944)

"A place fit for fully human beings to live in": as a sharp observer of his environment Huxley had become adapt at portraying human beings who were not fully human. He had continually yearned, agonisingly, for that totality which will give man his full humanity; Island is an attempt to delineate this totality. More than this it is also a dramatisation of the manner in which the Oriental and the Occidental civilisations can merge to create an earthly paradise. The west with its advanced science and technology (representing reason, intellect, knowledge), the east with its deep sense of spiritual reverence (representing intuition, understanding, wisdom): if the two could blend harmoniously man will, indeed, have achieved a concrete integration.

The first words of the novel are "Attention...attention" (Island, p. 7). The Huxley-hero, Will Farnaby, is bewildered; his rousing consciousness (he has just been shipwrecked) is stirred by this call of the talking mynah bird. Later, the point of the bird's insistent "Attention" call is explained to him by Mary Sarojini: "That's what you always forget, isn't it? I mean you forget to pay attention to what's happening. And that's the same as not being here and now" (Island, p. 15). True enough, when he first heard and word, Will had been lost in his domestic ruminations; he had been "neither here nor now" (Island, p. 12). To be able to respond wholly to the fact of immediate experience without becoming

distracted by it - to be aware but non-attached - is the hallmark of the integrated personality.⁴⁶ Will Farnaby has to learn how to become integrated, for his knowledge impedes his understanding. As the Old Raja had written in his little green book, Notes on What's What, "Good Being is in the knowledge of who in fact one is in relation to all experiences; so be aware-aware in every context, at all times" (Island, p. 40). Will, a journalist, confesses to be the man "who won't take yes for an answer" (Island, p. 20). He has, therefore, to be educated, to be trained in the art of liberating himself from the slavish bonds of what Propter had termed "time and evil." Every now and then Will is trapped by the consciousness of his past life with Molly and Rachel and this inhibits him; makes him incapable of living with total commitment or conviction in the present. "What one has to learn is how to remember and yet be free of the past," his Palanese guide Susila tells him; though this, she states, is by no means an easy task (Island, p. 107). Huxley had earlier written that "Understanding comes when we liberate ourselves from the old and so make possible a direct, unmediated contact with the new" (AA, p. 39). Further, "On the level of understanding...an individual has it in his power to transcend his social tradition, to over-step the bounds of the culture in which he has been brought up" (AA, p. 54). We recall how, in the early novels, the Huxley-hero had been tormented by the prisons of his heredity and education. Will Farnaby also

46. See, Frederick W. Conner, "'Attention!': Aldous Huxley's Epistemological Route to Salvation," Sewanee Review, Vol. 81 (1973), pp. 282-303. Conner approaches Huxley's final position from the standpoint of different philosophical propositions.

suffers from the flaws of his own Edwardian upbringing and only very gradually learns to shed the crippling anxieties it had instilled in him.⁴⁷

As Will lives in Pala he slowly learns the principles along which the society of Pala has been fashioned. "We're Mahayanists, and our Buddhism is shot through and through with Tantra:

If you're a Tantrik, you don't renounce the world or deny its value; you don't try to escape into a Nirvana apart from life. No, you accept the world, and you make use of it; you make use of everything you do, of everything that happens to you, of all the things you see and hear and taste and touch, as so many means to your liberation from the prison of yourself. (Island, pp. 75-76)

In Tantric Buddhism the difference between the initiated and the uninitiated is an essential one. Will Farnaby, as outsider, has to be initiated in order that he may enjoy some of the grace of Tantric Buddhism. Hence, being a Tantrik is not easy; it requires an enormous dose of the right sort of education. Children in Pala are subjected to such education from a very early age and their rigorous training ensures that by the time they are adults they are well on the path to enlightenment. Like Plato's philosopher-kings, the Palanese children receive a very disciplined education in various aspects of living which prepares them for the essential task of liberation. Unlike Plato's ideal citizens the Palanese do not divide the human being into a mind and a body, into reason and instinct. Instead they aim for the mind-body synthesis; a unity of

47. Cf. "In truth, Huxley could not invent a consciousness in any depth that did not contain the equivalents of his own impatient recollections of a time when to be young was not 'very heaven' but a sheer hell constituted by the sexual hypocrisy, provincial nationalism, and other defects of one's elders." Harold H. Watts, Aldous Huxley, op. cit., p. 139.

all the many-sidedness of man's nature:

What we give the children is simultaneously a training in perceiving and imagining, a training in applied physiology and psychology, a training in practical ethics and practical religion, a training in the proper use of language, and a training in self-knowledge. In a word, a training of the whole mind-body in all its aspects. (Island, p. 208)

In an essay entitled "The Education of an Amphibian" Huxley had written that "Whether we like it or not, we are amphibians, living simultaneously in the world of experience and the world of notions, in the world of direct apprehension of Nature, God and ourselves, and the world of abstract, verbalised knowledge about these primary facts. Our business as human beings is to make the best of both these worlds" (AA, pp. 14-15). Palanese education is directed not only towards the making the best of both worlds but, in fact, uniting them and transcending their limitations through the means of liberation. The methods employed are many and varied, ranging from the correct use of the moksha-medicine (a positive equivalent of the soma of Brave New World) to the practice of maithuna or coitus reservatus. Some readers have found reason to dub the means employed as "quaint" or "peculiar."⁴⁸ They appear so to the un-initiated, particularly the Occidental reader whose contact with such educative processes is minimal. In the east these practices have a long and respected tradition and they are easily recognised as a means by which a man gains "Upward transcendence." As Edward Conze has so perceptively shown in this book Buddhism: Its Essence and Development (1951) these Tantric

48. See, for example, D.H. Steward, "Aldous Huxley's Island," Queens Quarterly, Vol. IXX (1963), pp. 326-335.

practices are all designed for purposes of initiation because "Without initiation one cannot even begin a spiritual training." Further, "Initiation in this system of Buddhism has the same decisive importance as it has in the Mystery cults of Greece and Rome."⁴⁹ Methods of initiation which appear to be unusual (especially to the unsympathetic) are only too easily dismissed as being "quaint" or "peculiar." And their similarity to ancient practices often gives them a "primitive" aura which many readers find disquieting or just plain amusing. But Huxley took these things seriously and genuinely believed (like most people in the east) that through their cultivation man will be able to achieve integration.

The purpose of the whole exercise, the need for training, is given a perspective. "Liberation" Huxley states in Island, is

the ending of sorrow, ceasing to be what you ignorantly think you are and becoming what you are in fact. For a little while thanks to the moksha-medicine you will know what it's like to be what in fact you are, what in fact you always have been. What a timeless bliss! But, like everything else, this timelessness is transient. Like everything else it will pass. And when it has passed, what will you do with this experience?... All that we older people can do with our teachings, all that Pala can do for you with its social arrangements, is to provide you with techniques and opportunities. All that the moksha-medicine can do is to give you a succession of beatific glimpses, an hour or two, every now and then, of enlightening and liberating grace. It remains for you to decide whether you'll co-operate with the grace and take these opportunities. (Island, p. 169)

There are, in other words, no short cuts and Huxley is not guiled by any naive belief in the efficacy of the means alone, as some

49. Edward Conze, Buddhism: Its Essence and Development, London: Bruno Cassirer, 1951, p. 180.

readers have assumed.⁵⁰ Integration can only be achieved through a dedicated cultivation of those virtues which enable a man to be fully alive to the here and now. This is consistent with what Huxley had earlier stated in After Many A Summer and The Perennial Philosophy. There can be as many aids to the good life as possible, but nothing can be really effective unless and until there is a ready and conscious willingness on the part of the individual to want to become integrated.

In this respect it is important to clarify one of the more intellectually challenging postulates of the novel: the use of the moksha (meaning release or liberation) medicine as a crucial means to integration. In Brave New World the drug soma was used to escape the unbearable situations; hence Lenina's resorting to soma to brace herself for the terrible confrontation with John Savage (BNW, pp. 155ff). In Island, however, the moksha-medicine is used to resolve dichotomies; to heighten perception and enable individuals to "catch a glimpse of the world as it looks to someone who has been liberated from his bondage to the ego" (Island, p. 137). "Take four-hundred grammes of moksha-medicine," explains the enlightened Dr Robert McPhail to the insolent Murugan, "and find out for yourself what it does, what it can tell you about your own nature, about this strange world you've got to live in, learn in, suffer in and finally die in" (Island, p. 140). Moksha-medicine, in other words, is an educative aid, not a sedative. Huxley himself had experimented with the chemical-equivalents of the moksha-

50. For example, Lilly Zahner, Demon and Saint in the Novels of Aldous Huxley, Switzerland: Francke Verlag Bern, 1975, pp. 140-150.

medicine - mescaline and LSD - several times prior to writing Island and, unlike some of his critics,⁵¹ knew through firsthand experience something of what happens when the mind is subjected to the chemicals contained in these drugs. In his notable essays on the subject - The Doors of Perception (1954) and Heaven and Hell (1956) - Huxley has left us a memorable record of his experience. "Visionary experience," he states, "is not always blissful. It's sometimes terrible. There is hell as well as heaven" (DP, p. 112). The single-most valuable feature of the drug-taking experience is the fact that it makes possible a kind of total consciousness; an awareness which is at once profound and strange. Huxley knew better than to err in the way of misplaced emphasis; he explicitly states that

I am not so foolish as to equate what happens under the influence of mescaline or of any other drug, prepared or in the future preparable, with the realisation of the end and ultimate purpose of human life: Enlightenment, the Beatific Vision. (DP, p. 58)

Hence drugs temporarily at least, afford man a kind of liberation, a release during which is able to "see into the life of things" directly.

The years between these statements and Island - years in which he continued experimenting with drugs himself - did not alter

51. Especially Zaehner who poignantly accuses Huxley of wrongly equating an essentially mystical experience - the Beatific Vision - with the drug-experience. See Mysticism: Sacred and Profane, op. cit., p. 84. Zaehner, by the way, claims that his book "owes its genesis to Mr. Aldous Huxley. Had The Doors of Perception never been published it is extremely doubtful whether the present author would have been rash enough to enter the field of comparative mysticism." (p. ix).

significantly Huxley's stand on the subject. Susila, Will Farnaby's Virgil⁵² in Island warns him that "The moksha-medicine can take you to heaven; but it can also take you to hell. Or else to both, together or alternately. Or else (if you're lucky, or if you've made yourself ready) beyond either of them. And then, beyond the beyond, back to where you started from" (Island, pp. 261-262). There are, therefore, several factors involved in the process of gaining liberation through the use of the moksha-medicine. In Pala the children are gradually prepared for the experience so that when they finally take it for the first time - during their initiation out of childhood and adolescence - they are ready to see the Dance of the Lord Shiva (in his dancing manifestation as Nataraja) for what it is: "Dancing through time and out of time, dancing everlastingly and in the eternal now. Dancing and dancing in all the worlds at once" (Island, pp. 166-167). Through the cosmic dance a certain unity is portrayed. The children must appreciate that the dance is symbolic; that the figure of the dancing Shiva-Nataraja is only a man-made image, "a little contraption of copper only four feet high" (Island, p. 167). As the Indian critic Ramamurty has stated, "Godliness in worldliness is Huxley's theme. Awareness, pure, constant and uninhibited, from

52. The allusion is deliberate: With Susila's guidance Will relives his past hell - the "Essential Horror" (Island, p. 255) - goes through Purgatory and experiences a heaven of final enlightenment. Further, as Edward Conze states, in Tantric Buddhism, "the really efficacious methods of salvation and their proper use cannot be learned from books, but they can be taught only by personal contact with a spiritual instructor called a Guru. Conze, op. cit., p. 180. Susila becomes Will Farnaby's Guru and helps him gain some measure of salvation.

infancy to eternity, in his path to salvation."⁵³ Integration cannot just be simply attained by taking the moksha-medicine; it has to be striven for and worked at and only when one is absolutely ripe for the experience does the final sense of integration, of a serene completeness, fill one's being. Thus an individual like the perverted Murugan - "Colonel Dipa's pretty yong friend" (Island, p. 133) - cannot attain integration or benefit from the moksha-medicine because he is not ready. On account of his alienation from the Palanese environment, he has not been sufficiently prepared for the path to liberation. It is necessary to stress that Huxley was never naive enough to believe that integration could be obtained instantly through any vicarious means: in his own search, as we have seen, he goes through the painful gamut of manifold experience. There are no short-cuts and the experience of the search is itself a primary necessity for the final achievement.

One of the most important dichotomies which receives a synthesis in Island - and a dichotomy Huxley had seldom handled at all comfortably in the early work - is that between life and death. It is true that in Time Must Have A Stop, for instance, he makes an attempt to face the dichotomy through Sebastian's understanding of the process of life, memory and death. But it is in Island that he manages firmly to resolve the problem. It is here that he comes up with an adequate and positive answer to Cardan's complaint in Those Barren Leaves: "However lovely the feathers on a bird's head,

53. B.K. Ramamurty, op. cit., p. 108.

they perish with it; and the spirit, which is a lovelier ornament than any, perishes too. The farce is hideous, thought Mr Cardan, and in the worst of bad taste" (TBL, p. 334). Cardan cannot accept the fact of death; to him death is ugly because it is cessation. But in Pala, Susila tells Will, they practise the "art of dying":

We help them to go on practising 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 practising. To the very end. Maybe beyond the end. (Island, p. 239)

In other words, dying is made a conscious process, a passing over into another world where ordinary human consciousness is extinguished in favour of a larger cosmic consciousness. The description of the death of Lakshami in Island offers a striking contrast to the death of Linda in Brave New World. Linda had been given large doses of soma to stop her traumas; Lakshami is asked to be aware that she is dying and to go forward into death bravely and happily:

So now you can let go, my darling...Now you can let go. Let go...let go of this poor old body. You don't need it anymore. Let it fall away from you, leave it lying here like a pile of worn-out clothes.... Leave it here, your old worn-out body, and go on.... Go on into the Light, into the peace, into the living peace of the clear Light.... (Island, p. 260)

The admonition is to accept death willingly, like getting out of old clothes into new ones; the metaphor is strikingly suggestive. Lakshami is denied the consolations of a drugged death; rather she has to accept the fact calmly and tranquilly:

Lightly, my darling, lightly. Even when it comes to dying. Nothing ponderous, or emphatic. No rhetoric, no tremolos, no self-conscious persona putting on its celebrated imitation of Christ of Goethe or Little Nell. And of course, no theology, no metaphysics. Just the fact of dying and the fact of Clear Light. So throw away all your baggage and go forward. (Island, pp. 257-258)

She has to give herself completely to the act of dying without distraction or any sort, there has to be a total self-surrender. Lakshami reaches out for the Clear Light - unlike Uncle Eustace in Time Must Have A Stop who shrank away from it. She dies peacefully, without traumas or misgivings. It is a triumph of integration: to live and to die in awareness and peace. Huxley has arrived at the ultimate synthesis between life and death through his adoption of the teachings of the Bardo Thodol or the Tibetan Book of the Deed.

The dying should face death not only calmly and clear-mindedly and heroically, but with an intellect rightly trained and rightly directed, mentally transcending, if it need be, bodily suffering and infirmities, as they would be able to do had they practised efficiently during their active lifetime the Art of Living, and, when about to die, the Art of dying.⁵⁴

In his own life and at the time of his own death Huxley came as close to the teachings of the Bardo Thodol as possible. It was a remarkable feat for him to help his first wife, Maria, die calmly and willingly as well as to accept his death with an alertness and an equanimity which challenge human credulity.

54. W.Y. Evans-Wentz, The Tibetan Book of the Dead, New York: Oxford University Press, 1960, pp. xiv-xc. It is common knowledge that the description of Lakshami's death in Island is almost a verbatim representation of Maria's death. See Bedford, pp. 567-569; and Laura Archery Huxley, This Timeless Moment, op. cit., pp. 20-25.

Will Farnaby, the Huxley-hero in search of integration undergoes a great transformation through his experience in Pala. It is significant that he is first discovered ill and the curative process is both literal and symbolic. He is a journalist in the employ of a hard-headed, exploitative capitalist, Lord Aldehyde. His employer is himself the follower of the widowed Rani of Pala - a self-willed, bigotted and domineering woman who corrupts anyone who comes within her ambit, chiefly her own young son Murugan. The Rani is abetted in her efforts to undermine the security of Pala by Colonel Dipa, the tyrant-ruler of the neighbouring Rendang. Will, though he tries to escape his own past, sees through the dirty socio-economic politics of the situation and finally abandons his assignment as agent provocateur and opts for the way of life he witnesses in Pala and into which he is being gently inducted by those who care for him, particularly Susila. Towards the end of the novel he is ready to be initiated into liberation with the help of the moksha-medicine. His experience is salutary; it leaves him as if re-born, with an entirely new and wholesome appreciation of life and of what Huxley terms "the divine Ground of all existence" (PP, p. 29).

Will's mind, used to the dualistic mode of experiencing becomes one with the body of which it is a part: "here, behind his closed lids, there was neither spectacle nor spectator. There was only this experienced fact of being blissfully one with oneness" (Island, p. 263). As he gives himself up to the liberating effects of the moksha-medicine, Will gains profound insights into the nature of his own existence with all its conflicts and complexities; its

paradoxes and its weaknesses. He experiences heaven and hell "like a blind man newly healed and confronted by the first time by the mystery of light and colour" (Island, p. 269). The re-birth is a kind of new sight, a new way of looking at things and appreciating their rightful importance. Against the excruciating memory of pain and suffering, the memory of his Aunt Mary dying of cancer, he learns to pay attention to the here and now. For a time the fullness of his experience is arrested by his reluctance to let go completely. Like the Huxley of the early years he is afraid to get involved: "Maybe that's what it was," he says in reply to Susila's accusation that he dares not look at her directly, "Afraid of seeing something I'd have to be involved with, something I might have to do something about" (Island, p. 278). To look at Susila is to confront his own inadequacy since she is integrated where he is not. One is reminded of Huxley's old inner conflict - that between withdrawal and commitment. But Will overcomes his reluctance, his weakness and sees Susila, the woman who patiently guided him along the path to liberation: "You're incredibly beautiful.... But it wouldn't matter if you were incredibly ugly" (Island, pp. 279-280). Ugly and beautiful: they are aspects of the same reality, only modes of perception. The dichotomy is transcended, Will accepts reality for what it is. Will's final understanding transcends everything; he has, at long last, arrived to a full synthesis; achieved the integration he desired:

Will looked down at his burning bush and saw the Suchness of the world and his own being blazing away with the clear light that was also (how obviously now!) compassion - the clear light that, like everyone else, he had always chosen to be blind to the compassion to which he had always

preferred his tortures, endured or inflicted, in a bargain basement, his squalid solitudes, with the living Babs or the dying Molly in the foreground, with Joe Aldehyde in the middle distance and, in the remoter background, the great world of impersonal forces and proliferating numbers, of collective paranoias, and organised diabolism. And always, everywhere, there would be the yelling or quietly authoritative hypnotists; and in the train of the ruling suggestion givers, always and everywhere, the tribes of buffoons and hucksters, the processional liars, the purveyors of entertaining irrelevances. Conditioned from the cradle, unceasingly distracted, mesmerised systematically, their uniformed victims would go on everywhere, killing and dying with the perfect docility of trained poodles. And yet in spite of the entirely justified refusal to take yes for an answer, the fact remained and would remain always, remain everywhere - the fact that there was this capacity even in a paranoiac for intelligence, even in a devil-worshipper for love; the fact that the ground of all being could be totally manifest in a flowering shrub, a human face; the fact that there was a light and that this light was also compassion. (Island, p. 285)

The effectiveness of such prose to communicate the experience of integration is, of course, problematic. Apart from the usual complaint that it is almost impossible to verbalise such an experience, there is, invariably, the question of writer's own imaginative ability. Huxley's allusion to the Bible and his use of personified distraction ("Suchness") help to suggest the momentousness of the event. Like Moses who felt the presence of God in the burning bush, Will experiences the luminosity of the clear light that is compassion. The references to his former life with all its squalor and dirt and corruption intensify the present experience through sheer contrast: the base has given way to the noble, the new life has made him accept compassion as an act of faith. He has found those "quiet places of mind" which Calamy had talked about in Those Barren Leaves. The slow rhythm of the passage suggests the calm which is now Will's; by deliberate reflection, he

is able to see things in perspective and appreciate the obstacles that lie in the path of integration. The mention of "buffoons" and "poodles" recall an earlier Huxley who had delighted in zoologizing his human characters; now these terms are only apt descriptions which find recompense in the firm conviction that every human being, no matter how lowly or hideous, has the potential to imbibe of the clear light which is compassion. Will's experience brings him full circle; starting with light his ruminations lead him back to light and his experience is complete. Like the Blake who saw a world in a grain of sand and heaven in a flower, who roundly declared that everything lived was holy, so Will arrives at the final understanding of existence. Within the limits of verbal communication Huxley's attempt to visualise Will's experience deserves merit though the vagueness and the stretched prose underline a certain limitation of adequate description.

Ironically, Will attains total liberation just when Pala is being invaded by the armies from Rendang. This final juxtaposition of the peaceful with the warring lends to Island its darker, pessimistic, gloomy atmosphere. Pala's vulnerability is never in doubt; trained to be liberated and enlightened, the Palanese have neither time nor place for militaristic purposes. Is this, therefore, a viable blueprint for people to live by? The question is unnecessary. Huxley had used a dictum of Aristotle's as an epigraph to the novel: "In framing an ideal we may assume what we wish, but should avoid impossibilities." Very wisely he avoided impossibilities; he avoided claiming categorically that human nature can transcend its inherent flaws and attain that blissful state of

innocence from which man fell through bondage to his ego. Just as his Uncle, Matthew Arnold, was realistic enough to juxtapose the calm of the Sea surrounding Dover Beach with the ignorant armies that clashed, in order to highlight the precariousness of precious existence, so Huxley is realistic enough to underline the dangers that a peace-loving, liberated people will always have to face.⁵⁵ Many years before Island, Huxley had written that "The inhabitants of Utopia are radically unlike human beings. Their creators spend all their ink and energy in discussing, not what actually happens, but what would happen if men and women were quite different from what they are" (PS, p. x). In Island Huxley portrays a world peopled by human beings who, through a rigorous process of enlightened education, have surmounted their own limitations and realised some of the greatness of human potential. The problem with Pala is not that it is weak but that others are still evil, still in the clutches of time and craving.

In the end Huxley destroys his paradise. It is destroyed by the encroachment of the maniacal outside world. But Pala was more than an island in the geographical sense; it was an island of sanity and spiritual wholeness surrounded by the sea of sickness and madness of the remainder of the world."⁵⁶

Against this judgement we may put the statement of another critic:

Huxley sought to frame an ideal knowing that its acceptance, perhaps even its tolerance in a materialistic world was impossible, yet believing that its relevance

55. Cf. Jerome Meckier, "Cancer in Utopia: Positive and Negative Elements in Huxley's Island," Dalhousie Review, Vol. 54 (Winter 1974), pp. 619-633.

56. Charles T. McMichael, "Aldous Huxley's Island: The Final Vision," Studies in the Literary Imagination, Vol. 1, No. 2 (October 1968), pp. 73-82. Harold Watts, for one, does not see Island as a pessimistic novel; rather it is a "utopia of hope," op. cit., p. 145.

to men as individuals was supremely real. And it is difficult not to wonder if Island is Huxley's final legacy to posterity, if somehow he hoped that someday the quest toward such an ideal on a more universal scale would not be so far removed from reality.⁵⁷

Both these verdicts contain their elements of truth. If Huxley destroys his Paradise it is because he is painfully aware of the threats to its existence. And yet the fact that he wrote the novel, with the pregnant symbolism inherent in its title (Island, resolute and independent, but also, isolated and vulnerable) is ample testimony of his hope in human greatness. With Island Huxley's personal search comes to a crowning end.

But a personal achievement remains essentially private; to have a wider meaning and make an impact it must somehow be translated into universal terms.⁵⁸ This indeed is what Huxley attempts in Island. But Abdul Pierre Bahu⁵⁹ observes that "it simply isn't possible for Pala to go from being different from the rest of the world" and that, in any case, "it isn't right that it should be different" (Island, pp. 58-59). Pala is accused of suffering from

57. Donald J. Watt, "Vision and Symbol in Aldous Huxley's Island," Twentieth Century Literature, Vol. 14 (1968), pp. 149-160.

58. "Island is not simply an impersonal statement of the kind of society which Huxley the mystic and conservationist would have liked to see created by the systematic avoidance of the general errors of the past. It is also a vision of what the Huxley family might have helped to achieve if Thomas Henry (Huxley) had thought in the nineteenth century as his grandson came to think in the twentieth." Philip Thody, op. cit., p. 125.

59. One wonders if Huxley knew what "bahu" means in Indonesian-Malay: stink. The name is highly appropriate, Mr Bahu stinks of evil intentions.

hubris - the eternal sin of those who ascend to positions others do not. Bahu is, of course, highly prejudiced in his pronouncements; but the thrust of his charge cannot be lightly dismissed. Like the Spandrell of Point Counter Point he believes that "we're all demented sinners in the same cosmic boat - and the boat is perpetually sinking" (Island, p. 66). Huxley tries to show how the boat can stay afloat; how man can save himself if he realises his true situation in good time. "The right people were intelligent at the right time" (Island, p. 82). This is what made Pala unique and paradisaal. The combination of extraordinary good luck and extraordinary good sense, however, is a very rare occurrence and Huxley knew this too well to sentimentalise his integrated vision.

Curiously enough, thirty years before the publication of Island Huxley had observed that "Incapable of re-creating, except in patches and in transient moments, the world of objective reality, disappointed imagination elaborates a paradise of private and onanistic satisfactions" (TP, p. 56). Applied to Island the words are highly revealing: When he was writing it, he was not entirely happy with the results he was getting; somehow - he wrote to his son - he felt that his talent was not sufficiently equipped for the task (Letters, pp. 875-876). The admission does reveal a definite handicap of the imagination. In mitigation we may say that if he finds it extremely difficult to make his novel as engaging as a good novel ought to be it may be because the utopian vision is intrinsically alien to the novel-form. There are very few utopian (as distinct from the dystopian or anti-utopian) novels which are not boring or tediously written. For Huxley the vision

is of far greater consequence than its technical execution, though it is silly to separate form from content. But Huxley openly confessed that he was not a "novelist in the true sense." Yet he was deeply saddened when Island was severely criticised by reviewers for its shortcomings (MV, pp. 23-24). "For once," writes Bedford, "Aldous felt not indifferent" (Bedford, p. 689). Despite the personal involvement with its subject-matter, therefore, and despite his recognition of the novel's weakness, Huxley obviously regarded Island as a landmark in his literary career.

In his last published book, Literature and Science (1963) he states that among the many functions of a writer is the crucial one of getting on "with the job of making the best of all the worlds in which human beings are predestined to do their living and their dying; their perceiving, feeling and thinking" (LS, p. 71). This he himself certainly does in Island. From this limited point of view, whether or not every reader is convinced by the book remains secondary to the all-important fact that in it he at last arrives at that ultimate synthesis he had been searching for all his life. But for us as readers, even if we grant Huxley his ideas about the function of literature, the literary artist must still be able to communicate his artistic vision through a sustained imaginative medium. If the writer opts to convey his vision through a novel then he should be able to do so convincingly by means of characterisation, dialogue, plot, prose-style, imagery, symbolisms, and other devices proper to the novelist's art. Here is where Huxley very unfortunately falters; his ideas get the better of him and a projected novel becomes an extended narrative. The real

strength of his later books, including Island is therefore in their moral vision, not in their aesthetic appeal. Though wanting in artistic achievement it will be foolish to belittle the novels as being shoddy or irrelevant. Within the compass of his own inquiry, given the parameters of his search, they do allow Huxley to explore the problem of dichotomy and synthesis. And if his search for integration concludes on the enigmatic note it does, let us remember that, one cannot aspire toward integration unless one is completely ready and one has bought one's ticket for Athens.

CONCLUSION

A few years before his death Aldous Huxley wrote to his son to warn him of a family trait which Huxley thought would impede the boy's growth as an individual:

Huxleys especially have a tendency not to suffer fools gladly - and also to regard as fools people who are merely different from themselves in temperament and habits. It is difficult for Huxleys to remember that other people have as much right to their habits and temperaments as Huxleys have to theirs, and that democracy, the right of self-determination, begins on the level of personal relations, and that co-operation, based upon mutual discrimination and mutual not-judging, is the only satisfactory solution to the problem of hereditary and acquired differences. So do remember this family vice of too much judging. (Letters, p. 870)

At the time he wrote this, he had, of course, come a long way from the man who early in life made a reputation by writing stories about people who compromised their existence by preaching one thing and practising another. He had learnt the value of humility and tolerance. He had also come to value other people as human beings, as individuals who had a humanity to actualise. People now meant something to him; no longer did he regard them as mere embodiments of base animal instincts or abstract intellectual ideas. If individuals were in strife it was because they had to contend with conflicting forces in their nature, not because of personal predilections. Recognising this, Huxley now saw human beings as wanting and deserving help, not as caricatures. Throughout his own life he had found it hard to involve himself in "personal relations" and to accept "mutual not-judging." Astutely aware of his own predicament he had searched hard to find a means by which he could

overcome it and in the process learn how to rid himself of the "tendency not to suffer fools gladly."

For a long time his satiric thrusts at certain sections of the English upper-class became synonymous with his name and readers derived tremendous pleasure at figuring out familiar personalities from the fictions that he created. That this should have been Huxley's due is unfortunate; for beneath his wry exterior, even from the beginning, was a very sensitive and delicate spirit - a spirit overwhelmed by the confusion that the modern age had ushered in and desperately struggling to find a sensible way out of this malaise.

The problem for Huxley had been to arrive at a synthesis of the "wry exterior" and the "sensitive spirit." In its own way the problem was an inherited one. The scientific rationalism of Thomas Henry Huxley had demanded an outlook characterised by its hard-headed thinking, its stress on the intellect, and sharp observation of things. The religious humanism of the Arnolds, on the other hand, preached the primacy of human emotions, a concern with man's spiritual state and a literary sensitivity. In Huxley's consciousness scientific rationalism and religious humanism had created a deep-seated dichotomy which needed to be confronted and resolved.

Unwittingly Huxley became the suffering heir of the conflict which Arnold had described as Culture and Anarchy. His own heredity and education had been largely in favour of Culture; even his temperament and intellectual inclinations tended toward cultivating those aspects of living which provided the mainstays of Culture. But the environment, and the movement of history, impressed on him

the insidious power of Anarchy and made him aware how Culture was irrevocably threatened by the energy let loose by Anarchy. These abstractions became for Huxley personally significant because when he found his Culture ineffectual in coming to terms with the prevalent Anarchy he painfully realised how inadequate his personality was to cope with the problem. The presence of Anarchy within him aggravated the situation. Though wanting to preserve the qualities associated with Culture he found himself invariably attracted by the vitality associated with Anarchy. Unable to reconcile the two he embarked upon a long and uncomfortable examination of the wearisome condition of humanity.

The examination proved rigorous and exacting. The more he probed the more difficulties confronted him, and he needed yet newer forms to encompass them. And so he moved from one genre to another, quite unable to find an authentic medium for his troubles. He chose, at last, to settle for the "novel of ideas," and for awhile delighted people with his ability to capture so brilliantly the surface reality of intellectual life. The Peacockian wit of such novels as Crome Yellow and Those Barren Leaves gave him an assured place in the world of letters; but not for long, nor always without reservation. It soon became apparent that while the wit in the fiction may well be Peacockian, the satire was quite unmistakably Swiftian. Huxley, it soon came to be noticed, had a score to settle and he was using the characters of his novels to do this. A few readers recognised the deep-seated malady, the dis-ease which plagued him and compelled his astonishing intellect to vent itself upon the Mary Viveashes, the Spandrells and the Colemans of

the world. Unable to resolve the dichotomy within him, Huxley had converted the private problem into a universal obsession.

But always, at the heart of his work, was the continual preoccupation with his desire for a synthesis, for the state of integration which would eliminate his anxiety. Only through self-integration could he hope to integrate with humanity. He had had, therefore, to search for the means toward self-integration. This had led him to create the Huxley-hero, the familiar figure of incredible intellectual power who cannot participate wholesomely in life because he has created a hiatus between Knowledge and Understanding, between withdrawal and commitment. Possessing endless knowledge the Huxley-hero is totally bereft of understanding, and lacking understanding he finds it hard to commit himself to any meaningful activity. Indeed he cannot find meaning in activity; he is at home only in the world of ideas.

This abnormal and distressing state of affairs proves quite unbearable. In desperation Huxley searches for an acceptable method of living and turns, finally, to the religious beliefs of the east to find an answer in Vedantic-Buddhism. The most important feature of this answer for Huxley is its non-duality; its insistence upon a contiguity of existence which serves to unite man with his fellow men. Huxley is also attracted by its practical applications. In order to realise the basic unity operative in the universe, one had first to embrace non-attachment as a way of life. This fascinated Huxley for it resolved his dichotomy by insisting that man must learn to be in the world but not of it. Man must, in other words, take an active part in the affairs of life

but must not allow them to dominate him. Only in this way is integration both within and without made possible. Any dichotomy is eliminated simply because in the new frame of reference man is no longer seen as suffering from "self-division's curse" but as a creature requiring liberation from the cravings of time and personality.

Excited by the discovery Huxley eagerly declares it to the world. Starting with Eyeless in Gaza his major task becomes one of prescribing the cure he has found. If, formerly, he converted a personal problem into a universal one, now he takes it upon himself to universalise a personal remedy. But because conflict is the essence of drama, the new "novels of ideas" that he writes become expositions rather than dramatisations. Intent upon explaining the validity and relevance of his "perennial philosophy" - the term he uses to extol his newfound creed - he loses sight of the fact that art is more than propaganda. For this he is severely taken to task.

To the sympathetic critic the harshness of the judgement accorded to Huxley's later work is unfortunate. The brunt of the criticism is based on the assumption that the aesthetic quality of art should not be undermined by any extraneous considerations. Art, in other words, is autonomous and ought not, therefore, to become the mouthpiece of a personal didacticism. This, of course, is one approach to art, and one which has been endorsed by our century. By its yardstick, Huxley's "positive" novels fail dismally to qualify as being works of art.

In response, however, we may state that even "failed" art can

have a legitimate importance and serve a vital function. G.S.

Fraser, writing about the modern novel, has observed that

The novelist like D.H. Lawrence or his friend Aldous Huxley, who uses the novel to propound, to advocate, or even to figure forth experimentally some 'philosophy of life' is (much as he might dislike the idea) in the tradition of H.G. Wells. He may not be so pure an artist as James or Joyce; but he shows a commendable urgent concern for the immediate problems of his fellow men. If he never succeeds at arriving at complete aesthetic coherence...the moral coherence of his work may, for a long time, resist the dissolvents of social change.¹

The moral coherence of Huxley's work, as this thesis has attempted to demonstrate, centres on his life-long search for integration. Throughout his life he pursues this theme with an urgency and a single-mindedness which cannot fail to impress us. If by moral coherence is meant a unified vision which has as an anchor its concern with human right and wrong, then Huxley's work requires no apologetic defence. True, the work may often strike a sensitive reader as being unduly didactic - and hence aesthetically disquieting - but it should not, perhaps, lead him automatically to doubt its usefulness or value. The Millers, Propters and mynah birds of Huxley's later novels may not be very exciting or very appealing; but they do deserve a hearing, if only because they represent what Huxley had been so long searching - integration. Their teachings help to clarify some of the most pertinent issues facing modern man and to suggest a viable alternative to the search for meaning envisioned as integration. If the viability of the alternative has

1. G.S. Fraser, op. cit., p. 80.

not been adequately demonstrated through art (because this is where critics censure Huxley) it is not only because Huxley is not a "congenital" novelist but also because such alternatives may be intrinsically difficult to translate into artistic terms. This is an area which has not yet been sufficiently studied and future work on Huxley may well gear in this direction. A related field for further research could be a comparative study involving the sketching of a typology of the search for integration in Huxley and comparing this with the quest-motifs in other writers. It may transpire that in Huxley we have an entirely different, a new, modality which is peculiar to the type of individual he represents. For the moment, however, suffice it to say that one of the major ironies surrounding Huxley is that when, at last, he ceased to be ironic, his work ceased to delight.

The more important conclusions which emerge from this study of Huxley's work may be briefly summarised. First, his work is neither a random response to trends in intellectual thinking nor merely an exercise in intellectual curiosity. The work represents a constant and consistent trial to arrive at an answer to the problems which confronted him. There is a basic unity informing his entire work, and this thesis has attempted to demonstrate that the search for integration constitutes this unity.

Secondly, the study has shown that the unduly neglected poetry and short stories are pertinent to our understanding of Huxley as they provide ample evidence that he was involved with the search for integration from the very start of his career. Any final evaluation of his achievement must, therefore, take into serious

consideration these early writings especially as they illuminate and clarify several of his major concerns.

Lastly, it is clear that Huxley's adoption of the Vedantic-Buddhistic view of life should not, in itself, be a ground for censure. Vedantic-Buddhism provided him with a means of coming to terms with himself and with his environment. Huxley's recourse to Vedantic-Buddhism should, therefore, be seen as a courageous willingness to go beyond doctrine and creed (and geographical and mental boundaries) in order to arrive at the truth he was seeking. It is imperative to note that existing criticism of Huxley has rarely tried to understand the real nature of the "perennial philosophy" which he advocated. Lack of familiarity with Oriental religious beliefs (and a certain unfounded skepticism about them) has sometimes led influential critics to a hasty dismissal of Huxley's final position. This study has sought to demonstrate, that non-attachment (both as a philosophy and as a practical way of life) afforded Huxley a means to integration. Because lack of integration is the chief cause of his dis-ease, his conviction that non-attachment is the answer, must, surely, be seen as strengthening his perception and vision of life. If he did not always manage to convey this newfound vision successfully the failure is not necessarily a case of misdirection or of lack of ability. As he himself realised language was itself a barrier because it did not possess a vocabulary by which he could effectively express his convictions. It is significant that at the time of his death he was still trying to find ways to dramatise more adequately through art his vision. In this respect his later work should, perhaps, be seen as experimental rather than definitive.

It may be fitting, in conclusion, to quote the late Sir Julian Huxley. At Aldous's death, Sir Julian summed up Huxley's contribution to posterity as follows:

Above all he will go down in history as the greatest humanist of our perplexed era, the many-gifted man who in a chaotic age of intellectual, aesthetic and moral irresponsibility, used his gifts to enrich man instead of to diminish him, to keep alight humanity's sense of responsibility for its own and the world's destiny and its belief in itself and its vast unexplored possibilities. (MV, p. 25)

The words admirably convey the importance of Huxley's work. For us a detailed study of the work has shown how Huxley tried to master his fragmentary existence through an uncompromising search for integration which eventually led him to adopt the Vedantic-Buddhistic ideal of non-attachment. His wide-ranging explorations, his refusal to abdicate his sense of mission, and his faith in the ultimate possibility of integration, affirm the value of his moral vision. It is hoped that this study, with its focus on a central theme in Huxley's writings, has helped to define and identify the unity in his many-sided writings so as to contribute significantly to a fresh re-appraisal of his work.

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