ALDOUS HUXLEY AND THE VISUAL ARTS

ALDOUS HUXLEY
AND
THE VISUAL ARTS

By

PAUL DOUGLAS SCHUMACHER, B.A.

A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of Arts

McMaster University

August 1982

MASTER OF ARTS (1982) McMASTER UNIVERSITY

(English) Hamilton, Ontario.

TITLE: Aldous Huxley and the Visual Arts

AUTHOR: Paul Douglas Schumacher, B.A.

(McMaster University)

SUPERVISOR: Dr. W.G. Roebuck

NUMBER OF PAGES: vii, 124, 6 Photographic Plates

ABSTRACT

> Art is not the discovery of Reality -- whatever Reality may be, and no human being can possibly know. It is the organization of chaotic appearance into an orderly and human universe.
>
> -Jesting Pilate

There is no doubt that Aldous Huxley took a keen interest in the visual arts and their place in society, particularly during the nineteen twenties and early nineteen thirties. This quotation from Jesting Pilate (1926) accurately reflects the young writer's view on the creation of works of art. Order and humanity are key virtues to be pursued, not only artistically but socially as well. The social fragmentation, disillusionment and chaos which had befallen western society after August 1914, was echoed -- many persons thought -- in the modern visual arts. In his early satirical novels and essays, Huxley sought to thwart the fragmentary, egotistical, and morally bankrupt drift of his society -- as he viewed it -- with a call for wholeness and a sense of values, collectively and individually.

In later years, Huxley acknowledged the limitations of art as a social corrective. However, he did come to perceive the transcendent qualities of the visual arts. There was a shift from the pessimistic, cynical

graduate of Balliol with his Goyaesque view of post-war society to the semi-mystical humanist and social meliorist of the late nineteen fifties and early nineteen sixties.

This study will focus on Huxley's aesthetic views and the expression of his values in the visual arts, particularly during the period from 1920 to 1932, when the bulk of his art criticisms was produced. An attempt will be made to integrate Huxley's view of the artist and the arts with his view of society. It would be unfair to totally isolate Huxley's writings on art from his thoughts on society. The visual arts were deemed to be a vital and integral component of the social structure. It should also be noted and commented upon that the visual arts virtually vanish as a key element in the novels after Point Counter Point (1928).

This dissertation has a limited focus and is not intended to be a general critical assessment of Aldous Huxley as a novelist or essayist. What he had to say about the visual arts, generally remains as intelligent, pellucid and refreshing as it did when it was first published. What emerges from this study of Huxley's writings on the visual arts will be a

justification of Kenneth Clark's view of Huxley as "one of the most discerning lookers of our time".

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to my supervisor, Dr. Graham Roebuck, for his assistance and patience during the preparation of this thesis. Thanks also to Dr. Brian Pocknell for his moral support during my years at McMaster. I am grateful to my wife, Cate, for her constant encouragement and the preparation of the typescript.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Nothing short of everything will do.

-Island

A principal problem in delineating Aldous Huxley's views on the visual arts is the self-admitted, unsystematic nature of his written work. Huxley states that"in relation to the arts, for example, I have not aspired to be a methodical critic or an aesthetician with a full-blown philosophy. I have preferred to write of art without system and, so to say, tangentially".[1] At times, the best place to begin is at the end. In a memorial address, Kenneth Clark offers a personal appraisal of Huxley's talent:

> Of Aldous Huxley's many marvellous gifts the most surprising was the gift of sight.... As we all know, Aldous Huxley's eyes were physical organs of extreme fragility. For some years he was actually blind, and even when he could see enough for practical purposes, he was painfully far from normal vision. I remember, about thirty years ago, looking at a Seurat with him, and he scrutinized it from the distance of a few inches. I should have supposed that he saw nothing but dots. And yet, the fact remains, that what he wrote about painting proves him to have been one of the most discerning lookers of our time. Men of letters are by no means always safe guides to paintings. It is not that they are too literary: artists themselves from Leonardo to Van Gogh, have been extremely literary when they wrote about their works. It is not that they do not distinguish between the subject of a picture and the way in which that subject has recreated itself in the artist's imagination. They do not receive the message of shape and colour, which is the real subject, often modifying, sometimes even contradicting, the ostensible subject. Aldous had

> an astonishing faculty for seeing what an artist really meant.[2]

Lord Clark acknowledges that "I have spent many years of my life studying Alberti and Piero and in the end I seem to know far less than Aldous had learnt in a few weeks, by some miraculous combination of intellect and intuition".[3] It is true that Huxley was partly responsible for the rehabilitation in the public's mind of several neglected artists, particularly those who treated themes of humanity and inhumanity. Lord Clark calls him "one of the chief re-discoverers of the inter-war years. Quite unconsciously and unintentionally he was a great influence on the taste of his time. Breughel, Callot, Piranesi, Goya, Caravaggio, we think of them differently now from what we did in 1925, and many of us who, understandably, do not care to read art-criticism, may owe that change very largely to Aldous".[4]

In an era when formalism was dominating aesthetic considerations in art, Huxley was concerned with the thematic aspects of art. Jacob Israel Zeitlin relates that

> I would still be his champion for what he wrote in 1925. It was then still fashionable to look upon Breughel with disdain. The Künstler-doktors of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with their reigning doctrines of formalism had dismissed him with scant courtesy. Formalism, as

> Huxley pointed out, is important. But it is not the whole of the consideration which should be brought to the appreciation of an artist's works. He was able to make evident that Breughel had all the merits of a formalistic painter, but what made him hard to take for the professors of aesthetics were his comments on humanity.[5]

Indeed, Huxley remained for many people an unpopular writer, largely because he refused to compromise his intellectual integrity, his insistence on the need for values and tradition, and his satirical debunking of virtually every current artistic movement. Gervais Huxley notes that Aldous's tastes were catholic, and in terms of the visual arts, this is true. What is disconcerting is the fact that beyond occasional references in novels and essays, he wrote nothing substantial about any modern artist later than Toulouse Lautrec. The visual arts were part of a pattern of the progressive destruction of nineteenth-century ideals which had culminated in the Great War. Huxley's pessimism, expressed in the novels of the twenties, precluded any endorsement of an art scene -- to Huxley, in a seeming shambles -- that espoused the antithesis of his own aesthetic ideals.

Huxley was born in 1894 into an illustrious Victorian family whose members included his grandfather, the eminent Victorian scientist T.H. Huxley, and his great uncle, the author Matthew Arnold. As Huxley's friend Gerald Heard states, "His 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".[6] The death of his mother in 1908 and suicide in 1914 of his brother, Trevenen, were milestones in his early life. Huxley studied at Balliol College after an attack of keratitis punctata rendered him virtually blind in 1911. During the war, his vision had improved enough to permit him to hold a clerical job at the Air Board. In December 1915, he paid his first visit to Garsington Manor and was introduced to the coterie of Bloomsbury celebrities under the aegis of Lady Ottoline Morrell.

Of critical importance to the development of Huxley's aesthetic beliefs were the informal discussions with Roger Fry, Clive and Vanessa Bell, Mark Gertler and Duncan Grant. This select group was an influential voice in the English avant-garde art circle. English art movements had traditionally lagged behind their French counterparts. While the Fauves and Cubists were revolutionizing art in Paris in the early years of this century, the adapted impressionism of Sargent, Steer and Sickert was still holding sway in England. The Royal Academy, stifling in its adherence to classical models and theories, had lost its attraction for young artists. Roger Fry

organized the two Post-Impressionist shows at the Grafton Galleries in 1910 and 1912, which introduced the English to Cézanne and the new French schools of art. In 1913, Fry established the Omega Workshops, which sought to produce well-designed objects for daily use. To this project were drawn Clive and Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant and Percy Wyndham Lewis.

Percy Wyndham Lewis epitomized the avant-garde spirit of war-time English art. He was the most original and idiosyncratic British artist of his day. He created the first non-representational art in Britain with a dynamism forged through geometric shapes. He founded the Vorticist movement and edited its magazine, Blast.

Roger Fry, on the other hand, was a relatively uninspired artist but an excellent theoretician. He had been Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York from 1905 to 1910, and the editor of Burlington Magazine from 1910 to 1919. His aesthetic concerns were with plastic qualities and formal relations, and the patterned use of colour.

Fry's companion at Garsington, Clive Bell, was also an aesthetician and critic, propounding his doctrine of Significant Form and unique aesthetic emotion. From Fry and Bell, Huxley learned much of his art education:

> I had the extraordinary fortune to meet a great many of the noblest people of my time.... Roger Fry -- from whom I learnt a great deal about art -- well, he remains a very good art critic, I mean he had extraordinary sensibility and great knowledge, and enthusiasms; and he was a genuinely good man, as well as immensely charming and interesting. He was very kind to me. And then Clive Bell -- he was always extremely stimulating and very kind to me -- from them, I learnt a great deal about art, which I really did not know anything about at all before. They introduced me to modern art, to Post-Impressionism, Cubism and so on.[7]

Although fully amiable to Fry and Bell as individuals, there was a note of reticence in Huxley's statement about their aesthetic theories. He was evidently not prepared to embrace entirely the concept of "art for art's sake". Huxley did demonstrate, however, that he had adopted an aesthetic language in articles which he wrote for John Middleton Murry's Athenaeum in 1919 and 1920. In an article entitled "Pseudo-Blake", Huxley compared the work of Rockwell Kent to William Blake:

> One painter or writer may borrow from another and remain in his art completely original. Artistic borrowing is only harmful when the borrower turns the master's characteristic gesture -- the expression of some individual habit of mind -- into a convention, adding to it nothing significant of his own.... Compare one of Mr. Kent's drawings with one of Blake's, and you will at once be struck by its artistic poverty. It is not merely the grandeur of Blake's religious ideas that moves one to admire his pictures. It is also their purely aesthetic quality, the profound beauty and originality of their composition. Blake's ideas may leave one cold, but one can still be deeply moved by his pictures. It is the aesthetic quality of his work that makes Blake a great artist.... Van Gogh

> once painted a picture of a common bedroom chair. It seems an unexciting subject, but there is more spiritual energy in that chair, more flame-like, radiant vitality than in the most heroically planned of Mr. Kent's compositions of demi-gods. Van Gogh's secret is, like Blake's, an aesthetic secret.[8]

Donald Watt rightly notes that "this early influence impressed upon him an inner design for even the most unorthodox artistic creations."[9] Roger Fry was evidently impressed with Huxley's erudition and aesthetic acumen. In a letter dated 30 October 1918, Aldous wrote to his brother Julian that "Fry asked me if I would undertake the editorship of Burlington Magazine, but as (a) I know nil about art and (b) the wages are very small, I am inclined to think I shall not".[10] Despite his lack of self-confidence, Huxley was gradually attaining what Fry called "the grace of aesthetic experience" which depended upon an "alert passivity". Folded up like a bespectacled grasshopper on a chair at Garsington, Huxley was privy to discussions between some of the finest minds of his day. In an essay "Accidie" from On the Margin (1923), Huxley diagnosed the principal ailment of his age:

> And finally, to crown this vast structure of failures and disillusionments, there came the appalling catastrophe of the War of 1914. Other epochs have witnessed disasters, have had to suffer disillusionment; but in no century have the disillusionments followed on one another's heels with such unintermitted rapidity as in the twentieth, for the good reason that in no century has change been so rapid and so profound.[11]

Garsington and recent history were vital to the development of Huxley's mind in the twenties, and they definitely affected his attitude towards the visual arts. Order, wholeness and a sense of values had to touch all areas of human existence, and it was to this end that the satirical, pessimistic, early novels and the essays were directed.

THE NOVELS AND ESSAYS

Si monumentum requiris, circumspice.
-Inscription on Wren's monument

CHAPTER I -- SEARCH FOR VALUES

In the spring of 1921, Huxley took his first trip to Italy. In a letter to his father, he delineated partially his preference in Italian art:

> For my taste, at least, Florence is too tre- and quattrocento. There is too much Gothic in the architecture and too much primitive art in the galleries. I am an enthusiastic post-Raphaelite. Sixteenth and seventeenth century architecture is what I enjoy and there is very little of it in Florence. One must go to Rome for the architecture and to Venice for the painting.[1]

A week in Rome during August reinforced Huxley's feelings about Italian art and he stated them bluntly to his brother, Julian:

> We came back through Florence and the spectacle of that second rate provincial town with its repulsive Gothic architecture and its acres of Christmas card primitives made me almost sick. The only points about Florence are the country outside it, the Michelangelo tombs, Brunelleschi's dome and a few rare pictures. The rest is simply dung when compared with Rome.... I was astonished to find that Rome is principally and predominantly a seventeenth century town: it was practically invented by Bernini. I feel sorry for the people who come to Rome with the preconceived certitude of the badness of Bernini and the seventeenth century. They are left with nothing but Michelangelo and Raphael, the Coliseum, the columns and arches and the insupportably dreary spectacle of the rubbish in the forums. One could write a whole history of 17th century Rome

> round that astonishing Bernini who lived from 1600 to 1680, started his artistic career at 14 and went on to the day of his death, was the intimate of eight popes, who carved statues (and among them the most astonishing and surprising works that have ever been produced), painted pictures, drew, engineered theatrical displays, built, wrote, did everything.[2]

Huxley's enthusiasm for Bernini cooled in later years and he came ultimately to reject the baroque style.

There is no clearer description of Huxley's aesthetic ideals than in the essays from Along the Road (1925), particularly his study of Piero della Francesca in "The Best Picture". Huxley acknowledged that the label "best picture" was, of course, relative and based on personal taste, but in Piero's Resurrection at Borgo San Sepoloro, he discovered values that were reflective of his own view of life: (fig. 1)

> ... there does exist, none the less, an absolute standard of artistic merit. And it is a standard which is in the last resort a moral one. Whether a work of art is good or bad depends entirely on the quality of the character which expresses itself in the work.[3]

Huxley praises Piero's achievement in the painting stating that

> ... it is, absolutely great, because the man who painted it was genuinely noble as well as talented. And to me personally the most moving of pictures, because its author possessed almost more than any other painter those qualities of character which I most admire and because his purely aesthetic preoccupations are of a kind which I am by nature best fitted to understand. A natural, spontaneous

> and unpretentious grandeur -- this is the leading quality of all Piero's work. He is majestic without being at all strained, theatrical or hysterical -- as Handel is majestic, not as Wagner.... Piero seems to have been inspired by what I may call the religion of Plutarch's Lives -- which is not Christianity, but a worship of what is admirable in man. Even his technically religious pictures are paeans in praise of human dignity. And he is everywhere intellectual.[4]

Huxley goes on to discuss the technical accomplishments of the Resurrection: its triangular composition, the body of Christ developed like a Greek athlete, the stern and pensive face, the cold eyes:

> The whole figure is expressive of physical and intellectual power. It is the resurrection of the classical ideal incredibly much grander and more beautiful than the classical reality, from the tomb where it had lain so many hundred years.[5]

Huxley also approves of Piero's "passion for solidity" in the masses of the figures and the "delicate chiaroscuro" which gives a modelled depth to the features. Huxley compares Piero to Alberti in their treatment of masses. As he states, "What Alberti is to Brunelleschi, Piero della Francesca is to his contemporary, Botticelli". What Huxley indicates is his preference for modelled masses over flat, linear arabesques. In terms of style, Huxley preferred the plastic qualities of classical and Renaissance art over the linearity of Gothic art.

Beyond Piero's technical prowess, Huxley restates the source of his admiration:

> I am attracted to his character by his intellectual power, by his capacity for unaffectedly making the grand and noble gesture; by his pride in whatever is splendid in humanity. And in the artist I find peculiarly sympathetic the lover of solidity, the painter of smooth curving surfaces, the composer who builds with masses. For myself I prefer him to Botticelli, so much so indeed, that if it were necessary to sacrifice all Botticelli's works to save the "Resurrection", the "Nativity", the "Madonna della Misericordia" and the Arezzo frescoes, I should unhesitatingly commit the "Primavera" and all the rest of them to the flames.[6]

Inflammatory remarks indeed, and indicative of Huxley's flair for controversy. Four years after his Italian visit, Bernini had been revalued.

> Bad art is of two sorts: that which is merely dull, stupid, and incompetent, the negatively bad; and the positively bad, which is a lie and a sham. Very often the lie is so well told that almost everyone is taken in by it -- for a time.... For one can be an artistic swindler without meaning to cheat and in the teeth of the most ardent desire to be honest.
>
> Sometimes the charlatan is also a first rate man of genius and then you have such strange artists as Wagner and Bernini, who can turn what is false and theatrical into something almost sublime.[7]

Outside of aesthetic values, Huxley felt that the finest art should be imbued with spiritual values. In arguing against the purchase of the Codex Sinaiticus in "Modern Fetishism", Huxley stated that "All spiritual

values may be catalogued under one or other of the three heads: Good, True, Beautiful".[8] For many years Huxley was labelled a "classicist" and his pantheon was peopled by Alberti, Piero and Wren. He was very severe towards adherents of the baroque and gothic styles. Surprisingly he wrote nothing about the neoclassical and Greek revival movements of the early nineteenth-century, although he appreciated Johann Winckelmann's definition of classical antiquity's finest qualities; "eine edle Einfalt und eine stille Grösse" -- noble simplicity and calm grandeur.

Huxley's essay on "Breughel" not only celebrates the sixteenth-century Flemish artist's work, but also permits Huxley to expound several theories about artists and critics. He claims that the word "painter" has been abused and that

> Aestheticians have tried to make us believe that there is a single painter-psychology, a single function of painting, a single standard of criticism. Fashion changes and the views of art critics with it. At the present time it is fashionable to believe in form to the exclusion of the subject. Young people almost swoon away with excess of aesthetic emotion before a Matisse. Two generations ago they would have been wiping their eyes before the latest Landseer.[9]

Huxley acknowledges that there is an "eclecticism currently in vogue", which persists to this day. What he objects to is the critical myopia which classifies all art according

to strictly limited criteria. He states that all varieties of painters have a right to exist and that much valuable art is overlooked in a cursory fashion, because "at any given moment a number of meritorious facts fail to fit into the fashionable theory and have to be ignored". The critical climate which should exist is one in which

> The only prejudice that the ideal art critic should have is against the incompetent, the mentally dishonest, and the futile.... Every good painter invents a new way of painting. Is this man a competent painter? Has he something to say, is he genuine? These are the questions a critic must ask himself. Not, does he conform with my theory of imitation, or distortion, or moral purity, or significant form?[10]

However, the condition exists in which "the subject of the work, with all that the painter desired to express in it beyond his feelings about formal relations, contemporary criticism rejects as unimportant".[11] Representation, narrative and drama have been purged from modern art:

> True the old masters are indulgently permitted to illustrate stories and express their thoughts about the world. Poor devils, they knew no better! Your modern observer makes allowance for their ignorance and passes over in silence all that is not a matter of formal relations.... [Even in master works] every germ of drama or meaning is disinfected out of them; only the composition is admired. The process is analogous to reading Latin verses without understanding them -- simply for the sake of the rhythmical rumbling of the hexameters.[12]

Art seen in this light is fragmentary, dissociated and incomplete. Huxley treads on dangerous ground -- if

one considers the major accomplishments of Cézanne -- when he states that

> It is very seldom indeed that we find a painter who can be inspired merely by his interest in form and texture to paint a picture. Good painters of "abstract" subjects or even of still lives are rare. Apples and solid geometry do not stimulate a man to express his feelings about form and make a composition. All thoughts and emotions are interdependent.[13]

Drawing on Mantegna, Rubens and Michelangelo, Huxley notes that

> ... the great dramatic or reflective painters knew everything that the aestheticians who paint geometrical pictures, apples or buttocks know and a great deal besides. What they have to say about formal relations, though important, is only a part of what they have to express.... there need be no exclusions.[14]

In the elder Breughel, Huxley finds a victim of theoretical prejudice. Outlining his skills as a colorist, draftsman, and his techniques of powerful composition, built-up decorative groups and silhouette shapes in a succession of receding planes, Huxley feels that "Breughel can boast of purely aesthetic merits". What ranks him as a great artist in Huxley's eyes is that "he is highly competent aesthetically; he has plenty to say; his mind is curious, interesting and powerful; and he has no false pretensions, is entirely honest".[15]

The second half of the essay deals with selected

works, particularly the peasant scenes and snow scenes. The placement of figures and the sociological content of these genre paintings held a fascination for Huxley, and it is not surprising that Huxley gained technical insight from Breughel. In a perceptive essay, "Huxley and Brueghel", Charlotte Le Gates establishes the connection between the two men:

> Huxley seems to have been attracted to Brueghel's attitude toward life. Both artists saw individuals as isolated, yet forming a pattern of existence. Both saw a juxtaposition of tragedy and comedy as the nature of both life and art. Both were fascinated recorders of social customs and events. Both celebrated life above art, seeing art as a tool to record reality rather than an ideal to shape reality. And because of their similar attitudes, Huxley used a number of Brueghel's painting techniques in prose.... For Huxley, the inclusion in the works of art of vast numbers of figures which are, individually, dissociated, but which together make up a vast and striking pattern was an exact imitation of life itself.[16]

Undoubtedly, it is this multiple vision of life, the juxtaposition of the comic and tragic, and the individual incongruities within a rich and complex vision of life, which propels Huxley's novels of the late twenties, particularly Point Counter Point. It may be said of these kindred spirits that they were both "profoundly convinced of the reality of evil and of the horrors which this mortal life, not to mention eternity, hold in store for suffering humanity. The world is a horrible

place, but in spite of this, or precisely because of this, men and women eat, drink and dance".[17]

To say that Huxley was dismayed with the art scene in post-war Europe is an understatement. His derision extended not only to the artists and critics, but to dealers and patrons as well. One of the distinguishing features of the twentieth-century has been the creation of a society of neophiliacs, particularly in the technologically developed nations. This cult of the new and the fashionable was very much in vogue during the nineteen twenties. In an essay entitled "Conxolus", Huxley not only satirizes critics, but also the trendy connoisseurs. Posing as an advocate of a negligible, long-forgotten artist, Huxley exposes the malleable nature of his society:

> I would preach Conxolus to a benighted world, and exalting him as an artist, exalt myself at the same time as an art critic.... And my auditors (terrified, as all the frequenters of cultured society always are, of being left behind in the intellectual race), would listen with grave avidity. And they would leave me, triumphantly conscious that they had scored a point over their rivals, that they had entered a new swim from which all but the extremely select were excluded.[18]

Reaction against the overblown romanticism and sentimentalism of Victorian narrative and academic painting inevitably led to a rejection of all realism in art. Huxley claims that

> ... there are hundreds of young painters who dare not paint realistically and charmingly, even if they could, for fear of losing the esteem of the young connoisseurs who are their patrons.... Aiming as he does at some mythical ideal of pure aestheticism, to which all but form is sacrificed, the talentless painter of the present time gives us nothing but boredom.... The young's mistrust of realism does not apply only to contemporary art; it is also retrospective.[19]

An Athenaeum article entitled "Art and the Tradition", gives an indication of the direction which Huxley wanted artists to follow:

> Style may be... the essentially human, aesthetic element in art; but, divorced from matter, from the beauties of external reality it tends to become singularly dry and lifeless. Artists brought up in the independent school, preoccupied with the purely aesthetic side of art, are apt to be afraid of beauty, afraid of the great emotions, afraid of universal truths.... The independents have done good work in breaking and discrediting fossilized classicism. But intransigent individualism is sterile and unproductive. What is needed now is a return to a genuine and living classical tradition.[20]

In "The Pieran Spring", he amplified his views on the value of a continuing tradition. Until the last century the artist had worked in relative isolation, producing his art according to local tradition, unaware to a large degree of foreign styles and traditions. As Huxley states,

> The renaissance sculptor worked in an almost total ignorance of what had been done by other sculptors, at other periods or in countries other than his own. The result was that the was able to concentrate on the one convention that seemed to him good -- the classical -- and work away at it undisturbed, until

> he had developed all its potential resources. ... It was the absence of distracting knowledge that made possible this high level of achievement among the less talented men.[21]

He cites the German mania for documentation and states that "the Germans know more about the artistic styles of the past than any other people in the world -- and their own art, to-day, is about as hopelessly dreary as any national art could well be. Its badness is, in mathematical terms, a function of its learnedness".[22] In the article "Art and Tradition", Huxley gave one example of a bad tradition in action:

> Germany is certainly a hideous warning of what havoc a bad tradition may work. The deplorable Boecklin, with his sentimental pantheism, his islands of the dead, his realistic mythology, is the father of the modern German school.
>
> Des Deutschen Künstlers Vaterland
> Ist Griechenland , ist Griechenland.
>
> One traces Boecklin's neo-classicism everywhere: in Kley's pornographic drawings of centaurs and nymphs or again, in the world of practical life, in that characteristically German cult for the nude, which drives earnest professors and their wives to go out ski-ing with no clothes on, in the belief that they are recapturing the authentic spirit of Hellas.[23]

This misapplication of artistic style was irksome to Huxley. D.H. Lawrence had already satirized the current German artistic temperament in Women in Love, in which Loerke claims that art must interpret industry as it once did religion, and reveals to Gudrun his plans for a peasant bacchanalia frieze for a granite factory

in Cologne. However, Huxley does not fully accept the hard fact that academic art in Europe was moribund and no longer reflected socio-cultural realities. The cultural and artistic cross-fertilization, by which Japanese art was integrated into the works of Van Gogh, Gauguin and Bernard, or the adaption of African primitive art into Picasso's paintings, was a necessary recourse for artists working in a shrinking world and trying to shake off the dust of a no longer relevant tradition.

In "The Pieran Spring", Huxley acknowledges that there is no single, right convention, but that an artist's expanding knowledge tends to dissipate his energy, for knowledge renders disciplined, artistic concentration impossible. He notes that the numerous "-isms" of artistic style invented and disposed of during the last seventy years (1855-1925), would have taken the Egyptians a hundred centuries to exhaust. Not only do we invent, but also resuscitate aspects of old conventions. Because of the subjective nature of revaluation and the rapid digestion of artistic styles, an inevitable breakdown in values occurs:

> Appetite grows with what it feeds on. The good is not enough to satisfy our hungry appreciation, we must swallow the bad as well. To justify ourselves in this appreciation of what is bad, we have created a whole series of new aesthetic values. This process

> which began some time ago has gone on with ever increasing speed and thoroughness, till there is now almost nothing, however bad, from which we cannot derive pleasure.[24]

What Huxley offers in the essays on art from Along the Road is a learned appreciation of artistic qualities which are objectively verifiable, and subjectively relevant and sensible in defining the author's own character. The essays are written in the finest nineteenth-century tradition, eschewing the trap of the fashionable. When one turns to the first four novels of Huxley's career, the arts and artists, for good or ill, are depicted as a vital component of the social fabric.

CHAPTER 2 -- VIEW FROM CROME

In his first novel, Crome Yellow (1921), Huxley took his readers on a weekend romp through an English country-house, filled with brilliant and eccentric personalities: the poet, painter, journalist, scientist, and a number of "bright young people". This self-admitted Peacockian novel was largely biographical, based on Huxley's visits to Garsington Manor. In fact, the publication of Crome Yellow put a formal end to Huxley's connection with Lady Ottoline Morrell. In her memoirs, Lady Ottoline gave a detailed and bitter account of the break with Huxley:

> ... the characters in the book were all taken directly from people he had met at Garsington and no one who knew anything of our life there in which Aldous had so long had a part could fail to see that the book was a cruel caricature of the sort of life we led there. I always hoped that Asquith would not read the book, but felt sure that some of his family would, and that Mr Horne, our rector, would not know of its existence, or the use his sermons had been put to.... Of course, Gertler and Bertie Russell recognized themselves, as their portraits are very obvious, and conversations that they and Aldous had had together are reproduced almost word for word, but given a contemptuous tone.
>
> But apart from all this the thing that really hurt us was that Aldous could so entirely misuse and misinterpret and contemptuously ridicule all our life at Garsington. He already knew how much I had suffered by Lawrence having written of me and Garsington in Women In Love,[1] and he had seemed to share my indignation about it, but here he had done almost the same thing.[2]

Huxley's rebuttal to Lady Ottoline's criticism was hardly convincing:

> For, after all, characters are nothing but marionettes, with voices, designed to express ideas and the parody of ideas. A caricature of myself in extreme youth[3] is the only approach to a real person; the others are puppets -- or marionettes.... My mistake, I repeat, was to have borrowed the stage setting from Garsington.... Next time I write a puppet-comedy of ideas I shall lay the scene a thousand miles away from England. That will, I hope, make impossible misunderstandings such as this.[4]

Russell, Asquith, Horne, Dora Carrington, Dorothy Brett and the Morrells were presented as thinly veiled caricatures. The only character not treated ironically was the painter Mark Gertler, in the role of Gombauld.

Huxley's mockery also encompassed the architecture of Crome and its hodgepodge of art works, including "its rows of respectable and (though, of course, one couldn't publicly admit it) rather boring Italian primitives." (p. 5)[5] Scogan is enthusiastic in his praise of the architecture of Crome:

> "The great thing about Crome... is the fact that it's so unmistakably and aggressively a work of art. It makes no compromise with nature but affronts it and rebels against it.... The house of an intelligent, civilized, and sophisticated man should never seem to have sprouted from the clods. It should be an expression of his grand unnatural remoteness from the cloddish life. Since the days of William Morris that's a fact which we in England have been unable to comprehend. Civilized and sophisticated men have solemnly played at being peasants. Hence quaintness, arts and crafts, cottage industry, and all the rest of it." (pp 68-69)

Despite Scogan's laudable "form follows function" conception of Crome, Huxley deflates his presumptions. Henry Wimbush informs Scogan that

> "Whether Sir Ferdinando shared your views about architecture or if, indeed, he had any views about architecture at all, I very much doubt. In building this house, Sir Ferdinando was, as a matter of fact, preoccupied by only one thought -- the proper placing of his privies."(p. 69)

Huxley's distaste for the Gothic style is also expressed. Bodiham's attitude is mirrored in the architecture:

> Mr Bodiham was sitting in his study at the Rectory. The nineteenth-century Gothic windows, narrow and pointed, admitted the light grudgingly; in spite of the brilliant July weather, the room was sombre.... Outside the Gothic windows the earth was warm and marvellously calm. Everything was as it had always been. (pp 52-53)

Gothic style is equated with the unnatural and the oppressive, as opposed to the natural and harmonious world outside.

Huxley was evidently aware of the way in which works of art could give colour or definition to fictional situations. Prose scenes can be described in the manner in which paintings or drawings are read by the trained eye. In Henry Wimbush's History of Crome, it is related that George Stubbs, the accomplished eighteenth-century British painter, "painted a portrait of Sir Hercules and his lady driving in their green enamelled calesh drawn by four black Shetlands. Sir Hercules wears a plum-coloured velvet coat and white breeches; Filomena

is dressed in flowered muslin and a very large hat with pink feathers". (p 91) Although Huxley takes some liberty with the details, the source of inspiration is apparently Stubbs's Lady and Gentleman in a Phaeton (1787), in the National Gallery, London. (fig 2)[6] The diminutive quality of the two seated figures must have struck Huxley as being odd, and it has been used to embellish the fabulous tale.

In Those Barren Leaves, a similar artistic allusion is given to symbolize Francis Chelifer's feelings upon the collapse of his relationship with Barbara:

> There is a German engraving of the sixteenth century, made at the time of the reaction against scholasticism, which represents a naked Teutonic beauty on the back of a bald and bearded man, whom she directs with a bridle and urges on with a switch. The old man is labelled Aristotle. After two thousand years of slavery to the infallible sage it was a good revenge. To Barbara, no doubt, I appeared as a kind of minor Aristotle. (p 147)[7]

As with Sir Hercules and Filomena, the image is bizarre enough to be taken for a fabrication. However, Huxley is indeed drawing this sketch from a little known sixteenth-century engraving by Hans Baldung Grien, entitled Aristotle and Phyllis. (fig 3)[8] If for no other reason, one is impressed with the massive erudition which Huxley can draw upon to enliven his prose. The fact that this erudition is controlled and never languishes in

insufferable pedantry, is even more impressive.

In Crome Yellow, Anne Wimbush takes a fall in the garden at night and is assisted by Denis:

> He felt in his pockets for the match box. The light spurted and then grew steadily. Magically, a little universe had been created, a world of colours and forms -- Anne's face, the shimmering orange of her dress, her white bare arms, a patch of green turf -- and round about a darkness that had become solid and utterly blind. (p 118)

For a few seconds, there is light and warmth in the void -- a moment of exquisite beauty for Denis. Again the scene recalls an artistic source. George Woodcock states that "this moment, epiphanous as the candlelit revelation in a painting by Georges de la Tour, is the only moment of real happiness Denis experiences in the duration of the novel".[9]

Although social conventions and the state of modern art are strongly satirized, it is unusual to see the painter, Gombauld/Gertler, treated sympathetically. Huxley apparently intended to set him apart as a genuine, sincere and talented personality, alienated from the flock of poseurs and dilettantes about him at Crome. Huxley maintained a life-long friendship with Mark Gertler, and his reluctance to caricature his friend was witness to this relationship. However, as Keith May

has pointed out, "in the context of this novel Gombauld's very strivings bear by implication a hint of absurdity".[10]

Gombauld is introduced to the reader as being

> ... altogether and essentially human.... Indeed, with more hair and less collar, Gombauld would have been completely Byronic -- more than Byronic, even, for Gombauld was of Provençal descent, a black-haired young corsair of thirty, with flashing teeth and luminous large dark eyes.... [Denis] envied his looks, his vitality, his easy confidence of manner. (p 15)

This romanticized description is slightly at odds with the description of Gertler provided by the art historian Sir John Rothenstein:

> I was confronted by a shortish, handsome boy with apricot coloured skin and a dense mop of dark brown hair so stiff that it stood on end.... I was seven years old but I still remember his nervous sullen look.[11]

Gertler was born in London in 1891 to parents of Russian Jewish descent. The painter C. R. W. Nevinsen referred to his friend as a "Jewish Botticelli", because of his short curly hair and sensitive facial features. Gertler attended the Slade school and joined the New English Art Club in 1911. Through Gilbert Cannan, Gertler was introduced in 1916 to Katherine Mansfield, John Middleton Murry, and Frieda and D.H. Lawrence. Lawrence, in fact, used Gertler as his model for Loerke in Women In Love.

Summers at Garsington lasted from 1917 to 1927. Gertler became the first lover of Dora Carrington, and although her physical description is more akin to Mary Bracegirdle in Crome Yellow, she is depicted as Anne Wimbush in the novel. Carrington declared her love for Lytton Strachey in early 1917, and Huxley's treatment of Gertler and Carrington depicts the degeneration of an intimate relationship.

That Huxley was attracted to Gertler's attitude towards art is borne out by John Rothenstein:

> Gertler became a painter with a style of his own, the product of a highly personal character and of an immediate environment that offered the strongest contrast to the rest of the society in which it was set, and narrowly circumscribed.[12] Early in life he emerged from the environment that had so largely formed him, and was drawn within the orbit of Post-Impressionism. To some, therefore, Gertler was a gifted provincial whose art ripened as it moved ever nearer to the Parisian sun; to others he seemed an inspired provincial whose art lost its savour as it became more metropolitan.[13]

Art with no subject matter, or art concerned solely with forms or abstraction, held no interest for Gertler. In a letter written in 1913, he stated that

> I don't want to be abstract and cater for a few hyper-intellectual maniacs. An over-intellectual man is as dangerous as an oversexed man..., Besides I was born from a working man. I haven't had a grand education and I don't understand all this abstract intellectual nonsense! I am rather in search of reality, even at a cost of "pretty decorativeness". I love natural objects and I love painting them as they are -- I use them to help me express an idea.[14]

Gertler's early paintings are well drawn examples of representational art, displaying a strong and sensitive naturalism. (fig 4) As his career progressed, Gertler experimented with symbolic exaggeration of forms, showing the influence of post-Cubist Picasso, and he gradually moved away from naturalism. The strong studies in character and personality which had marked his earlier works gave way in the late twenties and thirties to depictions of faces, figures and objects for their purely visual qualities. Compared with the bold images of his earlier works, the later paintings appear flawed by a decorative prettiness.

Gertler never achieved the meteoric success of a Picasso or a Matisse, but rather had the reputation of a journeyman patiently refining his craft. In April 1937, Gertler's last major exhibition was held at the Reid and Lefevre Galleries in London. Huxley reflected on Gertler's achievement in the catalogue introduction:

> Artists may be divided into two main classes, the improvisors and the second-thoughters. The improvisors start brilliantly, but can never improve on their first fine careless rapture. For the second-thoughters, inspiration is something, not given in advance, but gradually discovered. Their divine spark is in the form of an ember which must be laboriously blown into flame. These artists achieve the best of which they are capable only after much effort and repeated experiment. Their advance is slow and

> wearisome, but in the end they generally go further than the improvisors.[15]

Gertler's personal life was not placid. His marriage in 1930 was a flexible arrangement which gave a large measure of independence for him and his wife. However, much of the stress in his life was generated by the struggle between the desire for independence and his own vulnerability. Tuberculosis and murderous headaches wore him down physically. He was plagued by bouts of depression, financially pressured by the critical failure of two exhibitions, and ultimately committed suicide in 1939.

Huxley took liberties with his sketch of Gertler at work in Crome Yellow. Instead of mirroring a Gertler painting, Gombauld's portrait of Anne, painted with a feverish energy, anticipates to a surprising degree, Wyndham Lewis's languid portraits of the nineteen twenties and thirties, such as Froanna -- Portrait of the Artist's Wife (1937): (fig 5)

> Seated sideways, her elbow on the back of the chair, her head and shoulders turned at an angle from the rest of her body, towards the front, she had fallen into an attitude of indolent abandonment.... The hand that lay along the knee was as limp as a glove. It was Anne's face -- but her face as it would be, utterly unillumined by the inward lights of thought and emotion. It was the lazy, expressionless mask which was sometimes her face. (pp 157-158)

Likewise, Huxley's description of Gombauld's artistic odyssey more closely reflects the developments of the Russian painter, Wassily Kandinsky:

> He had begun by painting a formalized nature, then, little by little, he had risen from nature into the world of pure form, till in the end he was painting nothing but his own thoughts, externalized in the abstract geometrical forms of the mind's devising. (p 75)

Gombauld ultimately grows dissatisfied with the intolerably narrow limitation of Cubism and the "few and crude and uninteresting forms" he could invent:

> He had done with cubism.... But the cubist discipline prevented him from falling into excesses of nature worship. He took from nature its rich, subtle, elaborate forms, but his aim was always to work them into a whole that should have the thrilling simplicity and formality of an idea; to combine prodigious realism with prodigious simplification. Memories of Caravaggio's protentous achievements haunted him. (p 75)

Huxley proceeds to describe the picture which Gombauld is painting. To a modern reader with a knowledge of art history, the subject depicted is obviously The Conversion of Saint Paul. (fig 6) However, until this century, Caravaggio had been criticized as a second-rate artist, exploiting light and shadow for dramatic effect and celebrating vulgarity. It is possible that Ruskin's appraisal of Caravaggio in Modern Painters (1846) was so negative that

Huxley avidly sought out the artist's more positive attributes. Huxley's view of Ruskin was quite clear. "Now it is to be generally observed, as he himself would say, that in all matters connected with art, Ruskin is to be interpreted as we interpret dreams -- that is to say, as signifying precisely the opposite of what he says".[16] Ruskin described Caravaggio's art as showing "definite signs of evil desire ill repressed, and then inability to avoid, and at last perpetual seeking for and feeding upon horror and ugliness, and filthiness of sin".[17]

Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1573-1610) was the undisputed enfant terrible of the seventeenth-century Italian art scene. Engaged in brawls, assaults, murders and libel actions, his personal life was hopelessly chaotic. He lost patrons because his works displayed too much realism and his religious figures were insufficiently holy. Saints with dirtied feet offended decorum and his figures did not please noble patrons' conceptions of the Roman artistic ideal. Caravaggism flourished as a fashionable style in Rome, Naples and Utrecht until ca. 1650. Georges de la Tour, Velasquez, Rembrandt and some painters of the Dutch school successfully appropriated his techniques; particularly the modelling of figures

through the interplay of light and shadow -- realism heightened by chiaroscuro.

Huxley not only describes the salient features of Gombauld's composition, but also the essence of Caravaggio's thought:

> On the ground, between the legs of the towering beast, lay the foreshortened figure of a man, the head in extreme foreground, the arms flung wide to right and left. A white, relentless light poured down from a point in the right foreground. The beast, the fallen man, were sharply illuminated; round them, beyond and behind them, was the night. They were alone in the darkness, a universe in themselves.... Under the arch of the horse's belly, between his legs, the eye looked through into an intense darkness; below the space was closed in by the figure of the prostrate man. A central gulf of darkness surrounded by luminous forms. (p 76)

Huxley was able to look beyond any aesthetic failings to detect the grandeur, the sense of humanity and the passionate spirit at work in Caravaggio, in advance of his rehabilitation in this century by Marangoni, Longhi, Wittkower and Friedlaender. Huxley admired Breughel's juxtaposition of the comic and tragic in his peasant scenes, and this balance of opposites is at work in Caravaggio's paintings as well. As Rudolf Wittkower explains,

> ... the very character of [Caravaggio's] art is paradoxical, and the resulting feeling of awe and uneasiness may have contributed to the neglect and misunderstanding which darkened his fame.... He is capable of dramatic clamour as well as of utter silence. He violently rejects tradition, but is tied to it in a hundred ways. He abhors the trimmings of orthodoxy and is adamant in disclaiming the notion

> that supernatural powers overtly direct human affairs, but brings the beholder face to face with the experience of the supernatural. But when all is said and done, his types chosen from the common people, his magic and light reveal his passionate belief that is was the simple in spirit, the humble and the poor who hold the mysteries of faith fast within their souls.[18]

It is a sentiment which Huxley well understands. Huxley's use of the long neglected Caravaggio unintentionally helped lead to his re-discovery in the public mind. However, despite Lord Clark's enthusiasm, brief reference to an obscure artist in a first novel by a relatively unknown writer, does not generate waves of art lovers battering down museum doors to view Caravaggios. Long hours of intensive research by art historians are obviously more likely to rescue canvases from dusty cellars and store rooms. Huxley merely taps into the developing trend.

Gombauld has no illusions about the integrity and correctness of his painting. As Keith May has pointed out,

> There certainly is in Crome Yellow an implication that man's activities are everywhere partial, discordant, unsusceptible to any unifying principle outside the realm of art. The pervasive irony with which this vision is expressed is absent from only one tiny portion of the novel, and that portion is about Gombauld's unfinished painting. It is the artistic product... that impresses, rather than its creator.... Art alone can be, and sometimes actually is, flawless, with its internal contradictions resolved in the pattern of the whole.[19]

Huxley's running battle with the modern artist surfaces in the dialogue between Gombauld and Mary

Bracegirdle. So thoroughly modern Mary is taken aback when confronted with Gombauld's homage to Caravaggio:

> She had expected a cubist masterpiece and here was a picture of a man and a horse, not only recognizable as such, but even aggressively in drawing.... Her orientations were gone. One could admire representationalism in the Old Masters. Obviously. But in a modern...? (p 78)

Feeling somewhat awkward, she declares it "too... trompe-l'oeil for my taste" and acknowledges its heavy chiaroscuro. Beyond that, she is at a loss for words and quickly changes the subject:

> When I was in Paris this spring I saw a lot of Tschuplitski. I admire his work so tremendously. Of course, it's frightfully abstract now -- frightfully abstract and frightfully intellectual. He just throws a few oblongs on to his canvas -- quite flat, you know, and painted in pure primary colours. But his design is wonderful. He's getting more and more abstract every day. He'd quite given up the third dimension when I was there and was just thinking of giving up the second. Soon, he says, there'll be just blank canvas. That is the logical conclusion. Complete abstraction. When he's reached pure abstraction he's going to take up architecture. He says it's more intellectual than painting. (pp 78-79)

One shudders to think what will happen to architecture when Tschuplitski gives up the third dimension. Mary's comments are perhaps the most hilarious in Crome Yellow, but her innocent appraisal of the avant-garde artist is based on fact.

The fictitious Tschuplitski is decidedly Russian, sounds like "duplicity", and aurally has an affinity with Kandinsky and Lissitsky. It seems, however, Huxley's satire of the eccentric artist was fashioned after Kasimir Malevich (1878-1935), the Russian suprematist painter and theorist, who found Cubism too tame for his vision of art. His suprematist canvases are as Mary describes them (fig 7), with the most notorious being White on White (1918) at the Museum of Modern Art in New York -- a white square on a white ground. Malevich claimed, "I reject the soul and intuition as unnecessary. On February 19th, 1914 at a public lecture I rejected reason". His eccentricity emerges in the article "From Cubism and Futurism to Suprematism" (1916):

> -I have transformed myself in the zero of form and dragged myself out of the rubbish-filled pool of Academic art.
> -Only dull and impotent artists screen their work with sincerity.
> -The artist can be a creator only when the forms in his picture have nothing in common with nature.
> -Colour and texture in painting are ends in themselves. They are the essence of painting, but this essence has always been destroyed by the subject.
> -And any carved-out pentagon or hexagon would have been a greater work of sculpture than the Venus de Milo or David.
> -The square is not a subconscious form. It is the creation of intuitive reason.
> -The square is a living, royal infant.
> -Our world of art has become new, non-objective, pure.[20]

Huxley was obviously aware that post-war Europe was not "new, non-objective, pure". He might concede that art was "mirroring the destruction of an entire generation, only faster"; but he was unprepared to condone art that was destructive of all values. Suprematism and Dada were polar opposites to the art Huxley favoured -- an art of order and harmony. Huxley declares that

> ... The great obvious truths are there -- facts. Those who deny their existence, those who proclaim that human nature has changed since August 4th, 1914, are merely rationalizing their terror and disgusts.[21]

In January of 1920, Huxley spent a week in Paris, and met key figures in the Dada movement. Huxley summed up his impressions in a letter to Dr. B.G. Brooks (4 May, 1920):

> As for any connections between Dada and the old Italian futurist movement: -- the dadaists repudiate futurism for its wild romanticism. But as a matter of fact there are a good many points in common. Only Dada is more fundamental. Futurism demanded merely that one should be allowed to talk about trains and cinemas and electric lights. Dada is out to destroy literature completely. Their watchword is 'vivre sans prétension' -- just life without philosophizing or thinking. It is the destruction of the subject matter at which they first aim.... Personally I don't much like their theories or their practice. Their satire is healthy, but I see no point in destroying literature; and for the most part I find their little utterances rather boring.[22]

Huxley also directed his satire at the Cubists in "How Eupompus Gave Splendour to Art by Numbers"

from his first book of stories, Limbo (1920). In a tale of the search for perfection, leading to excess and madness, the abstract forms of numbers themselves gained supreme importance as the sole reality.

As Peter Firchow has noted, Huxley was bothered by the fashionable resurgence of interest in primitive art:

> From Huxley's rationalistic perspective, the whole basis of modern art seemed radically wrong.... What disgusted him most was, rather typically, the contemporary mania for "primitivism," with its accompanying corollaries of art-for-art's-sake and the cult of the new. Not that he objected to the primitive as such. What rankled him was "the contemporary habit of emptying the primitives of their content and significance".[23]

In his article "Aldous Huxley and the Visual Arts", Sanford Marovitz remarks that "to reduce a painting to a series or grouping of forms without recognizable pictorial value is, Huxley believed, to eliminate the living quality through which life and art are so intimately associated."[24] Artists who had not totally abandoned representational art were still prone to criticism:

> ... [Huxley] seems to have taken lightly the work of such artists as Modigliani and Matisse, whose concern with line and color largely overrode considerations of light, depth and shadow. Although Huxley did not demand photographic representation of reality as it is perceived through the senses, he was clearly not satisfied with distorted images that simply suggested the real thing.[25]

That Huxley kept up to date with the developments in art circles is not in question. His reluctance to comment

more extensively on contemporary artists reflects his pessimism about the state of modern art, and his reluctance to engage in the rather depressing business of writing a series of totally negative reviews. What he thought for example, of the American painter Jackson Pollock is limited to a reminiscence by Raymond Mortimer:

> I recall... his question about the paintings of Jackson Pollock, which we were both seeing for the first time: "Is there any reason why they should not be smaller or larger instead of ending just where they do?"[26]

Huxley's comment, either innocently inquisitive or deliberately sneering, is the only record of his reaction to Pollock's massive abstract expressionist canvases. If Huxley comprehended the lyricism, the traces of naturalism, the insight, or the use of size to engulf and thereby involve the viewer in Pollock's work, it remains sadly unspoken.

Perhaps the strongest condemnation of the modern artist was expressed in an essay from Music At Night (1931), "Art and the Obvious":

> ... some of the most sensitive artists of our age have rejected not merely external realism (for which we may be rather thankful), but even what I may call internal realism, they refuse to take cognizance in their art of most of the significant facts of human nature, the excesses of popular art have filled them with a terror of the obvious -- even of the obvious sublimities and beauties and marvels... Which means that there are sensitive modern artists who are

> compelled, by their disgust and fear, to confine themselves to the exploration of only a tiny fraction of existence.[27]

Huxley proceeds to indict the modern artists, particularly those working out of Paris, who have stripped the plastic arts of their literary qualities. Pictures and statues are reduced to their strictly formal elements. Music and the visual arts display

> ... that new topsy-turvy romanticism, which exalts the machine, the crowd, the merely muscular body, and despises the soul and solitude and nature. ... By pretending that certain things are not there, which in fact are there, much of the most accomplished modern art is condemning itself to incompleteness, to sterility, to premature decrepitude and death.[28]

CHAPTER 3 -- LONDON

In 1923, Huxley published his second novel, Antic Hay, which reflected the disruption, disillusionment and wasted energies of life in post-war London. Behind the surface glamour and the frenzied life-style, Huxley's satire exposes the "incompleteness, sterility, premature decrepitude and death" of this fashionable world. In terms of the visual arts, two characters represent opposing poles of thought and behaviour. Gumbril Sr lives on a small square near Paddington, practising architecture on a modest level and collecting elaborate architectural models. Casimir Lypiatt, a would-be Renaissance man, poet and painter, leads a boisterous life, plagued by personal failures, lack of talent, grandiose dreams and unrealized ideals. In these two men, Huxley partially represents London as it could be, and as it is. Looming over the London of 1923 is the spirit of Sir Christopher Wren, whose disciple is the mild-mannered Gumbril Sr. Not only is Antic Hay a satirical commentary on modern life in London, but it is also a eulogy for Wren on the bicentenary of his death.

Huxley's comments on art are not relegated solely to Gumbril Sr and Lypiatt. The book is peppered with references to art, artists and critics, and this contributes

much to the colour of Antic Hay. Huxley's obligatory slap at the heirs of Ruskin occurs early in the novel when Theodore Gumbril Jr ponders the splendour of the English Perpendicular Gothic style and how it was corrupted by its nineteenth-century Ruskinian adaptation at Oxford. "At its worst and smallest, as in most of the colleges of Oxford, [the Gothic style] is mean, petty, and but for a certain picturesqueness, almost wholly disgusting." (p 10)[1] In an Athenaeum article from 1919, Huxley had praised some of Ruskin's political views and his support of Turner and the Pre-Raphaelites, but considered Ruskin's pronouncements on Gothic style a mixed blessing. The Gothic revival spread indiscriminately throughout England, secularized to a ridiculous degree for use in virtually any public or private building. Less prudent men, driven by Ruskin's moving and poetic, prophetic eloquence, unleashed dozens of architectural monsters. As Huxley explained, "It is not Ruskin's fault, so much as his sheer misfortune".[2]

Huxley also introduces Mercaptan, the writer, sensualist, aesthete, who is a devotee of eighteenth-century rococo art:

> "... if I glory in anything, it's my little rococo boudoir, and the conversations across the polished mahogany, and the delicate, lascivious, witty little flirtations on ample sofas inhabited by the soul of of Crébillon Fils. We needn't all be Russians". (p 47)

However, Mercaptan's taste for Borromini and the effusive quality of rococo is thoroughly alien to London. Huxley permits the reader a wry smile when he describes Mercaptan's writing table. "Mr. Mercaptan sat at his writing table -- an exquisitely amusing affair in papier mâché, inlaid with floral decorations in mother-of-pearl and painted with views of Windsor Castle and Tintern in the romantic manner of Prince Albert's later days..." (p 196)

There is also a sense of displacement in the description of Rosie's room. Gumbril Jr is invited up to see her reproduction of Domenichino's The Last Communion of St. Jerome. Divorced from its ecclasiastical setting and function, the painting gives the room an inharmonious, ludicrous character:

> Grave in its solemn and subtly harmonious beauty, the picture hung over the mantelpiece... like some strange object from another world. From within that chipped gilt frame all the beauty, all the grandeur of religion looked darkly out upon the pink room... the pink bed, the strawberry-coloured carpet, filled all the air with the rosy reflections of nakedness and life. (p 108)

If Rosie's room decoration was hopelessly mismatched, the furnishings of Myra Viveash's drawing room were the last word in modern taste. Huxley uses their sense of style to reflect character. "The furniture was upholstered

in fabrics designed by Dufy -- racehorses and roses, little tennis players clustering in the midst of enormous flowers, printed in grey and ochre on a white ground. There were a couple of lamp-shades by Balla". (p 165)

Those who feign knowledge in visual arts are also sources of comedy in Antic Hay. Mr Boldero, the promoter of Gumbril's pneumatic, small-patent clothes, is aked to view Lypiatt's portrait of Myra Viveash. As Huxley says, "He approached it, a connoisseur":

> "It reminds me very much", he said, "of Bacosso. Very much indeed, if I may say so. Also a little of ..." he hesitated, trying to think of the name of that other fellow Gumbril had talked about. But being unable to remember the unimpressive syllables of Derain he played for safety and said -- "of Orpen". Mr Boldero looked inquiringly at Lypiatt to see if that was right. (p 216)

After mashing Picasso into "Bacosso", the choice of Orpen in lieu of Derain compounds the humour of this situation. Huxley's use of Orpen is amusing, as one cannot imagine a stylistic gulf so great between contemporaries, as that between Picasso or Derain, and Sir William Orpen (1878-1931), the talented, representational painter of portraits and conversation pieces.

Critics and dealers never fare well in Huxley's novels. Dealers are rapacious and critics are either all enthusiasm or all venom. Huxley's description of

:r. Clew, who represents the Daily Post at Lypiatt's

xhibition, is a first-rate piece of character assassination:

> Mr Clew was one of those rare people who have a real passion for art. He loved painting, all painting, indiscriminately.... Sometimes, it is true, he hated, but that was only when familiarity had not yet bred love. At the first Post-Impressionist Exhibition, for example, in 1911, he had taken a very firm stand. "This is an obscene farce", he had written then. Now, however, there was no more passionate admirer of Matisse's genius.... As a connoisseur and kunst forscher, Mr. Clew was much esteemed.... His certainty and enthusiasm were infectious. Since the coming of El Greco into fashion, he had discovered dozens of early works by that great artist. (pp 83-84)

Not only is Clew numbered among the British corps of

philistines who howled at the Post-Impressionist Exhibition

at the Grafton Galleries, organized in late 1910 by Roger

Fry; but he is also an incompetent connoisseur. Clew's authentication

of Lord Petersfield's Duccio was a major embarrassment

when the Lord's estate carpenter declared the venerable

panel, "A worse-seasoned piece of Illinois hickory...

I've never seen". (p 84) Clew is an example of the critic

without established values, pandering to public fashion.

Confronted by the Hebdomadal Digest critic, Mallard, Clew

is intimidated

Mallard does not rate much higher in Huxley's

estimation, although he correctly assesses Lypiatt's inferior

canvases.

> [Mallard] had an immense knowledge of art and a sincere dislike of all that was beautiful. The only modern painter whom he really admired was Hodler. All others were treated by him with a merciless savagery, he tore them to pieces in his weekly articles with all the holy gusto of a Calvinist iconoclast smashing images of the Virgin. (p 84-85).

Huxley's satire of the incomplete, disproportioned, imbalanced state of mankind underscored the need for a society which would embrace values of order, harmony, proportion and completeness. In the architecture and spirit of Sir Christopher Wren, he found that ideal condition. Gumbril Sr serves as Wren's champion in Antic Hay. In Peter Firchow's view, "Gumbril Senior is like the vast old decaying eighteenth-century house he lives in: an antiquated but still vital remnant of an earlier and better age".[3] In his house he displays a model of London, envisioned by Wren after the Great Fire of 1666, and dominated by St. Paul's atop Ludgate Hill.

The scenes involving Gumbril Sr and Wren's London are carefully structured by Huxley, positioned at both ends of the novel, with a long descriptive prose passage, revealing Wren's vision of London, dominating the centre of the novel.

The second chapter introduces Gumbril Sr, displaying proudly his vast collection of architectural

models to his son and Porteous. A man of talent, imbued with a sense of the highest and noblest ideals of humanity, Gumbril has been reduced in his career to designing model cottages for workmen at Bletchley. He laments the loss of an era when

> "... architects busied themselves with architecture -- which is the expression of human dignity and greatness, which is man's protest, not his miserable acquiescence. You can't do much protesting in a model cottage at seven hundred pounds at a time.... You can only begin to protest positively and actively when you abandon the petty human scale and build for giants -- when you build for the spirit and the imagination of man, not for his little body." (p 30)

Gumbril calls up his pantheon of great architects. "Before Alberti there were no true Romans, and with Piranesi's death the race began to wither towards extinction". Brunelleschi, Michelangelo, Wren, and Palladio all share the principles of proportion and balance which Gumbril values. However, he despairs, as Wren did, of creating an ideal city for mankind, when the mass of men and women behave little better than animals, incapable of appreciating beauty and harmony.

The central section on Wren is deliberately crafted by Huxley to be the longest, most eloquent prose section of the novel, sharply contrasted with the ragged fragments of dialogue and encounters of other characters. The passage stands out symbolically, just as Wren's

great church dominates the serpentine landscape of East London streets.

Gumbril states that the London cityscape lacks proportion. Chaos, disorder and discord permeate the buildings to such a degree that, as Gumbril observes, "It's like listening to a symphony of cats to walk along them". He makes the quarrelsome claim that architecture is more intellectual than music and that "A man can be an excellent musician and a perfect imbecile, but a good architect must also be a man of sense". Architecture involves an innate talent, but it needs to be intellectually ripened. Gumbril shows his model of Wren's London to Gumbril Jr and Shearwater, while lamenting the wretched state of man:

> "Wren offered them open spaces and broad streets; he offered them sunlight and air and cleanliness; he offered them beauty, order and grandeur. He offered to build for the imagination and the ambitious spirit of man, so that even the most bestial, vaguely and remotely, as they walked those streets, might feel that they were of the same race -- or very nearly -- as Michelangelo." (p 135)

While Huxley sympathizes with Gumbril's vision, the vision is utopian and unrealizable. As Keith May correctly points out, a preference for moral and physical squalor is not to blame for London's decay, but rather habit, lethargy and a taste for quaintness:

> The words of Gumbril's father are significant ones, for the entire novel demonstrates the conquest of reason, not by evil passions, but by trivial, unenjoyable habits.... There is room in the model city for the varieties of true psychological need and healthful activity; excluded are only those qualities which everyone dislikes: staleness, ugliness, inconvenience.
>
> The significance of the model lies paramountly in its expression of spiritual freedom, its celebration of the end of the mind's enslavement by the body.[4]

Gumbril's description of Wren's London accents the grace, grandeur and intelligence of a design based on reason and order. At the hub of that city is the dome of St. Paul's. As George Woodcock points out, "modern men would be no more likely than Restoration men to accept a city or life based on reason and order".[5] For Gumbril, his square with the fourteen plane trees and starlings who return nightly to roost, is the psychological heart of his city. That Huxley constantly refers back to this square, underscores the sense of continuity and stability which Gumbril has cultivated in his personal life and which links him with his illustrious predecessors.

The final visit to Grumbril's home reveals that the model city has been sold to the Victoria and Albert Museum -- that repository of the defunct past. However, its image lives on in the mind of Shearwater, as he extricates himself from his spiritual malaise:

> He was escaping, he had escaped. He was building up his strong light dome of life. Proportion, cried the old man, proportion! And it hung there, proportioned and beautiful in the dark, confused horror of his desires, strong and solid and durable among his broken thoughts.

Prior to the publication of Antic Hay, Huxley celebrated Wren's achievements in an essay in On the Margin (1923). The ideals of Wren were enthusiastically supported by Huxley:

> ... we may take it as more or less definitely proven that good architecture is, in fact, almost entirely a matter of proportion and massing, and that the general effect of the whole work accounts for nearly everything.... In all that Wren designed... we see a faultless proportion, a felicitous massing and contrasting of forms. He conceived his buildings as three-dimensional designs which should be seen, from every point of view, as harmoniously proportioned wholes.... Wren was a master of the grand style; but he never dreamed of building for effect alone. He was never theatrical or showy, never pretentious or vulgar. St. Paul's is a monument of temperance and chastity.[6]

Beyond his aesthetic and plastic virtues, Wren's personal life typifies the sense of completeness which Huxley values:

> For Wren was a great gentleman: one who valued dignity and restraint and who, respecting himself, respected also humanity; one who desired that men and women should live with the dignity, even the grandeur, befitting their proud human title; one who despised meanness and oddity as much as vulgar ostentation; one who admired reason and order, who distrusted all extravagance and excess.[7]

If Huxley viewed Wren as a consummate artist, his antithesis was embodied in that disciple of extravagance and excess, Casimir Lypiatt. Lypiatt is the self-proclaimed prophet of Antic Hay, railing against the state of modern art, espousing noble artistic ideals with a Promethean

fervour, refuting vigorously his critics, and creating ultimately, paintings which are an indigestible potpourri of artistic styles. Baroque and romantic in his temperament, he provides the foil to the neo-classicist Gumbril Senior. George Woodcock writes that

> ... there is the inevitable comparison between Lypiatt and Gumbril Senior: both quite accurately see the degeneracy of the intellectual and artistic world in their time. But when Lypiatt seeks to thrust his values upon that world, Gumbril Senior remains aloof; where Lypiatt seeks to project himself through vast and tormented expressionist images, Gumbril Senior is content to immerse himself in the impersonal greatness of classical architecture; while Lypiatt achieves merely grandiloquence, Gumbril Senior achieves genuine grandeur... in the miniature forms of the models..., Lypiatt is a gross failure, because his ability was never equal to his ambitions; Gumbril Senior is a dignified and admirable failure because his ability was always greater than his opportunities.[8]

A name often serves as a reflection of character in Huxley's novels. Peter Firchow has suggested that Lypiatt is perhaps an elaboration of the verb "to lib", meaning to castrate; "hence a 'libate', a castrato insofar as he is unable to carry out in practice what he wants to do in theory".[9] A more likely origin for Lypiatt's name, however, is the painter Fra Lippo Lippi (1406-1469). Robert Browning depicted the Florentine friar, in his poem of 1855, as an artist whose aesthetic principles were at odds with his contemporaries. In his Lives of the Artists, Giorgio Vasari gave this sketch

of Fra Filippo Lippi:

> It is said that Fra Filippo was so lustful that he would give anything to enjoy a woman he wanted if he thought he could have his way; and if he couldn't buy what he wanted, then he would cool his passion by painting her portrait and reasoning with himself. His lust was so violent that when it took hold of him he could never concentrate on his work.[10]

Huxley knew Vasari's Lives and part of the friar's character was fictionalized as Lypiatt.

The portrait of Myra Viveash is given as an example of Lypiatt's style:

> It was a stormy vision of her; it was Myra seen, so to speak, through a tornado. He had distorted her in the portrait, had made her longer and thinner than she really was, had turned her arms into sleek tubes and put a bright, metallic polish on the curve of her cheek, the figure in the portrait seemed to be leaning backwards a little from the surface of the canvas, leaning sideways too, with the twist of an ivory statuette carved out of the curving tip of a great tusk. Only somehow in Lypiatt's portrait the curve seemed to lack grace, it was without point, it had no sense. (p 76)

Lypiatt has managed to create a pictorial pastiche; a Modigliani portrait with a Fernand Léger body, laced with touches of Vorticism and phallic imagery -- literally something to displease everyone. Gumbril Junior's estimation is fairly accurate:

> Dear Old Lypiatt, even in spite of his fantastic egotism, such a bad painter, such a bombinating poet, such a loud emotional improviser on the piano!

> And going on like this, year after year, pegging away at the same old things -- always badly! And always without a penny, always living in the most hideous squalor! Magnificent and pathetic old Lypiatt. (p 40)

Of Lypiatt's painting style, Huxley showed his disapproval. Cubist and machine-like forms in art were attacked in "The New Romanticism":

> ... the whole "Cubist" tendency in modern art... is deeply symptomatic of that revolt against the soul and the individual to which the Bolsheviks have given practical and political, as well as artistic expression. The Cubists deliberately eliminated from their art all that is "mystically organic", replacing it by solid geometry. They were the enemies of all "sentimentality"... of all mere literature -- that is to say, of all the spiritual and individual values which gave significance to individual life. Art, they proclaimed, is a question of pure form. A Cubist picture is one from which everything that might appeal to the individual soul, as a soul, has been omitted.
> ... The Cubist dehumanization of art is frequently accompanied by a romantic and sentimental admiration for machines. Fragments of machinery are generously scattered through modern painting.[11]

Although he is a character deserving of both pity and mockery, many of Lypiatt's ideals are endorsed by Huxley. Lypiatt is fighting a rearguard action against Mercaptan over the need for ideals:

> "You're afraid of ideals, that's what it is, you daren't admit to having dreams.... Ideals -- they're not sufficiently genteel for you civilized young men. You've quite outgrown that sort of thing. No dream, no religion, no morality... You disgust me -- you and your odious little sham eighteenth century civilization; your piddling little poetry; your art for art's sake, instead of for God's sake;

> your nauseating little copulations without love or passion; your hoggish materialism, your bestial indifference to all that's unhappy and your yelping hatred of all that's great.... How can you ever hope to achieve anything decent or solid, when you don't believe in decency or solidity?" (pp 47-48)

He speaks to Myra on the need to infuse paintings with a sense of life:

> "The artist rushes on the world, conquers it, gives it beauty, imposes a moral significance.... You've got to get life into your art, otherwise, it's nothing. And life only comes out of life, out of passion and feeling; it can't come out of theories.... You must paint with passion, and the passion will stimulate your intellect to create the right formal relations. And to paint with passion, you must paint things that passionately interest you, moving things, human things. Nobody, except a mystical pantheist, like Van Gogh, can seriously be as much interested in napkins, apples and bottles as in his lover's face, or the resurrection, or the destiny of man." (pp 77-78)

The remarkable thing about Lypiatt's utterances, taken out of context, is their similarity in attitude and style to Huxley's essays. What detracts from Lypiatt's seriousness are his unrealistic artistic goals and his belief in uttering his ideas <u>fortissimo</u>:

> "I've set myself to recapture... the size, the masterfulness of the masters...." His own words elated him, and drunkenly gesticulating, he was as though drunken.... "It's been my mission... all these years... and by God! I feel I know I can carry it through." (pp 39-40)

Lypiatt criticizes how small the scale, how trivial the conception, and how limited the scope is in modern art. He admires the versatile greats; Wren, Michelangelo, Leonardo, but fails to see that his own

lack of talent and his distaste for specialization work against any achievement for himself. Huxley saw the need for a living, classical tradition. Despite his ideals, it is the dissipation of his energies and the inability to convert feelings of passion into disciplined art which ultimately destroy Lypiatt. As George Woodcock comments,

> Lypiatt's denunciation is sincere and accurate. He knows clearly enough, all that is wrong with the world.... Yet when Lypiatt put his brush to a canvas, the result, as Myra tastelessly tells Mercaptan, is like that of a Cinzano advertisement, all his burning sincerity, expressed in painting, seems flashy and insincere, yet to self-deluding Lypiatt it is the greatest art of its time.[12]

What devastates Lypiatt is the criticism of his work as having "a certain look of insincerity". In Essays New and Old (1927), Huxley expanded on this idea of "Sincerity in Art":

> Sincerity in art depends on other things besides the mere desire to be sincere.... The truth is that sincerity in art is not an affair of will, of a moral choice between honesty and dishonesty. It is mainly an affair of talent. A man may desire with all his soul to write a sincere, a genuine book and yet lack the talent to do it. In spite of his sincere intentions, the book turns out to be unreal, false, and conventional; the emotions are stagily expressed, the tragedies are pretentious and lying shams and what was meant to be dramatic is badly melodramatic.[13]

The same criticism can be extended to the visual artist:

> But look at his pictures -- the pictures to which he devoted a lifetime of passionate endeavour....

> They are full of stage grandeur, the cold convention of passion, the rhetorical parody of emotion, they are "insincere" -- the word comes inevitably to the lips.

These paintings belong, not to Casimir Lypiatt, but to the man after whom his character was fashioned, the romantic painter, Benjamin Robert Haydon (1786-1846). Haydon was a great tragicomic figure of nineteenth-century British art. A competent portraitist, he sought to be a pure, historical painter working on large commissions. A follower of Sir Joshua Reynolds and the Grand Style, he set the highest artistic ideals for himself. Unsold paintings and works disposed of for meagre fees led to debt, imprisonment, continual anxiety over finances, depressions, and finally his suicide.

Huxley's interest in Haydon dated back to 1918 in a letter to Lady Ottoline:

> I am reading a most curious and amusing book, which I'm sure, if you haven't read it, you would like -- the autobiography of B. R. Haydon, Keats's artist friend. What an ironic tragic figure, a man who passionately believed in his own genius, sacrificed everything for art, laboured like a Hercules, suffered for his ideals -- and produced nothing but pictures of unequalled horror.[14]

Appalled that The Autobiography and Memoirs of Benjamin Robert Haydon had been out of print for forty years, Huxley wrote an introduction for the 1926 edition:

> The one gift which Nature had quite obviously denied him was the gift of expressing himself in form and

> colour. One only has to glance at one of Haydon's drawings to perceive that the man had absolutely no artistic talent.[15]

On the positive side, Haydon had a sharp and comprehensive intelligence, "An excellent judgement (except where his own productions were concerned)," a mystical sense of inspiration and a boundless belief in his own powers. On the negative side, virtually every artistic skill was lacking in Haydon, from colour to drawing, composition to painting. He had pride, ambition, vanity without bounds and was susceptible to flattery:

> Full blooded, emotional, a sort of Gargantuan turned idealistic and romantic, he was easily excited and, when excited, felt profoundly. He could not believe that such prodigious emotions as his were not due to some proportionate cause.[16]

One biographical note which Huxley relates is of particular interest:

> The boy was afflicted with a disease of the eyes that permanently weakened his sight. To a natural incapacity to draw or paint was now added the inability to see. It was a broad hint. But the Imp of the Perverse and Haydon's will were very strong.[17]

George Woodcock notes the feeling of kinship which Huxley felt for Haydon:

> Like Huxley, Haydon had suffered in childhood from an eye disease but persisted in pursuing his art despite this affliction. Yet -- as Huxley often felt when he thought of his own limitations as novelist -- Haydon had really chosen the wrong art.

> ... For [Huxley] the aesthetics of writing were, in themselves, as unimportant as the aesthetics of painting were for Haydon; the main difference was that Huxley was blessed with a natural literary eloquence, whereas Haydon's gift in painting was mediocre.[18]

A painting such as Curtius Leaping into the Gulf (fig 8) is indicative of Haydon's lack of artistic talent. Art, prayer and money formed a continuous pattern in Haydon's diaries. The entry for Curtius (December 15, 1842) is a good example:

> I have this moment completed Curtius.... I humbly and gratefully return thanks to Almighty God for enabling me to bring another picture to conclusion; that He hath blessed me with eyes, intellect, health, strength, and piety to get through with it in spite of many pecuniary difficulties deep and harassing. Grant O Lord, it may be purchased and add to the fame of my great country, and help me discharge the debts incurred during its progress, and to maintain my dear family in respectability and virtue. Amen.[19]

As John Woodward has noted, the painting "hung for many years in Gatti's Restaurant in the Strand".[20]

Haydon was "a glorious lunatic" to Huxley, with a large literary capability. That he gave himself to painting rather than literature is the tragedy of a wasted life. The connection between Haydon and Lypiatt is obvious in terms of ideals and talent. Keats was a friend of Haydon and celebrated him in "Addressed

to Haydon" (1817). "Hear ye not the hum/ Of mighty workings?/ Listen awhile ye nations and be dumb." One remembers Lypiatt's "I feel a great wind blowing". It should also be noted that Lypiatt's poem, "Look down, Conquistador...Land of your golden dream" (p 44), is a simple reworking of Keats's "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" (1817). Lypiatt also sets pen to paper "writing -- writing his whole life, all his ideas and ideals, all for Myra". Like Haydon, crushed by critical failure, he commits suicide. Robert Baker comments that, "Haydon's suicide, like Lypiatt's, was a grotesquely nihilistic gesture that Huxley regarded as entirely characteristic of the romantic's inflation of both the artist's powers and, as an inescapable corollary, his expectations as well".[21]

One final note should be made of Lypiatt's home, located between Whitfield Street and the Tottenham Court Road, where "You passed under an archway of bald and sooty brick -- and at night, when the green gas-lamp underneath the arch threw livid lights and enormous architectural shadows, you could fancy yourself at the entrance of one of Piranesi's prisons -- and you found

yourself in a long cul-de-sac". (p71). This mews is symbolically a spiritual and cultural dead end, as well as the location of Lypiatt's suicide.

Huxley's interest in Piranesi was less artistic than psychological. In 1949, he wrote an introduction to Prisons, an edition of Piranesi's Carceri etchings. What he wrote about the etchings can be applied to the private world of Casimir Lypiatt:

> All the plates in the series are self-evidently variations on a single symbol, whose reference is to things existing in the physical and metaphysical depths of human souls -- the acedia and confusion, to nightmare and angst, to incomprehension and a panic bewilderment.
>
> The most disquieting obvious fact about all these dungeons is the perfect pointlessness which reigns throughout. Their architecture is colossal and magnificent. One is made to feel that the genius of great artists and the labour of innumerable slaves have gone into the creation of these monuments, every detail of which is completely without a purpose.[22]

The Carceri etchings of 1745 (fig 9) fascinated Huxley by their continuing relevance and "not merely in their formal aspects, but also as expressions of obscure psychological truths".[23] With regard to formal aspects, human figures (as conventional points of reference), are reduced in size to emphasize the enormity of these visionary dungeons. However, unlike artists such as John Martin,

who used this device for purely sensational effects, Piranesi employs it as an integral element of his psychological statement:

> In 'Prisons' there is no hint of this ingenious and simple-minded theatricality. Such prisoners as we are shown exist for the purpose of emphasizing, not the superhuman grandeur of the buildings, but their inhuman vacancy, their sub-human pointlessness. They are, quite literally, lost souls, wandering -- or not even wandering, but merely standing about -- in a labyrinthine emptiness.... Every man is muffled up, furtive and, even when in company, completely alone.[24]

CHAPTER 4 -- THE ENGLISH ABROAD

A sense of horror, internally and externally realized, was a preoccupation of Huxley's mind for many years. A sense of completeness in twentieth-century man seemed a remote dream, as Huxley pondered the possibility that disintegration was a fact of modern life. In October 1924 he wrote to Robert Nichols:

> I have just finished a novel which is to appear in January.... The main theme of it is the undercutting of everything by a sort of despairing scepticism and then the undercutting of that by mysticism.[1]

Those Barren Leaves (1925) was Huxley's Italian novel, set at the palace of the Cybo Malaspina at Vezza. With its variety of house guests -- poets, authors, labour leaders, politicians and lovers -- it gave the appearance of Crome transported south. Although it was predominantly a novel of ideas, there was considerably less discussion of the visual arts and no representative of the arts per se (like Gombauld or Lypiatt), at Mrs. Aldwinkle's palace. However, many of the ideas expressed by Huxley in his first two novels and early essays received more embellishment in Those Barren Leaves.

The view of Vezza from the palazzo at sunset is one of lyrical beauty, which Huxley conveys in his prose, demonstrating his sensitivity to form and colour.

He reads the view in the way in which one reads a Poussin landscape, with the eye being directed through the landscape by the careful placement of form, colour and tonal detail. The view from Calamy's cottage is also one of nature's plenitude, "Beautiful, terrible and mysterious, pregnant with what enormous secret, symbolic of what formidable reality?". (p 363)

Allusions to various artists are used for humorous effect. Mrs. Aldwinkle "saw herself standing there on the beach between sea and sky, and with the mountains in the middle distance, looking like one of those wonderfully romantic figures who, in the paintings of Augustus John, stand poised in a meditative and passionate ecstasy against a cosmic background". (p 179) For Lilian Aldwinkle, life is a matter of appearances, as Huxley demonstrates when he discusses her use of make-up. "For Mrs. Aldwinkle was an impressionist; it was the effect of distance, the grand theatrical flourish that interested her. She had no patience, even at the dressing table, for niggling pre-Raphaelite detail." (p 15) For Francis Chelifer, uninitiated in the ways of the palazzo Malaspina, the house guests in the patino on the water is quite a sight. "Youth, then, at the prow and pleasure at the helm --

and the flesh was so glossy under the noonday sun, the colours so blazingly bright that I was really reminded of Etty's little ravishment -- the laden boat passed slowly within a few yards of me". (p 90) While Chelifer thinks of Etty, Huxley paints a boating party by James Tissot, parodied by George Cruickshank, the nineteenth-century English illustrator.

The Gothic style, not unexpectedly, receives its small share of abuse in Those Barren Leaves. In the Gothic part of the palace, novelist Mary Thriplow is composing, quite naturally, a Gothic romance. Chelifer notes that "Our house at Oxford was dark, spiky and tall. Ruskin himself, it was said, had planned it.... Nothing within those Gothic walls ever changed".(pp 114-115) Perhaps the strongest rebuke comes from the enterprising Mr. Cardan who speculates on the nature of the unseen "very old sculpture":

> "I should like the thing to be a piece of Romanesque carving. I'd give the butcher's boy an extra five francs if it were. But if it turned out to be one of those suave Italian Gothic saints elegantly draped and leaning a little sideways, like saplings in the mystical breeze... I'd deduct five francs!... How they bore me, those accomplished Gothicisms, how they bore me!" (p 205)

Cardan and Miss Thriplow are also engaged in a discussion of the merits of baroque and romantic art. Cardan complains of the theatricality of baroque art:

> "For some strange reason and malignant fate the Italians, once arrived at baroque, seem to have got stuck there. They are still up to their eyes in it. Consider their literature, their modern painting and architecture, their music -- it's all baroque. It gesticulates rhetorically, it struts across stages, it sobs and bawls in its efforts to show you how passionate it is." (p 207)

However, immediately after this discussion, he is vigorously mimicking artistic styles and striking poses of statues for the grocer. The altercation after Cardan's visit partially deflates Cardan's view of baroque as unnatural:

> Voices were raised, the grocer's deep and harsh, the women's shrill; hands moved in violent and menacing gestures, yet gracefully withal, as was natural in the hands of those whose ancestors had taught the old masters of painting all they ever knew of expressive and harmonious movement. (p 214)

In Cardan's view -- and it is a view largely held by Huxley -- art and passion must be still, compressed, and moulded by the intellect. As Cardan states,

> "Styles that protest too much are not fit for serious, tragical use. They are by nature suited to comedy.... the romantic style is essentially a comic style.... When you come to pictorial art,... you find that seriousness and romanticism are even less frequently combined than in literature. The greatest triumphs of the nineteenth-century romantic style are to be

> found precisely among the comedians and the makers of grotesques. Daumier, for example, produced at once the most comic and the most violently romantic pictures ever made.... Indeed, the case of Doré quite clinches my argument. Here was a man who did precisely the same romantic things in both his serious and his comic works, and who succeeded in making what was meant to be sublime ludicrous and what was meant to be ludicrous sublime in its rich, extravagant, romantic grotesqueness. (pp 206-208)

There are some absurd moments as well during discussions on art, generally at Mrs. Aldwinkle's expense. She calls Pasquale da Montecantini "dreadfully underrated". Deservedly, he remains so. In a ludicrous discussion on feminism, Mrs. Aldwinkle admits to Cardan that Angelica Kauffmann compared unfavorably to Giotto. Anxious to promote her sense of self-importance, a fictitious history of celebrated visitors to the palace is recited to the guests. In a final spurt of nonsense, she declares to Falx and Cardan that "St. Peter's isn't much a work of art", and then reverses herself defending Michelangelo's cupola of St. Peter's.

The former bedchamber of Cardinal Malaspina is now occupied by Mrs. Aldwinkle's niece, Irene. As in Rosie's room in Antic Hay, the art is bizarrely out of place. A huge fresco of religious figures, devils and angels covers the walls of the room. "In the midst of the

Cardinal's apotheosis and entirely oblivious of it, Irene stitched away at her pink chemise". (p 259)

While Huxley did not rail against the state of the visual arts to the degree he did in Antic Hay and Crome Yellow, there is in Those Barren Leaves, a sense of misgiving about the value of art. These doubts are raised by Francis Chelifer, whose own writing reveals an elegant style, and skillful presentation, but is produced by force of habit and without any true importance:

> It's a queer prejudice, this one of ours in favour of art. Religion, patriotism, the moral order, humanitarianism, social reform -- we have all of us, I imagine, dropped all those overboard long ago. But we still cling pathetically to art. Quite unreasonably; for the thing has far less reason for existence than most of the objects of worship we have got rid of, is utterly senseless, indeed without their support and justification. Art for art's sake -- halma for halma's sake. It is time to smash the last and silliest of idols. (p 84)

On a tour of Etruscan vaults on the site of Tarquinia, Chelifer and Cardan speculate on the nature of the people who documented their lifestyle in the durable forms of fresco and mosaic. For Chelifer, the size and everlastingness of the art work has a frightful quality. The enshrining of Roman athletes in paint and stone is "indicative of a profounder vulgarity and abjection".

Chelifer believes that the mosaics hold the "quintessence of Roman reality":

> "After looking at that mosaic a man can have no more generous illusions about the people who admired it or the age in which it was made. He will realize that Roman civilization was not merely just as sordid as ours, but if anything more sordid. But in these Etruscan vaults... one gets no such impression of organized and efficient beastliness as one gets from the Roman mosaic. There's a freshness... a certain jolly schoolboyishness about all the fun they represent. But I have no doubt, of course, that the impression is entirely fallacious. Their art has a certain archaic charm; but the artists were probably quite as sophisticated and quite as repulsive as their Roman successors." (p 312)

Chelifer's comments are part of his demolition of art snobbery, which presupposes a spiritual and social superiority of past ages. It is important to consider that the subject matter of art, while it may reveal socio-historical facts, is nonetheless fragmentary. As a record of day-to-day existence, works of art provide incidental insights, rather than a comprehensive overview. In Jesting Pilate (1926), Huxley commented that "Art is not the discovery of Reality -- whatever Reality may be, and no human being can possibly know. It is the organisation of chaotic appearance into an orderly and human universe".[2]

In "Art and Religion" from Themes and Variations (1950), Huxley addressed himself to the question of the

correlation of art and society. Huxley asks if art is a mirror to its period, or vice versa? What relation is there between Roman baroque art and seventeenth-century Catholicism? Were the effusive gestures of painting and sculpture reflective of behavioural traits and religious deportment, or merely an aesthetic device? To these questions,Huxley replies that

> At every period there exists, not a synthesis, but a mere brute collocation of opposites and incompatibles. And yet at any given epoch there is only one prevailing style of art, in terms of which painters and sculptors treat of a strictly limited number of subjects. Art may be defined, in this context, as a process of selection and transformation, whereby an unmanageable multiplicity is reduced to a semblance, at least, of unity. Consequently we must never expect to find in art a reflection of contemporary reality as it is actually experienced by human beings in all their congenital and acquired variety.[3]

Huxley's view of only one prevailing style at any given epoch is certainly arguable, although his focus is apparently regional rather than global. Indeed, seventeenth-century English and Dutch art had little in common with Italian baroque.

Citing Bernini's Ecstasy of Saint Teresa or a Carlo Dolci Magdalen, Huxley states that art and reality often go separate ways, with artists not concerned so much with problems of life, as much as with their art. He gives

the example of the Carthusian monks of Pontignano, whose religion was centred upon the contemplation of death. Styles come and go, and the lively rococo decoration of the oratories did not alter their practices. The restorers were simply trained in the current tradition of art:

> Man is a whole, and so, perhaps, so is society; but they are wholes divided, like ships into water-tight compartments. On one side of a bulkhead is art; on the other religion. There may be good wine in one compartment, bilge-water in the other. The connection between the two is not by pipe or osmosis, but only from above, only for the intellect that looks down and can see both simultaneously and recognize them as belonging (by juxtaposition rather than by fusion) to the same individual or social whole.[4]

This view presents a noticeable shift in Huxley's ideas on the relation of the artist to his society. Undoubtedly, the artist who heeds "only the categorical imperatives of his talent and the inner logic of the tradition within which he works," can create art which transcends his epoch -- such as Piero della Francesca. However, Huxley commented in Beyond the Mexique Bay (1934) that "The life of an epoch is expressed by and at the same time is itself an expression of the art of that epoch".[5] His contention was that vulgarity in the emotional and intellectual life of the people will produce

vulgarity in art. This contradiction may be due to Huxley's attempt to act as an objective historian, as well as a subjective social critic. His statement on vulgarity was intended as a comment on modern art and music. Vulgarity and excellence do exist contiguously in all epochs. The belief in a correlation between vulgarity and art, just as between religion and art, as a mirror of society, is extremely tenuous.

CHAPTER 5 -- LONDON AGAIN

Following a year-long trip around the world, Aldous and Maria Huxley left London for the healthier climate of Italy in August of 1926. In a letter from Florence to his father, Huxley revealed the plans for his next novel:

> I am very busy preparing for and doing bits of an ambitious novel, the aim of which will be to show a piece of life, not only from a good many individual points of view, but also under its various aspects such as scientific, emotional, 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 the other categories of existence behind the ordinary categories employed in judging everyday emotional life. It will be difficult, but interesting!

This novel appeared two years later as Point Counter Point (1928). The social maelstrom of London in Antic Hay was partially resurrected and peopled by writers, scientists, artists, politicians, intellectuals and society dilettantes. Unlike Antic Hay, which displayed a relatively light, satirical ambience, Point Counter Point took on a more menacing atmosphere; with a sense of urgency and importance to the discussions of ideas; and with a sense of potential tragedy lurking just beyond

comic scenes. In 1926, Huxley discussed his literary aims. "My own aim is to arrive technically, at a perfect fusion of the novel and the essay, a novel in which one can put all one's ideas, a novel like a hold all."[2]

The character of Philip Quarles, the novelist, was autobiographical and useful for Huxley as a vehicle for this novel of ideas. Quarles/Huxley is quite candid about this form:

> The chief defect of the novel of ideas is that you must write about people who have ideas to express -- which excludes all but about .01 percent of the human race. Hence the real, the congenital novelists don't write such books. But then I never pretended to be a congenital novelist.[3] (pp 409-410)

The two characters who represent the visual arts are the painter John Bidlake, and Mark Rampion. Readers recognized D. H. Lawrence as the character of Mark Rampion, but there remains some dispute about the model for John Bidlake. Bidlake is the aging sensualist who in his prime had the reputation of being "handsome, huge, exuberant, careless, a great laugher, a great worker, a great eater, drinker, and taker of virginities". (p 27) Keith May and Jerome Meckier have identified Augustus John as the model for Bidlake, although George Woodcock

quite rightly views him as "John spiked with Renoir".[4] Given Bidlake's painting style and subjects, Woodcock's view is closer to the truth. It may be suggested that Huxley has also injected touches of Walter Richard Sickert (1860-1942), into Bidlake's character.

Sickert was the distinguished British Impressionist who worked under both Whistler and Degas. He was a founder of the Camden Town Group (1911) and the London Group (1913), and a key link in the first decade of the century between the French avant-garde and progressive English art, through the New English Art Club. Huxley knew Sickert and arranged a loan exhibition of his works in 1920.[5] He also attended Sickert's breakfast parties at 19 Fitzroy Street.[6] At the time of the publication of Point Counter Point, Sickert was sixty-eight years old; much closer in age to Bidlake than Augustus John, who was fifty years old. Huxley mentions that a Bidlake painting of the theatre was hung in the dining room of Lucy Tantamount's house. Music hall scenes were a popular subject for Sickert in the eighteen-eighties. Huxley apparently intended Bidlake to be a composite character, embodying Renoir's subject matter, Sickert's style, and

John's bohemian reputation and physique.

For John Bidlake, painting is a branch of sensuality, which in turn is an extension of his life. Like Augustus John his reputation is a fantasy of the facts. "'He's had about fifteen wives,' said Norah." (p 60) His strength as an artist was his series of "Bathers", executed in his younger days. The version at Tantamount House is a hymn to sensual pleasures:

> It was a gay and joyous picture, very light in tone, the colours very pure and brilliant. Eight plump and pearly bathers grouped themselves in the water and on the banks of a stream so as to form with their moving bodies and limbs a kind of garland (completed above by the foliage of a tree) round the central point of the canvas. Through this wreath of nacreous flesh (and even their faces were just smiling flesh, not a trace of spirit to distract you from the contemplation of the lovely forms and their relations) the eye travelled on towards a pale bright landscape of softly swelling downland and clouds. (pp 60-61)

In Huxley's opinion, art that does not appeal to the spirit or intellect is incomplete. Bidlake explains that

> He had preferred to paint his bathers unmasked as well as naked, to give them faces that were merely extensions of their charming bodies and not deceptive symbols of a non-existent spirituality. It seemed to him more realistic, truer to the fundamental facts. (p 64)

Mary Betterton and Dennis Burlap -- a thinly veiled caricature of John Middleton Murry -- agree that

Bidlake is a great artist but a cynic. Although Burlap's ideas have little depth or invention, he does echo Huxley's aesthetic views:

> "How can a cynic be a great artist?" ... "A great artist," he went on aloud, "is a man who synthesizes all experience. The cynic sets out by denying half the facts -- the fact of soul, the fact of ideals, the fact of God. And yet we're aware of spiritual facts just as directly and indubitably as we're aware of physical facts." (pp 84-85)

Surrounded by his paintings of sensual delights, Bidlake lives in constant fear of death. Wives have died, models have grown fat and unattractive, glowing reviews are yellowing with age, and younger critics depict him as a spent talent:

> He was thinking of death; death in the form of a new life growing and growing in his belly, like an embryo in a womb. The one thing fresh and active in his old body, the one thing exuberantly and increasingly alive was death. (p 430)

While little Phil is dying of meningitis at Gattenden, Bidlake immerses himself in his art, transferring the same forms that invigorated his nude studies into landscape. "The landscape was all curves and bulges and round recessions, like a body. Orbism, by God, orbism!" (p 579) His enthusiasm is short lived however, as the taint of mortality that infests him and little Phil, overwhelms him. In a life devoted to hedonism, there

is no spiritual defense for the horrible facts of mortality. Bidlake is pathetic, because he is incomplete.

Set opposite Bidlake, the devoted sensualist, is the poet and artist, Mark Rampion. In a letter written in 1930, Huxley acknowledged that "Rampion is just some of Lawrence's notions on legs, the actual character of the man was incomparably queerer and more complex than that".[7] Lawrence's reation to Point Counter Point and his portrayal as Rampion was mixed, in this letter sent to Huxley:

> I have read Point Counter Point with a heart sinking through my boot-soles and a rising admiration. I do think you've shown the truth, perhaps the last truth, about you and your generation, with really fine courage.... Your Rampion is the most boring character in the book -- a gas-bag. Your attempt at intellectual sympathy! -- It's all rather disgusting, and I feel like a badger that has its hole on Wimbledon Common and trying not to be caught.[8]

Although neither Huxley nor Lawrence enthusiastically cared about each other's novels, they maintained a close relationship until Lawrence's death in 1930. In a concise study of the two men, Jerome Meckier comments that

> ... one must concede that Huxley and Lawrence were after different things. Lawrence was more interested in the recovery of vitality, Huxley in the regaining of balance. Lawrence, at least at times, was more

> concerned with fusing body and mind, Huxley with keeping them in equilibrium. Lawrence always took the term integration more literally than Huxley. ... Lawrence became more and more convinced that Huxley was irretrievably rooted in the mental and Huxley claimed that Lawrence went too far in the opposite direction.

Meckier calls their relationship "a co-existing fusion of a neoclassicist and a romantic".[9] Rampion is a hybrid character; Lawrence filtered through Huxley.

While courting Mary, Rampion discusses Blake's Marriage of Heaven and Hell:

> "Blake was civilized," ... "Civilization is harmony and completeness Reason, feeling, instinct, the life of the body -- Blake managed to include and harmonize everything. Barbarism is being lopsided.... Christianity made us barbarians of the soul, and now science is making us barbarians of the intellect. Blake was the last civilized man." (p 144)

Rampion also refers to the Etruscan sepulchral wall paintings at Tarquinia, which Huxley had explored via Cardan and Chelifer in Those Barren Leaves. Rampion states that the Etruscans "'were civilized,... they knew how to live harmoniously and completely, with their whole being'". (p 144).

Rampion translates his darker ideas into grotesque, symbolic drawings. The drawing he shows Spandrell depicts Jesus, doctors with a disembowelled man, entrails turned to

snakes, and struggling angels. Rampion's explanation is that "Jesus and the scientists are vivisecting us.... Hacking our bodies to bits". Spandrell counters that shame is "a sign of the body's absolute and natural inferiority". Rampion disagrees indignantly, claiming that "Shame isn't spontaneous to begin with. It's artificial, it's acquired.... The Christians invented it, just as the tailors in Savile Row invented the shame of wearing brown boots with a black coat. There was precious little of it before Christian times. Look at the Greeks, the Etruscans". (ppl62-163)

When the mild mannered editor of Literary World, Dennis Burlap, visits Rampion, the latter shows his most shocking works. Love depicts a naked couple in a natural setting, their flesh being the single source of illumination. Fossils of the Past and Fossils of the Future is Rampion's comment on the extinction of modern man. Unlike prehistoric beasts, plagued by too much body and too little head, modern man places his emphasis on the mental life to the exclusion of physical vitality. In Rampion's view, modern man treads the same path to extinction. He shows Burlap two Outlines of History, the first by H. G. Wells, the second by himself. Unlike Wells, who portrays an

ever increasing development of man from ape to twentieth-century scientist and thinker, Rampion places the apex of man in the age of Greece, with a steady decline thereafter, culminating in misshapen abortions to portray twentieth-century man. Burlap tries to appear unruffled, and conservatively selects three "of the least polemical and scandalous of the drawings".

Rampion also invites Philip Quarles to view his canvas of a scene from the natural world -- a scene of a naked woman suckling a child, a crouching man and boy, a ruminating cow, and playful leopard cubs. Quarles suggests "a companion picture of life in the civilized world", with a woman in a mackintosh, leaning against a Bovril bottle, feeding a baby with Glaxo. On an asphalt bank, a man in a suit plays with a wireless set, while a child with pimples and rickets looks on. Rampion suggests the style. "And the whole thing painted in the cubist manner," said Rampion, "so as to make quite sure that there should be no life in it whatever. Nothing like modern art for sterilizing the life out of things". (p 420)

If Rampion's paintings and drawings were offensive by intent, they were modified reflections of the paintings

created by D.H. Lawrence. Lawrence's paintings stressed physical and natural relations. Many people found them to be crudely drawn, garishly coloured, and carnally obscene. As Jerome Meckier has pointed out,

> Huxley tones down Lawrence's paintings. Indeed the Rampion painting of "physical love" is the most non-physical picture imaginable, given the pastoral, idyllic way Huxley describes it. Huxley mentions the man and the woman and their naked bodies but spends the rest of the paragraph discussing the lighting like an art critic.... Lawrence seems to have enjoyed offering the Huxleys paintings he knew they would feel qualms about hanging.[10]

Lawrence's Unholy Family (1926) is a good example of his painting style.(fig 10) Despite the technical deficiencies, there is a sense of rhythm and vitality to these paintings. Lawrence wrote to the Huxleys about this particular work:

> I've already painted a picture on one of the canvases. I've hung it up in the new salotto. I call it the "Unholy Family", because the bambino -- with a nimbus -- is just watching anxiously to see the young man give the semi-nude young woman un gros baiser. Molto moderno![11]

Although Lawrence considered the eroticism of the paintings innocent, the authorities in London did not. Thirteen paintings from his exhibition at the Warren Gallery were seized by police in July 1929, and Lawrence was subject to prosecution under the "Obscene Publications Act".

Point Counter Point was Huxley's attempt at the musicalization of fiction. Bidlake and Rampion were two parts of that great human fugue, united only in their painterly profession. As Peter Bowering has commented, "In contrast to Rampion's painting of the single male and female forms depicting physical love as a source of harmony, Bidlake's canvas points to nothing more than the irresponsible promiscuities of its author."[12]

Huxley, himself, was an amateur painter, although the whereabouts of most of his canvases are unknown. The fire that destroyed his Los Angeles home in 1961 likely destroyed most of his paintings. Reproductions of his works are very scarce, although it is known that he did paint floral still-lifes in a post-impressionist manner, and at least one portrait of a woman with elongated features, resembling stylistically, Picasso's portraits of his Blue Period (1901-1904).

Kenneth Clark has mentioned that on re-reading Huxley's novels, he was struck by what was actually seen, such as the interiors of Antic Hay and the countryside of Those Barren Leaves. Lord Clark noted that "the obvious truth remains, that his perceptions gained enormously by entertaining such an incredibly well-furnished

intelligence".[13] This contributed to Huxley's flair in Point Counter Point, for redefining and presenting a new perspective on even the most commonplace subject. "In Trafalgar Square the fountains were playing, Sir Edwin Landseer's lions mildly glared, the lover of Lady Hamilton stood perched among the clouds, like St. Simeon the Stylite". (p 374) The plastic qualities of the national monument to Wellington are also elegantly and humorously described. "Offered, in spite of the nakedness and the more than Swedish development of his abdominal muscles, by the Ladies of England to the Victor of Waterloo, the bronze Achilles, whose flesh had once been Napoleon's cannons, stood with shield raised, sword brandished, menacing and defending himself against the pale and empty sky." (pp 514-515)

The characters in Point Counter Point are not generally three dimensional. One may choose either to view them symbolically as single-minded eccentrics, lacking wholeness and the balance of moderation, or to interpret these caricatures as Huxley's failure to create substantial and complex characters. The London of Point Counter Point is full of strife and frustration; an undisciplined society of chaos and disunity. The

artist, like the scientist and politician, is carried along in the stream of events; his importance as a clear, harmonious voice in the human fugue, submerged in the cacophany around him.

CHAPTER 6 -- BRAVE NEW WORLD AND BEYOND

A surprising thing occurs in the novels of Aldous Huxley after 1928. Artists and discussions of the visual arts virtually disappear. In his first four novels, the artist and the visual arts played an important part in shaping Huxley's views on the multiple dimensions of existence; the need for harmony and completeness, and the need for a restoration of spiritual, intellectual and human values. This quest for unity and meaning was not to be found, however, empirically. The satire of the social novels was, in itself, not sufficient as a corrective device. The novels after Brave New World show a developing interest in and appreciation of religious mysticism as the way to reality.

In 1932, Huxley published his witty and satirical novel Brave New World. This anti-utopian fantasy of a society devoted totally to the dubious virtues of socio-scientific progress has remained his most popular work. The status of the arts in Brave New World is chillingly revealed in two lines from its history. "Then came the famous British Museum Massacre. Two thousand culture fans gassed with dichlorethyl sulphide". (p 50)[1]

The only character resembling an artist is the

slogan writer and lecturer at the College of Emotional Engineering, Helmholtz Watson. In a society rigorously disciplined and controlled with soma, emotional expression is severely retarded. Helmholtz discusses the predicament of his burgeoning artistic feelings with Bernard:

> "Did you ever feel," he asked, "as though you had something inside you that was only waiting for you to give it a chance to come out.... I'm thinking of a queer feeling I sometimes get, a feeling that I've got something important to say and the power to say it -- only I don't know what it is, and I can't make any use of the power.... I feel I could do something much more important. Yes, and more intense, more violent. But what? What is there more important to say?" (pp 63-64)

One is reminded of Casimir Lypiatt's reflection on the nature of artistic expression in Antic Hay. "Can an artist do anything if he's happy? Would he ever want to do anything? What is art, after all, but a protest against the horrible inclemency of life?" (p 74)

Great pains have been taken to eliminate the inclemency of life from this futuristic society. Milton Birnbaum mentions that according to "Mustapha Mond, one of the leaders of the utopia... the state of comfort without great art is infinitely preferable to the state of misery accompanying great art".[2] The pictorial image can be as potent as, if not stronger than, the printed word.

Art which pricks at the social conscience -- such as the art of Goya, Callot and Breughel, in Huxley's view -- is dangerous to social stability and must be denigrated or repressed if it happens to surface.

The artist does not surface in Eyeless In Gaza (1936), and Huxley's artistic references are few. The most strident criticism of the value of art comes from Mark Staithes in a discussion with Mr. Croyland:

> "But there seems so little substance in it all. Even in the little that's intrinsically substantial.... And as for Art, as for literature -- well, look at the museums and libraries. Look at them! Ninety-nine per cent of nonsense and mere rubbish!"[3] (p 197)

Mr. Croyland believes that "With the highest art one enters another world.... The great artists carry you up to heaven." Staithes replies:

> "But they never allow you to stay there,... They give you a taste of the next world, then let you fall back, flop, into the mud. Marvellous while it lasts.... [Great art] used to satisfy me. They used to be an escape and a support. But now... now I find myself wanting something more, something heavenlier, something less human." (p 198)

By 1936, one suspects that Huxley had eliminated the visual arts as a key to a higher state of consciousness. However, the artistic allusion still helps Anthony to put into perspective the multiple dimensions of life. As he watches Helen asleep on the roof, she embodies pain

and death:

> Distorted, the face was a mask of extremest grief. It was the face, he suddenly perceived, as he bent down towards those tormented lips, of one of Van der Weyden's holy women at the foot of the cross. (p 17)

In a moment, she is awake and transformed into an erotic embodiment of life's fullness:

> "You look like a Gauguin," he said after a moment. Brown like a Gauguin and, curiously, it struck him, flat like a Gauguin too; for the sunburn suppressed those nacreous gleams of carmine and blue and green that give the untanned white body its peculiar sumptuousness of relief. (p 17)

Commenting on Huxley's "remarkable visual capacities," Keith May notes that "'nacreous glems' and 'carmine' are words which could have occurred only to one who combines the painter's eye with the writer's verbal sureness."[4]

The painting in the gallery which Helen visits, depicting the martyrdom of St. Erasmus, provides an ironic parallel to the torturing of Ekki. After having viewed Boecklin's Toteninsel, -- "painted with a good faith and laborious lack of talent", -- Helen observes St. Erasmus's ordeal:

> An executioner in fifteenth-century costume, with a pale shell-pink cod-piece, was methodically turning the handle of a winch... winding the saint's intestines, yard after yard, out of a gash in the emaciated belly, while the victim lay back, as if on a sofa, making himself thoroughly comfortable and looking at the sky with an expression of unruffled equanimity. The joke here was less subtle than in Toteninsel, more

> frankly a knock-about; but excellent, none the less, in its own simple way. (p 387)

The painting described by Huxley is almost certainly The Martyrdom of St. Erasmus, (c. 1460) by Dirk Bouts, in the church of St. Pierre at Louvain. As Keith May points out,

> ... Helen's amusement at the picture is more than a simple piece of dramatic irony. Huxley probably thinks that his character is right to be amused at the naïveté of the artist, but he is also convinced that no answer short of that indicated by the painting (however simple mindedly conceived) will suffice. The real irony lies in the fact that the artist, more than any modern sophisticate, is right.[5]

The co-existence of beauty and disgust can be assimilated into an understanding that transcends mere physical responses to experience.

After Many A Summer appeared in 1939, and Mr. Propter's comments on literature can be applied to the visual arts also:

> "... people don't read literature in order to understand; they read it because they want to re-live the feelings and sensations which they found exciting in the past. Art can be a lot of things; but in actual practice most of it is merely the mental equivalent of alcohol and cantharides".[6] (p 160)

The sensation which art creates is subordinated to the impression of wealth and power it represents in Jo Stoyte's twelve million dollar collection of art. Huxley's model for Stoyte's castle was newspaper magnate William

Randolph Hearst's rambling tribute to American excess at San Simeon, California. Hearst Castle was built in the Hispano-Moorish style on one hundred and twenty three acres of land, dotted with pools, fountains and statuary. Begun in 1919, Hearst Castle contains a fifty million dollar art collection. Stoyte's Castle is a free adaptation of the Hearst property.

Stoyte's castle is above all else a model of poor taste, certainly not because of its bona fide art masterpieces, but because it lacks an internal cohesiveness and an intelligent basis for its very existence. The curious mélange of art works and architectural styles does not interrelate in any meaningful way. Thus we are confronted with the unintentional juxtaposition of the sacred and the profane, beauty and Kitsch. Stoyte is aware of the cost of his art works, but not their value:

> Followed by Jeremy, Mr. Stoyte hurried in silence through the Gothic portal, crossed a pillared Romanesque lobby like the Lady Chapel at Durham, and, his hat still pulled down over his eyes stepped into the cathedral twilight of the great hall.... At one end of the cavernous room, lit by a hidden search-light, 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 Hélène Fourment,

> dressed only in a bearskin cape. Jeremy looked from one to the other -- from the ectoplasm of the inverted saint to the unequivocal skin and fat and muscle which Rubens had so loved to see and touch;... Two shining symbols, incomparably powerful and expressive -- but of what, of what? That of course, was the question. (pp 37-38)

Peter Bowering responds to this question:

> There was a similar juxtaposition of the spiritual and the sensual at the castle approach: the replica of the Grotto at Lourdes and the bronze nymph of Giambologna spouting streams of water from her polished breasts. In fact, the novel bristles with motifs of this kind, symbolizing no doubt, what Huxley calls the "chronic civil war between passion and prudence and, on a higher level of awareness and ethical sensibility, between egotism and dawning spirituality" (The Perennial Philosophy, ch.vii). This is the "wearisome condition of humanity", but what typifies the American scene is the confusion arising out of a vain attempt to enjoy the best of both worlds.[7]

Keith May notes that "The Gothicity of the house indicates not only that Stoyte is a modern baron wielding power like his medieval forerunners, but also a baron who has nothing uniquely his own to assert". Stoyte's castle is the American "melting pot" mentality given its worst expression.

In this oppressive environment, the only common bond between the Rubens and El Greco paintings is their ownership by Stoyte. May states that "Death and sexuality (both given order and beauty by the paintings) are the extreme elements, which not only Stoyte but this part of California as a whole have attempted to amalgamate by taking the stings out of both of them."[8]

The most ludicrous juxtaposition occurs in the scene in which the enraged Stoyte rides in the Vermeer-adorned elevator:

> ... he decided to get the gun. He pressed the button and the lift dropped silently down its shaft. Unseeing, Mr. Stoyte glared at the Vermeer; and from her universe of perfected geometrical beauty the young lady in blue satin turned her head from the open harpsichord and looked out, past the draped curtain, over the black-and-white tessellated floor -- out through the window of the picture-frame into that other universe in which Mr. Stoyte and his fellow creatures had their ugly and untidy being. (pp 266-267)

Huxley describes the geometrical perfection of Vermeer's painting, contrasting it with the agitated, grotesque state of Stoyte's mind. "Within the frame nothing could have been different; the stillness of that world was not the mere immobility of old paint and canvas; it was also the spirited repose of consummated perfection." (pp 268-269)

The charm of Vermeer's works rests not only in superb composition, but also in the use of colour, and tonal effects, created expressly by the raking of golden, lambent light through open windows, infusing the interior with a delicacy of feeling. To shut the painting up in a steel box under the glare of electric light is the supreme travesty. Stoyte and the Vermeer have no relation to each other, nor do they relate to anything outside themselves.

Peter Bowering notes that "For a brief moment the real and the ideal meet in pointless confrontation -- the world of Stoyte's apoplectic rage and the Dutchman's dream of consummated perfection."[9]

The theme of art and its reflection of socio-religious reality also turns up in After Many A Summer, reiterating Huxley's view in "Art and Religion". Propter comments to Jeremy on the "charm of art":

> "It represents only the most amiable aspects of the most talented human beings. That's why I've never been able to believe that the art of any period threw much light on the life of that period. Take a Martian; show him a representative collection of Botticellis, Peruginos and Raphaels. Could he infer from them the conditions described by Machiavelli? ... The real conditions at any given moment are the subjective conditions of the people then alive. And the historian has no way of finding out what those conditions were." (pp 283-284)

It is a theme which Huxley returned to almost verbatim two years later in his study of Cardinal Richelieu, Grey Eminence (1941). "From a collection of fifteenth-century Italian paintings who could possibly infer the society described by Machiavelli? More often than not, the work of even the 'representative' artists shows at best what their contemporaries would have liked to be, not what they were". (pp 249-250)[10]

Huxley's fascination with the horror and depravity into which mankind could sink was given a reprise in Grey Eminence. Huxley writes a long passage on the etchings of Jacques Callot, who, with seeming imperturbability, depicted the atrocities of the Thirty Years' War in Les Misères et les Malheurs de la Guerre in 1633. Huxley compares Callot with Goya, describing the latter as a man of "passionate temperament and possessed of an unrivalled gift for the pictorial expression of his indignation and his pities". (pp 235-236) On the other hand,

> [Callot's] gift as an illustrator was a gift for complete emotional detachment paradoxically combined with a gift for realistic representation of actuality in all its aspects, the horrible and the pleasant, the tragic and the farcical.
> ... From etching to etching we follow the artist's record of pillage, murder, arson, rape, torture and execution. (pp 236-237)

Although Callot had his merits, Huxley considered Goya (1746-1828) to be the better artist. It was not until 1950 that Huxley wrote an essay on Goya, in Themes and Variations. Citing Yeats, Beethoven, Verdi, Piero and Shakespeare, Huxley makes a case for the improved quality of the later works of artists who have not ceased to learn of life. In "Variations on Goya",

Huxley traces the progression of Goya's career from decorative arts, to royal portraits, to the blackest paintings of cruelty and horror:

> It is a progress from light-hearted eighteenth-century art, hardly at all unconventional in subject-matter or in handling, through fashionable brilliancy and increasing virtuosity to something quite timeless both in technique and spirit -- the most powerful of commentaries on human crime and madness, made in terms of an artistic convention uniquely fitted to express precisely that extraordinary mingling of hatred and compassion, despair and sardonic humour, realism and fantasy.[11]

Huxley also notes that

> For Goya the transcendental reality did not exist. There is no evidence in his biography or his works that he ever had even the most distant personal experience of it. The only reality he knew was that of the world around him; and the longer he lived the more frightful did that world seem....[12]

One has ambivalent feelings about Goya's paintings. The horror, repulsion and indignation are evident, but one also considers that the victims of the Dos de Mayo are the same people of the Disparates and the Pinturas Negras: idiotic, bloody and squabbling. "These creatures who haunt Goya's later works", says Huxley, "are inexpressibly horrible, with the horror of mindlessness and animality and spiritual darkness."[13] The moral of this legacy of corruption and degradation is found in the central plate

of the Caprichos (1799). (fig 11) Goya sleeps fitfully at a desk while bats, owls and cats hover above his head:

> On the side of the desk are traced the words, "The dream of reason produces monsters". It is a caption that admits of more than one interpretation. When Reason sleeps, the absurd and loathsome creatures of superstition wake and are active, goading their victim to an ignoble frenzy. But this is not all, Reason may also dream without sleeping, may intoxicate itself, as it did during the French Revolution, with the day-dreams of inevitable progress, of liberty, equality and fraternity imposed by violence....[14]

Huxley notes that it is a lesson the Spaniards learned all too well less than a decade later, and is documented in the Disasters of War. "War always weakens and often completely shatters the crust of customary decency which constitutes a civilization."[15] There is no picturesqueness or glory in Goya's war etchings. His satire is bitter, his humour is sardonic, and his intelligence penetrates to "reveal the sort of thing that goes on in the squalid catacombs of the human mind".[16] One etching depicts three French soldiers strangling a man with a rope looped around a shattered tree trunk. The caption is eloquent in its simplicity: "Por qué?" It is the question Goya and Huxley cannot answer.

John Atkins remarks that Huxley's mind "never ceased to concern itself with political and social problems. Huxley

felt an affinity with Goya and adopted one of his captions as a personal motto. "One of Goya's pictures showed an ancient man tottering along under the burden of years with the accompanying caption: 'I am still learning.' It was Goya himself."[17]

The truth of Goya's motto can be borne out in Huxley's "Variations on El Greco", also from Themes and Variations. Huxley had published "Meditation on El Greco" in Music at Night in 1931, but apparently felt that the painter deserved a second look. In the earlier essay, Huxley admitted a sense of confusion about the peculiar style of El Greco. He was able to accept the two dimensional, Byzantine quality of his style and the attentuated figures. What struck Huxley as disquieting was the claustrophobic nature of the compositions:

> In their two dimensional abstraction the personages of the Byzantine mosaists are perfectly at home; they are adapted to their environment. But, solid and three-dimensional, made to be the inhabitants of a spacious universe, El Greco's people are shut up in a world where there is perhaps just room enough to swing a cat, but no more. They are in prison. For all that surrounds them is organic, animal. Clouds, rock, drapery have all been mysteriously transformed into mucus and skinned muscle and peritoneum. The Heaven into which Count Orgaz ascends is like some cosmic operation for appendicitis.[18] (fig 12)

Huxley makes the correlation between a primary visceral consciousness and states of religious ecstasy. "[El Greco's]

meditations were all of religious experience and ecstasy -- but always of religious experience in its raw physiological state, always of primary, immediate, visceral ecstasy." [19]

On the metaphysical aspects, symbolized in the style of El Greco's art, Huxley's early essay does not venture an explanation:

> Used for what purpose? to express what strange feeling about the world, what mysterious philosophy? It is indeed hard to answer. For El Greco belongs as a metaphysician... to no known school.[20]

In his second El Greco piece, Huxley had formed his ideas more fully. From biographical information, he deduces "that El Greco took more than a theoretical interest in the mystical states described by Dionysius and the Neo-Platonists; he also practised some form of meditation."[21] Huxley states that

> A picture always expresses more than is implicit in its subject. Every painter who tells a story tells it in his own manner, and the manner tells another story superimposed, as it were, upon the first -- a story about the painter himself, a story about the way in which one highly gifted individual reacted to his experience of our universe. The first story is told deliberately; the second tells itself independently of the artist's conscious will.[22]

Huxley felt that El Greco's intention was "neither to imitate nature nor to tell a story with dramatic verisimilitude", but rather to take the raw materials of

nature to create his own pictorial space, forms and illumination. The capacity for union with the divine was depicted by a marriage of representation and abstraction:

> Those faces with their uniformly rapturous expression, those hands clasped in devotion or lifted towards heaven, those figures stretched out to the point where the whole inordinately elongated anatomy becomes a living symbol of upward aspiration -- all these bear witness to the artist's constant preoccupation with the ideas of mystical religion. His aim is to assert the soul's capacity to come, through effort and through grace, to ecstatic union with the divine spirit.[23]

In El Greco's later works, "The forms and colours flow continuously from the bottom of the picture to the top. The two realms are totally fused",[24] unlike The Burial of Count Orgaz. (fig 12) His compositions are centripetal, turning inward on themselves. Landscape is virtually eliminated, figures are flattened, and all movement occurs in oppressively close quarters:

> Everything here is organic, but organic on a low level.... That is why there is no sensuality in these paintings, nothing of the voluptuous.... Under his brush the human body, when it is naked, loses its bony framework and even its musculature, and becomes a thing of ectoplasm.[25]

With his combination of representation and abstraction, El Greco is considered by Huxley "characteristically modern".

Huxley notes that El Greco's symbols are not

traditional visual elements for depicting transcendent spiritual reality:

> The agitation of quasi-visceral forms in an overcrowded ... world from which non-human nature has been banished cannot ... express man's union with the Spirit who must be worshipped in spirit.
>
> Landscape and the human figure in repose -- these are the symbols through which, in the past, the spiritual life has been most clearly and powerfully expressed.[26]

Huxley provides examples from Oriental art to support his view of spiritual art. By a "happy marriage of incompatibles, a perfect fusion of contradictions," El Greco created a "new kind of order and perfection... which the raw materials of his pictures had seemed to rule out".[27] George Woodcock correctly states that despite Huxley's desire to confirm El Greco as a painter of transcendent reality, he "has already argued so capably for the opposite viewpoint that we are left, at the end, unconvinced. We remain under the impression that... El Greco was unable ever completely to transcend the organic and accept the supremacy of spirit."[28]

In his later years, Huxley became convinced that mysticism was embodied in landscape art; that a union of physical and spiritual was possible. The potential of art to create this union was alluded to by Mark Rampion

in Point Counter Point. "Painting I find, puts you in real touch with it. I can say what I want to say." (p 292) In the last fifteen years of his life, Huxley's focus on the visual arts shifted from art as an intellectual exercise to art as embodying religious and visionary potential.

In a brief essay, "Patinir's River" from Along the Road (1925), Huxley celebrated the "fancies" of landscape details created by the Flemish painter, Joachim Patinir. Huxley comments that "For years I was accustomed to float along that crag-reflecting river as down a river of the mind, out of the world." (p 81) That quality of mental transport is what gives landscape its value as the privileged art of Huxley's last novel, Island (1961).

Painting is employed for meditation in Pala, although the visual arts have generally a small role in this utopian society. As Milton Birnbaum notes, "Will Farnaby... realizes that although the island of Pala may offer freedom from pain and guilt, it offers no breeding ground for artists. Art in order to flourish, requires the conflict of paradoxes and dualities."[29]

In the meditation room, Vijaya describes to Will

Farnaby the importance of the landscape paintings. "A genuinely religious image is always intrinsically meaningful.... Landscapes can really remind people of who they are." (p 182)[30] The value of distance resides in the fact that it not only "lends enchantment to the view," but also "lends reality":

> "Distance reminds us that there's a lot more to the universe than just people -- that there's even a lot more to people than just people. It reminds us that there are mental spaces inside our skulls as enormous as the spaces out there. The experience of distance, of inner and outer distance, of distance in time and distance in space -- it's the first and fundamental religious experience." (p 183)

Huxley's view of modern art had not modified appreciably over five decades, and Vijaya expresses his views on its worth:

> "To my mind," Vijaya added, "the worst feature of your non-representational art is its systematic two-dimensionality, its refusal to take account of the universal experience of distance.... All I know is that in your abstractions I don't find the realities that reveal themselves here and I doubt if anyone else can. Which is why this fashionable abstract non-objective expressionism of yours is so fundamentally irreligious -- and also, I may add, why even the best of it is so profoundly boring, so bottomlessly trivial." (p 183)

A volume of collected essays, On Art and Artists appeared in 1960. Vijaya's comments were Huxley's last reflections on art in print. On the day of John Kennedy's assassination, Huxley died in Los Angeles from cancer of

the tongue. In the turmoil of that black weekend, his death went virtually unnoticed in the press.

CONCLUSION

Aún aprendo -- I am still learning.

- Goya

What Aldous Huxley wrote about the arts was generally perceptive, refreshing, opinionated, eminently readable, and rarely, if ever, boring. Between Mrs. Q. D. Leavis's negative assessment of Huxley as a mere "populariser of ideas",[1] and Kenneth Clark's tribute to Huxley as a chief re-discoverer of his time, lies the truth. It is to his credit that his role as "re-discoverer" extended beyond the visual arts, constantly seeking out paths to truth and the ultimate reality of human existence. The quest did not stop until the man stopped.

His erudition was extensive. For pleasure, he carried an entire set of the Encyclopaedia Britannica around the world with him in 1925. There was a private joke at Garsington that one could tell which volume of the encyclopaedia Huxley had been reading recently by the topics he brought up in discussion. Given the fragility of his eyesight, the knowledge he gained by reading and observing the visual arts was astounding.

Huxley's distaste for modern art did not change over the decades, although comments made in 1949 linking

aspects of Piranesi's etchings to cubist forms lacked the old vitriolic fervour. In the wake of Abstract Expressionism and colour field painting, perhaps old Scogan and his "Cubismus" was attaining a state of nostalgia for Huxley.

It is apparent that his interest in the visual arts as material for novels declined rapidly after 1931. A letter to Julian Huxley in October 1946, gives a plausible explanation for the decline in interest in the visual arts for contemporary fiction:

> ...The truth is, I believe, that people have enormously exaggerated the role of art, philosophy, pure science, and the other indices of progress, as expressions of the general life of their period. Artists and thinkers are not, as a rule, deeply preoccupied with the "main currents" of their age.[2]

Words written early in a career often return to plague their creator. Huxley, full of the spirit of Wren, Piero, Bernini and Michelangelo, toured India in 1926. What he had to say about the Taj Mahal in Jesting Pilate caused long-lasting outrage. Huxley merely sought to be true to his classical ideals:

> My failure to appreciate the Taj is due, I think, to the fact that, while I am very fond of architecture and the decorative arts, I am very little interested in the expensive or the picturesque, as such and by themselves. Now the great qualities of the Taj are precisely those of expensiveness and picturesqueness. Milk-white amongst its dark cypresses, flawlessly mirrored, it is positively the Toteninsel of Arnold Boecklin come true.

Many readers knew Huxley's opinion of Boecklin and took offence at the disparaging comments about the Taj Mahal. Isaiah Berlin relates that true to his fair-minded fashion, Huxley acknowledged that his comments were perhaps overly harsh, and in 1961 took a second look at the building. "When he finally saw the Taj Mahal again, he relented; and decided that it was not as unsightly as he had supposed, but on the contrary, but for the minarets -- it was a creditable building after all."[3]

It is difficult to think of a single Huxley essay on the visual arts that seems outdated today, because his reflections on the arts were linked to traditional values, not to fashion. What is unfortunate is the absence of writings on twentieth-century artists. George Woodcock notes that

> If -- considering all that Huxley wrote on the visual arts -- there is a fault one can find with him, it is that he was too unadventurous in terms of the present and too inconsistently inclined to make his discoveries in the past. He wrote at length and in depth on no painter -- with the sole exception of Toulouse-Lautrec -- later than Goya.... What he needed to sustain his interest in a painter long enough to produce an essay upon him was a strong dramatic or intellectual interest. Mere formal accomplishment, however splendid, was not enough to release the springs of his eloquence.[4]

And this is indeed a just criticism of Huxley. Undoubtedly, he had the intellectual apparatus to write incisive critiques of modern artists. One wishes to know what he thought of Rothko, Soviet social realism, Pollock, Magritte, Klee, Sutherland, Wyeth and other twentieth-century artists.

Huxley's virtually totally negative response to modern art opens the way to claims that he was -- politely expressed -- an artistic reactionary, playing it conservatively, or -- impolitely expressed -- an elitist fuddy-duddy. What Huxley had to say about popular music in 1925 may have been embarrassing to him in later life, but it is the musical equivalent of his views on modern art:

> The writers of popular tunes are not musicians enough to be able to invent new forms of expression. All they do is to adapt the discoveries of original geniuses to the vulgar taste.... Composers seem to forget that we are, in spite of everything and though appearances may be against us, terribly civilized. They overwhelm us not merely with Russian and negroid noises, but with Celtic caterwaulings on the black notes, with dismal Spanish wailings, punctuated by the rattle of the castanets and the clashing harmonies of the guitar.[5]

Civilization is diverse and rich in its diversity, but Huxley seems to demand an impossibly constrictive set of values.

Huxley's contemporary, Herbert Read, the poet

and art critic, promoted the careers of Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth and Ben Nicholson. Through his writings on art, he became a popular interpreter of the avant-garde to the public. Huxley's negativity precluded any such parallel career. Huxley likely realized this fact. However, the themes that he found worthy of discussion in artists such as Goya, Piranesi and Callot, were being expressed by modern artists; had Huxley had the inclination to dig deeper. Kenneth Clark stated that Huxley's "sense of horror" was a dominating trait of his mind.[6] What about the war etchings of Otto Dix?; what about the disquieting metaphysical scenes of Giorgio de'Chirico?; what about the nightmarish creations of Francis Bacon? The material for the intellect was there.

It may be argued that the rigorous classicism which Huxley adopted as a reaction to the apparent decline in "civilized" values in the early twentieth-century, ultimately worked against him by creating a form of myopia in the visual arts. His standards were uniformly high and defensible, but one wonders what Huxley could have written had the early stance been less adamant, less negative, less cynical.

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

1 Aldous Huxley, On Art and Artists (London, 1960) p. 8.

2 Julian Huxley ed., Aldous Huxley: A Memorial Volume (New York, 1965) p. 15.

3 Ibid., p. 17.

4 Ibid., p. 16.

5 Ibid., p. 132.

6 Sybille Bedford, Aldous Huxley: A Biography Vol. 1 (London, 1973) p. 1.

7 Ibid., pp. 69-70.

8 Aldous Huxley, "Pseudo-Blake", Athenaeum (August 6, 1920) p. 172.

9 Donald Watt, "Huxley's Aesthetic Ideal", Modern British Literature, 3, (1978) pp. 128-142.

10 Grover Smith ed., Letters of Aldous Huxley (London, 1969) p. 167.

11 Aldous Huxley, "Accidie", On the Margin (London, 1956) p. 25.

NOTES TO NOVELS AND ESSAYS

CHAPTER 1

1 Grover Smith ed., p. 197.

2 Ibid., pp. 201-202.

3 Aldous Huxley, "The Best Picture", Along the Road (London, 1948) p. 179.

4 Ibid., p. 181.

5 Ibid., p. 183.

6 Ibid., pp. 186-187.

7 Ibid., pp. 179-180.

8 Aldous Huxley, "Modern Fetishism", The Olive Tree (London, 1960) p. 103.

9 Aldous Huxley, "Breughel", Along the Road pp. 133-134.

10 Ibid., pp. 140-141.

11 Ibid., p. 134.

12 Ibid., p. 135.

13 Ibid., pp. 136-137.

14 Ibid., p. 139.

15 Ibid., p. 141.

16 Charlotte LeGates, "Huxley and Brueghel:, Western Humanities Review xxix, (Winter 1975) pp. 365-366.

17 Aldous Huxley, "Breughel", pp. 148-149.

18 Aldous Huxley, "Conxolus", Along the Road pp. 168-170.

19 Ibid., pp. 172-173.

20 Aldous Huxley, "Art and Tradition", Athenaeum (June 6, 1919) p. 440.

21 Aldous Huxley, "The Pieran Spring", Along the Road pp. 194-195.

22 Ibid., pp. 192-193.

23 Aldous Huxley, "Art and Tradition", p. 440.

24 Aldous Huxley, "The Pieran Spring", pp. 198-199.

CHAPTER 2

1 Lawrence drew the character of Hermione and her Georgian house, Breadalby, after Lady Ottoline and Garsington Manor in Women in Love.

2 Robert Gathorne-Hardy, ed., Ottoline at Garsington (London, 1974) pp. 217-218.

3 Huxley portrays the neophyte poet, Denis Stone, in Crome Yellow.

4 Gathorne-Hardy, ed., p. 216. Letter from Huxley date 3.XII.21.

5 Aldous Huxley, Crome Yellow (1921) (London, 1958) Page numbers indicate Chatto & Windus Collected Edition.

6 André Dommergues, "Aldous Huxley: Une oeuvre de jeunesse: Crome Yellow", Études Anglaises. 21. (1968) p. 16. It is noteworthy that Huxley gives Stubbs the Christian name "William" in Crome Yellow. André Dommergues comments on this discrepancy in his essay.

7 Aldous Huxley, Those Barren Leaves (1925) (London 1960) Page numbers indicate Chatto & Windus Collected Edition.

8 Robert S. Baker, "The Fire of Prometheus: Romanticism and the Baroque in Huxley's Antic Hay and Those Barren Leaves", Texas Studies in Literature and Language, 19 (1977) p. 75.

9 George Woodcock, Dawn and the Darkest Hour (New York 1972) p. 50.

10 Keith May, Aldous Huxley (London, 1972) p. 29.

11 John Rothenstein, Modern English Painters Vol. II, (New York, 1976) p. 207.

12 Rothenstein is describing Whitechapel, the Jewish, working class enclave in London.

13 Rothenstein, p. 200.

14 John Woodeson, Mark Gertler (Toronto, 1973) p. 115.

15 Marcia Allentuck, "Aldous Huxley on Mark Gertler: An Unremarked Essay", The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America 68, (1974) pp. 180-183.

16 Aldous Huxley, "Sir Christopher Wren", On the Margin, pp. 175-176.

17 John Ruskin, Modern Painters Vol. II (Sunnyside, Kent, 1888) p. 133.

18 Rudolf Wittkower, Art and Architecture in Italy 1600-1750 (Harmondsworth, 1958) p. 56.

19 Keith May, p. 39.

20 Troels Andersen, Malevich (Amsterdam, 1970) p. 51.

21 Aldous Huxley, "Art and the Obvious", Music at Night (1931) (London, 1960) p. 31.

22 Grover Smith, ed., pp. 184-185.

23 Peter Firchow, Aldous Huxley: Satirist and Novelist (Minneapolis, 1972) p. 39.

24 Sanford Marovitz, "Aldous Huxley and the Visual Arts", Papers on Language and Literature IX, (Winter 1973) p. 180.

25 Ibid., p. 176.

26 Julian Huxley, ed., p. 137.

27 Aldous Huxley, "Art and the Obvious", p. 28.

28 Ibid., pp. 29-31.

CHAPTER 3

1 Aldous Huxley, Antic Hay (1923) (London, 1949) Page number indicates the Chatto & Windus Collected Edition.

2 Aldous Huxley, "Ruskin", Athenaeum (September 5, 1919) p. 842.

3 Firchow, p. 72.

4 May, p. 42.

5 Woodcock, p. 106.

6 Aldous Huxley, "Sir Christopher Wren", pp. 176-180.

7 Ibid., p. 179.

8 Woodcock,p. 104.

9 Firchow, p. 79.

10 Giorgio Vasari, Lives of the Artists (1568) (Harmondsworth, 1965) p. 216.

11 Aldous Huxley, "The New Romanticism", Music at Night pp. 216-217.

12 Woodcock, p. 97.

13 Aldous Huxley, "Sincerity in Art", Essays New and Old (New York, 1927) pp. 301-303.

14 Gathorne-Hardy, ed., p. 211, Letter date 3.XII.18.

15 Aldous Huxley, "B. R. Haydon", The Olive Tree p. 240.

16 Ibid., p. 244.

17 Ibid., p. 242.

18 Woodcock, p. 215.

19 Tom Taylor, ed., The Autobiography and Memoirs of Benjamin Robert Haydon Vol. II, (London, 1926) p. 742.

20 John Woodward, A Picture History of British Painting (London, 1962) p. 127.

21 Robert S. Baker, "The Fire of Prometheus", p. 66.

22 Aldous Huxley, Prisons (London, 1949) p. 21.

23 Ibid., p. 18.

24 Ibid., p. 26.

CHAPTER 4

1 Grover Smith, ed, p. 234.

2 Aldous Huxley, Jesting Pilate (London, 1957) p. 91.

3 Aldous Huxley, "Art and Religion", Themes and Variations (London, 1954) p. 155.

4 Ibid., p. 158.

5 Aldous Huxley, Beyond the Mexique Bay (London, 1950) p. 267.

CHAPTER 5

1 Grover Smith, pp. 274-275.

2 "A Talk with Aldous Huxley", Bermondsey Book 3, (June 1926) p. 78.

3 Aldous Huxley, Point Counter Point (1928) (London, 1951) Page numbers indicate the Chatto & Windus Collected Edition.

4 Woodcock, p. 157.

5 Grover Smith, ed., p. 188.

6 John Atkins, Aldous Huxley (New York, 1956) p. 13.

7 Grover Smith, ed., p. 340.

8 Harry T. Moore, ed., The Collected Letters of D.H. Lawrence Vol. II (New York, 1962) p. 1096.

9 Jerome Meckier, Aldous Huxley: Satire and Structure (London, 1969) p. 94.

10 Ibid., p. 109.

11 Harry T. Moore, ed., p. 945.

12 Peter Bowering, Aldous Huxley: A Study of the Major Novels (London, 1968) p. 84.

13 Julian Huxley, ed., pp. 17-18.

CHAPTER 6

1 Aldous Huxley, Brave New World (1932) (Harmondsworth 1955) Page numbers indicate Penguin edition.

2 Milton Birnbaum, Aldous Huxley's Quest for Values (Knoxville, 1971) p. 66.

3 Aldous Huxley, Eyeless in Gaza (1936) (Harmondsworth, 1955) Page numbers indicate the Penguin edition.

4 May, p. 131.

5 Ibid., p. 134.

6 Aldous Huxley, After Many a Summer (1939) (London, 1950) Page numbers indicate the Chatto & Windus Collected Edition.

7 Bowering, p. 144.

8 May, p. 146.

9 Bowering, p. 13.

10 Aldous Huxley, Grey Eminence (1941) (London, 1956) Page numbers indicate the Chatto & Windus Collected Edition.

11 Aldous Huxley, "Variations on Goya", Themes and Variations p. 212.

12 Ibid., pp. 213-214.

13 Ibid., p. 215.

14 Ibid., pp. 215-216.

15 Ibid., p. 217.

16 Ibid., p. 220.

17 Atkins, p. 35.

18 Aldous Huxley, "Meditation on El Greco", Music at Night pp. 58-59.

19 Ibid., pp. 66-67.

20 Ibid., p. 62.

21 Aldous Huxley, "Variations on El Greco", Themes and Variations p. 178.

22 Ibid., p. 178.

23 Ibid., p. 179.

24 Ibid., p. 180.

25 Ibid., p. 182.

26 Ibid., p. 186.

27 Ibid., p. 191.

28 Woodcock, p. 249.

29 Birnbaum, p. 194.

30 Aldous Huxley, Island (1962) (London, 1972) Page numbers indicate the Chatto & Windus edition.

NOTES TO CONCLUSION

1 Q.D. Leavis, "Mr. Aldous Huxley, Eyeless in Gaza", Scrutiny, Vol. V. No. 2, (September 1936) p. 182.

2 Grover Smith, ed., p. 553.

3 Julian Huxley, ed., p. 153.

4 Woodcock, p. 120.

5 Aldous Huxley, "Popular Music", Along the Road pp. 248, 252.

6 Julian Huxley, ed., pp. 16-17.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

BOOKS

Huxley, Aldous. After Many a Summer. (1939)
London: Chatto & Windus, 1950

--------. Along the Road. (1925)
London: Chatto & Windus, 1948.

--------. Antic Hay. (1923)
London: Chatto & Windus, 1949.

--------. Beyond the Mexique Bay. (1934)
London: Chatto & Windus, 1950.

--------. Brave New World. (1932)
Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1955.

--------. Collected Essays By Aldous Huxley.
Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company Ltd., 1960.

--------. Crome Yellow. (1921)
London: Chatto & Windus, 1958.

--------. Essays New And Old.
New York: George H. Doran Co., 1927.

--------. Eyeless in Gaza. (1936)
Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1955.

--------. Grey Eminence. (1941)
London: Chatto & Windus, 1956.

--------. Island. (1962)
London: Chatto & Windus, 1972.

--------. Jesting Pilate. (1926)
London: Chatto & Windus, 1957.

--------. Limbo. (1920)
London: Chatto & Windus, 1950.

--------. Music at Night. (1931)
London: Chatto & Windus, 1960.

--------. On Art and Artists.
London: Chatto & Windus, 1960.

--------. On the Margin. (1923)
London: Chatto & Windus, 1956.

--------. Point Counter Point. (1928)
London: Chatto & Windus, 1951.

--------. Prisons.
London: Trianon Press, 1949.

--------. Proper Studies. (1927)
London: Chatto & Windus, 1957.

--------. The Olive Tree. (1936)
London: Chatto & Windus, 1960.

--------. Themes and Variations. (1950)
London: Chatto & Windus, 1954.

--------. Those Barren Leaves. (1925)
London: Chatto & Windus, 1960.

--------. Time Must Have a Stop.
London: Chatto & Windus, 1945.

ARTICLES

Huxley, Aldous. "Art and the Tradition". Athenaeum, June 6, 1919, p. 440.

--------. "Pseudo-Blake", Athenaeum, August 6, 1920, p. 172.

--------. "Ruskin", Athenaeum. September 5, 1919, p. 842.

SECONDARY SOURCES

BOOKS

Andersen, Troels. Malevich. Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 1970.

Atkins, John. Aldous Huxley. New York: The Orion Press, 1956.

Bass, Eben E. Aldous Huxley: An Annotated Bibliography of Criticism. New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1981.

Birnbaum, Milton. Aldous Huxley's Quest for Values. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1971.

Bedford, Sybille. Aldous Huxley: A Biography, Vol. I. London: Chatto & Windus, 1973.

---------. Aldous Huxley: A Biography, Vol. II. London: Chatto & Windus, 1974.

Bowering, Peter. Aldous Huxley: a Study of the Major Novels. London: The Athlone Press, 1968.

Brander, Laurence. Aldous Huxley: A Critical Study. London: Rupert Hart-Davis Ltd., 1969.

Brooke, Jocelyn. Aldous Huxley. London: Longmans, Green & Co., Ltd., 1963.

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

Gathorne-Hardy, Robert, ed. Ottoline at Garsington. London: Faber & Faber, 1974.

Huxley, Julian, ed. Aldous Huxley: A Memorial Volume. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1965.

Huxley, Laura Archera. This Timeless Moment. London: Chatto & Windus, 1969.

Kuehn, Robert E., ed. Aldous Huxley: A Collection of Critical Essays. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1974.

May, Keith M. Aldous Huxley. London: Elek Books Ltd., 1972.

Meckier, Jerome. Aldous Huxley: Satire and Structure. London: Chatto & Windus, 1969.

Moore, Harry T., ed. The Collected Letters of D.H. Lawrence Vol. II. New York: The Viking Press, 1962.

O'Faolain, Sean. The Vanishing Hero. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1956.

Rothenstein, John. Modern English Painters, Vols. I & II. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976.

Smith, Grover,ed. Letters of Aldous Huxley. London: Chatto & Windus, 1969.

Taylor, Tom, ed. The Autobiography and Memoirs of Benjamin Robert Hayden (1786-1846), Vols. I & II. London: Peter Davies, 1926.

Vasari, Giorgio. Lives of the Artists. (1568) Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1965.

Wittkower, Rudolf. Art and Architecture in Italy 1600-1750. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1958.

Woodcock, George. Dawn and the Darkest Hour. New York: The Viking Press, 1972.

Woodeson, John. Mark Gertler. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973.

ARTICLES

Allentuck, Marcia. "Aldous Huxley on Mark Gertler: An Unremarked Essay", The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America, 68,1974, pp 180-183.

Baker, Robert S. "A Tour of Brighton Pavilion and Gog's Court: The Romantic Context of Point Counter Point and Eyeless in Gaza," Studies in the Novel 9, 1977, pp 537-563.

--------. "The Fire of Prometheus: Romanticism and the Baroque in Huxley's Antic Hay and Those Barren Leaves", Texas Studies in Literature and Language 19, Spring 1977, pp 60-82.

Dommergues, André. "Aldous Huxley: Une oeuvre de jeunesse: Crome Yellow", Études Anglaises, 21, 1968, pp. 1-18.

Leavis, Q.D. "Mr. Aldous Huxley, Eyeless in Gaza", Scrutiny, Vol. V. No. 2, September 1936, pp. 179-183.

LeGates, Charlotte. "Huxley and Brueghel", Western Humanities Review, xxix, No. 1, Winter 1975, pp. 365-371.

Marovitz, Sanford. "Aldous Huxley and the Visual Arts", Papers on Language and Literature, Southern Illinois University, IX, No. 1, Winter 1973, pp. 172-188.

Watt, Donald. "Huxley's Aesthetic Ideal", Modern British Literature, 3, No. 1, Fall 1978, pp. 128-142.

OTHER SOURCES CONSULTED

Baron, Wendy. Sickert. London: Phaidon Press, 1973.

Bell, Quentin. Roger Fry. Cambridge: Leeds University Press, 1964.

Clark, Ronald W. The Huxleys. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1968.

Holroyd, Michael. Augustus John: The Years of Innocence. London: Heinemann Ltd., 1974.

--------. Augustus John: The Years of Experience. London: Heinemann Ltd., 1975.

Levy, Mervyn, ed., Paintings of D.H. Lawrence. London: Cory, Adams & Mackay Ltd., 1964.

Lilly, Marjorie. Sickert: The Painter and His Circle. Park Ridge, N.J.: Moyes Press, 1973.

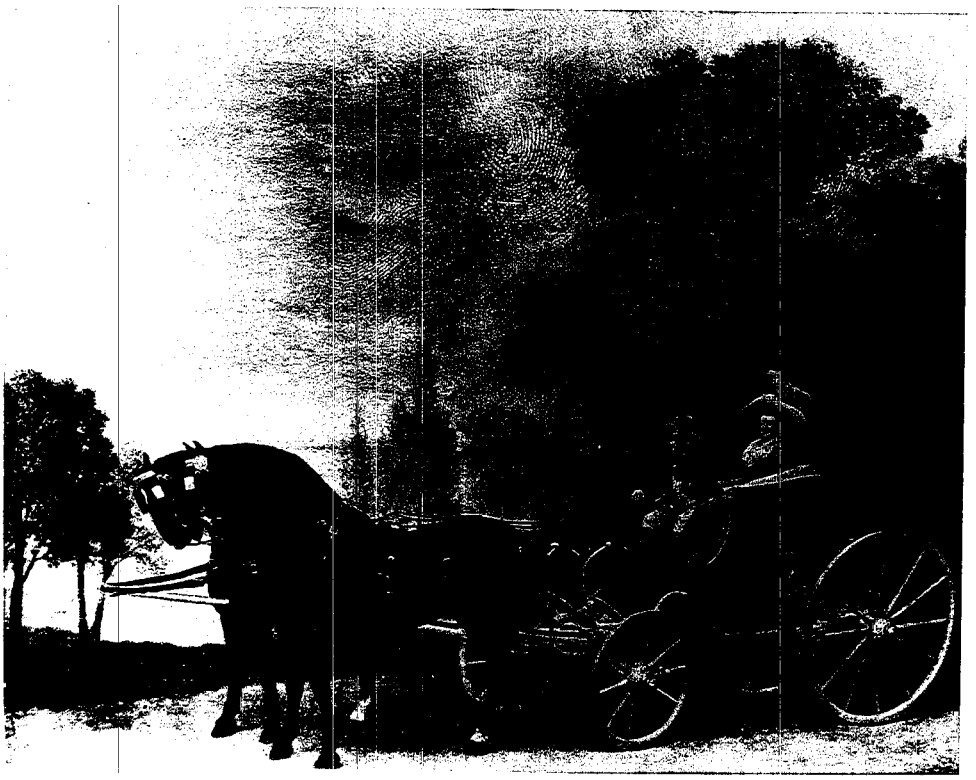
Rothenstein, John. Augustus John. Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1946.

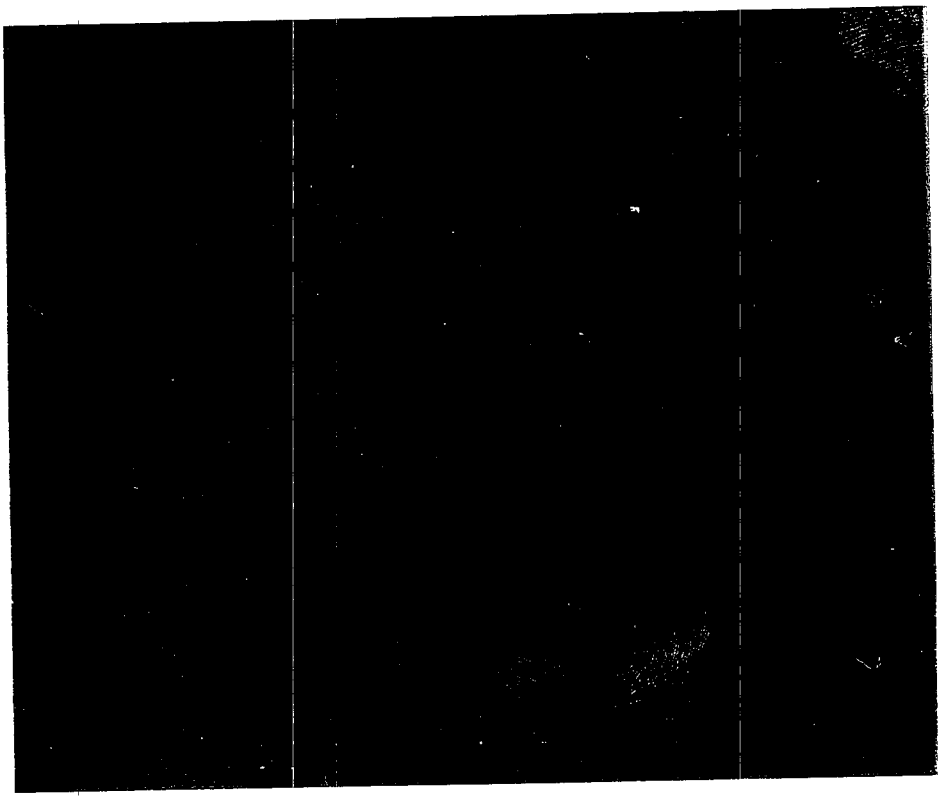
Sutton, Denys. Letters of Roger Fry. 2 vols. London: Chatto & Windus, 1972.

Wees, William C. Vorticism and the English Avant-Garde. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972.

Woolf, Virginia. Roger Fry: A Biography. Toronto: The Macmillan Co., 1940.

ILLUSTRATIONS





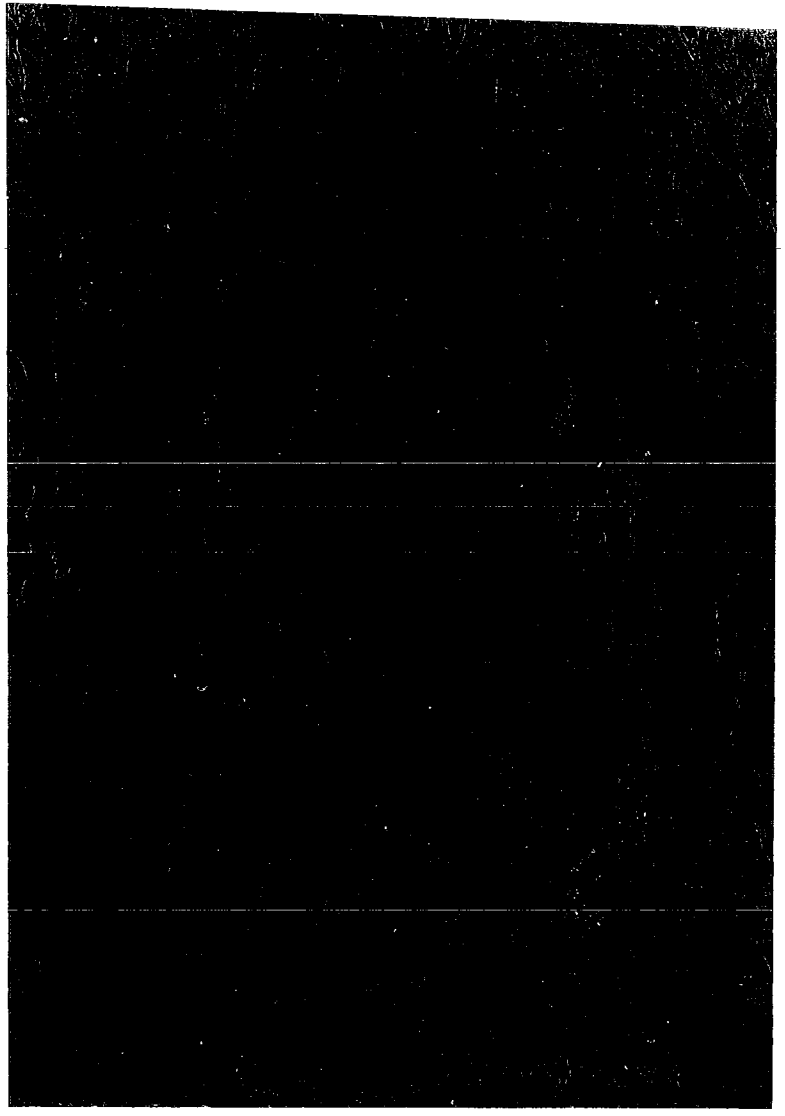


Fig. 3

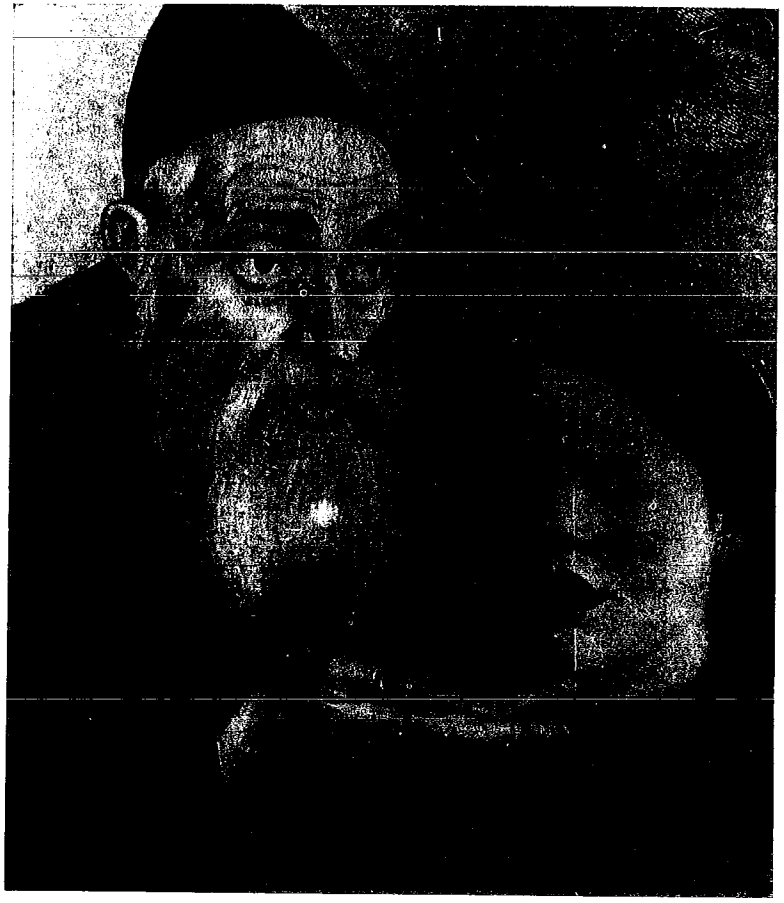


Fig. 4

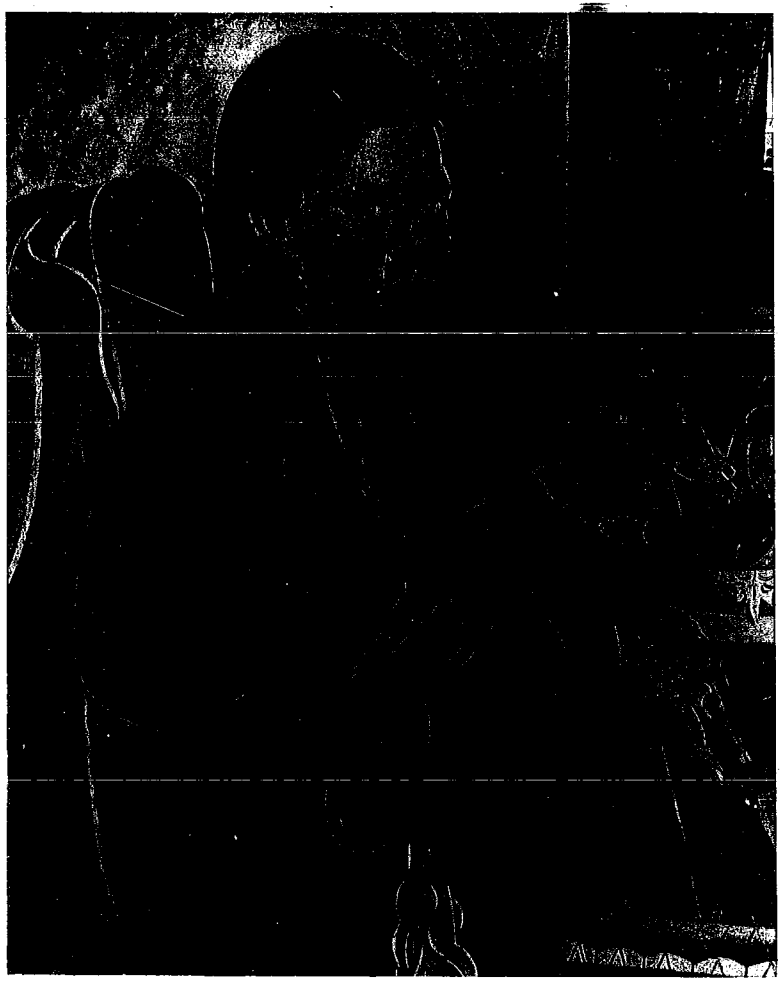


Fig. 3

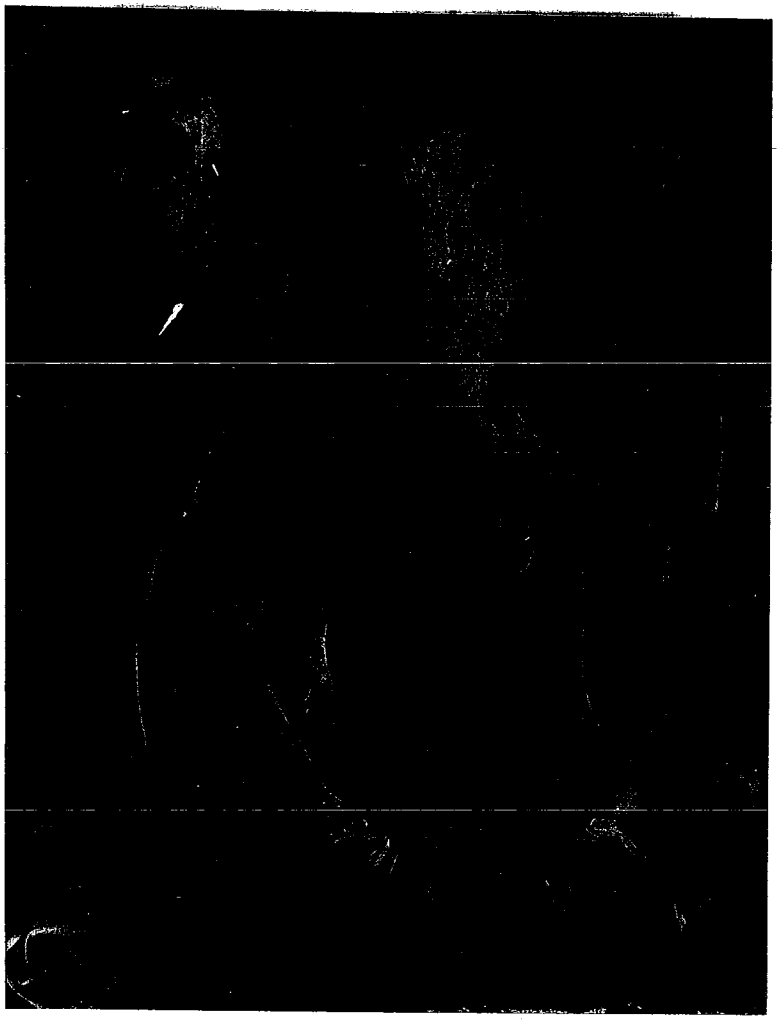


Fig. 4

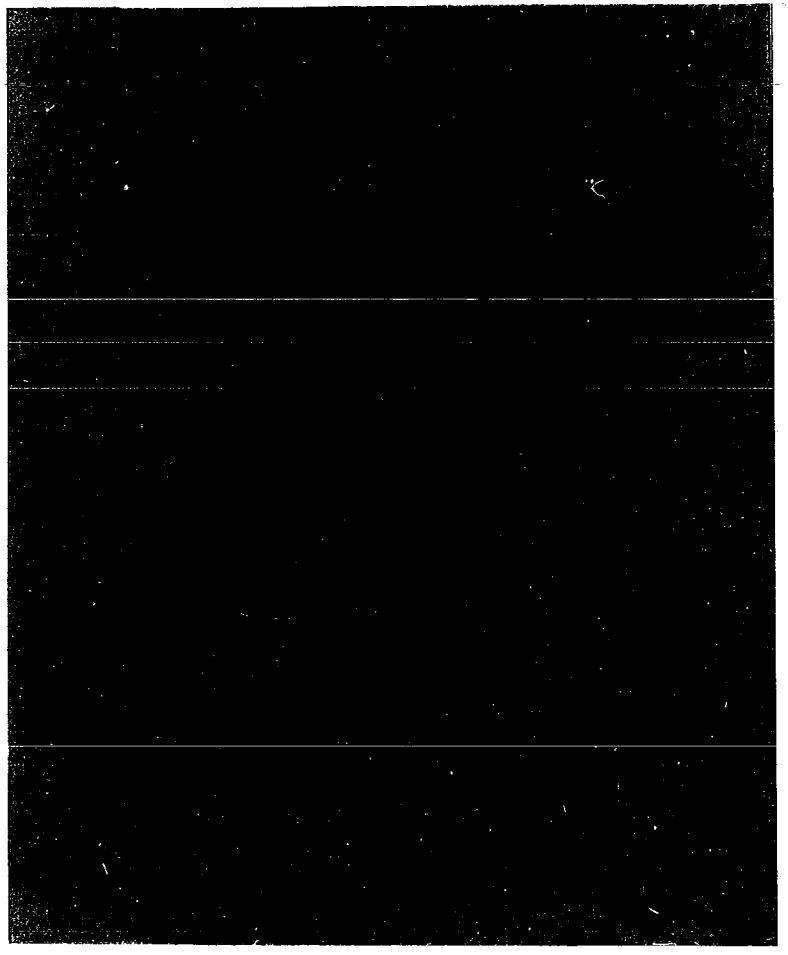


Fig. 9

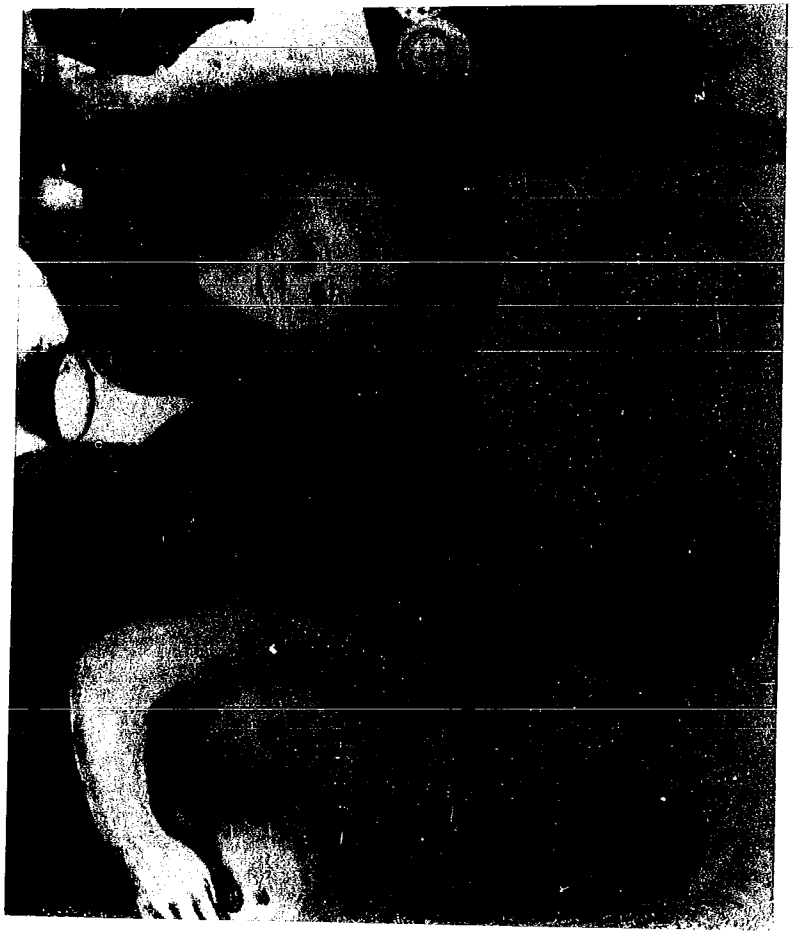


Fig. 10