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## Aldous Huxley's Generic Shift to Fantasy -

*A Study of After Many A Summer Dies the Swan and Ape and Essence*

**Shahnawaz Muntazir, M.Phil.**



### Look into the Divisions of the Modern World

Aldous Huxley as a writer set out to articulate the intellectual and moral conflict being fought in the collective soul of twentieth century. He used the novel form because he found it congenial to his purpose. D H Lawrence would express his reaction viscerally but failed “to look through a microscope”, as Huxley reminds us (Sybille 1974:199). James Joyce could not disentangle himself from the nets in which he felt caught, because he was not aware of the oases to be found in eastern meditative systems. E M Forster knew of passages to other cultures but preferred to regard Art as self sufficient rather than as catalytic. Virginia Woolf knew the agony of private torment but did not realize the healing energy that emerges from societal involvement. It was Aldous Huxley of all these twentieth century English writers who best reflected and coordinated the divisions of the modern world; he best expressed its *Weltanschauung* in its most universal sense (Birnbau 1971:4).

### Cynical Depiction of the World

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In early years of his career as novelist, Aldous Huxley was interested in cynically depicting the *Weltanschauung* of his times. However Huxley was aware of his shortcomings as a novelist. In a letter to Jerome E Hare he admits that he "... is not congenitally a novelist and therefore is compelled to resort to the devices which the born novelist would never think of using" (Smith 1969:58). Huxley, therefore, from the very beginning of his career, experimented with the novel form and continued to the end of his career to cope up with his growing artistic needs. At the very outset he declared himself to be an "amused pyrrhonic aesthete" and living up to that reputation adapted a dialectic style embodying an argument or discussion, with no requirement to reach the conclusion. For such dialectic discussion he adapted Peacockian model in which a group of people are assembled in a country house, having varying temperaments and attitudes and novel dramatizes the clash of these attitudes. Peacock's novel attacked most cherished assumptions, such as, new theories in morals, politics, and poetry. He suggested in not less than seven novels that most of the new ideas were idiotic, a source for satire rather than wisdom. In *Headlong Hall* (1816), *Night Mare Abbey* (1818), *Crochet Castle* (1831), to name only three, Peacock mocked at such trends as Romantic Movement, the political pretensions, scientific, and philosophical ideas of his age.

### **Depicting the Spectacle of Non-communication**

Huxley's first three novels *Crome Yellow* (1921), *Antic Hay* (1923), and *Those Barren Leaves* (1925) conform closely to this model. There is in all the three novels interplay of contemporary ideas, reliance on spectacle of non-communication for comic effect, on the failure of character to get outside the world created by a limited understanding of reality and an underlying satiric vein, which characterizes Huxleyan novel. There is in these novels free and frank treatment of sex, of the Freudian theories, science, philosophy, or any other tabooed topic of the post Victorian times. Angus Wilson speaking of these early novels states that they had a liberating influence and his only hope to free him from, "the prison of Family philistinism" (Watt 1975:74). He seemed to represent the kind of freedom, which might be termed freedom from all sorts of things such as conventional orthodoxies, officious humbug, sexual taboos, respect for establishments. Sir Isaiah Berlin speaking of these early novels considers Huxley as a great cultural hero of his youth "the cynical god, denying Huxley, the object of fear and disapproval...the wicked nihilist... [the delight of] those young readers who supposed

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themselves to be indulging in one of the most dangerous and exotic vices of those iconoclastic post war years” (Julian Huxley 1965:142).

### **Antidote to Science: Eastern Mysticism**

The unbridled progress of science in twentieth century and its repercussions made it clear that science propitiates the material in man and does not answer to his spiritual yearnings. The solution is to be found in eastern mysticism. The need now was to communicate this message to the world, the Peacockian model did not suit the didactic motifs, as it takes the bonnet bombe of the most cherished ideas as a target for its laughter provoking mirth. The novel involves an argument or discussion with no requirement to reach a conclusion or take sides with a particular point of view. The issues are rather dealt with from different points of view and the reader is given an open choice to take his stand. Therefore, Huxley abandoned the Peacockian comedy in favour of greater realism, formal complexity and seriousness in the treatment of ideas.

### **Other Novels**

In *Point Counterpoint* (1928) Huxley exhibited his grandeur as a realistic novelist. However, his later novel *Eyeless in Giza* (1939) proved more to be the dissolution of his realistic aspirations. The didactic material in *Eyeless in Giza* weighed more on the realistic model. The novel starts with an immense scope for the dramatic possibility but as the novel proceeds action impasses and didacticism takes over the novel. The aesthetic considerations are sacrificed to the preaching of the mystical creed, which is established in the first two chapters. In the subsequent chapter Huxley’s preference for the fantastic mode and its precedence over mimetic mode is also analyzed. The use of fantastic mode enables Huxley to strike a balance between the artist and thinker in him.

After *Eyeless in Giza*, Aldous Huxley made a paradigmatic shift to fantasy partly because the didactic strain in him had become so strong that it was almost impossible to continue with a genre that does not allow this vein to operate towards what it intends and partly due to the reason that during nineteen thirties and forties he had a great anxiety regarding the future of mankind. The west was blighted by the threat of Nazism which ultimately led to the Second World War and the dropping of atom bomb.

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Huxley, like most of the thinkers of that time was shaken by the horrors of holocaust and mass destruction. The faith in the image of science as a saviour of human species was shattered into pieces. The havoc done by the totalitarian state and the threat of communism behind the iron curtain became an inevitable tragedy. Nationalism, mechanization and continued loss of spiritual values had a deadening effect on human virtue. The task was to go beyond the aesthetic value of art and to search for sanity in human affairs—to create a society that strikes a balance between material and spiritual. Huxley tried his hands on the representational fiction but the form he used utterly frustrated his didactic intentions. The reason was that he believed that society ought to be different and to represent society as it was, meant to represent only undesirable behaviour (Ferns 1980:129). Therefore, in order to provide a societal standard against which society can judge its own conduct and reform itself, he moved beyond the realistic design.

In *After A Many Summer* (1939) and *Ape and Essence* (1949) Huxley adopted the fantastic mode; after all fantasy approaches the truth from another route. The rules are totally different; an artist is granted more freedom; he can push the limits according to his own need; he can create new worlds, imbibe myth and religion, make use of science and magic, comment on science and politics, and distance them by placing them in futuristic environment. Grotesque and bizarre is allowed, new symbols are created, language is manipulated, opens up an abyss of meaning questions self and society. Fantasy is of course bound by the ideologies of its author by its means of production, by its politics and prejudices but at the same time it is as much rooted in reality as “realistic novel” it deals with human condition. Fantasy is deeply concerned with human experience and is relevant to human living. Its major difference from the realistic novel is that it takes account of such areas of experience as imaginative, visionary and sub-conscious which free the human spirit to range beyond the limits of empirical primary world of reality—his own time structure, his own social and political order, but at no time does this apparent freedom permit the author to escape from contemporary reality. Indeed the fundamental purpose of a serious fantasy is to comment upon the real world and to explore moral, philosophical and other dilemmas posed by it.

## Mixing All Categories

In *After a Many Summer*, Aldous Huxley applied the principle of mixing of all the categories from slap stick to philosophic dissertation, eroticism, pastiche, grotesque and esoteric moralizing. Star states that *After Many Summer* dissolves the boundary between realism and fantasy. In fact, George Woodcock calls it a hybrid work (WoodCock 1972:221). Huxley himself called the book “a wild extravaganza, but with the quality of most serious parable” and later called it “a kind of fantasy, at once comic and cautionary, farcical, blood-curdling and reflective” (Holmes 1970:81). Laurence Brander calls it a “science horror story” (Brander 1969:81). The story of the novel deals with a millionaire, Jo Stoyte, who owns movie studios, acres of female flesh along with a collection of the world’s art and treasures and a retinue of scholars, scientists and physicians. But all this is not enough; Mr Stoyte wants to live forever. The setting is that of a gothic castle. The theme is that of immortality and timeless good. There is a return to Peacockian discussion novel, conversation does take place but there is also seduction and murder and mixed with all is the element of didacticism. If we go by Katherine Hume’s definition of fantasy as any departure from reality and includes transgression of what one takes to be physical facts such as human immortality, then the novel is in fact a fantasy (Kathrine Hume 1984:21).

*After Many a Summer* is a chronicle of fear, greed, lust, hatred and stupidity. The title of the novel is taken from Tennyson’s poem Tithonus which deals with a mortal of the same name whom goddess Eos (also Aurora) had bestowed with everlasting youth. The theme of the novel is directly related to the title as the novel deals with modern Tithonus, American millionaire Jo Stoyte’s quest for immortality. Jo Stoyte is the person in the novel who is scared of death. His fear of death stems from the Sandesmanian Calvinism burned into his soul by his father and the Christian Science ceaselessly shouted by his wife. Stoyte believes that its terrible thing to fall into the hands of living God:

Always, in the background of his mind, there floated an image of that circular marble room, with Roden’s image of desire at the centre, and that wide slab in the pavement at its base—the slab that would some day have his name engraved upon it: Joseph Penton Stoyte, and the dates of his birth and death. And along with that inscription went another, in orange letters on a coal black ground. It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Huxley 1964:173).

Jo Stoyte has built the most luxurious cemetery in America, “Beverly Pantheon—the personality cemetery”, the death has been glamorized and almost a sex appeal has been added to the death through the erotic statues of the nymphs in the cemetery but still this cannot evade Stoyte’s fear of death. He is filled with wariness and repugnance and “loathed his pantheon and everything to do with it, because in spite of statues and Wurlitzer, it spoke to him of nothing but disease and death and corruption and final judgment...” (Huxley 1964:167). Propter and Obispo regard fear of death rather than death itself as the real enemy. Obispo says to Jo Stoyte, “...if you are always scared of dying, you will surely die fear is a poison; and not such a slow poison either” (Huxley 1964:31). Obispo is working for the invention or discovery of some way to prolong life but at the same time he has the realization that he cannot defeat nature but is gleeful in encouraging Stoyte to suppose that he can. Propter’s solution is that immortality is possible only by rising above one’s personality and becoming one with God rather than getting entrapped in time. For Propter time is evil because evil is possible in time beyond time exists good, therefore “liberation from time,” he said “liberation from craving and revulsion. Liberation from personality” (Huxley 1964:91).

According to Keith May, there is a strong Faustian theme running through this novel. He goes on to compare Jo Stoyte to Faust who gives everything else in the pursuit of power and riches and finally desires prolongation of life even if it means degradation to a foetal ape. On the other hand Obispo is compared to bad angel and Propter to good angel (Keith 1972:150). This is in fact true. Both the characters heighten the crisis in Jo Stoyte and also in the novel. Obispo is the Mephistopheles of the novel. The handsome Levantine facet of Obispo, his wolfish smile, his production of piers and other ‘magical’ cures, his words which are often absolutely true which he (like the witches in Macbeth) knows will be misunderstood or disbelieved, his mischievous activities which cause the killing of Pete Boone, all combine to place him in the satanic tradition. He not only tempts Stoyte with prospect of immortality but also understands so much of what Propter understands but reacts to his understanding evilly. These two characters Obispo and Propter stand above the other characters in shared knowledge and unillusionedness, but Obispo collaborates with evil while Propter resists it.

Stoyte’s preoccupation with the search for prolongation of life takes him England, where he buys hauberk papers and employs Jeremy Pordage to work on them. Jeremy discovers that fifth Earl of

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Gonister, a thorough going autocrat with a nice turn of the pen and the tastes of Marquis de Sade wrote and owned these papers have made similar attempts with carp gut himself and now 203, is still alive.

...the shirt, which was his only garment, was torn and filthy. Knotted diagonally across the powerful chest was a broad silk ribbon that had evidently once been blue... he sat hunched up, his head thrust forward and at the same time sunk between his shoulders. With one of his huge and strangely clumsy hands he was scratching a sore place... between the hairs of his left calf (Huxley 1964:251).

The deathless Tithonus has become a repulsive old man; the fifth Earl has turned into “a feotal ape that’s had time to grow up” (Huxley 1964:252), evolution in reverse if Obispo is Mephistophelean fifth Earl is Luciferian, he rivals God. Instead of seeking to lose a sense of time, he tries to master time, but becomes time’s principle victim.

Mr. Stoyte’s fear of death is so intense that he is ready to embrace this animal existence to avoid falling into the hands of living God. Mr. Stoyte finds words: “well... once you get over the first shock—well they look like they are having a pretty good time” (Huxley: 1964, 254).

However the scene is epiphanic to the reader. It suggests two solutions to the reader—one is to cling to the self via a prolongation of life, the retention of the ego and personality at all costs. The second way is the way out of the ego, a mystical method of self-transcendence and perhaps, eventually with something larger than the confining self. Huxley’s own preference is implied.

Jerome Meckier contends that the novel is one of the few pieces of writing by Huxley where plot is of central concern (Jerome 1997:161). C. S. Ferns argues that the novel has one of his strong plot (Ferns: 161). Freed by the novel’s fantastic character, Huxley is under no compulsion to meet the demands imposed by realism. Huxley, in the novel depicts an order of events which in mimetic design may appear improperly ordered. Around his story of the hauberk papers and of their implications for Jo Stoyte’s quest for eternal life, Huxley creates a structure in which the interrelation of character and incident gives point and artistic inevitability to almost everything that happens. Even the most

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sensational occurrences fit into the novel's tight pattern (Ferns: 161-162). Pete's death in the novel which is the result of Jo Stoyte's rage is made credible by the combination of convincing circumstances. That Jo Stoyte will kill the wrong person seems the most logical conclusion after the scene in the lift, where his insensate animal rage is contrasted with the calm geometry and artistic perfection of the Vermeer which hangs there.

The setting of the novel plays an important role to the full realization of the theme, written as low fantasy it is perhaps the setting which carries it to the level of high fantastic works. *After Many a Summer* is set in the America of 1930s, a more familiar location than the world of distant future or the magical or supernatural world of a regular fantasy. But the way in which it is presented seems nonetheless bizarre. Seen first of all through the eyes of Jeremy Pordage, scholar and gentleman, America appears unendingly strange and alienated, continuously providing shocks. Jeremy is baffled by the sight of a large number of young women who are engaged in silent prayer but later he realizes that they are chewing gums. The distancing of the two worlds which is a pre-requisite for a fantasy to function, especially the one where the ends are didactic and reformative, is done by the juxtaposition of the most violent possible contrasts. After leaving the station, Jeremy passes hoardings which advertise hamburger alongside the comforts of religion and cosmetics next to funerals:

EATS. COCKTAILS. OPEN NITES. JUMBO MALTS.

DO THINGS, GO PLACES WITH CONSOL SUPER GAS!

.. The car sped onwards, and here in the middle of a vacant lot was a restaurant in the form of a seated bulldog, the entrance between the front-paws, the eyes illuminated ...

ASTROLOGY, NUMEROLOGY, PSYCHIC READINGS. DRIVE IN FOR NUTBURGERS •

. . Mile after mile .. interminably ... CLASSY EATS. MILE HIGH CONES. JESUS SAVES.

FINE LIQUORS.

GO TO CHURCH AND FEEL BETTER ALL THE WEEK.

. . A real estate agent's office in the form of ,an Egyptian sphinx. JESUS IS COMING SOON.

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## BEVERLY PANTHEON THE CEMETERY THAT IS *DIFFERENT*.

. . Past a Rosicrucian Temple, past two cat-and-dog hospitals, past a School for Drum-Majorettes ... Sunset Boulevard ... Beverly Hills. The surroundings changed. The road [was] flanked by the gardens of a rich residential quarter. Through trees .. the facades of houses all new, almost all in good taste-elegant and witty pastiches of Lutyens manor houses, of Little Trianons, of Monticellos; lighthearted parodies of Le Corbusier .. fantastic .. adaptations of Mexican haciendas and New England farms (Huxley 1964:9-12).

Taken to view, in passing, a vast cemetery called the Beverly Pantheon, he finds it adorned with: “the sort of statues one would expect to see in the reception room of a high class brothel in Rio de Janeiro” (Huxley 1964:15). Michael Synider compares the world presented in the novel to the unreal world, what Baudrillard may call a hyper-world (Synider 2006:176). Next comes into view what in the novel is the principle setting where all the action takes place—Jo Stoyte’s castle. “But what a castle! The donjon was like a skyscraper, the bastions plunged headlong with the effortless swoop of concrete dams. The thing was Gothic, mediaeval, baronial-doubly baronial, Gothic with a Gothicity raised, so to speak, to a higher power, more mediaeval than any building of the thirteenth century” (Huxley 1964:17). Jo Stoyte’s castle lends an air of gothic that is staple of the gothic tradition starting from *The Castle of Ortanto* and opens up a space for the grotesque action that takes place inside the castle. The castle is separated from the world by a draw bridge, hence, it becomes a different territory which is not regulated by the external world but has its own working principles. Inside the castle there are art works from almost all over the world. The castle dining room combines a Fra Angelico with furniture from Brighton Pavilion; the elevator is adorned with a Vermeer; waiters and butler’s roller skate on private tennis court; baboons munch bananas not far from Christian reading room. Grotto of Lourdes, “Greece Mexico backsides, crucifixions, machinery, George IV, Amida Buddha, Science, Christian science, Turkish baths... anything you like to mention” (Huxley 1964:19). The architecture and artifacts in the house not only suggest the gothicness of the house but also indicate that the interiors of the house are a mish mash of plundered or copied things. Having nothing in common every item is irrelevant to every other item. The most striking incongruity in Stoyte’s house is found in the great hall,

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from opposite ends of which El Greco's crucifixion of St. Peter and a magnificent nude by Rubens face each other. Death and Sexuality; both given order and beauty by the paintings, but both have lost sting in the modern world. Beside the castle, at the top of the hill, there is a small house at the foot of the hill in which lives Bill Propter. Huxleyan sage and representative of good in the novel, as against the evil that lurks inside Stoyte's castle. With this contrast the novel is raised to the allegorical level. According to C. S. Ferns what gives the setting its fantastic caricatured aspect is simply the principle of selection that Huxley adopts (Ferns: 150). He neglects the more mundane and ordinary elements and focuses on the garishness and vulgarity in American surroundings thereby presenting a reality which goes against the convention of real in a representational work. Thus through the organizing principle of contrast Huxley contrives to create a world which is at once recognized and distorted accurately observed yet bizarre.

### **Idea Takes Precedence**

Huxleyan novels do not have much scope for the characterization. The idea takes precedence over everything in the novel. Therefore the characterization in the novel is in accordance with the earlier novels. There are, in the novel viscerotonics like Jo Stoyte and Virginia Maunciple, cerebrotonics like Jeremy Prodage and Peter Boone, somatonic like Dr. Obispo and an ideal character as Propter. However, at the same time every character is presented as a contrast to his own environment which makes every character a multidimensional being and works at the satiric level in the novel. Jeremy Prodage, typical Huxleyan intellectual dominated by an authoritative mother, for instance combines the elegance and refinement appropriate to his public school and Trinity background to his unsavoury sexual habits. Jo Stoyte is himself an amalgam of incongruous contrasts. On the one hand he engages in sharp and underhand business transactions while on the other he indulges in grossly sentimental benevolence towards sick children. He also alternates between timorous despair and aggressive happiness, depending upon his love of money, which ever is uppermost. His most incongruous impulse is his feelings for Virginia, which are at once those of the purest father love and the most violent eroticism.

Virginia Maunciple as a character in the novel acts as a most important device of exposing contradictions in other characters. In Peter Boone's case she serves to reveal the confusions in his

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mind. Pete is an idealist whose idealism extends not only to his radical communist yearnings but also to his failure in seeing Virginia (his object of ideal love) in any kind of realistic light, even to the extent that he fails to realize that she is Jo's mistress. Huxley once again satirizes the romantic love by highlighting the contrast between the feelings of the lover and the object of love.

Virginia not only exposes the contradictions of others, she illustrates also the principle of contradiction in her own behaviour. She is an amalgam of innocence and worldliness and in her own uniquely vulgar way extremely religious. Her feelings of piety have their incarnation in the remarkable statue of the Virgin Mary which stands in her boudoir:

You drew back a pair of short white velvet curtains (everything in the room was white), and there, in a bower of artificial flowers, dressed in real silk clothes, with the cutest little gold crown on her head and six strings of seed pearls round her neck, stood our lady, brilliantly illuminated by an ingenious system of concealed electric bulbs (Huxley 1964:144).

Her religion, however contrasts sharply with her sexual habits, and the bedroom location of her idol provides ample opportunities for black comedy and extremely bad taste, which Huxley to his credit exploits to the full (Ferns: 152). Virginia, in her bedroom assumes that our lady (Virgin Mary) pardons her sexual lapses provided they occur in a suitably romantic context with "a boy saying lovely things to you, and a lot of kissing, and at the end of it almost without your knowing it, almost as if it weren't happening to you, so that you never felt there was anything wrong, anything that, Our Lady would really mind..." (Huxley 1964:144).

Further contradictions are exposed in her behaviour by her complacency with Obispo rather than to Pete who possesses all the romantic illusions she supposes herself to share. Despite her distaste for Obispo's cynicism she prefers him in the end he is "a real good looker... rather in the style of Adolphe Menjou... It was those dark eyes with oil in their hair that has always given her the biggest kick!" (Huxley 1964:143).

With Obispo the contradictions stop. He is not hampered by any illusions and knows exactly and clearly what he wants and how to get on it. He exploits Jo's fear of death to disguise his affair with

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Virginia. He also exploits Pete not only seducing the object of his adoration but also gets Virginia to play on that adoration in order to divert Jo's suspensions. But it is his manipulation of Virginia above all that illustrates the power which Obispo's single mindedness gives him over others. He not only seduces her but he does so without making slightest concession to her notion of how such seduction should proceed:

She would take him and take him what was more in his own terms. No Romeo and Juliet acts no non-sense about love, with a large L, none of that popular song clap trap... Why not treat the whole business scientifically? (Huxley 1964: 109)

Obispo is uncompromisingly committed to the destruction of illusions, the reduction of everything to the purely factual. His determination to bring everything down to the level of physical fact is dehumanizing especially in his views on love which he sees merely as a reduction to the animal. Obispo's reflection on the nature of sexuality culminate in a description of it in the familiar Huxleyan terms of abhorrence:

You took an ordinary ordinarily rational human being, a good hundred percent American with a background, a position in society, a set of conventions, a code of ethics, a religion ...you took this good citizen, with rights fully and formally guaranteed by the Constitution, you took her ... and you proceeded. systematically and scientifically, to reduce this unique personality to a mere epileptic body, moaning and gibbering under the excruciations of pleasure for which you, the Claude Bernard of the subject, were responsible and of which you remained the enjoying, but always detached, always ironically amused, spectator... (Ferns: 154)

Obispo's detached cynical attitude towards everything is certainly a way of bringing order to the chaos but it is the way which is denigrated by Huxley, his cold attitude and his treatment of Jo Stoyte to whom he is employed as a physician makes him "Mephistopheles" with his hoax theories, his concoctions which he injects to his prey Jo and his pre-occupation with evil makes a typical villain of fantastic tradition. In fact he appears like a character who has come out of the hell. Nevertheless, the very nature of *After Many a Summer* is such that the existence of Obispo has to be counter balanced by

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some kind of opposite and it is William Propter who acts as a contrast to the amoral doctor and plays an important role in enclosing frame work for this novel of contrast and incongruities. The presence of these two characters in the frame work of the novel presents an allegorical tussle between good and evil material and spiritual. Peter Bowering puts the matter excellently as follows:

Doctor Obispo and Mr. Propter representing the conflicting ideologies in the novel are symbolic manifestations of the material, spiritual motifs referred to earlier. Delineated with an almost allegorical simplicity, they hover around Stoyte like the good and the evil angels round a tottering Faustus, Obispo tempting with his promise of rejuvenation, while Propter offers the more permanent if less immediate attractions of enlightenment (Bowering 1968:149).

Like Obispo, Propter sees through the illusions of others and also remains detached, as any one must to preserve their sanity in the midst of the lunatic world which the novel portrays. According to Keith May, Propter is the central melody, to which the other melodies (characters) being variations are distorted echoes owe their existence (Keith: 151). He is a saintly figure trying to convince a usually skeptical audience of the reality of a spiritual dimension which alone can make sense of illusions and insanities of everyday world while Obispo, by contrast acts as a kind of Mephistopheles, offering the delight of this world, only at a price. Virginia buys concrete, factual physical pleasure but at the expense of her peace of mind. Jo buys of the threat of a murder charge for the shooting of Pete but only at the expense of acquiescing in his own cuckoldry. To say nothing of having to pay his rivals an extremely large sum of money. His dignity thus undermined, Jo is prepared in the end to accept Obispo's ultimate gift—that of eternal life, but only at the loss of his humanity.

In spite of all their contrasting natures, Obispo and Propter are the only conflicting elements in the novel, which are not directly juxtaposed; the confrontation between their ideas and attitudes remains an implicit one. Their essential opposition becomes clear in the scenes where each of them offers his interpretation of Molinos text which Jeremy discovers among the Hauberk papers: “Ame a Dios como es en si, y no como se lo dice y forma su. Imaginacion.” (Huxley 1964:54). For Obispo the

statement is meaningless, since he sees all perception as subjective: even if one purges the mind of illusions, one will still see things from one's own point of view:

Why, you can't even love a woman as she is in herself; and after all, there is some sort of objective physical basis for the phenomenon we call a female. A pretty nice basis in some cases, Where as poor old Dios is only a spirit. in other words pure imagination. And here's this idiot, whoever he is, telling some other idiot that people mustn't love God as he is in their imagination (Ibid).

Propter, on the other hand, while he concedes that Molinos' statement is meaningless in materialistic terms, sees it as an indication of the possibility of transcending materialism, of penetrating beyond the world of illusions to some deeper kind of reality. While he is as aware as Obispo of the delusions, which most human beings suffer from, he believes that there is a further delusion inherent in relying solely on a literal and self-consciously unromantic conception of reality. Just as Calamy, in *Those Barren Leaves*, criticizes Chelifer for his insistence on the ultimate reality of boring everyday existence, accusing him of being a 'sentimentalist reversed', so propter sees an exclusive belief in the reality of 'facts' as yet another kind of self-deception. He believes that most human beings define as 'reality' only what they can understand within the terms of the language systems, perceptions, and habits of thought which they have been conditioned into adopting-that their reality is in fact an artificial construct, which excludes the possibility of any experience, which lays outside the area it encloses. like Obispo, he knows that his theory can only be validated by 'a practical try-out': just as the women Obispo seduces can only discover the real nature of the sensual ecstasy he promises them by sleeping with him, Propter's audience can only be convinced of the existence of an ultimate spiritual reality which lies beyond language by experiencing it themselves. As Propter points out:

...There is a way. You can go and find out what it means for yourself, by first hand experience. Just as you can find out what El Greco's 'Crucifixion of St. peter' looks like by taking the elevator and going up to the hall (Huxley 1964:166).

Unlike Obispo's experimental validation, however, Propter's is lacking in immediate appeal. Transcendental spiritual experience is not quite so easy to attain as sexual satisfaction, as he himself concedes "...in this case, I'm afraid, there isn't any elevator. You have to go up on your own legs. And make no mistakes... there's an awful lot of stairs" (Ibid).

However Propter at the same time has come to accept cardinal Bernlle's definition of man as "nothingness surrounded by God, indigent and capable of good filled with God if he so desires", and accepts John Tauler's definition of God as "a free power, a pure working" (Huxley 1964:90). Propter's chief wish is clearly to the effect that man should recognize his own nothingness and should desire to be filled with God. This is the substance of Propter's teaching. It should be added that he also proposes a kind of Jeffersonian democracy in which his traditional message has the greatest chance of being acted upon. Propter, of course has taken a beating from the critics. Derrek Verschoyle states that:

With Mr. Propter as a character, he displays little skill of any kind. His failure with him is a matter of proportion, for while there can be no two opinions of the interest of what he says, the effect of his monologues, which occur too frequently and at infinitely too great length, is to make the book profoundly static, and to destroy the effect of what has preceded them. It does not matter that his philosophic lectures would not be credible in a person in real life; it does not matter that they have the effect, not of elements in a work of fiction, but a series of casual tracts(Verschoyle 1939:13).

Derrek Verschoyle's remarks are valid so far Mr. Propter's monologues are concerned. He talks too much in relation to the rest of the novel, about sixty out of two hundred and fifty-two pages of the book, and he is barely involved in the action of the novel yet Huxley introduce Propter in the novel as a moral pivot and a standard against which every character of his novel is judged. Every character except Propter thinks and acts falsely. The environment of the novel expresses and fosters ways of life diametrically opposed to the ways advocated by Propter. In fact his constructive philosophical thesis that good exists outside the time relates him directly to the theme of the novel, which deals with the concept of acquiring good in time.



*After Many a Summer* as a novel works on more than one level. It suggests his departure from realistic novel and on another level it marks the beginning of expounding of his beliefs with clarity and sureness which was missing from other novels. Malcom Cowley states that, “Huxley in this novel abandons art for morality... he still tells us a story, but... it is primarily intended as a moral lesson” (Cowley 1940:216).

### ***Ape and Essence***

*Ape and essence* is a novel much in tradition of George Orwell’s *1984*, written one year after *Ape and Essence*. *Ape and Essence* is a dystopia and presents an apocalyptic vision of the world. While *1984* is a political dystopia Huxley's dystopia is a historical and metaphysical one, novel is a merciless allegory (Jerome: 189). Huxley saw it as a partial redressing of cruel oversights in *Brave New world* (1928). *Ape and Essence* is in fact the part of the trilogy which Huxley wrote about the possible futures. While *Brave New World* and *Island* are the two utopias. *Ape and Essence* is a dystopia. Huxley through this novel visualizes a society, which has lost its spiritual value and has taken refuge in animal bestiality Huxley comes through as a prophet forecasting the destruction that atomic wars, organized religion and nationalism can cause.

The novel is written in a scenario form (a rejected script rescued on its way to the studio incinerator). The time: the post-atomic twenty second century. The setting: the Los Angels plain. “Dissolve to street under the porches of ruined filling station the heaps of human bones”(Huxley 1948:40). It is some decades after the world War III, atomic bomb, ‘the thing’ has wasted most of our known world; Active radiation has ceased, but food is still short, and everything else. The books from the former L.A. Public Library are used to stoke Communal ovens; Labour gangs dig up and plunder the corpses of the dead. Four babies out of five are born deformed and are destroyed and their mothers savagely punished; sex is loathed and feared, only periodic orgies are permitted by Church and State. The state religion is cult of Belial, government is absolute run by a hierarchy of castrated Priests, Arch Vicars followed by patriarchs, Presbyters, Postulants and Satanic science practitioners. Anthony West contends that, “novel is a pseudo scientific shocker something like M.P. Sheils’s *Purple Cloud*”(Anthony West 1949:232-33).

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*Ape and Essence* has been divided into two parts for the sake of the purpose of lending objectivity to the treatment of subject by distancing the main course of the novel from its author. The title of the first part of the novel is "Tallis" and its narrative deals with the discovery of the rejected script. This part is written as verisimilitude and comprises a brief satire on Hollywood and a number of Touches which anticipate the material of the second, much longer part. Huxley creates a device for frame work in the same manner as did H G Wells, William Morris and Nathaniel Hawthorne to offer just a few examples. All of them thought it desirable to move into the main supernatural story via some comparatively humdrum proceeding during which, for instance, the dreamer settles to his sleep or one of the company looks up the intriguing manuscript.

In this way Huxley has his first narrator talk with Bob Briggs and later discover the script and travel to the Tallis ranch. The first part not only acts as piece of satire on Hollywood and the discovery of Tallis' script, it also has a tone whose cynicism faintly foreshadows what is to follow (Keith: 178). This tone in a calculated manner is set by the first paragraph of the novel it self:

It was the day of Gandhi's assassination; but on calvary the site seers were more interested in the contents of their picnic baskets than in the possible significance of the after all, rather, common place event. They had turned out to witness. The centre of the universe is here, not there. Gandhi might be dead; but a cross the desk in his office, across the lunch table in the studio commissary, Bobbriggs was concerned to talk only about himself (Huxley 1948:1).

Placing Gandhi against the picnicker on calvary and then focusing more sharply upon one particular *homme moyen sensual* (Mr. Briggs) is a means of conveying neatly the point which will continuously be made by varying methods through out the novel.

Gandhi's death signals the death of spiritual qualities and the acceptance of amused egotism. This theme is continued through out the novel and later we learn from the Arch Vicar that it was not the share quantity of evil working through the Belial's triumph; It was rather the loss of recognition of spiritual qualities. This theme is developed in first part through depicting Bob Briggs' timid dreams of adultery and the milieu he lives in. Briggs is contrasted with Byron, Keats and Shelly not only for the sake of humor but also as the reminder of the audacity and spiritual grandeur, which those romantic poets, in the midst of their human feelings possess. The spiritual debasement is also stressed on by the

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joke about Christ when Briggs asks his producer, Lou Lublin, for an increase in salary to which Lou Lublin replies that “in this studio, at this time, not even Jesus Christ himself could get a raise” (Huxley 1948:169). This leads nameless narrator of the first part, which may be identified as Huxley himself, to think of the scene of Christ begging before Lou Lublin for salary hike painted by Rembrandt, by Breughel and by Piero Della. Francesca. The other contrast to emphasize the debasement is the making of a picture in one of the studios at Hollywood about ‘Catherrine of Siena’ in which the emphasis is upon some insignificant love affair in the saint’s life. All these matters compose the theme of vanishing spirituality. The Prufrockian Bob Briggs, the assassination of Gandhi, the loss of the spiritual qualities found in Renaissance paintings, such elements are seen possibly impelling us towards some sort of nadir and sets the tone for pessimism that follows.

The discovery of the script takes the narrator and Bob Briggs to Southern California to its writer William who is already dead and is buried in the nearby desert. From this point on reader is placed in a movie script, a post atomic world and narrations is handed over to the second narrator which marks the beginning of Part-II and the transcendence from verisimilitude to Fantasy. To give shape to this bizarre material and articulate his ideas effectively Huxley experienced problem in finding a suitable vehicle for expression. Regarding the form of second part Huxley states:

..... there was no other form that would do. I tried at first to write it straight; but the material simply wouldn't suffer itself to be expressed at length and in realistic, versimilitudinous terms. The thing has to be short and fantastic, or else it could not be at all. So I chose the scenario form as that which best fulfilled the requirements (Smith 1969:600).

### **Kinematic Narrative Technique**

Therefore, Huxley took recourse to the Kinematic narrative technique that borrows from film the device of rapid motion, sensory stimulation, and compressed data. In accordance with the form of the novel the plot and action are pinned to the background the action is pacey, narrator moves swiftly from one scene to another, which adds to the celerity of execution. C S Ferns states that the use of the scenario form puts too much pressure on the reader’s imaginative capability (Ferns 177). However, Huxley deliberately adopted an approach likely to create very decided expectations on the part of the

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reader. Besides, the use of this form allows Huxley to distance himself from the view expressed by the narrator or any other character like Arch vicar or Dr. Poole. Reader is always made conscious by the use of such terms like close-up, cut, the change of camera angle that he is actually reading a script by some William Tallis.

In this way narration is divided between two persons one pyrrhonic observer, one who along with Briggs discovers the Tallis' rejected script and the second person is Tallis himself giving vent to his embitterment through the persona of narrator in the movie. The use of second narrator helps Huxley to distance himself from the attitudes which he maintained during and just after Second World War but didn't wish to be devoured by, therefore, attributed to Tallis. The other reason for the use of the Narrator instead of the customary Huxleyan sage, marginally involved in the plot was that Huxley was aiming at pure fantasy (Rolo 1948:102-3). Therefore, he refrained from any attempt at realism. With the change of narrator reader is transformed from Zero world (Wolfe 1986:63) to the secondary world, which encompasses the elements of horror and Fantasy. The world that is presented is a world of baboons; the surrealistic images of the Apes are intended to represent humans with their coarse animal instincts. The screenplay opens with a baboon harlot singing onstage to an admiring crowd:

Give me, Give me, give me

Give me detumescence... (Huxley 1948:84).

As the Baboons move to the tunes of the baboon singer the next scene shifts to the sea and a four masted schooner named Canterbury is approaching the coast of California at the end of its voyage from New Zealand. The year is 2108 and the events are introduced to give the reason for the dystopic condition of the world. In this early part the allegory predominates. Huxley wished to portray the historical event which forms the background to the main story of Dr. Alfred Poole as a means of telling what was wrong with the world then, in the twentieth century.

Allegory was chosen because realistic expression of the third world war would have obscured its cause in terms of human psychology. The reader who is expected to be in Cinema (as he is reading a movie script) is shown another cinema full of baboons whom no doubt human beings resemble, the baboon actors in full sadistic control of human beings with the faces of Einstein, Faraday and Pasteur. Two Einstein's, each one enslaved by a different army are fairly soon obliged by their captors to inaugurate the Catastrophic war. The scene ends with both baboon armies lying dead on the ground

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while two Einsteins look at each other in astonishment and are last o die and the narrator declares ‘death by suicide of twentieth century science’.

The names of Einstein and Pasteur are introduced not just because their works pre-eminently, has made nuclear biological war fare possible, but also because these scientists represent the creative spirit in contrast to the tendency to stultify thought by presuming to know in advance what conclusion thought should reach. On the simplest level the fable here represents the opposition between scientific discovery and its misuse (Keith: 181). But at the deeper level the fundamental opposition is between ends which are ape chosen and means which are man’s, as the title of the novel implies taken from Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure* where Isabella delivers a speech:

But man, proud man, just in a little brief authority—  
Most ignorant of what he is most assured,  
his glassy essence— like an angry ape,  
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven  
as makes the angels weep (Huxley 1948:90).

The implication is that man’s spirit his glassy essence is characterized by transparency, so that it lets in truth. Wishes and fears, including what are thought of as noble aspirations, are apish because they through up barrier. Huxley viewed that in his time these formidable barriers by the presumption that mind is the soul instrument and arbiter of truth. But since the mind has an inclination to propose objectives, we are often driven into frenzied imbecility by a tendency to subvert or ignore the given truths of experience an effort to reach imagined destinations (Keith:182).

After the initial allegory which explains the reason’s for the World War III and resultant end of civilization we are introduced to the member from New Zealand rediscovers expedition which arrives from New Zealand, being the only place which survived the atomic bombs due to its geographic isolation The protagonist of the novel, Dr. Alfred Poole, a Botanist comes with the rediscovery expedition and finds himself amongst the civilization that has regressed to barbarism. This section is replete with the dystopic imagery and partakes with the gory and grotesque. The central themes of the novel all run through this section and are fully exposed through the dialogues between Dr Poole and

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Arch Vicar, the religious and political head of the survivors of nuclear destruction in Los Angeles. "Church and State/Greed and Hate/Two Baboon persons in one supreme Gorilla." (Huxley 1948:183).

These words of the narrator suggest the totalitarian character of the modern governments, which is responsible for the havoc done by the nationalism, which justifies the inhuman and wanton killing of one another.

The destruction caused by science and technology and the vices of organized religion and has reduced the civilization in *Ape and Essence* to a ghostly existence. "The great Metropolis is a Ghost Town, that what was once the world's largest oasis is now its greatest agglomeration of ruins in a Wasteland" (Huxley 1948:197). Skeletons are piled in doorways and ruined filling stations; dust, tattered clothing, cheap jewelry and brassieres cover what was once an undergraduate science laboratory, dunes of sand drift through the street, Trains and automobiles, rusty and unused, clutter the landscape. Women draw water from a well into a goatskin, food so scarce that books are pulverized for bread. The graves of pre-bomb movie moguls are robbed for jewelry and clothes. Many inhabitants are deformed; the gamma rays have produced babies with four rows of nipples, or without any legs or arms, or with eight or more fingers on a hand. The adults live a life of outlandish beliefs and shocking rituals. The religion followed is Diabolic, Belial has replaced God.

### **Arrangement of Language**

Much in the same way as any Fantastic, especially dystopic Fiction makes an arrangements of language that suites the articulation of the events removed from the reality Huxley makes use of certain words which forces the reader to resort to a "Conjectural mode of reading" in which the absent paradigm is replaced by paradigms of the empirical World (Angenot 1979:13). But evolve different meaning in the world created by the author the signifiers which in a naturalistic world may refer to something else are attributed to different signified which may or may not be related to the empirical signified.

### ***Brave New World***

Thus in *Brave New world* Alphas, Betas and Epsilons do not refer to the mathematical units but to the bottle made babies with varying intelligence and utility in state affairs. Similarly in Orwell's

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1984 (1949) many new terms and concepts like Newspeak and Double think are used in different context than they may empirically mean. Huxley also fills the empirical words with new meaning to propitiate his needs. Therefore the 'thing' in the novel refers to the third world war, the atomic and Biological warfare which led to the collapse of civilization. The term used for a woman is 'Vessel', "The vessel of the unholy spirit, the source of all deformity ... The enemy of the race, punished by Belial and calling down punishment on all those who succumb to Belial in her" (Huxley 1948:227). Huxley in a letter to Anita Loos suggested writing a novel about "Future .... A post atomic war society in which the Chief effect of the gamma radiations has been to produce a race of men and women who do not make love all the year round, but have a brief mating season"(Smith:569). We are told in the novel that due to the emission of gamma radiations after atomic war the sex has been reduced to a seasonal ritual rather than a regular affairs woman wear "NO" to cover the strategic places on their bodies to avoid intercourse except a particular time of the year when "NO" is removed. The humans who have normal sexual habits and mate round the year are referred to as 'Hots' and are considered threat to the society:

But remember your history if you want solidarity, you have got to have either an external enemy or an oppressed minority. We have not external enemies, so we have to make the most of our Hosts. They are what the Jews were under Hitler, what the bourgeois were under Lenin and Stalin what the heretics used to be in catholic countries and the papists under the Protestants. If anything goes wrong, its always the fault of the Hots. I don't know what we'd do without them (Huxley 1948:237).

They are executed and buried alive. The seasonal orgies take place on Belial's day: two week long mating period where no sense of reservation in terms of having a single partner, is held it is a kind of communal mating. The point that Huxley wants to bring home seems to suggest the degradation of the sex in his own times, where sex has become a mechanistic affair, used only to satiate the animal instinct devoid of any spiritual value. The sterility of sexual communion is reinforced by suggesting that the children produced of such union are mostly deformed and are systematically eliminated through 'purification ceremony' in which deformed babies are put to knife if they have more than three pairs of nipples or more than seven fingers or toes:

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blood, blood, the blood....’

The patriarch's left hand closes about the infant's neck...

Impales the child on his knife, then tosses the body into darkness .... (Huxley 1948:236).

The mother, who produce deformed babies are shaved and whipped with bull's pizzles. Such images are gory and add to the horror in novel.

### **Function of Fantastic Mode**

Huxley's use of fantastic mode enables him to avoid a large number of characters to focus on the undesirable attitudes and behavior, which used to create imbalance and was at odds with Huxley's pretensions to be offering an objective account of the world. In *Ape and Essence*, rather than the multiplication of individual examples Huxley pits the representational characters of two opposing worlds one realistic and other fantastic; as in case of Dr. Poole and Arch Vicar Against each other, where their incongruities expose there mutual absurdities.

Arch Vicar is the most impressive character in the novella, where characters are little developed and psychological penetration is shallow. He is the counter part of Mustapha Mond in *Brave New World* he is the cynical Huxley of early Huxley novels in his most grotesque guise. Sitting in his chapel he exponents to Dr. Poole the basic theology of the world of the damned over which he presides (Woodcock: 25). As he talks the annual scarifies of deformed babies and the flogging of their mother's is going on outside, the crowd whipping itself up to the state of excitement that will culminate in the great annual orgy. Poole watches in horrified fascination as the Arch vicar who terminates the lines of the Satanists that runs from Coleman through spandrel and Obispo-presents his interpretation of history as a triumph of the diabolic principle. "As I read history." He says, "it's like this man pitting himself against nature, the ego against the order of things, Belial" (a per Functionary sign of the horns) against the other one" (Huxley 1948:288). Finally assured in the nineteenth century when Belial fooled men into believing that "Progress and nationalism those were the two great ideas he put into their heads. Progress - the theory that you can get something for nothing; the theory that you can again... He would win the battle" (Huxley 1948:231). ... the great wars and revolutions that destroyed civilization and

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turned the earth into realm of Belial that man is diabolically possessed seems to the Arch- Vicar self – evident, “...are you aware, sir, that from the second century onwards every Christian believed that a man could be possessed by God? He could only be possessed by Devil. And why did people believe that? Because the facts made it impossible for them to believe otherwise, Belial's a fact, Moloch's a fact diabolic possession is a fact”(Huxley 1948:232).

This is surely the comment on the organized religion and its inability to provide any spiritual ground to the followers. The reason why Huxley makes the castrated clergy the heads of both state and religion in his dystopia is to suggest the sterility of both to raise human beings above the level of physical or material in modern times.

Belial is even said to have possessed scientists otherwise good meaning man but Belial, “got hold of them at the point where they ceased to be human beings and became specialists. Hence, the glanders and those Bombs” (Huxley 1948:233). Dr. Poole’s old Fashioned science has no answer to offer, or his neo-victorian respectability proof against the spirit of orgy.

Dr. Poole is a bachelor of thirty eight, arrives in time for the animal orgy. He is the typical Huxley male a man, bullied by his mother and is still intimidated by his own desires Dr. Poole’s progress as a character is conducted in three phases. The first phase comprises the events of part of Belial day (the day on which New Zealander’s set their foot on the coast of California). The second Phase consists of the happenings of Belial night which are described in detail and includes conversation between Poole and Arch Vicar. The third phase Begins on the following morning and covers eight weeks up to his final flight with Loola to join the community of Hots living near Fresno.

Dr. Poole is the hope that Huxley introduces in his novel; Optimism in the reign of pessimism. Through him Huxley suggests that the regeneration is possible, that we can create a better civilization through love and through the harmonious combination of east and west. “Eastern mysticism making sure that western science should be properly used; eastern art of living refining western energy; western individualism tempering eastern totalitarianism” (Huxley 1948:261). It is with Dr. Poole that Huxley’s didactic and moralistic mood takes charge of the situation. But before paving the way for a better future a ritual has to be executed to rise above the mundane human existence. Salvation is possible only a level above and below the human level and not on the human level. And the path to awakening goes from below to above, from animal to soul. Thus our doctor has to succumb to the animal passions,

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which he hitherto has been avoiding. During the dionysiac two weeks his sexual awakening leads him for the first time into a realm of personal tenderness for Loola, a self-concealing, eighteen year old Hot with two extra nipples, this experience is enlightening for both of them. Loola escapes the sheer animalisms of the mating season and Alfred becomes more human as a result of having behaved like an animal. A sort of balance is restored by the pair and in each of its members the larger wholeness, the re-ascent to the human level and possibilities beyond it.

### **Shelley and Huxley**

It is with Shelley and his semi mystical poetry that Huxley, through Poole's search for larger wholeness; makes his peace in *Ape and Essence*. When Poole wishes to dissuade Loola from her allegiance to the restrictive sexual customs practiced by the society of *Ape and Essence*, he begins to quote from the volume of Shelley he rescued from the bakery oven in much the same fashion Huxley salvaged Tallis' script from the incinerator, "We shall become the same, we shall become the one Spirit with in two frames, oh! Wherefore two?" (Huxley 1948:267) Poole asks quoting Episychidion, he realizes that making love like human beings "might not always and everywhere be the right thing. But here and now it is definitely" (Ibid).

It is a limited ideal, Huxley feels, though it is superior to that held by rest of the society in *Ape and Essence*, beyond it, perhaps, because of it, Poole already perceives something higher. The narrator perceives it too and asks: 'is there already the beginning of an understanding that "beyond Episychidion there is Adonais and beyond Adonias the worldless doctrine of the pure heart" (Huxley 1948:268). Probably so, since the novel concludes with Poole quoting the next to last stanza of Adonais in which, for Huxley, "The light whose smile kindles the universe" is "the fire for which all thirst," (Huxley 1948:271) or in other words, the mystics divine ground. The message is again clear, job, like always is done. Love and mysticism are the final hope for a new civilization at Fresno to which the two lovers are moving. Hope is in full bloom.

Anthony Bower argues that the message of the novel is anything but pertinent urgent and true (Bower 1948:210). *Ape and Essence* reveals Huxley's didactic temper in a much impressive manner. The Fantastic medium of the novel relieves him from the pressures exerted by the realistic medium. In

fact the kind of material that Huxley incorporates into the novel would not have found an appropriate expression in any other mode.

Realism with its focus on the empirical phenomenal world refuses to accommodate the conventions of a futuristic world, which hinges upon novelists imagination and the modification or manipulation of perceived reality. Besides didacticism has always been an element that tarnishes the realistic portrayal of the events, it comes in conflict with the aesthetic considerations of a work of art.

While in Fantasy aesthetic considerations are subservient to didacticism. Fantasy can hold the attention even if one disagrees with its premises. The fantastic context enables Huxley to present his views far more effectively than in a more realistic setting; by making the explanation which readers curiosity demands as grotesque vivid and horrifying as possible. Huxley manages to avoid the invidious earnestness which is always liable to attend overt explanations of a realistically presented world. Just as Swift uses the mechanisms of the traveler's tale in *Gulliver's Travels* to secure the attention of his audience, so that he might communicate his own views about society. So does Huxley in *Ape and Essence* rely on Tallis's script and working of dystopia to obtain a hearing for the message he wishes to convey.

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