

Eighth International Aldous Huxley Symposium
Firenze, 22–24 October 2025

ALDOUS
HUXLEY
IN
ITALY



Italy

*There is a country in my mind,
Lovelier than a poet blind
Could dream of, who had never known
This world of drought and dust and stone
In all its ugliness: a place
Full of an all but human grace;
Whose dells retain the printed form
Of heavenly sleep, and seem yet warm
From some pure body newly risen;
Where matter is no more a prison,
But freedom for the soul to know
Its native beauty. For things glow
There with an inward truth and are
All fire and colour like a star. (...)*

(from Aldous Huxley,
The Defeat of Youth and Other Poems, 1918)

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THE EIGHTH INTERNATIONAL ALDOUS HUXLEY SYMPOSIUM:

ORGANIZATION

Theme:

Aldous Huxley in Italy:
Rest Cure or/and Cultural Challenge?

Venue: Centro Studi Ricerca e Formazione CISL, Via della
Piazzuola, 71, 50133, Firenze (<https://www.centrostudi.cisl.it/>)

Conference dates: 22–24 October 2025

Convenors: The International Aldous Huxley Society (AHS) and
the Centre for Aldous Huxley Studies (CAHS)
(<https://www.uni-muenster.de/Anglistik/Huxley/>)

Organizing Committee:

- Prof Dr Bernfried Nügel, University of Münster, Chairman of the AHS
- Dr Gerhard Wagner, University of Münster, Vice-Chairman of the AHS
- Dr Uwe Rasch, University of Münster, Centre for Aldous Huxley Studies
- Dr Heike Sieger, University of Münster, Centre for Aldous Huxley Studies

Advisors:

- General Advisor: Dr Piero Ferrucci, Fiesole, Honorary President of the AHS
- Italian Advisor: Prof Dr Alessandro Maurini, University of Turin

Telephone Contact: Centro Studi CISL: +39 055 5032111;

Support: The Eighth International Aldous Huxley Symposium is sponsored by the International Aldous Huxley Society

Registration:

Wednesday, 22 October, 8:30–9:15

Thursday, 23 October, 9:00–9:30

Friday, 24 October, 9:00–9:30

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Photo of Aldous Huxley:

On the cover: Portrait of the artist as a young man in the mode of “Little Mexican” (from a French promotional postcard for the edition of *Contrepoint*, courtesy AHS)

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Welcome

to the Participants of the
Eighth International Aldous Huxley Symposium

For the sixth time the international community of Huxley scholars has resolved to hold a symposium in a region that Huxley himself visited and explored in the course of his worldwide travels. This time it is Florence that has attracted Huxleyans from all over the world, and against this backdrop the general theme of the conference is “Aldous Huxley in Italy,” focussing on Huxley’s attitude towards Italian culture and his experience of Italian people and everyday life in the 1920s. But, as usual with the preceding Huxley symposia, this conference covers many other topics more or less closely connected with that period. In addition, a special feature of the symposium is the Huxley Forum, a format introduced at the three previous symposia in order to encourage the discussion of an overreaching issue in Huxley studies. In Florence it focusses on “The Reception of Aldous Huxley,” and the convenors are very grateful to Dr Uwe Rasch (University of Münster) for having arranged it.

Earlier meetings of the International Aldous Huxley Society have taken place in 1994 in Münster, Germany, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Huxley’s birth; in Singapore, in 2000/01, on the subject of “Aldous Huxley and the Challenges of the Third Millennium”; in Riga, Latvia, in 2004, on the subject of “Aldous Huxley, Man of Letters: Thinker, Critic and Artist”; in Los Angeles, in 2008, on the subject of “Aldous Huxley in America”; in Oxford, in 2013, on the subject of “The Condemned Playground: Aldous Huxley and His Contemporaries”; in Almería, Spain, in 2017, on the theme of “Aldous Huxley in Europe,” and in Toulon, France, in 2021, on the subject of “Aldous Huxley in France: The Experience of Exile.” Lists of speakers and their topics at these meetings are

still available on the AHS website <https://www.uni-muenster.de/Anglistik/Huxley/ahs_conferences.html>.

The Aldous Huxley Society, founded in 1998, has two chief purposes: to promote the academic study of the works of Aldous Huxley, in particular critical editions, commentaries and interpretations, and to make a wider public acquainted with the thought and writings of the author. Furthermore, the Society supports the Centre for Aldous Huxley Studies (CAHS) at the Department of English at the University of Münster, and undertakes to organize academic meetings, further academic work of its members within the scope of its authority and possibility, cooperate with other societies devoted to the academic study of the works of Aldous Huxley and send delegates to international conferences. The Society possesses its own research library, and sponsors a journal, *Aldous Huxley Annual*, edited by Professors Jerome Meckier (University of Kentucky) and Bernfried Nügel (University of Münster), as well as a monograph series, "Human Potentialities," edited by Prof Bernfried Nügel and Dr Gerhard Wagner (University of Münster).

Those interested in joining the Society should first consult its website and then apply to its Chairman, Professor Bernfried Nügel (<nugel@uni-muenster.de>).

One of the foremost English-language writers of the last century, Aldous Huxley (1894–1963) was an encyclopaedic man of letters in the traditional sense, that is, a thinker, critic and artist in one. After the radical scepticism of the first two decades of his career (1916–1936), which culminated in his world-famous satirical novel of the future, *Brave New World* (1932), he aspired, from the end of the 1930s, to a metaphysical expansion of his world-view and his image of humanity. Among the steps that clearly testify to this development are his foundation of a modern ethics in his essay collection *Ends and Means* (1937), his anthology (with comments) of excerpts from Western and Eastern mystics, entitled, in allusion to Leibniz, *The Perennial Philosophy* (1945), and his self-experiments with mind-expanding drugs, described in

The Doors of Perception (1954) and *Heaven and Hell* (1956). At the centre of his later thinking was the notion of “actualizing human potentialities,” depicted, for instance, in his last novel, *Island* (1962). Throughout his career, Huxley had a searching mind, always open to new insights and solutions of problems. His last great essay, *Literature and Science* (1963), shows him as a bridge builder between the humanities and the natural sciences; it closes with an encouraging remark typical of the later Huxley: “Cheerfully accepting the fact [of man’s limited ability to explore the universe], let us advance together, men of letters and men of science, further and further into the ever expanding regions of the unknown.”

Within this mental framework Huxley worked also as a distinguished literary critic, art critic, and critic of society and culture. Several essay collections, such as *Along the Road* (1925), *Proper Studies* (1927), *Music at Night* (1931), *The Olive Tree* (1936), *Themes and Variations* (1950), *Adonis and the Alphabet* (1956) and *Brave New World Revisited* (1958), can still be read with profit and delight nowadays, especially because Huxley was doubtless one of the leading essayists of the twentieth century. His literary oeuvre is characterized by extraordinary variety: apart from essays, he wrote not only poems, short stories and dramas, but also novels and utopias. His first utopia, *Brave New World* (1932), was dystopia and anti-utopia in one, and *Ape and Essence* (1948) as well as his musical comedy version of *Brave New World* (1956) reveal that his anti-utopian thinking deepened over the years; even his so-called positive utopia *Island* (1962) provides no blueprint of a perfect society but a qualified picture of what might be humanly possible at the time of its composition.

To commemorate Aldous Huxley, the International Aldous Huxley Society (Münster, Germany) and the Aldous & Laura Huxley Literary Trust (Los Angeles) have set up an oak bench in Compton Cemetery (Surrey) near the grave of the Huxley family. On the top rail, as Huxley’s call for continuous awareness, a quotation from *Island* has been carved: “Here and now, boys!” Almost all the books, manuscripts and letters he kept at his home in Los Angeles were destroyed in a brush fire in 1961. Some

surviving materials are housed at the UCLA Library, which also acquired materials from Mrs Laura Huxley's residence in the Hollywood Hills in 2009.

After Huxley's death in 1963 interest in his work has been growing since the mid-1960s and gathering strength since the 1990s, with the foundation of the Aldous Huxley Society and its associated meetings throughout the world. With the death of Huxley's only son, Matthew, in 2005, and that of Huxley's second wife, Laura, in 2007, the long-standing copyright problems associated with the filming of his best-known novel, *Brave New World*, had finally been resolved, but regrettably no pertinent film project has since then materialized. Instead, we are happy to report a different attraction in the field of Huxley activities. On 16 September 2023 AHS Curator Robin Hull founded the Aldous Huxley Centre Zurich, an institute devoted predominantly to the reception of Aldous Huxley (<<https://www.huxleycentre.ch/>>), with the particular aim "to interest young people in reading and thinking out of the box." The Centre justly boasts the "world's largest exhibition of Huxley's works" and uses up-to-date digital devices, such as an AI-generated Huxley avatar, to put his oeuvre across to the younger generation: it certainly deserves your visit!

The Eighth International Aldous Huxley Symposium has been convened in Florence by the International Aldous Huxley Society and the Centre for Aldous Huxley Studies, Münster, Germany, but it is the participants who really matter: they will doubtless make it a further highlight in the tradition of international Huxley Symposia since 1994!

With all good wishes
from the organizing committee,

Bernfried Nügel (University of Münster)
Gerhard Wagner (University of Münster)
Uwe Rasch (University of Münster)
Heike Sieger (University of Münster)

PROGRAMME

EIGHTH INTERNATIONAL ALDOUS HUXLEY SYMPOSIUM

Theme: Aldous Huxley in Italy: Rest Cure or/and Cultural Challenge?

Convenors: The International Aldous Huxley Society (AHS) and the Centre for Aldous Huxley Studies (CAHS) [<https://www.uni-muenster.de/Anglistik/Huxley/>]

Venue: Centro Studi Ricerca e Formazione CISL, Via della Piazzuola, 71, 50133, Firenze (<https://www.centrostudi.cisl.it/>)

Dates: 22–24 October 2025

TUESDAY, 21 OCTOBER 2025

18:00–20:00 Conference Warming (arranged by the International Aldous Huxley Society) at the Centro Studi CISL

WEDNESDAY, 22 OCTOBER 2025

ALDOUS HUXLEY IN ITALY

Registration: 8:30–9:15

9:15–9:30 *Opening Addresses*

Dr Piero Ferrucci, Aldous and Laura Huxley Literary Trust
Profs Alice Cheylan and Alain Morello, University of Toulon
Prof Bernfried Nugel, Chairman of the International
Aldous Huxley Society

SYMPOSIUM PROGRAMME

WEDNESDAY, 22 OCTOBER 2025 (ctd.)

9:30–10:30

Chair: Bernfried Nugel

Keynote Lecture:

James Sexton: “Aldous Huxley and Italy”

10:30–11:00 *Break* (coffee and snacks)

11:00–13:00

Chair: Gerd Rohmann

Alice Cheylan/André-Alain Morello: “Aldous Huxley and the Revelation of Italy”

Chiara Sciarrino: “Music, Counterpoint, and Narrative Complexity in Aldous Huxley’s *Point Counter Point*”

Grzegorz Moroz: “Aldous Huxley, Italy and the Travel-Writing Discourse”

13:00–14:30 *Lunch Break*

14:30–16:00

Chair: Gerhard Wagner

Andrija Matić: “‘A Man in an Iron Mask’: Evocations of Italy in Aldous Huxley’s Short Fiction”

Gerry Kimber: “‘Bitterness and Hostility’: Huxley and Murry at War”

Lawrence Davidson: “Aldous Huxley: From Italy to France to *Brave New World*”

16:00–16:30 *Break* (coffee and snacks)

16:30–17:30

Chair: David Dunaway

Gerd Rohmann: “Italy, Montaigne, and Huxley’s Essayism”

Tobias Harris: “The Posthuman Huxley of *Proper Studies*: Posthumanities and Huxley’s Italian Essays”

SYMPOSIUM PROGRAMME

THURSDAY, 23 OCTOBER 2025

Registration: 9:00–9:30

ALDOUS HUXLEY: RE- AND PERCEPTION

9:30–13:00

HUXLEY FORUM: THE RECEPTION OF ALDOUS HUXLEY

(arranged by Uwe Rasch)

9:30–10:30

Keynote Lecture:

Robin Hull: “The Aldous Huxley Centre Zürich—Reaching Out to Younger Readers”

10:30–11:00 *Break* (coffee and snacks)

11:00–13:00

Irina Golovacheva: “Aldous Huxley as the ‘People’s Enemy’: The Bomb and Post-War Soviet Propaganda”

Jesús Isaías Gómez López: “The Reception of Aldous Huxley in Spain”

Miguel Afonso Martini: “Sage, Guru and Teacher: Mysticism, Religion and Spirituality in Aldous Huxley Studies”

Uwe Rasch: “*Island*—A Curated Novel”

13:00–14:30 *Lunch Break*

14:30–16:00

Chair: Robin Hull

David Dunaway: “Atropine—Aldous Huxley’s First Psychedelic?”

Filip Świerczyński: “Anesthetising Humankind: Aldous Huxley, José M. R. Delgado, and the Psychocivilised Society”

Dana Sawyer: “Support for Huxley’s ‘Unitive Knowledge’ and Its Value as Found in Current Research with Psychedelics”

SYMPOSIUM PROGRAMME

16:00–16:30 *Break* (coffee and snacks)

16:30–17:30

Chair: Uwe Rasch

Erika Dyck/James W. Spisak: “Texts and Contexts: A New
Look at *The Doors of Perception*”

FRIDAY, 24 OCTOBER 2025

Registration: 9:00–9:30

VARIA

9:30–10:30

Chair: Bernfried Nügel

Keynote Lecture:

Jerome Meckier: “Three Little Words: Fixity, Mutability,
Stability—Butler, Orwell and Huxley”

10:30–11:00 *Break* (coffee and snacks)

11:00–13:00

Chair: Alice Cheylan

Emily Reed: “‘Beautiful words don’t always mean what they
ought to mean’: Language, Meaning and Artifice in the
Works of Aldous Huxley 1921–1927”

Heike Sieger: “Contralto Singers: Huxley’s Secret Humorous
Obsession”

Bernfried Nügel: “The Significance of the Concert Pitch in
Island”

13:00–14:30 *Lunch Break*

14:30–16:00

Chair: Gerhard Wagner

Sujatha Chandarlapaty: “The Literary and Psychological
Imaginations of Aldous Huxley”

SYMPOSIUM PROGRAMME

Zoe Leoni: “The Strategy of the Jesuits in the Political Thought of Aldous Huxley”

Raj Chandarlapaty: “Aldous Huxley and the Boundaries of Consciousness”

16:00–16:30 *Break* (coffee and snacks)

16:30–17:30

Chair: Dana Sawyer

Uwe Rasch: “40 Years On: Postman, Huxley and *Amusing Ourselves to Death*”

Robin Hull: “Of Amphibians, Jungian Swamps and Freudian Graffiti—Huxley and Psychology”

20:00–22:00 Farewell Dinner [location to be announced]

SATURDAY, 25 OCTOBER 2025

COACH TRIP TO SANSEPOLCRO

10:00–17:00

10:00 Departure from the Centro Studi CISL

12:00 Arrival at Museo Civico Sansepolcro

15:00 Departure for Centro Studi

17:00 Return

Participants are requested to register on the first day of the conference; there will be no charge, as all expenses are covered by the AHS.

NOTES ON THE SPEAKERS AND ABSTRACTS OF THEIR PAPERS

RAJ CHANDARLAPATY

Dr Raj Chandarlapaty is an independent scholar, who lives in Denver, Colorado. He earned his PhD from the University of South Florida in 2003 and was affiliated with the American University of Afghanistan from 2012 to 2017. He is the author of four books and ten articles. His most recent work is *Psychedelic Modernism: Literature and Film* (2024). (E-mail: <rchandar@msn.com>)



ALDOUS HUXLEY AND THE BOUNDARIES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

When we ask ourselves whether or not British writer and thinker Aldous Huxley altered the boundaries of consciousness, we own up to his professed humanism, which had sought to usurp the generations of rationalism and Marxism that had confined and materialized human consciousness in the pursuit of economic goals. Clear in Huxley's work, on the lecture circuit and in interviews was his determined stance that the rationalist fetters that had confined and truncated human consciousness be lifted, yet Huxley's technique was far from experimental and drew upon histories and scientists from as far back as the early nineteenth century. Strictly, he does not solely purvey the occult, but suggests that ritual and pharmacological traditions could offset the misery and servitude of modern millions. He is thus drawing upon an active historical component, one that would challenge and redirect rationalist overtures and institutions that tended to interdict thought, dreaming, and certain forms of self-realization. His primary novel, *Brave New World*, would be based upon the idea that humans could be controlled through the understanding of their brain impulses and personality traits and that a human

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being was a controlled being, not a purely experimental or free one. As regards *The Doors of Perception*, on the other hand, a critical examination of its contents will explain both the deep historical background and the traditions that tended to subvert or outmaneuver socialist dictations of conscious and unconscious cerebral control, thus speaking to the redrawing of boundaries.

SUJATHA CHANDARLAPATY

Dr Sujatha Chandarlapaty teaches as professor at Community College of Denver, Colorado. (E-mail: <kris_suja@msn.com>)

THE LITERARY AND PSYCHOLOGICAL IMAGINATIONS OF ALDOUS HUXLEY

My paper aims to trace Huxley's thoughts on literature and psychology as they emerged during the early modernist period, with examples from Joseph Conrad, D. H. Lawrence, Shahid Suhrawardy, and Dante Alighieri, as well as French surrealists that were beginning to become popular. The general effort is to tie Huxley's notions to an emerging race theory, as well as to forecast the success of the modernist generation, inasmuch as the form of Huxley's own ideas would make for a broader, more interactive and impactive literature during those years. This can be illustrated by Huxley's letters to Lady Ottoline Morrell and an embryonic take on Huxley's concept of internationalism to build modernist forms.

In this respect, I will also deal with wartime theory and the emergence of a new world literature that could transform colonialist thinking.

ALICE BAILEY CHEYLAN (AND ANDRÉ-ALAIN MORELLO, SEE BELOW)

Alice Bailey Cheylan was director of the Department of Applied Foreign Languages at the University of Toulon, where she taught English language and literature. Although she is now retired, she remains a member of the Babel research laboratory. Her main areas of interest are bilingualism, expatriate writers, feminism, surrealism, and translation. She has published studies on Aldous Huxley, Ezra Pound, Lawrence Durrell, Gertrude Stein, Edith Wharton, Richard Aldington, Ford Madox Ford, T. S. Eliot, Jane Adams, Katherine Anne Porter, and Amy Lowell. After the Seventh Aldous Huxley Symposium at the University of Toulon in 2021, she edited with Professor André-Alain Morello *Huxley, ce méconnu*, a collection of essays written by Huxley scholars. She is currently working on a series of critical studies on the work of Katherine Anne Porter.
(E-mail: <alicecheylan@yahoo.fr>)



ALDOUS HUXLEY AND THE REVELATION OF ITALY

Aldous Huxley visited and lived in Italy intermittently between 1921 and 1925. Settling at first in Florence and summering in Forte dei Marmi on the Tuscany coast with his family, he had ample time to travel and explore the rest of the country. Whether it was due to the distance from England or the discovery of Italy, Huxley's writing was prolific during this short period. It was there that he wrote his collection of short fiction *Mortal Coils* (1922) and three of his early novels: *Antic Hay* (1923), *Those Barren Leaves* (1925), and *Point Counter Point* (1928). This short study proposes to analyse how the physical distance from his home country and the immersion into a new culture allowed Huxley a certain critical distance from his own origins at the same time as a new awareness of future possibilities and directions. His fascination with Italian art, archaeology, and ancient cultures was both a result of

his early studies of the classics and a foreshadow of things to come. During his time in Italy he was able to crystallize social satires of his homeland and to consider future perspectives which would involve other countries and cultures.

LAWRENCE DAVIDSON

is Professor Emeritus of History at West Chester University in West Chester, Pennsylvania, USA. He holds a Ph.D. in European Intellectual History from the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. His dissertation was written on the subject of "Aldous Huxley on Drugs, Mysticism and the Humanization of Man." Subsequently, he made a career in the history of U. S. foreign policy in the Middle East.

(E-mail: <ldavidson1945@msn.com>)



ALDOUS HUXLEY: FROM ITALY TO FRANCE TO *BRAVE NEW WORLD*

This paper will trace Aldous Huxley's intellectual development during the 1920s and 1930s and, particularly, the role of his time in Italy on that process.

Aldous Huxley and his family moved to Italy in 1923, initially for economic reasons. Cultural appreciation contributed to the choice, as did Huxley's initial belief that Italy provided the writer with a congenial working environment. Over the next decade this positive perspective would be eroded by the political evolution of fascism in Italy. Of particular interest is Huxley's notion that there is a ratio of 'political efficiency' to creative freedom. If it gets out of balance things go badly for the writer and other culturally creative folks.

By the end of the 1920s the Italian fascist regime had become too 'efficient' for Huxley and he and his family moved to France in 1928. In these years Huxley's awareness of the importance of

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politics and its potential to homogenize society was heightened. This awareness was finally expressed in fictional form in the novel *Brave New World*.

From the 1930s onward Huxley would do his work against the backdrop of the rising reality of dictatorship in Europe. This political turn of events, ultimately leading to WWII, would push him geographically to the United States and intellectually toward a mystically colored philosophy built on the metaphor of man as an 'amphibious' creature living at multiple levels of awareness. This latter notion reflects Huxley's essential optimism in regards to humanity's ability to overcome its emotional and genetic disabilities.

DAVID DUNAWAY

is Professor of English at the University of New Mexico and author and editor of ten books, among them *Huxley in Hollywood* (New York, 1989) and *Aldous Huxley Recollected* (New York, 1995). He wrote the last *Dictionary of National Biography* listing on Huxley and has contributed articles on Huxley to *Anglistik* and *Aldous Huxley Annual*, as well as producing a national public radio series on Huxley, "Aldous Huxley's Brave New Worlds." His speciality is the presentation of literature and history via broadcasting. (E-mail: <dunaway@unm.edu>)



ATROPINE: ALDOUS HUXLEY'S FIRST PSYCHEDELIC?

It is commonly thought that Aldous Huxley's experiments with mind-altering substances began in the 1950s, as he was introduced to mescaline by Dr Humphry Osmond, Canadian researcher of mescaline and LSD. Among the psychoactive substances he is reputed to have ingested over the years are these:

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- 1) Possible cocaine use in the 1920s, when it was endorsed by Freud and had a brief popularity among England and Europe's cognoscenti;
- 2) Possible use of hashish during this same period, as mentioned to me in oral history interviews at the Huntington Library;
- 3) Use of psychoactive substances indefinitely defined and without specific time periods, including psychoactive mushrooms from his acquaintance with Gordon Wasson, possible use of LSD during his Hollywood years, in association with other Hollywood trend-setters.

Yet, his first psychoactive substance was undoubtedly atropine, today used in orthokeratology, a system of dilating the pupils of young children to help control developing myopia. Before any of the above uses of psychoactive substances, Huxley began his systematic use of atropine during his teenage years, following his blinding at Eton. Because his corneas were left scarred by that illness, he was unable to study for his Oxford entrance exams without dilating his pupils to see around blockages, as mentioned in Bedford, and in oral history interviews I have conducted.

The psychoactive effects of atropine were apparently unknown at this time, and the treatment was initiated by his uncle, Harry Huxley, who brought him after his *keratitis* injuries to the London Institute of Tropical Medicine. During my oral histories with the Huxley family and friends in the 1980s, the subject of atropine periodically came up, though no one specified how often and in what percentage atropine was given.

This presentation of Huxley's history with atropine may lead to a new understanding of the potential effects (including on his earliest published poetry, during a time when he was apparently using atropine at Balliol College at Oxford.)

ERIKA DYCK (AND JAMES W. SPISAK, SEE BELOW)

Erika Dyck is a professor and a Canada Research Chair in History of Health & Social Justice at the University of Saskatchewan. She is the author or co-author of several books, including *Psychedelic Psychiatry* (2008); *Managing Madness* (2017); *The Acid Room* (2022); and *Psychedelics: A Visual Odyssey* (2024). She is the co-editor of *Psychedelic Prophets* (2018); *Women & Psychedelics* (2024) and *Expanding Mindscapes* (2023).

She is currently the President of the Alcohol and Drugs History Society. (E-mail: <erika.dyck@usask.ca>)



TEXTS AND CONTEXTS: A NEW LOOK AT *THE DOORS OF PERCEPTION*

Aldous Huxley's *The Doors of Perception* has been a pillar of the psychedelic movement since its publication in 1954. We recently acquired a draft copy of the work that was among the papers of the late Dr. Humphry Osmond, the English psychiatrist who led the experiment that Huxley recounted in *Doors*. Osmond remained in close contact with Huxley until the end of his life, and their correspondence led Osmond to coin the word *psychedelic*.

This version contains Huxley's original handwritten annotations, averaging about one per page, and is the only known extant draft of this groundbreaking work. All the annotations in this draft are in original ink, done in at least two iterations, in Huxley's hand. Some of the glosses are minor corrections, while others recapture a phrase apparently omitted by the typist. But there are numerous instances in which Huxley clarified or amplified what he had written earlier.

Doors of Perception was an instant success, articulating an experience that researchers like Osmond and his colleagues had struggled to put into words. The experience that led Huxley to write *Doors* was groundbreaking but did not occur in a vacuum. Osmond had been studying these altered states of consciousness,

including his own temporary suspensions of reality, for over a decade before meeting Huxley. His prolific correspondence files, essays, and personal notes provide a vivid window into the context of consciousness studies that led him to Huxley's door in 1953.

While readers are familiar with Huxley's text, the context surrounding its inspiration has remained buried in the archives. Osmond's role has been muted, both in the text itself, where he is described anonymously by Huxley, and in the meteoric rise to fame that *Doors* experienced as a classic grounding text in the emergent field of psychedelics. Our presentation will make use of numerous under-studied archival texts to reveal a fuller picture of the context that led to the publication of *Doors* and help to situate it as a critical text in psychedelia.

IRINA GOLOVACHEVA

is a habilitated Doctor of Philology and professor at Saint Petersburg State University as well as at the Russian Christian Academy for Humanities named after Fyodor Dostoevsky. She is a Fulbright Foundation, Fletcher Jones Foundation (The Huntington Library), and Kone Foundation (Collegium for Advanced Studies, University of Helsinki) fellow as well as a member of the Aldous Huxley Society, the European Association for American Studies and the international editorial board of *Literature of the Americas* (Russian journal of literary history). Her major publications include three books in Russian: 1) *A Guide to 'Brave New World' and Around* (Moscow, 2017); 2) *Fantastika and the Fantastic* (St. Petersburg, 2013); 3) *Science and Literature: The Archeology of Aldous Huxley's Knowledge* (St. Petersburg, 2008), and a number of English articles on comparative literature, the fantastic, utopia, British and American fiction and biography. Besides, she has published numerous papers on monsters and doppelgangers



in fiction and film, on cognitive literature, and on mathematical methods in literary criticism. (✉ <igolovacheva@gmail.com>)

ALDOUS HUXLEY AS THE 'PEOPLE'S ENEMY': THE BOMB AND POST-WAR SOVIET PROPAGANDA

This paper, which has been prepared within the framework of a grant from the Russian Science Foundation (№ 25-28 00584; see <<https://rscf.ru/en/project/25-28-00584/>>), highlights the reasons behind the publication of a highly biased review of Aldous Huxley's second negative utopia—his nuclear dystopia *Ape and Essence* (1948)—in *The Literary Gazette* ['Literaturnaja Gazeta'] (September 1949). How did Huxley—of all Anglo-American men of letters—come to be viewed as a target for an attack after ten years of complete silence on the part of Soviet critics (the latest review of his work had appeared in 1937)? The spiteful essay of 1949 alongside with other similar publications in the Soviet press, with the official documents highlighting post-WWII international and home politics, and finally with the articles in the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*—all these put together uncover a cluster of reasons why Huxley had become a worthy target. His anti-totalitarian world-views, long-standing involvement in anti-war activism, his support of the idea of making the UNO a World Government, and, most importantly, his resentment towards nuclear weapons and the related arms race—this is what made the writer the ideal object of a fierce attack at a time when Soviet physicists were about to test their nuclear bomb. There were other equally important circumstances conditioning the specific tone of Soviet reviews of Huxley's oeuvre in the post-war years: ideological campaigns of the late 1940s, such as 'anti-cosmopolitanism' and 'anti-Americanism,' which had a strong impact on the assessment of Huxley's ideology by Soviet critics. There is a definite causal connection between the atmosphere of the Cold War, the new wave of ideological cleansing, and the invective tone of the random Soviet reviews of Huxley, in which the "new American writer" is misrepresented as a "warmonger" and an "anti-democratic extremist."

JESÚS ISAIÁS GÓMEZ LÓPEZ

was formerly an Associate Professor at the University of Almería (1999–2025) and is currently a literary translator for prestigious Spanish publishing houses. He graduated from the University of Granada with a Ph.D. in Philology (1998). Dr. Gómez López has published monographs, editions and articles mainly on James Joyce, Aldous Huxley, Ray Bradbury, Jack London and George Orwell, among other twentieth-century English and American writers. He is the first and only translator into Spanish of the collected poetry of George Orwell (George Orwell, *Poesía completa* [Visor Libros, 2017]), of the collected poetry of Aldous Huxley (Aldous Huxley, *Poesía completa* [Catedra, 2011]), of the collected poetry of Ray Bradbury (Catedra, 2013) and of the collected poetry of Jack London (Jack London, *El sueño socialista y otros poemas* [Verbum, 2019]). Among his most widely known publications are: Aldous Huxley, *Un mundo feliz* (Catedra, 2013), Jack London, *El talón de hierro* (Catedra, 2020), Ray Bradbury, *Crónicas marcianas* (Catedra, 2022) and George Orwell, *1984* (Catedra, 2024). He has also contributed a chapter to the forthcoming *Routledge Companion to George Orwell*, which is scheduled for release later this year. Currently, Dr. Gómez López allocates a significant proportion of his time and research to literary translation publications for leading publishing houses. He also manages a YouTube channel (@poesiaydistopia) for Spanish-speaking audiences with an interest in general culture, literature and translation. (E-mail: <jesuias@gmail.com>)



THE RECEPTION OF ALDOUS HUXLEY IN SPAIN

This paper examines the reception of Aldous Huxley's literary œuvre in Spain in two periods: under the Franco regime (1939–1976) and during the subsequent democratic period from 1976 to the present day. It analyses the Spanish censors' response to the

works of a writer with an evident pacifist background. In the first section, the paper looks at the important role played by the censors of the Spanish translations of Huxley's works during the Franco regime. For this purpose, it focuses on Huxley's publications with the greatest impact and circulation in Spain, namely *Brave New World*, *Point Counter Point*, and *Ape and Essence*. The second section of the paper explores the critical response to Huxley in Spain, tracing the opinions of well-known Spanish writers and intellectuals on Huxley the writer and Huxley the man, and the role played by Spain in his career and work.

TOBIAS W. HARRIS

is an Honorary Research Fellow at Birkbeck College, University of London, a Visiting Professor at the University of Orléans and Research Fellow at the Aldous Huxley Centre in Zürich. His research interests include Huxley, Irish modernism, critical theory and technology. Tobias is the winner of the 'Best Essay-Length Study on a Brian O'Nolan Theme (2015–16)' prize for an essay on Flann O'Brien and Karl Kraus, and his new monograph, *Flann O'Brien and the European Avant-Garde, 1934–45*, has been shortlisted for 'Best Book-Length Publication 2023–24' by the International Flann O'Brien Society. In February 2025, Tobias organised the 'Brave New Worlds' colloquium, a groundbreaking collaboration between Flann O'Brien and Aldous Huxley studies hosted by the Aldous Huxley Centre in Zürich. Tobias hosts the podcast *Radio Myles*. He has recently launched a new podcast, *Themes and Variations*, dedicated to popularising the ideas of Huxley and produced in collaboration with the Zürich centre. (E-mail: <tobias.harris@bbk.ac.uk>)



THE POSTHUMAN HUXLEY OF *PROPER STUDIES*:
POSTHUMANITIES AND HUXLEY'S ITALIAN ESSAYS

21st-century critical theory is the era of 'posthumanities': disciplines organised around the emerging awareness of the non-human, the transhuman, the object and the ecological. Robin Hull writes in his forthcoming *Companion to Aldous Huxley* that Huxley is "one of the very few thinkers in human history who has more to say to the present day than he did nearly a century ago." Accordingly, this paper will bring ideas developed by Huxley nearly one hundred years ago to bear on questions raised by contemporary posthumanities.

In *Proper Studies* (1927) Huxley pursues Alexander Pope's axiom that "the proper Study of Mankind is Man." Under the influence of Vilfredo Pareto's immense *Trattato di sociologia generale* (1916), Huxley eschews what he sees as "the entirely false conception of individual human nature" that dominated 18th-century sociology and pursues a characterisation of social institutions that is stripped of abstraction. The result is a set of essays that explore the human from the outside in, as it were, through the ideological, technical and cultural systems that prefigure our thoughts—and thus respond productively to the posthumanities.

In the essay titled "Education" Huxley's comparison between the "invisible" mind and the technology enframing our lives enters into a productive dialogue with the late 20th-century characterisations of the human as already enmeshed with technology found in work by Katherine Hayles and Bernard Stiegler. The critique of biological improvement in Huxley's "Note on Eugenics" replies critically to Donna Haraway's influential "Cyborg Manifesto" and Benjamin Bratton's more recent proposal for a "positive biopolitics." Finally, Huxley's efforts to situate the difficulty of transcending our "human conception" of nature through a clear understanding of patterns in individual psychology and a critique of abstraction offers a valuable rejoinder to object-oriented ontologies of the ecological developed by thinkers like Timothy Morton.

ROBIN HULL

is an enthusiastic Huxleyan. He has been a Curator of the International Aldous Huxley Society (IAHS) for more than twenty years and has recently founded the Aldous Huxley Centre Zürich in Switzerland, which opened in September 2023 and aims to interest the young in Huxley, literature, reading and critical thinking. He is the author of numerous essays on Huxley and has authored the first introduction to Huxley's life and work for younger readers—*Aldous Huxley for Beginners*—which appeared in February 2025. Having completed *A Companion to Aldous Huxley* (due to appear early in 2026), he is currently writing a teachers' guide to *Brave New World* and producing podcasts on Huxley with the centre's research fellow, Dr Tobias Harris.
(E-mail: <r.hull@hullschool.ch>)



OF AMPHIBIANS, JUNGIAN SWAMPS AND FREUDIAN GRAFFITI: HUXLEY AND PSYCHOLOGY

Together with the perennial philosophy, Huxley's conception of amphibious man forms the foundation of his world of ideas. The roots of Man the Multiple Amphibian, as outlined in *Adonis and the Alphabet* in 1956, reach back into his early novels. Huxley's model of multi-layered man is one of the most intriguing in existence; it is a distillation of much that Huxley says about human nature in his entire oeuvre—from the structure of the unregenerate self to the many strata of the subconscious and the physiological intelligence. Man the Multiple Amphibian is also key to Huxley's conception of self-transformation, including metanoia; it represents an implicit cosmology (implicit because Huxley was averse to cosmologies) and constitutes a framework of reference for the arts and all areas of knowledge, from religion and philosophy to science and political theory. I will touch on a number of psychologists more frequently discussed by Huxley, including Myers,

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Freud, Jung, and the constitutional psychologist William Sheldon, and explain why Huxley preferred psychological bogs to urinals.

THE ALDOUS HUXLEY CENTRE ZÜRICH—REACHING OUT TO YOUNGER READERS

Since its inception in September 2023 the Aldous Huxley Centre in Zürich has been experimenting with ways to engage young readers through Huxley's œuvre. Founded by Robin Hull—one of the IAHS Curators—as a private initiative, the centre has been visited by more than 1000 teenagers from dozens of schools all over Switzerland. It is a fusion of high academia and a theme park. This talk will reflect on the experiences so far with young readers and their response to *Brave New World*, amongst other things. It will cover a number of new practical ways trialled at the centre to enrich the teaching of literature through film projects, the use of avatars and immersive experiences related to Huxley. It will also explore different forms of supporting the teaching of *Brave New World* and other works by Huxley at high schools—with reference to *Huxley for Beginners* (the first introduction to Huxley's life and work written also for younger readers), other publications by the centre and a series of podcasts which are currently being created to augment interest in Huxley.

GERRI KIMBER

Dr Gerri Kimber is Visiting Professor in the Department of English at the University of Northampton. She is the author or co-editor of over 40 books and has contributed chapters to many other volumes. She has published widely in numerous journals, notably in the *Times Literary Supplement* and the *Los Angeles Review of Books*. She was President of the Katherine Mansfield Society for ten years (2010–2020). Due to her inter-



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national reputation as a Mansfield scholar, Gerri has made numerous media appearances on national radio and television in both New Zealand and the UK and has been invited as a keynote speaker all over the world, including Japan, New Zealand, Switzerland, Slovakia, Belgium, France, Germany and the UK. In 2014, she was runner-up for the title of UK New Zealander of the Year, for her services to New Zealand culture. Her new, highly anticipated biography of Katherine Mansfield will be published by Reaktion Books in November. (E-mail: <gerri@thekimbers.co.uk>)

“BITTERNESS AND HOSTILITY”: HUXLEY AND MURRY AT WAR

This paper will examine the extraordinarily complex relationship between Aldous Huxley and John Middleton Murry. As fiercely intellectual young men in the 1910s, their initially outward bonhomie would transmute into something far darker and more malevolent as the years went by, each vying to outdo the other in the field of literature—as author, editor, and especially as the friend of D. H. Lawrence. Huxley would go on to paint vicious portraits of Murry—and his dead wife Katherine Mansfield—in his early novels of the 1920s, while Murry in turn penned scathing attacks on Huxley, especially after Lawrence’s death, claiming the title of his one true friend for himself. As both men grew older, the hostilities subsided as they each took very different paths. Huxley became an internationally renowned author and philosopher, while Murry’s star shone far less brightly, as he became chiefly known as the editor of an embarrassing number of volumes of his dead first wife’s literary remains. After Murry’s death in 1957, his fourth wife, Mary, wrote to Huxley in 1960, asking for help. The recent biography of Murry by Frank Lea had been met with hostility by critics, and Mary asked Huxley if there was anything he could do, with “[m]any of them referring to Burlap in your book *Point Counterpoint* [sic] to substantiate their views.” She went on: “I believe I am right in thinking that a few years ago you and John exchanged friendly letters and that the bitterness and hostility of the early years had ceased.” My paper will offer a brief overview

of this complicated relationship and assess the different ways in which each author sought to outdo the other, before finally arriving at a place of repose, if not quite forgiveness.

ZOE LEONI

holds a Master's degree in Philosophical Sciences from the University of Turin, where she completed a thesis focused on seventeenth-century Jesuit scientific thought and the figure of Kaspar Schott. Her research interests lie at the intersection of the history of science, early modern philosophy, and the study of knowledge systems in relation to power, with particular attention to representations of animal alterity and the processes by which social order is naturalized. She is currently collaborating with the University of Turin on projects involving historical dissemination, academic communication, and the scientific coordination of public-facing cultural initiatives.
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THE STRATEGY OF THE JESUITS IN THE POLITICAL THOUGHT OF ALDOUS HUXLEY

"What the Jesuits did for the Roman Church of the Counter-Reformation, [they] are now doing, and will doubtless continue to do, for the Communist parties of Europe, Asia, and Africa." This is how Aldous Huxley wrote about Pavlovian conditioning in *Brave New World Revisited* (1958). The relationship between the Society of Jesus and mechanisms of power is a theme that Aldous Huxley revisits in many of his works. In *Grey Eminence* (1941) and *The Devils of Loudun* (1952), the philosopher analyses 'in action' the political ontology that characterizes the Society of Jesus and its hegemonic systems. And it is through the analysis of Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* that Huxley speaks of a religiosity devoid of mysticism; through the words of Grandier he addresses

an education aimed at cultural hegemony, and through the Society itself, a papacy without asceticism.

This essay aims to analyse the political strategy of the Society of Jesus in a comparison between history and Aldous Huxley's political thinking.

Three main themes will be followed: the domination of hearts, the education of souls, and the organization of bodies. These contents are important both for the historicization of the Society of Jesus and for the political metaphysics of Huxley, who examines and utilizes them to analyse his categories of the political, which encompass the entire human sphere.

Through these three main themes, we will explore how Jesuit religiosity is imbued with a spirit of domination and the mechanisms of power that are activated within the Society of Jesus to implement such sovereignty; these themes will be compared with the epistemic categories of *Brave New World Revisited*, such as "brainwashing," "propaganda," and "education for freedom," to understand how Aldous Huxley's metaphysics of power interacts with a historical subject like the Society of Jesus.

MIGUEL AFONSO MARTINI

is a Master's student in Literary Studies at the Federal University of Paraná (UFPR), Brazil. He holds a Bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature from the Federal University of Technology – Paraná (UTFPR). He works as an English teacher and translator and was also a member of the Extension Project named "Modernism and Tradition in Joyce, Woolf and Mansfield: Translation of Essays, Letters and Diaries."

Miguel is mainly interested in the areas of English Literatures, Translation Theory and Poetry Translation. (E-mail: <miguelafonsomartini@gmail.com>)



SAGE, GURU AND TEACHER: MYSTICISM, RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY IN ALDOUS HUXLEY STUDIES

Aldous Huxley made use of several different literary genres to convey his interest in and critical point of view toward many topics such as art, science, religion, psychedelics and technology in relation to human consciousness, society and life. This study was conducted between the months of March and December, 2024, to investigate how Huxley researchers have approached the topics of mysticism, religion and spirituality in his work over time, and with regard to place and type of publication. Several academic databases were used to conduct a comprehensive bibliographic research that analyzed 40 studies published from the 1940s to the 2020s. The research shows that critical interest in the three topics is growing, as the 2010s and 2020s bring more than twice the number of studies compared to the previous decades. The central themes of analysis in the studied texts are the use of psychedelics as a means of attaining mystical experience, the intersection between science and religion, Huxley's search for common elements in different religions and the various influences on Huxley's thought and philosophy. *Brave New World*, *Island* and *The Perennial Philosophy* are the most frequently studied texts with regard to these topics, but the research covers 36 works by the author. Although Huxley studies on the mentioned topics are increasing, this research shows that their geographical space is mostly limited to the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom, with only two studies having been produced in Latin America and Africa and none in Asia.

ANDRIJA MATIĆ

is the author of *Aldous Huxley's Short Fiction* (2024). He has also published five novels, a collection of short stories, a study on T. S. Eliot's complete works, and many articles on Anglo-American literature. Dr Matić has taught at universities in Serbia, Kuwait, Thailand, Turkey, and the USA. He is currently teaching academic writing at Columbia University and The City University of New York. Andrija Matić lives in Brooklyn, New York. (E-mail: <andrijam147@gmail.com>)



“A MAN IN AN IRON MASK”: EVOCATIONS OF ITALY IN ALDOUS HUXLEY’S SHORT FICTION

Huxley’s love for Italy is well documented in the pertinent literature. During the 1920s, he and his first wife, Maria, lived in Florence and regularly visited other parts of the country. It therefore comes as no surprise that Italy is the backdrop of many of his works, especially his short stories. However, the evocations of Italy in Huxley’s short fiction do not merely show his admiration for Italian culture and art. Huxley often uses Italian society to reveal his views on patriarchy (“Little Mexican”), militaristic ideologies (“Green Tunnels”), and progressive education (“Young Archimedes”). Huxley also employs Italian art to announce changes in his opinion on sexuality and religious belief (“Visiting Stranger”). Even in stories which are not set in Italy (“The Claxtons” and “The Portrait”) we can find references to Italian culture and history that deepen characterization and create powerful irony. This paper analyses ten short stories from 1922 to 1934, indicating various ways in which Huxley uses the Italian context to express his poetics, philosophy, and political opinion.

JEROME MECKIER,

Prof Emeritus of English at the University of Kentucky, sadly passed away last April. He had finished his keynote paper, though, but had not been able to send it to the Editors, who hope to receive it in time for reading it at the conference. He has published eight books and dozens of essays on nineteenth- and twentieth-century English and American literature. Besides three book-length studies of Dickens, he has written five books on Aldous Huxley—*Aldous Huxley: Satire and Structure* (1969); *Critical Essays on Aldous Huxley* (1996); *Aldous Huxley: Modern Satirical Novelist of Ideas* (2006); *Aldous Huxley, from Poet to Mystic* (2011); *Aldous Huxley and Utopia* (2022). He was a Curator of the International Aldous Huxley Society and co-edited *Aldous Huxley Annual* up to volume 23/24.



THREE LITTLE WORDS: FIXITY, MUTABILITY, STABILITY— BUTLER, ORWELL AND HUXLEY

Kingsley Amis's assertion that *Erewhon* "directly anticipates" *Brave New World* and *1984* is misleading. From both twentieth-century dystopias, Butler elicits a sharp critical response—a fundamental revaluation, not an endorsement. Disagreeing with Butler's key notion regarding the future, Huxley and Orwell criticize each other. Three not-so-little words—'fixity' for Butler, 'mutability' for Orwell, and 'stability' in Huxley's case—prove central to understanding the competitiveness at the core of modern utopian writing. Can the future be predicted? Is the past alterable? Or should we dread a soul-deadening sameness—no past, no future, just a perpetual dehumanizing present—as the most likely outcome?

ANDRÉ-ALAIN MORELLO (AND ALICE BAILEY CHEYLAN, SEE ABOVE)

André-Alain Morello, normalien, agrégé, est maître de conférences de littérature française du XXe siècle à l'Université de Toulon. Il est spécialiste de littérature romanesque du XXe siècle (Giono, Yourcenar, Julien Green, Gracq, Montherlant, Proust), a dirigé une dizaine d'ouvrages collectifs consacrés notamment à Milan Kundera, Yourcenar, Caillouis, Green, Jean-Claude Renard, Montherlant et Giono. Il a publié une centaine d'articles. Il a aussi édité Jean Giono dans la Bibliothèque de la Pléiade pour le volume *Journal, poèmes, essais*. (E-mail: <morelloaa@yahoo.fr>)



ALDOUS HUXLEY AND THE REVELATION OF ITALY

(For the abstract see above, Alice Bailey Cheylan.)

GRZEGORZ MOROZ

is Professor of British Literature at Białystok University in Poland. He has published monographs and many articles on Aldous Huxley and on Anglophone travel writing. His most recent books are: *Travellers, Novelists and Gentlemen: Constructing Male Narrative Personae in British Travel Books, from the Beginnings to the Second World War* (Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 2013), *On the Road from Fact to Fiction: Evelyn Waugh's Travel Books* (Białystok: Prymat, 2016), *Recontextualising Aldous Huxley: Selected Papers* (Białystok: Prymat, 2017), *Nowe wspaniałe światy Aldousa Huxleya i ich recepcja w Polsce* ('Aldous Huxley's Brave New Worlds and Their



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Reception in Poland') (Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2019) (with Krzysztof Hejwowski).
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ALDOUS HUXLEY, ITALY AND THE TRAVEL WRITING DISCOURSE

Travel writing studies as an independent academic discipline have been developing since the 1980s in the wake of two groundbreaking books: Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and Paul Fussell's *Abroad* (1980). Both of them, using different methodologies, brought travel narratives, non-fictional as well as fictional, into the limelight. In my paper I will use the tools provided by travel writing scholars (particularly Jan Borm's distinction between 'travel writing' and 'travel books') to analyse Aldous Huxley's texts set in Italy. I will focus both on the non-fictional *Along the Road* and fictional texts such as *Those Barren Leaves* and "After the Fireworks" to locate his writings in the context of the development of the travel writing discourse.

BERNFRIED NUGEL

is Professor Emeritus of English Philology at the University of Münster, Germany, and has published books and articles on neoclassical literature and literary theory as well as on specific aspects of Modernism. He is the Chairman of the International Aldous Huxley Society and Director of the Centre for Aldous Huxley Studies at the Department of English, University of Münster (www.anglistik.uni-muenster.de/Huxley). With Prof Jerome Meckier he co-edited *Aldous Huxley Annual* up to volume 23/24, and with Gerhard Wagner he co-edits the Huxley-centred monograph series "Human Potentialities."
(E-mail: <nugel@uni-muenster.de>)



THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CONCERT PITCH IN *ISLAND*

That *Island* is thoroughly permeated by the mynah birds' calls for "attention" and, less frequently, for "karuna" has often been noted and discussed as Huxley's playful illustration of his ideas of awareness and compassion which constitute an important part of the conceptual framework of the novel. But that this conspicuous device also carries a strong musical connotation that makes for an overall artistic coherence of the work has so far escaped the attention of literary critics. Read against the backdrop of Huxley's impressive musical expertise, the beginning of *Island* can only be understood as a reference to the tuning of an orchestra before a concert or opera performance, where the oboist starts the process by playing the concert pitch A for all other instruments to adjust themselves to: "ATTENTION," a voice began to call, and it was as though an oboe had suddenly become articulate. 'Attention,' it repeated in the same high, nasal monotone."

My paper will investigate Huxley's further musical treatment of the mynah birds' calls and aim to discover his rationale behind it. More powerfully than words, Huxley's seemingly simple musical device appears to shed new light on the course of the novel and, particularly, its ending.

UWE RASCH

helps copy-edit and format the Aldous Huxley Society's *Aldous Huxley Annual* and volumes of "Human Potentialities." He is also co-editor of "Human Potentialities," vols. 9 and 12: *Aldous Huxley, Man of Letters: Thinker, Critic and Artist* (Münster, 2007) and *Aldous Huxley and Self-Realization* (Zürich, 2019). Together with Gerhard Wagner he has co-authored the first full-length biography of Aldous Huxley in German (Darmstadt, 2019). His further contributions to Huxley studies include "Satire in the Making: Aldous Huxley's 1912 Marburg Sketchbook" (*AHA*, 15), and



“Deliver Us, Dear God, from Belief: Aldous Huxley on an Obstacle to Realising Human Potentialities” (“HP,” 12). His PhD thesis on *Aldous Huxley and the Enemies of Freedom* is to be published in the Macmillan Palgrave series “Global Political Thinkers” in late 2025.

A member of the English Drama Group since 1990, he directed the world premiere of Aldous Huxley’s *Now More Than Ever* on the occasion of the First International Aldous Huxley Symposium in Münster in 1994. (E-mail: <uwe.rasch@uni-muenster.de>)

40 YEARS ON: POSTMAN, HUXLEY AND AMUSING OURSELVES TO DEATH

About a hundred years ago, with the onset of consumer culture, Huxley became immediately worried about the consequences of “man’s almost infinite appetite for distractions” (*BNWR*). In his satires he ceaselessly lambasted the Roaring Twenties’ prime directive of the “good time,” culminating in the constant distractions of silly games, entertainments and sports in *Brave New World*. He analysed the various reasons that made for a culture that couldn’t possibly be democratic in a meaningful sense because its sovereign, the people, was distracted to distraction. Since until the 1980s the warnings of Huxley and other critics of mass culture in the 1920s and 30s had been roundly ignored and glossed over by corporate interest and the salvationist doctrine of blind economic growth, Neil Postman felt he needed to update Huxley in 1985. Forty years on, it’s time for yet another update.

ISLAND—A CURATED NOVEL

How does a novel translate to the white cube? From 11 October to 8 December 2013 the short-lived London Dairy Art Centre, fittingly located in Bloomsbury, hosted an art exhibition entitled *Island*. Then student of Bruno Latour, now New York-based curator Sarina Basta had put together a show based on Huxley’s 1962 utopia of the same name. Visitors were invited to “retrace the steps of Bloomsbury-born *Island* protagonist Will Farnaby” unfolding the central themes of the novel. The show was very much a curator’s feat since it was woven together from the warp

and weft of pre-existing art work (from the collection of the Dairy Art Centre founders and loans from the Americas, Asia and Europe) as well as a dozen new commissions and first-time releases. The exhibition featured big names from a rather broad spectrum of contemporary art such as Ai Weiwei, Jake and Dinos Chapman, Per Kirkeby, Sigmar Polke, Tomàs Saraceno, Julian Schnabel and Cindy Sherman and a quirky performance by The Order of the Third Bird (featuring a sketch of a mynah bird on an insurance letter written to Huxley). I propose a brief tour through this curated Pala by revisiting this exhibition of a many-voiced re-enactment of Huxley's vision.

EMILY REED

Dr Emily Reed is a historical linguist, poet, performer, and Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Exeter. Her academic pursuits have encompassed ecologies of language, the interface between semantics and pragmatics, the history of linguistic philosophies, and language use through time. As a researcher into Aldous Huxley, she is particularly interested in his thoughts on the uses of language, as well as the family and social organisation—both topics being increasingly relevant now as much as ever. (E-mail: <E.Reed2@exeter.ac.uk>)



“BEAUTIFUL WORDS DON’T ALWAYS MEAN WHAT THEY OUGHT TO MEAN”: LANGUAGE, MEANING AND ARTIFICE IN THE WORKS OF ALDOUS HUXLEY, 1921–1927

While Aldous Huxley clearly demonstrates an interest in the role of language in communication, his engagement with linguistic ideas remains little researched or understood. In this paper addressing the Italy period of Huxley's career, I seek to understand whether one can detect movements between satirical

critique of, and philosophical unease towards, language as a tool of communication and obfuscation. I also wish to situate his thinking within a wider milieu of linguistic thought.

Across the works of this period, Huxley expresses a view of language as an imperfect tool to convey truth. For example, in *Along the Road*, he writes: “Most of our mistakes are fundamentally grammatical. We create our own difficulties by employing an inadequate language to describe facts.” Elsewhere, he portrays language as a tool used to deliberately construct barriers to meaning and perfidious personae, for example, the “Complete Man” adopted by Gumbriel (himself a man of “grand, silly phrases”) in *Antic Hay*, who serves as a misleading sign towards a fictitious signifier.

I moreover wish to provide a context for Huxley’s interaction with linguistic themes. Of particular interest will be Huxley’s ongoing friendships with Bertrand Russell, a prominent logician and linguistic philosopher, and T. S. Eliot, who meditates on several aspects of meaning and criticism in the early half of the decade. I will also make reference to Bergson and early Wittgenstein, as Huxley questions whether words can ever access ultimate truths.

GERD ROHMANN

studied English and French Literature for teaching at grammar schools at the University of Marburg, at the Sorbonne and at Downing College, Cambridge. By the time of his final exam in 1966 he had become thoroughly familiar with Huxley’s most important works, but for his PhD dissertation on *Aldous Huxley und die französische Literatur* (‘Aldous Huxley and French Literature’ [Marburg, 1968]) he naturally had to read much more French than English Literature. He published widely on topics ranging from Shakespeare to Postmodernism in English, Commonwealth, Irish and American Literature, became



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Professor of English at the University of Marburg in 1972, and in 1974 accepted a chair at the new Gesamthochschule Kassel, where he helped to establish the University. He was elected Head of the Department of Modern Languages and Literature within the Faculty of Human Studies and Culture, was director of the ERASMUS student exchange programme and, from 2005 to 2012, President of the International Samuel Beckett Society, supported by the Embassy of Ireland in Berlin. One of the German Curators of the International Aldous Huxley Society, he attended all the Huxley symposia held from 1994 (Münster) to 2021 (Toulon). He is now Professor Emeritus of English at the University of Kassel. (E-mail: <gerdrohmann@t-online.de>)

ITALY, MONTAIGNE, AND HUXLEY'S ESSAYISM

In the preface to his *Collected Essays* (1959) Aldous Huxley praises Michel de Montaigne as his master and model in the art of writing essays. Montaigne, in his turn, had developed his short literary genre of the self-reflexive essay under the influence of the novellas of the First Italian Renaissance, collected in Boccaccio's *Decamerone* (1348), and Bandello's *Novelle* (1554) of the Second Renaissance; in 1571, he began to draft his first personal essays about human conduct in life, politics, travel, and war, calling his collection *Essais*. After a journey in 1580/81 to Italy, where he stayed in Lucca, Pisa, Florence, Rome and Venice, he continued his work until 1592 against the backdrop of his newly gained Italian experience.

Similar to Montaigne's style, Huxley's novels of ideas form a synthesis of the autobiographical (travel), the factual (criticism) and the philosophical (truth) types of the literary essay. "Je suis un essayiste qui s'exprime par les moyens du roman" ['I am an essayist who expresses himself through the means of the novel'], he allegedly said to Georges Neveux, a close relative of his wife Maria. My paper will discuss Huxley's essayistic method and choose, among other essays, "The Best Picture" in *Along the Road* (1925) as a telling example.

DANA SAWYER

is Professor Emeritus of Religion at the Maine College of Art and adjunct professor of Asian Religions at the Chaplaincy Institute of Maine. He is a member of the American Academy of Religion, the Society of Asian and Comparative Philosophy, and the International Aldous Huxley Society. Early in his career he published work on the views and practices of the Dandi Sadhus, a sect of Hindu swamis descended from the ninth-century philosopher of Vedanta, Adi Shankara. This work carried him to India thirteen times, where he often lived in monasteries, but also led to an interest in famous Western authors who have appropriated Vedanta into their viewpoints. In this regard, he has mainly focused his research on Aldous Huxley, and Huxley's use of Vedanta in the construction of the "perennial philosophy." In 2002, Sawyer published a well-reviewed biography of Huxley (New York: Crossroad), describing the development of Huxley's philosophy in the context of Huxley's life. In 2014, his authorized biography of Huston Smith, the well-known scholar of World Religion, who was strongly influenced by both Vedanta and Huxley, appeared under the title *Huston Smith: Wisdomkeeper* (Louisville: Fons Vitae). His two latest books are *The Transcendental Meditation Movement* (Cambridge: CUP, 2023) and *The Perennial Philosophy Reloaded* (Rhinebeck: Monkfish, 2024). (E-mail: <dsawyer@meca.edu>)



SUPPORT FOR HUXLEY'S "UNITIVE KNOWLEDGE" AND ITS VALUE AS FOUND IN CURRENT RESEARCH WITH PSYCHEDELICS

Referencing the perennial philosophy, what is Huxley's claim of a "unitive knowledge" enjoyed during mystical experience? Since he describes it as a form of "knowledge," what epistemic value did he believe such experiences actually have? Today, in this time of renewed interest in psychedelics, more and more test subjects, as

well as underground explorers, are reporting unitive experiences of the mystical type (as measured in clinical settings by using the Mystical Experience Questionnaire based on the Hood Scale). Do they have epistemic value, and if so, what evidence is there of that? In this talk, I will first survey the recent prevalence of unitive mystical experiences triggered by psychedelics, and then explain why—in the search for interpretive models to best describe, explain, and assess the value of these experiences—Huxley’s position continues not only to be relevant but compelling in its intellectual appeal.

CHIARA SCIARRINO

is Associate Professor of English Literature at the University of Palermo. She holds an MA and Drama (UCD, Dublin), a PhD in Comparative Literature (IULM, Milan) and a PostDoc (IULM, Milan). She is the author of three books about the influence of Italian culture in Anglo-Irish literature and drama, a book about the Italian translations of Joyce’s *A Portrait*, and articles on James Joyce, Flann O’Brien, Oscar Wilde, Tom Stoppard, and Ali Smith, among others. Her forthcoming book is about Ali Smith’s *Quartet*, Brexit, immigration, and the environment. Her main research areas are contemporary British literature, literary translation, and Irish Studies. She was the Head Organizer of the tenth EFACIS conference in 2005 and three more recent conferences about teaching English as a foreign language. She is the co-founder of CISIRL, Centro Studi Universitario di Studi Irlandesi. She has most recently given a paper about Huxley and Flann O’Brien at the Aldous Huxley Centre in Zürich.
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MUSIC, COUNTERPOINT, AND NARRATIVE COM-
PLEXITY IN ALDOUS HUXLEY'S *POINT COUNTER POINT*

Music and counterpoint are central organizing principles in Huxley's *Point Counter Point* (1928). Huxley explicitly employs musical counterpoint as a structural device to layer multiple narrative threads and themes, reflecting the novel's exploration of the fragmentation and dissonance of modern life.

Characters and their dialogues operate like separate musical lines, each with its rhythm and theme, contributing to an overarching 'composition' without necessarily resolving into a single, harmonious narrative. Just as in counterpoint, the relationships between his characters are not simple or linear but involve various layers of complexity, where their desires, beliefs, and actions conflict and complement one another in unique ways, creating a deeper understanding of the human condition.

Huxley then uses the musical technique to emphasize the complexity of human relationships, the struggle between different desires (such as romantic love, intellectual pursuits, and social conformity), and the clash between idealism and materialism.

He also uses these musical forms to structure the narrative and rely on a predetermined schema made up of independent melodies and juxtaposed elements, sometimes harmonizing, sometimes clashing, which create a richer and more cohesive whole.

By examining the use of counterpoint, fugue-like layering, canon, and variations as well as the interplay of dissonance and harmony, this paper will argue that the novel offers innovative approaches to narrative form that reflect broader modernist concerns with instability, multiplicity, and the intellectual fragmentation of the modern world.

Last but not least, the paper will try to highlight the significant impact of some of Huxley's musical experiences in Italy.

Huxley's time in Italy was crucial in deepening his understanding of and appreciation for music, which then influenced his literary output. From his initial exposure to Italy's rich musical traditions to his engagement with modernist composers, music played a key role in shaping his intellectual and artistic life.

JAMES SEXTON

has doctorates in English from the University of Oregon (1980) and the University of Victoria (1997). He has been teaching a wide variety of English literature and language courses at universities and colleges in Canada, the U. S. and France since 1971. A former member of the English department at Camosun College in Victoria, and Adjunct Professor and SSHRC Research Fellow at the University of Victoria, his teaching specialties are modern Canadian, British and American literature; utopian-dystopian fiction; and Shakespeare. Now retired, he continues his research as a visiting lecturer at UBC and also teaches part-time online Academic Writing at Royal Military College, Kingston, Ontario.



Sexton is an elected Curator of the International Aldous Huxley Society, and a contributing editor of *Aldous Huxley Annual*. He has published numerous books and articles on Huxley and his circle as well as a scholarly edition of two novellas by Graham Greene. He is also active in the preparation of online learning resources, the latest of which are his rhetoric-anthology *Composition and Literature* (2019) and his 900-page “open textbook” *English Literature: Victorians and Moderns* (2015). Both open textbooks are available at no charge on the BCCampus Open Text Initiative website. (E-mail: <james.sexton@ubc.ca>)

ALDOUS HUXLEY AND ITALY

Aldous and Maria Huxley were fringe-members of the Anglo-Italian community in Tuscany from 1921–1929. Altogether the Huxleys spent 55 months in Italy during that period, and although it must be said that Maria was not the first woman in Italy to be granted an Italian driver’s license as Sybille Bedford alleges in her biography, Aldous certainly took advantage of his wife’s driving skills and was thus able to see a great deal of the countryside and

so produce a series of concretely detailed travel pieces which found their way into *Along the Road* (1925).

Apart from D. H. Lawrence, little has been written about Huxley's other contacts and the properties in which these mainly wealthy people lived, especially the denizens of what he sneeringly referred to as "Villadom." This talk will focus on Huxley's dealings there with friends and associates such as Lawrence, the Sitwells, Lady Sybil and Geoffrey Scott, Arnold Bennett and his second wife Dorothy Cheston, Bernard Berenson, Norman Douglas, Yoï and Antonio Maraini, and the artist Bruno Bramanti. In addition, I will discuss how Huxley used his familiarity with these contacts and the imposing properties in which they lived to vivify the characters and settings of much of his Tuscan-based fiction. The talk will also treat Huxley's attitude to Italian art and culture, and briefly consider his attitude to Fascism.

HEIKE SIEGER

graduated from Münster University, Germany, with an M. A. in English, German and Russian Literature in 2006. Her thesis, in which Aldous Huxley played a central role, dealt with "Literary Representations of Drug Experiences in America's 1950s–1970s." Afterwards, she worked as a journalist for a German wedding magazine for eight years before returning to literary studies in 2014. In 2023, she obtained her PhD and has recently published her dissertation entitled *Music as Satire in Aldous Huxley's Utopian Works*. During the past decade, she published various essays on Aldous Huxley, mostly in *Aldous Huxley Annual*. Apart from her studies she wrote for several local advertising journals in her home region as an editor in a small publishing house. In 2024, Heike switched from journalism to public relations, working as a speaker for the Evangelisches Studienwerk e. V., one of the 13 big German gifted education organizations that provide scholarships for talented students.



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CONTRALTO SINGERS: HUXLEY'S SECRET HUMOROUS OBSESSION

The female voice possessing a deep, rich timbre—these days often replaced by the lighter mezzo-soprano—was very fashionable till the first decades of the twentieth century. Baroque composers such as Handel, Porpora and Caldara appreciated the dramatic potential of the contralto voice. Edward Elgar wrote his 1899 song cycle *Sea Pictures* for Dame Clara Butt, one of the most popular singers around the turn of the century, and famous for her iconic performance of “Land of Hope and Glory.” However, one would hardly expect that the contralto voice was also a source of inspiration for various modernist writers. There are numerous examples in English literature using the contralto as a feature of a fictional character’s attributes. Some of these are more subtle and the characters rather unimportant, such as a young suffragette in H. G. Wells’s *Ann Veronica* (1909), some are comparably richer in details, such as Victoria, a minor character in D. H. Lawrence’s novel *Kangaroo* (1923), or Miss Ada Moss, the heroine of Katherine Mansfield’s short story “Pictures” (1917), an unemployed and likewise unhappy contralto singer.

While the characteristic pitch appears in the works of Huxley’s contemporaries only here and there, women possessing the rich female voice permeate the writer’s œuvre — beginning with his 1926 short story “Two or Three Graces” and ending with the Rani in his final novel *Island* (1962). My presentation contains a brief account of Huxley’s typical contralto-voiced females and provides insight into their satirical function. Furthermore, there will be surprising revelations about his possible sources of inspiration.

JAMES W. SPISAK (AND ERIKA DYCK, SEE ABOVE)

James W. Spisak is the Executive Director and Co-Trustee of The Aldous and Laura Huxley Literary Trust. Dr Spisak and Erika Dyck are among the co-editors of *Psychedelic Prophets: The Letters of Aldous Huxley and Humphry Osmond* (McGill-Queens University Press, 2018). Dr Spisak also serves as Treasurer and Board Member of the Dvořak American Heritage Association. (E-mail: <Jimspisak@aol.com>)



TEXTS AND CONTEXTS: A NEW LOOK AT *THE DOORS OF PERCEPTION*

(For the abstract see above, Erika Dyck.)

FILIP ŚWIERCZYŃSKI

is a PhD candidate in Literary Studies at the University of Warsaw and holds an MA in Russian Philology from the same institution. As a central part of his doctoral research, he explores the (meta)futurological thought of Aldous Huxley and Stanisław Lem, particularly in relation to the current state of scientific and technological development. His research interests include futurology, science fiction and cosmic horror studies, narratology, Russian and English literatures, and the works of Franz Kafka, Nikolai Gogol, and H. P. Lovecraft. His academic work has been published in Poland, Scotland, Japan, Russia, and Germany. He is Chairman of the SSC for Cooperation and Dialogue with the East at the University of Warsaw; Chairman of the Management Board of the international academic journal *Mirgorod: The Annual of the History & Epistemology of Contemporary Literary Studies*; editor of two publishing series—*Spicilegium Slavicum* and



Ad Fontes (IKRiBL, Siedlce); and a member of the International Aldous Huxley Society (University of Münster) and the International Academic Forum (Osaka University). He is an aspiring translator of Russian and English poetry and engages in literary writing. (E-mail: <f.swierczynski2@uw.edu.pl>)

ANESTHETISING HUMANKIND: ALDOUS HUXLEY, JOSÉ M. R. DELGADO, AND THE PSYCHOCIVILISED SOCIETY

One of Aldous Huxley's central and most frequently articulated futurological and moral concerns, consistently recurring in his works throughout his œuvre, particularly in *Brave New World* (1932), *Brave New World Revisited* (1958), and selected essays, pertains to the hypothetical biopolitical and chemocratic socio-conditioning potential and mechanisms of a future technocracy. According to his perspective, a pseudo-melioristic reconstruction of human nature appears to be the inherent sociocybernetic component of grand narratives constructed by the World Controllers.

Among Huxley's noteworthy contemporaries who articulated and advocated postulates of this nature was José M. R. Delgado, a professor of neurophysiology, renowned for his scientific research on mind control. His most notable and highly contentious publication, *Physical Control of the Mind: Toward a Psychocivilised Society*, was released some years after Huxley's death, i.e., in 1969. It is plausible that if the English writer had been acquainted with his work (he does not reference him in either his essays or correspondence), he might have perceived in Delgado's writings and philosophy the manifestation of his own futurological dreads.

This lecture aims to examine Delgado's ideas within the context of Huxley's œuvre and predictions, treating his thoughts as an actual and concrete embodiment of Huxleyan concerns.

GERHARD WAGNER

holds a Ph.D. in English Philology from the University of Münster (doctoral thesis on literary theory in Aldous Huxley's essays) and has published widely on Huxley. He is the Vice-Chairman of the International Aldous Huxley Society. Besides working as a secondary school teacher, he is a research associate at the Centre for Aldous Huxley Studies (Münster) and assistant editor of *Aldous Huxley Annual*. With Prof Bernfried Nugel he co-edits the Huxley-centred monograph series "Human Potentialities." Together with Uwe Rasch he has co-authored the first full-length biography of Aldous Huxley in German (Darmstadt, 2019). This time he is not going to present a paper, but he will assist in making the conference run smoothly.
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