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**THE NATURAL HISTORY OF THE FUTURE:  
THE RELATED IMPORTANCE  
OF HISTORY AND NATURE TO THE WORK OF  
RICHARD JEFFERIES, WILLIAM MORRIS,  
H. G. WELLS, AND ALDOUS HUXLEY**

by

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**under the supervision of Professor Keith Wilson**

**Thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for  
the PhD. degree in English Literature**

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## **ABSTRACT**

**Utopias and dystopias are forms of social criticism in which the author draws on an existing society to create a perfected (utopian) or exaggerated (dystopian) projection which is set in a different time and/or space from the original. As reactions to problematic, or potentially problematic, situations and developments, utopias and dystopias are always connected to change -- they explicitly or implicitly present an argument for change, and/or they embody a response to it. This thesis focuses on four English authors who wrote utopias and/or dystopias between the latter part of the Nineteenth Century and the middle part of the Twentieth: Richard Jefferies, William Morris, H. G. Wells, and Aldous Huxley. In each case they not only responded to recent, endemic, or continuing change, but also implicitly or explicitly sought it.**

**The narratives they wrote are founded in change and emerged during a time of flux. Jefferies responded to a declining rural culture, Morris to an expanding industrial culture, Wells to the material uncertainties evoked by evolution theory, and Huxley to the post-Darwin, post-War metaphysical incertitude which appeared to him to have decentred the culture. Each author also sought appropriate change to remedy the particular circumstances of which he was critical. This thesis looks at these authors, not simply in terms of their response to change, but in terms of their attitudes to the relatively enduring structures of nature and history.**

Nature, in its various manifestations, had different connotations for different authors. To Jefferies, nature -- as local landscape and cosmic immensity, as ears of corn and universal life force -- offered, amongst other things, an essential continuity that modern life was eroding. For Morris, nature offered inspiration and the possibility of a harmonious interrelationship with humanity once the restless era of capitalism had been succeeded by a restful future in communism. To Wells, both external and internal nature offered a dangerous unpredictability which must be controlled, while Huxley believed that humanity's struggle with the environment and consequent negative impact on it could be dissolved in the possibility of epiphanic fusion with the cosmos. Central to all their various conceptions of, and attitudes toward, nature, however, is the question of what are the shaping characteristics of humanity's relationship with nature.

The past also had a number of divergent meanings for individual authors. While it inspired Jefferies, and provided example, and the material for future-oriented narrative for both Morris and Wells, it had resonance but little forward impetus for Huxley, and history eventually dissolved in his perception of eternity. However, he was critical of others who appropriated or reconfigured the past for their own ends.

The unfolding of history, in the simple sense of time passing, was not synonymous with progress for these writers, and the perception that

**the temporal current was actually carrying society, or elements of it, toward regression and/or fragmentation inspired their remedial dystopian and utopian texts. This thesis establishes that Jefferies, Morris, Wells and Huxley all sought holistic solutions in various forms which would aid in the reconstitution of particular social structures and conceptual constructs which they believed to be disintegrating. In Huxley's terms, means determine ends, and it is fitting that a study in which the end is partly to emphasise these authors' concepts of unity and wholeness should use holistic means. Since both utopian and dystopian novels have their roots in social criticism, this thesis does not focus exclusively on the author's utopias or dystopias, but examines them in the context of the themes and critiques which find expression in their other work.**



## INTRODUCTION

The subjects of this present study – Richard Jefferies (1848-1887), William Morris (1834-1896), H. G. Wells (1866-1946), and Aldous Huxley (1894-1963) -- each wrote at least one significant utopia or dystopia.<sup>[1]</sup> The *oeuvre* of each of the four authors exhibits a concern with the natural world, the past, and/or the uses and abuses of the past, and evidences a belief in the need for unity. Their utopias and dystopias play out these concerns on a stage which, although distanced from their own social context in space or time, reflects their critique of the world around them in important ways. While these authors have been grouped together in this thesis because they are British writers who produced utopias and/or dystopias, the utopias and dystopias themselves are not the sole focus of the thesis, but are instead analyzed in terms of being representative of their authors' work as a whole.<sup>[2]</sup> Utopias and dystopias offer a certain vision of possible, if not always likely, worlds, and emerge from their creators' perceptions of the world around them. Those perceptions also manifest themselves in the authors' other work.

The most significant commonality between utopias and dystopias as genres (or the complementary antitheses of one genre) is that their authors have been motivated by serious concerns about aspects of contemporary life.<sup>[3]</sup> By creating an imaginary society to set beside his or her own, the author invites the reader to compare and to judge. The

utopia is paradigmatic, presenting a model in which the flaws of the society which the author (implicitly or explicitly) critiques have been repaired, and its debilitating antitheses dissolved into synthesis. The dystopia's thrust is toward the converse of this and its qualities as an exemplar are therefore negative – it exploits the flaws and antitheses, widens the cracks and divisions, and projects the author's concerns in an exaggerated form. Both the utopia and the dystopia embody social criticism, but while the utopia offers a society remodelled according to its author's idea of perfection, the dystopia offers a disturbing vision which its author has crafted as a potentially preventive revelation. The utopia offers a version of heaven, and the dystopia a vision of hell. Like heaven and hell, dystopia and utopia are antithetical in that one should attract and the other repel, but they have a synthesis in that the intent behind their depiction is to focus on the need to reorient, restrict, or restructure actions and beliefs in the here and now. In the four authors studied in this present thesis, that focus on the need to modify behaviour and redirect thought is a thread which runs through their work generally. Consequently, while paying particular attention to the utopian and dystopian texts, this study examines each author's output as a complete organism. It endeavours to envision the utopias and dystopias as part of archipelagoes of thought, reflecting ideas expressed elsewhere in each author's *oeuvre*, not as isolated philosophical islands.

The English utopia has its formal origins in Sir Thomas More's original Utopia (1516) and his coining of the word which gives its name to the genre. In More's Utopia the eponymous state was a literal, if fictional, island. While one of the connotations of the word 'utopia' is 'no place,' utopians and dystopians have to set their work in some place.<sup>[4]</sup> Each must distance his or her creation from its contemporary origins in some way in order for the author, and/or the reader, to compare it with the original. Wells, in A Modern Utopia (1905), decided that "no less than a planet will serve the purpose of a modern Utopia" (8). Generally, however, the utopias and dystopias analysed in this thesis are set in the future, and not distanced in exclusively spatial or geographical terms. The only real exception to this, apart from A Modern Utopia, comes from Huxley who, having set two dystopias in the future, then chose an apparently contemporary setting for Island (1962). Nonetheless, whether distanced in space or time, all the utopian and dystopian texts in this present thesis reflect their respective authors' continued engagement with the possibilities which history offers humanity, and with the ramifications of the relationship between *Homo sapiens* and the natural world. Questioning whether the social and economic change which they observed around them was necessarily symptomatic of genuine progress, they looked back at history for whatever significance it might have relative to their own period, whether as process, exemplar or foundation. Interpreting the importance of nature in various ways, they sought

variously to reaffirm, redefine, or reduce that importance. Each of them, in his individual way, argued for a new understanding of the relationship between humanity and both the past and nature in seeking forms of community and a unity of the individual with a greater whole..

Each of these authors, then, explored the significance of history and nature. The terms "history" and "nature," however, are inherently ambiguous, since they are both essentially umbrella terms but are often used as if they are specific in themselves. Indeed, the very ubiquity of the two terms may lend itself to ambiguity and to uncertainty as to which sense of history' or `nature' a speaker or writer intends. In order to avoid that ambiguity in this thesis, I differentiate variously between a number of conceptions which all fall within the general rubrics of `history' and `nature.'

In discussing these writers and their perspectives on history, I discriminate between past events, the individual's past, tradition, myth, historical relics or artefacts, ancient historical monuments (or other evidence on the landscape of human activity in the distant past), written history, supposed forces or mainsprings of history, historicism (which I use pejoratively as the selective reading of a certain pattern into events in the service of a particular ideological bias of the historian), and historical determinism (as in Marxist history). While the individual writers do not necessarily share the same specific interests in relation to the past, or focus on one particular conception of history, their work does suggest that

they were all concerned with evaluating the significance of the past and its ongoing meaning.

Jefferies, Morris, Wells, and Huxley each had an historical consciousness, reflecting a particular perception of living in a time of change. Each wrote at least one work in which they projected their hopes and/or fears into the future. Inevitably, then, there is a tension in these texts between the author's present and the future he presents, since the *raison d'être* of his imaginary future is to manifest a critique of the present. However, there is also a tension between the future and the past. It arises from the consciousness in all four authors of living in a time of flux. The period between the maturity of Morris and that of Huxley was one in which an attitude toward the phenomenon of change was part of the *Zeitgeist*. Evolution theory initially fuelled the belief in continuing positive change adopted by Social Darwinians and others, resulting in "the idea of Progress ... becoming a general article of faith" in the 1870s and 1880s (Bury 346). In some this faith was fed by Marxism, as it was in the case of Morris. In others it gave way to the *fin de siècle* doubts exhibited by Wells and manifested differently by Jefferies. World War One corroded residual faith in progress substantially, and the resulting pessimism created a market for Oswald Spengler and his grim vision of the "full decay" of the parliamentary system (*Decline*, II, 415) and the upcoming "transition to ... [the brutal anarchy of] Caesarism" (416). Spengler's suggestion that "'mankind' ... has no aim, no idea, no plan,

anymore than the family of butterflies or orchids" (I, 21), was one with which both Wells and Huxley would have concurred. However, Wells and Huxley, and, indeed, Jefferies and Morris, sought separately to find an idea or ideas which could be *made* into a plan. Aware as they were of living in a time of change, all four were distinctly aware of the past, since conclusions on whether the flow of change is necessarily toward the positive or the negative require a comprehension of the past.

Consequently, their work is not only characterised by a tension between the present and the future, as exemplified by their futuristic utopias or dystopias, but also by a tension between the present and the past and, by extension, the past and the future.

My thesis, therefore, analyses their attitudes toward the past itself, to see what aspects of it are privileged, criticised, or eulogised. It also determines whether the authors believed that the past has any power to push the present into the future – i.e., whether there are any forces of history which supposedly make a certain future inevitable. In Morris's case, subscribing to the philosophy of dialectical materialism enabled him to accommodate his perception of five hundred years of socioeconomic regression within a vision of progress. Conversely, Huxley disputed the notion that there was any deterministic force directing history at all. For all these authors, however, the past is important to their particular version of the future.

Equally important are the attitudes toward nature reflected in their work. As stated above, 'nature,' is, like 'history,' an ambiguous term. In her article "Nature/'nature'," Kate Soper notes the ambiguity of the word 'nature,' an ambiguity which she believes to stem partly from nature being defined against conceptions of culture, and then being culturally mediated (26). In "Some Meanings of 'Nature,'" Arthur Lovejoy establishes sixty-six different meanings associated with the term (447- 456). 'Nature' also had different meanings for Jefferies, Morris, Wells, and Huxley respectively and, while I do not pretend to refine my uses of 'nature' to quite the same degree as those identified by Lovejoy, I have distinguished between the individual conceptions of nature manifested by each of the four authors. Consequently I have differentiated variously between the supposed laws of nature, the idea of natural evolution, the environment (comprised of landscape, flora and fauna, and so forth), the cosmos, and the natural instincts which denote us as mammals and therefore part of the animal world.

At the core of these authors' attitudes toward nature in its various meanings and manifestations is the perennial question which Soper's observation -- that conceptions of nature are defined against, and mediated through, culture -- suggests. That is, to what extent *is* humanity a part of nature, and to what extent is the species *outside* it? This question (again, as Soper's observations would suggest) is complicated by the ways in which we must understand nature since, while it seems

obviously to be outside and inside all of us, the terms on which we base our understanding of what nature is and of our relationship with it emerge from the culture against which nature has been defined as being *other* than culture. Nevertheless, it appears to be undeniable that, as an animal, *Homo sapiens* lives, breathes, eats, reproduces, and so on, as do other animals. The species depends on the natural world for air to breathe, and for the resources which help to support human life, economies and, thus, cultures themselves. Yet it also shapes and controls aspects of nature, steering the evolution of domestic animals and agricultural crops, harnessing the environment by damming rivers and building canals, and, latterly, developing the scientific wherewithal to clone and genetically modify animal life, including our own species. Moreover, once the Industrial Revolution and its products and by-products began to have a significant impact on the environment, humanity became nature's adversary in many ways. So, as a species, we are simultaneously part of nature, partial controllers of nature, and nature's enemy. Our relationship with nature in its various facets is therefore complex. Working out the ramifications of that relationship, and imagining profound changes in it, lies at the heart of the utopias and dystopias which these four authors wrote, and, indeed, their other work also. Those considerations were motivated, and complicated, by continuing changes in the human relationship with nature during the period covered by this thesis.

The period between Morris's birth in 1834 and Huxley's death in 1963 was one in which Britain shifted from a significantly agrarian-based society to a largely urban and industrial one. Industrialism brought improvements, such as improved communications and better medicines, but it also brought industrial pollution, an increased demand on the environment in terms of resources, and a far greater capacity to extract, refine, and transport those resources. Moreover, it increasingly divorced most English people from the direct and daily engagement with nature -- as landscape, seasons, animal and plant life, and weather -- concomitant to an agrarian society. As a nature writer with a rural background, Jefferies was the most directly engaged in observing this process, representing an interface between, on the one hand, nature and rural life on one side, and, on the other, a presumably urban readership. He lamented the urban and industrial expansionism which impacted, often negatively, on rural life while he continued to promote the importance of an appreciation of the natural environment and its constituent parts. However, all of these writers had an attitude toward nature in its various manifestations, seeking to either bond with it, domesticate it, supplant it as an evolutionary force, or subdue it internally in the form of those human impulses which have often been deemed to be animal in origin. Again, a particular attitude to nature percolates through each author's work, including his utopian and/or dystopian texts.

**As we shall see, nature and history are interrelated in the work of these authors. For Jefferies, both the natural and the historical are fused through the medium of the landscape, while Morris's medievalism encourages him to use natural subjects for his art and imagine an England in which the modern divisions -- both physical and conceptual -- between country and city have been erased. Wells finds models for the ordered future in the past, and seeks to order nature in the future, while Huxley's conception of both past and nature eventually finds both apotheosis and negation in his mysticism. More generally, their perceptions of nature, or of its conspicuous absence, are, like their perspectives on the past and its representation, related to change and to notions of, or trepidations concerning, progress. Consequently their attitudes toward the past and toward nature are interrelated, as are their reactions to the social disintegration or dissociation which they believed to be a factor in contemporary life.**

**What Wells and Huxley -- and, differently, Jefferies and Morris -- sought was a form of wholeness as an antidote to the fragmentation caused by the particular social problems they perceived. Jefferies looked for ways of revitalising rural life in ways which would work toward maintaining layers of continuity, and found a form of personal completion through mysticism. Morris hoped that the dehumanising effects of industrialisation, with its division of labour and severing of 'crafts' from 'craftsman,' could be nullified in the handcrafted and fully-integrated**

**Marxist Eden he anticipated. Wells looked at the cancerous growth erupting around him as the traditional system presided over by England's aristocratic and intellectual elite decayed, shrivelled, and was then co-opted by entrepreneurs and speculators. He believed that the solution would lie with a future elite of altruistic rationalists who would create a whole and healthy society within a completely united world. Finally Huxley, who was only twenty- four when World War One ended, found himself in a world where God was apparently dead and a replacement of some sort was being sought variously in mindless pleasure, art, communism, fascism, nationalism and the sort of new scientific order which Wells advocated. Huxley worked his way toward a mystic pacifism by which he was able to advocate participation in at least a spiritual wholeness, and he saw the possibility of communities of like-minded individuals who would have the potential for proselytizing amongst the greater community.**

**As stated earlier, one needs to put these ideas of history, nature, and wholeness in context by indicating their development or amplification in the authors' other work. This is particularly fitting, since these authors themselves typically evidence a concern with the relationship of constituent parts to the whole systems within which they function. Jefferies, while he stresses the importance of a structured and organic rural society to the nation as a whole, tries to evaluate both the position of humanity in relation to nature itself and the importance of local history**

and tradition; the rural landscape connects him with nature but he also believes it to be a conduit to aspects of the past, so that it reflects the continuity of rural life. Morris is less directly focussed on the rural; the decline he traces from a mediaeval past with its craftsmen to the industrialised present with its demoralised machine operatives is perceived by him as an unfortunate but necessary journey which must lead to the communist Utopia; he therefore supposes that his own period is merely one segment of an ongoing process which will inevitably usher in that utopia. An essential part of the real life, the more natural life, the whole life to come must be art-in-work, and work-as-art. Morris's faith in the coming of a just, barrier-free and fully-integrated society was paralleled by his belief that nature, in the form of landscape and flora and fauna, must not be separate from social life but integral to it, part of a greater unity.

Wells, too, sought a unity. His early successes as a writer of fiction were with novels which questioned variously the consequences to society of a leisured elite living off the dehumanising labour of industrial workers, and the potential for excess amongst blinkered and asocial scientists. The criticism of a lack of efficient forward-thinking and control which his early scenarios manifest developed into a perception that the world was fragmented and chaotic; it could only be made viable by uniting it through the activities of a managerial, scientific, technological elite, and then administering it as a whole through a world government. However,

**Wells' holistic vision of the future world was one in which nature was to play an increasingly minor role. The world was to have no rurally-based society at all. Exterior nature -- sea and landscape -- was to provide, at best, opportunities for leisure and meditation. Interior nature -- in the form of the antisocial and individualistic urges which Wells believed to be our animal heritage -- was to be extirpated scientifically. Eventually, human nature would embody as little nature as possible. For Wells, history began as natural history, offering proof of an evolutionary process which humanity needed to tailor in order to ensure the species' viability; sociopolitical history, on the other hand, offered prolepses of the world unity to come.**

**Wells' view of contemporary society as fragmented and chaotic was echoed to an extent by Huxley, whose satires -- particularly those other than his dystopias and utopia -- each present a particular group within which competing voices or points of view play off against each other. Gradually a dominant theme emerges from the various polyphonies, relating to the gap in modern life which Huxley observed and which inspired his efforts to determine the potential for wholeness. Huxley believed that society was becoming increasingly superficial as it became less spiritual, but that the solutions which were being offered to fill the spiritual void -- such as fascism and communism -- were abhorrent and inhumane. Becoming environmentally conscious, Huxley eventually came to believe that the most viable human settlements should be small,**

[1] I have chosen not to deal with the authors in strict chronological order. Although Jefferies was born later than Morris I deal with him first, simply because Morris read Jefferies' After London (1885) before writing his own News from Nowhere (1890).

[2] My method, which treats the actual utopias and dystopias as part of the body of work of each subject, rather than *the* work, inevitably required the limiting of the thesis to a relatively few authors. Victorian utopians like Samuel Butler and W. H. Hudson, and more modern dystopians like George Orwell have therefore, and regretfully, been excluded.

[3] Raymond Williams, in discussing the relationship between utopia, dystopia, and science fiction, implies that utopia and dystopia are interrelated, although he focusses on common factors like the "technological transformation" ("Utopia" 52), which makes particular utopias and dystopias differ from the real world., rather than any common impulse. Krishan Kumar (who prefers to use the term "anti-utopia" to dystopia), determines that utopia and anti-utopia are "antithetical yet interdependent," with anti-utopia feeding "parasitically" on utopia (Anti-Utopia 100). Frederic Jameson prefers to see their relationship as not antithetical but nevertheless different, with the dystopia's narrative form being that of the novel, but the utopia's form being basically descriptive, typically detailing "a mechanism or even a kind of machine," and furnishing "a blueprint" (Seeds 56). My own perception is somewhat similar to Kumar's, in the sense of utopia and dystopia being interrelated, but I prefer the term 'dystopia' since I do not believe that all dystopias are necessarily anti-utopias.

[4] Paul Turner provides the etymology of a number of names used in More's work, including 'utopia' itself, in the Introduction to his translation of Utopia (8).

## CHAPTER ONE

**Community and Continuity: Richard Jefferies, After London, and Change in the Light of Nature.**

I

Richard Jefferies (1848-1887) was a farmer's son to whom the rural environment – its landscape, its flora and fauna, and its people – provided the touchstone for virtually all of his written work. His era was one in which the educated public's interest in nature burgeoned, and scientists travelled the globe seeking out new natural wonders. As Peter Raby states in his book on Victorian scientific travellers, "the investigation of nature was the great nineteenth-century work" (Bright Paradise 10).<sup>1</sup> At the same time, the English were particularly attracted to nature nearer home, in the form of rural images and descriptions. This was despite (or perhaps, because of) the fact that England was becoming increasingly urban and the rural economy was actually diminishing in importance to the country as a whole.<sup>2</sup> As Keith Thomas suggests, attitudes had gradually emerged – partly as a legacy of the Romantics – which were "essentially incompatible with the direction in which English society was moving" so that, as Britain became increasingly urban and less integrated with the natural world, there arose "a new longing for the countryside" (301). As a consequence of this interest in nature and the rural scene in general Jefferies found a readership. Jefferies noted in the 1884 article

“Under the Acorns” that, as far as natural history was concerned, “every one takes an interest, but no one goes to see for himself” (The Open Air 154). Although Jefferies’ tone is critical here, it was undoubtedly this armchair interest in the countryside which created the market for work which soon began to range well beyond the farming articles which he wrote for the early part of his career. As Jefferies’ career developed he supplied material for some of the major periodicals of the period, including The Pall Mall Gazette and Chamber’s Journal, and published such explorations of rural life such as The Gamekeeper at Home (1878), The Amateur Poacher (1879) and Round About a Great Estate (1880).<sup>3</sup>

Some of his work appears to cater unabashedly to the demands of an urban readership seeking to entertain itself by experiencing rural life vicariously. Fleeceborough, in Hodge and His Masters (1880), for example, is an idealised portrait of a country town, depicting a paternalistic utopia in which the latest in a line of humane aristocrats exercises his (virtually feudal) power benevolently. Red Deer (1884) similarly glows with nostalgia in describing the manorial ‘merry England’ which was apparently still thriving in a nook of Exmoor. Essentially, however, Jefferies makes it clear that he opposes the peddling of nostalgia at the expense of accuracy, and even Exmoor and Fleeceborough are offered as exceptions rather than the norm.<sup>4</sup> He is emphatic in his 1882 essay “Notes on Landscape Painting” that works of

art which portray the present in terms of a sentimentalised past are purveying an illusion.<sup>5</sup> He complains that some contemporary landscape painters eschew realism in favour of a misplaced nostalgia, omitting “modern aspects” of agriculture like “steam-plough and reaping-machine,” and therefore creating works which are pleasant, but which “lack the force of truth and reality” (The Life of the Fields 124). Viewers of such a painting thus feel somewhat alienated from the representation, since “our sympathy is not with [its anachronistic details] but with the things of our own time”(125). This emphasis on realism, and on the avoiding of pleasant anachronisms, is manifested in Jefferies’ own work when he discusses some of the more discomfiting aspects of rural life. Writing of the life of a gamekeeper in The Gamekeeper at Home, he takes pains to point out the long hours of work and the discomfort of having to work in unpleasant conditions (35); as he remarks, a gamekeeper’s path is “by no means always strewn with flowers” (36). In fact, much of Jefferies’ work depicts the harsh realities behind the picturesque landscapes and rustic activities, and addresses the social and economic problems which were, or were becoming, endemic to country life.

Jefferies looked at these problems holistically, conscious of the rural world as a complete organism. Indeed, behind much of his rural writing lies the concept of wholeness. He conceived of the rural world as a complex, in terms both of the stratifications and specializations of its

society, and of the seasonally-based cycle of farming activities which interconnected humanity and Nature. His conception of this interrelation between the human and the natural came to be paralleled by an epiphanic sense of spiritual interconnection which the natural environment evoked in him. This was despite his lack of a Romantic or sentimental sense of nature; indeed, during the latter part of his foreshortened life Jefferies, anticipating the perspective which H. G. Wells' would later adopt, began to look on nature as an almost alien force since it had no controlling consciousness and could therefore have no interest in humanity's destiny. Nevertheless the transcendental sense of fusion with the All which Jefferies continued to experience in his cogitations on, and in, nature yielded him a mystical understanding of his place in the cosmos which is not dissimilar to the conclusion derived by Aldous Huxley from his own meditations a half a century later.

On a more material level, Jefferies maintained an ongoing critique of the rural world. On the one hand, he believed that rural work, in its connection to Nature, was more organic than industrial work and that rural culture, centred as it was on the land, had an authenticity and continuity that urban culture lacked. On the other hand, he knew that the life of the poor in rural areas was far from ideal, and that the working conditions and domestic life of agricultural labourers could be undeniably grim. Moreover, farming itself was under threat, partly because of the

agricultural depression which was a factor in Jefferies' father giving up the family farm in the late 1870s as a consequence of "a losing battle against poverty" (Keith, Jefferies 17).<sup>6</sup> Rural society as a whole was in flux, as the increasing mechanization of agriculture meant more work could be done with less labour. As a consequence, the countryside became depopulated as rural people emigrated or migrated to urban centres. Meanwhile, ideas from those urban centres were disseminated into the countryside.<sup>7</sup> He knew, therefore, that the rural world which he valued was far from perfect, even as he voiced his concerns about its decline. Its imperfections might actually cause its collapse, given that the most able labourers now had an alternative in the factories and towns. Consequently he believed that innovations, particularly those forced on the rural world by outside influences, were to be viewed with suspicion, but not to be excluded altogether.

Jefferies' conservatism was tempered with a humanity which enabled him to look sympathetically at the suffering of the poor who formed the base of rural culture, and with a pragmatism which accepted that some changes might have the potential to preserve certain parts of the social fabric which would otherwise decay or disappear. Jefferies concluded that the Victorian countryside's future health depended on its accommodation of both tradition and progress, progress that must be gradual and organic, channelled so that innovation supported, and

blended seamlessly with, more traditional life, enabling the rural world to continue to operate as a complex within which the interdependencies of nature, landscape and culture were integrated. Jefferies' work therefore exemplifies "the fruitful tension, and accommodation, between social continuity and conservatism, and economic innovation and discontinuity" which F. M. L. Thompson identifies as "an underlying theme of the Victorian period" (Rise 30).

This dialectic between continuity and change, the past and the future, appears in modified form in Jefferies' post-apocalyptic After London (1885). In it a future is depicted in which Britain has been returned to a state resembling its mediaeval past. After London was published late in Jefferies' (admittedly foreshortened) career and represents in part his response to an England in which industrial growth had brought with it the production of mass-produced goods, the migration of rural people to urban areas, and increased urban development. Conversely, agriculture was in decline, handcrafts were disappearing, and the stability of rural society was threatened as the population base declined. The demands of the present were eroding a rural culture which was the accumulated legacy of the generations of people who had lived on the land, and the consequences of that erosion were potentially disastrous. After London reflects these concerns, in a text in which past, present and future all collide. They do so in a world in which the urban

has been pinned back behind stockades and city walls, but the rural, in the form of the familiar and benign English countryside moulded by thousands of years of farming and other human activity, has disappeared once the untended land has reverted to relatively hostile forest.

After London was written towards the end of a writing career that drew much of its inspiration from the region of Jefferies' birthplace, both in terms of the local landscape and the currents in social and economic life which he observed there. Edward Thomas has suggested that the area surrounding Coate, where Jefferies was born, "was the subject of half his work, and the background, the source, or the inspiration, for all but the rest" (Life and Work 9). It was also, as W.J.Keith remarks, quite a distinctive locale, "a curious mixture of the old and new" (Rural 128). The "new" was represented by the urban explosion which had occurred with the nearby town of Swindon becoming the site of a major railway works. The "old" was (and is) the thousands of years of human activity visible in the landscape in the form of churches, ecclesiastical ruins, ancient earthworks, prehistoric tracks, and megaliths. Jefferies celebrated the land and its history. The interactions of people with each other and with the topography over the centuries had created, in effect, a text; the earthworks, field systems, buildings and archaeological discoveries to which the land was host all provided evidence of the history of the people who had lived on and from it. The landscape was also a part of nature,

and nature, in the form of the seasons and the weather, was traditionally the preeminent determining factor in rural life.

Jefferies believed that rural life operated in harmony with the environment and was part of a complex which could accommodate changes but should not do so at the expense of an utter severing of the present from the past. This focus on the past surfaced early in his career, and had various sources, including an interest in ancient ballads which reflected Jefferies' schoolboyish fascination with the sword-play and adventure which he imagined was possible in old England.<sup>8</sup> More importantly, the area surrounding his birthplace was -- and is -- rich in sites which indicate a long history of human habitation. For Jefferies, as for his contemporary Thomas Hardy, the regional was always much more of a priority than the national. Consequently, history was always more important to him in its local aspects than as a record of nationally-important dates and political events. Jefferies makes one of his earliest references to the importance of the past in his article "Traits of the Olden Time" (1866), stating that "unless speedily recorded, many interesting traits of our ancestors will be lost," traits which contribute to our knowledge of the past. The past "without history would be but a blank," and a part of history "is in a great measure founded upon tradition," that being the part "relating to the daily life of men not distinguished as having performed any great feat" (Early Fiction 4). Jefferies is making two

complementary points here. Firstly, rural traditions are being displaced, and need to be documented before they vanish. Secondly, the ordinary life of ordinary people may be ignored by historians but nevertheless deserves to be recorded since it adds to our understanding of history. He goes on to document various elements of rural life, including a local dialect which he suggests preserves elements of "old Saxon," which are "disappearing" in the wake of the progress embodied in the improvement in transportation and communications, "the all-powerful influences of steam and the printing-press" (12).

This early interest in local history manifested itself initially along conventional lines. Jefferies wrote the History of Malmesbury (1867), the History of Swindon, and Antiquities of its Environs (1867), the History of Cirencester (1870), and, in 1873, the history of the local branch of a (wealthy and influential) family, A Memoir of the Goddards of North Wilts.<sup>9</sup> He also became briefly involved with a relatively successful local history group which had been founded in 1853: the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society. One can see from its range of subjects why it would have interested Jefferies: "Parochial History," "Monuments and Antiquities," "Traditions and Customs," and "Dialect and Idiom."<sup>10</sup> In 1873 Jefferies gave a talk to the society on "Swindon, its history and antiquities."<sup>11</sup> Subsequently, however, he seems to have avoided formal approaches to historical writing, and his impatience with the

antiquarianism with which local historians tended to be associated is indicated in Round About a Great Estate.<sup>12</sup> Seeking to discover written proof to support physical evidence and a local and oral tradition of what we would now term a “deserted village,” the narrator is disappointed in a history of the locality published in the previous century: “These quotations, these lists and charters, the extracts from Domesday, read dry and formal—curious, and yet not interesting.”<sup>13</sup> What is missing is an account of the social history, the real lived life, of the ordinary people “of his [the writer’s] own day” (104). This is partially echoed by an introduction Jefferies dictated in 1887 for an edition of proto-naturalist Gilbert White’s The Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne. In it Jefferies states, “It must be ever regretted that he [White] did not leave a natural history of the *people* of his own day [my italics]” (Looker and Porteous 181). One can conclude, therefore, that Jefferies became disenchanted with the document-oriented focus which was typical of local history at the time, partly because he thought that there should be attention paid to the lives of ordinary people. Certainly after the early 1870s his interest in the past shifts from the written record toward the sort of living history which was either visible in the landscape, surviving in aspects of traditional rural life, or retrievable from oral accounts. In “Nature and Books” (1887) Jefferies rejects “the ponderous volumes of modern history, which are nothing but words,” preferring instead the

vitality of older, if less comprehensive, records “the incomplete and shattered chronicles themselves, where the swords shine and the armour rings, and all is life though but a broken frieze” (Landscape with Figures 240).

The landscape around his original home offered ample scope for imagining a connection with an ancient England of shining swords and fragmented history. Wiltshire is endowed with a number of ancient structures, including the mysterious White Horse carved into the chalk hillside at Uffington, the nearby megalithic chamber tomb known as Wayland's (or Weland's) Smithy, the ancient hilltop track known as the Ridgeway, and the Iron Age banked enclosures like Liddington Castle. All are topographical features; all indicate the longevity of human presence and human interaction with the landscape.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, all of these are mentioned in Jefferies' writings. Like Thomas Hardy's “aged highway, and ... still more aged barrow ... themselves almost crystallized to natural products” in The Return of the Native (6), all have become naturalised features of the landscape. In “The Wiltshire Downs” (1877) Jefferies describes lying on the top of “an ancient Wiltshire hill” (Landscape and Labour 21) and musing on both “the eternal youth of nature” (22) and the human history embodied in the nearby “ancient British fort or camp” (23). That history embedded in the landscape evoked in Jefferies a sense of a living past. In his early tale “A Strange

Story" (1866) , a character can imagine the natural sound made by the breeze as military flags and battle cries. He asks, "Why is it that I hear in the whistling of the morning air through the bennets, the rustling of the raven standard unfolded to the breeze, and as it [the morning air] sighs through yon woods, the shout which greets the advancing Saxons" (Early Fiction 19).

Jefferies' sense that the past was, in a sense, still alive, is evident in his feeling of connection with the long-dead through the continuum provided by nature. The monuments of the ancient peoples who once populated the landscape are visible and a part of the topography. The landscape therefore connects the observer with the people originally responsible for the structures. This is apparent in the first of Jefferies' two children's books, the fantasy Wood Magic (1881). The protagonist, Bevis -- his very name suggesting ancient history -- talks to the Wind on what "is recognizably Liddington Hill" (Taylor 107).<sup>15</sup> A tumulus on the hill initially appears to Bevis to be " a curious little hill" (2: 243), or, a natural feature of the landscape. However it is, according to the Wind, the grave of a man whose people "used to love and drink me ... and when they died they still wanted to be with me, and so they were all buried on the tops of the hills" (Wood Magic 2: 259). While many modern people have "quite forsaken" the wind (2: 254), Bevis drinks it. By doing so he obviously imbibes that spirit or influence of nature which is threatened by modernity.

Since drinking the Wind also links him with the ancient man buried in the tumulus, time is therefore bridged in the person of Bevis and through nature:

**'There never was a yesterday,' whispered the Wind presently, 'and there never will be tomorrow. It is all one long today. When the man in the hill was you were too, and he still is now you are here; but of those things you will know more when you are older, that is if you will only continue to drink me.' (2:261).**

In the text Bevis is the modern incarnation of a past harmony with nature, mirroring Jefferies' own vision of himself. The landscape and nature itself provide him with a mystical link to that past by telescoping time.

The complementary idea of lapsed time being nullified in nature is referred to in Jefferies' second children's book, Bevis. In one of two epiphanic moments, the sub-adolescent Bevis suddenly becomes "conscious of the beauty of the morning" (391) and, caught in the moment, ceases to be aware of his surroundings. The narrator comments that these moments of rapture amidst "the glory of the earth, and the sun, and the sea" are "beyond the chronograph and any measure of wheels ... for the mind has no time" (392). Jefferies elaborates on this in The Story of My Heart (1883), the spiritual autobiography and excursion into natural mysticism which has been referred to as a watershed in his thinking.<sup>16</sup>

As in Wood Magic, a tumulus with its long-dead occupant gives rise to

feeling of connection with “the spirit of the man whose body was interred” so that there is “no bridge-less chasm, no unfathomable gulf of separation” (Story 37-38). This occasions speculation on the immortality of the soul, and then on eternity as a continuum in which measured time “is a purely artificial arrangement” (44) so that the “continuity of Now is forever” (45). The text makes it clear that Jefferies’ encounters in nature with the enduring evidence of the activity of ancient people have enabled him to experience a feeling of continuity with the past which transcends ordinary human conceptions of time: “Full to the brim of the wondrous past, I felt the wondrous present” (20).<sup>17</sup>

This sense of a transcendence of Time, facilitated by a sense of deep connection with the past, is enabled by the ability of the landscape, and those ancient manmade but naturalised features on it, to retain their essential character in the face of change. In Wildlife in a Southern County (1879), Jefferies notes that the Ridgeway, a “track of primitive peoples” has remained virtually unchanged “for fifteen centuries” through all “the strange changes of the times” (63) and remains a “broad green ribbon” which rarely and only coincidentally conforms to “the purposes of modern civilization” (67). The Ridgeway has thus become a feature of the topography, and therefore part of nature, while also providing a continuing link between the contemporary inhabitants of the landscape and those of the distant past. At the same time it, like nature itself, has

retained its own character over time and in spite of modernity. For Jefferies, the rural landscape in general also remained essentially unaltered, despite the forms of human activity which impacted upon it. It was partly this which enabled him to regard the ongoing process of change in rural life with some sort of equanimity. In an early essay, "The Farmer at Home" (1874), Jefferies remarks: "Nature goes on her way as before, regardless of the railway rattle" (Toilers of the Field 42).

Similarly, in Round About a Great Estate he states approvingly that, despite the great changes in "all human affairs," including the use of the "steam-plough," there are the "same broad open fields ... the same green hills, and the same sun ripening the grain" (75). In "Notes on Landscape Painting" he comments: "That there are many, very many things concerning agriculture and country life whose disappearance is to be regretted I have often pointed out, and having done so, I feel that I can with the more strength affirm that in its natural beauty the country is as lovely now as ever" (Life of the Fields 124).

While the countryside was essentially immutable it also had the property of naturalizing innovations; just as the earthworks and tumuli have blended into the topography, so machinery which once seemed disturbingly new and alien becomes simply part of the rural scene, and is eventually accepted as traditional. In "Notes on Landscape Painting," Jefferies states that the earth "has a way of absorbing things that are

placed upon it, of drawing from them their stiff individuality of newness, and throwing over them something of her own antiquity" (114). The modern machines of the continuing Agricultural Revolution -- such as the threshing machine, the mechanical reaper, and the steam-plough -- "soon become old in the fields" and "become so much a part of the life of the country that it seems as if they had always been there" (123). On the landscape "the old and new so shade and blend together that you can hardly say where one begins and the other ends" (124). Similarly, in "Walks in the Wheatfields" (1887) Jefferies insists: "It is the same beautiful country always new. Neither the iron engine nor the wooden plough alters it one iota" (Field and Hedgerow 154).

Complementing this faculty of the landscape for naturalizing and absorbing innovation are the underlying natural rhythms; continuity is maintained because the new is often a manifestation of the traditional or seasonal. Edward Thomas, in his Introduction to The Hills and the Vale (1909), writes of Jefferies' "curious consciousness of the past," exemplified by Jefferies' observation in "Unequal Agriculture" (1877) that a team of oxen is pulling a plough just as oxen have for "three thousand years" and still "plod[s] on, like slow Time itself, here in this day in our land of steam and telegraph" (xvii). The image illustrates how working the land traditionally makes the ploughman and his team part of a continuum. Similarly, the charcoal burner in "The Countryside: Sussex" (1886) is a

contemporary, but his occupation connects him with the eleventh century: "the man was modern, but his office was ancient. The descent was unbroken. The charcoal burner traced back to the Norman Conquest," and his mediaeval trade was still being practised "in these times of sea-coal and steam" (Hills 90). Moreover, the cycle of the seasons offers hope through renewal.<sup>18</sup> In "Out of Doors in February" (1883), the cold fields of winter are home to wheat shoots which will eventually struggle into the light, "knowing that summer must come" (Hills195). At the conclusion of "Hours of Spring" (1886), the ill Jefferies with his "trickling pulse" (Landscape with Figures 290) is seeking comfort in the regeneration manifest in spring and its concomitant agricultural activities. Jefferies observes that seasonal manifestations, both natural and human, are simultaneously contemporary and, in being part of an ancient cycle, representatives of a distant past: "And are these things new--the ploughman and his team, the lark's song, the green leaf? Can they be new? Surely they have been of old time! They are indeed new--the only things that are so" (299).

In this nexus, then, of landscape, nature and humanity, nature's cycles dictated seasonal agricultural work and, in the annual recurrence of that work, provided a continuum of human activity and a sense in which that activity was itself natural. The landscape, in its essential immutability and naturalization of the apparatus and evidence of human activity,

offered the potential for a consciousness in moderns of their continuity with the dead who, over the millennia, had been subject to the same seasonal rhythms. However, this sense of connection felt by contemporary individuals for the long-dead was obviously individual and intuitive, rather than social and documentary. Local people, on the other hand, offered the possibility of more tangible evidence of cultural continuity. Having inherited a traditional and essentially oral culture, they offered the opportunity for insights into the past through their anecdotes, customs and inherited knowledge. Consequently Jefferies stressed the importance of oral traditions in the history of rural England. He observed that local people could remember "the smallest particulars" about past local events, noting that the "memory of country people for ... details is beyond belief" (Round About 84). In "Traits of the Olden Times" he comments that "the agricultural labourer," although "living in the present," really "lives in the past" since "his traditions, histories, songs and customs, have been largely handed down to him from time immemorial" (13-14).

Suitably interpreted, oral traditions may offer insight where no written record exists, as Jefferies makes clear in "The Dragon at Ashdown," a short story unpublished in Jefferies' lifetime but probably written in 1876.<sup>19</sup> In the story the protagonist, Temple, comments that "tradition [is] the only true history" (Richard Jefferies Society Journal 6, 9),

and suggests that one should take myth and oral tradition seriously since “history in one age is legend in the next” (9). Legend, therefore, has a basis in fact. He goes on to try and unpack the traditions associated with both Dragon Hill (known locally as Dragon’s Mount) and the Uffington White Horse which overlooks it in order to suggest that they are evidence of a forgotten pre-Christian dragon cult which was itself the manifestation in a “prehistoric race” of a brief overlap between the “pterodactyle” found fossilized “not many miles northward” and neolithic humans (10).<sup>20</sup> The piece is framed as a work of fiction, but its specific local setting and the fully four-fifths of it taken up with the discussion of the traditions of the site and the history which the protagonist attempts to reconstruct from the decoding of those traditions accord it a place in any discussion of Jefferies’ own musings on the past.

Jefferies further indicates the emphasis he placed on oral tradition in the (re)construction of the past in “Three Centuries at Home,” written in 1877 but unpublished until 1948.<sup>21</sup> In a discussion which anticipates the beginning of After London, Jefferies considers the difficulty which would be faced in trying to write a history of England in the (unlikely) event that “the written records of English history were swept away” and historians like “Clarendon and Macaulay” therefore ceased to be available for reference (The Old House At Coate 135). He imagines a modern Herodotus “collecting from popular tradition and national monuments the

story of the past." Since landscape and history are virtually inseparable for Jefferies, he imagines his Herodotus visiting the sites of the battles of both Bosworth Field and Hastings and, at White Horse Hill, listening to a "shepherd's legend" of Alfred the Great and his "horn of stone" (135).<sup>22</sup> Jefferies suggests that his reader "imagine a history of England compiled in the same way as these local records, for they are all from life." While he supposes that such a history would have elements of the mythic, "as full of demi-gods and heroes and marvellous exploits as that of the Trojan War," he also suggests that, since "the past fades so quickly," enquiry into the (oral) history of rural people would have offered valuable information from times "as near our own as the [pre-1846 Repeal] Corn Law sufferings and the times of [the 1830-1831 'Captain Swing'] Riot and the Enclosures of Common Land " (135-136). Gathering "material ... in large part from illiterate persons" he would write his "new Saxon Chronicle" (136). Consequently he interviews several locals. An elderly farmer's family goes back ten generations on the same land (137) and the farmer recalls conversations with his grandfather in which the latter spoke of a man he had known who fought at the Battle of Culloden in 1745. Jefferies comments that, in retelling to him the events of 132 years before from recollections passed on orally down the generations, the farmer is effectively "bridging time" (138). Older representatives of the local population, then, in having memories which draw on their own

recollections of those of their antecedents, represent a continuity which does 'bridge time.' This continuity is visible in a slightly different form in the last character in "Three Centuries at Home," an unlettered nonagenarian woman whose method of calculating her age relies on the number of times her roof has been thatched since her childhood. Her occupation is a traditional one, and connects her to the distant past, since she spins wool skimmed from a sheep-dipping pool which shepherds use by right of "immemorial custom" (141).<sup>23</sup> Moreover, she tells a tale which, according to Jefferies, originated in Renaissance Europe, indicating to him the power of oral tradition to travel geographically and temporally, even among the illiterate.<sup>24</sup>

Unfortunately, Jefferies' efforts in "Three Centuries at Home" prove to be inconclusive. The details of Culloden are not forthcoming and the entry in Jefferies' imaginary history for the battle would thus be simply a date and a victory and would therefore, in terseness, "almost exactly reproduce the [original Anglo-] Saxon [C]hronicle" (138). Local people also tend to conflate different historical events. They associate topographical and other physical evidence of past events with a very few famous historical figures, attributing a variegated mass of local history to the agency of "Cromwell and Julius Caesar" (139).<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, Jefferies recognizes that local traditions passed on orally from generation to generation, although sparse in terms of political history, are rich in

folklore and rural culture.<sup>26</sup>

Jefferies' belief in the unexplored potential of oral history -- in the accounting of the lives of ordinary people, past and present, living in and from nature -- is related to its rawness and lack of an ideologically-motivated (historicist) narrator. There is no necessary end-oriented purpose to oral history; it simply recounts past event. Concomitantly, nature operates through randomness rather than some pre-determined or necessarily beneficent design. This belief became an important part of Jefferies' thinking in the latter part of his career, particularly when he began to consider humanity's future. He believed that even history, properly understood, had the randomness of nature, *and* that this randomness offered humanity almost limitless possibilities for the future. Human history, like natural history, is not the product of inevitability or destiny, nor is it being piloted by some sort of force; instead it ought to be comprehended as a series of contingent events. We can read the old country houses in Jefferies' work as metaphors for historical development. In his early story "Henrique Beaumont" a Squire's house is "a rambling mansion, built at several periods of English architecture -- each portion incongruous with its neighbour, yet forming a whole with which no fault could be found" (Early Fiction 41). This idea is developed more fully in the novel Amaryllis at the Fair (1887); the Idens' house is "a grown house, if you understand; a house that had grown in the course of many

generations, not built to set order; it had grown like a tree that adapts to circumstances, and, therefore, like the tree it was beautiful to look at" (258). Both houses have developed over time, organically, and through adaptation rather than according to a pre-determined plan.

This idea of life, or history, simply growing, as it were, without any particular inevitability is made explicit in The Story of My Heart (1883), Jefferies' most extensive excursion into mysticism and personal philosophy. In that text he suggests that, by "standing face to face with nature," he has been able to convince himself that "there is no design" visible in the world (137-138). To imagine otherwise is the result of accepting conventional wisdom, and of having a mind too used to operating within fixed perimeters, restricted to "the continuous circling of the same path" (162). Jefferies believes that even empiricism is too limiting: "The restriction of thought to purely mechanical grooves blocks progress in the same way as the restrictions of medieval superstition" (196). Similarly absolute faith in cause and effect puts the mind in blinkers: "At this moment the mind is unable to conceive of anything happening, or of anything coming into existence, without a cause. From cause to effect is the sequence of our ideas. But ... we may discover that there are various other alternatives" (139). One of these alternatives is the random nature of events; he notes "how great a part chance plays in human affairs" (164).

**Chance militates against notions of destiny or historical determinism. Consequently Jefferies suggests that scientists, in studying nature, have toppled that most conventional and widespread means of discerning a meaning or direction to life: religion. In "Nature and Books" (1887) he writes**

**Our Darwins, our Lyells, Herschels, Faradays—all the immense army of those that go down to nature with considering eye—are steadfastly undermining and obliterating the superstitious past, literally burying it under endless loads of accumulated facts ... Over go temples, and minarets, and churches, or rather they stay, the hollow shells, like the snail shells which thrushes have picked clean; there they stay like Karnac, where there is no more incense, like the stone circles on our own hills, where there are no more human sacrifices. Thus men's minds all over the printing-press world are unlearning the falsehoods that have bound them down so long; they are unlearning, the first step to learn. .... It is nothing but unlearning, I find now; five thousand books to unlearn. (Landscape with Figures 237-238)**

**He equates religion here, including Christianity, with superstition, and its physical structures with the megaliths of a pagan past, as relics of past beliefs which science has emptied of metaphysical truth just as the shell has been emptied of the snail by the thrush. Religion is simply one more**

face of the “old way of thought” which must be unlearned in order to “get by degrees slowly toward the truth” (238). In “The Old House at Coate,” he emphasises that any perceived cosmic plan is imposed rather than deduced.<sup>27</sup> With regard to nature and the world, “it is *our minds* that supply the purpose, the end, the plan, the law, and the rule [my italics]” (Old House 64-65).

Rather than being deflating in some way, however, the realization of a universe governed by chance and contingency is actually liberating, since an unplanned universe is one without preset or imposed conceptual limits:

When at last I disabused my mind of the enormous imposture of a design, an object, and an end, a purpose or a system, I began to see dimly how much more grandeur, beauty and hope there is in a divine chaos -- not chaos in the sense of disorder or confusion but simply the absence of order -- than there is in a universe made by pattern. .... Logically, that which has a design or purpose has a limit. ... [I] feel that there is no contracted order: there is divine chaos, and, in it, limitless hope and possibilities. (Old House 66-67)

If the future is undetermined, it has unknown, virtually limitless, potential.

It is clear here, in his understanding of Nature’s lack of design, that, not only are human history and natural history intertwined in

Jefferies' thinking, but also that his interest in the landscape and rural life is not located solely in the past or in ways of understanding that past. He was also concerned with the present and the future. However, those elements of the present which he particularly valued tended to be directly associated with the past, and were privileged by him when compared to some new (usually external) force for modernity. Modern social and economic forces impacted on the countryside in terms of urbanization, industrialization, and migration. Political forces threatened rural upheaval through radical and trades union influences.

As Q.D. Leavis suggests in her article on Jefferies in Scrutiny, he "was one of those comprehensive geniuses from whose work you can take what you are inclined to find" (435). One of the effects of this has been his posthumous appropriation by some members of the Left. Jefferies' instinctive suspicion of socialism and communism did not stop him having a certain sympathy for the lot of the agricultural worker. His main concern, however, was the preservation of the essentials of both a way of life and its environment. In wanting to do so, Jefferies was part of a general movement in late Victorian England toward rural conservation. A number of fundamentally conservative rural causes, such as that of The Commons, Open Spaces and Footpaths Society and, later in the nineteenth century, the National Trust, were, paradoxically, championed by people from the "radical [left] end of the political spectrum" (Samuel

295). These supporters included William Morris, who was involved in forming a Commons preservation society in the late 1870s (MacCarthy xv).<sup>28</sup> Conversely, and equally paradoxically, although Jefferies himself was antipathetic toward the Left, his radical conservatism has caused some critics to see in him leftist leanings.<sup>29</sup> However, Jefferies' antipathy toward leftist and trades union influences is evident from early in his career, particularly in the several letters he wrote to The Times in November 1872.

Jefferies' letters were inspired by the strikes in Warwickshire by farm workers earlier that year, and the subsequent formation of the Agricultural Labourers' Union.<sup>30</sup> The letters attracted enough attention for him to boost his career and achieve a national audience for his journalism in Fraser's Magazine the following year.<sup>31</sup> The first letter, on November 14<sup>th</sup> 1872, sets the tone for the others, criticizing the typical "Wiltshire agricultural labourer" for his appearance, poor eating habits and greed, and suggesting that, while relatively well off, farm labourers are "too ungrateful for the many benefits which are bountifully supplied them" by farmers (The Times, 8). In the third letter, which appeared on November 27<sup>th</sup>, he refers to the English farmer's "upright, untainted ideas of honour" (10). Taken as a whole, the letters reveal his solidarity with the interests of the class of low-acreage working farmers to which he belonged, and his distrust of organized labour. However, this latter

prejudice is manifested later in his career as a fear that unionists, aroused by outside agitators, would force changes which would have a negative effect on the community.

In a short, undated and only recently published article, "English Socialists," Jefferies implies that socialism and anarchism are synonymous and evokes the spectre of a powerful but formless conspiracy (Richard Jefferies Society Journal 2, 13-14). In the novel Greene Ferne Farm (1880) the (suddenly intrusive) narrator remarks that agricultural workers have "sterling worth" but are "easily led astray," and it is a pity that "no one has yet taken the lead among them with a view to their own real and solid advancement" (84). The inference is that they would be better off forming their own organizations rather than being influenced by outsiders. The Gamekeeper At Home offers a response to contemporary movements advocating land reform and redistribution. Jefferies defends private parks on the grounds of their being historically-important landscapes since they had "remained longest in a condition nearly resembling the original state of the country" (54), actually "form the pages of history" (52); land reformers, on the other hand, are in "utter ignorance of the facts," and "agitators of Communistic views" (54). This fear of attacks on the status quo wrought by leftists is equally obvious in Hodge and His Masters (1880), Jefferies' most sustained effort at delineating the stratified complexity of rural society. In the text Jefferies

insists that leftist political activists -- the "circles in cities who hold advanced views" (Hodge 280) -- are suspect. Consequently he expresses his anxiety about the left-wing politics taking root among the rural working class. He uses the newspaper vendor whose "business is mainly with the cottagers" and whose "print is very likely full of abuse of the landed proprietors as a body" as a symbol of discontent and lack of social harmony; he is a "product of modern days" and the "discordant uproar of his [trademark] trumpet is a sign of the times" (210). The labourer has no real political plan of his own, rather "the programme of the future ... which is put forward is not from [the labourer]" (262). The "restless and unsatisfied" farm labourers are exposed to "doctrines which savour much of Communism" (275).<sup>32</sup> In addition the "labour organization," by demanding higher wages for farm workers, is *causing* unemployment amongst its own membership by "squeezing the farmer too closely" (290). All this agitation, while "not [yet] sufficient to break in pieces the existing and natural order of things" will destroy "the peculiar attraction of country life" if it should intensify (280-281).<sup>33</sup>

Socialist or anarchist ideology, then, is a threat to the traditional culture of the countryside, an external influence with potential for dramatic change which parallels those equally alien urban and industrial influences which Jefferies also perceives as negative. All threaten to overturn the traditional and organic rural social-economic system. However Jefferies

also indicates that to try and stifle change by ignoring the grievances of the rural poor or through repression was simply counter-productive. In the 1883 sketch "The Field-Play," he analyses the causes of rick-burning and decides it is symptomatic of the "dynamite disposition" of anarchists (Life of the Fields 36-37). However he suggests that society creates these individuals through "the cruelty and inhumanity" of poor law legislation: "this is the way to breed dynamite." He argues instead for "more humane treatment of the poor" (39). Clearly he supports change, if only to avert a return to the destruction of the 'Captain Swing' period of rural revolt in 1830-1831 or, more recently, the disruption caused by the labourers' strikes of the early 1870s.<sup>34</sup>

Jefferies made his most succinct statement on his attitude to change and the relation of past to present and future at what turned out to be the midpoint of his career as a writer with a national audience. In his Preface to Round About a Great Estate, a text which celebrates a rural culture of which elements had largely dissolved as a consequence of social and economic change, he remarks that, until recently, the inhabitants of "villages and hamlets, and even ... little rural towns" had "learned the traditions and customs of their forefathers, such as had been handed down for generations" in the light of "the sun by day and the moon by night" (15). He acknowledges that the advent of formal education represents "a new illumination" which has eclipsed ignorance, and states:

In this book some notes have been made of the former state of things before it passes away entirely. But I would not have it therefore thought that I wish it to continue or return. My sympathies and hopes are with the light of the future, only I should like it to come from nature. The clock should be read by the sunshine, not the sun timed by the clock. (15)

The meaning is clear; Jefferies wished to assure the reader that he was not a reactionary, but was instead a progressive who welcomed or at least accepted change, with the important rider that rural change should proceed naturally, and in harmony with the traditional culture on which it impacted. Conversely he implies a fear that *unnatural* change, in replacing the traditions "handed down" for centuries, would rupture the continuity which the cultural accretions of many generations had maintained within rural society. To avoid that possibility, the "new illumination" of education, and therefore modernity, should not completely supplant an older and traditional way of learning or a way of life closely linked to the environment.

Eventually Jefferies came to believe that the forces of change must be channelled and selectively applied in order to appease the discontented and avoid the breeding of "dynamite," thus helping to preserve a way of life and the customary features of the land which supported it. Paradoxically, the *only* way to ensure continuity on social,

economic and environmental levels in rural England was to encourage social and economic changes. As W.J.Keith notes, Jefferies melded his "countryman's conservatism" with a "probing and basically optimistic vision of the future," tempering his emotional attachment to "the traditional ways" with support for "the newer agricultural methods and inventions" (Rural Tradition 128-129). In accepting the inevitability of modernity, but stressing that it should be appropriately applied, Jefferies' position, like that of the village parson in Hodge and His Masters (1880), is "not to check the inevitable motion of the age, but to tone it" (Hodge 282).

Jefferies' acceptance of the need for rural change stems partly from the recognition of the hardships suffered by the rural working class which he implies in "The Field Play." Even some quite early sketches offer a critique of rural poverty. In "John Smith's Shanty" (1874), one sixty-four year old labourer lives in a ramshackle, damp, and mud-floored cottage and must either work as a ditcher in "half-frozen slime and slush" (despite swollen feet and rheumatism), or go to the workhouse (Landscape and Labour 150-154). John Smith himself, meanwhile, is described unflatteringly: his "heavy and slow" movements (Landscape and Labour 150) complement his "slow, dull" thinking (154). Unthinking and criminal violence perpetrated on his wife results in his conviction in court. However his defence amounts to poverty, hunger, and lack of opportunity and, as he disappears into the cells and out of the article, the

narrator insists: "This is no fiction, but an uncompromising picture of things as they are. Who is to blame for them?" (162). The blame, he suggests, lies with the "whole social system" and the remedy resides in gradual rather than "radical and sweeping change" (163). In the sketch "A True Tale of the Wiltshire Labourer," written in the early 1870s but not published until after Jefferies' death, the drunkenness and jealousy of a labourer result in his deserting his wife; her consequent impoverishment causes her death from malnutrition (Toilers of the Field 259-285).

Poverty, drunkenness and desertion: at first glance the portrait seems a prejudiced stereotype. However, the fact that the poor couple have been forced through lack of available housing to rent accommodation from a mean and lecherous landlord is a contributory factor in the woman's death, a circumstance which dovetails with Jefferies' later advocacy of rural housing reform.

A number of these social critiques work by juxtaposition, their power to provoke maximised by Jefferies' subversion of his evocation of an idyllic and picturesque scene by the revelation of the hard labour and poverty that underpin it.<sup>35</sup> Essentially, the harvest scene may look like a landscape in which the people and Nature are harmoniously blended, but the reality is different. In "One of the New Voters," (1885), the "beautiful aspects" of a harvest scene are negated by the "reality of human labour" being "heat and strain" for relatively little gain: "The wheat is beautiful, but

human life is labour" (Landscape With Figures 260). In "Walks in the Wheatfields" (1887) a winter wheatfield evokes thoughts of "some other wheatfields" during the summer, and Jefferies attempts to sketch in words a series of vivid and temporally overlapping scenes as a substitute for "a coloured, living, moving picture" (Landscape With Figures 218). The scene is one of "exquisite silence, ... delicious repose" and "beauty" (219). It shifts to another field, still picturesque, visually replete with ripe wheat and the wildlife which that crop sustains. Then the work starts, and the reapers work long hours, growing "visibly thinner" as they are forced to make as much as they can to supplement low wages (222). Jefferies sharply delineates the contrast between an aesthetically pleasing landscape with its idealized pastoral conventions, and the withering effort and grinding discomfort which the labouring men and women, paid by the acre and needing to make as much during the relatively brief harvest as possible, actually endure:

Does it not seem bitter that it should be so? Here was the wheat, the beauty of which I strive in vain to tell you, in the midst of the flowery summer, scourging them with the knot of necessity; that which should give life pulling the life out of them, rendering their existence below that of cattle, so far as the pleasure of living goes. Without doubt many a low mound in the churchyard ... was the sooner raised over the nameless dead because of that terrible

strain in the few weeks of gold fever. This is life, real human life-- no rest, no calm enjoyment of the scene, no generous gift of food and wine lavishly offered by the gods--the hard fist of necessity for ever battering man to a shapeless and hopeless fall. (223)

Although Jefferies is not advocating socialism here, he is implying that a greater harmony might be achieved if the pleasure which the agricultural landscape gives to the spectator were to have an analogue in the lives of the workers – something not possible while their only concern has to be to a meagre subsistence.

In pieces such as these, where he goes beyond descriptive landscapes or natural history pieces, and includes in his essays rural working people, Jefferies rarely uses conventional bucolic imagery. The wedding feast in Greene Ferne Farm with its jovial rustics is an exception (215-217), but, more usually, he eschews sweetened pastorals in favour of more authentic images.<sup>36</sup> Consequently the eponymous Hodge in Hodge and His Masters is used to typify the “hard-working, honest labourer” who has only the monotony and alienation of the workhouse and an anonymous grave to which to look forward--the victim of an overly rigid Poor Law (306-310).<sup>37</sup> The hardships suffered by the rural lower classes in Jefferies’ unvarnished accounts were not only degrading and/or debilitating but were also likely to fuel discontent. This could have a number of ramifications, one of which was that dissatisfied workers

would be open to the inroads of leftist influences. In "Walks in the Wheatfields" Jefferies complains that the international trade in wheat has resulted in "bankers and financiers, [the] vampires that suck gold" hoarding money, thereby limiting investment, and causing the "bitter distress and starvation" which results in the "red flag of Socialism ... [being] unfurled" (Landscape With Figures 216). Distress as a result of (urban) financial interests results in the possibility of socialism, that "enticing but subversive political creed" which "despise[s] property and social order" and threatens to "overthrow existing institutions" (Hodge 286).

Apart from the suffering endured by the rural working class, there was also the possibility that those among them who were frustrated with the status quo would migrate to the cities or beyond, resulting in depopulation with its consequent negative effects on rural life and the face of the landscape.<sup>38</sup> This was also particularly apparent to Thomas Hardy. In an 1883 essay, "The Dorsetshire Labourer," Hardy celebrates rural culture but observes changes to it with mixed feelings.<sup>39</sup> Recognizing that "progress and picturesqueness do not harmonise," he acknowledges, given that change means partly a "widening [of] the range of [labourers'] ideas, and gaining in freedom," that "it is too much to expect them to remain stagnant and old-fashioned for the purpose of romantic spectators" (181). Two things particularly concern him, however.

One is the breaking of continuity between labourers and local landscape brought about by increased mobility of labour (181), and the other is “a depopulation ... which in some quarters is truly alarming” (188). A few months after Hardy’s article was published in Longman’s Magazine, Jefferies’ “The Wiltshire Labourer” appeared in the same publication. Partly in response to Hardy’s article, and as a complement to it, Jefferies identifies the problems he has observed amongst the rural working classes. Dissatisfaction from poor working and living conditions, frustrated economic aspirations, and a rural housing shortage, result in migration. A “restlessness permeates the ranks” (The Hills and the Vale 256) because “no men ... will endure what they once did” and, in a situation where tied cottages are the norm, and farmers “can only pay so much for wages and no more,” half of the labouring population “is nomad for two reasons--because it has no home, and because it must find wages” (257). Jefferies’ answer to the problem here is for rural housing to be rented rather than tied, and sizeable allotments be provided at agricultural rent (264-265). The result would be a settled rural population and “a race of men of the sturdiest order, the true and natural countrymen” (266) who, being satisfied, would be “without a trace of hasty revolutionary sentiments” (268). The latter statement obviously implies that an unsettled and dissatisfied population of labourers *could be* inclined towards revolution. The essay as a whole, then, is an attempt to

highlight a problem that threatens the ties between “the peasantry ...[and] the soil” (247), while offering a solution which, in encouraging the agricultural population who are the “backbone” and “rampart” of England (261), is “sound policy” for the country as a whole (269).

The pro-reform tone of “The Wiltshire Labourer” is evident also in “After the County Franchise” (1884), an essay which expresses an expectation that the recent extension of the vote to agricultural labourers would have positive results. Jefferies’ overall hope is that “the outcome of the franchise [will be] the foundation of solid inducements to the countryman to stay in the country” (Landscape with Figures 268). This would be in stark contrast to the present situation, where “if they [rural people] would live, they must crowd into the city...or they must cross the ocean” (271). Jefferies puts his faith in the growth of village councils, and anticipates reforms – including compulsory purchase orders by which local councils will obtain land and houses (266-267) – which will enable labourers to purchase “a cottage and a plot of land” and so achieve the security of tenure denied their forebears (268-269). He suggests that an insurance scheme along the lines of those of Friendly societies could replace the “inhuman, debasing, and injurious” poor-law and workhouse system (270-271).<sup>40</sup> A consequence of villagers having a vote, the sense of independence inspired by a “genuinely representative” council, and the goal provided by home ownership, will be the encouragement of “push

and enterprise" (272). Looking forward to labourers producing excess produce from their allotments, Jefferies suggests that a steam-powered road transit system should be established to move that produce cheaply and efficiently (273).<sup>41</sup> He imagines that the independent but settled labourer will be less, rather than more, antagonistic to farmers and estate-owners, but (inevitably) warns "the new voter" against "the outside orator who may urge him on for his own ends," and those of the (presumably socialist) "cliques and fanatics" (275).

However, although Jefferies was aware that change was not only inevitable, but often desirable, he felt that it should be accommodated with the least possible disruption. Even greater literacy was a possible cause for concern. Jefferies generally approved of education and the improved literacy which was a consequence of Forster's 1870 Education Act.<sup>42</sup> In Round About a Great Estate he referred to it as "a new illumination" (15).<sup>43</sup> However in Hodge he expresses concern that it might be difficult to balance intellectual activity with farm work. Noting approvingly that "it is a world of education, books, and wider sympathies" he goes on to ask:

The problem is how to enjoy the intellectual progress of the century and yet not forfeit the advantages of the hand labour and thrift of our ancestors? How shall we sit up late at night, burning the midnight oil of study, and yet rise with the dawn, strong from sweet

sleep, to guide the plough? (Hodge 117)

Again, Jefferies makes it clear that modern developments threaten to disrupt the legacy of “our ancestors.”

He also believed that the way to achieve progress in rural areas was through gradualism, rather than sudden or explosive change. This can be seen symbolically in the novel Greene Ferne Farm, in which nonagenarian Andrew Fisher is a tyrant whose habits evoke an image of the worst excesses of feudalism, including rape and other acts of violence towards his employees. Significantly, he has no appreciation of “the beauty and glory” of nature (52) and dies unmourned. Perhaps one of the most telling images in the text, however, uses Fisher’s millstones to predict symbolically the gradual wearing away of the forces of social injustice and exploitation by the exploited themselves. The millstones, powered by the “black and direful” water-wheel, have “crushed form and shape out of the yellow wheat” (49), much as Fisher has crushed his employees. Slowly but inevitably, however, “the helpless corn by degrees wore away the solid adamant of its oppressor” until the millstone was “rendered useless by the very corn it had so relentlessly annihilated” (49-50). Justice can be achieved gradually, without a violent upheaval. Moreover, as the first pages of The Dewy Morn (1884) symbolically illustrate, dramatic change wrought by outside influences, no matter how well-intentioned, can be counter-productive. In the novel the protagonist,

Felise, on finding flowers growing on a grass verge beneath a dead thorn branch, impulsively throws aside the branch "to give the flowers more room and freedom." Having reflected on her action, she replaces the branch, realizing that its thorns are actually protecting the growing flowers from passing sheep (1-2). It is also clear that too sudden or absolute a freedom would have resulted in the death of the flowers.

This episode in The Dewy Morn also reflects a continuing concern of Jefferies: the possibly destructive consequence of external influences. The hand that `liberated' the flowers might well have caused their doom. The urban, the modern, and the industrial were all external to the countryside and therefore, to a greater or lesser degree, inorganic. Intrusive modern developments which impinge on the traditional or customary, frequently appear in Jefferies' work, and tend to be viewed negatively. In The Amateur Poacher the manager of a local estate displays "shrewd management" financially (278). Unfortunately the "absence of all kinds of [human] sympathy" in his method "[has] caused a certain amount of discontent" (277) because "an estate cannot be worked like the machinery of a factory" (279). By implementing improvements that involve flouting the "traditions of the spot" (279), the manager is supplanting the organic with the inorganic and foreign. In Round About a Great Estate modernity -- in the form of urban competition, steam power, and cheap foreign grain -- has caused a sharp decline in the employment

of the local water-mill, and brought about the disappearance of the village millwright whose "skill ... forethought ... [and] sense of just proportion ... made him an artist" (99). The alien and modern encroach on the countryside in a different, and more specifically social, form in Hodge when an urban businessman rents a farm but has a wife who finds that "the ancient simplicity and plainness of country life are positively repulsive" (106). In their ignorance, she and her husband, by settling in an environment they neither appreciate nor understand, are a force for the diluting and subverting of traditional rural society ; they "help on that sapping and undermining of the ancient sturdy simplicity, the solid oak of country character, replacing it with veneer" (110). Jefferies' complaints here are of urban values having a negative influence on rural life directly, through urban people settling in the countryside. However he is equally critical of indirect urban influences, in that farmers' daughters at finishing schools mingle with young women whose "papas [are] in the City" (Hodge 125), and so become alienated from "the old-fashioned ways of agriculture" (126). Even agricultural workers are affected, since a labourer is more likely to sing "a street ditty such as you may hear the gutter arabs singing in London, and coming from a music hall" than anything more indigenous (262).<sup>44</sup>

Elsewhere Jefferies complains that modern industrial products are inferior to their handcrafted counterparts. Edward Thomas notes that

Jefferies' concern with "country crafts" in Wildlife in a Southern County is "because of their goodness as much as their age" (Richard Jefferies 139). In the Preface of that text Jefferies himself indicates that he is recording "the old manners and customs" which "linger" beyond the "frontier line ... [of] civilization" (vii). Peter C. Gould has written that Jefferies--like Thomas Hardy--was "directed from a variety of motives" that included a need to "demonstrate the value and skills of rural England" (69).<sup>45</sup> In "The Southdown Shepherd" (1881) Jefferies privileges the custom-made crook in comparison to modern mass-produced models which are "all exactly like" (Nature Near London 24). However his disapproval of industry goes beyond the products to the effect of machine work on the operatives themselves. In Wildlife in a Southern County, and echoing Ruskin and Morris, he refers to workers in an industrial workshop as "merely paid human machines" when compared to village craftsmen such as the wheelwright (81-82).<sup>46</sup> Jefferies' obvious disapproval of the sterility of this industrial workshop is in stark contrast to his approval of the local and organic: a shepherd reads "the fields ... for he ... has to linger over them and study every letter" (104), and a farmer "loves the earth on which he walks like a true autochthon" (152).

The monotony and uniformity which the image of a worker as a machine suggests were reflected in the mass-produced industrial products deplored by both Jefferies and Morris. However this

standardisation was also typical of urban and urban-style houses. One of the least acceptable aspects of the products of modernity was that they were less natural than their traditional equivalents which offered, in their individuality, a more organic aspect. In "The Farmer At Home" (1874), urban houses are criticized as uniform products, "exact duplicates of each other," in contrast to old farmhouses which are "very picturesque" and more natural in that they have "varied" and "irregular" features (Toilers of the Field 3). Similarly, in "The Future of County Society" (1877), Jefferies is critical of the spread of urban uniformity to a small country town: "The individuality of each place is wearing away, and the sameness succeeding" (Landscape and Labour 96). In Wildlife in a Southern County an old country mansion with a "fine old filbert walk" and a century-old yew hedge is being destroyed to make way for "a garish stucco-fronted hunting box, with staring red stables and every modern convenience." The indigenous, the "true old English," is being destroyed and replaced by the modern, ugly and alien (93-94).

Those urban influences which encroach on the rural environment, then, tend to be presented as overwhelmingly negative. However Jefferies also recognizes that the city itself does have its attractions, despite its darker aspects, as he indicates in Greene Ferne Farm (1880). In that novel Kingsbury, based on the Wiltshire town of Swindon, has two sides to its "medal"; although it brings overcrowding, disease and

drunkenness, its industry does offer high wages (62).<sup>47</sup> Elsewhere Jefferies indicates that London, too, can offer a positive face. In "The Modern Thames" (1884) Jefferies refers to London as "the greatest city in the world" (Open Air 104), and it is on London Bridge where he has the epiphany which he describes in The Story of My Heart as having "felt the presence of the immense powers of the universe" (87). In his last novel, Amaryllis at the Fair (1887), he states that the streets of the capital offer incomparable "entertainment" (127).

Contrasting dramatically with the positives which Jefferies finds in urban life, however, are the negatives. Swindon, close to Jefferies' birthplace, was little more than a village until the 1830s. Then, as Jefferies relates in "The Story of Swindon" (1875), the engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel was among a "small party of gentlemen" who "sat down to luncheon on the greensward which was then where the [railway] platform is now" (Hills105). As a result of their survey of the area "a whole town seemed to start into being at once" (109), centred around the Great Western Railway Company and the industries needed to supply it. What had been farmland disappeared beneath houses and factories. Jefferies indicated his attitude to this encroachment by the urban and industrial on the rural and agricultural in his treatment of the town of Kingsbury in Greene Ferne Farm . Separating (industrial) Kingsbury from "the sweet fields of lovely England" is a polluted pond, "a slough of

all unimaginable filth" (64). As Roger Ebbatson has commented, the description of the town "illustrates the alienation between man and his environment implicit in an uncontrolled surrender to industrialism" and is "a vision of an urban hell" (149). A local shepherd, having been attracted to the town in search of higher industrial wages, has fallen ill and languishes in a room with windows that will not open to let in the "scent of new-made hay" from nearby meadows (67). A member of the rural clergy saves his life by first letting in fresh air and then arranging for his return to his native village (67-69). The inferences are obvious: the rural world gives life, whereas industry and urbanism bring illness and pollution. When London is drowned in its own "slough of unimaginable filth" in After London its unwholesome influence is at least confined to the miasmatic swamp which forms on the site.

London itself is depicted as generally bleak in Amaryllis, the entertainment which it offers being balanced by it being "cold, grey, bitter [and] stony," while the pavements of Fleet Street are "covered with [the] expectoration" of sufferers of lung disease and the home of "starved and chilly wretches" (227). Elsewhere the Capital is associated with a sort of hyperactivity. The "loadstone of London" in "Footpaths" (1880) acts as a magnet on Jefferies but that magnet is one which operates through "a mental, a nerve-restlessness" rather than any real "pleasure" (Nature Near London 26-27). Jefferies admits being drawn to London, but

suggests that the effect of its proximity induces an effect almost like that of some addictive stimulant. Similarly, we read in "Red Roofs of London" (1884) of "Busy life everywhere: no stillness, no quiet, no repose. Life crowded and crushed together; life that has hardly room to move" (Open Air 227). The bustle of the city has an appeal, but it is toward the frenetic activity of the herd. What it does not offer, as he remarks in the preface to Nature Near London, is "the absolute quiet, peace and rest which dwells in the meadows and under the trees and on the hilltops in the [more distant] country" which enables the mind to "have an understanding" with the natural world (vi).

London is not only contrasted with the countryside, but also seen to have a negative impact upon it. In "Nightingale Road" (1880) a "bluish-yellow mist" drifts into the countryside which "blot[s] out distant objects and blur[s] those nearer at hand" (Nature Near London 50). It is "simply the atmosphere of London brought out over the fields by a change in the wind" (51). Foreshadowing the poisonous miasma in After London that emanates from what was once the capital and "obscure[s] everything where it hover[s]" (After London 199), the mist also symbolizes a sinister influence, moving out from London and poisoning the countryside. In "On the London Road" (1885), Jefferies describes the "hideous leer" on the faces of "four-fifths of the ceaseless stream that runs out from the ends of the earth of London into the green sea of the countryside" (Open

Air 224). The impression is of the urban population polluting the rural world, in a similar fashion to the mist in "Nightingale Road." This vision of the capital as contaminating its surroundings offers an explanation as to why, in After London, he has the city disappear into its own effluent.

## II

Raymond Williams describes After London as a "powerful but acrid vision" (Country 196). In it the largely urban, industrially-based society of late-Victorian England has collapsed in the wake of some forgotten cataclysm and fragmented into a number of mutually antagonistic feudal states. The past is a black hole into which almost all post-Dark Ages' knowledge has vanished. In the aftermath of depopulation, the once-benign English landscape has reverted to dense forest and become the habitat of hostile nomads. The novel is split into two sections. In Part I, "The Relapse into Barbarism," a future historian describes the new and regressed England, and offers possible explanations for its becoming that way. Part II relates the adventures of a member of the new squirearchy, a young man named Felix Aquila whose sensitivity and interest in artistic and intellectual pursuits makes him both a social misfit and a recognizably Jefferies-like figure.

After London is multi-faceted: part dystopian warning, part 'Boy's Own' colonial or Wild West adventure story, part disguised autobiography, part *fin de siècle* embodiment of fears of atavism and degeneration, part

subversion of the Victorian cult of medievalism, part ode to nature's 'divine chaos,' and part new beginning.<sup>48</sup> Given the various themes which one may identify in the novel, it is unsurprising that it has generated critical responses which accuse it of ambiguity or ambivalence.<sup>49</sup> Part of that ambiguity lies with the novel's setting, an England which resembles the mediaeval world to a significant degree. This in itself suggests something of a paradox, since Jefferies was well aware of the excesses and cruelties of England's past.

In "Traits of the Olden Times" Jefferies states that if one wants to style progress--in its seeming displacement of the "good days [of] old England"-- as "the degeneracy of the moderns," then it is "in many respects a degeneracy that *cannot* be deplored [my italics]" (Early Fiction 5). Hanging for trivialities, gibbeting, confining in stocks and bull-baiting are all offered as "practices scarcely likely to sustain the title ['good'] in modern estimation" (5). Moreover, in the same year as After London was published (1885), he wrote an article entitled "Outside London" in which the ruins of a royal hunting lodge on the fringe of the city provoke thoughts that things change but Nature endures. He writes:

Dearly as I love the open air, I cannot regret the mediaeval days. I do not wish them back again; I would sooner fight in the foremost ranks of Time. ~~Nqr dq~~ we need them, for the spirit of nature stays, and will always be here, ... the sweet air and the hills, and the sea,

and the sun, will always be with us. (The Open Air 218) <sup>50</sup>

Despite denying here that he wants “the mediaeval days” to come back again, however, Jefferies produced in After London a novel in which a devastating catastrophe has caused Britain to regress socially and environmentally to such an extent that the introductory portion of the text is titled “The Relapse into Barbarism.” Much of England’s landscape reverts to forest, and an economic system based largely on agriculture and hunting supports a series of feudal kingdoms comprised of small towns and stockaded settlements. While not strictly mediaeval, Jefferies’ future society is certainly reminiscent of feudal England, including a powerful aristocracy of “nobles,” and serf-like “servants” or “bondsmen” (31). The apparent dichotomy suggested by Jefferies writing a novel in which the future resembles the past, while proclaiming his aversion to bringing “mediaeval days” back, can be resolved partly by categorising After London as a dystopia, as Krishan Kumar does in Utopia and Anti-Utopia in Modern Times, when he refers to the novel as “clearly ... an anti-utopia” (127).<sup>51</sup> As a dystopia, the novel would be a warning, a dark vision based on the possible consequences of a continuation of the errors of the present. However After London is not simply a pessimistic vision of the future designed to implicitly critique the present, and present the author’s fears in a developed form. Amongst other things, it also remakes England, returning it to a more natural and undeveloped state. In mixing

positives with negatives After London therefore anticipates Aldous Huxley's Brave New World but, like Huxley's novel, inevitably appears to be ambiguous.

Part of the ambiguity perceived in After London, however, arises from the difficulty in confining it within a particular genre. One might expect an ardent naturalist and rural traditionalist like Jefferies, in imagining a future England which replicated an earlier, mediaeval, mode of existence, to have created a utopian 'Merrie England,' an antecedent of Morris's News from Nowhere. Instead Jefferies' novel may as easily be read in terms of degeneracy and atavism as it may be interpreted more optimistically.<sup>52</sup> Yet the eventual success of its protagonist, and the positivity implicit in the story's ending, make its easy classification as a dystopia also difficult to justify. The apparent ambiguity, however, may lie in the attempt to categorise, rather than in the text itself. M. Keith Booker locates the origins of the "twentieth-century turn from utopian optimism to dystopian skepticism" in the late-nineteenth century (Dystopian Impulse 9), and notes also that "nineteenth-century utopian visions showed a powerful ambivalence toward science and technology," since Edward Bellamy's Looking Backward celebrates machinery, but Samuel Butler's Erewhon shuns it (6). Given this ambivalence to modernity in the period, an ambivalence reflected in those other imagined futures, it seems reasonable that Jefferies' novel should also reflect an ambivalence.

Moreover, if one bears in mind the fact that he was both on the cusp of the turn toward dystopian fiction, and a pioneer of it, it seems *unreasonable* to expect Jefferies' novel to fit neatly into a genre which barely existed at the time.

Booker suggests that "the treatment of imaginary societies in the best dystopian fiction is always highly relevant more or less directly to specific 'realworld' societies and issues" (19). Although Jefferies' text is not an absolute dystopia -- nor discussed by Booker -- the imaginary society that Jefferies depicts in the text *is* relevant to his own society and the particular issues which he believed important. As I have suggested, much of Jefferies' work involves social criticism on some level, and After London is no exception. Moreover it is important to read the novel in the light of the issues which his other work throws into relief.

In After London Jefferies imagines an England which has suffered a sudden and catastrophic demolition of society, not by social but by apparently natural means. Radical depopulation has occurred and the new society is brutal and generally ignorant, but the wherewithal is there for society to begin anew. As we have seen, Jefferies' idea of the natural world was one which found hope in the cycle of the seasons, and the regenerative power of the earth. In the essay "Hours of Spring," published the year following After London, he describes how the winter landscape seems desolate, but, beneath the dormant earth, the seeds

await the sun:

With snow and frost and winter the earth was overcome, and the world perished, stricken dumb and dead, swept clean and utterly destroyed—a winter of the gods, the silence of snow and universal death. All that had been passed away, and the earth was depopulated. Death triumphed. But under the snow, beneath the charmed rampart, slept the living germs. ... Locked in sleep lay bud and germ—the butterflies of next summer were there somewhere, under the snow. The earth was swept of its inhabitants, but the seeds of life were not dead. (Landscape With Figures 295)

The passage has an obvious relevance to After London, with the depopulation of the earth and the world swept clean. But the “seeds of life” are still there waiting to emerge. However, nature has no consciousness; it does not intentionally nurture seeds nor any other form of life. In “Hours of Spring” Jefferies states flatly, “Nature sets no value upon life, neither of mine nor of the larks that sing” (289). All life must struggle to survive. The same applies to the society struggling to emerge in After London. Jefferies has created a new society with the potential to grow out of an apparent wasteland. In keeping with the realities of Nature, the new medievalism is brutal rather than benign.

Jefferies did find some aspects of the mediaeval appealing, particularly the evocation of an idyllic ‘Merrie England.’ In 1884 he had

published Red Deer, one of his ostensibly non-fiction 'countryside' books like The Gamekeeper at Home. It depicts Exmoor as timeless. The people are a living remnant of an ancient past with which they have retained a continuity: they "reserve for themselves their ancient tongue and ancient ideas, their traditions, and belief in the occult" (243). Exmoor is a mediaeval landscape over which "modern civilization has passed like a breath of wind, stirring the leaves of the trees, but leaving them as they were" (241). The book suggests a harmonious mediaeval world in which deer hunting looms large as a unifier: the stag itself is a symbol of organic continuity in that it is "earth-born -- autochthon" (96) and its ancestors have been on Exmoor since "Roman money ruled the island" (11); hunting, the "common bond of sport," helps to ensure that "a culture of goodwill survives here" so that, on Exmoor, "it is merry England still" (198-199). As in the Fleeceborough chapter of Hodge he depicts a community which is intrinsically harmonious and maintaining a continuity with the past. His purpose in Red Deer is to celebrate a distinct hunting culture, an island in time, which has preserved itself organically and retained, in its continuing links with the past, some positive aspects of 'merry England.' However, in being a vestige, its value is historical rather than as a model. Jefferies' position on the mediaeval is clarified in "Outside London." London is creeping out toward an ancient royal ruin overlooking a wood that is itself a remnant of a huge forest where wild boar and stags

were hunted “centuries ago” (Open Air 217). Despite the proximity of the metropolis the air is fresh, clear of polluting “gas ... [and] sulphurous acid” and therefore still redolent of “the spirit of nature” which will “always be there.” When Jefferies insists he does not want the mediaeval days to return, it is because “the spirit of nature stays and can be found by those who search for it,” despite the passage of time (218). Although he depicts a neo-mediaeval England in After London, it is *not* because he wishes England would regress. What he does wish is that people could rekindle in themselves the spirit of nature, the general loss of which Jefferies conveys metaphorically when the Wind tells Bevis that modern people have “quite forsaken” it (Wood Magic 2:254). However Nature itself has no consciousness of humanity or anything else. While Nature is an inspiration for Felix in After London, life in Nature is harsh. But the potential is there for society to evolve into something more acceptable to Jefferies’ sensibilities than Victorian England.

Part of that potential lies in so much of the physical and intellectual world in After London being a blank. Jefferies has cleaned England, not only of the mass of its people, but also of much of its knowledge. All the constricting ‘dogmas’ of Victorian England have disappeared, congruent with the suggestion he makes in The Story of My Heart: “Erase the past from the mind -- stand face to face with the real now—and work out all anew” (Story 167-168). By ‘the past’ in this instance Jefferies means

knowledge and ways of thinking. However, one of the areas of knowledge lost in After London is actually the past itself. In dystopias generally, notably Huxley's Brave New World and Ape and Essence, and George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four, the unadulterated facts of the past are often deliberately denied the people in order to maintain stability or for other, more Machiavellian, reasons. In Wells' The Time Machine, too, history has been lost to the inhabitants of the future but in that text the loss is really a plot device in the service of suspense, as the Traveller slowly deduces the downward spiral which history has followed. In After London, however, the loss of historical record is partly a device which enables Jefferies to criticise historians.

In the text history is a matter for informed conjecture, rather than proven statement. Some (probably natural) disaster has dramatically depopulated England, and possibly the planet, and its effects on landscape and wildlife are clear. Regrettably the causes are not. Accounts of the cause vary widely, "nothing is certain and everything confused." All the narrator can arrive at is an approximation of the truth, not "the ultimate truth" and he rejects the idea of tailoring the facts to suit his own theory (15). This conforms with Jefferies' ideas about freeing the mind, and not being governed by presupposition. In a sense, however, Jefferies is also anticipating ideas concerning the philosophy of history circulating in our own period, in that he is indicating how difficult it is to

arrive at a unified and single narrative of past events; the historian can only create *one* possible narrative, not *the* indisputable and authoritative account. Historical writing is impelled to “impose plot on the seriatim of reality” and consequently becomes part story rather than pure fact (Partner 33).

As we have seen, Jefferies' idea of a useful historical record was one which resembled the 'broken frieze' of the old chronicles which he privileges in “Three Centuries at Home” and elsewhere. This idea of historical record as a series of events, assembled from oral accounts and to which one must apply imagination to form a vivid and vital narrative, is exemplified in After London. The text starts with the words “The old men say their fathers told them ...”(1), and it is from a synthesis of differing oral accounts, together with written fragments, that the narrator assembles “the nearest [estimate of the actual past] to which [he] could attain” (15). Significantly, he indicates how difficult it is to establish confidently whether an event is a cause or an effect, since the silting up of the ports may have been a cause of “the disappearance of the population,” but, alternatively, “the disappearance of the population and the consequent neglect [of the ports]” may actually have “caused the silting” (15). Moreover, he tends to criticize an historian named Silvester who is guilty of “colouring them [the facts] with his own theory” rather than simply presenting the facts as known (15), whereas the narrator endeavours to

give the reader “nothing but ascertained facts” rather than “speculation and superstition” (41). Again, this accords with Jefferies’ preference for accuracy where history is concerned, facts rather than speculative narrative.<sup>53</sup>

The disruption to rural life which Jefferies feared in his own period occurs in After London, but from different causes. The apparently natural disaster which depopulates the country is the rebellion of nature rather than either a leftist-inspired revolution, or the mass exodus of dissatisfied labourers. However the novel also metaphorically represents Jefferies’ fears that some sort of dramatic social revolution would rupture historical continuity and result in catastrophe. The anarchist/communist revolution which Jefferies feared, should it have come to pass, would presumably have disposed of the ruling classes; in After London the pre-apocalypse “rich and upper classes” have fled, leaving behind “mainly the lower and most ignorant, so far as the arts were concerned” (16) as well as those living in isolation, such as farmers. The new ruling class has developed from those who “possessed some little education and force of mind”(32) and, exemplifying Francis Bacon’s dictum that knowledge is power, has differentiated itself by means of the knowledge which it has zealously kept to itself. However it has since degenerated into a powerful, and brutal, elite so that “the past was forgotten, and the original equality of all men lost in antiquity” (33). We have a situation where the original

moneyed elite has disappeared, lower-class intellectuals have eventually become the leaders, and the new elite which emerges from them soon forgets any ideals about equality and becomes despotic. What Jefferies is suggesting here metaphorically is that the equality preached by the socialist and anarchist agitators will simply lead to a new, and more severe, inequality.

The notion of After London metaphorically expressing a fear of the possibilities of upheaval and even violence from (urban-based) socialists and anarchists is more obvious when taking into account Jefferies' other work. He represents the people of London somewhat atavistically in "A Wet Night in London"; they are "well-dressed and civilized savages" (Open Air 230). In both of the two 'disaster' stories which preceded After London, "Snowed Up: A Mistletoe Story" and the incomplete "The Great Snow," urban mobs whom privation has made desperate rapidly regress into an animalistic brutality. In "The Great Snow" they degenerate into "ravening wretches" with teeth like "a dog's about to bite" (After London 246) and then to lycanthropic "wolves in human shape" (247). "Snowed Up" also depicts ordinary people becoming a dangerous mob in their desperate search for food. John Brannigan's analysis of "Snowed Up" suggests that "the real fear expressed ... is of poverty and vulnerability to mob rule" and detects in the text an expression of "the internal crisis of the dominant order"; after the text evokes the subversion of that order by

the mob, Jefferies' resourceful military hero contains the threat and nullifies it (Literary Theories 165-166). By "making visible the imminent danger of [society] `reverting' to barbarism" the power of "the dominant culture"— at once a visible but (in terms of how it "operates") concealed "presence"— is able to validate "the value of civilization" (167). One might argue something similar for After London, although the latter text makes that argument in a more convoluted fashion. Society breaks down and regresses to a more primitive state. The protagonist Felix, the most complete character in the text and, eventually, a synthesis of marksman, military tactician, scholar and naturalist, who is at least sensitive to the problems of the underprivileged, appears at the end of the text to be the gentlemanly power about to reassert civilized values in a barbarous world. At the same time, the excesses and regressions of After London would cause late-Victorian readers of the text to value those comparatively positive aspects of their own society -- such as stability, civility, and law and order -- which are absent in the novel but, by their very erasure in the world of the text, reenforce their presence in the world of the reader.

However, while the novel therefore metaphorically explores a social crisis and its consequences, evidencing a fear of leftist-inspired, working-class militancy, it also offers social criticism sympathetic to the lower classes. In his Introduction to a current edition of After London

John Fowles notes that “the selfishness, stupidity and injustice of Felix’s world ... lay for Jefferies (and William Morris) very close outside any Victorian reader’s door” (xix). John R. Reed suggests that “Jefferies [sic] was writing a parable not merely of an England wild again in a distant future but for his own day” (Victorian Will 385). As we have seen, Jefferies identified and deplored mediaeval abuses like bull-baiting and gibbeting in “Traits of the Olden Times,” and the barbarism and cruelty in After London is congruent with that. His depiction of mediaeval society is certainly much more unpleasant than other Victorian portrayals, such as the ordered world of Abbot Samson in Carlyle’s Past and Present, or the hale and hearty rural community in Morris’s A Dream of John Ball. Like Carlyle and Morris, Jefferies utilised feudal society to make a political point. However Jefferies’ quasi-mediaeval society is, in important ways, employed as a parallel to nineteenth-century England, not as the corrective model it becomes for Carlyle or Morris.

One obvious parallel between the world of After London and late Victorian England is between the bondsmen in the text “who work their whole lives for the profit of others” (31), and the impoverished labourers who populate a number of Jefferies’ works. In “Saint Guido” (1885) the harvest is a “time of great joy” for the boy Guido himself, but the wheat tells him that it is the cause of “labour and ... misery” for others (The Open Air 12). In “The Absence of Design in Nature” we are told that “the entire

labouring population ... is miserably underpaid" due to the "pure selfishness" of the employers (Landscape with Figures 246). Similarly in "Walks in the Wheatfields" the harvester's "existence [is] below that of cattle" (Landscape With Figures 223). More obviously enslaved is the labourer in The Dewy Morn whose forced dependence on the tied cottage system leaves him in the position of a serf (115). In After London freedom is impossible for the poor in the part of England Felix lives in, unless they are beyond the pale, like the Bushmen "who live wholly in the woods" (19) and are the most obvious examples of degeneracy in the novel. They mutilate domestic cattle, kill game for "mere thirst of blood," and are "human vermin" (21). On the other hand, as transients who "fix their camp for a few days ... and again move on" (20), they also reflect Jefferies' concern in "The Wiltshire Labourer" that a significant percentage of the labouring population, because of a lack of shelter and the search for employment, "is nomad" (Hills 31).

Given Jefferies' concerns about the urban and industrial encroaching on the countryside it is more than possible to see, in the text's "greatest military commander" (164) and his settlement Aisi, a critique of the growth of an urban industrial town in what was once countryside. The involvement of the prolific engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel in the growth of industrial Swindon makes it difficult to see accident in the naming of After London's King Isembard. Like

technological advances in Jefferies' day, the King's "furious energy was always disturbing the world" (146).<sup>54</sup> Aisi is also the site of a number of abuses, including the summary hanging of slaves "perhaps for pilfering, perhaps for a mere whim" and other examples of "a species of negative humanity" (165). This abuse of the slaves in Aisi has its parallel in the suffering endured by factory hands in the Kingsbury/Swindon of Greene Ferne Farm, which is "notorious for ... misery" (62). Since Felix reacts to the cruelty with "horror and indignation," (172), one assumes that the shepherd-kingdom he will develop at the story's end would avoid these abuses. In an England emptied of much of its population and knowledge by natural disaster, the vacuum having been filled by Nature, the barriers he has to overcome will be physical and logistical, rather than intellectually or socially restrictive.

The device of having a natural, rather than a human, agency causing London's downfall allows Jefferies to have nature triumph over the urban and industrial. Jefferies indicated the power nature has to humble humanity in his earlier work. In "Snowed Up," London is easily and quickly closed down. Snow, reminiscent of the grain that wore down the millstones in Greene Ferne Farm, is "so fine and impalpable, yet strong enough to completely conquer our civilization" (Literary Theories 27). Jefferies' emblematic signs of civilization, the possible disappearance of which he muses on in Hodge (see below), and the

actual disappearance of which he effects in After London, are shown here to be ephemeral, puny in the face of nature, and not securely rooted:

“Where are your steam-engine, your telegraphs and your printing-presses--all powerless and against what--only a little snow!” (28).

Technology is similarly neutralized in “Snowed Up,” albeit temporarily, and both stories therefore also indicate how vulnerable society is in comparison with nature, the products of modern industry notwithstanding. Instead of being forgotten by humanity, as in Wood Magic, nature virtually swamps it. Jessica Maynard identifies in “Snowed Up” -- and by implication, After London -- an “unarticulated desire for such a catastrophe to occur,” a “back to nature impulse” (Literary Theories 139), and a need for “the curative power of natural disaster, the purgative power of fire and water” to destroy London (143). In After London the River Thames has become blocked with “the cloacae of the ancient city” of London and has consequently swamped the city (After London 36). It is now “a vast stagnant swamp, ”toxic from “all the [festering] rottenness of a thousand years and of many hundred millions of human beings” (36-37). What land is left within the swamp is suggestive of the aftermath of a nuclear explosion, in that it is toxic, glows, and has on its surface the outlines of skeletons (202-203). London has been punished for its negative qualities, its pollution and dissemination of restlessness, by its submergence in a mega-version of the polluted slough of Kingsbury in

**Greene Ferne Farm**. Conversely, the reclamation of much of Southern England by woodland is paralleled by a vast inland lake that forms in the Thames Valley and becomes a particularly “beautiful ... expanse of water” (42).

Smaller cities and towns, meanwhile, have been swallowed up by the forest (36-37). This digestion of urban England by nature in the novel reflects Jefferies’ conviction that nature would soon reclaim the English landscape, given the opportunity. We have seen how he believed that the landscape maintained an essential identity despite human efforts, and that the countryside in fact naturalized human relics and agricultural equipment, making the new soon seem old. This faculty for absorbing newness is taken a step further in **Wild Life in a Southern County**, when he concludes that the Wiltshire downland, which may well have been heavily forested originally, would, if left alone by people, “in a few generations revert to that condition” (40). In **Red Deer** Exmoor is reminiscent of Hardy’s Egdon Heath, and demonstrates nature’s powers of reclamation: “The vast moors have simply swallowed up the efforts of man to conquer them” so that “Exmoor remains mediaeval” (17).<sup>55</sup> In **After London** the implacable and indifferent force that is nature rapidly converts “most part of the country into an immense forest” (3), and not only have “many of the marvellous things the ancients did, and the secrets of their science” been lost, but trains and the telegraph have been

reduced to “little more than ... fables” (18). The latter echoes a passage in Hodge which suggests an equally rapid social regression should technology fail: if the “modern inventions” of trains, telegraph, and printing-press were removed, “in how few years the village and the hamlet would revert to their original condition” (207).

The hope for this new post-industrial/pre-industrial society lies in Felix, whose movement through the text from a disgruntled and alienated misfit to a confident leader also exposes him to the sufferings of the lower classes to which his class's ideology blinded him earlier in the novel:

As himself of noble birth, Felix had hitherto seen things only from the point of view of his own class. Now he associated with grooms, he began to see society from *their* point of view, and see how feebly it was held together ... But a push seemed needed to overthrow it. Yet it was quite secure, as there was none to give it that push ... (171)

Felix becomes more aware of the reality of his society when seeing it from a new perspective.<sup>56</sup> The passage once again seems to suggest that Jefferies was aware of the need for social reform and progress in nineteenth-century England, in recognising the “point of view” of the lower classes. In the text, however, it may well be the enlightened upper-class Felix, rather than revolution, who is destined to give the corrupt society of After London “that push.”

The second part of After London begins at dawn on a May morning (45) and ends at dusk in early September (241) – a movement from Spring and new life to harvest time and the fruition which Felix's name connotes and which has been realised in the new maturity he has attained by this point. Unfortunately there is no fruition in the novel in a larger sense, since the old corrupt society presumably remains in place as the text closes. However After London has allowed Jefferies' imagination to sweep away all the controlling dogmas he felt were too limiting, the "mere illusions of heart and mind" (Story 104) which confine the mind by "the restriction of thought to purely mechanical grooves" (196). All "the learning and love of so many eras must be erased from [the mind] as an encumbrance" so that the mind can "begin wholly afresh" (105-106) and humanity can achieve "the expansion of the mind, and ... the expansion of the soul" (180). In After London the erasing has taken place, in that "the secrets of their [the 'ancients'] science" and "so many arts" are lost (17-18). What is yet to occur is the new expansion. This will come with Felix, whose own intellectual education has been, of necessity, limited to basics – two abridged history texts, a science primer, and bits and pieces collected from decaying books "lying totally neglected in the houses of other nobles" (47). He therefore has the beginnings of an education, but one which is paradoxically too limited to have narrowed down his potential for acquiring his own broad understanding of the world.

Although his intended wife has a "faith ... clear and bright like a star"(123) in the "moral beauty" of her humane religion (122), Felix has "too clear a mind" for religious faith (123). For Jefferies religion is superstition and another of the restrictions to thought, so there is no place for it in the new England. Consequently when Felix experiences a feeling of "awaking in Paradise" after he escapes the toxic environment of (what had been) London, the paradise is Nature, and there are no religious overtones (211). Since the novel ends with Felix heading home through the forest to bring his intended bride back to his new people, it ends ambiguously. However this is consistent with Jefferies' belief that history is a catalogue of chance and circumstance – there is no cosmic and controlling intelligence, no guaranteed path of progress.<sup>57</sup>

After London, then, like Jefferies' thinking itself, is multi-faceted. As this analysis has suggested, Jefferies' approach to his world was holistic and organic. His awareness of the inconsistent nature of life, a symptom of the "divine chaos" which is the universe's underlying principle, results in a complex and sometimes paradoxical vision which is reflected in the ambiguities of his work. His deep feeling for the past could take him back to the pterodactyls, the "lizards flying through the air" (Story 19). The landscape facilitated this bridging of time, as in "Forest" (1885) where he writes that "under the trees the imagination plays unchecked, and calls up the past as if yew bow and broad arrow were still

in the hunter's hands" since, in the forest, "so little is changed since then" (Open Air 162). On the open Downs the tumuli, and the other manmade but naturalized features of the landscape, connected him with even older inhabitants, those tribal societies – closer to nature than modern people were becoming – whose notables had been interred in the tumuli, or lived within the earthworks, thousands of years before. Traditional rural life, based on the seasonal cycles of farming and its dependence on nature, was also a natural connection with the past, and the oral traditions and folk songs of that traditional culture were a more vital, a more organic, form of history than the ordered, plotted and therefore inorganic formal historical narratives of Jefferies' era. This life, and therefore its landscape, was in danger from industrial and urban incursions, and, conversely, from the lack of social and economic progress in rural life. Socialism was another threat -- originating in urban centres, taking hold in rural areas because of the frustration consequent on the lack of social and economic progress, and consequently raising the spectre of revolution. So was rural depopulation. On a more intellectual level, Jefferies believed that using the past as a template for the future by adopting the stale dogmas originating in that past (including theories of history) was also flawed and limiting. Underlying all of this was Jefferies' mystical connection with nature and his apprehension, as expressed by the wind in Wood Magic, that humanity was becoming estranged from it.

After London, flawed and self-indulgent as it undoubtedly is, grapples with these concerns. It does so by throwing humanity back into a primitive state, into a neo-mediaeval society in which the cruelty common in past English life has reappeared. Almost all learning has disappeared, and literacy is both a jealously guarded property of the aristocracy, and not attempted at all by its male members. However, while the novel certainly departs from Jefferies' other work in terms of setting, it accords with Jefferies' thinking. It creates a new, if fallen, Eden in which humanity has been forced to live closer to Nature. The prevalent violence accords with what the naturalist in Jefferies would recognise is a reality for animal life generally. After London's status as a dystopia resides in its simultaneous expression of a latent apprehension of possible degeneration, a criticism of the inequities of Victorian England, and a concern that frustrated farm workers would either desert the countryside or alter rural society radically through social revolution. Jefferies was aware that phenomena have at least two faces. Fleet Street, in Amaryllis, was both evocative of high thought, and synonymous with sickness and poverty. Nature could be serene and inspirational, but it was also unhuman and harsh. The past provided interesting and often exciting material to consider in retrospect, and, through the tangible relics of human activity in the landscape, was evocative. However past times were also often brutal and redolent of ignorance. Insofar as After London

can be said to present a sort of future past, it offers a display of ignorance and brutality which edges it toward dystopia. However the brutality and intellectual restrictiveness typical of Felix's class in After London is opposed in the figure of Felix himself. Scholarly, progressively sensitive, and increasingly resourceful -- particularly after his psychological journey has resulted in a maturity not visible earlier in the text -- Felix is a portent of a possible utopia.

Jefferies is, in a sense, returning to a mediaeval past in order to rewrite the history of England, an England which will evolve without the limiting dogma of his own day but with a closer connection to the natural world. In his awareness of nature's lack of interest in humanity Jefferies not only anticipates Wells himself, but also Wells' mentor T. H. Huxley who, in Evolution and Ethics, suggests that humane social progress requires the circumvention of the blind impulses of Nature. Felix represents that humane power in the novel. Consequently the progress of the novel is actually towards utopia, one that remains to be written at the story's end.

Despite his love of the contemporary countryside, the culture that had traditionally depended on nature, and the history embedded in the landscape which combined both Nature and culture, Jefferies knew it was no utopia. It was better than the urban, or urbanised, alternative, but was far from perfect. Jefferies had written his utopia in Bevis, in the

adventures and fantasies through which Jefferies idealised his boyhood, bathing “in air and sunbeam, and gather[ing] years of health like flowers from the field” (Bevis 94). But Bevis is a book for boys, and describes a boy’s spatially circumscribed utopia. After London is painted on a bigger canvas. The book sweeps away all the impedimenta associated with modernity so that a better life, a more natural life, might be attained. In Bevis the utopia is available in the surrounding landscape for the protagonist to enjoy when he creates his imaginative adventures within it. In After London, however, the protagonist’s adventures become part of the process by which Jefferies’ version of utopia might eventually be established. That utopia would be one in which the culture would be founded in farming and linked to the eternal cycles of Nature. The brutal excesses of Aisi would cease. But this can only be conjecture, since After London stops with Felix’s departure into the woods, leaving the novel open-ended, and with Jefferies seemingly refusing to determine his protagonist’s fate. The ambiguity of the ending is fitting, given that it portrays a future which resembles the past, and is partly a critique of Victorian social conditions, partly a dystopian warning of civilization’s downfall, and partly a celebration of the world thus created when Nature reclaims its own. If the result is to make Jefferies’ intent and achievement ambiguous, this simply accords with his comment in his last published novel, Amaryllis at the Fair: “Nothing is consistent that is human. If it was

**not inconsistent, it would have no association with a living person" (33).**

[1] The Editor of The Oxford Book of Nature Writing, the environmentalist Richard Mabey, concurs, noting that, in the Victorian era, “natural history had become a public obsession” (89). His later comment that, during the latter part of the Victorian period, there was “a trend toward celebrating the commonplace and the untamed” (120) is exemplified by much of the work of Jefferies.

[2] W. J. Keith, who by “nature writing” here really means rural writing in general, notes in The Rural Tradition the paradox by which “the nineteenth century, which saw the decline of the English countryside, is also the great age of nature writing” (10). Raymond Williams, in The Country and the City, sees a carryover from this into the twentieth century, so that “the cultural importance of rural ideas” continued to flourish “almost [in] an inverse proportion” to the declining economic importance of “the working rural economy” (248). In “Images of the Rural in Popular Culture, 1750-1990,” Stuart Laing looks at “that general realm of the mythology of the rural which, especially since the early Victorian period, has become such a central part of the very idea of England and Englishness itself” (The English Rural Community 135). See also M. J. Wiener’s English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit 1850-1980, in which the author discusses the detrimental power which he believes a mythic conception of rural England has exerted on the English.

[3] For a full list of the periodicals in which Jefferies’ articles appeared, see George Miller and Hugoe Matthews, Richard Jefferies: A Bibliographical Study , v-vi.

[4] Jefferies’ Fleeceborough is particularly unusual in that it is “a complete world by itself” with its people being “a nation amongst themselves” (Hodge 128-129). We are told that its aristocratic ruler’s influence is all-pervasive and “in this case for good” (137). Obviously, then, there must be other cases where such rule is *not* “for good.” Similarly Red Deer depicts a rare community over which “modern civilization has passed like a breath of wind, stirring the leaves of the trees, but leaving them as they were” (241). It is not presented as in any way typical.

[5] For pictorial representations of the Victorian rural idyll, see Helen Allingham’s cottage paintings, reproduced in The Cottage Homes of England (1909), or Myles Birkett Foster’s landscapes, reproduced in The Life and Work of Myles Birkett Foster (1906). This falsification of rural life through representing its landscape partially, and/or anachronistically, is not limited to Victorians, however; see W. Vaughan in “Leisure and Toil: Differing Views of Rural Life c. 1750-1850” where he notes that twentieth-century artists have tended to leave out “pylons and silage towers,” and have shown little interest in the realities of modern farming (qtd. By

Brian Short in "Images and Realities," The English Rural Community, 4).

[6] For a discussion of the agricultural depression, see Howard Newby's Country Life: A Social History of Rural England (1988), 104-119. (Newby uses Jefferies as one of his sources).

[7] Raymond Williams suggests that this flux was formative to Jefferies, whom he identifies as one of a small group of rural commentators, like Cobbett, who emerged from the "crisis in the rural economy" caused by the interaction of "inherited rural ways" with "new and very powerful social, economic, and technological forces" (Cobbett 23).

[8] Edward Thomas, in his biography Richard Jefferies, His Life and Work (1909) reports that he saw Jefferies' own copy of Bishop Thomas Percy's Reliques of Ancient Poetry, which had Jefferies' name and the date 1863 (the year of his fifteenth birthday) inscribed on the flyleaf (43). The epigraph to Jefferies' The Gamekeeper at Home (1878) is comprised of the first verse of "Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne" (1), a ballad which can be found in the Reliques. Another ballad from the same volume, "King Estmere," is quoted by Jefferies in the first chapter of the children's novel Bevis (1882). The eponymous protagonist has been described as a fictionalized representation of the book's author by a number of critics, notably Guy N. Pocock in his Introduction to an abridgement of the (re-titled) book (Bevis and Mark 7); W. J. Keith in his biography (Richard Jefferies 17), and Peter Hunt in his Introduction to the World's Classics edition of Bevis (xviii-xix). In the novel Bevis reads the ballad "he had read so often" and goes into a reverie about "'the bolde men in their deeds,' ... the sound of trumpet and the clash of steel" (7). This boyhood fascination with the distant past and the brave deeds depicted in the ballads surfaces again in the subject matter and setting of After London.

[9] For details of the publication of these four histories, see Miller and Matthews, 37-40, 65, and 80-87.

[10] See Philippa Levine's The Amateur and the Professional: Antiquarians, Historians and Archaeologists in Victorian England, 1838-1886, 46.

[11] See John Chandler, "An Uncomfortable Antiquary: Richard Jefferies and Victorian Local History," Richard Jefferies Society Journal V, 1996. 14-24. Chandler suggests that Jefferies' experience with the Society must inevitably left him feeling "estranged from the local history establishment in Wiltshire" (17), not because of local history as a subject, but because of "the straitjacket imposed on it by the gentry and clergy" who "imbued their subject with a musty tedium" (23).

[12] See Levine 16-20, 38-9, and 70-75 for the social composition of

antiquarians, their interests, and typical criticisms of them and their work.

[13] See W. G. Hoskins, The Making of the English Landscape, 118-123, for deserted villages and uncovering evidence of them.

[14] Elsewhere in Jefferies' native Wiltshire are found other ancient sites such as Stonehenge, the huge stone circle at Avebury, the manmade Silbury Hill, and the West Kennet Longbarrow.

[15] Although little commented on by critics, Bevis's name is redolent of a mythic past, and of the literature of the past. Jennifer Westwood points out in her book on British legends that Bevis is the name of a mythical giant "who could wade through the sea ... without getting his head wet" (Albion 82). In addition, Wood Magic's protagonist is often referred to as "Sir Bevis"; Sir Bevis of Hampton was the hero of a fourteenth-century romance, a version of which appeared in 1845, The Gallant History of Sir Bevis of Southampton.

[16] Richard Mabey sees the text as pivotal to Jefferies' growth, since writing it "seemed to liberate Jefferies from many of his social and literary uncertainties" and, despite its obvious spirituality, it has "a strand of earthly idealism" which reflects a (utopian) theme of "the perfectibility of man" (Landscape With Figures 20). Jefferies' contemporary and fellow rural writer W. H. Hudson, however, thought that the book manifests a "strain of intense unnatural feeling" which "touches the borders of insanity" and was part of "a phase" which Jefferies would have outgrown had he lived longer (Nature in Downland 12).

[17] Despite Hudson's dislike of The Story of My Heart (see Note # 16, above), he describes an experience which is not too dissimilar to Jefferies' in Afoot in England. Standing on an ancient British earthwork, and observing nearby excavations of Roman ruins, he contemplates "the remains of the two ancient cities" (72) until eventually "death becomes an illusion; and the illusion that the continuous life of the species (its immortality) and the individual life are one and the same is the reality and the truth" (76).

[18] John Pearson suggests that the seasonal round, with its old/new dichotomy, also demonstrated to Jefferies, despite his "unashamed allegiance to the past" and acute awareness of "the destruction of many aspects of traditional rural life," that "change, decay and regeneration are all an integral part of the historical cycle" (18).

[19] The Editors of the Richard Jefferies Society Journal 6 (1997), in which the story was first published, deduce the date of writing from the ink used by Jefferies on the manuscript (8).

[20] The protagonist also mentions St. George in the story, and suggests that the Uffington White Horse is actually a representation of a dragon (10-11). In Francis Hitching's Earth Magic (1977) the author confirms a local tradition that St. George killed a dragon on Dragon's Mount, writes of the importance of the dragon symbol to "megalithic man" and remarks on the irony, since one strand of folklore maintains that the Uffington horse commemorates St. George's steed, that erosion has resulted in it looking "as much like a dragon as a horse" (259).

[21] See Miller and Matthews, 624.

[22] For detailed information on The Blowing Stone (the "horn of stone" to which Jefferies is probably referring), see J. B. Smith's article "History and Tradition in Richard Jefferies' 'Three Centuries at Home,'" Richard Jefferies Society Journal 5, 25.

[23] She performs this function of bridging time through her work in much the same way that the gamekeeper in The Gamekeeper At Home "can claim an ancient origin for his office, dating back to the forester" and therefore to "the days of the Norman King" William the Conqueror (52).

[24] For Jefferies' slightly erroneous attribution of the tale's printed origins, see J. B. Smith (above), 26-28.

[25] Similarly, in Greene Ferne Farm, after having unceremoniously dumped a Roman skeleton in a stable bucket, labourers reveal in their conversation that their conception of history conflates biblical references, local tradition and recent history: events in the book of Judges are assumed to be synchronous with both Julius Caesar and the existence of flintlock pistols (171-172).

[26] Referring to "Three Centuries at Home," J. B. Smith suggests that Jefferies' interest in oral history anticipates "by nearly a century the methods of oral history, a discipline that did not evolve until the 1970s" (25). Certainly Jefferies seems to be anticipating the work of rural social historian George Ewart Evans. In Ask the Fellows Who Cut the Hay (1956) Evans, "even when he wanted to reconstitute some more ancient past" used as his evidence the "living memory" of rural workers, his "septuagenarian and octogenarian neighbours" (Samuel 188). Jefferies also anticipates Ronald Blythe's 1969 text, Akenfield (a modern Hodge and His Masters). In a social and historical study of a typical Suffolk village Blythe offers the anecdotal statements of a comprehensive selection of local people, including "men who were children" when local agricultural land-use changed drastically in the late nineteenth century (Akenfield 19).

[27] The date of writing of "The Old House at Coate" is unclear. Samuel Looker, editor of The Old House at Coate, dates the article from "either ... 1884 or 1885"

(Introduction, 17). George Miller and Hugoe Matthews, however, suggest that “it is not entirely impossible that it was written early in 1887” (622).

[28] In his discussion of Jefferies in The Country and the City Raymond Williams discusses how, in English rural issues, there is often a nexus of conservation and conservatism, so that “defence of a ‘vanishing countryside’ ... can become deeply confused with that defence of the old rural order ...[supported by] the landlords, rentiers, and their literary sympathisers” (196). Having also noted Jefferies’ appeals for social and political change (195) which mediate *against* the status quo, Williams concludes that “Jefferies did not live to resolve the full difficulty” (196).

[29] Henry Salt, an early biographer of Jefferies, for instance, refers to the latter’s development of a “socialistic or rather communistic spirit” (80). Attacks on materialism and comments about redistribution of food or wealth in The Story of My Heart (1883) notwithstanding, Jefferies never saw himself as a socialist. Merryn Williams suggests in Thomas Hardy and Rural England that Jefferies’ late essays reveal “a conception of history” which is “virtually Marxist” (49). She bases this assumption on two posthumously-published essays--“Thoughts on the Labour Question” and “The Divine Right of Capital,” which she presumes are “some of the last things Jefferies wrote” (48). However Graeme Woolaston in “Richard Jefferies: ‘Thoughts on the Labour Question’” cites evidence to indicate that they actually date from 1876 or 1877 (Notes and Queries, March 1975, 118-119). Therefore they were written *before* Hodge and its attacks on socialism. Richard Mabey, in his Introduction to the anthology Landscape with Figures, talks of Jefferies’ eventual “out-and-out socialist position” but offers no real evidence other than Jefferies’ critique of “new Conservative alliances” in his short 1887 article “Primrose Gold in Our Villages” (21). However “Primrose Gold” itself offers no socialist perspective, but rather satirizes the subtle way in which the elite in a village overcome or negate opposition by exercising political influence or economic power.

[30] For details of the unrest and the foundation of the Union, see Joseph Arch’s autobiography From Ploughtail to Parliament 93-116, and Newby 120-132.

[31] The letters were unmistakably effective in provoking debate and thus, presumably, in raising (or really, creating) Jefferies’ profile nationally. Keith Wilson reads the letters as, in part, a calculated bid to attract a favourable reception from the newspaper’s readership (DLB 98 194). Certainly the first letter, published on November 14<sup>th</sup>, 1872, inspired a lengthy editorial in The Times on the same day, concurring with Jefferies, and, turning the doctrine of self-help against the labourers, stating that “the whole world will never raise ... those who will not raise themselves” (7). Jefferies’ letters inspired considerable correspondence in the newspaper. “The Son of a Wiltshire Labourer” (on

November 25<sup>th</sup> and December 3<sup>rd</sup>) argues against him, suggesting the farmers, not the labourers, are at fault. An “East Sussex Incumbent” offers a balance sheet indicating labourers’ poverty on November 18<sup>th</sup> (7), but the November 30<sup>th</sup> letter of Alfred Smith, rector of Yatesbury, Wilts, supports Jefferies and suggests that the members of (Arch’s) Agricultural Labourer’s Union are dangerous agitators (5). Lord Shaftesbury’s letter, on December 6<sup>th</sup>, advocates better living conditions and cheap allotments for farm workers, and refers to the “stringent and peculiar conditions ... stated by Mr Jefferies in his interesting letter” (6). Finally, under the heading “The Agricultural Labourer,” The Times of December 11<sup>th</sup> has a report of the previous day’s meeting at Exeter Hall in London in support of the ALU at which Archbishop Manning attacked Jefferies’ November 14<sup>th</sup> letter, saying that while “all its rhetoric was against the labourer,” ironically, “all its logic [was] for him” (10).

[32] Jefferies was at least partially right in seeing demands for rural reform as having an outside source. Howard Newby notes that “the movement for land reform” (reflected in five of the nine points of the Cottage Charter), while it “encompassed the aspirations of both tenant farmers and landless farm workers,” really “sprang as much from the political aims of a group of radical urban intellectuals” (Country Life 147).

[33] Socialist appeals for change are attacked by Jefferies in Hodge; the town of Fleeceborough has its “very small” contingent of left-wing activists who advocate the removal of the “despot’s” privileges and are willing to destroy historic artefacts and privileges, in order to “have the rights of man” (135-136).

[34] For details of these two periods of agricultural unrest, see Newby, 38-47, and 122-132.

[35] For a more typically nostalgic and airbrushed Victorian account of rural life, describing an area near Jefferies’ birthplace, see J. Arthur Gibbs’ A Cotswold Village (1898). Gibbs’ village is one in which the cottages are “all ... picturesque” (11). He suggests that any discontented rural worker should consider the lot of an industrial labourer and then “think of his own life in the happy hamlets and fresh, green fields of our English country” (217).

[36] Because of his shrewd, if opinionated, observations Jefferies is often used as a source by rural historians. See, for instance, Howard Newby’s Country Life: A Social History of Rural England, 116-118, and Pamela Horn’s The Changing Countryside in Victorian and Edwardian England and Wales, 62 and 152.

[37] ‘Hodge’ is a generic term often used in the period for farm labourers. Gibbs uses the term in A Cotswold Village (44, 64) as does Joseph Arch--born into a labouring family--in his autobiography. Arch refers to the class prejudice against

'Hodge' visible in church services (19) and, similarly to Jefferies, laments the inevitability of the labourer's drift onto "the mud-banks of pauperism" in old age despite a lifetime of "labour and toil," a drift which would end only in the grave (36).

[38] Pamela Horn notes that, as "the discontent of country people grew," many "decided to move away to take advantage of expanding employment opportunities" off the land (Changing Countryside 94). Between 1861 and 1881 the total number of male farm workers employed in England and Wales fell from 1,098,261 to 830,452 (95). Howard Newby, similarly noting a general decline in the numbers of agricultural workers during the latter part of the nineteenth century, suggests "the rural exodus was caused both by the 'push' of agricultural unemployment and the 'pull' of higher industrial wages and better employment prospects" in the towns, a "silent protest by agricultural workers over their living and working conditions" (133).

[39] Hardy's essay is apparently in part a rejoinder to Jefferies' use of Hodge as a generic in Hodge. Hardy complains of the use of Hodge as a stereotype, a "caricature ... taken as truth," which then lumps together all farm labourers as a "uniform collection of concrete Hodges" in whose future "to paraphrase the words of a recent writer on the labouring classes ... there are only the workhouse and the grave" (168-169). Hardy remarks that the stereotype "disintegrates" into variegated individuals on close acquaintance with actual labourers (170-171).

[40] In "Walks in the Wheatfields" he proposes a tithe on grain to enable villages to "get rid of that blot on our civilization—the workhouse" (Field and Hedgerow 136). As in "After the County Franchise" he believes that "something of this kind will really come about" (137).

[41] See too the 1881 essay "Steam on Country Roads" for the need for the "extensive use of steam on country roads" (Field and Hedgerow 230). Jefferies suggests that a container might be made to be shifted onto the train from the steam wagon in one piece; the benefits of such a road system would include "an increase in the rural population" (236).

[42] Improved education for the rural working class did not receive universal approval among rural social critics. See T. E. Kebbel's The Agricultural Labourer (1893) where he states that education merely "inspires the rising generation with a distaste for agricultural work and sends all the most intelligent youths of the village ... to seek their fortunes elsewhere" (67).

[43] See too "Country Literature" (1881) where he notes with approval the growth in literacy and the consequent appetite for reading material. Observing that

there is a lack of available texts for rural people, he suggests that the “volumes the country would like” are generally non-fiction, and include travel books and non-technical geographic, sporting, and scientific texts (Life of the Fields 196-197). He discusses possible ways of circulating books among rural people cheaply (200-204).

[44] Jefferies seems to be contradicting his earlier comments on an existing oral tradition in “Traits of the Olden Times.” However his rhetoric in Hodge originates in a fear that labourers will be swayed by leftist, urban-based, agitation. He is bewailing the apathy and lack of both high ideals and indigenous art embodying any ideals which, he believes, leaves labourers vulnerable to outside influences. He argues that labourers do not need land reform, but ought instead to be encouraged to seek an ideal, “a sense of something higher,” beyond the “mere material” end of “comfort or wealth” (284). He appeals here for appropriate education to turn the labourer away from “an insidious Socialism” (286).

[45] Regret at the superseding of the traditional and individual with the innovative and uniform can also be seen in Thomas Hardy’s The Mayor of Casterbridge. When the outsider Farfrae’s methodical accounting replaces Henchard’s honour system, the narrator remarks that “as in all such cases of advance, the rugged picturesqueness of the old method disappeared with its inconveniences” (160).

[46] In The Wheelwright’s Shop George Sturt complains that the change from traditional wheelwrights to industrial workshops replaced skilled rural craftsmen with untrained machine operatives “hardly knowing oak from ash or caring for the qualities of either” (202).

[47] For the fact that Kingsbury is based on Swindon, see Keith (Jefferies 128), Edward Thomas (113) and Brian Taylor (76).

[48] In his essay “Village Miners” (1883) Jefferies had compared mediaeval England to the United States, suggesting that “in remote parts of the great continent of America, the pioneers of modern civilization may be said to live in mediaeval surroundings” (Life of the Fields 126). In After London the correspondences between a mediaeval-like England, with marauding bands living in the forests, and popular images of the American frontier, are clear. The gypsies in the text have a lifestyle similar to the ‘Red Indians’ of popular fiction--they are nomads who live in tents with the men “always on horseback or sleeping in their tents” (22), and who attack “every caravan or train of wagons which they feel strong enough to master”(23). Note too that the only animal to have escaped from “menageries” and successfully (re)introduced itself into the environment is the beaver (14). As for the text as autobiography, Edward Thomas believed that Jefferies used the text as an escape into a fantasy which was an extension of the activities portrayed in the (semi- autobiographical) Bevis (Richard Jefferies

233-238). W.J.Keith has remarked on the “biographical possibilities” of the text as both “a continuation of ... [Bevis] on a new imaginative and vast scale,” and a “fictional and barely disguised representation of [Jefferies’] unrealized ambitions and yearnings” (Jefferies 119-120). Brian Taylor notes that Felix’s journey corresponds with Jefferies’ geographical shift from Wiltshire to London to the South Downs, but also suggests that the voyage is a “physical metaphor” for the author’s psychological journey (124). Felix’s voyage can also be seen as a successful search for self, with the mature and self-confident shepherd-king Felix at the novel’s end – having passed through the underworld-like London/swamp – being a more integrated personality than the Felix possessed by “petty jealousy” in “sullen and angry silence” before the journey (After London 18).

[49] In “Richard Jefferies’ Vision of England” John Strugnell identifies confusion on the part of Jefferies, suggesting that the novel’s second section fails “to face up to the implications of the prophetic visions ... set out in the first part” because the novel becomes an adventure story (The Victorian Fantasists 201). Kumar suggests that the novel reflects an “ambiguity of purpose” since Jefferies’ portrayal of a “harsh rural wilderness” and a “stinking, poisoned city” endorses neither the past nor the future. Consequently he questions its status as a “formal” anti-utopia and suggests it is instead part of the “demotic strain of anti-utopia,” bracketing it with Robert Louis Stevenson’s Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde (1886), Wells’ The Island of Dr Moreau (1896) and Bram Stoker’s Dracula (1897) as examples of the Gothic “literature of terror” of the late nineteenth century (127). Although not explicit about exactly what shared fears of “hideous and invincible powers” are manifest in Jefferies’ text, Kumar would seem to be making a case for the novel as a *fin de siècle* text (see Beer below).

[50] Writing in 1912, ‘George Bourne’ (George Sturt) expressed a similar point of view to Jefferies in Change in the Village. The “sturdy peasant civilization” which had grown “solely by force of its own accumulated traditions” has gone (175) but their better-educated descendants offer enough hope for Bourne to “forbid the indulgence of any deep regret for what has gone by.” Although he feels a sense of loss for both the past and the innocence in which he previously viewed the past, in what is almost an echo of Jefferies he writes that he “would not lift a finger ... to restore the past time” (176).

[51] Kumar eschews the familiar term “dystopia” in favour of “anti-utopia.” To Kumar anti-utopia inverts and subverts utopia; its distorted reflection of utopia is “seen in a cracked mirror” (100). Anti-utopians tend to disbelieve in even the possibility of utopia and are suspicious of “utopian strivings” (100). Or they may fear “that utopia *can* be attained, and that it will be a nightmare” (102). However modern anti-utopias have been written “by men who had at least as much of the utopian as the anti-utopian temperament in their make-up” like Huxley and Wells (103). Anti-utopias themselves have often been “no more than a thinly disguised

portrait of the contemporary world, seen as already more than half-way on the road to damnation" (110). If Kumar were using "anti-utopia" as a third term, beside "utopia" and "dystopia," it might well have proved useful. Unfortunately he does not, nor does he explain why he chose to use "anti-utopia" rather than simply "dystopia." Other than making the relationship between utopia and its antithesis immediately obvious in the very term "*anti-utopia*," I see no real difference between Kumar's employment of "anti-utopia" and my use of the more traditional "dystopia" and have therefore continued to use the latter.

[52] Gillian Beer's reads it in Darwin's Plots (1983) as a symptomatic *fin de siècle* text which "condenses fears ... that decadence may be an energy as strong as development, and extinction a more probable fate than progress" (145). Certainly elements of it reflect the fear of atavism, visible at the turn of the century in texts as various as Robert Louis Stevenson's The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886), H.G. Wells' The Time Machine (1895), Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's The Hound of the Baskervilles (1902), and Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness (1902).<sup>[2]</sup> In After London a number of factors suggest social regression and atavism. Some include the depopulation of the country and resettlement in isolated feudal communities; the loss of technology so that even the rails on which "the iron chariot" ran have disappeared (18); the "depraved" and brutal Bushmen, "human vermin of the woods" (21); the slavery (29-30); the confining of literacy to all but the upper class and those they favour (33); the scarcity of books (33), and the casual cruelty of executing a slave by leaving him nailed to a tree because his master "had simply taken a dislike to him" (172). This regression has a biological parallel in the devolution of the wide spectrum of domestic animals into a few basic types as they reverted to a wild state: there now exists only one variety of feral cat (6), three types of dog (7-9), two breeds of wild cattle (10), four types of pig (12), three types of sheep (12) and two breeds of horse (12-13). For a discussion of fears of degeneration and its effect on, and manifestation in, the literature of late nineteenth-century England, see David Trotter's The English Novel in History: 1895-1920 (1993) 111-127.

[53] This also accords with Jefferies' philosophy generally, and as we have seen with reference to "Notes on Landscape Painting" he objects to modern landscape paintings which are anachronistic and nostalgic: "they lack the force of truth and reality" (124). In "Walks in the Wheatfields" he makes a similar complaint, and insists "Idealise to the full, but idealise the real, else the picture is a sham" (260). In "Cottage Ideas" (1886), with regard to his own writing, he insists "I do but delineate" (Field and Hedgerow 198).

[54] Alternatively it is possible to see in King Isembard's Aisi a microcosm of British expansionism and imperialism, which is also "always disturbing the world" and often "at war with some one or other" (146).

[55] See in The Return of the Native where “everything around and underneath had been from prehistoric times as unaltered as the stars overhead” (6), and “Wildeve’s Patch” as a piece of land “redeemed” from the heath which had cost the life of one man and been the ruination of a second (34).

[56] The generosity of a slave in inviting him home for a meal had earlier impelled Felix to overcome the “ancient prejudice” of his class and shake the man’s hand. He realises that this is significant because he has managed to recognise “[the] man as distinct from [his] caste.” It strengthens the hitherto “abstract principle” which he had held that slavery should be abolished (157).

[57] I disagree strongly with Norman Page’s statement (Notes and Queries 32 [1985]) that Jefferies “intended to leave the reader with the impression that the hero’s quest is doomed to failure” and redolent of the pessimism of “a dying man” (361). Jefferies resisted closure in his later novels, preferring a more naturalistic approach, analogous to the “limitless hope and possibilities” inherent in the lack of a controlling cosmic intelligence (Old House at Coate 66-67).

## CHAPTER TWO

### **Patterning the Once and Future Society: William Morris, Mediaeval Socialism, and Garden England.**

#### I

William Michael Rossetti, in his 1906 autobiography Some Reminiscences of William Michael Rossetti, spoke of William Morris as “the most *uncommon* man” whom he had known: “artist, poet, romancist, antiquary, linguist, translator, lecturer, craftsman, printer, trader, [and] socialist” (214). While diverse, however, Morris’s pursuits are not discrete; virtually all of the activities that his interests motivated him to pursue –his handicrafts, his designs, the lectures he gave, and the essays and literary works which he wrote — are part of a distinct pattern. Morris’s personal embodiment of this pattern -- the synthesis of various complementary parts into a coherent whole -- is a manifestation of the desire which underlies all his work. That is, he was always working *for* synthesis in the elimination of difference, and *against* the structures and institutions that cause division and/or conflict. The emphasis on mutuality which this suggests is particularly evident in News from Nowhere (1890), a text that depicts an environmentally-friendly society in which the barriers and divisions that Morris perceived in Victorian life have been largely eliminated, and particular functions which were once complementary, but have since had the bond between them severed, are reconnected. For

**Morris, history since feudal times is a record of the growth of capitalism on one hand, and the consequent diminution of workers' selfhood and self-expression on the other. He constructs a vision of the future which draws partly on Marxist historicism, and partly on his privileging of a particular period in history. In that vision, the absence of the barriers which characterised Victorian social and economic relationships is paralleled by a lack of division and conflict between the social and the natural; that is, the rural and the urban are blended together, and economic practices no longer impact negatively on the environment as they had during the Industrial Revolution. In the process the proletariat on whom the Marxist Revolution depended become subsumed by a paradoxically middle-class classlessness. Morris, like Jefferies, focuses on the past and the natural environment -- that is, on human history, natural history, and the landscape they share -- in his work. His perspective, however, is quite different.**

**News from Nowhere and After London both offer visions of England's future. That those visions differ in significant ways is not altogether surprising, given that Jefferies found socialism abhorrent while Morris became committed to revolutionary socialism, and preached its gospel. While both novels reflect an antipathy to Victorian urbanization and industrialism, Morris's pastoral vision of a decentralised, democratic society, operating through the peaceful consensus of equals, is the**

antithesis of Jefferies' depiction of a fragmented society that is vulnerable to the whims of its rulers, divided by tribal antagonisms and subject to the inequities of slavery. What is common to both, however, apart from the portrayal of a future which owes its shape in a significant way to the respective author's perception of mediaeval England, is the importance of the relationship of nature, history – and to a lesser extent, the protagonist-- to the society of the particular text.

News from Nowhere is partly a response to the centralised socialism and celebration of technology manifest in Edward Bellamy's Looking Backward.<sup>1</sup> However, Morris was also inspired by After London; in an 1885 letter to Georgiana Burne-Jones Morris wrote that "absurd hopes curled round my heart as I read it" (The Collected Letters of William Morris II, 426). The idea of an apocalyptic destruction of Victorian ideology and its social-economic base, forcing a return to more basic values, appealed strongly to Morris, as he made clear in another letter two weeks later: "how often it consoles me to think of barbarism once more flooding the world, and real feelings, however rudimentary, taking the place of our wretched hypocrisies. With this thought in my mind the history of the past is lighted up and lives again for me" (Letters II, 436).<sup>2</sup> Barbarism would simply be a stage; in "The Aims of Art" (1887) Morris stated: "man may, after some terrible cataclysm, learn to strive towards a healthy animalism, may grow from a tolerable animal into a

savage, from a savage into a barbarian, and so on" (On Art and Socialism 94). The "so on" implies an evolution, suggesting that the England depicted in After London would inevitably move on from feudalism, just as the aged historian Hammond in News from Nowhere describes how the post-revolutionary society had its distant origins in a mediaeval England of "clearings amongst the woods and wastes, with a few towns interspersed, which were fortresses for the feudal army" (254). Moreover Morris was able to imagine that England's feudal past was not only a stage in the eventual evolution into socialism, but also offered a foreshadowing of it. A Dream of John Ball (1887) suggests that the Peasants' Revolt of the late fourteenth century was a struggle which anticipated that of Morris and his contemporaries, when John Ball's 'dream' would have become "a thing that men shall talk of soberly, and as a thing soon to come about" (110). Morris may therefore have imagined that the type of society depicted in After London would eventually lead to something more palatable to him. In News from Nowhere, however, that more palatable stage has already been reached, the consequence of a dramatic levelling process.

In After London nineteenth-century English society has been levelled in the sense of it being demolished; it has disintegrated in the face of the natural disaster which Jefferies employed as a depopulating agent in lieu of the social upheaval he actually feared. In News from

Nowhere, the levelling has occurred in the socialist sense; society is now egalitarian as a consequence of the revolution which had been a “sharper, shorter remedy” for capitalism than a gradual descent into “a condition as rude as barbarism” would have been (Nowhere 317). It is this social levelling in Morris's text which indicates what underlies his sociopolitical philosophy: the ending of conflict and division, the disposal of barriers and the bridging of gulfs, and the promotion of mutuality.

In English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, Martin J. Wiener writes that “Morris embraced revolution—a short, distinct time for radical change—in order to end, once and for all, the ceaseless, unsettling change that disturbed him” (59). However, whereas it is true that Morris looked forward to social revolution, it was not unceasing change *per se* which disturbed him. News from Nowhere is *not* a society in perpetual stasis; Guest asks “What is to come after this?” and the rural antiquary Morsom says “I don't know ... we will meet it when it comes” (368). What does disturb Morris is division and conflict. The divisions between the classes, between the rich and poor, between the urban and the rural, between the sexes, between political parties: all are dissolved in News from Nowhere, as, in a sense, are the divisions between past, present and future.<sup>3</sup> The conflicts generated by those divisions, and, most importantly, by the capitalism which underpins the social-economic system and helps sustain those divisions, disappear in socialism. With

the disappearance of those divisions and conflicts much of the potential for dramatic tension in the text disappears also. While there is some tension in the novel, it is found in the antithetical relationship of 'Nowhere' to the England of Morris and his original readership; the drama in the text exists in the lengthy historical narrative in which Hammond explains to Guest how Victorian England evolved into the England of Nowhere (287-319). The divisions and conflicts in the future experienced by Felix in After London therefore have no parallel in the future into which Guest awakes in News from Nowhere, because the social system in the latter offers little scope for them. Moreover, the tendency of the particular social system in place in each text toward either conflict or harmony is reflected in the characteristics of the respective protagonist.

Jefferies' protagonist Felix, despite being contemporary to the text's setting, spends much of the novel feeling alienated. We are told that his peers have "overwhelmed him with ridicule" for trying to educate himself and he has succeeded in "almost alienating himself" from them (47-48); when visiting Aurora, the object of his affections, and feeling slighted by the seating arrangements, he finds himself "despising himself since all others despised him" (101) and feels miserable and "distinct from all" (117). A solitary figure -- like the observer-narrators typical of Jefferies' descriptive rural essays -- he spends much of the novel alone and, although he eventually seemingly 'finds himself' by becoming the

ruler of a Confederacy of thousands of shepherds, we never learn any of the shepherds' names in the four chapters in which they appear (XXV-XXVIII). This solitary, alienated protagonist accords with the fragmented nature of society in the text.

Morris's (Morris-like) protagonist Guest fits 'his' text similarly in the way he operates within it. Guest finds Nowhere amenable, as he should since his visit represents to him a socialist wish-fulfilment, generated by his wistful "if I could but see it" (182). However, his characteristics dovetail particularly well with the society in the text. Guest is considerably more gregarious than Felix; he spends virtually none of the novel alone, Felix's eastward and solitary canoe journey having its counterpart in Guest's westward Thames voyage accompanied by Dick and Clara. Moreover he is a first-person, as opposed to Jefferies' third-person, but limited, narrator, so we are less distanced from his observations. Despite the fact that Nowhere is foreign to him, he is not alienated from its society in any significant way; instead he refers to it as "heaven" in comparison to his own era (338). He also makes a number of friends -- all of whose names we learn. In sum, Morris offers a much more sociable protagonist than Jefferies for the sociable, and socialist, society described in his text.

Each protagonist, then, has characteristics which accord with those of the society presented. The lack of historical knowledge present

amongst the population within each text similarly accords with the type of society operating in the text. After London depicts an England in which violence is common. Fittingly, therefore, lack of knowledge is associated with violence and destruction. The bulk of the population has no useful access to texts, historical or otherwise, since they are kept illiterate by force; the aristocracy "retain the knowledge" and any others who attempt to acquire an education are "enslaved and punished" (33). Those who are literate are forestalled as far as attempting to achieve any knowledge of the past is concerned; many records have been lost in "conflagrations," and "wars and hatreds" have resulted in more recent accounts being partisan and thus contradictory (15). In Morris's novel, on the other hand, the lack of historical knowledge is voluntary and suggested to be symptomatic of social harmony; people have little interest in the past because they live without the "turmoil and strife and confusion" which, according to at least one character, engender an interest in history (210). In both novels, therefore, the absence of a sense of history in the people is related to the type of society in which they live.

However, Morris's own interest in history and consequent sense of the past was acute. E. P. Thompson states that Morris's "historical imagination" was "perhaps his greatest intellectual strength" but his "contemplation of the past brought with it a sense of nostalgia and loss" (William Morris 28). Morris's mature perspective on the positive qualities

of life and work in fourteenth-century England correlates with his dissatisfaction at the lack of those qualities in contemporary life. His interest in history, if not born out of dissatisfaction with the present, is closely linked to it. Conversely the general population of Nowhere is too content with the present and the immediate past to be interested in history; old Hammond remarks that “the last harvest, the last baby, the last knot of carving in the market-place, is history enough for them” (235).

Just as the lack of an unambiguous historical record in After London does not betoken Richard Jefferies' own disregard for the past, so the lack of interest in history common to younger people in News from Nowhere does not indicate that Morris was similarly uninterested; towards the end of the text Ellen, a generally positive and thoughtful character who becomes the focus of the protagonist Guest's romantic yearnings, states

... I think sometimes people are too careless of the history of the past -- too apt to leave it in the hands of old learned men like [British Museum custodian] Hammond. Who knows? Happy as we are, times may alter; we may be bitten with some impulse toward change, and many things may seem too wonderful for us to resist, too exciting not to catch at, if we do not know that they are but phases of what has been before; and withal ruinous, deceitful, and sordid. (383)

**Morris, through the character, is speaking against a dangerous lack of interest in the past driven by complacency. Morris fears that, even in a near-perfect socialist society, an uninformed appetite for change or novelty might eventually result in inadvertent social recidivism if the desired changes were not assessed in the knowledge of similar events or analogues located in the past. On one level, this indicates that Morris did not imagine that the society in News from Nowhere represented the 'end of history' and was thus in a condition of stasis. On another, it simply exemplifies his own belief in the importance of the past.**

**While Morris's initial exposure to topographical history has similarities to Jefferies', his historical consciousness evolved quite differently. Like Jefferies, his sense of the past shares some origins with his appreciation of nature and landscape. Norman Kelvin, in "The Morris Who Reads Us," describes the lasting impact on Morris of his acquaintance with landscape by comparing his (Morris's) attitude to the countryside with those of other nineteenth-century authors:**

**He saw and loved not wild nature without boundaries or human habitation, not the (psychologically) unbounded expanse of Emily Bronte's Yorkshire moors, but nature dotted with signs of human habitation present and past--and largely past. However he saw those signs not as did Wordsworth (for whom evidence of human habitation was also essential) in stone walls and in the smoke**

rising from a shepherd's cottage, but as Hardy did--in history and prehistory. (344)

The "history and prehistory" here are significant. Of profound importance to Morris's development of an historical consciousness was the same rural topography which was a formative influence on Jefferies: the landscape of Wiltshire and southern Berkshire. However, whereas Jefferies' interest lay increasingly in preserving both the landscape and as much of its social and economic structure as possible, Morris's interest in topography evolved into a desire to preserve mediaeval architecture, and, eventually, into a hope that a socialist revolution would actually restore certain social practices and ethical structures from the past.

Entering Marlborough College at fourteen Morris became strongly attracted to history as an academic subject (MacCarthy 35) and to its manifestation in the countryside in topographical features like the vast earthwork and sarsen stones surrounding the village of Avebury; the artificially-constructed and prehistoric Silbury Hill; and the huge equine figure carved into the chalk at White Horse Hill below the Iron Age hill-fort of Uffington Castle (MacCarthy 37-39).<sup>4</sup> Recalling this period in a letter to Andreas Scheu, the Austrian anarchist, in 1883, Morris wrote that the landscape around Marlborough is "thickly scattered over with prehistoric monuments, and I set myself eagerly to studying these and anything else that had any history in it, and so perhaps learned a good deal" (qtd. in

MacCarthy 37). Undoubtedly the earthworks and sarsens did have a lasting impact on Morris in that they provided early evidence of the creative labour of past and largely anonymous people. They were also symbols of continuity, in that they had been essentially unchanging features of the landscape through many centuries of social-economic change; in "Early England" (1886) Morris refers to a number of ancient topographical structures in or bordering Wiltshire -- Uffington Castle, the Ridgeway, Wayland's Smithy, Stonehenge, Avebury and Silbury (Unpublished Lectures 160-161). In the same lecture he also states: "I am no patriot as the word is generally used, and yet I am not ashamed to say that as for the face of the land we live in I love it with something of the passion of a lover. ... Perhaps that is because I am in the habit of looking at things which pass before my eyes ... and connecting their present outward seeming with days gone by, and things yet to come" (158). The land helped connect Morris imaginatively to both the past and to a future which was revealed through contemplating the past. This sense of continuity he felt from observing the rural landscape and its pre-literate heritage was replicated in his observations of mediaeval buildings. In "Architecture and History," originally presented as a lecture in 1884, Morris stated that ancient architecture, when left free of renovations, "bears witness to the development of man's ideas, to the continuity of history, and, so doing, affords never-ceasing instruction, nay education, to

the passing generations, not only telling us what were the aspirations of men passed away, but also what we may hope for in the time to come" (Architecture 2).

Quite early in his career Morris recognised the historical significance of architecture, particularly the skilled individual hand work and collective endeavour that went into mediaeval ecclesiastical buildings. This perception originated partly in his tour of Northern France in 1855 which encompassed not only Paris but also a number of smaller cities like Amiens, Chartres and Rouen—all of which had ancient and impressive cathedrals and churches (MacCarthy 82-94). Writing in the first issue of The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine the year after his tour (1856), Morris described in "The Churches of Northern France" how the "past-away" builders of ancient French churches were "still real men" to him, offering a glimpse of "some little of the medieval times" which would otherwise be "voiceless for ever," and demonstrating in their work a "love of all men" as well as a love of God (Oxford and Cambridge 100 ). Moreover the buildings themselves evoked the sorts of thoughts and images which remained important to Morris throughout his life, in that they gave a vision of the past, and suggested to him that work was associated with expression. Some years later, recalling in "The Aims of Art" (1887) his first visit to Rouen, he stated that the town was "still in its outward aspect a piece of the Middle Ages," and remarked "no one can tell you

how its mingled beauty, history and romance took hold on me" (On Art and Socialism 85). The "beauty, history and romance" which Morris discovered in mediaeval-like Rouen in the mid-1850s offered a contrast to Victorian industrialism and infused his writing, art, and crafts. In a short story, "The Story of the Unknown Church," probably inspired by the cathedral at Chartres (MacCarthy 87-88), published in The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine in 1856, and narrated in the first person by a master-mason, Morris describes the work of carving stone decorations for a church "six hundred years ago" (Oxford and Cambridge 28). The bereaved mason eventually carves into his work "many flowers and histories" and includes in them "the faces of those I had known on earth" (33). The story therefore suggests that the mason was able to express himself personally and artistically through his work, work which itself suggests a connection with his community.

Medievalism, "a revolt against the world of the Railway Age and the values of Gradgrind" (Thompson, Morris, 9), was relatively common in Victorian England. Even the Great Exhibition of 1851, a showcase for British industry and a testament to innovation and ingenuity, contained within it a shrine to medievalism; Martin Wiener remarks that the Crystal Palace contained ecclesiastical architect Augustus Pugin's Mediaeval Court, so that *the* symbol of the "high-water mark" of enthusiasm for industry harboured within itself "a core of cultural opposition" (28). The

immediate inspiration for medievalism lay in the previous century and ballad collections like Bishop Thomas Percy's Reliques of Ancient English Poetry (1765) — a text the continuing popularity of which is implied by its appeal to Richard Jefferies a century after its original publication. In Victorian England a strain of late Romanticism -- which would find its fullest expression in the Pre-Raphaelites with whom Morris was associated -- balked at the materialism, the utilitarianism and the 'dark satanic mills' of the age, and sought an artistic outlet. In an 1885 letter to James Henderson, Morris recalled: "the young men of my generation ... were born into a dull time oppressed with bourgeoisdom and philistinism ... and only in ourselves and the world of art and literature was there any hope" (Letters II, 472). The "world of art and literature" to which they turned most eagerly was that of the mediaeval era, untainted by the bourgeois, capitalist ethos. The Pre-Raphaelites constructed an ethereal vision of the mediaeval world as an escape from their own and, in so doing, obliquely commented on mid-Victorian England. However, comment -- oblique or otherwise -- was not sufficient for Morris. His rejection of nineteenth-century bourgeois moral and economic values was not to be confined to exposition in his art. Moreover, his appreciation for the past made him want to map those parts he particularly valued onto the future.<sup>5</sup>

Morris was influenced by both Thomas Carlyle's Past and Present

(1843) and the works of John Ruskin, particularly The Stones of Venice (1851-1853). Morris's medievalism, like Carlyle's and Ruskin's, was contiguous with a particular critique of Victorian industrial society. Late in his life Morris states, in "How I Became a Socialist" (1894), that Carlyle and Ruskin had been important to him early on as rebels against the prevailing belief in unalloyed progress; they were two of the few "who were in open rebellion against ... the Whig frame of mind" (On Art and Socialism 277). Morris had read Carlyle's Past and Present at university (MacCarthy 71). However, despite that text's privileging of the "unpolluted" mediaeval past (II, VI, 71) against a degraded present of poverty, hunger, and the "tragic spectacle" of industrial labour (III, XII, 207), its equating of radical Chartists with heathen, pillaging Danes (II, III, 59) could not have sat well with Morris's eventual socialist position.<sup>6</sup>

Ruskin was a more profound influence on Morris, who referred to him in "How I Became a Socialist" as a "master" whose work had helped Morris "give form to [his] discontent" (On Art and Socialism 277). It was reading Ruskin that helped Morris solidify his ideas concerning the art and self-expression of ordinary people which the hand crafts, and particularly the architecture, of the Middle Ages represented, and which was denied to modern workers by industrial capitalism. In 1892 Kelmscott Press published as a separate volume the most socially dynamic chapter of one of Ruskin's most influential works: "The Nature of Gothic" from The

**Stones of Venice (1853). Morris wrote in the Introduction:**

**From the time at which he wrote this chapter ... those ethical and political considerations [concerning the importance of pleasure and invention in labour] have never been absent from his criticism of art and, in my opinion, it is just this part of his work, fairly begun in “The Nature of Gothic,” which has had the most enduring and beneficial effect on his contemporaries, and will have through them on succeeding generations.**

**(Repr. in William Morris, Artist 294-295)**

**Certainly “The Nature of Gothic” was important to Morris’s intellectual growth. As well as voicing the idea that the modern machine operative is basically reduced to a machine or even a tool, Ruskin complained that forcing a workman to keep reproducing the same item is degrading and a sign that the workman is “utterly enslaved.” However, in mediaeval Gothic architecture, “there is perpetual change both in design and execution, [therefore] the workman must have been altogether set free” (Stones of Venice 165-166). So, while stating that the monotony of factory work is an evil, reducing the worker to an automaton, Ruskin also indicates that the mediaeval mason was, in being allowed some variety of expression, more free than the modern worker. Ruskin is an obvious antecedent to Morris in his synthesis of aestheticism and social criticism, and his ideas about art and labour provided part of the foundation for**

**Morris's ideas concerning the self-expression through art which had been a function of hand work pre-capitalism, and could be again post-capitalism.**

**Where Morris's medievalism differs radically from that of both Carlyle and Ruskin is in his development of it into a socialist vision of the future. Moreover, in adopting the Marxist view of history, he was able to justify the decline from the past to the present as part of the process by which a new socialist Eden would eventually be generated. Like Carlyle, Ruskin and Jefferies, Morris was contemptuous of the industrialism of his own age. In his "Prologue: The Wanderers" in The Earthly Paradise (1868-1870), London is described as "six counties overhung with smoke," subject to "snorting steam and piston stroke," and a "hideous town" spreading out into the countryside (Collected Works IV, 3). However, Morris was able to imagine the end of this unpleasantness and its replacement by a utopia. As Raymond Williams points out, in Morris "the negative energy has found a positive cause" (Country and the City 273). Morris's vision of that future Eden incorporated a merging of art and artefact, or of aesthetic expression and work, which he believed existed in the Middle Ages but had been lost to the modern workman through capitalism and its incarnation as industrialism. It was a vision which emerged from Morris's eventual merging of artistic endeavour, medievalism, social and aesthetic criticism, political activism, and**

**Marxism. It was also fed by a particular sense of history in which Morris immersed himself practically as well as intellectually and imaginatively.**

**Morris mastered a number of hand crafts in a material manifestation of his historical consciousness. This work was inspired by the Middle Ages in terms of the techniques and materials he employed, and the artefacts he produced, such as tapestries and illuminated manuscripts. Besides evidencing the strength of Morris's medievalism, all of these activities reflected Morris's attempt to create work that offered self-satisfaction in its production since it was aesthetically pleasing and personally expressive. By so doing he was endeavouring to rekindle an approximation of the spirit of the Middle Ages by using appropriate -- if anachronistic -- materials and regenerating those pre-industrial skills and methods needed to (re)create the products. This urge to renovate the present by revivifying a past ethic by which art and work had been synonymous and pleasurable is similarly manifest in his literary output and political activism. He was also aware that the self-expression which crafts had offered in the past had often been the sole means of durable expression available to the anonymous and often illiterate artisans who created them. Consequently, their surviving work was imbued with meaning in that it was the only medium available to them for the active leaving of any sort of meaningful signification beyond their lifetimes. Jefferies had emphasised the importance of old ballads and oral history in**

discovering or preserving aspects of peasant culture. Morris was more interested in the products of past hands as a means of knowing something about the past of the illiterate.

Conventional historical study contemporary to Morris tended to be based in documents, and to give little credit to the anonymous masses. J.R.Green, in the Preface to A Short History of the English People (1886), states his intention to avoid the excessive concentration on military battles and aristocratic endeavours of a “drum and trumpet history” in order to make space for “figures little heeded in common history” such as “the missionary, the poet, the printer, the merchant, and the philosopher” (iii-iv). Green’s intent, then, is to acknowledge the contribution of people outside of either politics, the military, or the aristocracy. Although Green’s text may therefore be seen, in one sense, as both populist and progressive -- particularly in its own time period -- it is still parochial. For Green’s attention to lesser figures seldom extends beneath the middle-class.<sup>7</sup> It also pays scant attention to non-documentary sources. For Morris, the type of history which Green’s represents would therefore have been incomplete.<sup>8</sup> Morris expected historians to use art and handcrafted artefacts as sources. In 1884 he wrote that they ought to take into account “the art that grew up and flourished” and the “nameless people that wrought it” (Art and the Beauty of the Earth 5). The same year he also wrote that, in order to discover “the genuine life which exists in [the]

written records of the past" a historian ought to supplement sometimes inadequate or misleading documents with alternative sources such as "handiwork, ... the record of man's creative deeds" (Architecture 4).

However, Morris realised that contemporary workmen were unable to create meaningful work which would be a record of their own "creative deeds" because industrial products involved little hand work and allowed no self-expression on the part of the worker. Furthermore, the qualitative gap between the work life of the mediaeval workman, with its opportunity for self-expression, and that of his Victorian equivalent, with all its constraints, could not be bridged merely by replicating the style of the work produced. Similarly, the mania for "restoring" ancient churches was misguided because the modern masons employed were working within constraints and without the opportunity to express themselves, and the attempt to impose a modern replication of Gothic on the original structures was violating the integrity of the historical document which the architecture represented. Morris was interested in the possibilities of revivifying the spirit of medieval builders through revolution, not in the Gothic Revival. Deeply appreciative of Gothic architecture in its original form, he was opposed to the Pugin-inspired wave of so-called "restorations" of churches by Ecclesiologists which, reflecting a misguided attempt to implement a particular vision of gothic architecture, actually destroyed a considerable quantity of original mediaeval material,

particularly in church interiors. Richard Morris points out that “hundreds of mediaeval churches were destroyed or practically rebuilt in the name of ecclesiology” and often remodelled as “over-large Gothic fantasies” (Churches 435). In response, Morris helped found the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings in 1877, and reprinted a passage from Ruskin’s The Seven Lamps of Architecture (1849) for a circular promoting it. The passage chosen by Morris, who was the honorary secretary, insists that ancient buildings “are not ours” but “belong, partly to those who built them, and partly to all the generations of mankind who are to follow us” so that “we have no right to obliterate [them]” (qtd. In Thompson, Morris, 234). In “Westminster Abbey,” a lecture given to the SPAB in 1893, Morris, alarmed at proposals for restoring the Abbey, suggested that architecture can be both art and a sort of historical document; he maintained that it “is a great work of art” which is “inextricably interwoven with the history which has, in fact, produced it” (Architecture 47). Morris’s medievalism incorporated an antipathy to restorations and to neo-Gothic architecture since it was likely to lack the social conditions by which genuine mediaeval architecture had enabled individual craftsmen to express themselves collectively and cooperatively. In “The Gothic Revival II” (1884) he criticizes modern building practices, as evidenced in neo-Gothic architecture, for preventing workmen from expressing their potential as artists and reducing them to “trained

drudges" (Unpublished Lectures 86). Genuine mediaeval buildings, on the other hand, were "the outcome of corporate and social feeling, the work not of individual but of collective genius; the expression of a great body of men conscious of their union" (90). The craftsmen working on mediaeval buildings did not only express themselves as individuals, but also as part of a community or collective -- prefiguring Morris's ideal of an arts and crafts socialist utopia. That community was not a possibility under capitalism.

Morris's involvement with the SPAB community meant that he was working with an organized group of activists whose common goal effectively privileged the mediaeval against the Victorian. E. P. Thompson believes that Morris's involvement in the SPAB "contributed as much to bring him on the final stages of his journey [to socialism] as any other influence" (231) since it "quickened and deepened his insight into the destructive philistinism of capitalist society" (233). The evolution in Morris's thought from medievalist social criticism to revolutionary socialism can be traced through his lectures.

In an early, seminal, lecture, "The Lesser Arts" (1877), Morris offers some general social history, suggests that anonymous mediaeval workmen left only their work as a record, affirms that the work is of historical significance in its blend of work and art, and bemoans the divorce of art from labour. Since this is before his exposure to Marx in the

early 1880s, while he suggests that he detects (unspecified) signs in the present which suggest to him changes are coming "for the bettering of all mankind," he offers "no guess" as to the specifics (On Art 17). He emphasizes that art -- with its origins in "unconscious intelligence"-- should not just encompass the high art of "Architecture, Sculpture, and Painting," but also the work of craftspeople in "house-building, [house] painting, joinery and carpentry, smith's work, pottery and glass-making, weaving and many others." These craftspeople tend to incorporate in their work "some touch or other of decoration" which, while indicating that they have an "alliance with nature," does not mean that they "necessarily imitate nature" but does demonstrate that they produce work which looks "as natural, nay as lovely, as the green field, the river bank, or the mountain flint" (18). This art not only offers an aesthetic pleasure to the user, but also reflects the satisfaction of those "who must perforce make" the products. Despite a perceived lack of freedom for working people in the distant past, there is a sense of freedom still visible in the (now restored and spoiled) architecture of Westminster Abbey, built, not by Henry III, but by "handicraftsmen, who have left no names behind them, nothing but their work." The work, however, evidences "the bond between history and decoration" (20) in the "interweaving of the Decorative Arts with the history of the past" (21). This commonality between art and handicrafts has gradually decayed, and art, in becoming divorced from

ordinary life, has become a separate pursuit and will disappear as a force in people's lives altogether (22-23). The rebirth which Morris anticipates will be implemented by handicraftsmen who need to look to "Nature and History" for models (27). This history may be seen in the "monuments of our own land" (28) but many of them have been ruined by "the attacks of ... [a] foe, called nowadays `restoration'" (30). Morris is already looking towards some sort of socialism, in which, free from "the greed of money," people "shall one day achieve EQUALITY, which, and which only, means fraternity, and so have leisure from poverty" (36). Socialism will restore art to its proper place; equality will cause "happiness" which "will assuredly bring forth decorative, noble, *popular art*" (36).

In this lecture, then, one may see Morris typically celebrating or seeking various syntheses or congruities: art and work; nature, or at least naturalness, and art; decorative art/crafts and history; and art and socialism. Conversely the inorganic restoration of ancient structures is criticised because it violates the bond between the structure and the original anonymous craftsman who built it, decorated it, and left no other record. When Morris expresses sadness for the fact that ordinary people have lost their ability to express themselves artistically through handicrafts, so that art now is conceived of only in narrow and elitist terms as `high' art, he is really complaining of a modern division between work and art.

The lecture also demands change, but reveals that Morris has not yet convincingly worked out exactly how that might come about. Craftspeople will help bring about change, looking to nature and the past for models because (in some unspecified way) crafts should be natural, and ancient buildings, where unrestored, offer a conjunction of art and work which needs to be reimplemented. A new egalitarian society, arrived at in some unclear way, will restore art to its proper place in work. Morris had yet to absorb Marxism, which infused his critique with a logical rigour and provided him with the apparently scientific historicism necessary for working out how change might come. "The Lesser Arts" does offer other aspects of Morris's later thinking, however. Morris compares a mediaeval landscape with its "pretty, carefully-whitened houses," its "famous church and huge spire," and "fair gardens running down to the broad river"(23), set in a countryside in which there was "a full sympathy between the works of man, and the land they were made for"(29), and the London of 1877, in which "modern commerce" dictates blackened rivers, poisoned air, demolished "ancient and venerable buildings" and vanishing trees (35)<sup>9</sup>. He also ends the lecture by describing the socialist, art-conscious, future he has sketched as a "dream" and remarking that dreams have come true in the past, and he hopes that "one day" his will also. The comparison of the two landscapes and the idea of a dream foreshadows both A Dream of John Ball and

**News from Nowhere in significant ways.**

By the time of his 1881 lecture, **Art and the Beauty of the Earth**, to an Art School at Burslem, Morris 's philosophy, and his perspective on the past within that philosophy, were almost completely formed. He suggests that both art and the landscape are, or should be, communal, and that some sort of rebellion is required to restore that quality to life which made art of work. He refers to each old country church as constituting "another museum" and refers to those churches near Kelmscott as each being "a beautiful work of art" (12); they are the work of ordinary "unhelped people," which would be impossible to build 'now' because "all the old traditions of building have been lost" (13). In the past, "everybody that made anything made a work of art besides a useful piece of goods" (13). He adds, in a partial echo of Jefferies' Preface to **Round About a Great Estate**: "Do not misunderstand me; I am not a mere praiser of past times. I know that in those days of which I speak life was often rough and evil enough ...yet I cannot help thinking that, sorely as poor folks needed a solace, they did not altogether lack one, and that solace was pleasure in their work" (14).<sup>10</sup> Morris also echoes Ruskin by commenting that in the industrial nineteenth century workmen are always likely to be "degraded into machines" through being unable to make creative input (15). Art itself is seen as something of a panacea as long as it is "shared by all people" and "no respecter of persons"; in being shared "by gentle and

simple, learned and unlearned" art could be "a language that all can understand" (16). This communal quality which art should have also applies to the landscape in the sense that "the external aspect of the country belongs to the whole public, and whoever wilfully injures that property is a public enemy" (29). Finally Morris advocates "rebellion in general" although it is to be a fairly Fabian sort of rebellion, gradually and through "education on all sides" (19-20). One can see that Morris's philosophy has moved on somewhat since 1877, but still lacks the historical impetus implicit in Marxism.

Looking back *after* he had been introduced to Marxism Morris acknowledged that socialism had added direction to his sociopolitical critique and his consequent impulse toward social and economic reform. In the Preface for a collection of his lectures published in 1888, two years before News from Nowhere appeared in The Commonweal, he affirms the "grief and pain" he feels as a result of his awareness of "the contrast between times past and the present day." He goes on to write:

The repulsion to pessimism which is, I think, natural to a man busily engaged in the arts, compelled me once to hope that the ugly disgraces of civilization might be got rid of by the conscious will of intelligent persons: yet as I strove to stir up people to this reform, I found that the causes of the vulgarities of civilization lay

deeper than I had thought, and little by little I was driven to the conclusion that these uglinesses are but the outward expression of the innate moral baseness into which we are forced by our present form of society, and that it is futile to attempt to deal with them from the outside. Whatever I have written, or spoken on the platform, on these social subjects is the result of the truths of Socialism meeting my earlier impulse, and giving it a definite and much more serious aim ... (Signs of Change vii-viii).

An aesthetically-based revulsion from the “uglinesses” and “vulgaries” of Victorian England, compounded by the contrast between the present and the past, has been both complemented and redirected by a belief that those qualities which Morris finds offensive are a manifestation of, and intrinsic to, the “moral baseness” of capitalism. Simple Marxism suggests that the (social) superstructure is a function of the (economic) base, so that by destroying the base and replacing it with a different economic system one would radically change the social system arising from it. That is what Morris desires, and what plays out in News from Nowhere. Marxism complements Morris’s aesthetic concerns and historical consciousness by providing him with a systematic vehicle for the projection of a future which is not only a reconstructed present but also a perfected past.

In Morris’s pre-1880s’ perception of history, the quality of life of

the lower classes had, since the fourteenth century, been consistently eroded as the equations by which handmade articles equalled art, and work equalled self-expression and satisfaction, were negated by a culture dominated by the profit-motivated capitalist economy. Morris felt that human social potential could only be fully realized if those equations were put back in place in an atmosphere of cooperation. Morris grafted his hopes for the future on the `scientific' materialist theory of history which he derived directly and indirectly from the writings of Marx and Engels.<sup>11</sup> In studying Marx he found an analysis that concurred with his own observation of a steady decline in both the individual and communal fulfilment of workers as feudalism succumbed to capitalism, and capitalism developed into industrialism. However, Marx read that decline optimistically; the eventual outcome of late fourteenth-century "peasant proprietors" being "robbed of all their own means of production" as feudalism dissolved (Marx, Capital, 365) would be capitalism's own dissolution in the "revolt of the [very] working-class" which capitalism has created (Capital 379). The apparently downward spiral, then, was actually part of the process by which apocalypse would come as a revolution and the new Eden would be created. The bourgeois and industrialised society which Morris despised had, through concentrating the dissatisfied proletariat in factories and slum communities, created the force which would destroy it. Moreover, Marxism -- in its `scientific

socialism' -- offered Morris an apparently legitimate avenue for the escape imaginatively from the depressing and non-fulfilling present of competition and economic 'warfare' into a peaceful and satisfying communist future, the actual specifics of which were left conveniently unclear.<sup>12</sup>

Morris was familiar with Marxist thought by 1884, when he wrote Architecture and History. In that essay he stresses the continuity afforded by ancient architecture, and uses the point in introducing a version of English social history which reveals a pattern that has particular implications for the future. Mediaeval architecture, providing it has not been renovated, "bears witness to the development of men's ideas, to the continuity of history, and, so doing, affords never-ceasing instruction, nay education, to the passing generations, not only telling us what were the aspirations of men passed away, but also what we may hope for in the time to come" (1-2). Foreshadowing the narrator's musings in A Dream of John Ball -- and blending his own medievalism and Marxism -- Morris writes of a "new spirit" of history by which the past can be seen as "inchoate order ...moving ever towards something that seems the very opposite of that which it started from, and yet the earlier order never dead but living in the new, and slowly moulding it to a recreation of its former self" (3-4).<sup>13</sup> Later in the lecture he points out that the genuine restoration of ancient buildings is actually impossible because the original conditions

of production cannot be replicated. To prove this he works his way through history, in order to privilege the medieval past against the present. Co-operation and community, artistic expression and satisfaction through work, access to an unpolluted environment: all of these were available to the medieval workman and not to his modern counterpart.

The fourteenth-century era of craft guilds with their “thoroughly democratic” constitution (Architecture 13), the craftsman who made complete items in creative freedom and, who was, even if near a town, close to “fields and sweet country” (25): these were losses in the process which brought capitalism. Morris --almost, but not exactly, like Marx -- notes a major social-economic shift in the first quarter of the sixteenth century when a switch from arable to pastoral farming created “crowds of landless men who had nothing but their bodies to live upon,” or, in Marx’s terms, a proletariat (19).<sup>14</sup> The relatively satisfying atmosphere of cooperative independence which characterised mediaeval crafts degenerated, via the capitalist workshop, into the factory system and the uniformity by which modern workmen, even within the architectural trade, are “a set of human machines, co-operating indeed, but only for speed and precision of production” (22). Morris’s visualization of workers as machines has overtones of Ruskin, but the emphasis on the workers’ forced cooperation offers, on the one hand, a contrast with the medieval

workman and his guilds while, on the other, implying the Marxist notion that capitalism, in pushing the proletariat together in this way, has created the means of its own destruction because the workers will eventually combine in a revolution.<sup>15</sup> Morris detects “the visible end of one cycle and the beginning of another” (30), because capitalism has “developed itself so far that ... its own change and death is approaching” (31). This idea, that there is a direction to history, by which economic systems necessarily reach a stage of development at which they give way to new systems in a progression toward communism, offers Morris a certain amount of consolation for the degeneration in workers’ lives since late medieval times. Change becomes seen as process, and that process would bring utopia with the demise of capitalism. In “Feudal England” (1887) one of the causes he gives for the fall of feudalism is “craftsmen and traders” encroaching on the “feudal hierarchy ... as they could not help doing” (Signs of Change 78). In “Art and its Producers,” Morris observes that the “guilds were incapable of the necessary expansion called for and they had to disappear” (On Art 213). In “True and False Society” (1888), he suggests that society has passed through “some of its necessary stages” (On Art 310). The phrases are significant: “could not help”; “had to disappear,” and “necessary changes.” They suggest inevitability; the past has had to be sacrificed to the future.

Morris’s interest in the past was not merely antiquarian nor even

simply historicist. Like Jefferies, he could envision a living past. Unlike Jefferies he came eventually to think of the past not as the fragments of a frieze, but as a pattern or process which would determine the future. In "The Hopes of Civilization" (1885) Morris remembers looking down "on the plain where [King] Alfred was born" from the Uffington White Horse; and imagining how strange it would be to find one's self in the fourteenth century when, "under all that rigidly-ordered caste society" there was a "keen struggle of the classes" going on "which carried with it the hope of progress" (Collected Works XXIII, 62). The perception clearly foreshadows A Dream of John Ball (1887), but one can see that the fourteenth century, privileged as it was in Morris's mind, was also analogous to his own period in that, within a particularly stratified society, a class-based struggle was in process. The "hope of progress" which the Peasant's Revolt represented had dissolved as the demise of feudalism brought not more freedom with the end of serfdom, but less, with the birth of the proletariat. However, for Morris, the proletariat of his own time embodied that hope of progress in the dialectic by which capitalism had created the force that would bring about its own destruction. The hope for the future therefore had its roots in the past, and history was particularly important because studying it dialectically revealed the continuing process which would *determine* the future. However, Morris wanted the culture of that future to have specific resemblances to the culture of the

fourteenth century.

Morris had this profound sense of the late Middle Ages as something of a golden age, even after he had adopted Marxism. In "Feudal England" he describes the art of the Middle Ages as standing "alone triumphant, the loveliest, brightest, and gayest of all the creations of the human mind and hand" (Signs of Change 73). In the same lecture the late Middle Ages are described as a time "in a sense brilliant and progressive," in which "the life of the worker ... might compare with advantage ... with what it is now; and indeed, looking back upon it, there are some minds and some moods that cannot help regretting [its loss]" (76). In "Art and its Producers" (1888) he implies that medieval architecture foreshadowed socialism in that it manifested "the freedom of hand and thought" and the "collective genius of a people working in free but harmonious co-operation" (On Art 211). Morris found in Marxism a vehicle for interpreting the past and present, then used its relatively indeterminate determinism to create his own vision of the future. Consequently, in "The Arts and Crafts of Today" he suggests that the "true line of progress" is a "spiral" upward, which enables him to imagine a circular movement on one plane, enabling a return to the past, and a movement upward on another (On Art 241). The circular movement enables society to resume something started in the past, while the upward movement carries it into the future:

So that if in the future that shall immediately follow on this present we may have to recur to ideas that today seem to belong to the past only, that will not be really a retracing of our steps, but rather a carrying on of progress from the point where we abandoned it a while ago. On that side of things, the side of art, we have not progressed; we have disappointed the hopes of the period just before the time of abandonment: have those hopes really perished, or have they merely lain dormant, abiding the time when we, or our sons, or our sons' sons, should quicken them once more? (On Art 242)

The abandoned progress to which he refers is obviously (what he has perceived as) the flowering of work/art/pleasure in a cooperative spirit in the latter part of the Middle Ages which disappeared with the Renaissance and after. The thinking is in line with what we will see in News from Nowhere, enabling elements of fourteenth-century life to appear in that text because that interrupted or latent spirit of cooperation which had blossomed then has been reborn or revitalised. The upward movement to the spiral is Marx's; the circular movement is Morris's.

Between 1886 and 1890 Morris produced three works of fiction which involve one or both aspects of this spiral. All were particularly political: The Pilgrims of Hope, A Dream of John Ball, and News from Nowhere. The first is set in Morris's own lifetime, the second in the

distant past, and the third in the future. All indicate his revolutionary socialism, all reveal a historical perspective which complements his political viewpoint, and all reflect his attitude to nature and landscape.

## II

The first of these, The Pilgrims of Hope (1886), is a verse narrative which shifts from the English countryside through London to the Paris of the 1871 Commune and back. The narrative sets up divisions which News from Nowhere will dissolve: city/country, rich/poor, but it also inverts and foreshadows the apathy toward the past exhibited by the general population in News from Nowhere. In The Pilgrims of Hope the protagonist and co-narrator is a rural carpenter whose migration to London, and exposure to communism, results in his and his wife's going to Paris where he fights on behalf of the 1871 Commune. The narrative explicitly contrasts London with the countryside, and city life with rural life. In both cases the urban is seen as comparatively negative. London is described as a "grim net" and a "prison built stark/With the greed of ages" (121), while rural England is a land of "birds and ... blossoms and the beasts of the field" (117) where "talk and ... laughter [is] mingling with the music of the meads" (153), and "the starlings bechatter the gables, and the thrush in the thorn-bush sing[s]" (168). Although the narrator acknowledges that rural workers can have a hard time of it, since he has

seen "hard and pinching want midst ... [the] quiet fields and green," he says it is "nothing" compared to "the London holiday throng" with their "faces worn and grey" and "hang-dog gait" (124). The urban rich "have, and ... hanker, and grip far and wide" (118) while the city's poor, the "blinded labour," have "grey backs bowed 'neath the load" and are employed simply to make "the toys of rich men's folly" (123). The "rich man's mill is strife" and "the poor is the grist that he grindeth" (127).

When the protagonist joins a communist group in London, he imagines a future in which "riches [have] vanished away and ... the city squalor ... [has] gone" (138). It is therefore significant that a communist meeting the narrator attends is in "a wretched quarter" where "the rich men's houses are elbowed by ragged streets and rough"; consequently, the actual place chosen is "a bit of waste ... 'twixt the rich and the poor" (147). Morris is using the place symbolically; communism itself is, in a sense, *between* the rich and poor since its purpose involves the equalization of income.

Unfortunately, the industrial masses in The Pilgrims of Hope are generally apathetic toward the communist perspective on both present and future, despite being "poor, and haggard and dirty" (148). This is the inverse of the situation in News from Nowhere where people are apathetic, but in their case toward the past rather than the present or future, and because they are actually fulfilled and quite content, rather than miserable. In The Pilgrims of Hope the apathy manifested by working class people at a

communist meeting is due variously to the sedative effect of alcohol, the channelling of aspirations into religion, and the capitalist hegemony which ensures that workers feel a sense of solidarity with "their masters and feeders" (148-149). Generally they are "dull and abased" (148), reflecting Morris's view of the downtrodden workers at the time he was writing the poem.<sup>16</sup> The lack of support for the socialist speakers suggests that Morris had confidence in the working class when he considered them collectively and in the abstract, but less so when he thought of them as actual individuals he had met.

Morris's Marxist dialectical reading of history, however, expects the proletariat created by capitalism to revolt eventually, and this is reflected in the poem. Consequently the narrator expects that, "the field being laboured and tilled and the teeth of the dragon sown" (124), the "crop of the dragon's teeth" will bare its wrath in the streets of London, but the eventual "fruit of the people's war" will be a "new peace" (126). The dragon's teeth are the proletariat by which capitalism has planted the seed of its own destruction. The 1871 uprising in Paris which is described in the text is intended by Morris to be proleptic of the eventual revolution in England, in that it represents a proletarian revolution and therefore concurs with the Marxist analysis of history. The protagonist states that the "true tale of it" is an inspiration for those who "meet with the red flag overhead" (174) because, instead of being thought of as local

and specific, it ought to be seen as an early salvo in the class war. In foreshadowing the end of worker apathy and a successful communist revolution on the Continent and in Britain, it was “the beginning of the end/That first fight of the uttermost battle whither all the nations wend” (171). Construing this unsuccessful revolt as a prolepsis of the final revolution-to-come enables Morris to find optimism where a more obvious reaction might be pessimism. He extends this idea in A Dream of John Ball, going back to the late fourteenth century to find a revolt which both foreshadowed the revolution he anticipated, and contributed to the death of feudalism.

In A Dream of John Ball the Morris-like narrator awakes in the fourteenth century<sup>17</sup>. The dream has not only taken the narrator from the present into the past, but also from London to the countryside—the opposite direction from that taken by the narrator in The Pilgrims of Hope—and from winter to summer. The past is warm, sunlit and rural; the present is swept by a “harsh ... January wind,” has a “bleak sky,” and is urban (113). This privileging of the past over the present is a general theme in the text. The “garden-like neatness and trimness of everything” is opposed to the “tumble-down bankrupt-looking surroundings of our modern agriculture” (37). There are continual comparisons, explicit or implied, between the simple positives of mediaeval life and the squalid negatives of the late nineteenth century. Consequently the architecture in

the mediaeval village embodies "beauty, elegance and fitness" with "much curious and inventive carving" on the houses (38) and the sounds are natural, the "far-off lowing of a cow" or the "sharp cry of a blackbird made fearful by a prowling stoat" (82). By contrast the narrator's contemporary London is one of "wretched-looking blue-slatted houses" and the sounds are decidedly unnatural, represented by the "frightful noise of the [factory] 'hooters'" of industrial capitalism (113). Morris stresses the communal life and cooperation of the period; even the rebel priest, John Ball, remarks that (earthly) "fellowship is heaven and lack of fellowship is hell" (51)

The weight of the narrative is behind connecting the late Middle Ages, and the peasants' particular response to "the lords who would turn them into villeins again" (42), with Morris's England, in which industrial capitalism has instituted a new slavery against which the narrator expects a successful revolt--in the same spirit as that of the Peasants' Revolt--to bring into being a communist future. Morris believes the revolt to be more than simply analogous to that which he anticipates in his own period. Just as he interprets the uprising in Paris in 1871 as a preliminary skirmish which foreshadows the eventual war, he sees in the uprising in 1381 a prolepsis of the conflict-to-come. The continuity established is, again, one of the spiral rather than the straight line. Moreover, the Revolt was partially successful despite being quashed, in that the serfdom of

feudalism dissolved into the wage-slavery of capitalism, and that success meant that the peasants were an instrumental element of the dialectic by which capitalism had succeeded feudalism and was now generating the means of its own destruction: "men fight and lose the battle, and the thing that they fight for comes about in spite of their defeat, and when it comes turns out not to be what they meant, and other men have to fight for what they meant under another name" (53). Later in the text Morris is able to offer the reader a simplified version of Marx's explication of both the historical process and economics when the narrator tries to explain what, to him, is history to a listener (John Ball) for whom that past is the future (93-108). For example, conversion of arable land to sheep pasture forces workers to leave the land and become a proletariat, so that few "shall have so much as they can stand upon save by buying such a grace of their masters" (96). He describes the theory of surplus value: the worker "shall sell himself, that is the labour that is in him, to the master who suffers him to work, and that master shall give to him out of the wares he maketh enough to keep him alive ... and the residue shall the rich man keep to himself" (97).

Morris connects the mediaeval past with his present and, tentatively, with the communist future, but refrains from a depiction of that future. The Peasants' Revolt is like the "little glimmer" that precedes the dawn, offering hope for a summer's dawn that will instead become the

“cold and grey and surly” morning of capitalism, a grim but clear light by which people will eventually “see things as they verily are” and “find the remedy and deal with it.” Eventually John Ball’s “dream” of fellowship and freedom will be discussed “as a thing soon to come about” (110). The narrator forecasts the eve of the revolution, which will come after the working class overcome false consciousness in two forms: their belief that capitalism is natural (101), and their faith in the doctrine of self-help which blinds them “to the robbing of themselves by others” because they “hope in their souls that they may each live to rob others” (109). The socialist movement, meanwhile, will have to overcome internal discord amongst its “friends and fellows” (112).<sup>18</sup> However, he stops short of the arrival of the communist society. Morris would tackle that briefly in a lesser known work, the short ‘agit-prop’ play, The Tables Turned, or, Nupkins Awakened (1887), and then in detail in A Dream of John Ball’s complement, News from Nowhere.<sup>19</sup>

A Dream of John Ball suggests a relationship between the late fourteenth century and the late nineteenth century. News from Nowhere goes further. As well as dissolving the barriers that separated urban-based Victorian society from nature and the landscape, News from Nowhere erodes the temporal, social, and economic gulf that separated nineteenth-century from medieval England. This is hinted at early in the text when we are told that Dick Hammond’s clothing looks nothing like

“modern work-a-day” dress but “would have served very well as a costume for a picture of fourteenth-century life” (186). It is Morris's desire to construct a viable, thriving and benevolent future from those aspects of the distant past which he admired which makes him unique as far as this present thesis is concerned. Jefferies may have toyed with the idea of a raw frontier in a neo-mediaeval England, and the opportunities for derring-do which it would afford, but the brave new *old* world which he creates is a warning and metaphorical critique rather than the manifestation of what he believed was a genuine possibility. Wells and Huxley would also be critical of contemporary life in one aspect or another, but neither of them expected the past to offer a model for the future. Morris, however, took his medievalism and belief that craftsmen had lost the pleasure of self-expression once capitalism succeeded feudalism, and wed it to Marxist historicism and determinism.

The consequence was, in News from Nowhere, a vision of the future in which pleasure in work and work as art was available to all within socialism, and life was more comparable to aspects of medieval life than to Victorian. Guest states he “felt as if [he] were alive in the fourteenth century” (203), and the populace exhibit more interest in the medieval than in Guest's own period; noting Dick Hammond's interest in ancient architecture, Guest smiles to himself “to think how the nineteenth century, of which such big words have been said, counted for nothing in the

memory of this man, who ... had not forgotten the Middle Ages" (230).

Morris himself goes beyond not forgetting the period and creates an active celebration of it.

News from Nowhere depicts an idyllic future in which the (latent) pre-capitalist peasant culture of the fourteenth century has reappeared in a peacefully harmonious form in the future, the Marxist dialectic of history having played itself out satisfactorily so that capitalism has been replaced by communism. The lost qualities of (universal) pleasure in labour, art in handicrafts, and guild cooperation have been fused with communal principles in the future classless society; in one sense, a gulf hundreds of years wide has been bridged. Morris's particular depiction of the future reflects its author's critique of his own society, as do the equivalent texts written by the other writers in this study. However, he chooses to offer an exemplary future which depicts the rehabilitation of society, rather than a dark vision which is intended as a deterrent to society. Consequently in News from Nowhere there has been no descent into brutal tribal barbarism, no degeneration of the classes into Morlocks and Eloi, and no move toward an artificially stratified society of brainwashing and Soma-induced bliss. Instead the socialist revolution has created a decentralized, classless, organic, harmonious society.

Critical opinions vary as to how much Morris's novel was intended to be prophetic.<sup>20</sup> The fact that he expected at least one event described

in the novel eventually to have a correspondence with reality -- a socialist revolution -- is incontrovertible, however. The revolution was going to alter social and economic relations fundamentally by replacing the capitalist economic base with a socialist one. However, it should also be clear that Morris believed that the form which the post-revolutionary society ought to take would have the positive attributes of late mediaeval England. In A Dream of John Ball the peasants are depicted as ahead of their time, fighting for a vision of a socialist society in which "all shall be without money and without price" and food would be stored for the benefit of everybody for the times when "the seasons are untoward" (John Ball 59). News from Nowhere depicts a society which is, in a sense, a modernised version of that supposed would-be mediaeval socialism.

Isolde Karen Herbert insists that Morris "does not ask for a retreat into either nature or the past" and that his idea of progress is "not a reconstruction of the past ... but an awareness of the contribution of the past to civilization as it could/should be" (6). However, she offers no explicit evidence to support this claim. While a literal retreat into the past is impossible, and News from Nowhere is not simply a replication of medieval England, Herbert's statement begs the question of the form and significance of the past's "contribution" to Morris's text. Morris obviously did not want the post-revolutionary world to revert to feudalism and the sort of society depicted in After London. However, he did believe that

there was a conjunction of artistic freedom and the ability to express one's self through hand crafts in the late mediaeval period which was not possible in an economic system which ensured that work was driven by the market and the maximization of profit, and which, through the division of labour and industrialization, forced workers to produce mere parts of artefacts in which they had no artistic input, using machines which ensured uniformity rather than individual expression. Morris's socialism therefore had its origins in the differences he identified between the labour, architecture and artefacts of the fourteenth century, and their degraded equivalents in the Victorian era. Morris's idea of progress was not a simple turning back of the clock, but his entrenched perception of mediaeval working life, and the apparent ubiquity of art within that life, impelled him to want to see the qualities he privileged manifested in the future. However, attempting to ameliorate the situation through some neo-mediaeval gestures in the form of, say, crafts or the peasant proprietorship of (redistributed) land were foredoomed since they would be mere cosmetic changes and not affect the root of the problem which lay in the economic system itself. In 1885 he stated in "The Hopes of Civilization" that "reactionary plans for importing the conditions of the production and life of the Middle Ages ... into the present system of the capitalist farmer, the great industries and the universal market" are "more or less preposterously futile" (Collected Works XXIII 77-78). Those

positive qualities of life which had existed in a pre-capitalist economy and been extinguished by capitalism would not genuinely reappear until capitalism itself had been extinguished.

Morris's medievalism was always an important factor in his sociopolitical philosophy and activities. Before his introduction to Marxism Morris had suggested in "The Lesser Arts" that artisans—the class that had produced the hand crafts and architecture of the past—were the hope for the future, and should take the inspiration for their work/art from nature and from mediaeval buildings, "the monuments of our own land" (On Art 28). After reading Marx, he continued to emphasize the importance of art and artisans to both the mediaeval past and the evolution of society in the future. In "The Aims of Art" (1886) he accepted that the Middle Ages was a time of "oppression and violence" but maintained that "it was possible then to have social, organic, hopeful, progressive art" because "the medieval craftsman was free in his work ... and it was his pleasure and not his pain that made all things beautiful that were made" (Collected Works XXIII 89-90). Morris believed that this freedom in work was the opposite to the Victorian situation; in "Architecture and History" he states that the modern workman is "the slave to a machine" (Architecture 24). In "Feudal England" he emphasizes the "triumph of fellowship" which he believes will be a consequence of "the inevitable social revolution" (Signs of Change 58),

and it is the fellowship enjoyed by the participants in the Peasants' Revolt which Morris stresses in A Dream of John Ball. In the book Morris co-authored with Ernest Bax, Socialism: Its Growth and Outcome (1893), the vision presented of the socialist future is qualified by the statement that they are "only expressing [their] opinion of what will probably happen" (Socialism 289). However, this probable future resembles that of News from Nowhere in a number of areas, such as the ending of marriage as a "binding contract" (299), the end of the "terrible tyranny of machinery" (307), the probable disappearance of the novel (308), the cleaning-up of pollution (312), the "doing away of all antagonism between town and country" (316), and the belief that education should be chosen and pursued by the individual, rather than directed by an outside authority (317). Morris and Bax also suggest that the potential for work to be pleasurable is directly related to what they term "adjective" art, or the aesthetic quality of well-crafted or ornamented goods; they suggest that the relationship reached its zenith in the Middle Ages, and has since disappeared. They anticipate, however, that, within socialism, "the New Society will revert to the old method, though on a higher plane" (300-307). This suggestion that post-revolutionary working life will be a modernized version of its mediaeval equivalent is echoed by an expectation that clothing will be like pre-Tudor dress since "good clothing at once veils and indicates" the body (311). Too much of the future described in Morris

and Bax's text accords with Morris's novel for the latter not to have represented what he believed to be at least a strong possibility for the shape of the future. At the end of News from Nowhere, Guest wonders whether his adventure was simply a dream, but implies that it has a truth since he realises that while experiencing that "new life" he was "really seeing ... [it] from the outside, still wrapped up in the prejudices, the anxieties, the distrust of this time of doubt and struggle" (400). He is therefore aware that he is too much a product of his own unhappy time to have fit into this happy future. He deduces that the glimpse of the future was meant to give him "a little hope" so that he will continue the struggle toward "fellowship, and rest, and happiness," and concludes "if others can see it as I have seen it, then it may be called a vision rather than a dream" (401). While this conclusion is ambiguous, it does suggest that Nowhere will become a reality but Morris needs others to share his vision and conquer their own prejudice, anxieties, distrust and doubt.

News from Nowhere, then, is not simply a medievalist fantasy.

Morris wrote a number of romances in the 1880s and 1890s, each with a mediaeval or apparently mediaeval setting, each revolving around a quest of some sort, and each written in an archaic style. These are not devoid of implicit criticism of aspects of the nineteenth century.<sup>21</sup> However, when Morris wanted to make an explicit political point, as in his lectures, he did not adopt the archaic prose of his romances, but used the contemporary

language appropriate to his purpose. News from Nowhere is written in a direct and relatively plain manner because Morris wanted to get his point across as well as entertain. Consequently he employs relatively straightforward diction. Old Hammond, one of the text's two historians, spends Chapters IX to XVIII discussing the evolution and operation of Nowhere which inevitably reflects badly on Guest's own era. One might argue that the numerous comparisons, implicit and explicit, between the nineteenth century and the future, virtually always to the former's detriment, simply perform one of the central functions of any utopia and that is to expose the flaws in the writer's society to his contemporaries. Sir Thomas More's original Utopia would not necessarily have to anticipate the eventual reality of that utopia in order to use it as a vehicle for social criticism. However, some thirty pages of this discussion (287-319) are dedicated to the historical development of Nowhere from its embryonic stirring in Morris's day to its present state. Morris would surely not have devoted so much space to a Marxist unfolding of history if it were intended to be merely whimsical.

Moreover, when Guest -- obviously a clone of Morris himself in that he is a middle-aged socialist born in Walthamstow and living in Hammersmith -- awakes in the twenty-first century it looks remarkably like the late mediaeval period. This is reflected in the clothing of a waterman which "would have served very well as a costume for a picture of

fourteenth-century life" (186), a bridge across the Thames which looks "like one out of an illuminated manuscript" (187), meadows in place of Victorian Hammersmith's urban sprawl (202), dwellings there "like mediaeval houses" (203), and a wood where Kensington Gardens used to be (206). Old Hammond says of their housing that "like the mediaevals, we like everything trim and clean, orderly and bright" (255), and the glasses and crockery are mediaeval-looking (284). It is not surprising that the narrator states "I fairly felt as if I were alive in the fourteenth century" (203).

Old Hammond relates the history of Nowhere, offering a chronological and explicated history of the end of the old capitalist society and the evolution of the new communist one. The continual struggle between capitalists and labour had eventually resulted in a confrontation between the government and the workers, and a consequent massacre of demonstrators had begun a civil war, resulting in the government's backing down. A general strike forced the government to make compromises to a workers' committee which prompted a middle and upper class backlash with which the government aligned itself, but many soldiers joined the rebels, and the reactionary forces gave up (286-318). Thus the revolt that Marx expects from the proletariat once they are miserable and powerful enough (Capital 379-380) is played out in Morris's novel, and in some detail. Once capitalism had disappeared, a new "art

or work-pleasure ... [sprang] up almost spontaneously, it seems, from a kind of instinct amongst people, no longer driven desperately to painful and terrible overwork" (Nowhere 319). Consequently they have "learned the trick of handicraft, and have added the utmost refinement of workmanship to the freedom of fancy and imagination" (368). So we can see that another of Morris's beliefs -- that the art in work enjoyed by all in the Middle Ages was rendered latent by capitalism, and can be reawakened with the collapse of capitalism -- works itself out in Nowhere. Even road-building is both pleasurable and respectable work; in what is a clear reference to Ruskin's students' road-building project at Hinksey the workers look "much like a boating party at Oxford would have looked" (227). This is not to say that Nowhere seems completely mediaeval; although the "smoke-vomiting chimneys" have gone with the rest of London's industrial landscape (186), there are "banded workshops" to facilitate hand-crafts which necessitate communal work (227), "irksome" work is done by "immensely improved machinery" (280), and barges have some form of propelling force which has "taken the place of ... steam-power" (350).<sup>22</sup> As Roger Lewis points out, Morris cannot be cast as "a sort of Luddite machine-basher" (21). Furthermore, the society is obviously egalitarian, as opposed to the inequities of feudalism. It lacks the coercive or punitive forces or institutions in place in the mediaeval era; crime has been virtually eliminated with the abolition of private

property and “all the laws and the legal ‘crimes’ which it [private property] had manufactured of course came to an end” (263). Capital punishment is looked upon as the state “solemnly and legally” committing “homicide and violence,” so atonement for the occasional murder is expected to be made on a voluntary basis by the murderer (265).

Clearly, then, *Nowhere* is not simply a replica of England in the reign of Richard II. However, the past, and Morris’s version of Marxist historicism, are an integral part of his vision of the future, so that the way in which Morris shapes the future in his novel owes a significant amount to his perception of the shape of the past, and to one portion of the past in particular. *News from Nowhere* constantly privileges the Middle Ages. The coins which Guest has brought with him from his own century have tarnished (188), and Dick Hammond, having paid tribute to the beauty of a coin from the (fourteenth-century) reign of Edward III, remarks that “nineteenth-century ones are so beastly ugly” (189). Guest mildly defends his own century by pointing to its improvement on “the Mediaeval period” when “men fairly seemed to have enjoyed tormenting their fellow-men” (224). However, it prompts a retort from Dick Hammond, who argues that “the Mediaeval folk acted after their conscience ... and they were ready to bear what they inflicted on others; whereas the nineteenth-century ones were hypocrites and pretended to be humane, and yet went on tormenting” (224). The suggestion is that there was a congruity

between the actions and moral integrity of mediaeval people which is absent amongst Morris's contemporaries. In *Nowhere*, there is not the institutional or social violence of the Middle Ages, but there is a moral integrity, which implies that, ethically, its culture is distanced considerably from the nineteenth century, but not from the fourteenth. In *Nowhere* there is "no hypocritical excommunication" of other people motivated by "unconsidered habit" or social pressure (240). This implied attack on the conspicuous conventional morality of Victorian England serves to distance *Nowhere* from the nineteenth-century. It also offers another instance of Morris's typical dissolving of the causes of conflict in the removal of the "unexpressed threat" of Victorian peer pressure which ensured that people in and around the same social group were not "lax in their hypocrisy" (240). This removal of conflict is also visible in Morris's handling of the relationship between humanity and nature.

Morris, like Jefferies, depicts a future in which there has been a shift in the balance between the natural world and the human world. In Jefferies' *After London* nature is in the ascendancy, and in a somewhat adversarial relationship with humanity. The landscape offers opportunity in the form of hunting, but it also presents daunting challenges in the form of dense forest, and "the great Lake in the centre of the island" caused by the flooding of the Thames Valley (34). These natural challenges are paralleled by the social challenges faced by the people: a brutal and

unforgiving feudal system, a variety of social groups who are mutually antagonistic, and dictatorial rulers who exercise their power at a whim. It is a Darwinian world. In Chapter Three of The Origin of Species Darwin observed that “the struggle ... for existence” is “most severe between individuals of the same species” (126) and, on a social level, this struggle is certainly one in which Felix finds himself engaged. Moreover, in After London there is a struggle between people and landscape as humanity seeks to define itself against nature; the settlements are fortified, and even the cultivated -- and reclaimed -- farmland is stockaded to separate it from the forest (61-64). This separation of communities from the landscape by the use of stockades parallels the divisions between people -- both tribal and social. The situation in News from Nowhere is quite different. Although the new relationship between people and nature does parallel the operation of social relationships within the text, the character of those relationships is governed by mutuality rather than conflict or challenge. Morris was an associate of the naturalist and political activist Peter Kropotkin, “the acceptable face of London Anarchy” (MacCarthy 545). Kropotkin was formulating a theory which was antithetical to Social Darwinism, in that it postulated that cooperation was the key to the success of species in the animal world, not competition (Coates 147). This fed not only into Morris's ideas concerning human cooperation, but also into his vision of harmony with nature itself. The “struggle for

existence" within society and between classes has ended, and so has that of people with the natural environment.

Morris and Bax, in the conclusion to Socialism: Its Growth and Outcome, state "we have been continuously putting forward the doctrine of evolution" and suggest that the post-revolutionary socialist state would itself evolve, but they "can form no idea" into what (320). News from Nowhere is subtitled An Epoch of Rest and it is a society in (temporary) stasis that the text depicts, although it seems to be a stasis which resembles Morris's own social ideals. Darwin and Morris both anticipate an eventual perfection. In Chapter Fourteen of The Origin of Species Darwin writes that, because of the principle of natural selection, "all corporeal and mental endowments will tend to progress towards perfection" (459). News from Nowhere also suggests that perfection is a possibility but on a social as well as an individual level; people can become "free, happy, and energetic at least, and most commonly beautiful of body also, and surrounded by beautiful things of their own fashionings, and [with] a nature bettered and not worsened by contact with their own kind" (Nowhere 318). The non-competitive tone of that "contact" ensures the social harmony which is characteristic of Nowhere, and accords with the lack of conflict between humanity and nature in the text. Morris, as Roger Lewis observes, depicts "the happiness and freedom of society in harmony with nature" (21). Like After London, Morris's novel offers a

post-industrial England from which the ugliness of the metropolis and the evils of industry have disappeared. However, whereas Jefferies chooses to destroy the cities and depopulate the countryside, Morris opts to dissolve the division between country and city, and to evenly disperse the population. This lack of division between the urban and the rural parallels the lack of any social, political or economic boundaries dividing the population within the decentralised socialist system operating in the novel. It also creates a much more benign or domesticated image of nature than is visible in After London.

The 'divine chaos' of nature which Jefferies found cause for celebration contrasts sharply with the benign and ordered environment evoked by Morris, one in which any sense of conflict or struggle has been elided. Jefferies' sense of nature and landscape was multi-faceted. A (tamed) agricultural landscape may be picturesque, but it also represents centuries of toil wresting a living from nature. Nature is the primal life force and may be accessed spiritually, but it is a disinterested power and quite unconscious of humanity's interests. The landscape absorbs human activity, retains an essential integrity, and is part of the continuity of rural life, but nature may at any point reclaim the landscape and, in swallowing up the evidence of human presence, demonstrate how fragile and transient human activity--and indeed humanity itself--can be. Morris's vision of nature, on the other hand, is simpler, and less primal. In

keeping with his general philosophy of smoothing away obstacles, he prefers to perceive the English landscape as a whole in terms of a mosaic in which the divisions between the pieces are barely noticeable. In "The Lesser Arts" (1877) he writes of the rural landscape, "all is measured, mingled, varied, gliding easily one thing into another: little rivers, little plains [and] swelling, speedily-changing uplands" (On Art 29). News from Nowhere adopts this image of a harmonious landscape which has variety but no obvious seams separating its topographical features, but adds to it, and blends with it, human settlement. This utopian vision in which all the elements are in accord contrasts sharply with the discord typical of dystopias.

There is a tendency within dystopias for nature either to be some sort of adversary or challenge, as in After London, or be conceived negatively, as in Yevgeny Zamiatin's We and Aldous Huxley's Brave New World. It is generally a formative part of these texts' dystopian identity. In Morris's utopia, on the other hand, the reverse is true. Nature is benign, and the landscape is both domesticated and aesthetically pleasing. In his 1881 lecture, Art and the Beauty of the Earth, Morris stated that "our fathers treated our lovely land well, but we have treated it ill," spoiling its beauty with "growing blotches of hideousness"; he writes that the land must instead be turned "from the grimy back yard of a workshop into a garden" (28). This national landscaping which Morris

seeks has already been carried out in News from Nowhere; Hammond tells Guest that “England is now a garden, where nothing is wasted and nothing is spoilt, with the necessary dwellings, sheds, and workshops scattered up and down the country, all trim and neat and pretty” (254). The image of England as a garden confirms that the despoiling effects of industrial activity have been negated; it also suggests that humanity is in control of the landscape, and possibly of nature itself. The idea of a garden evokes a sense of safety and control; the image serves to defuse any possibility that the landscape might be dangerous or ominous like the forest in After London. In an inversion of Jefferies’ idea that the landscape naturalises the relics of human activity, the remaining natural “wastes and forests” in News from Nowhere are described as the “shrubberies and rockeries” in England’s “garden” (256).

This conceptual tendency to dis-empower, declaw or otherwise domesticate nature is found also in Morris’s non-literary work. Morris used natural materials as far as possible in his furniture, wall-paper and fabrics, going to great lengths in the late 1870s to learn techniques which enabled him to eschew industrial dyes derived from coal-tar derivatives in favour of “traditional natural dyestuffs” made from walnut shells, insects, and vegetable matter (MacCarthy 351-352). Morris also customarily incorporated natural imagery into his patterns for wall-paper, furniture coverings, tapestries and carpets -- designs such as “Honeysuckle”;

**"Artichoke"; "Brother Rabbit"; "Bird"; "Cabbage and Vine," and the "Woodpecker Tapestry," with its birds, fruit and flowers, all being designed by him in the 1870s and 1880s.<sup>23</sup> Apart from the Pre-Raphaelite aesthetic and medievalist ethic which the designs and materials evidence, they also effectively socialise nature; by incorporating nature into art, and covering the walls, furniture and floors with it, Morris was blurring the barriers between the natural world and the human world, parallelling the dismantling of any barriers between the country and the city in News from Nowhere.**

**In Back to the Land Jan Marsh writes that "the picture it [News from Nowhere] gives of the country [England] is, quite simply, the country" (16). That is, it depicts an England that is now basically all countryside, since the urban centres, while still in existence, have been radically ruralised.<sup>24</sup> Hammersmith is virtually unrecognizable to Guest: "King Street was gone, and the highway ran through sunny meadows and garden-like tillage," and the houses do not look urban, but rather "countrified in appearance, like yeoman's dwellings" (Nowhere 202). Kensington now borders a wood which incorporates Paddington and Notting Hill (206). On the other hand, "except in the wastes and forests and amongst the sand-hills ... it is not easy to be out of sight of a house" (255). Conversely, the urbanization of the countryside has ended so that a trip to "the foothills of the White Horse," causes Guest to observe that "the contrast between the half-**

cockneyfied and wholly unsophisticated country existed no longer" (364). However, the text's relatively seamless blend of country and city is not simply a manifestation of Morris's nostalgia or aesthetic preference -- although that is part of it -- but rather intrinsic to Morris's impetus toward harmony, and to his Marxist belief that the overturning of the social and economic base would inevitably have profound effects on social life *and* the environment. Paddy O'Sullivan observes that, since Morris recognised that "capitalism creates environmental disruption," News from Nowhere offers the "healthy, unpolluted environment" which would result from the overturning of capitalism (5-6). In the text the socialist garden contrasts with the capitalist landscape it has replaced, the "huge and foul workshops and fouler gambling dens, surrounded by an ill-kept, poverty-stricken farm, pillaged by the masters of the workshops" (Nowhere 254).<sup>25</sup> Capitalism conflicted with the landscape and nature generally; socialism is in harmony with it.

The blending of country and city, and the disappearance of conflict between humanity and nature, is mirrored in the lack of difference between rural people and urban people. An obvious example of a lack of sharp division between urban people and the rural life is the trip down the Thames by Guest and the (essentially urban) Dick and Clara for the purpose of haymaking. Moreover, Dick's "passionate love of the earth" is contrasted to Guest's own day when "intellectual persons" are dissociated

from country life and have a "sour distaste for the changing drama of the year, for the life of the earth and its dealings with men" (397). Old Hammond discusses the rural decline of the Agricultural Depression in the nineteenth-century and the sort of decay in village life and "the small country arts" which troubled Jefferies. After the revolution, however, the villages became "more populous than they had been since the fourteenth century," a situation which required various adjustments on the part of old and new inhabitants. In a process analogous to Jefferies' idea of the countryside absorbing ingenuity, the newcomers "yielded to the influence of their surroundings, and became country people" (253). Eventually "the difference between town and country grew less and less" and the rural world has been "vivified by the thought and briskness of town-bred folk" (254). Morris underlines this later in the text through Henry Morsom, "who seemed in a country way to be another edition of old Hammond" and has "an extraordinary [sic] detailed knowledge of the ancient history of the countryside" and of the "period of the change to the present state of things." He discusses the same "exodus of the people from the town to the country" as Hammond. There was a "gradual recovery by the town-bred people on one side, and the country-bred people on the other, of those arts of life which they had lost." Consequently the ex-urban people learned the handicraft of "agricultural arts" by studying how machinery performed field tasks (365), and farm labourers learned " a little

artisanship" (365). The end result is they have "learned the trick of handicraft and ... added the utmost refinement of workmanship to the freedom of fancy and imagination" (368). In Nowhere the life of the countryside is obviously supposed to be enriched by the fusion of urban and rural, and some urban-based people, like Dick, learn rural skills like hay-making, but step aside for the less-skilled, "scientific men and close students generally" so they may still work in the fields, despite their minimal ability (395). The happy volunteers, a "gay-clad company of beautiful men and women" contrast greatly with the agricultural workers whom Guest is used to seeing, the "spindle-legged, back-bowed men and haggard, hollow-eyed, ill-favoured women, who once wore down the soil of this land with their heavy hopeless feet" (389-390). As elsewhere in News from Nowhere the vision is juxtaposed with the reality of Morris's present, to the latter's detriment. In the vision, mutuality and harmony prevail, and the inequalities, divisions and restrictions of Victorian England have all disappeared. Nowhere's inhabitants enjoy individuality without individualism, and express it in their work.

However, there is a flaw in News from Nowhere, caused by something actually absent from it which its particular basis in Marxist historical determinism makes contradictory. Morris's drive toward synthesis and the elimination of difference, to dissolve the hopeless drudges of the working class into a "gay-clad company of beautiful men

and women," and to set utopia in an England infused with medievalism, actually betrays his socialist vision which is, paradoxically, egocentric. Morris was a very active middle-class socialist. In one sense he is analogous to Pugin's mediaeval shrine in the middle of the Great Exhibition, the antithesis within the thesis; Morris was a member of the upper-middle class, and a manufacturer, who actively campaigned against bourgeois values and capitalism. However, in another sense, Morris was also antithetical to a section of society which he ostensibly supported: the working class. Morris's removal of social and economic difference and general harmonizing of society creates a society within which he would be most at ease, and it does not include any trace of the working class. The effect of Morris's communism seems to have been the elimination of the unwanted by social evolution much as eugenics might have done it by scientific means. Huxley's Brave New World artificially perpetuates separate types by the application of science; Morris's harmonious new world has dissolved a class by a change in the social and economic system.

From one perspective, Morris has imagined a society in which the working-class have thrown off the chains of oppression and overturned the capitalist system which degraded them, resulting in the dissolution of class altogether. From another perspective, it is more accurate to say that Morris's utopia envisages the dissolution of one particular class

altogether. The degraded dregs -- all that remained of what had once been a contented class of mediaeval craftspeople -- have disappeared, to be absorbed into a homogenous, enlightened, middle-class, Arts and Crafts universality. Paul Meier remarks of the novel:

We may wonder what would have been the reactions of a working-class socialist ... had one arrived in Morris's utopian world.

Doubtless, in two hundred years the characteristic outlooks of each social layer would have had time to disappear, and society has become homogenous. There is really nothing proletarian left in this world. .... Don't we get the feeling that in sketching a picture of a classless society Morris has stolen all the bedclothes, and proposed as a model whatever was best in his own milieu? The bourgeoisie against which he rails is that of enriched cockneys, not his own. (48)

Meier does not really deal with the implications of his observation, instead musing on Morris's possible response. However, the lack of any vestiges of the proletariat is a serious flaw in the novel. There is a gap in Morris's thinking, based on those assumptions which were the legacy of his middle-class cultural background, and which all his hatred of the commercial bourgeoisie and their values could not completely nullify. Morris could only really appreciate the working class in their past and future, not in the present; he idealised the mediaeval artisan, and looked

forward to the freedom of the downtrodden worker in the future, but found no positives in the 'degraded' proletariat of his own day.<sup>26</sup> The Marxist model which Morris adopted, and explicated in the 'historical' narrative in News from Nowhere, anticipates a proletarian revolution. It seems strange, therefore, that the Marxist pattern which Morris observed in history would inspire him to anticipate both a working class triumph and the disappearance of all trace of the working class.

In the process of learning how to dye, Morris spent some time at a factory in Leek in the industrial Midlands between 1875 and 1878. MacCarthy sees this as having an effect on Morris in exposing him in the fact to "things he had previously considered only in the abstract" such as "industrial landscapes" (348) and the long hours and "repetitive and arduous" life of industrial workers (350). However, in also pointing out that on his visits he "lodged with the [factory-owning] Wardles in their substantial house" (349), she (apparently unintentionally) undercuts the point which she is making. Morris's Leek trips were as close as he was to get to the type of exposure to the industrial proletariat which George Orwell would experience in The Road to Wigan Pier but, unlike Orwell's working-class lodgings, Morris's temporary home in Leek was still prosperous and middle-class. Despite Morris's commitment to socialism, and his belief in the working class as the force which would erase bourgeois values and industrial capitalism through revolution, he

apparently did not exactly immerse himself in the working-class culture which News from Nowhere leaves out. Despite his sympathy, and his active and committed support for the working class's true emancipation, there is still his tendency to see them as degraded and negative--a shadow of what they had been and could be. This is a theme that runs through much of his work.<sup>27</sup> In Art and the Beauty of the Earth he finds some of the more vocal elements of the working class quite disturbing. He talks of working-class 'ruffians' and "their lowest depths of savagery," and says:

Look you, as I sit at my work at home, which is at Hammersmith, close to the river, I often hear go past the window some of that ruffianism of which a good deal has been said in the papers of late, and has been said before at recurring periods. As I hear the yells and shrieks and all the degradation cast on the glorious tongue of Shakespeare and Milton, as I see the brutal reckless faces and figures go past me, it rouses the recklessness and brutality in me also, and fierce wrath takes possession of me, till I remember, as I hope I mostly do, that it was my good luck only of being born respectable and rich that has put me on this side of the window among delightful books and lovely works of art, and not on the other side, in the empty street, the drink-steeped liquor shops, the foul and degraded lodgings. (26)

In the commonality of feelings of “recklessness and brutality” there is a vague presentiment of Marlow’s disturbing (for him) sense of primal fellow-feeling with the natives in Joseph Conrad’s Heart of Darkness, especially given the casting here of the poor in terms of “savagery.”<sup>28</sup> The sense here is that the poor are uncivilized brutes -- the same sort of stereotype as was often used to characterize foreign indigenous peoples.

It is somewhat ironic, then, that in the same lecture Morris complains of the imperialism by which “civilization” is “too apt to thrust her blessings on far-off peoples at the cannon’s mouth before she has improved those blessings” at home in the form of “a decent house with decent surroundings for every honest and industrious family” (24-25). Instead, Britain should “shake off from her all foreign and colonial entanglements and turn that mighty force of her respectable people ... to giving the children of these poor folk the pleasures and hopes of men” (27).<sup>29</sup> The phrase “every *honest* and *industrious* family” says something about Morris not being completely outside of Victorian bourgeois ideology, but in any case Morris certainly seems to be distinguishing between the “respectable ...men” and the “poor folk.”<sup>30</sup> One might also wonder whether Morris would like to “thrust” his own version of “blessings” on a section of society whom, in the actual living fact of them rather than in their fulfilment in the past or their potential in the future, he sees in purely negative terms. When one also considers that Morris was,

by the mid-1880s, a revolutionary socialist who preached that the working class had the future in their (potentially artistic) hands, yet ran a company which neither allowed its workers artistic input nor encouraged their involvement in the decision-making process, one can see a middle-class lack of faith in the *actual* working class which is at odds with Morris's commitment to the '*once and future*' working class.<sup>31</sup>

This antipathy to the nineteenth-century working class also tinges Morris's fiction. It is present in The Pilgrims of Hope in which the protagonist seems to be virtually the only lower-class individual willing to respond positively to the Morris twin who exhorts those at a meeting to each "arise and play his part" (137).<sup>32</sup> At a later meeting the urban working-class listeners are "dull and debased as the very filth of the road" (148). In A Dream of John Ball Morris makes many comparisons between the fourteenth and the nineteenth centuries, but is particularly negative in contrasting the people. The mediaeval peasants -- who are well-dressed, and rough but good-tempered -- speak without "any of that drawing snarl or thick vulgarity which one is used to hear from labourers in civilization" (39). Morris evidently regarded even the speech of modern workers as degraded when compared to their distant ancestors. Consequently when News from Nowhere mentions the working class of the nineteenth century, it is as "being degraded out of humanity" (248). The women are "poor drudge[s] and mother[s] of drudges" (243), and female agricultural

workers are described as “lean, flat-breasted, ugly, without a grace of form or face” (329). Rural workers “kn[o]w little about the country” (359). All this negativity is reflected in the fact that Morris’s utopia not only has no class divisions, but no trace of the working class at all.

Morris privileged the work and workers of the Middle Ages, read the history of England from the late fourteenth to the late nineteenth centuries as one of decline and degeneration, and read into that decline a process which would bring about the socialist utopia. Unfortunately he could not imagine that the working class of his own era had any positives which would be, or deserved to be, carried into the future. Instead he wanted the supposed artistic qualities of a distinct group of the lower orders in the mediaeval times -- the artisans, and particularly the stonemasons -- to be reawakened in the future.

Morris’s particular sense of the past is one of the factors which makes him consign working class culture to the dustbin of history. The other factor is his instinct to erase divisions and create blends where there were once differences. Town people become country people but also invest country life with a little urban zest; towns take on a rural flavour while the countryside is covered with scattered housing; heavy industry stops scarring the landscape while the landscape becomes a garden. However the factories have gone, farm labouring is done by intellectuals needing fresh air and exercise, and everybody can produce

handicrafts. The defining feature of the industrial *working class* – their work – has disappeared. Unfortunately all trace of them and their culture has also vanished, subsumed within Morris's fresh-faced utopia. It is as if Morris had written a novel set in an African colony in which the indigenous people eventually revolted against their European overlords, but the utopia which followed exhibited no trace of the native culture.

In News from Nowhere the proletariat, despite fulfilling the Marxist version of history and winning the revolution, have vanished, not just as a class, but culturally. Morris's culture is all work as art, work as pleasure - - an Arts and Crafts culture. It is also homogenous in terms of speech. What it does not have is any trace of the working-class culture. Morris is so intent on seeing the working class of his day as degenerate that he *denies* the possibility of their having a viable culture; he refuses, therefore, to allow it into his new world. Meanwhile, he sifts through the England of five hundred years before, rejects feudalism, ignorance, and the religion which inspired the buildings he so admired, and grafts those parts from it which he admires on to the future. His vision is holistic; Nowhere is a place of unity rather than division. The class system has gone, and the division of labour has been blurred as people work temporarily at activities other than their own, such as the harvest. Marriage is a more flexible institution. Nature blends seamlessly with culture. The future has reestablished a continuity with a mediaeval past.

**Undeniably, it is an attractive prospect in many ways and an improvement on some of the worst aspects of life in a working world of overcrowded `two up, two down' houses, poor sanitation, harsh conditions for labour and inadequate nutrition. Yet this utopia has been bought at a price, albeit one Morris would be pleased to see paid. He had been critical of Bellamy's `cockney paradise'; however, in creating his own paradise, he leaves all the cockneys out.**

[1] A number of critics have discussed the relationship between Looking Backward and News from Nowhere. A.L.Morton quotes extensively from the review of Looking Backward in the Commonweal in January 1889 in which Morris complains of the “machine life” and huge [State] centralisation” depicted in Bellamy’s novel (English Utopia 155); Morton concludes that “Looking Backward provided the stimulus for News from Nowhere” (156). More recently Alexander MacDonald examines the relationship in “Bellamy, Morris, and the Great Victorian Debate,” Socialism and the Literary Artistry of William Morris (74-87). See also E.P.Thompson, William Morris (692-3); Krishan Kumar, Utopia and Anti-Utopia (161-163); Michael Fellman, “Bloody Sunday and News from Nowhere,” Journal of the William Morris Society III, 4 (1990), 13; and Fiona MacCarthy, William Morris (584).

[2] Norman Kelvin remarks in his note to the first letter that Morris “both assimilated Jefferies’ essentially utopian vision and converted it into its opposite” (Letters II, 427).

[3] In “William Morris” (1939) C. S. Lewis suggests another area where Morris, in a sense, dissolved barriers in that his secular prophecy was a fusing of Christianity and materialism (Rehabilitations and Other Essays 230-231).

[4] This is recognizably the landscape through which Ralph travels in the fourth chapter of Book One of Morris’s The Well at the Worlds’ End (1896) when he meets the “shepherds of the Downs” (21).

[5] For an analytic overview of nineteenth-century medievalism see Raymond Chapman, The Sense of the Past in Victorian Literature (1986), particularly Chapters 2 and 3.

[6] In the text co-authored by William Morris and Ernest Belfort Bax, Socialism, its Growth and Outcome (1893), Chartism is described approvingly as a manifestation of “the intense discontent of the working classes,” and, in its embryonic socialism, a foreshadowing of things to come (180). (Bax was a Marxist economist).

[7] The one notable exception is his fairly detailed and sympathetic account of the Peasants’ Revolt (259-269) and the complementary analysis of Piers Plowman (269-272).

[8] Morris was actually appreciative of Green’s interest in the Middle Ages; in the text Morris co- wrote with Bax (Socialism, its Growth and Outcome), appreciative reference is made to Green-- along with (Edward Augustus) Freeman and

(William) Stubbs--for their “enlightened” (if popularly overlooked) researches into the Middle Ages, as opposed to those of “bourgeois historians”(76). Nevertheless Green’s Short History concerns itself solely with documentary sources, and focuses almost exclusively on the middle and upper classes.

[9] For a later, equally picturesque, but lengthier and more panoramic description of “the face of mediaeval England” by Morris see “The Hopes of Civilization”( On Art 281).

[10] See also “The Aims of Art” (1887) where Morris acknowledges “the oppression and violence of the Middle Ages” but maintains that, despite it, the people produced “social, organic, hopeful progressive art” as opposed to “the poor scraps” of “retrospective and pessimistic” art of the nineteenth century; the serfs and gild-craftsmen of the past lived with “grossly obvious” oppression “*external* to the work of the craftsmen,” (my italics) whereas, for the modern “mechanic” *his* work--as “industrial production”--is *itself* an instrument of oppression and robbery (On Art 89).

[11] In “How I Became a Socialist” (1894) Morris remarks on learning about Socialism partly “from continuous conversation with such friends as Bax and [Henry Mayers] Hyndman and Scheu” (On Art 276). Morris read Das Kapital in a French translation in 1882. Hyndman founded the Social Democratic Federation in 1881, which Morris joined in 1883 but left in 1884 to form the Socialist League. For discussion of Morris’s relationship with Hyndman et al, see MacCarthy (462-503), and Thompson (350-354).

[12] Peter Singer in Marx (1980) points out that “nowhere in his [Marx’s] writings does he give more than sketchy suggestions” on the actual nature of the coming communist society (27). Similarly, in Marxism: Philosophy and Economics (1985), Thomas Sowell notes that “Marx and Engels refused to draw up details” of “the communist future” (206).

[13] In A Dream of John Ball the narrator tells us “how men fight and lose the battle, and the thing that they fought for comes about in spite of their defeat, and when it comes turns out to be not what they meant, and other men have to fight for what they meant under another name” (53). In the phrase “recreation of its former self” in Architecture and History Morris is also suggesting that the future will regain the positives which he believes were burgeoning in late medieval life, only to disappear with the encroachment of capitalism.

[14] Marx actually locates the change “in the last third of the 15<sup>th</sup>, and the first decade of the 16<sup>th</sup> century” (Capital 366). It should be noted that Morris does not use the technical terms in this essay which Marx does in the equivalent analysis of history in Capital, other than “division of labour.” However, in “The Hopes of

Civilization" (1885) he does use those terms, including "the expropriation of the *people* from the land" and "proletariat" (On Art 282).

[15] He expands on this in "The Hopes of Civilization." The factory system of "the capitalist or modern slave-owner" brings large numbers of workers together and "into a co-operation for production so well arranged that it requires little but [the capitalist's] elimination to make it a foundation for communal life' after "the present proletariat ... has triumphed over the present privileged class" (On Art 293).

[16] Morris's daughter May states that he wrote the work "piece by piece ... after he had returned home ... from poor quarters full of sights and stories which had wrung his heart by their sordidness and dull endurance" (Collected Works XXIV, 11). The "dull endurance" is suggestive of the apathy he describes in the narrative.

[17] Like Morris, the narrator values ancient buildings "untouched by the degradation of the sordid utilitarianism that cares or knows not of beauty or history" (35) and gives socialist lectures (36).

[18] The most obvious disagreement between "fellows" was when Morris and others split from Hyndman's SDF and founded the Socialist League at the end of 1884.

[19] In this satirical play, the original production of which featured Morris in an acting role, the titular character, a judge, gives an upper-class swindler a light sentence in a comfortable prison so that he can avoid contact with "thieves and rioters and other coarse persons" (1). Conversely, Mary, a rural woman whose family's livelihood disappeared with the advent of a reaping-machine and the disappearance of traditional perks, is falsely accused of stealing three loaves, deemed to be in collusion with "ruffianly revolutionists" and given eighteen months in jail (8). A subsequent trial of a socialist for obstruction is corrupted by scare-mongering by the prosecution and leading comments to the jury by the judge, resulting in a six year sentence for the defendant (9-21). (Morris's fellow socialist Jack Williams had gone to prison for obstruction in 1886 [Letters II, 563, & note#1]). Proceedings are interrupted by a revolution which foreshadows News from Nowhere in that soldiers recognize their solidarity with the working class, and the courthouse becomes a distribution centre of free goods (22). The communist state is composed of a number of communes, and the building of a new hall is pleasurable work, done by "lads ... merry as grigs" (25). There are no prisons, and (ex)Judge Nupkins is set to work on the harvest -- which is apparently done by hand as in News from Nowhere -- at the play's conclusion (31).

[20] Northrop Frye suggests in "Varieties of Literary Utopias," that the book's main function is in presenting a sort of Eden by which contemporary society could

be morally criticized (Utopias and Utopian Thought 45-46). A.L.Morton writes that it was written partly as a corrective to Edward Bellamy's idea of a socialist future, and partly "to hearten and inspire his [Morris's] comrades" (English Utopia 165). He suggests the book is both forecast and dream, a "combination of scientific method with the imagination of a great poet," and a synthesis of literary utopia and the Land of Cokaygne (170-171). E.P.Thompson reads it, like Morton, as a combination of scientific approach and romantic vision (695-696). Krishan Kumar suggests that Morris "offers it as a realizable, socialist utopia" but thinks it "might be read more as a powerful indictment of a large-scale mechanical civilization than as a utopian portrait of a future society" (126-127). MacCarthy, meanwhile, stresses that the text "was never intended as a blueprint" but that it instead has the effect of "a catalyst" which "releases the imagination by suggesting that another form of society is *possible*" (587).

[21] For example, in The Well at the World's End a community of craftspeople—the Wheatwearers—is enslaved; landless and starving labourers are exploited in a town called Goldburg, and a cruel mercantile regime oppresses the town of Cheaping Knowe. These suggest respectively the degradation of the artisan, the formation of an exploited proletariat, and the tyranny of capitalism. For an analysis of the Marxism implicit in a number of Morris's late romances, see Carole G. Silver, "Socialism Internalized: The Last Romances of William Morris," Socialism and the Literary Artistry of William Morris, (1990), 117-126.

[22] Science is not in a state of stasis or stagnation in Nowhere as the new or improved technologies indicate; in the text science is described as being as "inexhaustible" as art, and we are told that there are still people "who are excited by its conquest of difficulties" (281).

[23] All these designs, and others, can be found at the William Morris Gallery at Water House, Lloyd Park, Forest Road, Walthamstow in England.

[24] Marsh points out that the countrified city in News from Nowhere foreshadows the 'garden city' movement in England, and implies that it was an influence on the design of Letchworth Garden City (226-228).

[25] By "gambling dens" Morris presumably means banks or stockbrokers; he equated capitalism with gambling, as he makes clear when he says that industrial cities were "centres of nothing but 'manufacture' and served no purpose but that of the gambling market" (Nowhere 250).

[26] Other writers of the period at least acknowledge *some* value to working class life. For instance, Arthur Morrison's short story "The Red Cow Group" (1895), for all its attempt to belittle the threat of the Anarchists through ridicule, both

acknowledges a sort of public house culture and depicts working class men as having a sardonic sense of humour (Tales of Mean Streets 123-141).

[27] See too Morris's "Art and Socialism" (1884) where, in talking of "the contrast between rich and poor" he states that in England one can see the "terrible spectacle" of "two *peoples* living street by street and door by door, people of the same blood, the same tongue, and at least nominally living under the same laws, but yet one *civilized* and the other *uncivilized* [my italics]" (On Art 97). In "Art under Plutocracy" (1883) he discusses the working classes in terms of their being "permanently degraded" and suggests that struggling to make ends meet leaves them joyless, since "such thrift is in itself a degradation to man, in whose very nature it is to love mirth and pleasure," (On Art 149-150). In "Art and Labour" (1884) he writes "it is necessary for their [the working class's] happiness nay for avoiding their degradation into the condition of brutes that they should assert their true position of being themselves society" in order to change society (Unpublished Lectures 117-118). Again, there is the sense here that they have not far to fall to be in the "condition of brutes." In "True and False Society" (1888) he complains that a capitalist society says to the poor: "...you shall not be allowed the exercise of the social virtues: sentiment, affection, good manners, intelligence even, to you shall be mere words; you shall be less than men ..." (On Art 316). In "Art and its Producers" (1888) he speaks of "the brutal slum-dweller" (On Art 217). Finally, in "Monopoly, or How Labour Is Robbed" (1890) he is saddened by "the amusements which are thought good enough for the poor" and suggests that the typical labourer who is not a "well-to-do artisan" is a "squalid, hustled-about, misery-blinded and hopeless wretch" (On Art 196). All of these instances indicate that Morris, full of good intentions and with a humane desire to alleviate all distress through socialism, nevertheless dismisses working class culture as squalid, degraded, joyless, and useless.

[28] I refer to the passage here in Heart of Darkness in which Marlow is taking the steamboat upriver from the station seeking Kurtz, and, in passing villages and being disturbed by the reaction of the native people, realizes what it is that is affecting him: "No, they were not inhuman. Well, you know, that was the worst of it--this suspicion of their not being inhuman. It would come slowly to one. They howled and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity--like yours--the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar" (36-37).

[29] See E. P. Thompson for Morris's ability to see beyond imperialist rhetoric and equate the expansion of the empire with capitalism and the need for new markets (272, 384-389). For his anti-imperialism and its appearance in News from Nowhere, see Peter Faulkner's "A Note on Morris and Imperialism," Journal of the William Morris Society IX. 2 (1991): 22-27.

[30] For the belief in the moral value of hard work as a faith which the middle class preached to the working class, see James Walvin, Victorian Values, 139-144.

[31] See MacCarthy for the lack of any real attempt to “bring out the latent creative talent of each workman” (453), the use of “piecework,” the monotony of the work, and the lack of worker input (454). In a letter to The Standard in 1882 Morris, in essence, attempted to justify this by stating “we are but minute links in the immense chain of the terrible organisation of competitive commerce, and only the complete unrivetting of that chain will really free us” (qtd. in MacCarthy 479). In a letter to Georgiana Burnes-Jones in 1884 he puts this in a slightly different way: “cooperation to be real must be the rule and not the exception” (facsimile in MacCarthy, 459).

[32] The speaker is undeniably very like Morris: “grizzled ... thickset and short, and dressed in shabby blue” (137). Morris habitually dressed in blue. Fellow Democratic Federation member Jack Williams recalled the clothing of his colleagues in the Federation’s newspaper; Morris is described as wearing his “usual blue serge suit” (Justice, January 15 1914).

## **CHAPTER III**

### **Historicism, Discontinuity, and the (Un)natural World:**

#### **H. G. Wells and the Shaping of Things to Come.**

##### **I**

In the autumn of 1924, while beginning the process of correcting the proofs of a forthcoming collected edition of his writings in "eight-and-twenty fat volumes," H. G. Wells ruminated on "the mass of written matter" that he had produced thus far. Reflecting on the consistency of the central ideas which he believed to run through his work, he created something of a coda to his writing career:

The gist of it is an extraordinarily sustained and elaborated adverse criticism of the world as it is, a persistent refusal to believe that this is the best or even the most interesting of all possible worlds. There is a developing attempt culminating in the Outline of History to show that the world of men is only temporarily what it is, and might be altered to an enormous extent. There is a search through every sort of revolutionary project and effort for the material for conclusive alteration.

(Prophesying 269-270)

In the same article he suggested that his "imagination [took] refuge" in the idea of "a world like a great garden, various, orderly, lovingly cared-for," a world which could be attained "through a great extension of the scientific spirit to the mental field and through a deliberate reconstruction of social

and economic life upon the framework of a new, far-reaching educational organization" (Prophesying 271-272).

This self-reflection on three decades of writing reveals some of the defining characteristics of Wells' work: his social criticism; his belief that humanity was merely at one level of development in its continuing history and could attain other, higher, levels; his self-consoling faith that the world might eventually be like a garden in that it would be diversified but also subject to the cultivating and ordering hand of an implied gardener; and his insistence that the creation of this 'garden' would require rational, scientific thinking and a comprehensively organized system of education with a specific mandate. Particularly significant here are the faith in science, the idea of history as a demonstration that society is always in the process of evolving, the simile of the garden (suggesting the ordering of Nature by the gardener), and the belief that this evolution might be controlled in order to steer it in a particular direction.

Wells' attitude toward science, history and Nature are key to his ideas of utopia. He looked at the world around him and saw the disorder and chaotic growth which he describes in his Edwardian 'condition of England' novels. A temporary and personal solution might be to opt out of the chaos, like the protagonist of The History of Mr Polly (1910), but other solutions were needed for the nation and the species as a whole. One of his other Edwardian works, Tono-Bungay (1909), addresses the

problems without offering any concrete solutions, but it does explain the origins of his belief that impartial scientifically-minded elites would emerge to steer humanity along a path of genuine progress. Confidence in the attainability of that progress caused the qualms which he expressed in the disturbing scientific fantasies of the 1890s to give way to the hope he manifested early in the twentieth century in A Modern Utopia (1905). His treatment of both history and Nature reflects the emphasis on universal control and order typical of his utopias. Nature is to be ordered externally, in terms of the environment, and internally, in terms of bodily and mental health and the extirpation of anti-social 'animal' instincts. Wrestling humanity's fate from the unhuman and unheeding caprices of Nature can be achieved best through the global planning which would be possible were the whole planet within the purview of a World State. Wells' stress on the need to control Nature is paralleled by his desire to impose a pattern on the past through writing end-oriented historical narrative. His version of history supported his vision of human destiny, by which he imagined the entire species being united within the World State. The Shape of Things to Come (1933) is the apotheosis of his utopianism, and borrows from his The Outline of History (1920) in utilising the form of historical narrative to support a utopian vision.

A.L.Morton suggests that Wells "found it necessary to write so many utopias ...[because he] was never able to convince himself with any

of them" (English Utopia 183). More recently, Krishan Kumar has assessed Wells' prolific utopianism more kindly, describing Wells as "the greatest of the modern utopists," who, "for his contemporaries, ... was ... utopianism incarnate" (Utopia and Anti-Utopia 168). Kumar comments on Wells' "classically utopian ... advocacy of planning and organization"(168), and it is this preoccupation with order and system generally which informs much of Wells' work.<sup>1</sup> Order and system would ensure that the regression indicated in The Time Machine (1895) might be averted. Order and system might also prevent the ruthless and blinkered application of science reflected variously in Dr Moreau, the invisible Griffin and the Martians.

Wells' most obviously dystopian novel was his first to be published, The Time Machine. In it *homo sapiens* founders as a result of the lack of both foresight and humane social regulation. Nature is allowed to run its course, and the neutral force of natural selection facilitates humanity's slide to extinction. This is in remarkable contrast to his utopias, particularly A Modern Utopia and The Shape of Things to Come, in which humanity eventually flourishes as a whole within a just and comprehensively regulated system. His more ambivalent texts, meanwhile, When the Sleeper Wakes (1899), and A Story of the Days to Come (1899), both depict a future in which there is potential for a degenerative downturn toward the world of Eloi and Morlocks, but in

which the seeds of a prevention of that particular decline are also evident.<sup>2</sup> All these texts, however, are haunted by the same spectre. Whether Wells is offering a positive picture of success, or projecting a dark vision as a warning, the sub-text is that the future holds no guarantees of progress, and that the continuing lack of genuine direction to social evolution might actually result in social and biological regression.<sup>3</sup>

It is an evolutionary downturn which makes the future world depicted in the The Time Machine particularly discomfoting. Wells began to speculate on evolution quite early in his career, following his studies at the Normal School of Science in the mid-1880s and the work he did toward the B.Sci he achieved in 1890.<sup>4</sup> In "On Extinction," written in 1893, he made an observation which had clear implications for those contemporaries who had blind faith in humanity's continuing progress. Discussing pterodactyls, he wrote, "If their narrow brains could have entertained the thought, they would have congratulated themselves upon having a great and inalienable heritage for themselves and their children for ever. And now we cleave a rock and find their bones" (Early Writings 170). In "The Man of the Year Million," also written in 1893, Wells wrote (somewhat facetiously) of the pronouncements of the fictional Professor Holzkopf.<sup>5</sup> Holzkopf notes that "Evolution is no mechanical tendency making for perfection" but merely "the continual adaptation of plastic life

for good or evil" (Double Helix 32). In "The Extinction of Man," an article Wells wrote in 1894, he made explicit what had been implicit in "On Extinction"; warning against a "complacent assumption of the future," he suggests that "the fall of humanity" might be "at hand," possibly through competition from another species (Certain Personal Matters 119).<sup>6</sup> When Wells turned to fiction, he explored the same concerns. The theory that evolution takes place in the adaptation of life forms toward changing conditions rather than as a preconditioned drive toward continuous improvement, and the idea that humanity is not immune from extinction, are two of the themes which make The Time Machine a powerful critique intended to disturb late-Victorian complacency.

In the Preface to an anthology of his work, The Scientific Romances of H. G. Wells (1933), Wells reiterated the ideas he had expressed through 'Professor Holzkopf' forty years before. He stated "I am neither an optimist nor a pessimist at bottom" and maintained that in The Time Machine he had created a work "that ran counter to the placid assumption of that time that Evolution was a pro-human force making things better and better for mankind." Instead he believed that "this is an entirely indifferent world" as far as humanity is concerned (repr. in H. G. Wells's Literary Criticism 242-243). In The Time Machine Wells' Time Traveller visits a future Britain which initially, and illusorily, suggests the serenity of Morris's News from Nowhere -- in the peaceful, if child-like,

Eloi -- but which actually conceals a barbarism more brutal than that of Jefferies' After London -- in the troglodytic Morlocks. The Traveller's initial characterization of the age in which he has landed as "the Quiet" (33) is reminiscent of Nowhere's "epoch of rest." Moreover the Eloi's society suggests a number of things to the Traveller which, when taken together, imply a criticism of the sort of world which Nowhere might precede.<sup>7</sup> The Traveller presumes a form of communism to be in place (29) and that "the whole earth had become a garden" (30). However, he also deduces that "one triumph of a united humanity over Nature ... [must have] followed another," and presumes that, once the "whole world" had become "intelligent, educated and co-operating," the "subjugation of nature" would have gone on at an increasing rate (31). Unfortunately, as a consequence, "languor and decay" have set in (33). Following the "perfect conquest of Nature" and in the absence of any sense of struggle, there are no challenges which require the "energy of mankind"; consequently the species has adapted to these new conditions and is evolving toward a passive state of "contented inactivity" (32-33). The Traveller's theory turns out to be only a partial explanation. People, or at least the moneyed classes, may once have subjugated nature but humanity is now *being* subjugated by it; the evolution of the species that has occurred between the Traveller's own time and 802701 is not the result of universal co-operation and education, but is the consequence of

a lack of intelligent and disinterested planning. Humanity is not sailing toward a gentle lotos-land as a consequence of "the true civilizing process" (31); instead it is being carried toward monstrosity and extinction by the blind forces of evolution.

Eventually the Traveller realises the ugly reality: there has been a bifurcation of the species into two sub-species, and that process has been "no such triumph of moral education and general co-operation as I had imagined" but a consequence of a socially, and literally, stratified society. The privileged and easy life of the wealthy above ground has left them diminutive and delicate (50), and the harsher existence of the working class condemned to subterranean living has erased their humanity and resulted in their, literally, eating the (once) rich (62-63). Their plight plays out the warning which Charles Dickens' narrator gives the upper classes in Hard Times: when the day arrives when the working-class mind has had all vestiges of higher feeling driven out of it, and necessity beckons, then "Reality will take a wolfish turn, and make an end of you" (125).

The Eloi have shrunk in intellect as well as size: they have a minimal vocabulary (40), a "childlike simplicity" (58), and no written language at all (65). Their diminished mental capacity is a consequence of evolution, the result of their adaptation to an effortless existence: "Nature never appeals to intelligence" unless there is a need for it, and if there is no challenge, "no need of change," then "there is no intelligence"

(79-80). The Morlocks' degeneration has been far more brutal, so much so the Traveller describes them as beasts. They are hairy "ape-like" creatures which either run "on all fours" or with their "forearms held very low" (46-47), and have a characteristic "stooping" posture (54). They seem to the Traveller as "inhuman and malign" (58) and he refers to them as "human rats" (75). Clearly they have regressed back to that animal state from which Wells wanted humanity to distance itself.

Evolution continues on its remorseless course in the text. In the original version of the story, published in the National Review, the Traveller's first stop after leaving the era of the Eloi and Morlocks leads to an encounter with a little rabbit-sized creature which hops like a kangaroo; although the traveller is unable to come to any firm conclusion, its five digits on all four feet imply human ancestry and the light grey fur which covers it suggests Morlock origins. This underscoring of the continuous devolution of humanity was omitted when the story appeared in book form.<sup>8</sup> However, the final fate of the world is common to both versions of the text and it is one of entropy; on a cooling earth beneath a dying sun the only visible life thirty million years hence is green slime and a small tentacled creature "hopping fitfully about" (86).

In the Epilogue the frame narrator suggests optimism in that he feels "the manhood of the race" has yet to come, but acknowledges that the Traveller "thought but cheerlessly of the Advancement of Mankind"

(93). It is tempting to see in these opposing positions two contrasting facets to Wells -- the utopian optimist and the dystopian pessimist. Yet it is more useful to view the Traveller's experience as a warning; Wells is criticizing both the inertia of the post-Nowhere utopia in which the Traveller initially imagines he has arrived, *and* the dangers inherent in operating a society solely for the benefit of its moneyed classes. Firstly, he is implying that a judicious use of influence by those in power could beneficially shape humanity's collective destiny and justify the narrator's optimism. Secondly, and conversely, it is clear that flawed or biased judgements, and a lack of comprehensive planning on the part of those in control, would leave the future to the caprices of nature. Wells remained convinced of this; almost forty years after he wrote The Time Machine he created a character, Dr. Philip Raven in The Shape of Things To Come, who is chastened to realise that a failure to "begin anew" the "collective organization of the race and the moral making of the individual" would "in all probability ... leave the race to drift back again to animal individualism, and so through chaos to extinction" (Shape 325-326). Leaving humanity's fate to chance, to the mechanisms of evolutionary adaptation, could be disastrous. The consequences of "animal individualism" could lead to the end of the species altogether.

For Wells, integral to the history of the future would be the playing out of that struggle with a self-oriented animalistic nature. We see

throughout his career a continuing engagement with the human dichotomy: as animals, we are inevitably part of Nature; culturally, and especially through science and technology, we often set ourselves against it. Consequently a fear of returning to our animal origins lurks behind much of Wells' speculative work. Concerns over the fragility of the barriers which, in supposedly civilized individuals, separate the human and the animal, and the modern from the primordial, are visible in a number of broadly *fin de siècle* texts, including Robert Louis Stevenson's Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness.<sup>9</sup> The possible frailty of those barriers also bothered Jefferies, in the form of the various bloodthirsty Bushmen who roam the forests in After London and the animalistic mobs of "The Great Snow." It clearly haunted Wells, and is manifested in The War of the Worlds (1898) and, more particularly, in The Island of Dr. Moreau (1896). In Dr. Moreau Prendick comes to think of the existence of Moreau's Beast-Men as "the whole balance of human life in miniature, the whole interplay of instinct, reason, and fate, in its simplest form" (93). When Moreau's hirsute "Sayer of the Law" ritually asks his fellow mutants "*Are we not Men?*" (58), his words therefore have another layer of meaning; the implied question for the reader is "*Are we not Animals?*"<sup>10</sup>

Dr. Moreau himself is an over-reacher and singularly lacking in compassion, like Griffin in The Invisible Man (1897). Like Griffin too, he is

excessively individualistic, and, as such, doomed to failure. Griffin doses himself with invisibility-inducing drugs, but he also takes strychnine, which his erstwhile friend Kemp refers to as “the palaeolithic in a bottle” (Invisible 70). Apart from the overtones of Stevenson’s Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, this suggests that the drug has some sort of Stone Age effect. Certainly the individualism that the scientist Griffin exhibits, which Wells elsewhere associates with our early ancestors, is a major flaw in his character; Kemp complains: “He is mad, ... inhuman. He is pure selfishness. He thinks of nothing but his own advantage, his own safety. I have listened to such a story this morning of brutal self-seeking!” (92). Individualistic and anti-social behaviour is also characteristic of Moreau, who alienated the public with his callous cruelty when he fell under “the overmastering spell of research” (32), and has since exiled himself on his island; Prendick eventually concludes that Moreau’s “mad, aimless investigations” are simply “irresponsible” (93). However, in his intervention in, and challenge to, the natural process of evolution, he is also an (admittedly warped) antecedent of the various scientific or technological Samurai who control the destiny of our own species in Wells’ utopian texts. Having created something human from animals, Moreau looks on his Frankenstein’s monsters as “indisputable human beings” and seeks to extirpate from them the “cravings, instincts, desires that harm humanity,” by “burn[ing] out all the animal” (76). Arguably,

however, it is Moreau's humanity which has burned out in the pain he inflicts on these beasts in the name of science. Moreau is unsuccessful in his project in that, in each case, "the beast begins to creep back" (76). Nonetheless the idea that one might dissolve the "cravings, instincts [and] desires that harm humanity" from human beings themselves, and wrest control of humanity's destiny from nature generally, continued to exercise Wells' imagination.

In The War of the Worlds an extra-human, and inhumane, disruption to Earth life comes in the form of an invasion by destructive, scientifically-advanced, and virtually invulnerable extra-terrestrials. The Martians turn out to be excessively rational, their bodies having atrophied as their brains have become preeminent in their total physical composition: "They were heads –merely heads" (119), because, for them, "the brain alone remained a cardinal necessity" (121). In a sense they indicate what happens when the rational faculty takes over to the exclusion of all emotion; certainly their sexlessness excludes them from "the tumultuous emotions" (120) associated with desire. Presumably their compassion has, like their corporeal selves, atrophied, and they use humans for sanguinary nourishment. In The Time Machine *homo sapiens* bifurcates into brutes and gentle imbeciles once the humanity of the Morlocks, and the drive and intellect of the Eloi, wither away. In The War of the Worlds the Martian species have evolved away from the need for

bodies or emotions -- an unsatisfactory situation which results in their vampirism being an analogue for the Morlock's cannibalism. Equally disturbing is the converse of this inhumane, species-centric, rationality in the novel. A thought which haunts the protagonist of The War of the Worlds "for many days" is the idea of his swift reduction to "an animal among the animals" (138), and the artilleryman whom he meets refers to the need to avoid becoming like rats (149). The plot moves steadily toward a scenario in which, echoing the position of the Eloi relative to the Morlocks in The Time Machine, the relationship of humanity to the Martians would be that of domestic livestock to husbandmen, again implying a certain animality on the part of the humans.<sup>11</sup> Wells is obviously concerned with determining those properties that define us as human and which may be negated by both degeneration into brutishness and development into pure intellect. Obviously balance is required, the wholeness which Wells would eventually find by investing his rational elites with an altruism to which the Martians -- the elite in this text -- are the absolute antithesis.

The War of the Worlds is moving toward a dystopian England in which humans would have become domestic animals, and the Martians would be an elite feeding off them -- in some ways similar to the situation of The Time Machine but with the class-based satire reversed, since it is the dominant and parasitic Martians who metaphorically represent the

upper classes in this text. This outcome, which appears at one point to be inevitable, is narrowly avoided, and the embryo of Wellsian social wholeness glistens instead in the aftermath. Despite considerable turmoil and destruction, the episode therefore has unexpectedly positive consequences. It shakes people out of an unhealthy complacency in the inevitability of progress, and it generates interest in world unity. As Kumar points out, the conclusion suggests that he was already thinking in terms of "humanity organized in the World State" (Utopia 186), since the narrator reflects that the near-disaster "robbed us of that serene confidence in the future which is the most fruitful source of decadence," and has "done much to promote the conception of the commonweal of mankind" (Worlds 170-171). Wells' own lack of that "serene confidence" would later be manifest in his condition of England novels which preceded World War One. These texts, taken together, depict the confusion and chaos of an England hidebound by social stratification and its inherited physical fabric, and pustulating with uneven and undirected economic growth. England is caught between the decay of the old and the unregulated hyperactivity of the new, and the cracks which are opening up are symptomatic of the social fragmentation which would later exercise Huxley. Wells' utopias would anticipate the forming of a new nucleus of rationalists who would nullify that fragmentation and reintegrate humanity within a new unity. Part of the solution would involve

the sluicing away of the current shambles, but Wells made clear in these texts -- particularly Tono-Bungay -- why that would be justified .

## II

In The Island of Dr. Moreau, Moreau's assistant Montgomery complains of the world: "What a muddle it all is" (104). Similarly Willie, the protagonist of In the Days of the Comet (1906) complains that Britain "is in a state of almost indescribably aimless economic and moral muddle" (90), and Richard Remington, the protagonist of The New Machiavelli (1911), declares "Muddle ... is the enemy" (141). In the microcosm, that muddle is represented in the individuals who, like the eponymous protagonist of Kipps (1905), live "clipped and limited lives" (Kipps 279). The bemused Arthur Kipps stumbles hesitantly and self-consciously through the labyrinthine strata of Britain's "complex and difficult social system" (Kipps 242). Willie, meanwhile, finds himself in an "intellectual muddle" because of poor food, inadequate living conditions, and labour "too petty" to be stimulating (Comet 39), and succumbs increasingly to an "egotistical wrath and jealousy" which parallels the mindless nationalism prevailing in his country at large (91). In the macrocosm, 'muddle' appears in Wells' work as a problem of universal proportions, a product of the unsystematic and discordant tangle of self-interest, error and partiality which he believed to be a dominant characteristic of all areas of life, on a national and institutional as well as an individual level. Leaving the

future to chance was to leave it to the caprices of swarms of humans with individual or group-oriented agendas but no globally beneficial plan, and to nature, and nature, having no consciousness, offered no guarantees to humanity whatsoever.

In Kipps England is in decline, and the aristocratic elite has been replaced by a moneyed upper class more concerned with appearance than intellect. It is a view of England which evidences Wells's belief that the inner life of many people was bleak and their outer life vulgar, and that drastic change was required for real social progress to match scientific and industrial progress. Kipps's friend Sid Pornick is a token socialist and the voice of genuine social criticism in the novel is given to the bitter Masterman who vitriolically and apocalyptically voices Wells's own perspective on the state of the upper classes.<sup>12</sup> As Wells also indicates in Tono-Bungay, the upper classes are only a shadow of their former selves and the moneyed are replacing the hereditary aristocracy. Masterman complains:

All the old tradition is gone, and there's no one to make a new tradition. Where are your nobles now? Where are your gentlemen? They vanished directly the peasant found out he wasn't happy and ceased to be a peasant. There's big men and little men mixed together, and that's all. (208)

We see here Wells's nostalgia for a supposedly noble aristocracy which

has withered away in the face of modernity. What has replaced them, according to Masterman, is "rich men [who] may do almost anything they like with the world." Evoking imagery reminiscent of The Time Machine he complains the rich "waste it [power and liberty] all in folly" while "under their feet the great mass of men festers and breeds in darkness, darkness those others make by standing in the light" (209). Masterman is not Wells, and, in a novel written in the same year as A Modern Utopia, has no constructive vision to complement his vision. Masterman's is the dystopian voice one must balance against the utopian one in that other text. The novel's other explicit note of social criticism comes in a brooding narratorial intrusion immediately preceding that part of the book where Kipps loses his fortune but finds himself. In it Wells blames "the ruling power of the land, Stupidity" for preventing Kipps and his spouse from realizing the "promise of childhood and youth" which education might have made viable (279). Wells uses Kipps to expose hypocrisy and shallowness, and the strict limits which a poor education imposes, but shies away from ending the text on the "tragic note" to which he proleptically refers in the middle of Book Two (179). Nevertheless Kipps does reveal Wells's sense of history unfolding in a particular direction. The high culture and intellectual investigation which the upper classes had once represented is diminishing as they themselves have become diminished. England has a "strange atmosphere of neglected great

issues, of insistent triumphant petty things; we are given up to the fine littlenesses of discourse ... [and] table manners" (252). Kipps is Wells's foil for exposing the shallowness of the Edwardian educated classes and, paradoxically, the iniquities of a lack of education.

The protagonist of The History of Mr. Polly (1910) is somewhat different from Kipps but, in his restlessness and yearning for something better, shares some similarities. Both have a resemblance to Wells himself. Certainly Polly's fondness for, and escape into, literature during his fifteen years as shopkeeper, reading Shakespeare, Conrad, Thackeray and "everything he got except theology" (101), reflects Wells's own early access to the library at Up Park and subsequent reading. The young Polly's brief flirtation with a boarding school girl, and his inability to get closer to her world than the top of her school wall, also represents Wells's wistful desire for the tantalizing but untenable 'upstairs' world of the privileged classes. Polly falls in love with the girl, but, in discovering in his single glimpse over the top of the wall that she is simply using him for an amusing diversion, slides back abruptly, bruised and bleeding (64-71). In Mr. Polly we see that the upper-class lifestyle inevitably has aspects which inspire class envy and Polly's transitory and unsatisfactory brush with the girl in this episode metaphorically situates him as an outsider whose desire to merge with the (ego-centric) upper class inevitably results in disappointment and the rude awakening from a

reverie. John Carey, in his The Intellectuals and the Masses, notes “the symbolism of exclusion” embodied in the wall and the “ideal of culture” which the girl represents (140). It is also clear from his reading of Shakespeare *et al* that it is not an ideal which Polly is dissuaded from seeking because of his romantic debacle. Polly has not the benefit of Wells’s own post-secondary education, however, and Wells writes an escape for Polly into the “interesting world” of rural England which is unnoticed or ignored by “so many people” (139). Although the rural idyll initially comes with its own resident Morlock in the form of the Neanderthal-like knobby-browed Uncle Jim (152), Wells takes Polly out of his old life and inserts him into a new one which is in a state of stasis. Polly is eventually removed from any real sense of futurity, or any implication of cosmic or social struggle.<sup>13</sup> Potwell’s environment as delineated toward the text’s end is in many ways utopian, but it is a regressive and picturesque utopia. It evokes a sense of well-being, making it difficult for the narrator and Polly to believe that “there could be any shadow in life” other than literal ones thrown by natural features: “It was as if everything lay securely within a great, warm, friendly globe of a crystal sky. It was as safe and enclosed and fearless as a child that has still to be born” (178). However, the narrator implies a sense of acknowledged delusion about the scene: the existence of a “shadow” is not denied, but rather the apprehension of it as a concept is soothed

away by the tranquillity of the landscape. Furthermore, Polly's enjoyment of the rural scene is principally at sunset, and the text ends with him saying to the Potwell's landlady as they watch the sun going down, "we can't sit here for ever" (181). Polly's comment, and the symbolic significance of the sun going down, would both suggest that this utopia is one with little future. Ultimately the text implies that contentment is more important than ambition yet undercuts the image of stasis and completion at the novel's end with Polly's acknowledgement that he "can't sit ... for ever," leaving us with an echo of his early restlessness.

Wells's understanding of historical process and of evolutionary history in the non-utopian world confirms change and struggle as inevitable, yet he creates in Mr Polly a protagonist who, having opted out of struggle in the forms of both urban commercial life and his earlier pretensions to culture, immerses himself in a nostalgic and essentially timeless utopian idyll. The tension between the two, inevitable change and rural stasis, results in the ambiguity of the novel's end.<sup>14</sup> The peaceful and secure warmth of that ending is an echo of the fortuitously happy conclusion of the more complex Kipps, with Kipps and his wife in the summer twilight and his unarticulated glimpse of "the wonder of life" (301). In that novel Wells had offered a more comprehensive view of society. Kipps himself is given a boost completely over the (class) wall and actually walks amongst the upper classes, but eventually finds

himself crashing down, bloodied and bruised, on his own side of the wall again, before the playwright Chitterlow unexpectedly repays Kipps' early generosity and restores the latter's financial equilibrium (293-298). Apart from the similarities in the texts' endings, however, both Kipps and Polly are clearly victims of an inadequate education and versions of the Wells that might have been had he not been better educated. George Ponderovo in Tono-Bungay too shares characteristics with Wells, one of which *is* a better education than Kipps or Polly.

Tono-Bungay is a novel permeated with the despair and uncertainty created by a loss of continuity in the chaos consequent on volcanic change. It is a portrait of an England metamorphosing into something new, unpredictable, and unnerving. The mainspring of that change is a shift from the certainties of an aristocratic, rigidly-structured, land-based society to the flux of a commercial, profit-oriented, urban-based society. The discourse of this change, imaged in terms of cancer and decay, is omnipresent throughout the text as the narrator, George Ponderovo, unfolds a narrative suffused with tones of regret and loss. Like that of Kipps, Ponderevo's existence begins on the margin between the lower and middle classes, but, unlike the latter, he is able to adopt an informed and comprehensive perspective on a Britain in which "the decay of our old culture" has caused "a loss of traditions and distinctions and assured reactions" (297). It is a world of "aimless civilization" where "the

immense process of social disorganization” causes everything to be “fruitless” and “broken away from its connexions” (338). Reflecting on his narrative as a litany of squandered resources, materialism, and lack of direction, he remarks, “It is all one spectacle of forces going to waste, of people who use and do not replace, the story of a country hectic with a wasting aimless fever of trade and money-making and pleasure-seeking”(346). England’s “feudal scheme” has been “overtaken by fatty degeneration and stupendous acts of hypertrophy” so that St. Paul’s is forgotten amidst “a rude tumult of warehouses” and “the ancient Tower of London” is overshadowed by the modern and vulgar “Sham Gothic” of Tower Bridge (350). Ponderovo therefore conceptualizes contemporary England in terms of loss, decay, aimlessness, disorganization, instability, and unpredictability. As Ponderevo sails through the Thames Estuary and out into the sea “Light after light goes down. England and the Kingdom, Britain and the Empire... London passes, England passes ...” (352). The implication is that England must change dramatically or “sink down upon the horizon” (352). The criticism of the state of Edwardian Britain is marked.<sup>15</sup>

Anticipating Masterman’s remarks in Kipps about a loss of tradition, the text is directly concerned with questions concerning the consequences of the old order’s having decayed without any new coherent system to replace it, and the absence in this commercial world of

any motivation that transcends materialism. The “fine Olympians” presumed to have been at the apex of the “elaborate social system” of which Bladesover is a symbol are, like that system, in or going “to Limbo” (8). The rural gentry are being replaced by a “pseudomorphous” class of nouveau riche who ape the ways of the old gentry but lack their substance (9). Rather than being dynamic innovators, the nouveau riche are “but a phase in the broad slow decay of the great social organism of England” (55).

Ponderovo clearly has mixed feelings about Bladesover, as the description of its last aristocrats as shrivelled “old painted goddesses” suggests (11). Nevertheless, it is “the clue to almost all that is distinctively British and perplexing to the foreign inquirer” and he asserts that “England was all Bladesover two hundred years ago” (13). It is Ponderevo’s touchstone throughout the text. The “museum and library movement throughout the world” has its origins in “the elegant leisure of the gentlemen of taste” and is thus an outgrowth of “the seventeenth century system of Bladesover” (87). The emphasis on Bladesover as a *system* is opposed in the text by the forces of change which are seemingly unsystematic, “great new forces, blind forces of invasion, of growth” (87). Obviously these forces, in being blind, are like evolutionary forces at work in English history – there is no prescribed direction to them. Unfortunately these same forces, manifest in commercial and

industrial development in and around London, impress him as “the unorganized, abundant substance of some tumorous growth process” (88). As the cancerous image suggests, change, and particularly unsystematic change, is construed negatively in the text. There is an elegiac note to Ponderevo’s memories of Bladesover and his observations on the rural scene and England’s past. Yet, characteristic of Wells’ ambiguity, there is no real sense of any hope in it, and certainly no human representative of the past whom Ponderevo views with unalloyed approval. Instead the changes taking place in England result from the collision between the commercially-driven forces of modernity spearheaded by the nouveau riche and the decayed or fragmented vestiges of simpler, more ordered, times. Ponderevo is nostalgic for the ‘Bladesover system’ which he glimpsed as a boy, but that nostalgia is overlaid uncomfortably with a more critical understanding of the realities of that system obtained as an adult. The result is a nostalgia that can be justified only by believing that the Bladesover he knew was actually in decline from a greater past which is therefore the greater loss and worthy of that nostalgia. Wells adds a note of irony to the narrative in that Ponderevo’s nostalgia comes from an insider to the forces of change, both as part of a business controlled by an ambitious uncle dedicated to commercial improvements, and as an engineer with a scientific bent who builds an airship and a warship.

The ship Ponderevo has designed and built, and on which he is steaming out of the estuary, is a destroyer, an engine of ruin, suggestive of the need to sweep away the existing mess. It is heading out into "the great spaces of the future," and Ponderevo himself muses that it is actually a symbol for the science or truth which "calls upon such men as ... [him] with an irresistible appeal" and is drawn "by pain and effort out of the heart of life" (352). The implication is that the hope for the future lies with those scientists, engineers and others who have the desire, fortitude and ability to access this quality of truth. The old jumble must give way to a new rational order, whatever pleasant associations the residual, crumbling, order might still evoke.

Tono-Bungay is a text in which Wells struggles with his own contradictory impulses towards both nostalgia and science, the latter being generally a force for innovation and change. In his 1994 "Introduction" to the Everyman edition of the text John Hammond discusses the "deeply divided personality" of Wells' narrator, Ponderevo: on the one hand "sceptical, scientific, enquiring, detached," and on the other "romantic, emotional [and] sentimental" (xxxi). One can also see in Ponderovo a reflection of Wells's utopian and dystopian sympathies. In this case utopia lies in the past, in the stratified and ordered system of the country house and its domain. Dystopia is being engendered by modern commercial forces. The ramifications of the changes wrought by those

forces have yet to emerge and so remain obscure -- the "unknown across a great grey space" into which Ponderevo sails the destroyer X2 in the novel's last pages (352). At the end of a novel which begins using the domain of Bladesover as a microcosm of a past social system, Ponderevo makes of the River Thames a metahistory in which the flow of change is carrying England into an unknown future; "to run down the Thames is to run one's hand over the pages of the book of England from end to end" (348). Beginning with the "old England" of Craven's Reach, Ponderevo sails down the Thames, chronicling an historical movement from the post-feudalism synonymous with Bladesover through the "commercialized Bladesoverly ... of meretricious gentry and nobility sold for riches" (348) to the "monstrous confusion" of the new trade-dominated England, synecdochically represented by London's docklands (350). Change has taken, and is taking, place, but what will succeed the current period of flux is unclear.

The most obvious force for change in the novel is, ironically, George Ponderevo's ambitious and insensitive uncle. In Teddy Ponderevo Wells has created a symbol of capitalism, vulgar commercialism, and the tumorous outgrowth which originates in individualism. Ironically Wells has him conceptualize commerce -- a force for despoliation and cancerous disorder in the novel -- in terms of "Romance. 'Magination" (119). Unfortunately commercialism is eager to

warp history, to taint or misrepresent historical fact and event. Wells himself was to give a particular shape to history in the interests of promulgating his own philosophy, but Teddy Ponderevo does it to sell soap. Moggs, "an educated, cultivated, degenerate plutocrat" whose family wealth originated in the soap industry, has adopted a genteel life style and become an amateur historian. Ironically, when he enters into partnership with Teddy the history of his own family is reinvented and his ancestors given sham aristocratic connections for the purposes of peddling the product (190 - 191). A "second-rate black-lead firm" is given a false history stretching "back into the mists of antiquity" to the Black Prince (191).<sup>16</sup>

Teddy Ponderovo also attempts to reinvent himself, joining the ranks of the rural pseudomorphs by his purchase of a country house. This brings him into a collision with the doomed and fragmented rural social-economic system, symbolized by Teddy's purchase of Lady Grove and its estate (223). The voice that speaks on behalf of the countryside, however, is the ineffectual vicar whose "cadaverous complexion" (225) denotes his association with the dying order "doomed so far as he could see, root and branch, scale and form alike, to change" (247). The vicar laments the recent lack of the (Bladesover-like) "house influence" which he expects the Ponderevos to provide (228). Unfortunately Teddy wants both ersatz traditional culture such as "Harvest Home" and modernization

in the form of light railways and the possibility of industry (228 - 229).

Wells here is, again, ambiguous; he implies a sympathy with the nostalgia George feels for the "tranquil and idyllic" village threatened by Teddy's ideas, but, given the vicar's Jefferies-like lament for the loss of the "brisker" village girls to the city, rural life appears doomed to stagnate without some new input. The desire to preserve the idyll, complicated by the knowledge that the idyll is doomed to die without rural reinvigoration, were considerations which concerned Jefferies, and Teddy's proposal of modern amenities and more employment echoes his ideas.<sup>17</sup>

Ultimately the text, like Kipps, offers no explicit answers. The severing of continuity and the supplanting of a traditional organic system with an artificial urban-based one is lamented but the future is left opaque. George Ponderovo himself has found a purpose in life in engineering and the "Science...[that] saved [him] from despair" (182). This provides a glimmer of hope at the text's end. George cannot articulate his final thoughts any more clearly than Polly or Kipps; they are "nearly formless" and yield "no words" (353). He sums up himself and England with the idea "We make and pass....striving upon a hidden mission, out to the open sea" (353). Ultimately, then, humanity's hope, or Ponderovo's consolation, lies in a barely articulated and seemingly instinctual drive, something presumably embedded in us by millions of years of evolution. It needs direction. That direction is not given in Tono-

Bungay, but it is in Wells' utopian texts, in the forms of various elites who lead and control. What Tono-Bungay does offer, however, is insight into the origins of Wells' faith in elites.

### III

Wells had a nostalgia for the old and eclipsed social order in rural England in that its leisured gentry had been the amateur scientists and scholars whose disinterested acquiring of knowledge offered him an early model for his rational elites. Wells' mother's employment as housekeeper at Up Park and his consequent lengthy visits there from 1881 onward offered Wells an ambivalent view of upper-class rural life, a view which he obtained as a spectator who was not actually a servant, nor a guest of the gentry, but merely a functionless observer. The vast library to which he was allowed access suggested both the education and the leisure to read widely which the upper classes enjoyed (Foot 5). A perfected version of this well-educated and cultured aristocracy, restyled as an elite qualified by aptitude and health rather than by lineage, emerged in A Modern Utopia as Wells's somewhat controversial Samurai. As Norman and Jeanne Mackenzie have suggested: "The great estates, ruled by order and owned by enlightened guardians of scientific intelligence, provided him with the pattern for his utopian societies and the cultured elites which were to control them" (38). It is important to note, however, that the country estate and the layered life it supported was, when Wells

contemplated it retrospectively, a system decayed and, in a sense, nearing extinction.

Describing the estate microcosm in fictional form in Tono-Bungay, Wells refers to it being in the “October” of its existence and awaiting the frost which “ends the thing forever” (9). One could say that, in evolutionary terms, its environment had altered to the point where it was unable to adapt and yet retain its identity, and it would have to evolve into something smaller and less overtly important. Nevertheless the idea of a cultured and disinterested ‘county’ elite whose generally positive influence pervaded their rural dominions is something for which Wells was nostalgic. In his Experiment in Autobiography (1934), he speaks of the “flood of new experiences” he gained at Up Park and in its vicinity as being “immensely important in [his] development” (Experiment I, 110). Wells’s fictional elites -- and their apotheosis in his proposals for, and projections of, world government -- are partly the product of Wells’ fondness for a segment of his own past. Nostalgic for Up Park and the ideas which it and its library opened up to him, he idealized the declining country house system and constructed, like a sort of misguided forensic scientist of the imagination, an image of benevolent and unselfish governance.

Typically, Wells’s analysis of Bladesover in Tono-Bungay also reflects an ambiguity concerning his feelings for the upper classes. The

narrator, George Ponderovo, states that the “centre of our system,” the “shrivelled” and “garrulous” Lady Drew, lives in the “great shell” of the country house in which she and her aged companion are “dried-up kernels” (10). Clearly the imagery denotes decay and ineffectuality. This is reiterated in Wells’ autobiography when he writes of modern country houses as “mere empty shells” (Experiment I, 105). Yet Bladesover is nevertheless portrayed as the decayed relic of something once vigorous and vital. What it should also have signified to Wells was a past which underlines the inequalities inherent in a system in which all the real power is in the hands of a formalised elite. Despite the rules which inhibit them in A Modern Utopia it is not difficult to imagine the Samurai eventually becoming an oligarchy and devolving from benevolent paternalists to decadent aristocrats.

Up Park/Bladesover was a vestige of a feudal system which had involved land grants in exchange for military support. As the system evolved it retained the emphasis on land as both reward and sign of status, and the great landowners, through consolidation by enclosure and the appropriation of common land, dispossessed the peasantry. Wells acknowledges this process in his The Outline of History, when he notes “the concentration of property in the hands of a powerful, privileged and greedy class” resulting from enclosures (862). However, he seems to set this knowledge aside when considering the culture and the evidence of

education made tangible at Up Park, of which the library provided a taste. That the rural gentry who dominated their little kingdoms were self-interested rather than disinterested, and the inheritors of a system founded on tyranny rather than benevolence, was secondary in Wells's mind to the example which he imagined Up Park's residents or their ilk must have provided *in the past* of an intellectual elite with the education to understand and the leisure to think, unimpeded by the imperatives and concerns of lesser souls who must use up their lives in labour. Wells discusses this at some length in his autobiography. As far as he is concerned, "modern civilization was begotten and nursed in the households of the prosperous, relatively independent people, the minor nobility, the gentry, and the larger bourgeoisie" and that civilization spread in "country houses and chateaux and villas over the continually more orderly countryside" (Experiment I, 104). Although their culture "rested on a toiling class," Wells maintains that "it has been far more through the curiosity and enterprise and free deliberate thinking of these independent gentlemen than through any other influences" that modern society has finally done away with "the harsh necessity for any toiling class whatsoever." The following is particularly telling:

It is the country house that has opened the way to human equality, not in the form of a democracy of insurgent proletarians, but as a world of universal gentlefolk no longer in need of a servile

substratum. It was the experimental cellule of the coming Modern State. (105)

Besides revealing Wells antipathy toward Marxism and its faith in "insurgent proletarians," the passage indicates that a privileging of the English gentry, who in their supposed civilizing influence and impetus toward equality presaged the World State, was still a factor in Wells's thinking as late as 1934. The disinterested intellectual curiosity and Enlightenment emphasis on rational order which the gentry represented to Wells was passed on in his fiction to his various elites. What those elites must do was to impose order, not simply on the people, but on the forces of nature to which the people were subject.

#### IV

Wells believed that our ability to order our existence is part of what defines us as human beings against the Otherness of nature; in The New Machiavelli Richard Remington concludes that "life ... [is] a various and splendid disorder of forces that the spirit of man sets itself to tame" and that "order came into things only through the struggling mind of man" (113). The supremely rational discipline of science which emerged from the "mind of man" -- so often envisaged as being antithetical to nature -- was Wells' key. The future would not be brought into being by the 'dragon's teeth' of Morris's proletariat, nor be built quietly and piecemeal by fastidious Fabians; instead it would be constructed clinically and

efficiently by an elite of scientific, systematic, and farsighted professionals whose motivation was the good of the collective, rather than the amassing of personal wealth or power. These unselfish elites -- able to assess, innovate, create and organize -- populate all Wells' visions of a global, socialist utopia in which there can be individuality without individualism. In A Modern Utopia the elite are the ascetic Samurai "in whose hands as a class all the real power of the world resides" (164) and who generally have the tendencies toward creativity, particularly in science, characterised in the text as 'Poietic.'<sup>18</sup> In The Shape of Things to Come the world state movement does not gain momentum until its early adherents (including "'pure' scientific workers"), are joined by "engineers, architects, skilled foremen and industrial organizers, technicians of all sorts, business men and captains of industry" (Shape 256); these scientists, engineers, and the organizationally and technologically minded are eventually instrumental in bringing about a form of universal socialism in which people "worry about food, drink, clothing, health and personal freedom no more" (Shape 409).

In The World Set Free (1914) Wells maintained that the progress of the species required the "subordination of individual interests and established institutions to the collective future" (World 40). The world needed over-arching direction and a dedicated elite, but it also needed to address the problems of egocentrism, elitism, self-interest, and tribalism.<sup>19</sup>

Utopia would need a *Zeitgeist* of “self-abnegation [and] self-identification with the world spirit,” (World 160). Wells’ elites are exemplars of this identification of the individual with the whole, to the extent that one of the sequential protagonists in The World Set Free, educational pioneer Karenin, claims that it is not “Karenin” who speaks but “a common mind” (190).

Science and socialism combine in Wells’ creation of a future world order, and are conceived by him as parallel forces since both involve the idea of order and system, and both offer the hope of collective action against the unpredictability of a future left to accident and circumstance. In his 1908 work, New Worlds for Old, he maintains that both rest upon the same “fundamental idea” that “things are, in their nature, orderly” and can be “computed, ... calculated upon and foreseen”; in its aiming at “systematic knowledge” that is “frankly and truly exchanged,” science is mirrored by socialism which “has just that same faith in the order, the knowableness of things, and the power of man in co-operation to overcome chance” (22-24). The key word here is “orderly” and the key phrase is “to overcome chance.” Wells appears to be asserting that both science and socialism subscribe to the idea that order is somehow ‘natural’ to the material world, while he also suggests that this order, once deduced, can be used as the basis for accurate planning and prediction.<sup>20</sup>

Wells was, course, making this equivalency between the philosophies of science and socialism a decade before their fusion, and negative apotheosis, in the State socialism of the USSR, and two decades before the Soviets -- through their Five Year Plan and the collectivization of agriculture -- attempted to modernize the Russian economy radically. This attempt to force scientific principles on the collective in order to bring about a particular vision of the future was to cause a great deal of suffering.<sup>21</sup> The West, however, remained largely ignorant of all the negative consequences of Soviet policy and, even in the early 1930s, looked wistfully out from the economic confusion of the Depression toward the "achievements of scientific economic planning" (Thomson 692). The 22<sup>nd</sup> century narrator of Wells' history of the future, The Shape of Things To Come (1933), remarks that "the Soviet system certainly anticipated many of the features of our present order," although he notes that the Soviets demonstrated at the World Economic Conference in 1933 that they were too insular to be interested in world unity or "the inevitability of world socialism" (Shape 120). Stalin's Five Year Plan is acknowledged as having been attended by "mental discords and tragic disproportions" but the "disproportions" are described as similar to those of "the hypertrophies and atrophies" of nineteenth-century capitalism; the Plan itself is referred to as a "great experiment" (Shape 314-315).

Wells, in the form of the narrator, refers approvingly to Stalin's Plan as a "great experiment" for two reasons. One is because, as we will see, he was by this time committed to the idea that past efforts at unifying or systematizing society suggested the twitching in the collective consciousness of an inchoate desire for an ordered world. The other is that the new Jerusalem would need help to come into being.

Socioeconomic experiments were at least an effort toward that brighter future toward which humanity must struggle. Those with ability had to realize, like Frederick Barnet in The World Set Free, that "the supreme need for our race is leading, the supreme task is to discover leading, to forget oneself in realizing the collective purpose of the race" (84). Those who could take control should do so, but for the good of the whole, not for individual gain or for the power it gave them. Humanity could not simply drift along without a plan, hoping for providence or waiting for Nature to take its course.

Nature could not be left to its own devices because, as The Time Machine suggests, lack of a rational and benevolent force directing the species offers the potential for degeneration and extinction. Nature represented disorder. The manmade conglomeration of Dockland London in Tono-Bungay is, ironically, "a world of accident and *nature*" (my italics); it is described in terms of "monstrous variety, ... monstrous confusion," and of being "beyond all law, order and precedence,"(350). Wells,

through his narrator Ponderevo, is implying that 'nature' is synonymous with random and irregular growth, and muddle. Like the tangle of London's East End, it evidences "no plan ... no intention, no comprehensive desire" (351). Nature itself meant several different things to Wells. It was the environment outside the human being, it was the instinctual drives which the human being had inherited from the animal world, and it was the laws of Nature which govern the cosmos. In Wells' view, all of them required the application of rational controls.

Firstly there was the external world of nature--the complex of resources and animal and plant life--which we now often refer to as 'the environment' and which, Wells felt, should be efficiently managed. Wells believed that the countryside could offer aesthetic pleasure and that non-urban spaces provided the opportunity for solitude and reflection.<sup>22</sup> However, he considered that the environment generally should be managed and exploited in the service of (what would eventually be) an almost-exclusively urban society. He saw no real value in the rural way of life *per se*, and consequently he exhibited none of Jefferies' interest in preserving it. The London of A Story of the Days to Come is completely separate from the countryside, not even having any suburbs bleeding the urban into the rural. Instead the city ends suddenly, "like a wall, like a cliff, near four hundred feet in height, abrupt and sheer" (152). Although the neat and weed-free fields beyond, administered by the monopolistic

Food Company, hardly represent nature in the raw, the separation of the urban from the rural, or the human from the natural, is obvious. There are “no inhabited houses in all the countryside” and agricultural workers live in one of England’s four massive cities and commute (146).<sup>23</sup> Nature is being excluded from the lives of the majority of the populace, and the escape into it for the protagonists Denton and Elizabeth is a romantic adventure which ends in them realizing that “the city ... is the life to which ... [they] were born”; rural life for them is “a pleasant dream” from which there has to be a harsh awakening and a return to the metropolis (160).<sup>24</sup>

In The World Set Free the utopia which emerges in the aftermath of nuclear war is one in which the rural life which Jefferies so prized has practically disappeared. Those who make their living from the soil, those most associated with nature, are disappearing as a discrete social group; the “distinctively `rustic’ population ... is passing away out of human experience” (World 147). The land is now worked by “cultivating guilds” rather than individual farmers, and, as in the case of A Story of the Days to Come and When the Sleeper Wakes, those who work the land in The World Set Free “maintain ... residences in the nearest town” (146). The narrator is clearly supportive of this movement, since the rural life which has been superseded by this new system is described as lonely, and characterised by “the narrow scandals and petty spites and persecutions of the small village” and the “half-inanimate existence away from books,

thought or social participation" (World 147). The depopulation of the countryside which is actively pursued in these utopias of Wells is exactly what Jefferies wished to avoid.

Secondly there was the nature within, those individualistic or anti-social tendencies which Wells believed to be animal in origin and which we have seen were a factor in his early science fiction fantasies of the 1890s, particularly The Island of Dr Moreau and The Time Machine, and in other British *fin de siècle* fiction. In the years since Wells' death the possible simian origin of human ethical behaviour has become the subject of cross-disciplinary study.<sup>25</sup> The old tradition to which Wells subscribes, unsurprisingly, is that which has been described as "not see[ing] humans as animals in the same way that other animals are animals. Humans are ... somehow special and superior in their animality" (Preece 51).

Underpinning that idea in Wells' case is that the fact of our humanity makes us special, but that our animal propensities lurk within. The idea of the animal, or the 'apeman,' in human nature haunts much of Wells' fiction, as when the protagonist Denton remarks in A Story of the Days to Come, "we are just poor animals rising out of the brute" (178). Wells subscribed to T. H. Huxley's belief that the ethical quality supposedly unique to humanity controls the impulse towards selfishness and ruthless self-assertion imbued in humanity through millions of years of evolution, subduing those "qualities which he shares with the ape and the tiger"

(Huxley, Evolution, 51). Civilization, and hope for humanity's future, lay in an ethical "combatting" of the atavistic urges of the "cosmic process" in individuals and within society (Huxley 83). Being an animal *homo sapiens* is subject to primal instinctual drives, the "inordinate passion" which, according to Wells' narrator of In the Days of the Comet, is "the legacy ... we have received from the brute from which we came"(91). Wells believed part of our inheritance from the apes to be these drives which were the basis for individualism and therefore impinged on the principle of collectivism. "The history of man" he wrote in The World Set Free, is partly "the ... conquest of those distrusts and fiercenesses, that self-concentration and intensity of animalism, ... the ape in us [which] still resents association" (11). This animal heritage subverted those qualities which supposedly distinguished humanity from other species. Consequently people had to negate their primal individualism and channel the individual's motivations toward fulfilling the common good rather than satisfying self-interest. Continued moral evolution could be cultured in the mass of the people through teaching intended to ensure "the release of man from self" (World 161), as psychologists learn "how to mould minds" (188). The "old animal limitations" will be overcome (World 188) as the descendants of the "hairy savage," (191), that "great individualist" of the Stone Age (8), yield up their "billion wills into a common purpose" (191). The utopia attained in the twenty-second

century in The Shape of Things to Come is one in which the self-interest inherited from the “subman” of a million years ago – “as solitary an animal as the tiger ... in a phase of almost fundamental individualism” (Shape 414) – has given way to a “sublimation of individuality” (415); while individuality still has an outlet, it is in the service of the Modern State, that “single organism” which humanity now comprises (416).

Thirdly there were those so-called laws of Nature which potentially affect all living things, and therefore also affect the other two aspects. Wells' believed that humanity's prospect for having *any* viable long-term future depended on the species' ability to shape its own collective destiny, soberly and constructively, in defiance of these mindless natural laws. As he wrote in The Common Sense of War and Peace (1940):

I have always believed that by a strenuous effort mankind might defeat the impartial destructiveness of nature, but I have always insisted that only by incessant hard thinking and a better co-ordination of man's immense but dispersed powers of self-sacrifice and heroism was such a victory possible. (7)

Wells' attitude to the laws of nature is symbolised in his novel The First Men in the Moon (1901), when the physical law of gravity is defeated (and space travel enabled) by the invention of Cavorite, a substance “opaque to gravitation” (17). Here Nature, in the form of gravity, is a restriction to science and consequently challenged and overcome. One way or

another, Wells saw nature as tending to confine or limit humanity, preventing the realization of potential. It is a blind and non-rational force which, manifest as growth, is conducive to riot and disorder.

In the face of the evident lack of planning in nature, Wells concluded, like his erstwhile mentor T. H. Huxley, that a developed society must work to create its own order, to negate those natural laws which cramp it. His argument for human planning and control is, in effect, an argument for nullifying and supplanting the law of Natural Selection.<sup>26</sup> The susceptibility to chance, the mainspring of Darwin's evolutionary theory, entailed the potential for regression and extinction as well as progress. Evolution, after all, is a blind and amoral force without any evident intelligence guiding it. Wells' attitude to nature generally -- especially in the way that evolution, operating through randomness and adaptation, affects human biological and social growth -- separates him philosophically from both Jefferies and Morris.

It is true that Jefferies is sometimes critical of a lack of planning and coordination; in The Story of My Heart he suggests that "people die of starvation" despite the earth's "superabundance" because of "the absolute lack of organisation ... the absolute lack of distribution, [and] the absolute lack even of the idea that such things are possible," a situation he attributes to the "selfishness" of "interested persons" (Story 174-175). However, as we have seen, Jefferies thought optimistically of nature's

randomness since the lack of any controlling cosmic intelligence or divine plan, in betokening the lack of preset boundaries, offered almost infinite possibilities for the evolution of humanity. He celebrated organic growth as a model for the continuing unfolding of human history, an idea symbolised in Amaryllis at the Fair by Iden's house, which, over the generations, has "grown like a tree that adapts itself to circumstances." Wells, however, looked on the lack of a controlling intelligence as a deficiency which could, and should, be remedied by rational thought and collective action. Growth should be carefully planned and take place in an orderly fashion, not left to happenstance and higgledy-piggledy adaptation to circumstances.

Wells' conception of nature was also significantly different from Morris's. True, Morris had wanted to control nature, but in his case to domesticate and declaw it, thereby rendering the natural landscape aesthetically pleasing and benign. There are pastoral overtones to the relationship between people and the natural world in News from Nowhere, as if humanity is shepherding nature. Nature is at peace, and the community operates in harmony with it. Consequently, Nowhere's inhabitants like to get out into the fields and help with the harvest, and they incorporate natural images into their work. Wells, however, not only wanted to take the sting out of nature; he wanted to obviate the natural laws which affect humanity altogether. The difference between the

attitudes of Morris and Wells is particularly striking when one thinks of their contrasting use of the image of the garden.

As we have seen, Wells imagined utopia as a garden, "lovingly cared-for" on scientific principles. Morris imagined England as a garden, but not one dominated by the controlling hand of the gardener. On an aesthetic level, Morris's image of garden England was one intended to contrast the dehumanizing, dour and ugly excesses of industrialism. Wells tended to imagine the population of the future as almost exclusively urban, with the rural landscape sharply demarcated from the town.<sup>27</sup> Morris's utopia, however, dissolved the old divisions between the country and the city. There was to be no more opposition between the polluted, cramped town and the healthy open countryside, between urban sophistication and rustic simplicity, or between industrial growth and rural stasis. After the revolution he expected utopia to evolve into a decentralized, de-industrialized, society of countrified towns and an evenly-settled countryside, in which the more positive elements of mediaeval culture would be integrated within an aesthetically pleasing landscape, shaped as the craftsman shapes his artefact.

The garden -- which, as a space in which the flora and soil are managed or controlled by people, is an interface between humanity and nature -- also offers a convenient metaphor for socioeconomic change. Morris's (Marxist) revolution would have cleared the ground for the new

garden, but there would be no controlling gardener to implement it; the new society visited by Guest has simply emerged, as it were, 'naturally' as the product of the dialectic of class conflict. Capitalism has disappeared because "the two combatants, the workman and the gentleman, between them" had "destroyed commercialism" without necessarily intending to do so (News from Nowhere 316). This sense of advantageous change as analogous to a natural process, in that it requires no controlling hand, characterizes life in Nowhere. Consequently the improved physical condition of the people is the result of "freedom and good sense" (244), rather than any plan. Given the laissez-faire communism which governs life in Nowhere, it is no surprise that Morris's chapter on politics (XIII) is the shortest in the text—less than half a page. Significantly, the "art or work-pleasure" which characterises society in Nowhere has "sprung up almost spontaneously, it seems, from *a kind of instinct* among people" [my italics] (319). All this contrasts dramatically with Wells' vision in which there is generally no place for instinct or unplanned and uncontrolled growth.<sup>28</sup>

Specifically, Wells disputed Morris's idea of an "instinct" for "art or work-pleasure." In the machine-compatible, labour-saving world of A Modern Utopia (1905) there are "some [who] love to make ... beautiful things" (55) but Wells keeps art and work separate, arguing that the idea of "Morris and the outright Return-to-Nature Utopians" that "all toil may be

made a joy" is a "bold make-believe" and a fantasy of "an irresponsible man of the rich share-holding type" (59). Amongst the working classes, labour has always been a means-to-an-end, rather than motivated by aesthetic or pleasurable impulses, and will therefore be minimised in Utopia.<sup>29</sup> More generally, social change itself should not be left to instinct or providence, but rather planned, developed, and managed, as a garden should.

Wells writes of the (warmongering) press in In the Days of the Comet that it was "in the nature of an unanticipated accident. It had happened, as weeds happen in abandoned gardens, just as all our world has happened, because there is no clear Will in the world to bring about anything better" (Comet 92). Wells is primarily using the garden simile here to talk about the press and similar influential "monstrous shapes" like "'Empires,' ... 'Nations,' ... and 'Trusts'" (91). However, in extending it to "all our world," he implies that social growth, if simply abandoned to chance, is subject to unexpected and unwanted eventualities. Collective 'Will' is required to give structure and implement a positive vision. Consequently, while Morris leaves improvement of the race to nature, as individuals adapt positively to improved conditions, Wells' Utopians have "brought a sounder physiological science than ours to bear upon [their] regimen" and actively work toward better health (Modern Utopia 186). More generally, improvement of the 'racial stock' is a goal which can be achieved by social engineering. In Wells' Utopia "the unnatural animal,

the rebel child of Nature” actually thwarts nature and its “ancient law” (Modern Utopia 81). “The method of Nature,” which is “to degrade, thwart, torture and kill the weakest and least adapted members of every species,” will be negated, but the genetically flawed will gradually be eliminated from the species as the “weaklings” and “inferiors” are “prevented from increasing and multiplying” (Modern Utopia 106-107).

In suggesting that the unfit should not be allowed to reproduce Wells is addressing some of the same issues which he had discussed earlier in Anticipations (1901) -- a non-fiction text in which Wells had analysed contemporary (and apparently fragmenting) civilization and projected possible developments from a sociological (and eugenicist) viewpoint.<sup>30</sup> He was also responding to questions that his mentor T. H. Huxley had raised in Evolution and Ethics. However, Wells is offering an answer which Huxley rejects. Huxley suggests that an administrator guided by “purely scientific considerations” might allow “only the strong and the healthy...to perpetuate their kind” (21). He goes on to reject this notion, however, on the grounds that “the attempt to perfect society after this fashion” might loosen social bonds (24). Huxley’s target is really Social Darwinism, the belief in the “active or passive extirpation of the weak, the unfortunate, and the superfluous...on the ground[s] that it has the sanction of cosmic process” (36). Nevertheless it equally applies to Wells’ suggestion, in that the notion of preventing the unfit from reproducing is clearly related to Social Darwinism, but made to sound

more humane than Social Darwinism's laissez-faire attitude by which the unfit and the poor should not be helped.<sup>31</sup> Wells is advocating that the elimination of the unfit should not be accomplished 'naturally' by the evolutionary process but instead achieved humanely by the decidedly unnatural process of forbidding reproduction and, should an individual break the prohibition on unsanctioned reproduction twice, by the "absolutely effectual guarantee" of forced sterilization (A Modern Utopia 108).<sup>32</sup> Similarly, Wells suggests elsewhere that, in Utopia, the 'natural' will be taken out of natural selection: "In the future, as the obscurer processes of [natural] selection are accelerated and directed by eugenic effort" the characteristics acquired through "education and social discipline" will be "incorporated with his [humanity's] inherent nature" and therefore become *part* of his 'nature' (Shape 414).

Nature, then, must be controlled in one form or other. As will be discussed later, Wells also wanted to control history, in the sense of writing historical narrative which offered his desired future embryonically. More generally, however, utopia would require a cleansing process and a breaking free of the past. Utopia would not simply emerge dialectically as the inevitable consequence of class conflict.<sup>33</sup> It must necessarily involve a continued effort to impose a future society which differed radically from its antecedents.

## V

Morris was of the opinion that positive change would not come painlessly; his historian, Hammond, asks rhetorically: “the world was being brought to its second birth; how could that take place without a tragedy?” (Nowhere 317). Wells concurred with this. His utopian and dystopian fictions share with both Jefferies’ After London and Morris’s News from Nowhere the idea of radical change -- social, economic, architectural, and topographical -- being born of massive disruption.<sup>34</sup> Wells clearly believed that apocalypse was necessary in bringing about the new world, but had no illusions about what that might mean in human terms. He created a war game with lead soldiers and spring-operated toy field guns, and in 1913 produced Little Wars, a book which detailed his game’s rules, strategies, and so forth. He wrote “how much better is this amiable miniature than the Real Thing,” since there are “no smashed nor sanguinary bodies” or devastation of property or landscape (97). As Little Wars suggests, wars and uprisings are not without cost and suffering, and Wells movingly describes a Prussian soldier dying in agony in a cornfield in The World Set Free (77). However, in The War That Will End War (1914), Wells offers the image of the Great War as a necessary war, a “war for peace” which “aims straight at disarmament” (11). Anticipating that the war will end in “a conference of the World” (35), and hoping for “a peace league that will control the globe” (62), Wells is clearly, if somewhat reluctantly, justifying the War as a means to an end.

In the last year of the War (1918) Wells offered, in his book In the Fourth Year, a glimpse of the new Jerusalem which would follow the apocalypse. He states that, despite the carnage, he had “never ... been so sure that there is a divinity in man and that a great order of human life, a reign of justice and world wide happiness ... lies close at hand” (Fourth Year 155). Wells was hoping here -- too optimistically, as it turned out -- that the proposed League of Nations might bring about that new reign, but one can see a principle here, that the various catastrophes and upheavals which precede utopia in his fiction are seen by him as unfortunate but necessary in creating the environment for real change.

Not all the agents of change are violent, but all bring about a break with the past. In Wells' In the Days of the Comet, the (benign) extra-human agent of change is the tail of a comet which narrowly misses earth; it has the effect of altering the chemical composition of the atmosphere, affecting people's attitudes.<sup>35</sup> Following a revolution in individual perspectives and a profound shift toward a community-oriented ethos, both the social-economic system and the infrastructure supporting it are massively restructured, resulting in global “fulness and pleasure of life” (201). In other texts, including A Modern Utopia, The World Set Free, and The Shape of Things to Come, however, the disruption that triggers the virtual rebirth of society is decidedly social in origin and attended by violence and/or suffering. In A Modern Utopia we know few specific details of what gave birth to the new society, but we do know that its

prime movers, the Samurai, must "have arisen amongst a clash of social forces and political systems as a [Utopian] revolutionary organisation" which, having become militant, overcame or assimilated competing organisations, to become "[the] synthesised World State" (155). In the other two texts, however, world war precedes the great change and brings about in each a period of 'barbarism' but without the extreme social regression found in Jefferies' After London.<sup>36</sup> In The World Set Free the discovery of atomic power in the 1930s precipitates unrest in that it revolutionizes industry, but "government and education" are pitifully inadequate for the situation and out of touch, tied to "the rusting traditions of hundreds of years ago" (54). The consequent unrest results in atomic warfare, seen by one of the guiding lights in the subsequent unified world as necessary since "civilization was very near disaster" before the war because "extreme individualism" was resulting in the exhaustion of natural resources and the allocation of "vaster and vaster amounts of power and energy on military preparations" (178). In The Shape of Things To Come years of warfare in the 1940s are succeeded by catastrophic starvation and disease, cutting the population from "two thousand million in 1930 to a little under half that in 1960" (213). In both these texts, there is neither a smooth nor an instant transition from the individualistic and nationalistic era of competition and disorder to the socialist and collectivist order of the World State. This is given particular emphasis in the latter text, in which stubborn resistance toward the world state effort results in a strict regime,

the "Air Dictatorship," which is eventually ousted by "the most gentle of all revolutions" (365) as the single world government disappears in favour of a loose confederation of the various "faculties" and "controls" which look after education, behaviour, food, and so forth (366). The process from the beginnings of the post-war Renaissance in 1965 to the disappearance of the Air Dictatorship takes almost a century—from 1965 to 2059. Clearly Wells is suggesting that the committed efforts of several generations may be necessary if Utopia is to be achieved. Even In the Days of the Comet emphasises the huge effort that goes into the demolition and rebuilding of the infrastructure of England (236-239).

What separates Wells' renaissances from Morris's Marxist ideas is not in the rebuilding work, however, but in the steering hands which organise and bring about the reconstruction, in the elites like the Air Dictatorship. Wells rejected the Morris/Marxist vision of a proletarian revolution which would inevitably – naturally – topple capitalism.<sup>37</sup> The utopias are not states which seem simply to have been happy effects of the freedoms emerging after revolution, as is apparently the case in Morris's text. Rather, they result from calculated effort, and the considered imposition of order onto muddle by skilled scientists, technicians, and managers. However, it is not only in the management of utopia where Wells differs from Morris, but also in the fact that, in coming into being, Wells' utopias also cleave the future from the past.

In many ways Wells believes that the utopian future requires the

severing of continuity; the Martians in The War of the Worlds jolt the British out of a complacent belief in progress and the bombs in The World Set Free shake people “out of their old-established habits of thoughts, and out of the lightly held beliefs and prejudices that came down to them from the past” (158). We have seen that Morris privileges the past or at least those aspects of the past centred in the life and architecture of the late-mediaeval era; his commercial activities, his literary output, and his ‘Anti-Scrape’ conservation efforts all attest to that. Wells, however, rejects Morris’s idealising of the late Middle Ages.<sup>38</sup> In The Shape of Things To Come, he criticizes the mediaeval masons whom Morris so admired for their supposed collectivism. The narrator states that the masons who “built those flimsy but often quite beautiful Gothic cathedrals it is now such a task to conserve” may have “interfered in local affairs in order to make jobs for themselves,” but have left “no sign that at any time they concerned themselves with the order and stability of the community as a whole. Their horizons were below that level of intelligence” (258). Moreover, for Wells, old buildings -- like old traditions -- are simply structures which stand for decay and disease and have to be destroyed. Wells’ apocalyptic vision requires the pioneers of the World State to “clean up the racial mind” (Shape 326) and the fabric of society must similarly be cleansed of its muddle and its inherited encumbrances; “mental disinfection” is augmented by “physical disinfection” (Shape 352-353) The forces of science and truth, which Tono-Bungay’s George

Ponderevo had associated with his warship, must destroy the old jumble. Consequently we are told by Willie in In the Days of the Comet, that, although a number of "great houses" are retained as the sites of communes and "pleasant places for the old people" (226), only "one building in five thousand" is *not* demolished to make way for new structures (236). The historian-narrator of The Shape of Things to Come laments the "immense loss of 'picturesqueness'" when functional buildings replaced "creeper-clad cottages and houses, old decaying stone and brick town halls, market houses [and] churches," but implies that the destruction was a necessary price to pay for the eradication of a number of "infectious diseases" (353).<sup>39</sup>

Wells' attitude to the past also differed from that of Jefferies. Jefferies valued continuity with the past, particularly in terms of the rural environment. Selectively at least he mourned the passing of old traditions and customs, and he felt a strong sense of connection with the people of the distant past through their burial mounds and earthworks. None of this is the case with Wells. Wells' antipathy to those traits which he believed were inherited from our distant ancestors precluded any positive feeling of connection with 'primitive' forebears, and, as we have seen, he believed that there would be no place for rural life or traditional agriculture in the future. It was too irregular and inconsistent, a part of the past which ought to be jettisoned.

In Wells' first complete utopia, A Modern Utopia, however, the

past is not so much jettisoned as remodelled. Wells writes that we cannot “liberate ourselves” from our personal history -- “our past, even its accidents,...and ourselves, are one” (152). He personally finds it impossible to summon “the power to resist the causation of the past” which he deemed necessary for the proposal of a utopia early in the text (7). The Utopia itself, however, has avoided being entangled by its past, and *is* somewhat liberated from it, because Wells gives it a revised and more positive version of Earth’s history. Those “persons of extraordinary character and mental gifts” who suffered, died or had no opportunity to exploit their abilities on earth have been luckier in Utopia, so that “Jesus Christ...[was] born into a liberal and progressive Roman Empire...[which] was to know no Decline and Fall” (154). It is a rewriting of history, a facetious fictionalizing of the past as Wells might have preferred it, and prefigures his imposition of a pattern on the *real* history of Earth in The Outline of History. The perfected past in A Modern Utopia has led to “the World State in Utopia” (154) just as Wells’ Outline was designed to lead to a World State in reality. T.H.Huxley had suggested that we shape our destiny by defying cosmic or evolutionary forces, and that civilization itself demonstrates humanity’s “command over the course of non-human nature” in his “artificial world within the cosmos” (Evolution and Ethics 83-84). Wells takes that suggestion a step further in creating a World State where individuality is artificially balanced with uniformity and “progress [combined] with political stability” (Modern Utopia 160).

Believing that biological and social history both chronicle the inevitability of change, so that, post-Darwin, "the modern Utopia must be not static, but Kinetic" (Modern Utopia 5), Wells -- like Huxley's gardener in the "Prolegomena" in Evolution and Ethics -- seeks to create the artificial conditions necessary for promoting particular growth. However, his desire that Utopia be ruled by an entrenched elite has an air of the totalitarianism of the One Party System, despite the insistence by the double whom the narrator encounters that the Samurai are not "an exclusive caste" (176). The tendency would therefore seem to be towards homogeneity and stasis, not towards change and individuality. This is confirmed by the narrator's plea for world peace on Earth through shared languages and common institutions (207), although he recognizes that Edwardian nationalism makes it "too much for the contemporary mind" and thus "but dream stuff yet" (208). In fact, it is so much "dream stuff" that he has had to rewrite the world's history to have it occur in Utopia. If it therefore evolved due to a specific set of circumstances which did not develop on Earth, how then could this Utopia ever emerge in the real world without its being imposed rather than evolving organically? If the real world is "a vast disorder of accidents and incalculable forces" (80) how might any genuine Utopia arise within any workable World State? Wells' answer is that it would not arise organically, but that a specific set of circumstances would enable a perceptive and unselfish elite to seize power, essentially. Wells wrote in his autobiography of "the handicapped

intelligence of our species, blundering heavily toward the realization of vast changes and still vaster dangers and opportunities" (Experiment, 1, 135). The Shape of Things to Come depicts a future in which that handicapped intelligence has been guided away from disaster and toward efficiency. However, almost thirty years passed between the writing of A Modern Utopia, and the publishing of The Shape of Things to Come. During that time an apocalyptic war made the need for world government seem even more pressing. In searching for justification for that world government, and for assurance that it was a possibility, Wells turned to history.

## VI

In The Days of the Comet the providential effect of the passage near Earth of the celestial body is to make a latent and noble "Spirit of Man" universal. However, it does not create the spirit, since it has always been visible in infrequent "glowing moments" in ourselves and others, and in reports of "rare and remarkable" demonstrations of "how fine mankind could be" (160). This prefigures analogically Wells' The Outline of History which suggests that world unity within one State is not a new idea, but can be seen flickering intermittently throughout recorded history. In The Outline of History Wells' emphasis on the need to subjugate the animal in human nature, and his creation of fictional templates for the future in which 'natural' social and biological evolution has been supplanted by controlled growth, are complemented by his attempt to

impose a particular future-oriented structure on the past through narrative.

The control or obviating of nature and the patterning of the past are both integral to Wells' utopian visions in which the new world order which emerges is equally well described as a new ordered world. In his recent (1999) article "The Past Is Another Country," historian A.P. Thornton writes that "the historical profession, like others, has a bias nobody lists as such: a bias towards order itself" (512). This is particularly true of Wells who, though not an academic historian, did write two popular history books and gave an historical dimension to some of his other work.<sup>40</sup> Wells ordered past events to offer a particular version of history which suggested that there had been numerous attempts at global unification in the past which, while failing due to internal flaws or external pressures, nevertheless foreshadowed the successful world order to come.

Although it is difficult to isolate any particular component of his thinking as either dominant or catalytic it is evident that the historical perspective which Wells obtained relatively early in his career had a profound effect on his work. In the introductory portion of The Outline of History (1920) he writes that he "has always been preoccupied with history as one whole and with the general forces that make history," having kept "notebooks on historical reading" since being "a science student"(2). His emphasis on the scientific thinking which emerges in his

utopias merges with his historical perspective in his criticism elsewhere that historians often tended to pay insufficient attention to the importance of science and technology: "At the advent of steam and electricity the muse of history holds her nose and shuts her eyes" as she does to "modern means of communication" and their effects (Fourth Year 100). Wells consequently wrote a history which paid attention to scientific and technological progress and, more essentially, embodied a foundation for, and a foreshadowing of, the pattern or narrative he wanted to impose on the future.<sup>41</sup> This is evident throughout The Outline of History, a text which uses historiography as a vehicle for propaganda, promoting the concept of world government by categorizing instances of imperial expansion and collapse as abortive attempts at 'world unity.' In fact, he states that it had its very origins in a plan to write "a general review of European unity" (3). As Michael Coren writes in his (largely negative) biography: "Wells saw history as confirming his predictions and hopes for the future" in that The Outline of History focuses on elites coming to power just as "in the future the Samurai ... would inevitably take over" (The Invisible Man 155). Consequently the Outline is something of a paradox in that, despite its global breadth and temporal depth (300 million years, in effect), it is an end-oriented and consequently partisan vision of historical event. Ironically, given Wells' criticisms of Karl Marx, one could compare it to the historical portions of Das Kapital insofar as it offers a reading of the past intended, in important ways, to justify his anticipations

concerning the future. Wells may have been an elitist, and been much more specific about the mechanics of Utopia than Marx or even Morris. However, like both these visionaries and, differently, Jefferies, he found in the past the material for the future.

Like Jefferies, Wells is critical of Marxist historicism and the socialist emphasis on the proletariat as the mainspring of change. However, Wells promoted the science, technology and urbanism which threatened the very rural continuity which Jefferies valued. Although one cannot know what new society would emerge from After London's simple, non-industrial, society, one can assume that it would not be led by the scientists and technologists who shape the future in Wells' visions. Like Morris, Wells' particular vision of the past and its continued unfolding shaped his fiction of the future. However, Morris's pre-industrial and communist *Nowhere* partially resurrects the past whereas Wells' interest in history is for its foreshadowing of the future, not for particular aspects of past life worth reviving or replicating. Morris, in promoting particular visions of history in his articles and lectures alongside his overtly fictional work, demonstrates in himself a connection between historical discourse and fictional narrative. Wells, in writing two popular history books, demonstrates this connection to a much greater degree.

Implying a self-consciousness of himself as novelist and historian, and affirming that contributing to historical discourse and writing novels are related activities, Wells remarks that "there is a natural and necessary

connection between the great novel of the English type and history” (Outline 1044), suggesting that Thomas Hardy offers “another instance of the close affinity of the great novelist to the *interpretative* [my italics] historian” (1045). Wells is here anticipating a topic which surfaced in discussions of the philosophy of history long after his death.<sup>42</sup> More significantly for the purposes of this present thesis, his status as both novelist and popular historian makes him the apotheosis of that “close affinity.” Wells observed in the 1933 Preface to his romances that he had a “predisposition to make [his] stories reflect upon contemporary political and social discussions” (repr. in H. G. Wells Literary Criticism 242), and his sociopolitical critique is certainly a factor in all his work, fiction and non-fiction. It is particularly true of The Outline of History; he states, “what are a man’s political activities but the expression in action of his idea of the past?” (Outline 3). However, one may adapt this proposition to say that Wells’ Outline actually *imposes* his politics *on* the past. Moreover, one must factor Wells’ scientific perspective into the close relationship between the writing of fiction and of history which his work manifests. While one might expect that the rationalism of science and the imagination of the novelist would cancel each other out, they find synthesis in Wells’ view of human history as evolutionary struggle and in his vision of the future as needing the guiding and organizing hand that the past lacked. Wells wrote novels in which the mindless force of evolution is a powerful presence that offers no guarantees.<sup>43</sup> He also

wrote history texts that recounted the story of humanity's evolutionary growth but with a historicism which was conditioned by his scientific will-to-order. Wells recognised the arbitrary nature of historical event but imaginatively and selectively ordered that random raw material to construct a narrative which justified his vision of an ordered future within a World State, and offered examples of past hypertrophic attempts to bring about universal order and unity which had failed through being premature and/or flawed. Wells' efforts were aimed at ensuring that the world of the future enjoyed the benefits of a pervasive but equitable global order which the past had lacked.

Unfortunately, the model Wells constructed for his utopia -- a society, and ultimately a world, governed by a cultured and incorruptible elite -- was faulty. It had its origins in a mistaken nostalgia for a decayed rural feudalism, and in the belief that both atavism and the potential for terminally destructive change in society -- which the blindness and moral neutrality of cosmic evolutionary forces implied -- could be negated in a society ruled by a technocracy. His nostalgia for a relatively recent past and his positing of an evolution-defying elite as a solution to social problems, are connected in that the elite is modelled on an idealized or perfected rural aristocracy. The need for, and inevitability of, such an elite is further justified historically in Wells' Outline. However, in that his conception rests in part on the supposed existence of a wise and cultured rural elite whose country houses beneficially controlled the

surrounding area, his thinking was flawed. It was analogous to a traveller who, viewing some free-standing and disintegrating gothic arch, imagines the castle which may once have stood there. Like Morris, Wells formulated a utopia informed by a skewed perception of the past.

Wells' The Outline of History , both in its original form and in its abbreviated format as A Short History of the World (1922), goes beyond reportage and informed analysis into the realms of the political tract. The Shape of Things to Come has its inner narrative described as a "Sibylline" book by its frame narrator (4). In many ways, the Outline is also a Sibylline chronicle in that its subtext is the future, not the past, and is an important plank in Wells' utopian platform. It attempts to justify Wells' particular conception of the future by seeing it as determined by the past. As he writes in A Short History, "it is impossible for us to guess or foretell how many generations of humanity may have to live before the dawn of the great peace, to which all history seems to be pointing, ends our night of wasteful and aimless living" (240). This great peace will only be accomplished within a global unity and is essential to the survival of the species: "world controls of political and economic life and of the general biology of the species have to be organized if human life is still to go on" (293). The British have to quell their jingoism and school themselves "willingly and unwillingly, to world democracy and world fellowship, lest worse betide us all" (294). World government, international controls, the biological management of humanity: Wells' familiar shibboleths are

justified by the direction of history.

The Outline of History clearly sets this out. Beginning with a lengthy delineation of the planet's origins, the beginning of life and the evolution of humanity, it becomes in part a propagandist text with world unity as its object, and in part an effort to educate prejudice out of the ignorant or naive. In terms of the latter point, Wells wants to support science and technology, and offer an alternative to the sort of anti-industrialism which we have seen in the work of Morris and Jefferies. Separating out the economic from the technological in his discussion of the Industrial Revolution, he privileges the latter because, as machines replaced people for mechanical tasks, so workers ceased to be valued purely for muscle and began to be wanted as "human beings" who required education to maximise their usefulness (805-806).

Wells' main thrust, however, is toward world unity. Alexander the Great was, according to Wells, "for some generations...the symbol and embodiment of world order and world dominion" (315). From the time of the Hebrew prophets, in fact, "there runs through human thought, now weakly and obscurely, now gathering power, the idea of one rule in the world, and of a promise and possibility of an active and splendid peace and happiness in human affairs" (228). Similarly, all the great religions after 600 B.C. preached a form of world unity, that "the hearts of men, and therewith all the lives and institutions of men, must be subdued to one common Will ruling them all" (451). But a common Will in control was not

sufficient in Wells' view, and the Roman Empire -- a secular model of fledgling world unity -- foundered partly because of its failure to give its citizens what England failed to give Kipps and Polly: education: "There was a need of an organized teaching of the history, of the main laws, and of the general intentions of the State toward everyone" (401). Other subsequent imperial attempts are also catalogued by Wells, including the Mongols', the Arabs' and the Church's. Like the Romans, they were all unable to gain complete control of the world. The ultimately successful, Wellsian, World Empire remains for the future.

Wells is even able to conceive of his own mission as anti-imperialist since a united and homogeneous world, having no nation, would inevitably not generate nationalism.<sup>44</sup> Standing in the way of world unity is blinkered patriotism and xenophobia, so Wells' histories are also attacks on the nationalisms which were concomitant with nineteenth and early twentieth-century imperialism. He suggests that there was a mythologising of nationalism from which imperialism grew; and suggests that nationalism and imperialism are enabled partly because "people in general" have not had "the sweeping views that a study of world history can give" (Outline 825). He makes a similar point in the Short History:

There was but a shallow historical background to the European mind in the nineteenth century. ... The quite temporary advantages that the mechanical revolution in the West had given Europeans over the rest of the Old World were regarded by people, blankly

ignorant of such events as the Mongol conquests, as evidences of a permanent and assured European leadership of mankind. ...

They believed that there was some innate intellectual drive in the West and some innate indolence and conservatism in the East, that assured the Europeans a world predominance for ever. (254)

Clearly Wells is suggesting that a knowledge of history, or of his type of history, would dispel some of the orientalist myths about European superiority which had supported the inequities of modern imperialism. As always, he is chipping away at the obstacles which he perceives lie between the present and a future world unity within a World State. He believed it to be the only alternative to the disappearance of civilization which he had described so chillingly in The Time Machine, or even to the quirks of overly-specialised evolution which, in The War of the Worlds, has reduced Martians to huge heads, and which has left the ant-like Selenites in The First Men in the Moon with "neither ideas nor organs for any purpose" other than their individual niche in the "world machine" (171-172). The only viable future lay in universal unity within world government. However, the possibility of that happening imminently through a League of Nations receded significantly in the same year in which The Outline of History was published, 1920, when the Senate of the United States refused to support a move for the United States to join the fledgling League (Thomson 636-644). In the early 1930s, with one Communist and two Fascist dictatorships burgeoning in Europe, Wells

wrote his last fully-realised utopia, and in so-doing, made the fusion of novelist and historian complete.

Whereas in A Modern Utopia Wells had described a fully-formed Utopia in a parallel world and then sketched in its history, in The Shape of Things to Come he describes the historical process by which a utopian world state is created in the future. The fact that Wells' frame narrator describes the inner narrative as an "Outline of the Future" (14) connects it to Wells' own Outline of the past; indeed, they serve the same purpose in their dissemination of Wells' ideas of a World State. In the text Wells' inner narrator, Philip Raven, is critical of formulaic history texts which provide names and a chronology but fail "to give any sense of the historical process" (56). What Raven produces is a history which discusses and evaluates rather than simply relates, a characteristic also true of Wells' formal histories. Furthermore Raven formulates a theory of what the historical process actually is insofar as he states that "the essential and permanent conflict in life is a conflict between the past and the future, between the accomplished past and the forward effort," which is both "biological" and social in that it "runs through all history" (40). While this suggests that Wells viewed history as a sort of Oedipal dialectic, it also supports a reading of the Outline as the continuing struggle of the World State to assert itself against various forms of established order. At the same time Raven also maintains that Marxism failed because of Marx's simplistic belief in post-capitalist society as so

inherently good that it needed no planning -- a fact which forced the USSR to flounder away from the "general world experiment" and towards crippling Stalinist dogmatism. The inference, of course, is that any new world needs a new plan -- something provided by Wells in both A Modern Utopia and The Shape of Things to Come itself.

The Shape of Things to Come is related to, and given an illusion of authenticity by, actual historical event in that it begins with, and refers to, the immediate past, including World War One. In A Modern Utopia, as stated earlier, Wells provided a sort of alternative and favourable version of world history to enable one to imagine how a utopia might have actually existed in 1905. Part of Wells' purpose in that history was no doubt ironic, and designed to implicitly criticize the "individualism, democratic liberalism and anarchism" (Modern Utopia 155) which had actually emerged in the real world. What Wells is doing in The Shape of Things to Come is to write a history of the future, growing out of past and present, which culminates in utopia. In ending in 2106 it also conforms to the two hundred years which Masterman estimates in Kipps will be necessary before the "universal confusion" gives way to something new and better (Kipps 208). The "confusion" in The Shape of Things to Come is manifest in the intense warfare which precipitated the "definite and so a realisable plan" from which the vision of the World State eventually takes shape (241). The new elite required to implement that plan emerges from the ranks of, not professional politicians, but those "engineers, industrialists

and professors of physical science" (258) who have been influenced by theories of social conditioning which suggest that the self is constructed, not innate (246). The World State works partly because its early controllers have used education as an avenue for propaganda in order to "establish a complete new ideology" which made "the Modern State ... the whole duty of man" and prevented "a relapse through chaotic barbarism to animal casualness to extinction" (387). Unfortunately the concomitant belief that adolescents need to be educated for the specific purpose of being good (World State) citizens (250) is suggestive of the Hitler Youth, and one of the theorists who inspires the World State, De Windt, points to "Nazis, Fascists [and] Communist Party Members" as the "first primitive intimations of the greater organization" in having "the spirit of an elite class" which they unfortunately wasted (250 - 251). Wells' attempt to offer a possible blueprint for optimising humanity's future is therefore encumbered by his insistence on envisaging past efforts at empire-building as the foreshadowing of a new benign global imperialism designed to benefit all humanity. Consequently, even *after* the rise to power of apostles of order like Stalin and Mussolini, Wells still remained committed to his vision, regarding these malignant attempts at imposing one rigid system on large areas of the world as warped or inadequate antecedents of the eventual and viable World State. This ignores the reality that those attempts at bringing large parts of the globe within the purview of one power have generally been motivated by the ambition of

that imperial power, regardless of whatever particular myth has arisen to justify it. Wells' vision of the World State is simply another mission which, so far, has apparently not had a sufficiently powerful myth to bring about its fruition.

Like the titular object in his short story "The Crystal Egg," Wells' novels offer a window into a "visionary world," (Tales 103). Inevitably, however, the vision dimmed. In an Afterword to the updated Short History completed shortly before he died, and which he essentially repeated in Mind at the End of its Tether (1945), Wells firmly argued that "world controls of political and social life and of the general biology of the species have to be organised if human life is to go on" (Short History 292). He stressed that humanity must "adapt or perish" according to "nature's inexorable imperative" (296). Unfortunately, at this point he seemed to believe that only "a small adaptable minority" (302), representing *homo sapiens* "at his best," could possibly survive (303). Two World Wars had forced Wells' utopias out of the world of realistic possibility and into the realm of fantasy, and apparently edged his expectations in the same general post-apocalyptic direction as Jefferies' After London and Huxley's dystopian Ape and Essence.

In Wells' final reckoning, then, it is only the best humans, the Samurai, who will survive. Despite his best efforts at advocating social and biological control, "nature's inexorable imperative" lurks at the gate. The idea of enslaving the force of evolution -- eradicating our animal

nature and moulding a positive and collectively-minded human 'nature' -- exercised Wells' mind but our animal nature had been to the fore in the carnage of two global conflicts. Apparently only "the curious, ... teachable and experimental" (Short History 304) were going to be adaptable enough to rise above and not go "steeply down" with the rest (296). Ironically, those whom Wells had hoped would manage the post-apocalyptic world would now be the only ones in it. Events had simply conspired against Wells' utopian vision by the time he wrote this, apparently pessimistic, piece.

It is in Wells' awareness that modern imperialism was counter-productive, and his simultaneous belief in a World State as both saviour of society and moulder of humanity, that his ideas deconstruct themselves. The Outline of History is careful to draw a distinction between early conceptions of a unified world state and the imperialism which was rampant in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries: "The new empires did not even pretend to be a continuation of the world empire of Rome. They had lost the last connection between the idea of the empire and the peace of the world" (825). This seems to beg the question as far as imperialism is concerned, however. Wells' utopias and histories, noble in intent though they were, failed to fully recognize that attempts at world or part-world domination all tend to have an element of self-interest and have dangerous ramifications, circumstances emphasized by the totalitarian excesses of the twentieth century. Wells'

vision of a world cured of nationalism and its militaristic excesses would require some sort of global pan-nationalism to bring it into being, one in which will-to-power and imperialistic economic expansion would be replaced by an efficient supra-national and altruistic drive toward world unity and peace. It is true that the E.C. may be seen as a movement in that direction, a federation of individual states with a limited central 'government' in Brussels. NATO and the United Nations (the latter a more successful descendant of the League of Nations of which Wells had been an advocate), may, on one level, be seen as evidencing a movement toward the centralization of efforts designed to ensure world peace. But these efforts stop well short of world government and, particularly in the case of the U.N., rely on consensus within the collective will of its members -- a consensus which is not always forthcoming. If a form of world unity is to come, it seems as likely to be the result of that spread of liberal democracy facilitating a safe market-place for corporate capitalism which Francis Fukuyama has identified, as it is to be from the rise to power of an altruistic elite.<sup>45</sup>

Wells based his hopes for the future partly on a particular analysis of the past which he used to foreshadow his vision of the future. Besides the proleptic efforts at world unity which he identified, he also looked to the past to provide a basic paradigm for his Samurai. The class of leisured aristocrats who, outside of Plato's Republic, were Wells' models for his world-governing elites, are not necessarily exemplars of altruism,

however. The library at Up Park, and the gentry's leisure to read its texts and philosophize, were the fruits of exploiting others. Their interest in an orderly tenantry and peasantry may have partly ensured contentment across their domain, but was rooted in self-interest. It was based in the power that was theirs to exercise, and which was (superficially at least) eroded by democracy as much as replaced by the vulgar commercialism of Tono-Bungay. If the reverse movement occurred, and a distinct and disinterested elite, a meritocracy subject to strict rules, moved into a position of power which was *not* subject to democratic election, why would that power not encourage corruption and exploitation? And if so, how long would it be before Wells' brave new world order became Aldous Huxley's Brave New World?

[1] In imagining utopia as a place of consistent order, system and careful planning, Wells follows in the path of More and his original Utopia in which, for instance, the “fifty-four splendid big towns” share identical “language, laws and customs” and are “all built on the same plan” (More 70).

[2] In When the Sleeper Wakes the sleeper–Graham–thinks of the civil war that rages as one between “multitudes dulled by mindless labour and enervated by the tradition of two hundred years of servile security” and “multitudes demoralised by lives of venial privilege and sensual indulgence” (172). In A Story of the Days to Come the impoverished Denton finds himself working amongst the labouring classes; he thinks of “the monstrous fraud of civilization” as “a vast lunatic growth, producing a deepening torrent of savagery below, and above ever more flimsy gentility and silly wastefulness” (191). The potential for an Eloi/Morlock divide is clearly in place.

[3] Wells’ forebodings concerning regression were shared by a number of his contemporaries. For a comprehensive account of the biological, sociological, and pseudo-scientific theories underpinning notions of degeneration and their effect on the work of selected novelists, (including Conrad, Hardy and Conan Doyle) see William Greenslade, Degeneration, Culture and the Novel 1880-1940. Particularly interesting is his brief discussion of the Morlocks in The Time Machine in terms of fears that “sub-races” of degenerates might, in their “successful adaptation” to conditions, manage a sort of “degraded fitness” (39). Furthermore, although Greenslade’s chapter on Lombroso and his theories of hereditary criminal tendencies (88-119) does not mention Wells, it has obvious implications for the eugenics of A Modern Utopia. For a useful, if necessarily more circumscribed, overview of the “urgent interest in regression, atavism and decline” (111), see David Trotter, The English Novel in History 1895-1920, 111-127.

[4] Wells attended the Normal School of Science, of which Huxley was Dean, from 1884-1887. He later described his year-long period of study under Huxley as “the most educational year of my life” (Experiment, Vol. 1, 186). Kumar suggests that Huxley’s Evolution and Ethics virtually contains all “the central tenets of Wells’ philosophy, maintained to the end of his life” (Utopia and Anti-Utopia 177). There is some irony in this, to the extent that in the 1894 “Prolegomena” to the published Evolution and Ethics Huxley makes it clear that the achievement of utopia is only a very remote possibility; given human failings and intellectual limitations “the prospect of attaining untroubled happiness, or of a state which can, even remotely, deserve the title of perfection, appears to me to be as misleading an illusion as ever was dangled before the eyes of poor humanity” (44).

[5] In one of a number of playfully self-referential comments in Wells' fiction, the narrator of The War of the Worlds (1898) actually refers to the article, remembering it as by "a certain scientific writer of quasi-scientific repute" (120). Although remarking on its "foolish, facetious tone," he concludes that "many a true word is written in jest" and speculates that the Martians might actually have evolved from humans, having lost their "emotional substratum" once their brains grew sufficiently for their bodies to become obsolete (121).

[6] In the Conclusion to The Origin of Species Darwin had, somewhat ambiguously, remarked that "natural selection works solely by and for the good of each being" so that "all corporeal and mental endowments tend to progress toward perfection" (459). "Perfection" inevitably implies some sort of quantifiable progress. This, together with Darwin's belief that "the struggle for existence" is both natural and a confirmation of Malthusian doctrine (Origin 117), provided a basis for the "belief in progress through struggle" from which "the ideology of so-called Social Darwinism" grew (Young, Victorian Crisis, 29). However, elsewhere in his text Darwin had acknowledged in a discussion of extinction that it would be a presumption to imagine "that we understand the many complex contingencies on which the existence of each species depends" (Origin 325). This idea of contingency, and the fact that the traits which separate the successful organisms from the unsuccessful ones are those which have "*chanced to arise*" [my italics] and "better adapted them to ... altered conditions" (Origin 131), lies behind Wells' distrust of nature and belief that humanity's future lay with planning rather than providence.

[7] Kumar suggests that the novel is a "biting comment on both the hyper-industrial civilization of Bellamy's Looking Backward and the post-industrial pastoral idyll of Morris's New from Nowhere" (Utopia and Anti-Utopia 182). More generally, Raymond Williams writes of the novel that Wells' "sombre vision of man divided into brute labour and trivial consumption" is "the counterpart of Morris's gentler and more idyllic vision" (Country 274).

[8] For the omitted section, see the version in Three Prophetic Science Fiction Novels of H.G. Wells, 325-327.

[9] Hyde represents the evil half of "the thorough and primitive duality of man" which, in Jekyll, is normally kept in balance (Stevenson 117). Brutal, dedicated only to self-interest and self-satisfaction, Hyde is described variously as "hardly human" (51) and "like a monkey" (95). Conrad's Marlow, despite routinely referring to native Africans as savages, and equating them with "prehistoric man," recalls being "thrilled" by the thought of "their humanity—like ... [his]— the thought of ... [his] remote kinship" with them. This echoes Prendick's reaction to the Leopard Man; he feels an unexpected sympathy for it when, despite its "perfectly animal attitude," he "realise[s] again the fact of its humanity" (92).

[10] In Moreau's beast-people's intoning of 'the Law,' it seems likely that Wells was parodying Baloo's presentation of the Law of the Jungle in Rudyard Kipling's anthropomorphic The Jungle Book. See Robert L. Platzner, "H.G. Wells' Jungle Book: The Influence of Kipling on the Island of Dr. Moreau." Victorian Newsletter 36 (1969), 19-22.

[11] Both texts evoke a similar and disturbing form of husbandry. The artilleryman in The War of the Worlds anticipates that the lot of those humans who do not resist the Martians will be "Nice roomy cages, fattening food [and] careful breeding" (148). Similarly the Time Traveller compares the Eloi to "the cattle of the field" (Time Machine 79). R. J. Dingley, in "Count Dracula and the Martians," notes the shared quality of these two sets of relationships (Victorian Fantasists 15-16). Again, too, humanity is represented in terms of animal imagery, in this case that of domestic animals.

[12] John Batchelor, in his H. G. Wells, labels Masterman "a brilliant articulate socialist" (50). However, while it is true that he writes "'for the Commonweal sometimes'" (Kipps 201), Masterman dismisses socialists as having "'no imagination to make use'" of socialism and does not see socialism as providing any answers "'for a couple of centuries,'" if at all (208).

[13] It should be acknowledged, however, that when Polly has to make a choice between fighting Uncle Jim or leaving his new-found Eden he chooses the former (154-156).

[14] Kumar refers to it as "Wells's sunniest novel" (178), which misleadingly implies an unqualified happiness pervading the text. Batchelor writes that while the novel is a political novel it is also "as utopian as A Modern Utopia" locating that utopia in "a past which is rural and arcadian" (86). Batchelor maintains the novel speaks for "rural continuity" (89) and for an "unobtrusive rural England which continues and remains delightful" (91). I would agree with this to a point, particularly as regards the text's utopian aspect. Batchelor's emphasis on rural continuity also has merit, particularly if one bases it on Wells's first chapter and its celebration of rural England's features such as its "farms and ricks and great barns and ancient trees" (14). However, the ending is more ambiguous than that, as I have indicated above, and is a depiction of the calming or even deluding effect of the rural scene on the mind rather than a confirmation of that scene's integral value or robust continuity. Undercutting a past rural England in a slightly different but equally ambiguous fashion is Wells's depiction of the bad-mannered and insensitive Uncle Pentstemon who is like a "fragment from the ruder agricultural past of our race, like a lump of soil amongst things of paper" (45). The uncle is thus simultaneously positive in being something more substantial than moderns, and negative in his surliness and lack of tact, demonstrated at Polly's father's funeral

when he calls the bereaved Polly “puny” and complains about the coffin lid being nailed down (45-46).

[15] In The New Machiavelli Richard Remington says of Edwardian England: “It was muddle that had just given us the still painful disaster of the [Boer] war, muddle that gives us the visibly sprawling disorder of our cities and industrial countryside, [and] muddle that gives us the waste of life, the limitations, wretchedness and unemployment of the poor” (141)

[16] In his efforts to appropriate history for profit Teddy Ponderovo is not too far removed from the commodification of history discussed by the late Raphael Samuel in Theatres of Memory (1994) and recently satirized by Julian Barnes in England, England (1998).

[17] Wells was familiar with Jefferies’ work. In the essay “The Amateur Nature-Lover” (1897) he appears to parody Jefferies’ work and refers to himself as a “Cockney Jefferies” (Certain Personal Matters 172). Furthermore, Wells’s tells us that his father read Jefferies (Experiment 154)

[18] In the parallel world of A Modern Utopia people have been classified according to four “classes of mind”: the Poietic, the Kinetic, the Dull, and the Base (157). These divisions are not absolute, and a person may be a blend of more than one. The Dull are the unimaginative, the unintelligent, and the incompetent. The Base are the cruel, the ego-centric, the untrustworthy, and the immoral. The Kinetic are trustworthy and capable, but not innovators. The Poietic are creative and experimental, and “the forms of the human future must come ... through men of this same type,” so their activities “should be unhampered and stimulated” (158). The Samurai class contains both poietic (creative) and kinetic (administrative) elements but stresses “the importance of poietic activities” in its members (163). The dull (inadequate) and base (criminal) classes are effectively excluded from membership of the Samurai and will virtually disappear through education and eugenics as the Samurai gradually “assimilate almost the whole population of the earth” (176).

[19] By tribalism, I simply mean group-specific partisanship or prejudice, including class bias, ethnocentrism, nationalism, and so on. In The World Set Free, for instance, support for a devastating war is built on the “outworn traditions” which encourage identification with a particular state. Bolstered by a “vast insane [nationalist] literature” and with a continuity that stretches back to “primitive man” and “tribal warfare,” it is fanned into flames once the uneducated “common man” has his “vacant mind” filled with “the sounds and fury of exasperated suspicion and national aggression” (World 58).

[20] This is somewhat ambiguous. It may be that Wells means by ‘order’ here

something like the 'balance of Nature' or even simply 'facts.' Otherwise his statement is problematic in that it seems to negate the possibility that randomness -- the chance inherent in natural selection -- is the natural condition of things, while also asserting that both science and socialism share a faith in co-operation as a means of *overcoming* chance. It is as if Wells is suggesting here that one can in some way negate the accidental quality of existence by discovering in it a core of order.

[21] For the disastrous effects of collectivization on the Soviet peasantry, and the "barbarous fantasy" of the Five Year Plan, see Paul Johnson, Modern Times, 268-274.

[22] In A Modern Utopia the Samurai must take "yearly pilgrimages beyond the securities of the State" to "secluded reserves of forest" and so forth, to be "alone with Nature, necessity, and their own thoughts" (178-179).

[23] This is also the situation in When the Sleeper Wakes, similarly published in 1899 and describing a society very like that in A Story of the Days to Come. Only five major cities exist in Britain, and house the whole population; agricultural workers come hurrying home "to the city" at night "to leave it in the morning" (95).

[24] This separation between humanity and nature, and city and country, is echoed and satirized by both Eugene Zamiatin and Aldous Huxley. Zamiatin's We is, in part, a reaction to Wells' vision(s) of utopia, with its United State being a counterpart to Wells' World State. The society of the United State is separated from the natural world by a Green Wall, behind which its people have "isolated [their] machine-like, perfect world from the irrational ugly world of trees, birds, and beasts" (We 89). In the synthetic environment of Huxley's Brave New World the urban masses are conditioned to "hate the country" and the "love of nature is abolished" (19).

[25] See the recent collection of papers debating the issue in Evolutionary Origins of Morality: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives, ed. Leonard D. Katz.

[26] See Norman and Jeanne MacKenzie's biography of Wells, The Time Traveller, and their comment that he was convinced "that the only hope of ultimate survival lay in finding a means of escape from the laws of evolution" (378). See also Kumar's remark that Wells, like T. H. Huxley, saw "victory of man over nature ... as the only hopeful possibility for mankind" (Utopia and Anti-Utopia 219). For an argument that Thomas Huxley believed that "cosmic nature must be overcome" while Wells believed "it must be harnessed," see Leon Stover, "Applied Natural History: Wells vs. Huxley." H.G. Wells Under Revision, 125-133.

[27] There are one or two exceptions. In the Days of the Comet, although clean and planned cities replace the old polluted urban and industrial patchworks, there are apparently also some picturesque villages “half-forest with a brawl of streams down their streets” with “roses and wonderful flowers and the perpetual humming of bees” (200). The picture-book idyll or fantasy that this suggests, one of perpetual summer, foreshadows Mr. Polly’s contented sojourn in the environs of the Potwell Inn. It suggests the rural landscape as nostalgia, rather than life.

[28] The World Set Free offers an exception in that there is a Nowhere-like phase in the early decades of the World Republic. The “vast mass of people” exhibit a “long-smothered passion to make things” and there is an outburst of “aesthetic making” (155). Commenting obliquely on the inadequate housing of his own era Wells notes that, before the atomic war, the “uncomfortable [and] dingy” urban houses and their tiny gardens still contained attempts at aesthetic expression, “witnessing the old buried instincts that struggled up towards the light” (156). In suggesting that the drive to express ourselves artistically is at least latent in most of us, and that it is an “instinct,” Wells apparently echoes Morris. Quite where he thinks this instinct might originate, he does not say. What he does state is that “there is no natural life of man” because we are “a sheath of varied and even incompatible possibilities, a palimpsest of inherited dispositions” (155). This suggests that any individual is a mix of potential and inherited traits, capable of being reshaped, which would seem to deny an essentiality to human nature-- what Wells means by “no natural life of man.” However, he also goes on to suggest that the “moral and mental” changes which take place in this utopia are not new but emerging from “elements in his nature that have hitherto been suppressed” (like the desire for artistic expression) and that the striking moral differences between particular classes--or widely separated generations--of a particular race demonstrate “the versatile possibilities of human nature” (157-158). It would seem, then, that by “human nature” in this text he really means something like ‘the field of human possibilities,’ and by ‘instinct’ he means nothing natural -- animal -- *per se*, but rather an inherited but relatively dormant and particularly human quality which can appear when given the appropriate environment. This would seem to be more complex than Morris’s idea that the human impulse toward aesthetic expression is simply natural.

[29] It is a point somewhat reminiscent of that made by Jefferies in “One of the New Voters” and elsewhere, that the aesthetic beauty which the harvest scene offers the leisured spectator has a different reality from those forced to work in it to make a living: “behind these beautiful aspects comes the reality of human labour--hours upon hours of heat and strain; there comes the reality of a rude life and in the end little enough of gain” (The Open Air 98).

[30] For example, he expected that the criminal classes and other “inferior” types would be whittled away by eugenics. In addition, unwanted pregnancies would be

radically reduced by universal family planning and there would be an increased responsibility of the State to children; the State would eventually have to be “the reserve guardian of all children,” and step in should the parents be failing in, or unable to fulfill, their obligations (Anticipations 268).

[31] Wells would presumably not have seen his position that way. In The Outline of History he complains of a “crude misunderstanding of Darwinism” (821) which is used as a license by “the big dogs of the human pack [to] bully and subdue” (822). Although Wells is discussing Kipling’s Stalky and Co. and relating it to the “ugly idea” of imperialism (821), the implied criticism of Social Darwinism is clear.

[32] Wells’ eugenics are explicitly aimed at the actively criminal, the idle, the indebted, the infectious and so on. However, given the ‘scientific’ classification of intellect into four general types of which two -- the Dull and the Base -- are inferior (159), Wells’ narrator’s assurance -- that “special breeding” to engineer human development is not to be practised -- seems hollow.

[33] In The Shape of Things to Come Marx is accused of thinking “he had produced a final doctrine to put beside Darwinism” and of being responsible for early Marxists having “a quite idiotic pride in a planless outlook” (28). Wells is criticizing here both Marx’s belief in the (inevitable) evolution of capitalism into communism, and his followers’ assumption that no planning of the coming socialist utopia was necessary because communism would inevitably bring with it “millennial bliss” (28). In turn, Marxist critic A.L.Morton reacts to Wells’ dismissal of class war as a model for change by suggesting that part of the reason for his “rejection of Marx” is a “fear and hatred” of the working class, forcing Wells to “turn away from reality” and struggle fruitlessly to “concoct some rival theory” (English Utopia 187-188).

[34] A. L. Morton has suggested that Wells never shed his Fabian inclinations, and believed that persuasive rhetoric would be sufficient to bring about economic reform; Wells “could see the faults of the old capitalism, and naively supposed that he could persuade it to transform itself, shedding its absurdities and becoming clear, sweet and reasonable” (English Utopia 184). However, Morton seems to have overlooked the fact that, while Wells may have hoped that his work would have a persuasive effect, his novels frequently suggest that significant change would come about only as a consequence of (often violent) upheaval. Moreover “the old capitalism” tends to be overthrown; in When the Sleeper Wakes, for instance, the monopolist Council is deposed by the demagogue Ostrog who is himself being ousted as the novel ends. Wells was not an advocate of class war and was suspicious that a proletarian revolution might mean mob rule, but he was not naive.

[35] In “Science and the World State: Education as Utopia in the Prophetic Vision of H. G. Wells,” Warren W. Wagar suggests that the comet’s tail is “Wells’ metaphor for the light of science” (Under Revision 46).

[36] In The World Set Free atomic warfare results in a situation “indeed as if civilization had come to a final collapse” (92). A mid-twentieth-century World War in The Shape of Things to Come inaugurates a quite chaotic period in which there has been considerable technological regression in the areas of communication and transportation. As in After London, the railways have ceased to function and the rails are simply “old junk ... torn and rusty [and] ... smothered in agaves and wild flowers” (Shape 224). Moreover “tramway systems [have] either ... [fallen] into complete disuse or returned to horse traction” (Shape 217).

[37] He also dismissed the socialism-by-degrees by which the Fabians hoped “to gain the classless society by a process of gradualism” within the existing political structure (Newsome 237). Wells was a member of the Fabian Society in the early 1900s but was impatient with the gradualist approach by which they intended to avoid major disruption to existing institutions; in a lecture delivered in 1906 to the Society entitled “Faults of the Fabians” he noted that attempts by a mouse to “win over and attract the cat by friendly advances rather than frighten her by a sudden attack” would probably end with the cat digesting the mouse, rather than the mouse converting the cat (in Foot, 66-67).

[38] In a review of The Well at the World’s End<sup>[21]</sup> published in the Saturday Review a few days after Morris died in October 1896, Wells reminisces about his attendance at meetings at Kelmscott House during the 1880s in which much of the discussion seemed “irrelevant,” and included “a disposition to restore the Thirteenth Century.” He suggests that he came to realise that, in following Morris, he would not “be led anywhere but backward” because “his [Morris’s] dreamland was no futurity, but an illuminated past” (413-414).

[39] Somewhat more ambiguously, the destruction of the old fabric in The World Set Free is a consequence of war rather than part of a planned redevelopment; atomic war destroys the centres of major cities world-wide, and destroys “museums, cathedrals, palaces, libraries, galleries of masterpieces” and so forth (137). However, this forces the construction of “modern type of town” (147) which is obviously seen as a positive consequence.

[40] For example, the frame narrator of The Shape of Things to Come (“H.G.W.”) refers to Philip Raven’s narrative (i.e. the bulk of the novel) as “a Short History of the Future” (4) and an “Outline of the Future” (14). Moreover much of the text’s first hundred pages is a selective history of Europe from the late nineteenth century to the early 1930s. Wells also prefaced The World Set Free with a Prelude which related the history of power over thousands of years from the

fire used by “a being scarcely articulate” who had discovered fire (7) to the discovery of the “limitless power” of nuclear energy by the (fictional) Holsten (26).

[41] Norman and Jeanne Mackenzie remark that in the text “Wells had thus summoned up the whole of human past as an argument for his vision of the future, forging the link by an interpretation of history which accorded precisely with his own dualism, and with the dialectic of ethics and evolution ... which he had taken over from T. H. Huxley” (Time Traveller 323).

[42] See Hayden White’s pioneering Metahistory for a discussion of the literariness of historical writing.

[43] Physicist Freeman Dyson, in a speculative study of scientific innovation in relation to science fiction and humanity’s future, notes that Wells “was the first novelist to place his characters ... within the larger framework of biological evolution” (Imagined Worlds 11).

[44] Wells regularly attacked imperialism. For example, in The War of the Worlds the Martian incursions are compared to the brutal settlement of Tasmania by Europeans, an ugly chapter in British imperialism in that it resulted in the extinction of Tasmanian aborigines within a few decades (6 - 7).

[45] I refer here to Francis Fukuyama’s The End of History and the Last Man (1992).

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Means Which Determine Ends: Fragmentation, Superficiality, Misreading the Past, and Aldous Huxley's Holistic Medicine.**

I

Amongst the fiction, journalism, essays, poetry and philosophical works which comprise Aldous Huxley's literary output there are three texts in which he creates complete imaginary societies. In the first of these, Brave New World (1932), a superficially utopian society is revealed to be a particularly synthetic example of paradise, artificially maintaining social stability in order to facilitate a mindless happiness. In the second, Ape and Essence (1948), the internal narrative is a screenplay depicting a post-apocalyptic America in which society has mutated into a brutal and ghoulish mix of paganism and Christianity and within which a particularly ruthless form of eugenics is practised in order to eradicate difference. In the last, Island (1962), a peaceful and harmonious society -- Pala -- has evolved from a conscious blending of the best of two cultures, although it is being invaded by a neighbouring power as the text ends. Thus, after writing a novel in which an apparent utopia actually turns out to be a dystopia he produces another in which the society depicted is explicitly dystopian, and finally finishes his career with an actual utopia, albeit an apparently doomed one. In the first, nature is deliberately excluded from human life both socially and biologically, and the past is virtually dissolved with the erasure of history as a concept; in the second

humanity's impact on nature and developments in the history of the twentieth century have resulted in an apocalypse and a consequently mutated twenty-second century; and in the third the artificial stasis of the first has a far healthier counterpart in an organic stability by means of which the inhabitants of Pala live in harmony with their environment and in tune with Time. In his essay "Writers and Readers" (1936) Huxley suggests that "history pursues an undulatory course," partly because people tend to "react, after a certain time, away from the prevailing habits of thought and feeling toward other habits" (Olive Tree 20). It is tempting to see in Huxley's progression from dystopian utopia, through dystopia, to utopia, a similar undulation resulting from a reaction every decade and a half against ideas to which he had previously subscribed. This would be an over-simplification, however, as is made clear when one reads his utopia and dystopias within the context of his work as it develops through the course of his career.

One of the ways in which each of these three novels informs, and is informed by, his other writing is visible in the texts' examination of concepts of balance and completion -- in terms of both the individual and society. Like the other writers who have been the subjects of this thesis, Huxley observed fragmentary forces at work in the world around him. In a writing career begun shortly after World War One had exploded any lingering assumptions about the inevitable progress or coherence of

civilization, Huxley increasingly sought the reintegrative means by which stability, unity and harmony might be achieved. Eventually he came to believe that an individual could progress by achieving an internal balance of the diverse elements within his or her personality, and then flourish as a person within a society which could itself only achieve coherence by recognising its place as an integral part of the cosmos.<sup>1</sup> The process of understanding one's self and one's society required an understanding of time as a natural continuum, rather than as a scientifically-determined linear progression measured by clocks and calendars. Huxley explores this idea fully in Eyeless in Gaza (1936) and, while time and history are not synonymous, any analysis of Huxley in relation to history or the past has to take in his ideas about time itself. Understanding one's place in relation to time, should, according to Huxley, offer one a sense of eternity which made other time-related concepts less imperative. The mysticism with which Huxley's mature thought is infused offers one a sense of being part of the cosmos.

Huxley's position on the relationship of the part to the whole is particularly useful when considering, and comparing, Huxley with Wells. Wells' utopias are concerned partly with individuals realizing themselves within the World State after individualism and its outgrowth, nationalism, have been dissolved. Unfortunately, in The Shape of Things to Come his presentation of the growth of this State over hundreds of years results in

his focus being more on the State than on the individuals within it. More generally, he can only imagine this State coming into being through a selfless and scientific coterie empowering itself and using propagandist education as a tool for cultivating an appropriate ethic in the masses for whom Wells fails to demonstrate much sympathy. Moreover, in promoting the future development of a particular new order, he offers both a particular conception of nature *and* an end-oriented vision of the past. When considering humanity in relation to nature Wells wants both to extirpate part of our animal nature and replace the 'natural' in Natural Selection with 'artificial,' so that individuals can be shaped for things to come. In writing his histories -- a process which ought to be dependent on considering the relationship of individual phenomena to their contemporary and historical contexts -- he actually continues to work the ground selectively for his particular vision of the future, since both the Outline and the Short History plough one specific furrow across a field one planet wide by 300 million years long.<sup>2</sup>

Aldous Huxley, like Wells, came to believe in unity as opposed to individualism, but he had very different ideas about what sort of unity was desirable. For Huxley, hope for humanity lay in an inclusiveness which would only work if it began on the level of the individual and grew organically, rather than its being imposed on the majority by an elite. Huxley's final book, Island, demonstrates that, to maximise its potential,

society must fully realise the *unity* in `community.' The individual's relationship to the society, and the society's place within a greater whole, are both important. In Island the individual is important; in Ape and Essence the individual has to merge with the herd, since nonconformity is punished or eradicated, and in Brave New World -- the most obviously Wellsian of Huxley's imaginary societies -- those with a strong sense of themselves as individuals are banished, since the only officially sanctioned personalities are those which are the product of science and technology, rather than any organic process. Like Wells, Huxley was suspicious of certain traits in humanity which he perceived as animal, and celebrated instead some of the distinctively human attributes in the species. In Huxley's case the attributes he focussed on were humane rather than scientific and technological, however.

Huxley's elder brother, the biologist Julian Huxley, was, together with Wells' son, a collaborator on The Science of Life (1931). Like both Aldous and Wells himself, Julian Huxley came to believe that the cure for the world's ills lay in structures of inclusiveness rather than in strictures of exclusiveness. His 1951 William Alanson White Memorial Lecture, "Knowledge, Morality and Destiny," offers a utopian vision which effectively links the differing individual perspectives on unity and wholeness evinced by Wells and Aldous Huxley respectively. In this lecture the elder Huxley stresses that people must organize their thinking

along monist, rather than dualist, lines and conceptualize their relationships with each other, the world and the cosmos holistically, rather than as self and Other. Observing “in the West” a loss of both our “sense of continuity” and “long term hope” (New Bottles 245), he proposes that this somewhat disconnected state can be remedied if “we ... accept reality as unitary and so .... reject all dualistic ways of thinking” (251)<sup>3</sup>. As far as humanity is concerned, he suggests, “the “real business of evolution has been shifted from the domain of matter to that of thought” ( 253); consequently “man does not stand over against nature,” but is rather the “self-conscious” part of its ongoing development (259). Science has revealed that “man has not been created helpless or as a slave of some external authority, but is the most creative part” of the evolution process (276). Human destiny “is to participate in the creative process of development” within the universe of which it is a part (278), in the light of monist thinking which recognizes that individual units can most fully realize their potential by understanding themselves as part of a greater whole.

Julian Huxley’s lecture therefore speaks for a sublimation of ego on both the individual and the tribal or nationalistic levels, arguing that the development of the person, the group, and the species can be best facilitated once the cultural *Zeitgeist* is one of unity, rather than of individualism. As we have seen, Wells also believed in unity in a world

conjoined politically, economically and socially within the World State. He, like Julian Huxley, anticipated humanity creating its own destiny by applying itself to the evolution of the species. However, Wells' idea of unity stops short of imagining the sort of symbiotic relationship with nature to which "Knowledge, Morality and Destiny" speaks. Instead he imagines nature -- internal and external -- as something to be controlled by the species, and from which individuals should be distanced as much as possible. In some ways, then, Wells' thinking was dualist, in that he thought of humanity and nature, not humanity in nature. Aldous Huxley's position was more akin to his brother's, in that he came to believe that the unity of the cosmos was a concomitant of the wholeness of the self; moreover humanity's relationship with the cosmos should be such that the species was in harmony with nature rather than an exploiter of it, and in step with time rather than subscribing to some ignorant, blinkered, or self-serving perception of the past or the supposed forces of history. Huxley worked his way toward the explicit exposition of this view in Island by using his fiction to depict a superficial and fragmented Western society, the reintegration of which could only be achieved when individuals achieved a wholeness and unity of the self. In order to explore fully the concept of wholeness and unity in Aldous Huxley's work, however, one cannot focus too narrowly on his specifically utopian and dystopian fiction. Any exploration of the related concepts of history and nature must

benefit from a study of his other works and the ideas he develops in them. Since Huxley's `novels of ideas' tend to express those ideas through the interplay of numerous points of view expressed by an array of characters, the most effective method of analysing the novels is through those characters and their points of view.

## II

In a letter to his father in April 1924, Huxley condemns realism as a mode of novel-writing in favour of fiction which deals with "the only really and permanently absorbing things," which are "attitudes towards life and the relation of man to the world" (Letters 228). In order to present a variety of attitudes Huxley's novels tend to be dialogic, with a panoply of characters whose words, thoughts, and actions invite thought on life and humanity's relationship with the world. Within this polyphony the third-person narrator is often simply a voice, not *the* authoritative voice. The diversity of non-authoritative points of view therefore contributes to the reader's sense of the fragmentation characteristic of the society which Huxley depicts.

In the case of Crome Yellow (1921) the polyphony is particularly evident in the disparate discourses offered on the past, its value, and its meaning. The Crome of the title is a sixteenth-century country house, built on the site of a dissolved monastery, the stones of which have been recycled in the form of Crome's outbuildings (68). It is, then, itself a

symbol of the past which embodies continuity with that past, but, in supplanting, and using the materials of, an extinct community it is also a symbol of change or metamorphosis, and demise, a point emphasised when the narrator suggests that within fifty years large country houses will “have vanished as the monasteries vanished before them” (176). This mixture of continuity and extinction is visible also in Crome’s inhabitants; while the present incumbent, Sir Henry Wimbush, is descended from the original owners of Crome, their family name, Lapith, has completely died out (130-133).

The voices in the text offer scientific, apocalyptic and nostalgic visions of the past and its meaning through Mr. Scogan, the Reverend Bodiham, and Henry Wimbush respectively. All the visions are flawed. Scogan, something of a Wellsian figure for the type of utopia he predicts, embodies a scientific, analytical viewpoint. In a view that perhaps parodies Wells’ qualified approval of past imperial efforts in The Outline of History, Scogan visualizes history as a narrative of the pursuit of power and the rule of madmen, so that “the Caesars are one of [his] touchstones” in assessing character (109). Since “the Caesarian environment makes the Caesar,” the post-World War environment has given birth to “a host of little Caesars” in Europe (110-111). What the past has taught Scogan is that, given a choice “between the man of reason and the madman,” the world has inevitably “followed the madman”

(161), preferring “dangerous maniacs like Luther ... [and] Napoleon” to more rational alternatives. Consequently “men of intelligence must combine, must conspire, and seize power from the imbeciles and maniacs” in order to “found the Rational State” (163).<sup>4</sup> Scogan reflects Wells’ utopian ideas in A Modern Utopia and clearly sees himself as a prophet. However, his ideas are, in effect, undercut when his faculty for prophecy is metamorphosed into chicanery at the local Bank Holiday fete; telling fortunes for charity he abuses the power which this role as prophet confers on him to arrange a sexual liaison with one of his more naive customers (190-193), again suggesting, given Wells’ reputation as a philanderer, a Wellsian echo . However, this is not to say that everything Scogan says is unrepresentative of Huxley’s own thinking; clearly his suggestion that post-World War Europe has generated little Caesars accords with Huxley’s own criticism of the Versailles Treaty. <sup>5</sup>

Scogan’s dissatisfaction with his own period and emphasis on a scientific perspective has an ironic counterpart in the profoundly unscientific viewpoint of the Reverend Bodiham, whose meld of literal reading of the Gospels, hermeneutic analysis of Revelation, and interpretation of history in the light of that analysis, has led him to anticipate eagerly the Second Coming of an “avenging” Christ (59). He assuages his disappointment that the recent World War failed to achieve apocalypse by looking forward to the possibility of “a great new war in the

east" (60) which will end with "the culminating world-war" for which the recent war was only "the first stage" (126). Human history since Christ has been, for Bodiam, a catalogue of the "wickedness of mankind" (54), and his utopian vision is one to be achieved only through the punishment of humanity through cataclysmic violence. Apart from the inhumanity of such a position, it is also an early instance in Huxley's work of a type of thinking of which he was particularly critical -- the willingness to sacrifice the present for the sake of the (unknowable) future. Reverend Bodiam longs for Armageddon to obliterate the present so that a future New Jerusalem may be brought into being. Scogan's anticipated Rational State therefore has its irrational counterpart in Bodiam's Second Coming, but their desire for radical change in the future is balanced by the third inadequate approach to history in the text, that of Henry Wimbush.

Wimbush has no interest in the future at all; studying the past simply offers him another country to which he can escape imaginatively. His present has been dedicated to writing his History of Crome which he has just finished. However, given the text's specialized interest, the thirty years he has spent on it (81) seem out of proportion to its probable circulation. Evidencing his focus on material which is not of any real use to the living, and underlining his overemphasis on events which have long since trickled into oblivion, the recent excavation of "fifty yards of oaken

drain-pipes" has particularly excited him (17). In Wimbush's nostalgia there is an example of that strain in English thought which locates the possibility of utopia in the past and tends to set "the idea of an ordered and happier past...against the disturbance and disorder of the present" (Williams, The Country and the City 45). To Wimbush the present is the enemy, and he is "desolated to think of all the murdered past" (129). He, like Bodiam, casts contemporary society in an unsatisfactory light; consequently he evidences a misanthropy which finds the prospect that the "perfectibility of machinery" may eventually obviate human contact "a beautiful thought" (205). Wimbush's vision of history is escapist, paralleled by his preference for literature as opposed to real life, since fiction tends to glamourize and romanticize (206). The appeal of history to Wimbush is simple, and summed up in his comment, "give me the past. It doesn't change" (204). The History of Crome apparently has no moral purpose as far as the improvement of society is concerned. All Wimbush's work achieves is a monumentalised past; he attempts to reconfirm the unchangeability of the past by configuring it as a document and containing it within his History where it remains safely static. One may see it, therefore, as analogous to the parks of those large country houses of which Crome is an example; landscape architects like Lancelot "Capability" Brown or Humphrey Repton tamed Nature's wildness by assimilating it within a particular (cultured) vision and confining it behind a

wall. Wimbush tames the chaos of living by focussing on the past, ordering it as a coherent narrative, and confining it within the covers of his book.

Wimbush's History also resembles the contents of the house itself, the tangible relics of centuries of occupation; when the text's protagonist, Denis Stone, first arrives at Crome he finds it "like a dead, deserted Pompeii" and imagines an archaeologist attempting to create a picture of the inhabitants based on the house and its contents. Significantly Stone notes "the living had left but few traces" (5). It is more a monument to the past than a vital organic household. Like Wimbush's History, then, the house contains much material from the past, but has little connection with the present. And like that text, it holds history safely in suspension.

This general dissatisfaction with the present shared by Wimbush, Bodigham and Scogan is underscored tragically in one of the three extracts that Wimbush reads from his History, and which offers indirectly a fourth perception of the past. A diminutive eighteenth-century inhabitant of Crome, the ironically-named Sir Hercules Lapith, creates his own scaled-down TINYTOWN Utopia, surrounding himself with dwarfish servants and miniature animals. He writes a brief and self-serving evolutionary history of humanity in rhyming couplets. The poem supposes that homo sapiens has descended from a race of oafish giants, and that size is in inverse proportion to intellect; he equates decreasing

stature with increasing artistic ability: "For Art grew great as Human Kind grew small." But Sir Hercules goes beyond tracing the history of the shrinking of giants to men, and the concomitant upward growth in ability. He wants to see himself as prefiguring humanity's future, suggesting that destiny demands continued evolution by diminution: "But can we Think that Providence will stay/ Man's footsteps here upon the upward way?" From his position in the present he imagines a pattern to the past, and then tries to apply that pattern to the future, predicting a future Lilliputian Utopia which will also rationalize his own position as a foreshadowing of humanity's apotheosis . Sir Hercules therefore prophesies a time when the "Gross and repulsive" people then seen as normal sized will evolve into a smaller race; humanity's destiny, he maintains, lies in this progress toward "Nature's most delicate and final birth." Sir Hercules is therefore a solipsistic historicist; as one of the "rare precursors of the nobler breed," he imagines himself and his anticipated progeny as representative of humanity's glorious fulfilment (86-87). Like Scogan and Bodiam he puts his faith in a perfected future. In penning a self-justifying history with an eye on the future his project is similar in principle, if not in scale, to the sort of 'history' for which Heinrich Himmler's Ahnenerbe organization would be created in the 1930s, dubiously 'justifying' an anticipated future by locating its roots in the past.<sup>6</sup> In so doing, Sir Hercules' poem is also reminiscent of Wells' project in his Outline of History.

Sir Hercules' faith in the future is unfortunately undercut when he and his equally minuscule wife become parents to a full-sized child who eventually abuses them. Sir Hercules' view of history as progress towards (miniature) perfection with himself as precursor of that destined perfection therefore collides fatally with reality in the form of the next stage in the actual, rather than imagined, Lapith family history: the son is full-sized and as boorish as the giants of yore. The senior Lapiths become "haunted" by "the thought of the future" (96) and after his wife says she does "not want to see tomorrow" Sir Hercules poisons her and slits his wrist (98). By his suicide the disillusioned dwarf both opts out of history and demonstrates the futility of reading the past as if it in some way predetermines the future.

Crome Yellow, then, contains at least four different strains, four different philosophies of history: scientific, apocalyptic, nostalgic/escapist, and progressive/deterministic. All are flawed because each is driven by something other than simple analysis and the desire to learn from the past for the benefit of the present. Ultimately Scogan's real interest is in a Rational State which will classify people into three types, with "directing intelligences" as the dominant caste (163): Bodiham wants the Kingdom of God, Wimbush wants an ordered and secure past into which he can escape, and Sir Hercules had wanted to justify his own minuscule proportions by situating himself as the vanguard of the coming perfected

race of small people. All of these expectations are in some ways solipsistic, and they are presented as inadequate. The fully actualized self cannot be self-centered, and the individual cannot fully justify his or her existence without an awareness of being part of a unified whole. Consequently there is no synthesis of these flawed perspectives on history in the text. None of the historians in Crome Yellow are, in any real sense, part of a unity. Each has his own agenda which drives his particular flawed vision. Each is as singular in his way as Denis Stone, the text's ineffectual protagonist, whose "studious solitariness" has enabled him to "stand at Piccadilly Circus" and still "imagine himself the one fully conscious, intelligent, individual being among all those thousands" (174).

In Crome Yellow only Scogan is particularly concerned with nature. Stone, it is true, has a certain perception of the aesthetics of landscape, of "blue hills ... [and harvests whitening]" (3) but his focus shifts from the countryside itself to ways of expressing it, since it is "the beauty of words" which affects him, not the exterior world of Nature (4). Scogan, on the other hand, is more interested in nature itself, but only insofar as he, like Wells, wishes to negate it. He deplores the natural and the organic; Crome itself impresses him because, as a man-made structure which contrasts starkly with the landscape, it "affronts" nature (68). A farm is understood by him simply as "a model of sound paternal government" (29)

and -- foreshadowing Brave New World -- one of science's achievements has been to facilitate a future in which test-tube fertilization will replace "Nature's hideous system" and create "impersonal generation" and both the disappearance of "the family system" and the freeing of "Eros" from the responsibilities of propagation (31). Scogan's antipathy to Nature as "inhumanly large and complicated," and his preference for the "works of man" with their "geometrical forms ... [and] straight lines," is coupled with an aesthetics which demands art "from which nature has been completely banished" (170). Scogan's analytical approach to both history and nature has its apotheosis in his denatured Rational State of the future with its elitist government and its "commonality" who will be convinced by "Men of Faith" that "there is no happiness to be found except in work and obedience" and "will go through life in a rosy state of intoxication" (166). Clearly the ideas which would come to fruition in Brave New World were already percolating in Huxley's mind.

Huxley's next novel, Antic Hay (1923) has, like Crome Yellow, a setting contemporary to the time of its writing but the action takes place almost entirely in a city, London. With a mainly middle-class set of characters, including representatives from both science and the arts, Huxley's novel implies the importance of authenticity as it focuses on a number of individuals whose existence is tainted by superficiality, contrivance, and self-deception. It portrays a generation for whom the

war had fundamentally ruptured all continuity with the pre-war world. As with Crome Yellow and much of Huxley's other long fiction, the reader is left to tabulate the positives from a mass of alternatives which are often tainted in some way. Nevertheless Huxley's thematic concern with authenticity, albeit left to the reader to deduce, enfolds history within the broader concept of time and also, to a somewhat lesser degree, nature.

Nature in Antic Hay is reflected in two ways: in the idea of the 'natural man' -- as opposed to the over-civilized or over-intellectual individual like the text's scientist, Shearwater -- and in the *absence* of the natural and the *presence* of the unnatural. Virtually none of the action takes place in the countryside so there is relatively little attention paid to anything rural, other than by Emily, one of the only figures in the text who is seemingly untainted by urban life. Although sexually naive (142-143), she is unsophisticated in a novel which equates sophistication with decadence or sterility of the spirit. Her love of the countryside reminds Theodore Gumbriel, the otherwise hedonistic protagonist, of his mother and momentarily reawakens his own lapsed interest in wild flowers (144). Significantly, their first date is at the botanical gardens at Kew, where the "trees of the English spring" and the "the soft air that ... [smells] of the greenness of the garden" (146) initiate Gumbriel's brief interlude of spirituality (146-148). Ultimately, however, Gumbriel muses cynically on the rural cottage Emily has rented as being probably "altogether too

cottagey" (160) and abuses her trust by using his knowledge of her naivety as the material for a sordid anecdote (186). His selfish and deceitful postponement of a visit to her cottage (161) results in his eventually losing touch with her altogether, and he is therefore responsible for forfeiting what contact with the natural world he has had, leaving him in the superficial and brittle world of mindless pleasure he shares with his 'set.'

Apart from Gumbriel's encounter with Emily, however, nature in the text tends to be presented in terms of the contrast between natural and unnatural existence. Modern life has its victims in a physical sense, particularly amongst the working class, on whom Gumbriel reflects as "pass[ing] their whole lives being shoved about like maltreated animals" (68). He also thinks guiltily of "all the legless soldiers grinding barrel organs" and the "phthisical charwoman" who cleaned his father's house until she "got too weak and died" while he (Gumbriel) continues to be "contented and well-fed" (68-69). Some of this bleakness is a product of (unnatural) urban living, portrayed in the play that Gumbriel and Mrs Viveash attend in Chapter XVI. While the play obviously also has resonances of Huxley's ideas about both responsible birth control and the importance of improving society from the individual outward, it nevertheless offers a particularly grim picture of city life. In it, an apparently unwanted child grows up to be a "monster," with rickets and

tuberculosis, his lungs "black with soot" from London's "cloud of stink" (175). Incarcerated in an asylum and rotting from syphilis, he maintains an optimism which actually causes his death; concluding that he has been able to "recreate the world from within" (181) he believes he is climbing "beyond humanity" to see the stars with new eyes as he stands on the back of his chair, only to fall and break his neck (181-182). In a sense, the monster is groping toward an elevated vision of 'natural man,' as a man mystically in tune with the whole of nature, as opposed to the earthy idea of 'natural man' which appears elsewhere in the text.

The conception of 'natural man' as one able to manifest his animal propensities emerges from a debate on utopianism. Mercaptan -- a suave literary journalist -- dismisses the idea of any "golden dream" because it is "too late in the day" (45) and "times have changed" (46); Gumbriel agrees since such dreams seem anachronistic after "the war ... [and] the Russian famine" (46).<sup>7</sup> Lypiatt's counter-argument that such cynicism is a sign of "spiritual poverty" among "[over-]civilised young men" who lack ideals is disputed by Mercaptan who defends his "civilised" life-style, suggesting that one ought to opt for the hedonistic "middle way" between the "stink" of "*Homo au naturel*," represented by Dostoevski, and the utopian "asepsis" of H. G. Wells (46-47). Huxley is playing with the ideas which would emerge more fully in Brave New World as a conflict between the Wellsian utopia and other alternatives, when John the Savage as the

**'Homo au naturel' clashes with the aseptic utopia in which he finds himself.**

**However, the idea of "homo au naturel" which Mercaptan rejects is aired elsewhere in the text. Coleman, an artist, muses facetiously on fathering a child and letting it grow up "a child of nature" (55). However, Coleman is himself already something of a natural man; a boisterous blasphemer with a lust for life marred by an overactive libido and an apparent lack of conscience, he projects a vigour which Gumbriel attempts to simulate. Buying a false beard to imitate Coleman's real one, Gumbriel assumes the role of "Rabelaisian man," or "Complete Man," intending to balance the typically animal aspects of his personality--eater, drinker, lover, fighter--with the more civilised ones--thinker, artist, truth-seeker and prophet (94-95). In this way he hopes temporarily to leave his usual "Mild and Melancholy" persona behind (95). However, Gumbriel's gargantuan activities are, in the event, limited to the seduction of a woman unknown to him who turns out to be his friend Shearwater's neglected wife (97-110). Apart from its overtones of Jekyll and Hyde, the episode is symptomatic of Gumbriel's superficiality since, as Guinevera Nance has noted, "the bearded, bold lover [who] Gumbriel turns into is a sham" (36). Although the need for wholeness of the personality is a typical theme in Huxley's work, obviously it could not be achieved by disguise. Nor could it be achieved through pneumatic trousers; Gumbriel's absurd (if profitable)**

invention has been invented for the seating comfort of “those whose occupation is sedentary” (23). However, Boldero, an entrepreneur and client of Gumbriil’s father, seeks to broaden the market for Gumbriil’s device, appealing to, amongst other things, consumers’ professional pride and patriotism (119, 124). Oddly he becomes an unlikely, and dubious, spokesman for D. H. Lawrence’s ideas about the need for individuals to realise their natural drives:

We could put in a lot about the dark, powerful sense-life, sex-life, [and] instinct-life .... That already our modern conditions of civilization tend unduly to develop the intellect and the thoracic ganglia controlling the higher emotions. That we’re wearing out, growing feeble, losing our balance in consequence. And that the only cure—if we are to continue our present mode of civilised life—is to be found in Gumbriil’s Patent Small-Clothes. (120-121)

Lawrence’s theories get a fuller exposition through his fictional counterpart Rampion in Point Counter Point (1928) but here, analogous to Gumbriil’s attempt to become Rabelaisian Man, they serve to emphasise the unnatural quality of modern life through the paradox of duping consumers into buying an artificial device so that they might get more in touch with their natural instincts.

In total, then, society in the text is presented as predominantly unnatural, a fact paralleled by the experiments on laboratory animals

(below). This tendency toward the inauthentic and the artificial is present also in the characters' attitudes toward historical narrative and the past generally. Gumbriel gives up his job as a history teacher, partly because he believes the discipline of history to be dominated by "bad writers' generalizations" and the feeding of students with "a diet of soft vagueness" (22). Clearly Gumbriel finds history as a school subject to be lacking in authenticity. This representation of history as an inauthentic academic subject is mirrored in bricks and mortar by Gumbriel senior's client, the capitalist Boldero, who "has a mania for buying Tudor houses and making them more Tudor than they are" by having them pulled down and "put ... together differently" (24). Boldero is therefore making the ancient houses inauthentic as historical fabric -- ironically, by seeking to make them appear more authentic.

The Marxist version of history makes an appearance in the novel, albeit in a particularly mutated form. Gumbriel's tailor, Bojanus, is "a great admirer of Lenin" (32) and looks forward to a revolution in Britain, not because of its Marxist inevitability, however, but since "it would be a nice change" and a "scientific" experiment (36). Moreover his study of "istory" suggests to him that no revolution -- French, industrial, or whatever -- has ever created genuine liberty for the masses, since they must still work (34). Foreshadowing Brave New World, Bojanus remarks that even "unlimited leisure" might simply entail a new slavery geared to

consumption, in the form of a craving for “cinemas, newspapers, magazines, gramophones, football matches, wireless, [and] telephones” (35). That history should, according to Bojanus, reveal that political and economic change creates superficial freedom but not authentic liberty relates to Huxley’s later position that genuine progress is a questionable concept and difficult to qualify or quantify. His support of a revolution when he actually believes that only “a few, a very few people like you and me” can actually experience genuine liberty (35) suggests a particularly cynical permutation of Marxism.

Contrasting Bojanus’s cynicism is the artist Lypiatt’s idealism.

Lypiatt, “who sees himself as a misunderstood and embittered Prometheus” (73), privileges the past, or at least the artists of the past, because of the lack of specialization typical of geniuses like Leonardo Da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Sir Christopher Wren (40). Unfortunately, Gumbriel observes that, in attempting to emulate this multiple virtuosity, Lypiatt has become “a bad painter, ... a bombinating poet, ... [and] a loud emotional improviser on the piano” (40). Attempting to mimic the virtuosity of past polymaths is apparently futile. Lypiatt is an idealist, a believer in “some reality more than human,” the “one reality” which he believes is expressed in “science and art ... [and] religion and philosophy” (53-54), but his Promethean attempts to disseminate this supposed truth amongst his fellow humans are unsuccessful. Moreover, the “one reality”

of the disciplines which he privileges is rendered dubious in the text, particularly in the case of science. Science is responsible for the inducement of defective sight in rabbits (111), the grafting of an ovary into a cockerel (252), the sexual rejuvenation of an elderly monkey (foreshadowing the experiments in After Many a Summer [1939]), and the replacement of beetles' heads with other beetles' heads (253).

There is a utopian vision in the text. The 'monster' of the play believes that "somewhere, in the past, in the future, a very long way off" there must be "other [better] cities, built by men for men to live in" (175). Gumbriel's father has, in a sense, built such a city. Reacting to the "vile and discordant architecture" of central London (133), he has built a large and exquisitely detailed model of London as it might have been if Sir Christopher Wren had been allowed "to carry out his plans of rebuilding after the great fire [of 1666]" (135). Unfortunately the citizens had not learned from their mistakes and rejected Wren's offer "to build for the imagination and the ambitious spirit of man"; they had preferred to re-erect the old [mediaeval] squalor" to which they were accustomed (135) rather than construct Wren's "ideal city" (136).<sup>8</sup> On first glance Gumbriel supposes the model to be "the capital of Utopia" but recognises the link between it and the real London to be St. Paul's (135), a symbol of continuity in a city in which, as Gumbriel Senior complains, the (rare) ordered beauty of Regent Street is being demolished in favour of a

modern "chaos of Portland Stone that is an offence against civilization" (136). Gumbriel Senior here is not praising the past so much as he is privileging a present as he would have preferred it to be, and against which he holds the actual present to be inferior. Ultimately the elder Gumbriel sells his model in a selfless gesture so that he may buy back some books for a friend who had been forced to sell them (247), an act which suggests that the exigencies of the here and now should take preference over utopian wistfulness.

Over and above the anti-utopianism and the various ideas involving history and the past is a concern with time. Lypiatt is aware that "Time ... [is passing]" (79) as he nears forty without any success in his artistic endeavours. Mrs Viveash, object of desire for a number of characters, is trapped in "steppes after steppes of ennui" (157), the endless living death which 'vive ash' implies. To her it seems "ten centuries" (175) since the only man she ever loved was killed, yet he actually died in 1917, five years before the time in which the novel is set (165); to Mrs Viveash, "time kills everything" (158) but she actually spends her life simply killing time.<sup>9</sup> Gumbriel has an opportunity to experience time in a more fulfilling way after Emily inspires a mystic interlude on his part, foreshadowing that aspect of Huxley's later work. Initially Gumbriel muses on "something inexpressibly lovely and wonderful" which approaches when one establishes an "inward quiet, ... a crystal

quiet” but which threatens to kill the “regular, habitual, daily part of you”; afraid “to begin living arduously in some strange, unheard-of manner” one shatters the sense of quiet (147). Later he has a sense of the eternity of time, as it “passes in a dark stream, staunchlessly, as though from some profound mysterious wound in the world’s side, bleeding, bleeding, for ever” (155). Immediately afterward he has a sense of timelessness as Emily falls asleep in his arms: “the past is forgotten, the future abolished; there is only this dark and everlasting moment.” The moment is, however, bittersweet since he “look[s] forward through the endless present; ... [and forsees] the end of his eternity” (156). On a larger scale, he brings about the end of that eternity and the crystal is shattered when Emily believes that the postponement of their rural tryst has been “arranged by Providence” and she disappears (188).

Gumbriel’s irresponsibility and superficial behaviour therefore cost him (at least the illusion of) moments of eternity and leave him enmeshed in time. In this he joins Mrs Viveash, and the text concludes with the two of them driving around London, visiting friends. In doing so they unknowingly stop Lypiatt exchanging time for eternity, in that they interrupt his intended death by suicide (231-236), and encounter the scientist Shearwater who is trapped in time, literally going nowhere on his stationary bicycle while he hallucinates about cycling across the sea to France (249-254). Shortly before the text ends, Gumbriel and Mrs Viveash

gaze out across the Thames, aware of time flowing "like the river ... silent and black," as they look "across the flow of time, at the stars, at the human symbol [St. Paul's] hanging miraculously in the moonlight" (253). The possibility of some profound understanding of themselves as individuals, and of their species, in relation to time as a continuum is implicit in the scene. However, Mrs Viveash concludes that "tomorrow ... will be as awful as today," speaking as if "from her death-bed," before continuing with Gumbriel on their apparently pointless quest (254). She can only seek distraction to fill the void left by her paramour's wartime death. Similarly Gumbriel, having forfeited the possibility of an epiphanic bonding with time through union with Emily, ultimately abandons himself to an escapist hedonism which is frittering time away, rather than using it fruitfully or discovering a fuller sense of it.

Gumbriel's rejection of a meaningful comprehension of existence, and failure fully to realise his potential as an individual, makes him one of a series of individuals in Huxley's fiction who appear to have the possibility to move on to some higher state but do not succeed in doing so. The novel suggests that modern life is fragmented, uncertain, and spiritually hollow, yet Gumbriel fails to engage with the problem in any meaningful way, seemingly lacking the moral wherewithal to do so. As June Deery observes, "Huxley believed that the collapse of religion inevitably entailed the collapse of ethics" (Mysticism 133). The centre

could no longer hold. In a letter written in April 1925 to a childhood friend, the poet Robert Nichols, he wrote:

...men are more solitary now than they were; all authority has gone; the tribe has disappeared and every at all conscious man stands alone, surrounded by other solitary individuals and fragments of the old tribe, for which he feels no respect. Obviously the only thing to be done is to go right through with the process; to realize individuality to the full, the real individuality, Lao-Tsz[u]'s individuality, the Yogi's individuality, and with it the oneness of everything. Obviously! But the difficulty is huge. And meanwhile the world is peopled with miserable beings who are neither one thing nor the other; who are solitary and yet not complete individuals; conscious only of the worst part of themselves (that deplorable and characteristic self-consciousness of the present time that examines all that is good and beautiful until it discovers its opposite)... (Letters 245)

Those Barren Leaves (1925), set in Italy but involving mainly English characters, also revolves around personas who fail to achieve 'the real individuality' before concluding with one character, Calamy, who is making an effort to reconcile himself to the "oneness."

As it does in E. M. Forster's early work, notably "The Story of a Panic" (1904) and "The Road from Colonus" (1911), southern Europe

provides Huxley with an opportunity to take variously the remnants of an ancient civilization, an impressive landscape, and the peasantry who inhabit that landscape, and juxtapose them with modern Britons. The juxtaposition, in the various dialectics which ensue, contributes to Huxley's continuing critique of the shallowness and disconnection inherent in contemporary English life, with traditional beliefs shaken by the war and with the relation of the individual to any real organic existence becoming increasingly tenuous. The two powerful images which bookend the novel -- the Cybo Malaspina's palace high above the town of Vezza, and the mountain peak at the head of the valley -- offer antithetical meanings: human pomposity and decline on the one hand, and an essentially timeless and natural presence on the other. Calamy, in having moved amongst the peasants in the mountains as the text concludes, has shifted his focus from the futile existence represented by the Cybo to the possibility of a more complete life which the mountain symbolises. The authenticity which he seeks stands in contrast to the myths and fantasies indulged in by the other characters.

The notion of embellishing or falsifying a reality resonates through the text, particularly where an idealized past jars uncomfortably with the probable, but less romantic, facts on which the idealized version has been based. The past simply becomes the raw material for a reconstruction, (re)created according to the particular perceptions and prejudices of its

manufacturer. Cardan, a cynical freeloader who is in many ways the Scogan of this text, remarks that utopia – “The Kingdom one would like to live in” – would be an “ancient Greece purged of every historical Greek that ever existed, and colonized out of the imaginations of modern artists, scholars and philosophers” (205 - 206). While he is suggesting here that the idea of utopia has more to do with imagination than reality, and that to idealize ancient Greece is to fictionalize it, he is also implying that each generation creates the version of history which suits it, so that moderns would prefer a modern vision of ancient Greece, existing only in the minds of contemporary artists and so forth, to the reality. When Cardan later relishes the pungent odours of the local grocery store his remark foreshadows Brave New World; stating that he has “the greatest suspicion of your perfectly hygienic and well-padded Utopias,” he complains that “we shall come to sacrifice everything to comfort and cleanliness” (212). However, in noting that the aroma of the shop is “tremendously historical” and evocative of “the Etruscan grocers” (213), Cardan is suggesting that the *real* past, as lived organically by the peasantry, was as odorous as this shop. This contrasts sharply with the reaction of his companion, the novelist Miss Thriplow. In her theoretical, and condescending, envy of the “simple and happy and contented” villagers she equates their supposedly instinctual lives with an heroic past, “the heroes in the *Iliad*” (211). She later muses on becoming “no

more civilized, but savage" in reaction to the "intellectualizing education" which causes moderns to live "so artificially" (262). Here, however, she reacts to the smells of the village grocer's shop by burying her face in her scented handkerchief (213). The disjunction between the ideal past and reality is also emphasised later in the novel; looking at a "the quintessence of Roman reality" revealed in a mosaic glorifying Roman athletes, the journalist/poet Chelifer concludes that "a drop of that reality is enough to shrivel up all the retrospective Utopias that historians have ever made or ever can make out of the chronicles of ancient Rome" (312).

However, it is not only historians and novelists who are susceptible to reconfiguring the past; Mrs Aldwinkle, the owner of the Cybo Malaspina, also does so, and for the purposes of self-aggrandisement. There are a number of ways in which she tries to skew or embellish fact to suit her imagination. For example, to elevate her own status she inflates that of her guests, "promoting her common acquaintances to the rank of greatness" (5), and justifying the ubiquity of the relatively undistinguished Cardan as a guest "on the ground that he was one of the obscure Great" (25). She is not content with inflating the reputations of her contemporaries in order to boost herself, however; she also creates her own (swollen) version of local history. Having purchased the palace of the Cybo Malaspina family, therefore, she tries to appropriate the culture

of the area, so that amongst those "vast domains unmentioned in the contract" are the "Cybo Malaspina and their history" (18). Believing that she has purchased the past with the palace, then, Mrs Aldwinkle revises and fictionalizes it, imagining events taking place there which, in reality, could never have done so: "In Mrs Aldwinkle's enthusiastic imagination what marvellous symposia had been held within those walls – centuries even before they were built" (22). Consequently she imagines Aquinas, Dante, Boccaccio, Michelangelo and Galileo among those who had enjoyed "intellectual feasts" at the palace (22). Having fictionalized the past, she seeks to be the new patron of modern revivals of those intellectual gatherings, resurrecting the "ancient glories" which, in reality, had never taken place, and enabling the palace to "re-become what it had never been except in Mrs Aldwinkle's fancy" (23). Unfortunately her imaginary version of the past is dramatically undercut by reality; not only did the palace's inhabitants not form a steady procession of brilliant aristocrats hosting intellectual gatherings, but they actually degenerated. The busts of the family reveal a downward spiral of diminishing intellectual capacity: "as marquess succeeded marquess and prince, prince, an expression of ever profounder imbecility made itself apparent on the faces" so that while the "look of conscious pride became more and more strongly marked on every countenance," their "foreheads grew lower"(23). Mrs. Aldwinkle, in believing her own fantasy of the splendid

history of the family, accrues to herself that history and situates herself as the adoptive heiress of its imagined splendour. In terms of revisionism, her historicist remodelling of the past is an example of an individual reinventing history based on her own needs or perspective, rather than interpreting the past from verifiable data. Despite the evidence of the busts, and in the absence of any evidence of the "marvellous symposia" (22) which she believes to have taken place in the palace, she nevertheless invents the past as she would like it to have been, indulging in the sort of 'golden age' utopianism of which Cardan has been critical.

The Cybo Malaspina's apparent regression, while at odds with Mrs. Aldwinkle's grand conception, accords with the theme of decline which pervades the novel. The older Cardan admits to having had (and apparently lost) the Victorian faith in "progress and the ultimate explicability of everything in terms of physics and chemistry", a belief for which he appears wistful (26). He also bemoans the loss of theatre in modern politics, those "stage effects" of ritual and pomp which "Napoleon was the last ruler to practice...systematically and scientifically on the grand scale" and which had required ostentatious architecture as a complement. Modern rulers seem to ignore the lessons of history since they neglect "these aids to government"(26). Cardan observes this downward slide in the arts also; observing that Gulliver's Travels "has become a children's book" he also complains that Milton is remembered

only for "a collection of isolated passages" rather than as "a great religious poet," a diminishing of prestige occasioned partly by a modern tendency to "skim along uncomprehendingly" rather than read in depth (55). Moreover sciences, or pseudo-sciences, become outmoded or replaced, but the result is not necessary an unalloyed improvement; the narrator -- a greater presence in this novel than in the previous two -- comments that inadequate phrenological explanations for Filippo Lippi's artistic inclinations have now been replaced by even less satisfactory psychoanalytic interpretations of the artist as "an incestuous homosexualist with a bent towards anal-eroticism" (288 - 289). He asks ironically,

Can we doubt any longer that human intelligence progresses and grows greater? Fifty years hence, what will be the current explanation of Filippo Lippi? Something profounder, more fundamental even than faeces and infantile incestuousness; of that we may be certain. But what, precisely what, God only Knows. How charming is divine philosophy! (289)

There is also the apprehension of decline in Chelifer's fears that the bourgeoisie will become ubiquitous and all-encompassing, completing their absorption of the working class once the "traditional wisdom and ... traditional superstition" of the "lower classes in the past" has been drowned in the wake of "newspapers and radio" (293). Modern

diversions, including cinemas, jazz and motor-cycles as well as newspapers and radio, ensure contentment through “the prevention of thought and the killing of time” (107). Chelifer’s apparent regret that the working class will disappear as their traditional culture is eroded by the proliferation of cheap entertainment and mass communications is undercut somewhat by Huxley not including any real specimen of working-class culture in the text, the only (ersatz) example being the undergraduates’ morris dancing in Chelifer’s mother’s garden on which Chelifer looks back with some nostalgia (117). Nevertheless Chelifer’s general point is that mental and social life in the 1920s is worse than it was in the past, and continues to decline. The embryo of Brave New World is evident in his statement that people may have “more wealth and leisure” now and society may be evolving toward “the Utopian state” of universal plenty, but the ensuing boredom of all but the most intelligent will result in the withering away or homicidal “barbarism” of the rest (317). At the same time, Chelifer emphasizes that becoming too enveloped in the past is counter-productive:

They are dangerous, ...things and places inhabited by memory. It is as though, by a process of metempsychosis, the soul of dead events goes out and lodges itself in a house, a flower, a landscape, in a group of trees seen from the train against the sky-line, an old snapshot, a broken pen-knife, a book, a perfume. In these memory-

charged places, among these things haunted by the ghosts of dead days, one is tempted to brood too lovingly over the past, to live it again, more elaborately, more consciously, more beautifully and harmoniously, almost as though it were an imagined life in the future. Surrounded by these ghosts one can neglect the present in which one bodily lives. (115)

Chelifer is here discussing the reliving of perfected personal memories, rather than the immersion in history practised by Wimbush in Crome Yellow, but the general point – of privileging or revising the past at the expense of the present – has a wider validity. One may use the past as some sort of standard by which to assess contemporary life, but one must not become infatuated with the past to the extent that one “neglect[s] the present.” Chelifer is equally critical of living for the future, remarking that working for it actually “partially blinds us to the present” (94), and stating that “the future is no concern of ours” (372). Unfortunately, while Chelifer himself has consequently “learned to live only in the moment” (145), his ‘moment’ is one of disconnection rather than profundity, characterised by sexual affairs with women whom he does not love (321).

The past has a monetary value to Cardan, in the tangible form of some statuary dug up in a village by the local grocer’s brother (202). Cardan hopes to buy it at the “lowest possible price,” and “sell it at the highest (203), so that, like an art dealer, he can exploit both the

**“ignorance or urgent poverty of the vendor” and the “snobbery and ... almost profound ignorance” of a wealthy buyer (204). To the cynical Cardan, then, historical artefacts are reduced to their monetary value, a commodity offering financial gain to the middleman who swindles both seller and buyer. The past – like the mentally challenged heiress Grace Elver whom he intends to marry – is simply something for Cardan to commodify and exploit. However, his illusions of laying hands on a lucrative piece of Classical statuary are confounded when the piece actually turns out to be a century-old piece of monumental sculpture, lacking even the name of the poet whose tomb it was meant to commemorate (251). Here the terms of reference are those of art, money, and history; to Cardan the sculpture fails to qualify on all three counts, but to the grocer to whom it belongs, it is an item of great “beauty and ... antiquity” (280). Huxley leaves the ‘true’ value of the sculpture a moral ambiguity – especially given that the grocer’s brother seems to give short measure (214), suggesting that the grocer’s praise of the piece may be motivated by his hopes of selling it to Cardan. Nevertheless Huxley is implying that the value of any historical artefact, or fact of history, may vary according to the perspectives of the valuers, in this case Cardan and the grocer respectively.**

**The socialist perspective on the past is offered by Falx, one of a number of flawed representatives of the Left who appear in Huxley’s work,**

including Illidge in Point Counter Point (1926) and John Barnack in Time Must Have a Stop (1944). The narrator tells us Falx has "the air of a minor prophet" and, in another era, might have been "a denouncer, a mouthpiece of the Lord, a caller to salvation, a threatener of wrath to come" (27). In equating him with a Biblical prophet Huxley connects Falx with past, future and the denunciation of modern life, while also implying the apocalyptic and religious quality of Marxism. To Falx, the past is simply the history of exploitation of the workers, so that St. Peter's in Rome merely represents the "degraded lives" of "many thousand workmen and their wives and children" (291) and the "poets, the scholars, the philosophers, the painters, the musicians" of the past are not worth the cost of having had the "tyrants" who were their patrons (66). In reducing architecture and art to economics and exploitation the prophet Falx paradoxically represents the soullessness of Marxism as a pseudo-religion.

Nature in the book is represented in two significant ways. One is in Chelifer's memories of his taciturn father's conventional Wordsworthian offerings. Chelifer remembers climbing a mountain (Snowdon) with his father as a twelve-year-old. Chelifer's climb was significant for two utterances from his normally silent father: a quoting of the "sense sublime of something far more deeply interfused" passage from Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey," and a comment about the smell of fried onions which

undercut the sublimity of the first statement (122). Chelifer has eventually come to the conclusion that the words of his father, which had once seemed oracular to him, were actually "as meaningless as so many hiccoughs" (122), presumably because of the sense of his father's response to the mountain being conditioned or calculated, rather than a genuine reaction. Calamy's sojourn in the mountains at the text's end acts as a corrective to this.

The other significant way in which Nature appears in the text is through the dialectic in the text between modern civilization and various levels of primitivism. The former is characterized by mindless leisure activities, superficiality, ennui, a stultifying bourgeois classlessness, "the horrors and squalors of civilized life" (96) and the spectre of "a planet-wide tribe of [Sinclair Lewis's] Babbitts" (373). Its opposite is found variously in Irene's Lawrencian response to the "ancient root of life planted in the darkness of her being" (355), in the unsophisticated Etruscans who predate the Romans (305 - 310), in the "ancient, instinctive, animally sagacious life" (364) which Calamy attributes to peasants, in the discussion of Tolstoy's famous proposal of a return to "the genuine, primordial, uneducated, dirty tribalism of the savage" (373) which Cardan rejects, and in the savage "lower classes in the past" (293) to whom Chelifer attributes traditional wisdom and lore. The distant past, and the primal impulses or unsophisticated ways of life which indicate

continuity with the pre-civilized past, are generally privileged in the text but, as we have seen, attempts to idealise the past or imagine it as some sort of reflection of the present are criticised. Contemporary society is seen as increasingly superficial and inorganic, becoming devoid of traditional culture. Consequently, the future holds the possibility of “the whole planet [being] covered by one vast American-speaking tribe” (372), Democracy is thus working toward an homogeneous mass of mediocrity, a warped version of the democratic state desired by Falx which would be so abhorrent to Webley in Point Counter Point. The implication would seem to be that the present needs to be corrected in order that the future not be a Brave New World, and that the way to do that would be through achieving some sort of balance between different elements and perspectives.

The character who is able to reconcile some of the fragments and diverse perspectives in the text is Calamy, who is working toward personal balance as the text concludes. His initial reaction to contemporary life is one of exhilaration at living in a time of flux in which it seems “everything’s perfectly provisional and temporary – everything from social institutions to what we’ve hitherto regarded as the most sacred scientific truths,” reflecting Huxley’s own perspective (34).<sup>10</sup> However, he eventually turns from a reactive thrill at the uncertainties of modern life, and from the superficialities of the Cybo Malaspina, to a more positive

quest for a fulfilling response to it in the mountains.

In a text which, like most Huxley novels, offers a number of intellectual viewpoints, Calamy recognizes that any phenomenon may be examined from a number of discrete perspectives. He offers the example of his hand, which connotes different meanings to a child, a scientist, or a philosopher (344 - 346). Beyond the individual perspectives on the particular phenomenon, however, lies the problem of trying to interconnect seemingly distinct and separate "modes of being," to establish the commonality between "a collection of cells and the consciousness of a caress" (346-347) or, more generally, between the physical world, one's mind, and the Universe which encompasses both (346 - 347). Huxley is indicating that the world is diverse; even the individual is a diversity of elements and competing motivations. As Huxley would suggest in his essay on "Pascal" (1929), he believed the self to be "a colony of separate individuals" (Do What 234) and "diverse personalities" (300). The solution lies in completion and balance. Calamy's solution, and eventually Huxley's, is to seek answers in mysticism .

Mid-way through the text, Calamy endeavours to displace the urge to seek this truth, the desire to investigate those mysterious "other things" which have "loomed up enormously behind the distracting bustle of life," through sexual desire (195). Ultimately, however, he heads off to live

alone in a hovel in the mountains, where he can “open the mind wide and wait” (348). The conclusion of the novel – which otherwise ends with the death of Cardan’s imbecilic wife-to-be and the loss to him of her fortune, Calamy’s conclusion of his affair with Mary Thriplow, and Chelifer’s rejection of Mrs. Aldwinkle – offers two positive events. One is Irene’s response to her primal and instinctual desire for Hovenden, the “something that looked prophetically toward something that had come through innumerable lives, out of the obscure depths of time, to dwell within her” as opposed to the “consciousness and individuality” which drew her to the sterile world of her aunt, Mrs Aldwinkle (355).<sup>11</sup> The other is Calamy’s rejection of the “mediaeval” Christian viewpoint, the willingness to sacrifice the here and now to a naive but spiritually utopian vision of the hereafter, reflecting a “cynicism about this world” and a “childish optimism about the next” (366). Huxley typically attacks any philosophy which lessens the importance of dealing with the present in expectation of some unknown, and perfected, future existence. Calamy’s mysticism, however, in exploring the “whole universe” within him (375), is really unconcerned with past or future. It is true that Chelifer, too, is intent on living for the present, but he does so with little interest in anything deeper. Calamy, on the other hand, ends the novel with an intent to see below that “surface-life of appearances” (370), and he is really the first character in Huxley’s novels who consciously attempts

some sort of genuine and sustained engagement with 'oneness' and manages to enjoy a degree of success.<sup>12</sup> He seeks "salvation in *this* life" (366).

The "shining peak" at the head of the valley which impresses Calamy in the novel's last sentence is therefore significant in at least two related ways. Firstly, the towering eminence offers a positive and relatively timeless reality to counterpoint both Mrs. Aldwinkle's overblown fictional history of the Cybo Malaspina and the degenerated intellect of the family who originally owned it. Secondly, it is in the mountains themselves that Calamy is attempting to seek some truth that transcends the superficiality which life in the Cybo represents. Chelifer apparently rejected the familiar tenets of Wordsworth's Tintern Abbey with his dismissal of his father's words as "meaningless," and Huxley himself is elsewhere critical of the Lakeland poet.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, the text is suffused with the "still, sad music of humanity" and Calamy ends the novel in the mountains seeking that "something far more deeply interfused" which Wordsworth glimpsed in Nature. As a sophisticate who chooses to live simply amongst Nature and seek insight through contemplation, following the example of "Gotama [Buddha], Jesus and Lao-tsze" whose "pictures of reality" maintain their meaning across time (377), Calamy is the text's hope for the future, and, insofar as there is any synthesis between diversities (of past and present, or primitive and decadent) in the

text, he embodies it.

Huxley continued to ponder the possibilities of synthesis, and of understanding our world as a unity of disparate entities, rather than a melange of completely separate elements, in Proper Studies (1927), an early sociological study. In it he considers how the panorama of history is often interpreted in terms of one of a number of mutually-exclusive theories. He notes the multiplicity of causes which historians of one school of thought or another have identified as the mainsprings of history:

The facts of history have been explained in terms of the will of God, of the class war, of moral law, of climate, of the caprices and physiological peculiarities of those in power, of economic struggle, of race, of pure reason, making judicious use of the pleasurable, of blind animal instinct. (xvi)

Narrowing one's focus to one specific type of cause, predicated on bias, inevitably leads to an historicist self-fulfilling prophecy, enabled by selectivity; Huxley warns of "[h]istorians and sociologists who set out with preconceived ideas about the causes of events [and] distort the facts by attributing them to causes of one particular kind, to the exclusion of all others" (xvi). He acknowledges that he himself may not have "achieved ... [the necessarily] difficult and perhaps humanly impossible neutrality" but does at least "warn the reader against [his] distortion of the facts" (xvii). However, Huxley is particularly scornful, not of the selective historian, but

of the utopians who "are too much preoccupied with what ought to be to pay any serious attention to what is" (x). In ignoring the reality of human nature as played out "throughout recorded history" (x) and creating "Utopian worlds where human nature is different from human nature in this world," utopians may inspire, comfort, or even "stimulate ... revolutionary action" but they are useless to "the would-be sociologist" or "judicious reformer" (xi). Clearly selective interpretations of the past are problematic for Huxley, but visions of the future embodying a selective comprehension of what it is to be human are worse. Marxism would offer an example of both types of selectivity. However, Huxley's main point is really the argument against selectivity and exclusivity, as opposed to some fuller understanding of the whole picture. As he writes in the essay, "Wordsworth in the Tropics" (1929), "it is obvious that there must be some sort of unity underlying the diversity of phenomena" (122). However, it is a unity of diversities:

The world in which we live may be fundamentally one, but it is a unity divided up into a great many diverse fragments. A tree, a table, a newspaper, a piece of artificial silk are all made of wood. But they are, none the less, distinct and separate objects. It is the same with the world at large. Our immediate intuitions are of diversity. .... [But] modern man's besetting temptation is to sacrifice his direct perceptions and spontaneous feelings to his reasoned

reflections; to prefer .... the verdict of his intellect to that of his immediate intuitions. (Do What You Will 123).

Huxley is saying that we appreciate the multiplicity on some fundamental level, but our modern insistence on intellectual, as opposed to intuitive, comprehension leads to our thinking of homogeneity where the reality is diversity. Unfortunately living completely requires "the whole being, with the body and the instincts, as well as with the conscious mind" (123-124). However, Huxley suggests that the best that can be hoped for in "our modern, highly specialized world" is "a compromise" by which one lives partly as a "Dr. Jekyll" for "metaphysical and scientific thinking" and partly as "a natural, spontaneous Mr. Hyde" for "physical, instinctive living" (125).

This idea of modulating diversities within one whole, and of the balancing of the rational Jekyll with the instinctive Hyde, is made particularly explicit in Point Counter Point, a novel which is, like Antic Hay, largely set in London and includes a broad range of characters from the upper-middle class. However, as in Brave New World, while Huxley creates characters with different perspectives and opens up various possibilities, he allows none of the characters to achieve completion by fully counterbalancing Jekyll with Hyde; he prefers to indicate the possibility, rather than offer a paradigm.

The interplay of diverse characters and ideas in the novel accords

with the musical device of its title and the narrator's description of a performance of Bach's Suite in B minor: "The parts live their separate lives; they touch, their paths cross, they combine for a moment to create a seemingly final and perfected harmony, only to break apart again." Each part is "always alone and separate and individual" and all of them are "equally right and equally wrong" (29). Huxley is clearly explaining what he tries to do in his novels — create a polyphonic text in which the competing voices and characters exist in their own right yet contribute to a theme which the reader glimpses intermittently; the theme is like "the truth" which the listener momentarily experiences in the Bach Suite, only to have it slip "out of [his or her] grasp to present itself in a new aspect" (29). Later in the text the novelist Philip Quarles considers "the musicalization of fiction" (301), which would mean constructing a novel like a piece of classical music in which a number of variations are "all in organic relation: to a simple tune, and one might therefore "modulate through all the aspects of [a] theme" or present the story from various discrete perspectives, "emotional, scientific, economic, religious, metaphysical, etc." (302). Proposing a "[n]ovel of ideas" in which particular characters personify and promote particular theories, Quarles muses on the possibility of including a novelist as a character in the novel, partly because having the interior novelist experiment with "ways of telling a story" will enable the exterior novelist (Quarles) to have made

that same experiment (302 - 303).

Huxley himself is clearly doing what Quarles is considering, in that Quarles is Huxley's interior novelist here, and the novel's characters represent various emotional, scientific, philosophical and political credos. However, Quarles realizes that having characters exemplify particular viewpoints or characteristics which they both articulate and represent metonymically is problematic: "people who can reel off neatly formulated notions aren't quite real; they're slightly monstrous" (303). This is partially avoided by making the characters more realistic, so that "the thoroughly contemptible man may have valuable opinions, just as the in some ways admirable man can have detestable opinions" (326). Huxley therefore makes the reader's task harder, in that the quality of a point of view expressed by a character is not necessarily simply a function of the positivity or negativity of the character. One must evaluate and synthesise, grappling with the multifarious and disparate elements of the novel to make of it a coherent whole -- analogous to the process Huxley believes the individual should go through internally, and which the species must do with the world. The individual entity has his, her or its unique value, but also fuses into a bigger whole -- true for Huxley whether the entity is a person within society, a person's spiritual self within the 'all', one of the "diversity of states" within a particular human being (Texts and Pretexts 46), or a particular idea within a broader philosophical

context.

At this point in his writing career Huxley seems more intent on using diversity to criticise what is wrong with society, and then offering glimpses of a better way of life, than in creating characters who have actually got it completely right. Quarles -- like Huxley himself -- gropes toward a means of "transform[ing] a detached intellectual scepticism into a way of harmonious all-round living" (326). Unfortunately modern life militates against organic "all-round living" and tends toward creating the incomplete individual whose importance exists in his professional or public life, and in his capacity as consumer. In Point Counter Point, characters generally conform to Quarles' reflection that characters created to exemplify an idea or characteristic are 'slightly monstrous'. Point Counter Point, like Crome Yellow, Antic Hay and, to a large extent, Those Barren Leaves, features a number of characters who are incomplete themselves as individuals yet who each provide tools for Huxley in his critique of a fragmented society eroded by industrial 'progress' and ripe for fascism, war and apocalypse.

A partial solution to individual and social problems is offered by Rampion, whose consistent focus on instinct and the need to realise the self's organic potential enables those ideas to be explored more fully than in the previous texts. Rampion is obviously inspired by D. H. Lawrence, who had been a neighbour of Huxley's for several months in early 1928

while the latter had been in Switzerland working on Point Counter Point.<sup>14</sup> He is the book's spokesman for nature, or at least for a more natural life, and against the effects of advanced industrialism. To Rampion, modern industrialized society is a superficial society, reduced to a function of technology, market forces, mindless mass entertainments, and their combined and overarching power over human life:

Industrial progress means over-production, means the need for getting new markets, means international rivalry, means war. And mechanical progress means more specialization and standardization of work, means more ready-made and unindividual amusements, means diminution of initiative and creativeness, means increased boredom and restlessness, means finally a kind of individual madness that can only result in social revolution.

(308)

Industrial workers ought at least to try and acknowledge their demeaning work as demeaning and involve themselves in meaningful and enriching activities outside of work, living as "real complete human being[s]" during leisure periods (309). Instead, in an echo of Ruskin and Morris on the dehumanizing effect of industrial labour, Rampion complains that workers "live as idiots and machines all the time, at work and in their leisure" (309). Typically for Huxley, Rampion's solution to the problem requires primary change not initially at a social level, but "in the individual

psychology" (309), and he asserts the importance of balancing the intellectual with the primal, "mind and consciousness and spirit" with "body and instinct and all that's unconscious and earthy and mysterious" (414 - 415).

Rampion also offers a vivid vision of history, which is linked to his belief that people deny the natural part of themselves. It leads to a pessimistic vision of the future, in the sense that, as his foretelling of "social revolution" (above) suggests, Rampion anticipates a "final catastrophic crumbling of [an] already dreadfully unsteady society" (323). The path which history has followed, which will culminate in that catastrophe, has been generally downhill from a past beauty: "it's horribly humiliating that human beings should have made such a devilish mess of things. Life could have been so beautiful, if they'd cared to make it so. Yes, it was beautiful once, I believe. Now it's just an insanity" (324). The class from which Rampion originates, the working class, have declined to the point where they are "rather bad imitations of the bourgeoisie, a little worse than the original in some ways" and consequently (and ironically), Rampion's children are being educated as "scholars and gentlemen" rather than as peasants (324). In sum, Rampion's position echoes that of Morris: a degraded working class, the dehumanizing effect of factory work, the decline from a better time and the inevitability of revolution are all ideas which Morris held. However, Rampion offers no vision of a

coming utopia to leaven his belief that the present reflects a continuing decline toward apocalypse.

For Rampion, the root of the problem lies in the fact that humanity has progressively denied the importance of primal impulses, and increasingly become the servant of science and technology, a victim of “Jesus’s and Newton’s and Henry Ford’s disease” (123). The “grand industrial civilization” is now subject to the whims of leaders — both left and right — who believe in “the necessity of standardizing and specializing every trace of genuine manhood or womanhood out of the human race” (310). This negative view extends from past and present to pessimism for the future, and is depicted pictorially in Rampion’s sketches and paintings. An Edenic image of an illuminated naked couple lighting up an uncultivated landscape with their physical love (215), is juxtaposed with “Fossils of the Past and Fossils of the Future” in which dinosaurs are succeeded by equally ponderous creatures — including G.B. Shaw and Sir Alfred Mond — composed of bodiless but gigantic heads (216 - 217). The potential for a natural life is evident in the Edenic image, but the rational new “monsters,” overburdened with too much intellect, are ‘marching [the race] towards extinction” by “sacrificing physical life and affective life to mental life” (217). The image of huge bodiless heads echoes Wells’ image of the Martians in The War of the Worlds, but Wells himself is attacked by Rampion through two of the latter’s drawings.

Rampion has two sketches which represent different "Outlines of History," one being Wells' and the other his own (217). In the drawing of the Wells version, general human evolution, beginning with a monkey, becomes more particularized in representations of engineers such as Stephenson, scientists like Bessemer, and financiers like Rockefeller. It comes to "a contemporary consummation in the figures of Mr. H. G. Wells himself and Sir Alfred Mond," and indicates a future in which replications of Wells and Mond wind away "towards Utopian infinity" (217-218). The drawings therefore image Wells as the prophet of science, and technology, while Mond -- politician, businessman and chairman of I.C.I. -- represents corporate industry and applied science.<sup>15</sup> Both men symbolise the continued 'progress' of humanity along the strictly rational path blazed by Stephenson *et al* toward a utopia which neglects instinctive life and the arts.

Rampion's own satiric vision of history begins with the same monkey as he situates in Wells', and reaches its most positive heights with the Greeks and Etruscans. After a decline with the Romans, which continues through the mediaeval world, and then a brief positive upward trend in the Renaissance, the "stature of the representative humans" diminishes through Victorian dwarfism to "twentieth-century ... abortions" (218). The future is one of "gargoyles and foetuses," with huge heads and "the tails of apes," fighting and disembowelling one another" (218).

**Decline, regression, degeneration: Rampion's grim view of the past -- as a mainly downhill journey from an Hellenic and Etruscan peak -- drives his vision of a dystopian future. Like Huxley's Brave New World, Rampion's Outlines present only two unacceptable possibilities, a sterile utopia or something more savage, with no third option. Additionally, Mond's efficiency through company size and Wells' world government and State control seem to Rampion to be forces for the loss of individuality consequent on standardizing and compartmentalizing.**

**Despite painting a canvas depicting "the living relationship of [its human] figures to each other and the rest of the world" (311), however, Rampion remains more a force for individuality and individual balance than for any genuine interconnection with "the rest of the world". His consciousness of being working-class and "sitting on the hard reality" as opposed to relaxing on an "air cushion" like the upper classes (107) is not complemented by any obvious class solidarity or sense of community. Instead he prefers to see miners and steel workers as "pre-human monsters" with the "humanity squeezed out of them" (136). Rampion is more concerned with balancing the primal and the intellectual within the individual than with harmonizing the individual with the community. Thus his vision of history offers itself as the antithesis of progress, but is too limited in its perspective on the present and consequently offers no hope in its vision of the future. Philip Quarles refers to the atrophy of the**

“physical, intuitive, instinctive and emotional” in moderns, a vital dynamic which he feels is still found in Southern Europeans and a few rare intellectuals like Rampion who “have always believed in it, and lived it, while at the same time leading the life of the spirit” (327). However, although Rampion has succeeded in balancing his personal primary and intellectual drives, he is socially incomplete. His scathing criticism of the modern world and his bitter prophecy of its apocalypse suggests a certain misanthropy; his wry analysis of himself as “a pedagogue pervert. A Jeremiah pervert” (417) supports that. In “D. H. Lawrence” (1932) Huxley suggests that Lawrence’s psychological alienation caused him to isolate himself physically, resulting in his tendency to conceptualise humanity too broadly and “ignore all tiresome details” (227). Consequently he could be “bloodthirstily censorious,” make “sweeping and violent judgements,” and offer “inadequate” advice (Olive Tree 228). These flaws are clearly reflected in Rampion.

The novel offers a number of perspectives on the past and the future. Spandrell, anticipating Miller in Eyeless in Gaza (1936), suggests that one’s present and future are predetermined and made inevitable by one’s own life. In Spandrell’s mind, character influences one’s destiny: “Everything that happens is intrinsically like the man it happens to” (289). However, Spandrell’s predestination is inevitably only verifiable retrospectively, since he says “it’s only in the light of the end that you can

judge beginnings and middles" (151). Moreover Spandrell locates the mainspring for his own degraded destiny in the shock when his idealized mother remarried (291-292), so external events may presumably alter one's destiny. Nevertheless there is an inevitability to the spiral of misanthropic and self-destructive behaviour that ends in Spandrell murdering Webley and engineering his own death.

Spandrell's vision of his own life as predestined, and his manipulation of events by the murder which he ensures will result in his own death by a sort of auto-suicide, offers a personal history which parallels Rampion's version of human history. Spandrell's ideal lies in the past, before his mother remarried. Since then his life has been one of (moral) regression and degeneracy ending in a personal apocalypse. Spandrell has also made no attempt to become integrated into the community. Even those whom he meets socially, the intellectual and artistic elite, have been effectually rejected by him, as indicated by his perusing "nothing but magazines and the illustrated weeklies and the morning and evening papers" (228) rather than books, and reading the advertisements for concerts and plays, rather than actually attending. He "preferred to be bored and alone" (228). Even his murder of the demagogue Webley, superficially a selfless act, is solipsistic since it is not motivated by political will but partly by a death wish and partly to corrupt Illidge through murder as he (Spandrell) has corrupted women

through sex.

Illidge himself is equally flawed in his vision of the past and its significance for the future. Illidge, like Rampion, is a lower-class individual whose intellect has enabled him to rub shoulders with the cultural elite. Again like Rampion, Illidge has a strong class consciousness although, ironically, he is the assistant of an aristocrat -- the scientist Lord Tantamount (36-40) -- while Rampion has married one (114 -118). Illidge's lack of balance lies in his being too political, and his communist beliefs manifest themselves in his habit of generalizing about the masses rather than imagining them as individuals; he talks about people "as though they [are] indistinguishable from maggots" (137). Once human beings can be viewed in the abstract, it becomes easy to countenance their being sacrificed for some ideal or idealized future. Consequently Illidge represents the scientific, Marxist vision of history, and Spandrell notes that being a "militant communist and a scientific materialist and an admirer of the Russian Revolution" has enabled Illidge to sanction political murder, thereby justifying "the most primitive, savage, animal indifference to life and individuality by means of obsolete scientific arguments" (160). Illidge's communism is characterized by misanthropy and self-consciousness; acutely aware of himself as an individual, Illidge nevertheless denies it in others. His perspective on history is that of "a long-lived observer on the moon" to whom human settlement patterns

would look like "the pollution of ants and flies round a dead dog" (137); Illidge compares human history in geological time with "the life of a Sequoia divided by a generation of decay bacteria" (138). This idea of human time and its relation with cosmic time would exercise Huxley in later texts, but Illidge's version of it here is supremely negative. Maggots, flies and bacteria typify his misanthropic vision of humanity, and his energies tend to be directed toward mere criticism rather than constructive analysis. Critical of both the upper classes and the fascist Webley, he gets a bloody nose protesting at the latter's rally (345) but offers no real political alternatives. While, echoing Antic Hay, his biological experiments disrupt natural evolutionary processes by amputating newts' tails and limbs and grafting new tail growth onto the stumps of legs, and his communism necessarily entails a concern with the future, Spandrell suggests that Illidge actually rejects "any scientific theory that's less than fifty years old" (161). Illidge is therefore curiously marooned in a limbo, cut off from his own class and loathing the upper classes with whom he associates, resistant to modernity yet tampering with the course of evolution. Like the transplants of his newt experiments, he has been removed from his 'natural' (class) position and grafted somewhere new. And like the opinions of communists or radical socialists found in Huxley's other novels, such as Falx in Those Barren Leaves, Mark Staithes and Helen Ledwidge in Eyeless in Gaza, and John

**Barnack in Time Must Have a Stop, Illidge's philosophy is presented by Huxley as socially sterile. Certainly, like Huxley's other communists, he is ultimately ineffectual. Despite his reduction of humans to insects and his theoretical support of "political murder," he has to be goaded by Spandrell to conspire in Webley's death, and it is Spandrell who commits the murder itself, Illidge's reaction being a mixture of disgust, horror, and fear (394 - 398), subverting his earlier delusions of being a hero for heckling Webley at a rally (346). Illidge, then, sees human history in terms of decay, finds his theoretical detached belief in political assassination hard to sustain when tested personally and empirically, and offers negativity rather than any positive inspiration for the future. Reading Illidge as a metonym for British communists, one deduces that Huxley is critical of communist ideology in terms of both its perspective on history and its hopes for the future. Illidge is also something of a hypocrite. The Tantamount fortune can be traced back through the Industrial Revolution and its overworked children and women "hauling Tantamount coal-trucks," back through the slaves sweating on a plantation in Jamaica, to its roots in land "stolen from the monasteries" in the sixteenth century (23 - 24). Yet Illidge is complicit in this history of exploitation by working as the current Lord Tantamount's assistant.**

**Illidge, the self-conscious communist, has his antithetical counterpart in Everard Webley, the text's egotistical fascist. Whereas**

Illidge feels inferior and remains ineffectual, the patrician Webley is confident and dynamic, a fictional antecedent to Oswald Mosley.<sup>16</sup> However, Webley tends to view people as a “mass of undifferentiated humanity” (380), rather than as individuals, mirroring Illidge’s perspective of the people as an homogenous lump. Clearly the left and the right are equally guilty in having no real interest in individuals.

To Illidge, Webley is a “tin-pot Mussolini” (46). Webley’s British Freemen stand for typically fascist beliefs in their defence of “English tradition” and opposition to “the dictatorship of the stupid” (61). Webley’s belief that “the mob” were a threat to individuality, and that democracy results in a levelling-down, and must be shelved in order to allow the implementation of “direct action” against “the forces of destruction” were ideas for which Huxley had some sympathy in the 1920s.<sup>17</sup> However, Webley’s belief in the threat of violence as a tool for the imposition of political will, “for the sake of civilization, of progress” (62), became anathema to the later, pacifist, Huxley.

Webley is a fictional example of the 1920s’ “little Caesars” whom Scogan had remarked on in Crome Yellow. He is synonymous with the exercise of power, supporting a form of Social Darwinism – domination by the fittest – through his policy “that the best men shall rule, whatever their origin” (283). Obviously Webley fulfils his own vision of “the best.” His power is both political, in his control of the British Freemen, and personal,

in that he has attained power through force of personality. One woman notes that a (male) supporter's "outpourings" in praise of Webley resemble her own praise for "the domestic economy mistress" at school (55). The charismatic Webley uses the power of his oratory and his rhetorical skill to manipulate both his Freemen and the spectators to their rally: "Commanding and yet persuasive, passionate, but controlled and musical, his voice thrilled out" (345). Although Philip Quarles is able to be "dispassionately analytical" about "Everard's stage-managing," he is nevertheless moved by both Webley's "solar-plexus-punching voice" and the quasi-military spectacle (351). For Quarles' wife Elinor, however, Webley's oratory and rhetorical power have a sexual attraction: "She thought of Everard Webley. 'Force is always attractive,' she [said]" (297). Webley symbolizes power, then, on a number of levels. He also self-consciously plays the role of demagogue and ruthless commander; after reprimanding a subordinate his anger "instantly" vanishes and he reflects that anger is "an excellent weapon, so long as you [do not] let yourself be mastered by . He never did" (306). Webley understands how to use his own power, how to channel it to manipulate.

Since Webley is the personification of power, it is not surprising that Huxley has given him a concomitant vision of history. Just as Webley's love-letter to Elinor refers to her as "the enemy" and jests of subjecting her to "a slight Rape of the Sabines" (305 - 306), his particular

version of history celebrates domination and conquest. His collection of coins and medals reflects that:

There was the Macedonian tetradrachm, with the head of Alexander the Great in the guise of Hercules; the sestertium of 44 B.C. with the formidable profile of Caesar, and next to Edward III's rose noble stamped with the ship that symbolized the beginning of England's power at sea. And there, on Pisanello's medal, was Sigismondo Malatesta, most beautiful of ruffians and there was Queen Elizabeth in her ruff and Napoleon with laurels in his hair, and the Duke of Wellington. (281)

However, alongside these symbols of power, Webley sets a version of British history as one of lost power and decline.

According to Webley's manifesto, "Every English liberty has been paid for by a new slavery"(282). Webley's account loosely resembles Morris's Marxist analysis, in which feudalism has been succeeded by various tyrannies, up to and including the capitalist "tyranny of the landowners and the middle classes." Where it sharply diverges from any Marxist vision is in its evocation of "the dictatorship of the proletariat" and complementary intent to dispose of democratic rule by majority (282). For Webley, liberty lies in dealing with problems "without reference to traditional party prejudices or the worthless opinion of stupid majorities" (282). His ideal future is thus one of the one-party system and the

dictator: himself. Like Rampion, Webley's interpretation of the past is one of decline rather than progress, culminating in a distinctly unsatisfactory Twentieth Century. But whereas the negative forces which Rampion focuses on are science and industrial capitalism, Webley's bogey is democracy, and he seeks to utilise historical imagery in his struggle against it.

Webley evokes the vague nostalgia of "English tradition" (61) and, more specifically, dresses his Freemen in "the livery of Robin Hood and Little John, the livery of outlaws" (344). Literally wrapping themselves in an historical symbol, therefore, Webley's Freemen deliberately try to create a quasi-mythical image of themselves as outlaws on the margin, fighting for freedom against tyranny. Ironically their tyrants are really the working class, the common people on whose behalf Robin Hood supposedly fought against the power of Church and State. Webley's speech also evokes another heroic image from the pages of history-- the three hundred Spartans who "fought at Thermopylae against tens of thousands" of Persians (343 - 344) -- thereby both aggrandizing his Freemen and making a virtue of their relatively few numbers. Using historical references as propaganda fodder, Webley does not look to the individual for change, like Rampion. Rather he sees his organization as the *champion* of the individual, protecting "individuality from the mass man, the mob; they [the Freemen] were fighting for the recognition of

natural superiority in every sphere" (61). Webley, in fact, equates democrats with "mob-made law" and believes that socialist initiatives for "nationalizing industry" will result in a "state with tyrannical powers such as it has never possessed" and the concomitant discouragement of "individual enterprise" (344). What actually underlies the philosophy of the British Freemen, however, is individualism rather than individuality, an urge to be a dominant force in what Webley thinks of as the Darwinian "struggle for life" (381). According himself pan-mythic status, Webley imagines himself triumphant like "the bronze Achilles" he sees on the way to his death, forged from Napoleon's cannons, given to the Duke of Wellington, and standing with sword and shield at the ready (381). The constant in world history which Webley's medal and coin collection suggests, and which this union of Achilles, Napoleon, and Wellington confirms, is the successful and aggressive application of power. However, this turns out not to foreshadow his own political career, which is ignominiously abbreviated. Ironically, shortly after fantasizing about being a Greek hero, the supremely arrogant Webley dies unheroically, the victim of a self-hating nihilist and a painfully self-conscious communist, in a murder thought of by Spandrell as "a piece of squalid knockabout among the dustbins" (434). Also ironically, Webley's death boosts the British Freemen's recruiting so that their numbers are almost doubled (432), implying that an act of political violence may have

undesired results.

Point Counter Point, then, critiques the industrial England of the 1920s and its fragmented society without much cause for optimism concerning that society's future. Virtually all its characters represent individual ideas or characteristics but, for one reason or another, are flawed as individuals, and antipathetic to the realities of life and community. While none of the various points of view put forward by the characters is completely valid, the most viable observation is Rampion's. His belief that the individual should be "living completely, with the whole man" (411) has neither the cynicism of Spandrell's nihilism or hedonism, nor the inhumanity and sterility of Illidge's communism, nor the Will to Power of Webley's fascism: all these are motivated by egocentrism. Ultimately, Rampion's sardonic pessimism achieves nothing tangible; however, he does inspire Philip Quarles.

The intellectual but emotionally detached Quarles appears at one point to be on the brink of becoming the Calamy of this text, as he moves toward recognising the need for balance. He concurs with Rampion's social analysis and his promotion of self-integration; he writes of Rampion, "so many of his opinions agree with mine" (326). Quarles also reads history in terms of decline, much like Rampion, observing that the lower classes have degraded "into the modern bourgeoisie and proletariat" (327). Division of labour has culminated in one's specialization defining

**one's self.**

**The whole of modern civilization is based on the idea that the specialized function which gives a man his place in society is more important than the whole man, or rather *is* the whole man, all the rest being irrelevant, or even (since the physical ' intuitive, instinctive and emotional' part of man doesn't contribute appreciably to making money or getting on in an industrialized world) positively harmful and detestable. (327)**

**Reflecting Huxley's own continuing quest for wholeness, Quarles comments that if an intellectual "pursues his journey long enough and unflinchingly enough," he arrives at "the obvious" (326) which is "life itself" (327). Unfortunately, most intellectuals prefer the refined paths of specialized theory and research to "the complexities of reality" (327). Quarles wants his own novel to convey "the astonishingness of the most obvious things," saying that "everything's implicit in anything" (199-200) because any situation viewed holistically is the effect of a combination of immediate and distant causes extending ad infinitum. Quarles, like his creator Huxley, rejects the simple, the general and the monolithic in favour of the individual, the complex and the multiple. Artistic representations which generalize, simplify, or "idealize and beautify" (293) are also problematic if one therefore finds experience inferior to art, as does Philip's mother-in-law, Janet Bidlake (331). Quarles, then, is**

antipathetic to any historicist vision of continuing progress, critical of art which simplifies, idealizes, or avoids life's complexities, and aware of the need to integrate intellect and spirit with body and instinct. He intends to embark on a search for meaning in his own life, "to know, personally and intuitively, a lot about one's fellows and to have satisfactory relations with one's friends and lovers, one's wife and children" (328). This education in "the art of integral living" will in many ways replace the intellectual "Search for Truth" on which he has hitherto focussed and by means of which he has avoided having to deal with "this grotesque contemporary world" (328). He understands, however, (and considers including as a factor in his proposed novel) the struggle that modifying one's behaviour entails: "It's easy to believe one ought to change one's mode of living. The difficulty is to act on the belief" (351). Unfortunately Quarles does not make the steps toward "integral living" which similar characters manage in some of Huxley's other novels. If he were able to effect the internal changes which he ponders (328 - 329) and which Huxley would increasingly emphasize as necessary to social reform, then Quarles would seem to be the text's best portent for the future. Unfortunately, we are told that the "question of identity was...one of Philip's chronic problems" and that there is "something amoeboid about [his] mind" (201). The flexible nature of his personality makes him open to new ideas, but also makes his character too pliant to follow any particular course

**persistently. After the unexpected death of his son, which he describes as a "peculiarly gratuitous horror," he escapes from his problems by choosing to "go abroad" (435). The lack of any real hope at the text's end mirrors the general tone of decline evident in the respective versions of history offered by Webley, Quarles and Rampion. Equally, of course, it reflects the narrator's comments on Bach's evocation of the "complex and multitudinous" nature of our world in his Suite in B Minor; just when you seem "to have found the truth" it "slips out of your grasp" and the "seemingly final and perfected harmony" of the individual elements "break apart again" (29). The possibilities manifest in Rampion and Quarles (and Webley and Illidge, in less acceptable ways) offer potential solutions, but not *the* solution. The problem which required a solution was for each individual to achieve inner harmony and then harmony within society while still achieving his or her full potential as an individual. The novel reflects Huxley's belief that this is rare amongst moderns for whom egocentrism, not a complete and integrated self, is the norm. In the novel, as in real life, few individuals succeed in becoming genuinely integrated internally or externally. Hence the text's ending.**

**It concludes with the simpering hypocrite Burlap and his paramour Beatrice pretending "to be two little children" and sharing a bath together; the narrator tells us "of such is the Kingdom of Heaven" (444). Burlap's future is financially secure with the sale of his work on St. Francis, but the**

infantile pleasures of exuberant shared ablutions suggest a Heaven obtained by less Romantic means than those he earlier ascribed to Rimbaud who he said “gain[ed] the Kingdom of Heaven” by the “deliberate sacrifice” of abandoning literature (164 -165). Burlap himself sacrifices nothing. His solipsism is so intense that he has no real concern over past or future. However, while past and future are important to the text’s other characters, none of their varied perspectives seem to offer any clear futurity to the society which the text satirizes. The future society that Huxley would describe in his next satire, however, offers the superficial heaven connoted by Burlap’s connubial bath – hedonistic satisfaction, but spiritual emptiness.

### III

Brave New World, the first of Huxley’s specifically dystopian and utopian works, continues in the satiric tradition he established in his novels of the 1920s. The concern of those was his present, the spiritually sterile world of isolated individuals living in a fragmented society. In his 1929 essay “Spinoza’s Worm,” he writes that, instead of aspiring “to be superhuman” (Do What You Will 70), as in G.B.Shaw’s “loftily idealistic” utopian play Back to Methuselah (71), “let us think about the present, not the future .... [or] there will very soon be no future to think about” (72). It seems somewhat paradoxical, then, that his next major work is an apparent utopia set in the future. However, Brave New World depicts a

false utopia which reflects more on problems which Huxley observed in his own period than on any particular hope for the future, and evidences Huxley's continuing concern with balance, authenticity, wholeness, and Time. Rather than portray a fragmented and superficial society, as he had in his novels of the 1920s, Huxley creates his Brave New World in which society is superficially complete, harmonious, and happy. But the emphasis here should be on "superficially." Brave New World's satire turns the idea of fragmentation on its head, offering a future society which is apparently unified, but in which health, happiness, and wholeness have been bought at the expense of free will.

The novel presents Huxley with a structural difficulty. It portrays a society in which the *Zeitgeist* is the result of a careful and unified conditioning, and is therefore particularly monologic. Perspectives other than the officially inculcated ones are not only wrong, but can only be the consequence of accident, or from somewhere beyond the pale, as in the case of John the Savage. This monology militates against Huxley's usual device of offering diverse opinions by structuring his narrative as a polyphony. Limited in the number of competing voices which he can logically offer, Huxley loads his monologic new world with ideas and concepts which are not all unattractive, and of which some would be positive in a different context. As with polyphony, the reader must evaluate the various alternatives and make his or her judgment on them.

The reader, in being free to make an assessment, has choice -- something impossible for the majority of the decanted and conditioned populace of Brave New World. In presenting the novel in this way, Huxley has created a text which is utopian in some respects, but disturbingly dystopian in others. Consequently the best way to read this text is not as a utopia or a dystopia, or even an anti-utopia, but as a sort of meta-utopia -- a text which plays with utopian ideas and concepts, such as Wells', but is neither completely prescriptive, prophetic, nor fatalistic, subverting attempts to reduce it to the monologic entity which "dystopia" or "utopia" suggests. It must also be understood as an attack on utopian thinking, which Huxley regarded as an eagerness, most obvious in the Soviet Union, to sacrifice today on the altar of a better tomorrow. Such thinking could lead to a tomorrow like that in Brave New World: utopian, but with its utopia bought at a high price.

The novel depicts a society which is particularly artificial and in a state of stasis, maintaining its stability through distancing itself from nature and by sealing off the past. Huxley opposes the society's artificiality with a version of 'natural man': John from the Reservation. However, the reader is not left with a simple choice between the flawed synthetic society and the noble Savage, since John is also flawed. In a Foreword written for a 1946 edition of Brave New World, Huxley suggests that, were he to rewrite the novel, he "would offer the Savage a third

alternative" so that "between the utopian and the primitive horns of his dilemma would lie the possibility of sanity." This alternative society would have an economy based on Henry George's model of communal land ownership; a politics inspired by Peter Kropotkin's anarchist vision of co-existing co-operative communities, science and technology that would genuinely serve humanity, a religion devoted to "man's Final End, the unitive Knowledge of the imminent Tao or Logos," and a philosophy based primarily, not on simple utilitarianism, but on a consideration of any action or thought's contribution to the achievement of that "Final End" (Brave New World, unpaginated). One can see in Huxley's hypothetical revision the ideas typical of him by the time he wrote the foreword: antipathy to unchecked scientific and technological 'progress,' a faith in small communities as opposed to a centralized society, a resistance to the lowest-common-denominator thrusts of both capitalist democracy and communism, and a sense of mysticism. In the novel as written, however, this alternative is not provided as an option for the 'Savage' and Huxley's expressed regrets fourteen years later are as likely an effort to emphasize the importance of the mystically-oriented pacifist humanism to which he was by then committed, as they are representative of a genuine belief that Brave New World was flawed by the omission of a third possibility.<sup>18</sup>

Guinevera Nance notes that Huxley does not "assert the superiority of primitivism over scientific determinism" in the novel (81).

This is true, since what Huxley actually sought was balance between a 'natural' and civilized life. In his 1933 article "Primitive and Civilized" he notes that "primitivism and peasantry possess certain advantages over present-day civilization" but he advocates an attempt "to combine these advantages with the no less indubitably good features of civilization -- knowledge, elasticity of mind, health of body and power over natural environment" (Hearst Essays 183-184). This confirms what Huxley states in his 1946 Foreword, when he refers to John's "life of a primitive in an Indian village, a life more human in some respects, but in others hardly less queer and abnormal [than in the utopia]" (unpaginated). Moreover Huxley notes that "the Savage" eventually reverts to the "Penitente ferocity" of his upbringing and "ends in maniacal self-torture and despairing suicide" (unpaginated). Nance suggests that the manner of John's demise "effectively undercuts any temptation the reader might have to give primitivism the edge [over scientific determinism]" (81). However, while this is true, it is important to assess why primitivism is not a solution for Huxley. To effectively portray the universality and insidiousness of the 'brave new world,' Huxley makes the only possible exception to it an officially-sanctioned Savage Reservation, a place of ignorance and prejudice, tainted by outside influences such as Christianity. It is significant that, when Huxley wrote a complete dystopia, Ape and Essence, he depicts an America which has degenerated into a

brutal primitivism which is skewed by the vestiges of civilization, suggesting that primitivism is not really an option for the supposedly civilised because it could only be an adulterated primitivism. Moreover, were a return to it voluntary, it would not be a choice for the majority. Cardan's contention in Those Barren Leaves that Tolstoy's proposal for a return to "the genuine, primordial ... tribalism of the savage" would not work because people would not wish to give up modern conveniences (373) is obviously realistic.<sup>19</sup> Huxley's own viewpoint is that modern science and technology have enabled population growth to the point where we cannot sustain that population without them. In a 1932 radio broadcast, "Science and Civilization," Huxley makes his views on primitivism clear:

Tolstoyans and Gandhi-ites tell us that we must 'return to Nature' -  
 - in other words, abandon science altogether and live like  
 primitives or, at best, in the style of our mediaeval ancestors. The  
 trouble with this advice is that it cannot be followed—or rather, that  
 it can only be followed if we are prepared to sacrifice at least eight  
 or nine hundred million human lives. ... If we abolish science and  
 'return to nature' the [world's] population will ... [be halved]. ... No,  
 back to Nature is not practical politics. ... We are suffering from the  
 effects of a little science badly applied. The remedy is a lot of  
 science, well applied. (Hidden Huxley 106)

Huxley is not particularly anti-science, then, nor an advocate of a simple 'return to Nature' at this point. Brave New World depicts a world in which the science-less Reservation offers a life which fits Thomas Hobbes' famous aphorism, while life in the 'brave new world' is the result of a lot of science ... *badly* applied.

In his recent Imagined Worlds the physicist Freeman Dyson notes that Huxley's book is partly inspired by Daedalus, or Science and the Future, written by Huxley's friend, the biologist J.B.S.Haldane, and published in 1923, the main theme of which Dyson identifies as "that the progress of science is destined to bring enormous confusion to mankind unless it is accompanied by progress in ethics" (99). Dyson concludes that Brave New World depicts a future "in which the technology made possible by science brings science to a halt" so that "the rigidly conservative caste system," holding humanity in stasis, must inevitably end in "mutation and degeneration," dooming the species to a "stagnation and ultimate extinction" similar to that which Wells depicted in The Time Machine (125). Dyson notes, however, that it is not science itself which has caused the stasis in Huxley's novel; science has enabled it but "bureaucracy and eugenics" have eventually "permanently tamed" science itself in the name of stability (125). As Krishan Kumar has argued, "Huxley is not attacking science so much as *scientism*" (Utopia 254). However, as June Deery has observed, he felt scientists "were not

ordinarily taught anything about the metaphysics of their subject" (96). A more profound understanding of the place of humanity in the cosmos might bring with it more thoughtfulness of the consequences of experiment. In "Science and Civilisation," Huxley points out that "we are unable to foresee what discoveries in pure science will be applied to human life. But equally we are unable to foresee all the results of any given application of science" (Hidden Huxley 113). In Brave New World an unforeseen consequence of science has been its enforced stagnation. Science itself becomes as neutered in the novel as nature and history.

In Brave New World's civilization both Nature and history are kept at bay. There are two concepts of Nature in the text: the natural world outside humanity, and the forces of Nature as they directly affect humanity. The natural world only has a value if that value can be monetary. Society is based on a culture of leisure consumption, geared to the maintenance of full production, so that "the masses" are conditioned to hate the country but to enjoy elaborate rural sports, ensuring the consumption of sports apparatus and transport, without any concomitant, but non-productive, love of Nature (19). In fact Nature as a force, affecting human beings through the birth to death cycle, is abhorrent to a society in which babies are not born, but created artificially, and in which people maintain an artificially-youthful appearance until they die.

The relatively natural quality of the Savage Reservation of John's birth situates it, to some degree, outside history -- an anachronism in an otherwise technologically sophisticated world. Procreation is through sex rather than ectogenesis, and age brings the appearance of old age rather than an artificially-maintained youth. Its hybridized religion -- a mixture of totemic paganism and Christianity (102-104), rather than the self-annihilating artificiality of the "Solidarity Service" (70 -76) -- reveals it is not completely untouched by 'civilization.' However, its continuing symbiosis with Nature makes it potentially dangerous to the stability of the artificial society around it. Consequently, like the natural world in Eugene Zamiatin's We, it is off-limits to ordinary citizens in order to keep their "machine-like perfect world" safe (We 89); it is held at bay not, as in Zamiatin's text, by a "Green Wall," but by an electrified fence (Brave New World 94). From this artificially-isolated world there is "no escape" (91).

Nevertheless, John does escape, in that he is 'liberated' by Bernard Marx. However, he is only a 'Savage' by upbringing, not ancestry -- the offspring of the Director of Hatcheries and Conditioning whose accidentally pregnant girlfriend got lost when they visited the Reservation (86-87). Both John and his mother Linda are cultural hybrids. Linda has been conditioned to take multiple lovers as a cultural norm, but her consequent promiscuity in the Reservation is violently resented by the monogamous women with whose husbands she has sex

(113). Coming from a utopia where all babies are hatched technologically rather than born, her anti-maternal conditioning clashes with her primal maternal instinct, and she both loves and hates John (114 - 115). Linda helps John learn to read, and he seizes literacy as a defence mechanism for all the insults he suffers from the illiterate 'primitives' who mock him for Linda's sexual incontinence and her lack of ability to weave or mend his clothes (117). He subsequently becomes obsessed with a copy of The Complete Works of Shakespeare "hundreds of years" old (118 - 119); this contributes to his hybrid character, in that the words of Shakespeare take on a significance to him which is almost literally magical, "like the drums at summer dances" (119). His tendency to take art too literally manifests itself when he is so inspired by Hamlet's murderous thoughts of Claudius's "incest" with Gertrude that he stabs an Indian for regularly sleeping with Linda (120 - 121).

John, then, is a product partly of utopia and partly of the Reservation, with a philosophy of life complicated by a self-taught and unmediated Works of Shakespeare. Before John makes his (ultimately-fatal) exodus from the Reservation, Bernard Marx comments to him that "[it is] as though we were living on different planets, in different centuries" (111). This is true on two levels. One level is John's Reservation existence, a life of families and disease and natural processes that, in utopia, have long since been consigned to the dustbin

of history. The other level is Shakespeare, who, like the (East) Indians Huxley met who had "the more sententious parts of Shakespeare at their finger-tips" (Jesting Pilate 29), John quotes at every opportunity. All this makes John a misfit in both worlds. His tragedy is that he is really neither fish nor fowl, a partly-educated misfit amongst the tribal people, and an anachronistic individualist amongst the utopians, too civilized for the former and too unpredictable for the latter. On the Reservation, it is mainly John's utopian heritage, in the form of his Nordic looks and more particularly, his mother's promiscuity and paucity of practical ability, which causes his alienation. In utopia, it is his Reservation upbringing *and* the archaic language and outmoded sentiment of Shakespeare which set him apart. Eventually, both contribute to his loathing of utopia and his inability to reconcile himself to it.

Within the artificial stability of Brave New World's utopia, John is a force of Nature as well as the force of a relatively unrestricted human nature; he is a seed of instability. As such he is doomed. His actual undoing, however, is not his primitivism, but civilization; he is an example of an individual to whom art becomes too great an arbiter of life, and for whom filtering the actual through the prism of the ideal distorts perceptions of reality. He interprets the world in terms of Shakespeare, idealizing both the 'brave new world' outside of the reservation (126), based on his mother's stories, and Lenina, whom he imagines as Juliet

(130). John's oration of Romeo and Juliet, during which he visualises himself and Lenina as the eponymous lovers, is greeted only with laughter by the poet Helmholtz, who cannot imagine romantic love or a sense of loss, dispassionately interpreting Shakespeare's "emotional engineering" (166) as the work of a consummate "propaganda technician" (168). Similarly John's Shakespearean protestations of love are incomprehensible to Lenina, who can only understand love as carnality; John's shocked and puritanical reaction to her blatant offer of sex is to call her a whore and strike her (174-178). John is therefore a paradox -- a 'natural man' to whom the idea of sex devoid of romantic love is abhorrent.

John's disillusioned revolt against a "brave new world" which now has the "nauseous qualities of a nightmare" (191) is ineffectual and short-lived, involving mainly the throwing away of some of the artificial happiness pills, *soma*. Having had his idealizing of both utopia and Lenina shattered, John engages the arch-apologist for utopia, the Controller, Mustapha Mond, in a debate in which God, free will, and individuality are set against pleasure and stability. Again, John's terms of reference are idealized and Shakespearean, focussing particularly on Hamlet, King Lear and the nobility of struggle and suffering. The Controller sums up the argument as one of artificially-conditioned happiness versus the unhappiness of ageing, illness, uncleanliness and

fear – the concomitants of “God, ...poetry, ... danger, ... freedom, ... goodness ...[and] sin” which John demands. John consequently chooses “the right to be unhappy” (219). However, the terms of this debate are not, as Nance implies, simply scientific determinism versus primitivism, part of an interrogation of the proposition that “happiness must necessarily exclude freedom” (80). Rather, by partially civilizing the ‘Savage’, and making ‘high’ culture -- in the form of John’s use of Shakespeare as an infallible touchstone -- part of his undoing through his consequent, ultimately destructive, tendency to idealize, Huxley both invests John with a tragic flaw, *and* makes civilization the most significant contributor to his downfall.

Civilization eventually kills John when he becomes a commodity. When he exiles himself to the solitude of an abandoned air-lighthouse and a life of penitence and self-mortification, he attracts reporters “like turkey buzzards settling on a corpse” (226). Brave New World manifests a number of trends which Huxley had identified by the early 1930s, and John’s commodification as titillating spectacle can be read as an example of the mindless mass entertainment of which Huxley was critical in his own time. Huxley precociously anticipates the current fad for voyeuristic television, and John becomes the subject of a successful wildlife documentary.<sup>20</sup> The masses flock to his home in order to amuse themselves by watching the self-flagellating “ape” (233). John’s lashing

of both himself and the futilely supplicating Lenina sparks a sadomasochistic orgy in which he himself apparently takes part, increasing his popularity as entertainment (235-236). Although John takes his own life, it is the soul-less civilized horde who seek to consume him as entertainment who cause his suicide.

His death apparently achieves nothing and, if Huxley intended John's brief assault on utopia to have some sort of ripple effect, he gives little sign. However, for all John's intractability and naivety, Huxley does allow him a certain nobility in having him die for his convictions. He maintains his individuality throughout, possibly because his character was formed in the Reservation. This consistency is more than can be said for John's 'civilized' equivalent, Bernard Marx. As far as Utopia is concerned, Bernard is an insider rather than an outsider, but does not feel like one. Like John, he is a misfit, who feels alienated and lonely, and has a sense of himself as an individual. Unfortunately, like Illidge in Point Counter Point, Bernard's individuality is embedded in a painful self-consciousness and inferiority complex. His small stature—unfitting for one of his caste—has resulted in his being the victim of jibes, instituting a spiral of ridicule, reaction, and more ridicule:

The mockery made him feel an outsider; and feeling like an intruder he behaved like one, which increased the prejudice against him and intensified

the contempt and hostility aroused by his physical defects. Which in turn

increased his sense of being alien and alone. A chronic fear of being slighted made him avoid his equals, made him stand, where his inferiors were concerned, self-consciously on his dignity. (58)

Like his friend, the poetic, athletic, and socially adept Helmholtz Watson, Bernard knows he is an individual. However, whereas the latter's difference resides in his sense of being "physically defective," the former's sense of separateness is rooted in his having "too much ability" (60). Watson, like Calamy in Those Barren Leaves, has a sense of there being "something else" to life which he wants to discover (60). This sensitivity to some elusive, presumably mystic, meaning outside himself is complemented by his selflessness, as when he fights at John's side after the latter causes a riot at the Park Lane Hospital by throwing away *soma* rations (195). When confronted with exile as a consequence of the individuality which this act embodies, he chooses a "thoroughly bad climate" in the belief it will help him write better, as he works toward artistic responsibility (209). In his dedication to his writing, his bravery, and his seeking some meaning to life beyond the superficial, Watson would seem to be one character who suggests eventual movement within this static society.

Bernard, however, lacks Watson's fortitude. Since his individuality

is built on a base of inadequacy and self-consciousness, he seems unable to look beyond his own desires, fears, and grievances. Even bringing John back from the reservation is part of a "strategy" (125) to humiliate the Director by confronting him with his one-time paramour and their (illicitly conceived) son (136). John becomes merely his ticket to sexual conquest and self-aggrandizement (140-141), a ticket which loses validity when John refuses to co-operate (156-160). Bernard fails to support John in the Hospital fray and tries to absolve himself of all responsibility for John's actions as he grovels at Mond's feet (206). Although he subsequently apologizes to John for his behaviour (220-221), he is clearly a weak individual, exhibiting the flaws of such characters as Denis Stone from Crome Yellow and Illidge from Point Counter Point. While the over-compensated Watson rises above his social conditioning, the self-centred Bernard exemplifies the emptiness which that conditioning creates in the core of the individual; despite being an exceptionally individual citizen, the shallow hedonism of his society has made him chronically egocentric and lacking in conviction.

Brave New World offers a civilized society which is superficially utopian, in that it is a unity and operates harmoniously. Virtually all its citizens are employed and enjoy health and happiness. Unfortunately its only concession to the difference which individuality normally connotes is the variation between artificially-engineered grades of intelligence, and

between different types of conditioning. The Reservation's brutal hybrid culture is somewhat unforgiving of difference, but is at least more organic, not imposed on its citizens through indoctrination, rather than being grown into by them. Although both societies are maintained in a temporal bubble, John's is less contrived than Bernard's and, misguided though he is, it gives him the fortitude to die for his beliefs. When Bernard's individuality is challenged, he merely buckles.

The suppression of individuality is but one of the ways by which stability is assured in this utopia. By ensuring that comparisons with the past are virtually impossible, that the effects of the passage of time on individuals are nullified, and that any potential change in the status quo is repressed, an illusion of temporal stasis has been achieved. As M. Keith Booker has noted, "the citizens of Huxley's dystopia ... live entirely in the present, with no sense of either past or future" (Dystopian Impulse 64) so that the population is "unable to formulate any notions of genuine political change that might threaten the existing system" (65). While this situation works toward peace and stability, it is a situation that has been contrived artificially, rather than arrived at organically. It is also an exaggerated manifestation of the separation of humanity from 'natural' time which Huxley observed in Western society. In the essay "Time and the Machine," he notes that "pre-industrial people know time in its daily, monthly and seasonal rhythms. ... Pre-industrial man was never allowed

to forget the majestic movement of cosmic time." The modern town dweller, however, "is the inhabitant of an artificial universe that is, to a great extent, walled off from the world of nature"; time to "industrialized man" is "artificial, machine-made time" (Olive Tree 124). In Brave New World, Huxley has created an "artificial universe" which has taken this ignoring of cosmic time a step further; the people are "walled off" from natural time to the extent that its passage in the individual has been effectively negated with the abolition of "all the physiological stigmata of old age" (Brave 49). Moreover time on any sort of large scale is held in stasis so effectively that the very concepts of past and future are almost meaningless to the mass of the people. Henry Ford, an example of "industrial man" who is revered in the novel, is invoked in support of the abolition of the study of the past and its arts and sciences. One plank in the structure of the utopia's stability is this isolation in time, its cutting itself off from the flux of history, and as the Controller makes a gesture which seems to whisk away the cities, civilizations, literature, and classical music of the past, he reverentially repeats one of the industrialist's most famous statements, "that beautiful and inspired saying of Our Ford's: History is bunk" (30).<sup>21</sup>

In Brave New World the concept of progress has been collapsed, at least for the general public. This has been achieved partly through the severing of society from history, "... by a campaign against the Past; by

the closing of museums, the blowing up of historical monuments ...; [and] by the suppression of all books published before A.F. 150" (45).

Moreover, the future is reined in by nullifying scientific progress; despite hypnopaedic platitudes which convince people that science is all-important, the Controller maintains that "science is subversive" and must be "carefully chained and muzzled" (205) since change inevitably threatens stability. Controlled social experiments in Cyprus and Ireland, for a casteless society and a reduced work-day respectively, have been failures (204-205). A stable society has been maintained in its present optimum form for a century and a half, with individuals scientifically tailored to suit particular types of employment and specific levels of intellectual activity (11-13). Stability is all, and stability requires that the present be, in a sense, eternal -- a stable population must not perceive change, so the past must not be available as a referent, and the future is held at bay by the confinement of science within strict boundaries. The only real reminder of the past which is tolerated is also confined within strict boundaries: the Reservation.

According to Huxley, Brave New World was supposed to be "on the horror of the Wellsian Utopia and a revolt against it."<sup>22</sup> However, in an article written two years after Brave New World, "100 Years Hence," and musing on the possibility of "a Wellsian paradise," he writes "I can never quite make my mind up whether I should find the future paradise a golden

dream or a nightmare" (Hearst Essays 281). By satirizing in Brave New World Wells' general vision of a controlled and artificial utopia, Huxley plays with ideas which, in other circumstances and with a different orientation, might receive his approbation. For instance, the separation of the people into contented and mutually-exclusive castes, with an Alpha-Plus elite, might seem to be a solution to the lowest-common-denominator mass culture of homogeneous mediocrity of which Huxley was apprehensive, since the elite might be expected to foster high culture. However, this is not the case. With the exception of the Controller, the population is kept ignorant of art, including Shakespeare (200-201); what literature there is emanates from the State, amounting only to propaganda, and art has made way for "the feelies and the scent organ" (201). The World State's motto on the text's first page -- Community, Identity, Stability -- seems superficially to fit in with Huxley's ideas of individuality within social unity, and suggests the lack of conflict which would accord with Huxley's pacifism. Yet "identity" turns out to be conformity, the "community" is totalitarian, and "stability" has been achieved by ectogenesis, eugenics, cloning, hypnopaedia, the psychological conditioning of children, the artificial inducement of happiness through drugs, and societal stasis. The solidarity service which Bernard attends, with its idea of "Twelve-in One," initially suggests a mystic -- if drug-induced -- experience, and leaves at least one of its

celebrants with “the peace ... of balanced life, of energies at rest and in equilibrium. A rich and living peace” (76). Yet the diabolical association of conjuring up some supernatural being to come into their midst, the hint of the parody of a Mass, the emphasis on the “synthetic” quality of the accompanying music, and the degeneration of the rite into an orgy, undercut this.

The society depicted in Brave New World is a peculiar synthesis: the consumerist, ersatz and hedonistic elements of American culture, melded with the totalitarian, dispassionately planned and rigidly controlled society of the Soviet Union. To some extent the carefully controlled cycle of consumption and production accords with Huxley’s own ideas; in an article entitled “The Victory of Art over Humanity,” published in 1931, he discussed the problem of over-production in both industry and agriculture from a quite Wells-like perspective, concluding that there was a need for “some sort of world-wide plan” operating on the lines of the successful Port of London Authority but dealing with “the larger chaos of World Trade” (Hidden Huxley 86). In the same article, echoing both Ruskin and Morris, he bemoans the lack of creativity which condemns machine-operatives to “psychological poverty” and, referring ironically to the “Christ-like unselfishness” of Henry Ford for removing the “burden of creativity” from working people, wonders if Ford will be acknowledged by them “as their saviour” (78), an obvious foreshadowing of Brave New

World. In the latter text the Controller indicates how a mechanism has been found to address the issue of needing "sane" people "stable in contentment" to "tend the wheels" of industry.(37). The problem of a lack of mental stimulation for those doing mundane tasks, the "psychological poverty" which Huxley criticises, has been solved scientifically by producing mentally-undeveloped Epsilons who *need* no intellectual stimulation. The "chaos" of production is solved through the central control of output and "the conscription of consumption" (44) -- even children's games are not sanctioned by the Controller unless they require a suitable consumption of apparatus (26). These policies create a sense of harmony but all deny individuality and, therefore, render the individual inauthentic. Given Huxley's sarcasm concerning Henry Ford, and suspicion of the "Wellsian Utopia," one can therefore read these aspects of Brave New World as dystopian measures in utopian clothing.

In the final analysis, Brave New World remains ambiguous, an amalgam of competing discourses on the page which remains resistant to a single and completely unified analysis. Its dialogic narrative reflects the polyphonic nature of Huxley's other texts of the 1920s and 1930s, and it deals with many of the same issues. One of those issues is the significance of the past and its interpretation. As with the other themes of the text, one suspects it results from Huxley's internal struggle, including his debating of what society would be willing to give up in order to gain

happiness -- the inverse of the debate which Mond has with John -- and whether the sacrifice would be worth the gain. Brave New World avoids potential problems which might arise from a flawed awareness of the past or from the sacrificing of the present for the future, by abolishing the past and concentrating the energies of all on the present. Unfortunately sacrificing the individuality of people and their ideas so that society might achieve universal happiness seems not to be worth the price.

#### IV

To return from Brave New World to Huxley's later naturalistic works is to encounter once more the complementariness of opposed ideas. Brave New World depicts a society in which part of the cost of happiness, as a concomitant of the disappearance of organic diversity, is the loss of genuine spontaneity and unpredictability. Conversely, Huxley's next published novel, Eyeless in Gaza (1936), suggests that an element of predestination is present in even the most random events. The novel also returns to the mysticism with which Calamy was grappling in Those Barren Leaves, but has less concern with the historical past as a referent than earlier Huxley novels, opening up instead a debate on the larger issue of the individual's relationship with time itself, and how much one's own history is predestined in some way.

As Beavis travels to his mother's funeral someone's thoughts, possibly the omniscient narrator's, turn to time: "Always imperiously time,

categorically time" (32). This sense of time's power is made particularly evident in Eyeless in Gaza by Huxley's defamiliarization of time itself. Eyeless in Gaza eschews linear narrative in favour of a fragmented temporal structure. On one level the text's structure is simply analogous to the process of recall; it reflects those trans-historical leaps of memory that any particular experience or thought may generate, resulting in a sequence of impressions from different periods in one's life.<sup>23</sup> However, Huxley's idiosyncratic chronology also forces the reader to put the (linear) story together from the (temporally disjunctive) plot. While each chapter is dated, and the novel follows a number of periods in the life of the protagonist, Anthony Beavis, over some thirty years, no two chapters are consecutive in terms of date or content. Consequently the reader must often observe the effect before discovering the cause in a more problematic process than that engendered by novels which employ anachrony conventionally, through simple analysis and prolepsis. For instance, while Miller, the mystic pacifist of whom Beavis eventually becomes a disciple, is completely unknown to Beavis until they meet in January 1934 (Chapter XLIX), he is first mentioned to the reader by Beavis in Chapter II (April 1934).

The novel opens on August 30<sup>th</sup> 1933 with Beavis shuffling through old (and thought-provoking) snapshots (1-10). Later that day, he finds the past intruding on the present, as the "seemingly ... solid fragments of

present reality” become “riddled with [the] pitfalls” of unbidden memories (22). He reflects on the sequences of images and sensations which his memory puts together as “thirty-five years of his conscious life made ... known to him as a chaos—a pack of snapshots in the hands of a lunatic” (23). These mental snapshots -- parallelling the literal ones -- often have uncomfortable connotations for him, and, as Jerry Wasserman has suggested, the novel is partly about Beavis dealing with the responsibility he has as an individual for both the events that occasioned those ‘snapshots’ *and* their ramifications; he must eventually recognize that Miller’s Buddhist perspective -- that one’s actions make the receipt of a card inevitable -- is more valuable than the idea that the recalling of those events is simply chaotic (138).

Huxley makes the reader work in tracing the sequence of cause and effect by which Beavis is reformed; essentially the reader’s struggle to make sense of the text’s fragmented chronology is analogous to Beavis working through his “pack of snapshots” in his mind to come to terms with the past and make his future more meaningful. Beavis’s romantic conquest of Brian’s fiancée, Joan, was the direct cause of Brian’s death, but one of the effects, admitting his responsibility, had been sidestepped by Beavis immediately after Brian’s death when he burned four documents which had implicated him: Joan’s confessional letter to Brian, Brian’s consequent suicide note, and Brian’s letters to his mother and

Joan (542-545). The encounter with Miller eventually results in Beavis being able to move beyond his spiritual isolation, transcend his "detached and irresponsible sensuality," and achieve a fulfilment of self and a realization of his responsibilities both as an individual within a society and to the other individuals within that society. Later in the story (April 1934), though earlier in the plot, he reflects that "self-knowledge [is] an essential preliminary to self-change" (14); part of this self-knowledge will come from applying rationality to the "chaos" of memory in order to acknowledge his own responsibility for events.

However, the text's chronology also has the effect of suggesting that one's relationship with time may not be on a strictly linear basis. Beavis, in the aftermath of making love to Helen, is already beginning to form an idea that would prepare the way for his later adoption of Miller's perspective; he has a sense that one act may be stored in memory as opposed to another because it will be required to resurface at some particular point in the future. The memory of his and Brian's striking of flints to produce sparks may have been stored for this particular moment so that "he might be forced, in the midst of this act of detached and irresponsible sensuality, to think of Brian and of the things that Brian had lived for; yes, and had died for" (24). If the reason some events are remembered has to do with their importance in the future rather than in the present, then there is more to Time than strict linearity.

One of the most memorable scenes occurs in Chapter XII when the sunbathing protagonist Beavis and his lover Helen are spattered with the blood of a fox terrier which has suddenly fallen from an unknown aeroplane. The event is random but it acts as a catalyst; Beavis's jocular and inappropriate response to the incident is seen by Helen as symptomatic of his lack of emotional commitment to her, and she breaks off their affair (153-155). On one level this accords with a comment made later by Beavis's eventual spiritual mentor, Miller, in indirect connection with one of the series of falls which have great impact on the protagonist. An accident involving the misanthropic and ascetic Mark Staites results in the latter contracting gangrene. Beavis, out seeking a doctor, providentially crosses paths with James Miller, a doctor and Buddhist. Afterward Miller himself remarks that "nothing ever happens by chance, of course. One takes the card the conjurer forces on one — the card which one has oneself made it inevitable that he should force on one. It's a matter of cause and effect" (550). Miller explains this more fully a few pages on, relating it to Buddhists: "they don't believe in special providences for individuals; they believe in a moral order, where every event has its cause and produces its effect - where the card's forced on you by the conjurer, if only because your previous actions have forced the conjurer to force it upon you" (555). As far as the recipients of the metaphorical card are concerned then, it appears to be random. Neither

meeting Miller nor the falling dog are in any way anticipated by the subjects at the time. However, it is the *predisposition* of Beavis prior to each event that makes the event a cause of a particular effect, and therefore marks the event as particularly significant. In a sense, Huxley is implying a sort of determinism active in personal history, although it is seemingly only obvious in retrospect, and therefore lacks the prophetic quality of deterministic analyses of social history as practised, for example, by Marxists. The immediate consequence of the dog incident is the end of Beavis's affair with Helen, but the longer-term effect is to initiate a life-changing series of events for Brian. It results in his adoption of Miller's spiritual and pacifist views; his predisposition here, which was the basis for his motivation to make the fateful journey with Staithes, had been toward finding a meaning for his life beyond either a Lawrencian "animal purpose" or the intellectual pursuit of "[t]hinking and ...knowledge" as ends in themselves (360). Miller provides that meaning, or at least a path to it.

Beavis's past has been one in which economic freedom has enabled him to live a shallow existence; although intellectually adept he has lacked any real motivation beyond seeking pleasure and avoiding boredom. Consequently he has spent years working on his book Elements of Sociology (139), doing the necessary research in the detached spirit of the "Higher Lifer," escaping into a world of scholarship

**“where there’s no risk to health and the minimum of responsibilities” (172), in the guise of “a man of science [who] tries to keep himself unbiased by his interests and prejudices” (173). Unfortunately this scientific detachment has been manifest as lack of real engagement or involvement; when Beavis laughingly remarks “I’m quite content with only *knowing* about the way of perfection” (122) he means he has preferred to know of it rather than actually experience it.**

**The Elements ..., however, was misguided in its original conception, something which Beavis realizes in the aftermath of meeting Miller. His initial plan, for a text “constructed of historical facts,” he now understands as “a picture of futility, apparently objective, scientific, but composed, I realize, in order to justify my own way of life” (15). Moreover he has now rejected this mere history for “a new shape” which will include constructive criticism in order to investigate ways in which human behaviour can be modified (15). In going beyond a simple historical record of society to an engagement with behavioral problems Beavis’s text will reflect his own new engagement with the world. Huxley is here implying that mere historical narrative is, like all science or social science, too circumscribed if dissociated from the realities of existence. Moreover, the original Elements was to have been a passive catalogue, rather than a critique with a positive purpose; the distinction between it and Beavis’ new project is analogous to the difference between his friend**

Beppo's "passive" and "negative" pacifism, and the "active and positive pacifism" which Beavis recommends to him (18).<sup>24</sup>

While the novel comes out firmly on the side of *personal* progress, it reflects Huxley's scepticism of *social* progress as a process which could be felt genuinely in any essential way by the individuals involved in it.

Very early in the text, Beavis notes: that "progress can only be recorded, not experienced. ... [It] may, perhaps, be perceived by historians; it can never be felt by those actually involved in the supposed advance" (3).

Huxley clarifies this point in a number of his essays and letters.<sup>25</sup>

Moreover, however one experiences progress, innovation often means that something else is superseded, so the gain also entails a loss.<sup>26</sup> This suspicion of the fact of progress in its meaning to the individual had manifested itself as a satire of Wellsian scientific and social progress in Brave New World, and would surface with a twist in Ape and Essence when a combination of scientific advance and nationalism devastates the planet and brings about a new barbarism.

Increasingly, however, the idea of progress in any quantifiable way becomes of less interest to Huxley than the idea of union. He suggests that the only way for civilization to optimise itself is by means of unity; the individual must first unify her- or himself through self-integration, and then integrate that self with the community and the cosmos, something Beavis is working on with Miller for the latter part of the story. Through Miller he

comes to the conclusion that a peaceful world cannot be created solely through a top-down process. "National behaviour" is really "a large-scale projection of today's personal behaviour" or at least "a large-scale of the individual's secret wishes and intentions" (228-229). Consequently "pacifist propaganda must be aimed at people as well as their governments" and embody "a set of instructions in the art of modifying character" (230). The desired end should be a world of peace and harmony, a goal which is unattainable through hatred and violence. Miller maintains that "means determine ends" so that what the Russian Revolution actually created was a state "using secret police methods" (415). Helen's communist lover Ekki intends making changes to the system by whatever means necessary in support of an overarching political creed; his effort fails when he is kidnapped in Switzerland by the Nazis and smuggled into Germany (Chapter LIII). Beavis suggests that Ekki was an idealist "with an exceptional gift for self-deception" who either believed that "the end justifies the means" or did not realise that the means (hatred and violence) "condition the end" (605). The implication is that Ekki should first have sorted himself out and then directed his activism peacefully and toward peace and unity.

Nature is part of that unity in which humanity must participate. However, nature, *per se*, is not a major concern of Huxley's in this text. Beavis, previous to meeting Miller, makes the Jefferies-like observation

that "nature is senseless" (162).<sup>27</sup> Men avoid "slavery to nature" by means of "social organization and technical invention," so that city-dwellers may "forget that such a thing as nature exists" (162). However, the beauty of nature inspires an epiphany in Brian Foxe in which it seems to him that he and Joan are "walking through the image of their love":

His love, it seemed to him, in that apocalyptic moment, was more than merely *his*; it was in some mysterious way the equivalent of this wind and sunshine, these white gleams against the green and blue of spring. His feeling for Joan was somehow implicit in the world, had a divine and universal significance. He loved her infinitely, and for that reason was able to love everything in the world as much as he loved her. (214)

The apocalyptic vision which Brian experiences is achieved through nature, but is not essentially a function of nature. In his earlier essay "Country Ecstasies," Huxley notes that, at certain times, one may "become directly conscious of his sensations and intuitions, an apocalyptic process, which [John Keats] describes [in Endymion] ... as the forming of a fellowship with essence." Manifestations of external nature, like "the mountains, the sea, sky, [and] stars" have a value "insofar as they stimulate us to exchange the consciousness of separate selfhood for that of not-self, essence, the all" (Texts and Pretexts 41). Huxley believes

that “self and not-self are states of our consciousness” (41), so the union we achieve is internal. Nature can be a conduit to that apocalyptic fusion of consciousness; certainly it compares favourably in Eyeless with other means of achieving other, less elevating, moments of insight.<sup>28</sup> However, epiphanic moments of apparent fusion occasioned by a natural scene are not an end in themselves; as Sebastian Barnack concludes in Time Must Have a Stop (1944), “country ecstasies” must be understood to be “only an invitation to move on to something else” (285). When Beavis has his own epiphany in Eyeless’s last chapter, where story and plot finally coincide, it is deep thought when he is indoors and in solitude which occasions it, not anything external. However, in that epiphany he sees patterns “in seed and leaf and root” visible in all nature, from soil and air to mammals, demonstrating the “unity of life” (613).

It is in this final epiphany that the various elements of the text come together under the umbrella of unity. Beavis has shifted from an unengaged perspective and an indolent hedonism to a commitment to the pacifist movement, so that the text’s emphasis on positive change in the individual has obviously been manifested by Beavis himself.

Nevertheless, he is still an individual, and the unity of all life which he now believes in must also, as far as human beings are concerned, acknowledge the individuality which was such a threat to the artificial unity of Brave New World: “one in division; united and yet separate”

**(Eyeless 614). The idea of unity also carries over into Time as a concept. Here the suggestion of non-linear time in the text's fragmented chronology becomes resolved in the idea of timelessness. This timelessness, however, is not the eternal and interminably happy present of Brave New World, but a more positive timelessness. Different memories, different episodes in Beavis's life separated by space and time, are all part of the whole:**

**Unity is diversity, even in separation. ... the dark dried blood on that mangled face [Brian's] among the rocks, the fresh [dog's] blood spattered scarlet over Helen's naked body, the drops oozing from the raw contusion on Mark's knee. Identical patterns, and identical patterning of patterns. (612)**

**In part this represents Beavis's being able to reconcile himself with the more uncomfortable episodes in his past -- those unwanted snapshots dredged up from his memory. However, it is also part of the process by which he mystically experiences a sense of utter unity. This leads on to the inner peace which Huxley hoped would ultimately overflow into global peace, as Beavis experiences "peace in this silence, this still emptiness where there is no more time" (619). Eventually, however, Beavis is hauled back from "the light" to "everyday existence," by a symbol of time, the striking clock. In the workaday world in which most of us live, the clock, while admittedly artificial, structures life to the degree that time**

cannot easily be escaped. However, several characters in Huxley's next published novel, After Many a Summer (1939), make strenuous efforts to do so.

In After Many a Summer time is a central issue. The text's pacifist guru suggests that one human characteristic which needs to be addressed is that "we're obsessed with time" (93). This obsession is visible in the novel in two characters who wish to opt out of biological time as it applies to them, and are willing to postpone their own deaths indefinitely, whatever the cost. Another seeks to ignore it altogether, living hedonistically within a temporal bubble. Moreover, while none of the other major characters is quite so worried about the clock ticking, a number of them have adopted particular positions relative to Time. One, a socialist and scientist who fought in the Spanish Civil War, has all his political and philosophical investment deposited in the future. Another immerses himself in the dusty records of the past, while living a half life in the present. Finally, and more positively, the text's philosopher offers social criticism and spiritual advice, suggesting that the antagonisms and superficiality of the present might be dissolved through commitment to inner and social peace and a sense of eternity. All of this takes place in the bright superficiality of Southern California which Huxley had described in a letter to the author John St Loe Strachey on his first visit in 1926 as "pure Rabelais" and "the nearest approach to Utopia yet seen on our

planet".<sup>29</sup> Ultimately the text illustrates the problems which Huxley perceives in modern society and offers a teacher who has a solution to them, but does not allow any character other than the teacher to fully realise the solution.

Nature is a factor in the novel mainly in its absence and in attempts to deny it. Exterior nature is either domesticated -- visible in the landscape vestigially in "mathematically planted rows" of fruit trees (12) -- or exhausted, as symbolised by the Dust Bowl which farmers caused by "tearing up the grass and planting nothing but wheat," prompting penniless transients to travel to California from Kansas (73). Propter's dream of peasant communities (114, 187) offers an image of individuals living in harmony with nature, but that dream is not realised within the text. Nature as an interior force, a factor in human life, is something which the millionaire Jo Stoyte seeks to obviate through paying for Dr. Obispo's scientific research in a bid to retard the ageing process and extend his life (40-41). Stoyte is terrified of death, haunted by visions of his own tomb (164), and ready to eat carp innards like the Fifth Earl of Gonister, discovered in the book's last chapter to be still alive at two hundred years old. Unnatural means lead to unnatural ends, and the price the Earl has paid for defeating nature has been regression into a chimpanzee-like creature (237-238); despite this horror Stoyte seems willing to risk the same fate to achieve a similar longevity (241).

**Stoyte and the Earl therefore intend to negate biological time, a motivation which also impels Stoyte to have a much younger mistress, Virginia, “cherished to the point of idolatry” (163), as a symbol of his virility. Unfortunately Obispo becomes Virginia’s lover, and the text undercuts Stoyte’s relationship (and prefigures his possible simian fate) through an episode in Stoyte’s baboon enclosure when an old male is too greedy at feeding time to notice his mate’s copulation with a younger male (64-65). The baboon episode metaphorically represents the way in which Stoyte’s greed for life renders him oblivious to Obispo’s predations; even when the ape in him erupts in rage at being cuckolded he shoots Obispo’s assistant in error, and, ironically, can only cheat death in the form of capital punishment by bribing Obispo to falsify Pete’s death certificate (226-227). Stoyte’s fear of ageing and death is not unique to him, however; the very successful cemetery which he owns suggests that Californian society itself shares Stoyte’s obsession. Decorated excessively with nude female statuary “ever youthful, immortally athletic, indefatigably sexy” (12), it does not contain “any representation of grief or age, any symbol of mortality, [or] any image of the sufferings of Jesus” (156). The cemetery’s decor is a denial of the fact of death, and it and Stoyte are both echoes of the cult of youthfulness in Brave New World.**

**Stoyte’s mistress, however, denies the passage of time in a different way, through satisfying her short-term wants materially and**

considering nothing beyond that. Enjoying life as “successive instants of present contentment,” she finds that her life outside “this mindless eternity” is a “narrow little universe” in which the “farthest boundaries” are “never more than a week away in the future” (38). While again echoing Brave New World, here evoking the mindless present in which that text’s citizens live, Virginia’s hedonism is clearly not a satisfying response to the passing of time, its shallowness reflected in her casual promiscuity -- apparently with both sexes (39) -- and hypocrisy, in that she manages to reconcile her lifestyle with her Catholicism (40).

The text’s fervid leftist democrat, Obispo’s assistant Pete, has fought in the International Brigade in Spain in 1937, and his two loves have been “biology ... [and] socialism” (134). Both involve a belief in the future:

‘Disinterested quest for truth’—that was what you said ... about why you were a biologist. And in the case of Socialism it was ‘humanity,’ it was ‘the greatest happiness of the greatest number,’ it was ‘progress’ -- and, of course, that linked up with biology again: happiness and progress through science as well as Socialism. (133)

Moreover Pete, with the best of intentions, has idealised both science and socialism. As Propter, the text’s pacifist and mystic, explains, to idealise anything other than the idea of transcendence of both self and worldly

things is to serve “a magnified aspect of [one’s] self” through devotion “towards an aspect of [one’s] personality” (86). Huxley is consistently critical both of idealising and of sacrificing the present for a better future, and consequently Pete grapples with his idolatry and faith in progress in response to Propter’s theories. Propter points out that the progress of “social justice” is always questionable, pointing to the chains of cause and effect by which the French Revolution eventually led to Hitler’s rise to power, and the “abolition of Czardom and capitalism” not only led to Stalin, secret police, starvation, “the liquidation of intellectuals, Kulaks and old Bolsheviks,” but also motivated “the bourgeoisie to invent Fascism” (87-88). Consequently Pete begins to reconcile himself to the fall of Barcelona to Franco since, like all cities, it is a “nightmare-huge projection and embodiment of men’s passions and insanities -- their avarice, their pride [and] their lust for power” (207). Ironically, just as he is moving toward a feeling of inner peace in a state of “tranquil exultation,” another idolatry betrays him and he is shot while comforting Virginia, for whom he has nursed a blind romantic love. Idealising anything -- progress, a political philosophy, a person -- is unsatisfactory and blocks one from seeking higher truths.

Pete’s faith had been in the future, but the one professional historian in the text, Jeremy Pordage, focusses on the past while only drifting through the present. He is working in a California in which images

of present and past are oddly intermingled. The faddish and the fast are celebrated in neon advertisements (5-8), yet the popular cemetery which Stoyte owns is decorated with replicas of buildings and architectural features from the past, ranging from Shakespeare's tomb to the Taj Mahal (10-11). Moreover Pordage's immediate environment is Stoyte's Gothic castle; it is crammed full of expensive and venerable art which is juxtaposed in such an apparently disconnected manner that Pordage finds staying at the castle "like living inside an idiot" (118). Stoyte has hired Pordage to catalogue twenty-seven crates of documents: the Hauberk Papers, "delicious fragments of English history" (42). Yet Stoyte cannot remember the name of the collection (21), and pays "attention to none of his [other] treasures" (31). Stoyte's purchases represent his attempt to appropriate both culture and, in a sense, history; presumably the existence of artefacts which have withstood the centuries is comforting to a man whose particular aim is to distance himself from the passing of time. Pordage, on the other hand, exists in a disengaged manner in the present. Although middle-aged he still lives with his mother and is grateful that she has "delivered him from the horrors of responsibility" (150); his brother refers to him as a Peter Pan (151), and his sexual activity is limited to discreet but regular encounters with two prostitutes (95-96). However, the past holds such appeal that he "voluptuously savour[s] his anticipations" of opening the Hauberk Papers

(41), and has a sense of “going home to where he belong[s]” when able to return to them after a lunch with the other characters (61). Clearly Pordage is too fond of the past and too uninvolved in his present. Propter refers to the “dismal form of compulsory idolatry” by which ancient families have “inherited loyalties” to the material accumulated by their kindred in times past (119-120); however, Pordage also manifests an idolatry but, in his case, to the relics of the past of others. There is also a certain superficiality to his studies; reading the Fifth Earl’s notebook, Pordage bypasses the pages on the French Revolution in favour of the Earl’s more personal and misanthropic observations (167). Propter essentially questions the point of Pordage’s profession. He suggests that historical documents are merely fossilized evil, and that “cataloguing bits of fossil evil can never be more than an *ersatz* for the experience of eternity” (81). Later he suggests that no art of a period ever “threw much light on the life of the period” (217), and that the *real* test of a period would be the happiness felt by those living in it, something unverifiable since historians have “no way of compiling statistics about the sum of happiness, nor any way of comparing the feelings of people living under one set of conditions with the feelings of people living under another and quite different set” (218). Propter would seem to be suggesting that those qualities of the past which were the most important are impossible for historians to ascertain.

Clearly, then, all these people have an unsatisfactory attitude toward, or relation to, time. The most positive perspective is that offered by Propter in lengthy discussions which occupy a sizeable portion of the text. Propter's message is the same in essence as that offered by the other guru figures in Huxley's novels, Miller in Eyeless in Gaza and MacPhail in Island: seek "the kingdom of heaven, or whatever other name you care to give it, ... within" (190). The means of access is through the embracing of pacifism and, through mysticism, conceiving of one's ego as "a [limiting] fiction" (76), and transcending time. History loses its importance once one imagines one's self as a participant in eternity, since "psychological eternity" is "a fact" (81).

To enjoy inner peace, though, requires effort, and only a few will initially make that effort. Since "good manifests itself only on the animal level and on the level of eternity" (113), the individual, and eventually the society, need to be purified of the things that are not good for body or spirit: "greed and fear, lust for power, hatred, anger ..." (114). However, the necessary reforms must be centred in the individual rather than in politics, given that the actions of politicians are "the actions of lunatics" (113). Capitalism is flawed, since it values some of those negative human forces, particularly greed and power, so that individuals like Stoyte are able to "realise their potentialities." Socialism is equally faulty, since it is "fatally committed to centralization and standardized mass

production,” and enables “too many occasions for bullying.” The real answer is a confederation of small communities living in harmony with each other and Nature, a society of “peasants plus small machines plus [electrical] power” (114). This society is Propter’s idea of utopia, the type of community which, as we have seen, Huxley later discusses in his 1946 Foreword to Brave New World as the third alternative he would provide in it were he to rewrite it. What Propter imagines is the establishment of small agriculturally-based townships with a population of about one thousand, each township operating through “a good system of producers’ and consumers’ co-operatives” and avoiding the failures of utopian communities like those of Robert Owen and the Fourierists by having an entrance examination and a novitiate (187). Propter acknowledges that few are likely to abandon their urban lifestyles for the peaceful peasant life, but those few who do can help to disseminate the philosophy, and will also have more chance of surviving “a time of anarchy” after a war than the urban masses who “depend for their livelihood on a highly centralized and specialized organization” (117).

The ideas that Huxley promotes here through Propter have some similarity to those of Jefferies, Morris and Wells, but are also significantly different. The back-to-the-land idea would have had some appeal to both Jefferies and Morris. However, Jefferies would have been suspicious of the apparently egalitarian nature of Propter’s proposed communes, since

they would lack both the traditional social structure of rural society, and the vigorous frontier spirit which he associated with America. Morris, on the other hand, would not have endorsed the philosophy by which these townships would be essentially model communities with only a gradualist approach to the converting of others, and with an antipathy to any sort of political violence or revolution. Wells would have approved of the idea of communities of perceptive elites, but not of their anti-industrial and anti-scientism leanings, nor of their being dedicated to reforming society from the individual outward, rather than from the top down. Wells would find Propter's utopia to be simply too lacking in order.

Perhaps unfortunately, Propter's utopia remains unrealised, and his ideas concerning eternity achieve little in the here and now. He preaches that individuals must transcend "the cage of flesh and memory" (208), create the internal peace by which we may experience God's "timeless consciousness" (209), and make free choices from "direct insight into the nature of things" rather than choose options preconditioned by "earlier history" (210). In the event, however, the only individual actively considering these possibilities, Pete, unintentionally transcends his own particular fleshly cage through being shot. In his next novel, Time Must Have a Stop (1944), Huxley plays with the idea of an afterlife, but in After Many a Summer Pete's existence apparently ceases once time stops for him. The text ends with Stoyte contemplating an

indefinite extension of life within his own cage of flesh, even if the cage should devolve into that of an ape itself in a more literal cage. In sum, Huxley uses the novel to satirise the superficiality of modern life, offers a solution to it, but leaves the realization of that solution to another text, Island.

Between After Many a Summer and his virulently dystopian Ape and Esence, Huxley wrote Time Must Have a Stop, which begins in 1929 and is largely set in Italy. In this novel the protagonist, Sebastian Barnack, does achieve a transcendence. His socialist father John, however, has a tendency to imagine a world of stereotypes rather than individuals and his revolutionary politics define him (55); one of Huxley's familiar socialists, he resembles those others with an abiding faith in progress, whether "Wellsian, Marxian, Capitalistic or Fascist," who are willing to sacrifice "their only tangible possession, the present" for the "completely unknowable" future (291-292). This type of thinking is eventually understood by Sebastian as idolatrous, abusing time in anticipation of "Progress towards Utopia" (292). The focus on a future utopia and "the apotheosis of the State," has entailed the slavery of thought to life, and of life to time, a state which can only be avoided by seeking the timelessness of eternity (292).

Unfortunately this timelessness is not easy to achieve. The "self-transcending awareness" required is seldom achieved because "people

love their egos and don't wish to mortify them" (289). This is borne out by Sebastian's Uncle Eustace who dies and whose spirit floats in a kind of purgatory, frightened of losing his self by becoming part of the All and consequently trying to find a way through "old experience and ... condemnation" without loss of identity (171) as he avoids turning toward the "silence" (231). Material progress, meanwhile, is seen as being both elusive and illusory. Prior to Eustace dying, and in conversation with Sebastian, he invokes but undercuts Wells by suggesting that a useful "outline of world history" would be one which depicts the "eternal three-cornered struggle" between "live and let live," political power, and religion; unfortunately, however, "power for the sake of power" has become the "established orthodoxy" (122). History reveals the number of wars carried out in the name of religion; more recently, people have grown "bored with God," so that the "war[s] and massacre[s]" are now performed "in the name of "Humanity and Progress, Progress and Humanity" (129). Unfortunately the "Golden Future" which progress is supposed to bring about is a mirage:

... needless to say, in the very nature of things, the future *can't* be golden. For the simple reason that nobody gets anything for nothing. Massacre always has to be paid for. ... Every notable advance in technique or organization has to be paid for, and in most cases the debit is more or less equivalent to the credit. (130)

Belief in progress simply makes us blind to “the evils and dangers” inherent in technology (274). Real progress has to be spiritual, in “the progression ... from animal eternity into time, into the strictly human world of memory and anticipation; and from time, if one chooses to go on, into the world of spiritual eternity, into the divine Ground.” The “life of the spirit” is not concerned with past or future, it is “life out of time” (276). People often fail to take this step. As groups, they often adopt God-substitutes like “Nation, Class and Party” which will eventually “destroy the entire social structure” (286).<sup>30</sup> As individuals, people often create a “spiritual mackintosh” out of physical or intellectual satisfactions, “shielding the little corner of time of which ... [each] is the centre from the least drop of eternal reality”; unfortunately “the only hope for the world of time lies in being constantly drenched by what lies beyond time” (284).

However, while the life of the spirit may be timeless, Huxley indicates that one’s past is still significant; one must recognize different chains of cause and effect, and acknowledge, therefore, a responsibility for the consequences of one’s actions, past and present. Sebastian makes this clear: “Back into past history. Out into the world around one. Forward into possible consequences ... nothing one does is unimportant” (238). He moves beyond remorse, “pride’s *Ersatz* for repentance,” to the “self-abandonment” of God’s forgiveness (282), finding that the “the most memorable” period of his life, and, “in a sense, the happiest,” is in 1944,

caring for the terminally ill Bruno who had previously been imprisoned for being anti-fascist as a consequence of his association with Sebastian's father (282). Clearly Sebastian is working toward the sense of mystic union which Propter promulgated in After Many a Summer.<sup>31</sup> However, while Sebastian is an example of positive change in the individual, there is little sense of how his personal spiritual elevation might be translated into change in society. Huxley does reflect on social issues like the abuse of the environment where, instead of sacrificing the present to the future as in the case of utopians, humanity sacrifices the future to the present. What he does not do is offer any real solutions to what he perceives as a flawed *Zeitgeist*. Sebastian notes that his bourgeois relatives, "and all their kind," are a paradox, "simultaneously the beams [of society] and the dry rot" (273). Presumably Huxley is not sure how to get rid of the dry rot without bringing down the entire structure. By the time he wrote Ape and Essence a few years later the destructive potential of the atom had been unleashed to end the Second World War and there was potential for the entire (social) structure to come crashing down.

## V

With that potential in mind Huxley twice returned to the same general genre which he had explored in Brave New World. This time, however, rather than write a dystopia disguised as a utopia, he wrote one novel that is unambiguously dystopian, and another which is as

unambiguously utopian, albeit with dystopia lurking beyond its fringes.

In Ape and Essence the social structure has caved in, both in the story-within-a-story and in Germany where post-war children prostitute themselves for chocolate bars (23) and the Jews have been murdered "at the hands of maniacs" (25). The bulk of the novel is a screenplay which forms an embedded narrative within a frame set in Hollywood and then the fringe of the Mojave desert. The competing voices of Huxley's earlier fiction are replaced by the shifts between scenes of the screenplay; as Nance has pointed out "the technique of dissolving from one scene to another allows for the kind of juxtaposition Huxley likes to use for ironic effect" (84). The relatively brief frame narrative does offer different points of view, however; it begins on the day of Gandhi's assassination, but this event, and the concomitant death-blow to pacifism which it symbolises, is of less importance to the narrator's colleague Bob than his love life (Ape 7). The less-superficial narrator reflects that what really killed Gandhi was not so much his unworldliness, as that he made himself "part of the machine" and became involved with "the politics of power," rather than trying to "cure our regimented schizophrenia ... from without" (12). As usual, Huxley is critical of trying to change society through politics, rather than more organically from individuals outward. In the embedded narrative the consequences of individuals not enabling those organic changes are made vividly apparent. The brutal post-apocalyptic

society which Huxley depicts exudes a barbarism far worse than anything Richard Jefferies had imagined. The ape beneath the skin has re-emerged.

The animal element in our nature which haunts Huxley's After Many a Summer -- and which had also troubled Wells -- appears in exaggerated form in Ape and Essence. In After Many a Summer Obispo says of the simian Earl in his subterranean cage that he is a "foetal ape that's had time to grow up" (239), implying a potential in humanity for degeneration. In Ape and Essence, however, the ape is out of the cage completely. As Nance observes, "the central dichotomy of the novel is that of ape and essence, the bestial and the uniquely human aspects of man's nature," and it is only through understanding and fulfilling "his fragile yet spiritual humanity" that man can have "a chance of survival" (85). Unfortunately the novel depicts a future California in which man's "spiritual" humanity has actually been perverted into a parody of Christianity, the worship of Belial. While the spiritual has been warped, the supposedly rational has been debased; science and technology have become subordinated to the capacity for brutality in the collective will, so that Einstein and Faraday, metonyms for science, have been collared and leashed by the ruling baboons (Ape 28-31).<sup>32</sup> Consequently biological warfare and then nuclear attack have been employed by the bestial armies of both Left and Right (33-37) and civilization has been destroyed

over much of the planet.

The stupidity and violence symbolised by the baboons also emerges in the reaction to war among the populace. Huxley was writing in the years immediately after World War Two, a conflict of competing technologies which “more than any other previous war ... was a war of machines” (Thomson 808), and which effectively ended with the unleashing of modern science on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The script’s narrator comments that “fear casts out even a man’s humanity” but that unfortunately, fear -- of the increasingly deadly applications of technology, of the negative consequences of scientific research, of the omnipresent danger of war -- is “the very basis and foundation of modern life” (40). In the text this fear is reflected graphically in the rapid descent to the animal level which occurs when the terror of attack results in a complete breakdown of civilization in a number of major cities; people flee like rats, “biting, clawing, looting, murdering, raping” and “feeding on dead dogs and the corpses of children” (39). Here the text is reminiscent of The War of the Worlds in the sense of the rapid breakdown of society, and the rat imagery. This casting out of the human, and resurgence of the animal, also manifests itself in Ape and Essence in the post-nuclear mutation of human sexuality. Due to exposure to gamma radiation, the populace now only have a five-week mating period each year as the females come into oestrus, so that the “Triumph of Modern Science” has been to abolish

**“courtship, chivalry, tenderness, love itself” (107).**

**What Huxley is suggesting here in this focus on human regression and degeneration is that the sort of bestial behaviour which so-called civilised nations manifested during World War Two in the form of “concentration camps and gas chambers and cremation ovens” (93) might be a collective and continuing symptom. However, Huxley’s concern is not simply with human, or the inhumane, abuse of people, but also with the impact of modern socioeconomic practises on the environment. In January 1948, a few weeks before he finished writing the novel, Huxley wrote to the ecologist Fairfield Osborn about the spiritual aspect of a proper relationship with nature. Noting the tradition of “Nature mystics” like Whitman and Wordsworth in the West, Huxley expressed a belief that Europeans and Americans might be persuaded to accept a Taoist philosophy, which would “take in Nature as well as man.” He went on to write:**

**People have got to understand that the commandment, ‘Do unto others as you would that they should do unto you’ applies to animals, plants and things, as well as to people; and that if it is regarded as applying only to people (as it has in the Christian West), then the animals, plants and things will, in one way or another, do as badly by man as man had done by them. (Letters 579)**

Huxley then, like Osborn, anticipates by some years the popular environmental and conservationist debate. Huxley was moving toward the nature/culture harmony of Island and the new holistic field of ecology where science and spirituality might overlap in "an area where Huxley thought that scientists could actually learn something from mystics" (136). This concern manifests itself succinctly in Ape and Essence by depicting the consequences of bad science, short-sighted economic practises, and not doing unto Nature what our species would that Nature should do unto us.

Huxley makes a clear ecological statement when the ruler, the Arch-Vicar, complains of twentieth-century people exhausting the planet's ability to sustain itself through human overpopulation and poor industrial practises; "up goes the spiral of industry, down goes the spiral of soil fertility" so that material wealth increases and the availability of consumer goods multiplies but world hunger increases (89-90). Industry is guilty of "fouling the rivers, killing off all the wild animals, destroying the forests, washing the topsoil into the sea, burning up an ocean of petroleum, [and] squandering the minerals it had taken the whole of geological time to deposit" (90). The arch-Vicar points out that, even without nuclear and biological warfare, "men would have destroyed themselves by destroying the world they lived in"; the "Conquerors of Nature" did not control Nature, they simply upset its balance and began

**“to suffer the consequences” (90). Alfred Poole, the botanist member of an expedition from New Zealand who is captured by the Californians, concurs: the relationship between modern humanity and the planet has been that of parasite and host, “of tapeworm and infested dog, of fungus and blighted potato” (122). Moreover the screenplay’s narrator suggests that the deformed babies who are murdered in the text in a particularly inhumane form of eugenics “could as well be the product of atomic industry as of atomic war” (73).**

**This degenerate society is therefore the consequence of humanity’s decidedly unnatural behaviour and oppositional attitude to Nature in the twentieth century. The history of the planet between February 1948 when Huxley finished writing the novel and February 2108 when Poole’s expedition reaches California has been grim. Yet few of the general populace exhibit an interest in how their society came into being. This is a consequence of illiteracy, the sole purpose of books being to provide fuel for bread ovens (66-67). The only Californian to exhibit any real sense of history is the text’s equivalent of Brave New World’s Mustapha Mond , the Arch-Vicar. The Arch-Vicar suggests that the twentieth-century propagation of the false idols of Progress and Nationalism was so self-destructive that it must have been instigated by a diabolic force; he comments that “the longer you study modern History, the more evidence you see of Belial’s guiding hand” (91). He also**

criticises historical determinism, the “theory that you alone understand the meaning of history; the theory that you know what’s going to happen fifty years from now; the theory ... that Utopia lies just ahead” and that “it is your privilege and duty” to exploit, enslave or murder “all those who, in your opinion ... obstruct the onward march to the earthly paradise” (91). Since he then inverts Marx’s dictum that “Force is the midwife of Progress” to say that “Progress is the midwife of Force” (91) it is clearly Marxism that he has in mind. The actual history of the twentieth century has, to the Arch-Vicar, little to do with genuine progress. Instead it is a catalogue of horrors: a World War One that might have been prevented, followed by “the Communist Revolution, ... a Fascist reaction to that revolution, ... Mussolini and Hitler and the Politburo, ... famine, inflation and depression; ... the persecution of the Jews and the Kulaks [Russian farmers]” and, with the evaporation of religion and “the old compunctions and compassions,” a vacuum which was “filled by the lunatic dreams of Progress and nationalism” (93-94). To the Arch-Vicar, Progress and Nationalism had been powerful forces in twentieth-century life, and the end of modern history is therefore a downward spiral through continuing squalor to “worse deformity” and, eventually “complete extinction” (96). The spectre which haunts Wells’ writing haunts Huxley’s here also, except that judiciously-applied science is part of Wells’ platform for avoiding extinction and establishing *utopia*, whereas Huxley fears that science is

being injudiciously applied and will bring about *dystopia*. However, Huxley has a simple antidote to this dystopian society which the dominance of self-destructive tendencies, and the consequent misuse of science and technology, has created.

In *Ape and Essence* romantic love has been destroyed through the actions of the ape in the human, and replaced with an animalistic rut. Huxley implies, however, that love forms part of the essence of what it is *to be human*; "Love, Joy and Peace" are the "fruits of the spirit that is [the human] essence and the essence of the world" (134). Eventually love re-emerges in the romantic fusion between Poole and the Californian, Loola. Poole, as a botanist captured and put to work by the Californians, has initially seemed to be another scientist leashed by the apes, but the (unscientific) force of love liberates him. The unity in this novel, the balanced whole created of diversities, is in Poole and Loola's relationship, in the dissolving of both his sexual repression and her hormone-charged promiscuity in the "synthesis of the chemical and the personal to which we give the names of monogamy and romantic love" (116). It lifts the timid Poole spiritually so that he can perceive Loola and himself as "individuals" who can "work for the Order of Things" and therefore against Belial (139). But antidotal love is also an important factor in the novel in the small minority of Californians, the 'Hots,' who are throwbacks with a pre-apocalyptic sexuality, who practise romantic love illegally and have

fled and created a community of exiles (99). Poole and Loola also flee, heading for the Hots' community, and the novel ends, like Jefferies' After London, with its protagonist en route to his intended destination.

Although the Hots' community is mentioned but never directly encountered in the text, the Hots are the closest group in the novel to Propter's projected communities of like-minded individuals in After Many a Summer -- a glimmer of hope in an otherwise degenerate society. In his final novel and full-fledged utopia, Island, that glimmer and that community would become utopia and an island nation.

In Ape and Essence Poole offers a synopsis of one of the Arch-Vicar's sermons, which has apparently suggested that twentieth-century civilization was a blend of "the worst" of East and West: "So the East takes Western nationalism, Western armaments, Western movies and Western Marxism; the West takes Eastern despotism, Eastern superstitions and Eastern indifference to individual life" (130). The Arch-Vicar responds by suggesting that if the converse had been true, if "Eastern mysticism" had tempered Western science, if "the Eastern art of living" had refined "Western energy," and if "Western individualism" had moderated "Eastern totalitarianism," then it "would have been the kingdom of heaven" (130-131). In Island that kingdom of heaven has come to pass on Pala. The two men who instigated the synthesis of East and West in Palanese society in the 1840s -- a Raja and the Scottish doctor who

saved his life—tried to combine the best of both cultures and thus “to make the best of *all* the worlds -- the worlds already realized within the various cultures and, beyond them, the worlds of still unrealised potentialities” (Island 148).

In Island, as in Brave New World and Ape and Essence, an outsider finds himself in a society alien to him. In this case it is Will Farnaby, a cynical and self-hating journalist whose original intent is to surreptitiously help his employer, the industrialist Lord Aldehyde, gain a foothold in utopian and non-industrial Pala in order to exploit it. Farnaby has second thoughts, but this does not affect Pala's destiny. In the novel a landscape painting is used as an aid to meditation, since the self-knowing which the experience of observing it evokes, combined with the work's representation of vast exterior space within the small compass of its frame, “reminds us that there's a lot more to the universe than just people” and that “there are mental spaces inside our skulls as enormous as the spaces out there” (213). Unfortunately this positive and mystical experience of the outer world being reflected in the inner has a negative political analogue, in that the exterior forces of the neighbouring expansionist dictator, Colonel Dipa, have an interior sympathiser in the young and materialistic Raja Murugan who destroys “the work of a hundred years ... in a single night” in the service of “Progress, Values, Oil, True Spirituality” (334-35). Pala -- with its positive fusion of East and

West, its seamless blend of nature and culture, its optimised unification of the individual with the social, its holistic approach to the health of mind and body -- was created, in a sense, outside history, or at least outside the history which, in Huxley's lifetime, had been a catalogue of wars, revolutions, totalitarianism, economic undulations and other examples of human inhumanity.<sup>33</sup> However, its demise has apparently been inevitable. Bahu, Colonel Dipa's ambassador, suggests that "Pala was completely viable ... until about 1905," after which it had become increasingly vulnerable to the outside world so that "what was once a viable ideal is [by the 1960s] no longer viable" (64). Ultimately the outside world comes flooding in.

The past of that outside world is seen as generally negative in the novel. Pala's philosophy is encapsulated in a slim book lent to Farnaby by the book's Heard figure, Dr. Robert MacPhail, and entitled Notes on What's What. It suggests that "conflicts and frustrations" are "the theme of all history and almost all biography" (41). A consequence of people taking the words of St. Paul, Mohammed, Marx and Hitler uncritically and too seriously has been "the senseless ambivalence of history -- sadism versus duty, or (incomparably worse) sadism as duty" (42). However, actually studying history has had its advantages; MacPhail himself has read it extensively and learned from it. His studies suggest that violence and the abuse of power are a potential problem at the local level, with its

“mute inglorious Hitlers,” as well as on the international stage (173). He decides that “history and prisons” are “closely related” in that the former is the record of “crimes, follies and misfortunes,” while prison is the place where those associated with crimes and follies “are visited with a special kind of misfortune” (174). MacPhail has categorised and defused the two types potentially dangerous and power-loving personalities: late developing “Peter Pan” types in the Hitler mould, and extrovert “Muscle Man” types like Stalin (176). With the potential for dictator-types thus abolished, Pala should be able to continue to shape its own future as one free from repressive government. Unfortunately the young Raja-in-waiting, Murugan, has been educated mainly outside the country under the control of his mother (59-62), and has fallen, probably sexually, under the spell of Colonel Dipa, “Antinous to ... [Dipa's] black-mustached Hadrian” (21). Consequently history catches up with Pala. However, it leaves in its wake some consolation in that Will Farnaby has discovered that he, like any individual human being, has the capacity for compassion (334), and that, once the armoured cars and dictators move on, “out [come] the frogs again ... [and] the uninterrupted insects ... [and] the mynah birds” around the lotus pool (335). Regimes come and go, but Nature persists in one form or other.

Island, more than any of Huxley's other novels, promotes holism. Pala is a place of holistic medicine (76), co-operative economics (167),

and a spirituality symbolised by the statue of the god Shiva and the goddess Parvati embracing: "Eternity in love with time. The One joined in marriage to the many" (196). Consequently the novel emphasises the importance of a harmonious relationship with the environment. Symbolically, this harmony between humanity and the environment, nature and culture, is represented in Western form by Farnaby's recollection of Wells Cathedral in springtime, "challenging the wildness of those soft April clouds ... and at the same time complementing it, coming to terms with it in perfect reconciliation" (33). The Eastern version is on the island itself, an old Shiva temple in the mountains which is "a thing of symmetry in contrast with the rocks, but ... regular with the pragmatic geometry of a living thing ... [with] all its bounding contours against the sky curved organically inwards" and with its top swelling out "like the seed capsule of a flowering plant" (183). The oppositional symbolism of the Cybo and the mountain in Those Barren Leaves is replaced by the complementary symbolism of Wells Cathedral and the organic temple.

Farnaby is told that Pala is not "Eden or the land of Cockaigne"; it is not perfect, but it is good, and will remain so "only if everybody works" (224). Part of that work is to ensure that all have a sense of ecological interconnection, and live accordingly. On Pala they try to avoid "those senseless, pointless cockfights between Man and Nature" (225). Darwin's evolution theory suggested that there is a connection between humanity

and other forms of life; the philosophy of life current on Pala is “biological theory realized in living practice, is Darwinism raised to the level of compassion and spiritual insight” (226). The Palanese have “the modest ambition to live as fully human beings in harmony with the rest of life on this island at this latitude on this planet” (246). This vision of harmony includes animal life; Pala “is probably the only country in which the animal theologian would have no reason for believing in devils. For animals everywhere else, Satan, quite obviously, is *Homo Sapiens*” (218). The idea of living in harmony with Nature is therefore taught to children, the principle being to “make it plain from the very first that all living is relationship,” and the means being to introduce them to “relationships in the woods, in the fields, [and] in the ponds and streams” (247-248). Huxley described in Time Must Have a Stop the Dust Bowl created from fertile land by poor farming practises, and depicted an inhospitable environment resulting from scientific excess in Ape and Essence. In Island the children are taught to cherish Nature and to avoid disaster:

We don't have any good examples of erosion here; so we show them what has happened in [Colonel Dipa's] Rendang, in India and China, in Greece and the Levant, in Africa and America—all the places where greedy stupid people have tried to take without giving, to exploit without love or understanding. Treat Nature well, and Nature will treat you well. Hurt or destroy Nature, and Nature

will soon destroy you. ... `Do as you would be done by' applies to our dealings with all kinds of life in every part of the world. (248-249)

This is complemented, once the children are old enough, by doses of the mushroom-based hallucinogenic *moksha* which enables "the full-blown mystical experience" of "One in all and All in one" (159). The question of whether the experience is purely psychological, or whether it represents the opening of the individual mind to "a large volume of Mind with a large 'M'" flowing in from outside, is never settled. Ultimately, as MacPhail suggests, "Who cares?" since "the fact remains that the experience can open one's eyes and make one blessed and transform one's life" (160).<sup>34</sup>

Island's affirmation of the need for a sense of harmony with nature complements Brave New World's critique of the modern divorce from everything natural. Spiritually, Island locates the ailing Huxley in a mental space close to the natural mysticism of Richard Jefferies. Like Jefferies, Huxley had to consider the harsher, disinterested face of nature which is not necessarily found in the peace of a sunset, the serenity of a landscape painting, or the sculpted contours of the agricultural landscape. Over thirty years before writing Island, in "Wordsworth in the Tropics," Huxley suggested that "the worship of Nature comes almost naturally" in England because "the hosts of nature have mostly been vanquished and enslaved" (Do What 115). Had he ever found himself in a tropical jungle,

the mature Wordsworth would not "have felt so certain, in the damp and stifling darkness, among the leeches and the malevolently tangled rattans, of the divinely anglican [sic] character of that fundamental unity" (129). In Island Farnaby emerges from a jungle in which he has been terrified by snakes into an agricultural, and therefore sculpted, landscape: "Nature here was no longer merely natural; the landscape had been composed, had been reduced to its geometrical essences, and rendered, by what in a painter would have been a miracle of virtuosity, in terms of these sinuous lines, these streaks of pure bright colour" (23). On one level this suggests a harmony with Nature, but it is nevertheless a manmade vista which contrasts sharply with the impersonal jungle. Later in the novel adolescents go through a rite of passage which involves climbing a mountain and experiencing "the yoga of the summit," with "muscles relaxed and a mind open to the sunlight and the clouds, open to the distance and the horizon" (192). After this serenity they have to pass through the jungle, "in all its exuberance and its rotting, crawling squalor, all its melodramatic ambivalence of orchids and centipedes, of leeches and sunbirds, of the drinkers of nectar and the drinkers of blood," where life "brings order out of chaos and ugliness" but life's only purpose seems to be "to destroy itself" (192-193). Ultimately the young people are able to accommodate the serenity, the beauty, and the horror in "a reconciliation ... a fusion ... [and] an identity" (193). Nature is not always peaceful and

serene; it also embodies a harsher reality which, nevertheless, must be accepted. Ultimately Farnaby's own (drug-induced) mystic experience encompasses a mantis killing and eating its mate during copulation and then, in turn, being eaten by a lizard (320-321). The insects and reptiles become Nazi legions and other ideologically-driven forces for destruction in a train of visions which causes Farnaby to contemplate the suffering in his own life and his incarceration in the solitary "private prison" of self-consciousness (322-323). Thoughts of death bring him to "the brink" (324) but he is made aware that, other than "the Buddha nature," all things must perish, since "nothing is to infinity" (325). Ultimately love enables him to accommodate it all in a whole made of "the paradox of opposites indissolubly wedded, of light shining out of darkness, of darkness at the very heart of light" (327). A philosophy based on unity has to find some way of acknowledging those things which are unpleasant or discomfiting.

Unfortunately the social and spiritual unity which is Pala is broken up by avaricious forces, suggesting that Huxley knew that what he believed to be humanity's best option was in reality, as Ambassador Bahu maintains, "no longer viable" (64). However, in Farnaby's conversion at the text's end, Huxley offers another example of the individual reforming and having the potential to reform others. Both the first and last words in the text are spoken by one of the mynah birds used in Pala—an example

of a sort of fusion of the human and the natural. The word it utters in both cases is "attention"; one presumes that Huxley intended that we each should take notice of how our world seems to us, how it might appear differently to the individual with a change of his or her consciousness, and how that change of consciousness might bring about more profound changes in the exterior world itself.

Huxley's own consciousness had, inevitably, changed in the forty years between Crome Yellow and Island, explored through fiction which frequently hinges on the redemption, or failed redemption, of key characters. He explored the rootless materialism of the 1920s, when "the mental and moral qualities, the occupations and diversions of the greatest number [were] regarded as the best, the sole permissible," and "stupidity, suggestibility and business ... held up as supremely precious" (Jesting Pilate 201). He rejected Marxist historicism and, through Brave New World, Wellsian utopian determinism in a text which offers unnatural man and a sort of post-colonial semi-natural man as mutually unsatisfactory alternatives. The successive spectres of World War, nuclear holocaust, and environmental disaster resulted in the savagely dystopian Ape and Essence, and its portrayal of an excessively unnatural existence in an ecologically doomed California. Increasingly, Huxley's lack of faith in material progress as something personally verifiable through experience caused him to turn away from historical concerns *per se* toward a mystic

sense of time itself -- a process which, as we have seen, essentially begins in earnest with Eyeless in Gaza and reaches its apotheosis in Island. Since Huxley's mysticism approximates that of Jefferies, with whom this thesis began, there is a sense of completion in concluding with him. Huxley's own progress culminates in his faith in an holistic and anti-materialistic approach to life and in a mystical spirituality by which the individual consciousness might find peace and an understanding of his or her place in time's continuum through a sense of unity with nature and thus with eternity. In the sense that it suggests an individual (and unempirical) sense of unity which requires no coercion, revolutions or apocalypse to bring it into being, it seems the most possible of the various visions studied in this thesis. In its potential for becoming a preeminent belief which would reach beyond New Age disciples and integrate the populations of the Western world, it seems as unlikely as the anticipated utopias of Wells and Morris, or the wish-fulfilment fantasy of Jefferies.

[1] With regards to World War One, one of Huxley's earliest published short stories, "Happily Ever After" (1920) is set in 1918 and juxtaposes the civilized Wiltshire world of Alfred Petherton, (an academic who is working on a "monumental History of Morals" [Collected Short Stories 22]), and his guest Jacobsen, (an American friend who still subscribes to Keats' notions of "beauty is truth" [31]), with the violent death of Petherton's ward Guy and the crippling of a neighbour. The realities of war subvert both Petherton's pride in his "historical God's-eye view" that "the world must be made safe for democracy," (22) and his clerical brother Roger's glib and cliché-ridden words of comfort (44). Clearly the niceties of civilized middle-class life are useless in the face of modern war. In the essay "Accidie" (1923) Huxley notes that European history since 1789 has largely been "a vast structure of failure and disillusionments" culminating in "the appalling catastrophe of the war of 1914" (On the Margin 25).

[2] In "Writers and Readers," Huxley described The Outline of History as "persuasive ... propaganda" which made a "plea for internationalism" and was read by many but was ultimately made redundant by circumstances (Olive Tree 10-11).

[3] Science has rediscovered the "unexpected unity of all nature" which had been conceptually split by the God/Nature and consequent good/evil dualities (274). Politically, unlike "totalitarianism or State-worship," a unitary vision of the state or community is of "an organization to facilitate and promote the development of its members and the fullest realization of their individual potentialities" (276-277). For unitary thinking to succeed, it would have to supplant the divisive dualism which he observed in the thinking of both East and West (257-259).

[4] For another Wells-like perspective, see Scogan's comments that aristocracies form "a class of people who are secure, safe from public opinion, safe from poverty, leisured ... [and] of which the members can think" (72). This reflects Wells' thinking, inspired by Up Park, about the enlightened aristocracy as prototypes of his Samurai.

[5] Baker suggests that Huxley is "in 1921 tentatively swayed by Scogan's Spenglerian pessimism regarding European history" (Dark Historic 52). Baker here refers to Scogan's "profound aversion for the twentieth century" (46) and is clearly relating it to Oswald Spengler's gloomy Decline of the West. Certainly Scogan's emphasis on Caesars reflects Spengler's expectation of an oncoming Caesarian struggle. However, I would suggest that Scogan's vision of the future is less dark than Spengler's in that he apparently anticipates a utopian society -- the forthcoming Rational State.

[6] Himmler founded the Ahnenerbe in 1935 "under the aegis of the SS" to

“promote and pursue research into Germanic antiquity and racial identity” as part of a general project “to demonstrate the historical as well as the biological basis of Aryan supremacy” (Schama 79). The Nazi intent was to affirm the supremacy of modern Aryans by confirming that their bloodline was rooted in Germanic barbarian tribes, thereby conferring on themselves that warrior heritage, while Sir Hercules’ aim is actually to plot an evolutionary progress *away* from barbarism; however, in using history to justify themselves as the superior product of destiny, the Nazi’s overall intent and his are similar. To Huxley, for whom nationalism was one of the modern perverse religions and to whom self-serving history was fundamentally flawed, both projects would be ill-conceived.

[7] Presumably the famine in Russia referred to is that of the winter of 1921-1922, when “as many as 3 million people may have died” (Johnson, Modern Times, 93).

[8] The year of Antic Hay’s publication was also the bicentenary of Wren’s death. In his 1923 essay “Sir Christopher Wren”, celebrating the bicentenary, Huxley notes that an “anniversary celebration” is an event in which “past is linked with present and of the vague interminable series of the days a single comprehensible unity is created in our minds” (On the Margin 174). However, the essay bemoans the *loss* of continuity with Wren’s “gentleman[ly]” art wrought by the artificiality of eighteenth-century “stage houses” and the “sham Gothic” and then “sham peasantry” of Victorian architecture (181-182). Gumbriel senior’s admiration of Wren obviously reflects Huxley’s own. However, Huxley is also illustrating the illusory quality inherent in mentally constructing a transhistorical “single comprehensible and logical unity” when the reality is one of fragmentation rather than unity. The thrust of the argument is actually toward *subverting* any historicist project which would want to put a linear — and generalized — progress from Wren to 1923. Like Gumbriel senior, Huxley sees disjunction between eighteenth-century London and the city he lives in, not continuity.

[9] In his essay “Pleasures,” published in the same year as Antic Hay (1923), Huxley adversely contrasts modern mass entertainment with the more organic and arduous leisure activities of “our ancestors” (On the Margin 48), seeing in twentieth-century leisure pursuits the encroachment of the “deadly ennui” which preceded the demise of The Roman Empire (51-52). Clearly Mrs Viveash’s ennui is symptomatic of the disease which Huxley believed to be a portent of the demise of modern civilization.

[10] Writing to his father, Leonard Huxley, in November 1923 (concerning Antic Hay), he wrote that his novel was intended to reflect “the life and opinions of an age which has seen the violent disruption of almost all the standards, conventions and values current in the previous epoch” (Letters 224). Calamy’s perspective in Those Barren Leaves similarly reflects this.

[11] Irene's decision here represents a triumph of Lawrenceian impulses over more sentimental inclinations. The ageing Mrs. Aldwinkle has a vampire-like quality, leeching Irene's youth to counter "the approach of death" (355). But Irene, in choosing life, and the possible generation of new life, over the artificial, dying world of her aunt, and responding to the "something that had come through innumerable lives out of the obscure depths of time," is reacting to "something" which transcends recorded human history: our evolutionary drive, our animal instinct.

[12] Calamy is not the earliest exponent of an alternative spirituality to be found in Huxley's novels. The first is Barbecue-Smith in Crome Yellow, whose esoteric beliefs combine psychology with mysticism. However, given that he supposedly has written his Pipe-Lines to the Infinite via automatic writing (39-42), Barbecue-Smith is obviously a parody of the mystic eccentric. Calamy's mysticism is more authentic.

[13] Huxley had mixed feelings about Wordsworth, referring in Texts and Pretexts to having read material like "The Power of Sound" and being "put to the endless trouble of sifting this worthless rubbish in search of gems, which generally prove to be non-existent" (15). In "Country Ecstasies", however, Huxley writes admiringly of the "precision and force" of Wordsworth's description of evening in "Composed Upon an Evening of Extraordinary Splendour and Beauty" (Texts and Pretexts 33).

[14] In his autobiography Memories (1970), Julian Huxley recalls renting a chalet at Diablerets during the winter of 1927-1928, with Aldous and his wife as guests, (160). (Aldous) Huxley was still working on Point Counter Point at this point, writing to John Gielgud's brother Lewis from Diablerets in late February to say that the "bloody novel" would probably not be finished until the end of March (Letters 295).

[15] Chairman of the conglomerate I.C.I., Mond represented a nexus of science, monopoly capitalism, and industry. He emphasized in his Industry and Politics (1927) that the way of the future was toward a few increasingly large companies as opposed to a proliferation of small companies; the economics of scale would ensure the conglomerates a "more effective use of resources" (9). A world of huge efficient multi-national corporations suggests a capitalist Utopia not too far removed from Wells' World State.

[16] One would suspect that Mosley was Huxley's inspiration for Webley. However, when Point Counter Point was published in 1928, Mosley was still a Labour M.P. who was not to found the British Union of Fascists until 1932 (Eatwell 179 - 185).

[17] In his travel book, Jesting Pilate (1926) Huxley suggests that the “falsification of the standard of values is a product, in our modern world, of democracy” (198). One consequence, he complains, is the tendency in America to denote a commercial activity like stockbroking “as valuable and noble an occupation as scientific research or artistic creation” and he is only “moderately confident” that the trend will not spread to Britain (200). Huxley later contemplated in “Revolutions” (1929) that current economic trends would result in an equalization of incomes which might “mean...the complete practical realization of the democratic ideal, and this in its turn would mean, almost inevitably, the apotheosis of the lowest human values and the rule, spiritual and material, of the worst men” (Do What You Will 224). Huxley obviously had reservations about the leveling of society, economically and politically, fearing a loss of diversity in the generalizing tendency toward a celebration of the lowest common denominator as a standard. This fear of the subsuming of the gifted individual within the mass, of the loss of diversity in favour of uniformity, manifests itself also in Brave New World, albeit in a post-democracy.

[18] In the Foreword Huxley writes that he now has “no wish to demonstrate that sanity is impossible,” and has in fact “compiled an anthology of what the sane have said about sanity and all the means whereby it can be achieved” – a reference to The Perennial Philosophy (1946). Although Huxley refers to the lack of a third alternative for John as “the most serious defect in the story,” based on his then belief “that free will in human beings simply facilitates a choice between insanity and lunacy,” he is really promoting his current vision of what he describes as “a society composed of freely co-operating individuals devoted to the pursuit of sanity.” It is my belief that a third alternative given John would have been to the text’s detriment, making it a less brutal indictment of Huxley’s contemporary society’s scientific, social and economic failings and flawed trends. If Orwell’s 1984 were to have a genuine societal option for Winston Smith, it would be less effective. In Ape and Essence Huxley does provide a third alternative to diabolical California and isolated New Zealand in allusions to the non-conformist community of ‘Hots.’ However, Poole and Loola have yet to reach that community by the text’s conclusion so the reader gains no experience of it.

[19] See too Huxley’s article, “Sex, the Slump, and Salvation,” (1932). In it Huxley states that “a return [to Nature] would be psychologically all but impossible” because of the wants which “education and advertising have created” (Hidden Huxley 130).

[20] See John Masters, “Orwell was wrong, Huxley was right,” A15, Ottawa Citizen, July 13<sup>th</sup> 2000. Masters does not refer to John the Savage in his article, relating the phenomenon of reality-based television more generally to Brave New World’s culture of “endless amusements.” However, his point is similar to mine.

[21] David Lowenthal, in The Past is a Foreign Country (1985) notes that, despite saying "History is more or less bunk," Henry Ford did create the 'historical' village of Greenfield by shifting old buildings to a new site, including "Abraham Lincoln's Logan County Courthouse," the George Washington Carver Memorial Cabin" (49) and Edison's laboratory (288). Lowenthal suggests that Ford was motivated by guilt, recreating "an earlier America his automobiles had done much to destroy" (328).

[22] Letter to Kethevan Roberts, May 18<sup>th</sup>, 1931 (Letters 348).

[23] This process actually occurs in the text; Beavis's lover Helen's sunburned figure reminds him of a Gauguin painting, leading to thoughts of a gallery in Paris he had visited twenty years before with Helen's mother (also once his lover). Immediately afterward, as he becomes conscious of the smell of Helen's warm skin, a childhood memory of an afternoon in a chalk pit with Brian Foxe evokes memories of the latter's eventual death by suicide (21-22).

[24] Active pacifism was now a part of Huxley's philosophy. In a letter to Victoria Ocampo, an Argentinian editor, in November 1935, he wrote, "I am working on my book [Eyeless in Gaza] and in the interval talking over ways and means, with Gerald [Heard], for getting an adequate pacifist movement on its feet" (Letters 398). A consequence of these discussions was Huxley's book, What Are You Going To Do About It: The Case for Constructive Peace (1936). In it he advocates support for a "Constructive Peace Movement" which would be a kind of "religious order" in the form of "an affiliation of small groups" (32), anticipating the ideas which he would express fictionally through the Heard-inspired character Propter in After Many a Summer.

[25] In his essay "Progress" Huxley suggests that, whereas we regard the English Renaissance as "one of the most brilliant and progressive epochs of all history" those living then "believed the race was in a state of chronic decay." He suggests that, since the inverse is true in modern times (the early 1930s), and people regard themselves as "men of the dawn," it will be interesting to see "what the judgement of future historians will be" (Texts and Pretexts 146). The implication is that history may conclude the 1930s to be a time of decay. In an article, also written in 1932, "The Reality of Progress," Huxley writes that, although progress may be affirmed statistically, "there is probably no such thing as subjective progress in happiness" (Hearst Essays 104). Some years later, in a letter written to his brother Julian in October 1946, Huxley reaffirms that the reason for his "feeling rather dubious about the whole idea of progress, in its nineteenth - and - twentieth century expressions, at any rate" is that "progress can never be consciously experienced by the individuals who are supposedly progressing" (Letters 551). The pattern of progress is one which is established only in hindsight. As part of his argument, and partly echoing his point about the Renaissance (above), Huxley

suggests that, while the modern view of the thirteenth century is that it was “one of the great flowering times of history”, those living in it and writing of it “were uniformly of opinion that it was an age of decadence” (552).

[26] Huxley makes a Morris-like point in his letter to Julian of October 1946 (n. 33, above). “Gains in one field are paid for by losses in another. E.g. the advantages of mass production methods have entailed the decay of craftsmanship ... and the destruction of the basic, popular arts” (Letters 553).

[27] In his 1932 essay “Amor Fati” Huxley, echoing Jeffries, states his conviction that “Nature ... is mindless” (Texts and Pretexts 240).

[28] While Brian’s “apocalyptic moment” becomes a romantic memory to be treasured, rather than a more profound experience, it is far more positive than the anti-epiphany of the hedonistic Mary (Helen’s mother and Beavis’s ex-paramour). Forced into sex by a much younger man, she has “a revelation marvellous as well as horrible ... the Apocalypse, the whole Apocalypse at once” that “she really *wanted* to be treated as he was treating her, like a prostitute, like an animal” (280). Whereas Brian’s epiphany gives him at least the illusion of emotional and spiritual fusion with the cosmos, Mary’s union is solely of the flesh.

[29] House of Lords Records Office, MS. S/33/5/113, January 6<sup>th</sup> 1927. Reprinted in The Hidden Huxley, 23-24.

[30] Like both Morris and Wells, Huxley was antipathetic to nationalism. In his 1935 article “Emperor Worship Up to Date” he suggests that religion “has a formidable rival in nationalism” and complains of the prevalence of “the stupid and dangerous idolatries of nationalism supplemented here and there by the crazy blasphemies of dictator-worship” (Hidden Huxley 194- 195). In Time Must Have a Stop he refers to nationalism as “lunatic idolatry” (287).

[31] In a letter to written to Julian in November 1942 Huxley wrote that mysticism “is empirical and does not depend on revelation or history,” being “concerned with the eternal present and not...the future” (Letters 483). That is, in its focus on the individual experience within a unity and in the ‘eternal Now,’ mysticism is apolitical and is neither dependent on an historical viewpoint nor on hermeneutic interpretation. In its lack of emphasis on the future, mysticism is, therefore, much more positive than modern “political religions,” like “Communism and Nazism” and the more benign “Humanism and Utopianism” which are guilty of “sacrificing the present to [an unforeseeable] future” (483).

[32] In a letter to Victoria Ocampo on August 10<sup>th</sup>, 1945 -- four days after an atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima -- Huxley wrote that he found “a peace with atomic bombs hanging overhead a rather disquieting prospect,” because

“national states armed by science with superhuman power always remind me of Swift’s description of Gulliver being carried up to the roof of the King of Brobdingnag’s palace by a gigantic monkey: reason, human decency and spirituality, which are strictly individual matters, find themselves in the clutches of the collective will, which has the mentality of a delinquent boy of fourteen in conjunction with the physical power of a god” (Letters 532). In Ape and Essence the “gigantic monkey” of the collective will is represented by the apes holding science in their clutches.

[33] See Will Farnaby’s memories from his reporting assignments “following the smell of death from one end of the earth to the other,” from the murders of blacks under Apartheid in South Africa to an execution in the gas chamber at San Quentin (272), and then his drug-induced flashbacks to the “huge idiot faces” of spectators at a Nazi rally, the “thousands of corpses in the Korean mud,” the fly-blown bodies of a family in an Algerian farmhouse, and the body of an old woman in the Blitz (322).

[34] In a letter to the writer Margaret Isherwood in August 1959, and with reference to his own experiences in the taking of hallucinogens like mescaline and LSD, Huxley suggests that, although the “visionary experience” induced by drugs is different from genuine “mystical experience” he thinks that “the first is apt to lead into the second” (Letters 874).

## **CONCLUSION**

**Notwithstanding considerable variation in their backgrounds, Richard Jefferies, William Morris, H. G. Wells and Aldous Huxley were all disturbed by forms of fragmentation which they perceived in the world around them. As we have seen, in Jefferies' case, the changes wrought by the Industrial Revolution were compounded by both a chronic downturn in the agricultural economy, and an accompanying rural exodus. The towns attracted the ambitious among the working rural population, providing as they did employment for labour which was surplus to requirements on the land. The burgeoning urban centres and the proletariat clustered within them also appeared to Jefferies to be hotbeds of political agitation and fuel for, if not the source of, Leftist agitation. Generally, traditional rural life was being disrupted, and this was exacerbated by the lack of rural amenities. Change was not necessarily progress, but, without improvements in rural life, rural culture would simply break up. He sought means of providing personal, and social stability.**

**For Morris, the disruptive force was five hundred years of capitalism which had replaced the equation of "work equals art" by "work equals exploitation plus drudgery."**

**So-called progress had actually been a regressive process, accelerated by the Industrial Revolution, which had transformed a mediaeval**

workforce of contented artisans expressing themselves through work into a degraded and vulgar class of machine operatives. Although industrial work consolidated the workforce into a proletariat in industrial areas and ghettos, the fragmentation which Morris perceived was in the communal and cooperative life which he believed had been a feature of the mediaeval workplace – particularly amongst architectural workers – and which had been destroyed by dehumanising industrial work and its reduction of labour to a solely monetary value.

Wells worried about society from an evolutionary point of view. In Tono-Bungay he described the chaos of an England simultaneously decaying socially and pustulating with uncoordinated and frenetic entrepreneurial projects. All was muddle, and biological evolution offered no more guarantees than its social counterpart. Increasingly people sought guarantees in various nationalisms in which the threat of war was inevitably inherent.

Huxley grew to maturity during World War One, which left as its legacy an eroded sense of spirituality and the sort of pessimism which manifested itself in Spengler's work. Huxley observed a decentred attitude to life amongst the upper reaches of society, and a tendency toward hedonism amongst the general population to which the leisure-oriented industries catered. Those who found a spiritual void which other satisfactions could not fill were turning to pseudo-religions like

communism and fascism. Spiritual fragmentation was succeeded by the excesses of World War Two and the possibility of planetary dissolution once nuclear technology was in the hands of the major powers.

As we can see, and have seen, then, all of these authors were dissatisfied with trends and circumstances visible in the world around them. They made their dissatisfaction clear through their work which, in each case, leans heavily toward social criticism. Their dystopias and utopias are born of that criticism. However, none of them was content to merely complain, and all of them offered solutions to the problems which they perceived. In each case their response to disruption and fragmentation was to seek ways of creating or recreating unity.

Jefferies suggested reforms which might make rural life more tolerable or attractive to those thinking of moving off the land, but his force for unity was nature itself. The landscape and the seasons represented continuity as, by association, did naturalised, but manmade, topographical features and the rural population who synecdochically represented both the many generations of those who had lived on, and from, the land, and the cumulative traditions of those forebears. Consequently nature and history are really complementary in Jefferies' response to change. Rural people, the past, and the natural world all form a unity in his thought. Nature also inspired his mysticism, enabling a sense of unity between him and the cosmos and a source for optimism

in that the individual bond he felt with nature might eventually become universal. After London is a multi-layered and ambiguous novel, but it provides Jefferies with a vehicle for his social criticism, and offers a picture of an England in which nature has swallowed up much of humanity's efforts once depopulation has occurred. One particular quality which it shares with the dystopias analysed in this thesis is that it is a vision of the future which is not intended to be prophetic; instead it embodies Jefferies' critique of trends in (then) contemporary society. It also suggests a new beginning -- something which actually aligns it with the utopian works of Morris and Wells.

On one level, After London has a simple, if then original, plot, in which civilization has been swamped and the descendants of the survivors in England live in various tribes or within a feudal society and struggle against a resurgent natural world and each other. Perceiving a decline in rural life generally, and a diminishing in the relationship between humanity and nature, Jefferies had responded imaginatively by having nature sweep most of humanity away so that what society is left is completely rural and forced to reestablish itself in the natural world. Although not acknowledged by him as such, Jefferies imagines the change in Darwinian terms; the individual and the social have regressed, adapting to new conditions by devolving, as the title of the first section, "The Relapse into Barbarism," would suggest (1). Nature reclaims its

own, both through the landscape which becomes “endless forest and marsh” (4), and in the characteristics of the various violent tribes which live within that environment, like the “depraved” Bushmen (21). It is a situation which seems to require the more cultured, spiritual (and Jefferies-like) Felix as a force for progression.

There is, however, no doubt that After London is an ambiguous text. As I have suggested, part of its ambiguity for the modern reader may result from a desire to bracket it within a particular genre or sub-genre when, to be fair, it actually pre-existed dystopian literature as a developed genre. As a piece of literature, its ambiguities are part of what makes it interesting. When read in the context of his other work, it can be seen to embody his criticisms of the metamorphosis he observed in the England around him. As an example of Victorian medievalism, and particularly as an inspiration for Morris, it has a value irrespective of a consideration of its other merits.

Morris sought a unity within communism and through a return of the mediaeval work ethic. Marxism provided a justifying historical myth for Morris’s mediaeval future in the sense that it suggested that the steady decline which Morris had observed since the feudal era was actually part of a process which would bring about the socialist nirvana, but offered few details of exactly what Marx’s vision of utopia would resemble. Having required a proletarian revolution to bring it into being, Morris’s utopia

becomes, paradoxically, one vast arts-and-crafts version of the middle class.

Morris's new society exists in harmony with the natural environment, rather than in competition with it as in Jefferies' more Darwinian vision. Moreover, whereas in Jefferies' vision only Felix exhibits an emotional and spiritual appreciation of the natural world, in the more benign News from Nowhere such feelings have become universal: "the spirit of the new days" is an "intense and overweening love of the very skin and surface of the earth" (317). Nature has become omnipresent; the obtrusive and polluting industry which provided the economic base for Victorian cities has disappeared and the division of England into country and city is no longer a factor. However, whereas Jefferies has Victorian England literally swamped by nature in the form of forest and a great lake, Morris's remodelled and green England is one in which the natural world and the distinctively human world have been blended together. The city becomes countrified, and the countryside evenly settled, so that the whole country "is now a garden" (254). Consequently, and contrasting with Jefferies' depopulated After London, News from Nowhere depicts a future in which "the population is pretty much as it was at the end of the nineteenth century" (News 256). Urban dwellers spend working holidays doing agricultural work, and the rural population have benefited from being "vivified by the thought and

briskness of town-bread folk" (News 254). Town, country, and indeed the entire population are all held within Morris's holistic vision in which divisions are eradicated and politics dissolved.

Wells -- the most prolific author of utopias and dystopias in this thesis -- subscribed to a view of society so holistic that it contained the entire world. Like Morris's utopia and Jefferies' dystopia, his visions of a future utopia required some sort of violent upheaval to bring them into being. Unlike Morris, Wells anticipated that the utopian new order might only be established through the efforts of a rational elite -- an elite which he based on the post-Enlightenment rural gentry.<sup>1</sup> Wells, like Morris, came to look to the past for justification of his vision of the future.

However, Wells' version of historical determinism was not one of process but more of prolepsis, in that history yielded embryonic efforts at world domination which offered evidence of a latent tendency in society or societies toward a world unity, and foreshadowed the new order to come. Wells' utopian thought revolves around visions of order, and, in one sense, by taking the records of events in the past and shaping them within the The Outline of History, he was imposing a form of order on the past which he offered as proof of a particular conception of the future.

Wells' ideas concerning the need for order also emerge in his attitude toward nature. Wells has little faith in nature generally. Nature may have checks and balances, but it lacks symmetry and certainly offers

no guarantees of any particular progression. Extinction is as much a fact of nature as growth. Evolution offers the possibility of adaptation in response to change, but no guarantees of the results of those adaptations. Nevertheless, Wells understood the human as a natural organism. This suggested two things to him. One was an animal nature lurking beneath the layers of culture, and Wells, much as Huxley would later, distrusted that animality, suspecting it of violent and antisocial tendencies which militated against an ordered society. On the other hand, humanity's status as a part of nature also offered possibilities. Why not institute a husbandry of humanity, in the sense of recognizing the principles of evolution but using them according to the plan that nature in the larger sense does not itself evidence? The evolution of humanity, biologically *and* socially, might be engineered scientifically rather than left to chance. But, as Wells suggests in A Modern Utopia, "no less than a planet will serve the purpose" (8). A rationally ordered society burgeoning in one part of the world would always be vulnerable to the depredations of its brutish and short-sighted neighbours.<sup>2</sup> Consequently he is forced to promote his visions of a global unity, a World State. Social, and indeed biological, evolution could safely be engineered if there were no threats from nationalism or self-aggrandizing demagogues.

Finally Huxley, like Wells, wrote examples of both dystopias and utopias. His perception of progress was simply that it was obvious only

through the retrospection of historians, and therefore unverifiable experientially by individuals who might be part of the process, but cannot be certain since they lack the benefit of hindsight. Progress could, in fact, be a dangerous myth. Ape and Essence offers a post-apocalyptic dystopia in which Armageddon has resulted from the ape winning out over the essence. That is, humanity has lost touch with its spirituality and compassion. Instead it has subscribed to what is described ironically as “the two great ideas” of Progress and Nationalism (Ape 125).

Paraphrasing Marx, Huxley suggests that “Progress is the midwife of Force” and that it has been used as a self-justifying myth (126).

Nationalism has resulted in two World Wars. In Ape and Essence “the lunatic dreams of Progress and Nationalism” have resulted in the Third World War (130). The devastation to the environment from nuclear and biological weapons has resulted in a bleak future for humanity in which, in a sense, the remnants of California’s population are only marginally more humane than Wells’ Morlocks.<sup>3</sup> Yet, even had the War not blighted the planet, humanity’s “devastation of natural resources” through poor environmental practices would have resulted in “the ruin of ... civilization” in any case (172). Huxley’s ecological message is clear, as it is elsewhere in his later work. Ironically, the ape in humanity, the brutal and myopic tendencies which Huxley deplored and saw as animal, are a threat to the natural world itself. The animal in us, our natural heritage, is

perceived by Huxley as anti-nature. But of course the “angry apes” (Ape 35) have qualities and abilities that the literal ape does not, including an intellect and recourse to the immense power made available through science and technology. It is those powers which are capable of destroying the planet’s ecology and all those living organisms which depend upon it.

Huxley believed the solution to social and environmental problems lay in unity, a unity which would begin with individuals and then small communities. He sought an organic social unity, rather than the rigidly ordered utopias of Wells. Eventually Huxley subscribed to an ecology by which nature and humanity might be harmonised physically and spiritually. Island resembles News from Nowhere in many ways, but Huxley had no time for revolutionary Marxism, nor for the historical determinism it represents. As we have seen, Huxley’s historical consciousness is visible in his early works, but gradually gives way to a perception of time that made the past or the future less relevant. Past, present and future become fused in Huxley’s mysticism. In Brave New World the past has been rendered a blank in the interests of stability, and so progress is an irrelevancy. Eventually the past itself became something of an irrelevancy for Huxley.

We have seen, then, how nature, a sense of the past, and an attitude towards the meanings which have been loaded onto the past are

reflected in the work of all four authors. Reading their work inspires thoughts as to where to place ourselves, as individuals, and societies, in the schemes of things. I use the plural form of scheme since I have focussed on two schemes – history, and nature. Their various perspectives on history are important, because it is through analysing the past, and through trying to determine whether it offers a direction or useful precedents, that we may endeavour to work out where this world of ours is going. Whether lamenting the loss of roots, supposing that certain aspects of history are proleptic, observing a direction to history, or valuing the past but supposing that observing a direction in it is dangerous but necessarily ascribing a value to understanding the past, all four authors in this thesis contribute to the debate.

Their conceptions of the importance of nature in relation to humanity are equally important, given the importance of the various aspects of that relationship between our species and nature, whether in terms of the environment, or in terms of which human characteristics are cultural and which biological. And, encompassing all these considerations, we ought to think about the ways in which our species would seem to be a part of the natural world, and in what ways it appears to be outside that world. Ultimately, as our society impacts on the environment increasingly, and we become less involved with an unmodified natural world as individuals, we might consider in what ways

**we are becoming either unnatural or even anti-nature. Given our status as animals, that would seem to be a dichotomy. The four authors in this thesis all contribute to that debate also.**

**When one traces each author's comprehension of both nature and the past through his work generally one sees how, in the case of all four writers, the two conceptions are interrelated. For Jefferies, the natural world provided a model for his idea of history as organic, and undirected, growth. In lamenting the loss of humanity's own organic connection with the environment, Jefferies had no historic model which assured any particular future. Morris, like Jefferies, saw life in the past as itself organic, and closer to nature. However, he believed that history was progressing inexorably toward a time when that organic life would return. Wells, in effect, sought to exert some control over the past by shaping it so that it offered a sort of prophecy of the shape of the future. He also wanted to control nature in terms of shaping humanity's destiny by imposing artificial controls on social and biological evolution. Huxley believed that a certain vision of history could have a negative effect on the environment, in that a subscription to notions of progress enabled the present to be sacrificed to a vision of the future which, especially in the case of Marxist thinking, was guaranteed by understanding history deterministically. Ecological comprehension required a whole vision, not the sort of partial or selective thinking practised by historians in the**

service of a certain belief or theory.

Their respective views on both history and nature contributed to holistic conceptions which would integrate those areas of life in which they observed fragmenting and disruptive forces to be at work. The utopias and dystopias are integral to their work, but that work must be understood as a whole, not merely as a supportive background to their imagined and distant worlds. The holistic responses which each developed to the world around him can be traced through the careers of Jefferies, Morris, Wells, and Huxley respectively. Of those responses, neither Wells' World State nor Morris's communist garden seems likely to appear in the foreseeable future. The rural world which Jefferies privileged and defended is one in which only a fraction of England's inhabitants could have any extensive connection to the soil. His response to threats to rural life and its environment were, in his non-fiction, to support modest change in the good of a greater continuity. In After London, however, his more emotional reaction, perhaps, is to clean the board and start again. In his more esoteric moments, he gropes for some more spiritual hope. Huxley's mysticism, like Jefferies', can hardly be seen as mainstream. His only utopia, Island, offers a spiritual as well as more pragmatic vision of a sort of paradise. Ultimately, however, it disappears beneath army boots and tank tracks.

Finally, as avenues toward thought on the significance of the past,

**and on our relationship with the natural world in all its aspects, the various and provocative critiques offered by all four authors have an undeniable value. The prophetic possibilities or probabilities of their visions of the future are open to debate. Whether we are on our way toward utopia, or slipping toward some less desirable fate, is the matter for conjecture but not for verifiable conclusions. The assessment of progress, or its lack, must be, as Huxley would say, the province of historians. Only time will tell.**

[1] It would seem that Jefferies' leaders are likely to emerge from the gentry also, in that Felix in After London exhibits leadership qualities, seems to be the hope for the future at the text's end, and is a member of the lower aristocracy.

[2] This situation is obviously the downfall of the insular utopia in Huxley's Island.

[3] The exception being the minority of Hots. Globally, the populations of New Zealand and Equatorial Africa are the only ones to escape the ravages of the War (39).

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