

Matić, Andrija

"Gruff old scientists and rough old scholars" : the caricature of intellectualism in Aldous Huxley's short stories

Brno studies in English. 2021, vol. 47, iss. 2, pp. 105-117

ISSN 0524-6881 (print); ISSN 1805-0867 (online)

Stable URL (DOI): <https://doi.org/10.5817/BSE2021-2-8>

Stable URL (handle): <https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/144879>

License: [CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/)

Access Date: 17. 02. 2024

Version: 20220831

Terms of use: Digital Library of the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University provides access to digitized documents strictly for personal use, unless otherwise specified.

“GRUFF OLD SCIENTISTS” AND “ROUGH OLD SCHOLARS”: THE CARICATURE OF INTELLECTUALISM IN ALDOUS HUXLEY’S SHORT STORIES

Brno Studies in English
Volume 47, No. 2, 2021

ISSN 0524-6881 | e-ISSN 1805-0867
<https://doi.org/10.5817/BSE2021-2-8>

ANDRIJA MATIĆ

Abstract

This essay examines Aldous Huxley’s short stories from early “Happily Ever After” to more accomplished “Chawdron” and “The Rest Cure”. My analysis shows that criticism of perverted, one-dimensional intellectualism is one of the most important themes in Huxley’s short fiction. His stories often mock superficial public school teachers, delusional academics, art snobs, unimaginative critics, and intellectuals who neglect or deliberately suppress emotions and thus limit their perception of reality. Huxley’s criticism reveals his position on diverse phenomena ranging from British education to Modernist art. It also indicates his dissatisfaction with dominant ideas at the beginning of the XX century, positioning him as a unique thinker of the Modernist era.

Key words

Aldous Huxley; Modernism; short stories; intellectualism; academia.

Like many other Modernist authors, Aldous Huxley often questioned the ideas which shaped Western societies. World War I showed that no scientific, philosophical, political or religious concepts prevented mankind from slipping into the most horrific slaughter that had ever been recorded. The emerging artistic and intellectual movements, promoting themselves as substitutes for corrupt ideologies, seemed to him equally futile. Likewise, as a young man, he spent some time at Garsington Manor where he learnt that a powerful mind frequently goes together with pretentiousness and incurable vanity (Murray 2003: 54–66). His fiction therefore is full of tunnel-visioned scientists, indoctrinated academics, wannabe artists, snobbish art critics, just to name a few common types. To this date, however, there is no study that analyzes the depictions of intellectuals in Huxley’s short stories. The main reason is probably because Huxley’s short fiction is usually considered second-rate compared to his novels. This paper will show that the analysis of the satirical portrayals of intellectuals in Huxley’s short fiction not only contributes to the better understanding of similar characters in Huxley’s novels, but indicates his views on the social functions of science, education, and art.

Aldous Huxley and the Modernist Satire

Most scholars agree that Modernism should not be seen as a unified artistic movement but, as Richard Sheppard (1997) points out, a “loose-fitting label designating an experience of cultural crisis” (98). That cultural crisis was evoked in different ways which, from today’s perspective, seem unrelated and at times even opposed to one another. Still, the majority of Modernist works – regardless of their style and poetic focus – were marked by heavy irony and satire. In *Mrs Dalloway*, Virginia Woolf derided British upper class with its conservative politicians, renowned psychiatrists, and heirs of noble families hosting sumptuous parties for the affluent. Her descriptions were rarely given without sophisticated irony, which Witemeyer (1997) considers one of the main characteristics of Modernism (1). Moreover, Fletcher and Bradbury (1991) believe that irony is “presiding in the spirit of Modernism” (407). On the other hand, in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Joyce mocked Catholic school upbringing designed to impose a permanent sense of guilt and scare children into embracing a rigid Jesuit doctrine. The satire in T. S. Eliot’s early poems (until his conversion to Anglo-Catholicism) was so prevalent that Yeats (1936) thought of him as “a satirist rather than a poet” (xxii). Eliot (1957) used satire in his essays as well, labelling New Critics, for instance, as a “lemon squeezer school of criticism” (126). The satire in some Modernist works targeted outdated artistic concepts, which led scholars such as Michael Bell (1999) to believe that Modernism was a “turn against an earlier generation’s aestheticism” (26). Modernist authors also ridiculed previous philosophical, sociological and scientific ideas, or, as Childs (2000) argues, “nineteenth-century stalwarts such as empiricism and rationalism” (19).

Although not a typical Modernist, Aldous Huxley shared this characteristic with his peers. His early novels such as *Crome Yellow* or *Antic Hay* were praised for their witty satire. His essays contain satirical passages, too, directed primarily against dominant political, religious, and sociological ideas at the beginning of the XX century. Few critics, however, have analyzed this aspect in his short stories, where satire is employed mostly to depict superficial intellectuals.

Huxley’s Intellectualism in the Literature

Scholars and biographers have different views on whether Huxley was an intellectual or a mystic or a thinker who amalgamated both roles. Nicholas Murray (2003) has entitled his most influential book *Aldous Huxley: An English Intellectual*. He believes that Huxley has undergone different stages in his works – from “Olympian intellectualism” to a socially responsible position in which the author “would recognize that the contribution of the intellectual to society is in collaboration with the existing know-how rather than in a speculation that risk becoming self-indulgent” (298). Sybille Bedford (1973) underscores that Huxley criticized D. H. Lawrence for his “anti-intellectualism” and “dislike for science” which was “passionate and expressed itself in the most fantastically unreasonable terms” (192). Frederick W. Conner (1973) claims that Huxley “sided with intellectuals”

and criticized mysticism and Oriental spirituality until 1925, whereupon he became more inclined toward mysticism (286). Sally A. Paulsell (1995) claims the opposite. In her essay on the use of color and light in Huxley's literature, she writes that Huxley started his mystical journey with his first collection of poems in 1916 (81). Paulsell points out that in 1928, "Huxley temporarily neglects the literary expression of his mystical vision [...] in order to satirize perverted sexual relationships and perverted scientific reason" (93). June Deery (1996) claims that Huxley's "interest in mysticism was neither a temporary phase of youth nor the final aberration [but] one philosophy that unites all his works after 1936" (109). Some scholars think that Huxley has never reached higher mystical level due to his intellectualism. Kulwant Singh Gill (1981) asserts that Huxley "did genuinely knock at the doors of the Kingdom of Heaven, but the Kingdom of Heaven never revealed its celestial glory to him" because "he was a pilgrim who was encumbered by heavy intellectual baggage" (612). Jerome Meckier (1969) has given perhaps the most comprehensive description of Huxley's intellectual mysticism: "An intellectual with a distrust of mind and language, an artist who prefers unpopular truth to artistic effect, [...] a life worshiper who feels the physical will always let you down, Huxley is an alleged mystic who is always clear and rational, a knowledgeable scientist who has written the century's severest critiques of science" (7).

Nevertheless, scholars are unanimous when it comes to Huxley's portrayals of one-dimensional scientists and intellectuals in his novels, especially the ones that suppress or completely ignore their emotional life. David Bradshaw (1996) points out Huxley's satirical depiction of "Einstein craze" in *Crome Yellow*, emphasizing a peculiar way in which Denis Stone experiences Einstein's theory of relativity (196). In his reading of the same novel, Robert S. Baker (1982) focuses on Scogan – a character widely believed to be based on Bertrand Russell – and suggests that his "comically fastidious aversion for nature and his preference for a world that systematically testifies to the power of human intellect is a typical instance of the self-imposed ignorance characteristic of the burrower" (36). Ronald T. Sion (2010) sees Shearwater from *Antic Hay* as someone who "represents the one-dimensional, soulless product of an exaggerated emphasis on science that is divorced from human values" and who "has lost all sense of empathy and passion because he has forfeited his essential human nature" (38). Meckier (1969) stresses that the name Shearwater "accentuates his insistence that life revolves around kidney research: for him, life is sheer water" (16). Shearwater, according to Meckier, is part of the human orchestra which has "gone haywire," an instrument which, "instead of striving for unity [...] remains by choice separate and alone" (16). In an essay on Huxley's relation to D.H. Lawrence, Pierre Vitoux (1974) says that Lord Edward Tantamount, the reclusive scientist from *Point Counter Point*, is "an extreme intellectual introvert" who "does not base his thoughts on external facts" and who "is helpless in personal relations" (510). Meckier (2002) thinks that in *Brave New World*, Huxley "caricatured H. G. Wells and Sir Alfred Mond [...] because he considered both men proponents of antihumanistic rationalization" that could "reduce human beings to machines by destroying freedom and individuality" (432). In his analysis of the same novel, Brad Congdon (2011) emphasizes Huxley's fear not of any "scientific technique" but of a religion that could "lead

men to use scientific knowledge and powers in morally corrupt, dehumanizing ways” (100).

However, no studies have explained the satirical characterizations of intellectuals in Huxley’s short stories. This paper will show that some characters in Huxley’s novels, more accomplished and thus more popular in the literature, have been sketched in his early short fiction. It will also indicate Huxley’s attitude toward some Modernist movements and their over-intellectualization of art. Finally, this paper will prove the consistency in Huxley’s opinion on the relation between European intellectuals and the society in the early XX century.

One-Dimensional Intellectualism in Huxley’s Short Stories

In “Happily Ever After”, Huxley mocks the sterility of British and expatriate intellectuals at the beginning of the XX century. Alfred Petherton is a respectable academic whose name can be found on several “meritorious, if not exactly brilliant, books” (Huxley 1992: 15). He relishes quoting from his vast knowledge, but he also loves to read gossip columns in *The Times*. He can talk with the same delight about Gibbon’s *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* and the forthcoming marriage of a person named Beryl Camberley-Belcher. The outcome of his teaching philosophy is best seen in his daughter Marjorie. Spoon-fed with classical history all her life, she hates anything related to the subject matter. But the father never fails to ignore his daughter’s feelings. At luncheons, his favorite time for evoking ancient masters, Petherton often surprises her with a question such as: “Do you remember, dear child, whether it was Pomponazzi who denied the personal immortality of the soul, or else that queer fellow, Laurentius Valla?” (19) It is not a surprise that Marjorie turns into a passive young woman unable to understand anything beyond her cushioned world. Huxley once wrote that “one has no idea [...] how bottomlessly stupid learned men can be” (Murray, 2003, 274). Alfred Petherton is among the first characters in Huxley’s prose to fit the profile.

The Reverend Roger, Petherton’s brother and “a master at one of the most glorious public schools” (Huxley 1992: 27), adheres to even more idiosyncratic methods. Sporting a military crew cut, he suggests that students should be regularly beaten up because, “if you can’t hammer knowledge in at their heads, you can at least beat a little in at their tails” (28). Although he teaches Latin verses and Greek grammar, he believes that the core of solid education is discipline. He detests scientists not only because some of them deny God’s existence but because they are not able to keep discipline. That is why he considers teaching science a waste of time. He even thinks that schools shouldn’t provide housing to scientists due to their atheism and reluctance to attend church ceremonies (29). His monologues, however, are not limited to the problems in curriculum and religious sentiment among public school teachers. Inspired by his brother’s exquisite port, the Reverend Roger reveals his policy on the poor, as they have “plenty to eat, plenty of money, and no taxes to pay” (35). Not only do such statements indicate the privileged bubble of his caste but his callous attitude toward the working

class people in Britain who mostly suffered during WWI either as soldiers or the victims of the economic downturn. Likewise, upon hearing that Marjorie's fiancée Guy has died on the battlefield, Roger is more worried about the obituary he should send to the *Times* than Marjorie's pain. And when he has the opportunity to console his niece, he offers only dry words taken from his latest sermon. The Reverend Roger is the representative of the XIX century religious education, unwilling to accept the modern world which is embodied in scientific discoveries and especially reshuffling of the old class-based society where the clergy was guaranteed a major role, the society of "organized sacramentalism," as Huxley (2009) calls it in *The Perennial Philosophy*, that "gives to the priestly caste a power which it is all too natural for them to abuse" (270). What Roger shares with his brother Alfred is a façade of classical knowledge that conceals pathological egoism and lack of empathy. Such self-centeredness and inability to experience deeper feelings will be the main characteristic of most Huxley's scholars and intellectuals—from his early short stories to late novels.

Jacobsen, Alfred Petherton's friend and former student, comes from a new generation of scholars. He is not British but "a Norwegian, born in the Argentine, educated in the United States, in France, and in Germany" (Huxley 1992: 14). He is a master of small-talk, extremely polite and correct, a man who can see through the religiosity of the British clergy and pretentiousness of academia. His brilliant mind, however, never reaches beyond looking down on people and justifying his superiority. His religious belief is ambiguous: Jacobsen respects the church as an institution, yet he cannot stand the "childish imbecility of its representatives" whose "intellect [is] only a little less limited than that of an Australian aboriginal" (21). Perhaps his biggest peculiarity is his conscious suppression of emotions. Unlike Alfred and Roger Petherton, who can hardly feel anything other than simple pleasures and physical discomforts that go with their age, Jacobsen is capable of more profound feelings. Nevertheless, his daily routine, apart from writing and thinking, entails "never letting [himself] to be moved by external things" (31), as he admits in a conversation with Guy. That is why he is surprised when he learns that George has lost his leg in the war:

George had lost a leg. There would be no more of that Olympian speed and strength and beauty. Jacobsen conjured up before his memory a vision of the boy running with his great fawn-coloured dog across green expanses of grass. How glorious he had looked, his fine brown hair blowing like fire in the wind of his own speed, his cheeks flushed, his eyes very bright. And how easily he ran, with long, bounding strides, looking down at the dog that jumped and barked at his side! (40)

Hardly does he manage to rationalize George's amputation – his ingenious brain has tied it to the differences in tone between the English word *stump* and its French translation *moignon* – when he learns that Guy has been killed. This time Jacobsen cannot shake it off and surrenders to the overwhelming grief. Jacobsen is one of many characters in Huxley's fiction (for instance, Brian Foxe) who are endowed with intellect to see the world as it is, maybe even to perceive the

comprehensive “divine reality,” as Huxley usually called it, but they never reach it due to their “one-pointedness” that usually leads to the “more or less total atrophy of all but one side of the mind” (Huxley 2009: 299).

Emberlin in “Eupompus Gave Splendor to Art by Numbers” is another scholar, an academic “in the best sense of the word” (Huxley 1992: 48). Although an erudite and a prolific writer, he never bothers to publish his works. To him it is mere exhibitionism. Only once did he publish a book of poetry, but soon afterwards he became ashamed of it, seeing no other option but to collect all available copies and burn them. He has often experimented with bizarre schools of thought (e.g. Mnemonics, which prompted him to construct a syllogizing machine). His latest passion is Eupompianism, a sect established in memory of an obscure Greek painter Eupompus who devoted his life to worshipping numbers. As with all other ideas he followed in the past, Emberlin has become a pious Eupompian. He finds parallels between the number of tiles in his bathroom and the ones in Holborn public lavatories. He sees an unusual metaphysical value of the Trinity, as it is “three in one” and “one in three” at the same time (54). Emberlin is an embodiment of what Huxley calls an “introvert Procrustes, who would chop and trim the objective world in order that it may fit the bed he has prepared for it in his mind” (Huxley 1957: 47). However, the focus of Huxley’s criticism in this story is not only on scholars or “easy targets”, as Virginia Woolf wrote in an anonymous review of *Limbo* (Murray 2003: 119). He also mocks over-intellectualization of art, so much present in Modernist movements. Huxley has often admonished their rejection of “obvious truths” or simple concepts of ordinary life. In “Art and the Obvious,” analyzing the perception of reality in the contemporary art, Huxley (1931) writes that modern artists explore “only a tiny fraction of existence” (26) and limit themselves to “incompleteness, to sterility, to premature decrepitude and death” (29). Eupompus perfectly illustrates Huxley’s opinion. He had been an accomplished portraitist until he sacrificed his craft for the idea that numbers were the sole reality and superior to boundless artistic expression. Upon realization that he had wasted his best years in pursuit of “numerical foundations”, he killed his admirers first – or Philarithmics, as they called themselves – and eventually took his own life.

The suppression of emotions and over-intellectualization of art are important topics in “The Tillotson Banquet”. Spode is an ambitious scholar who befriends Lord Badgery, hoping that the nobleman will help him climb the social ladder. The narrator introduces him with characteristic Huxleyan irony. Spode is not a snob, which is stressed twice, but he cannot help thinking that having dinner with Lord Badgery is “a definite event in his life, a step forward, he felt, towards that final success, social, material, and literary, which he had come to London with the fixed intention of making” (Huxley 1992: 120). After a conversation with Lord Badgery on Walter Tillotson, a forgotten painter from the mid XIX century, Spode discovers that he is still alive at the age of ninety-seven and that he lives in a slum. They develop a plan to organize a banquet in Tillotson’s honor, with the aim of raising funds which would enable the painter to move to a more humane environment. But each of them has an ulterior motive. Spode thinks that the rediscovery of the great painter will boost his reputation in London’s art world.

Lord Badgery, although disappointed on hearing that Tillotson will not decorate his private gallery with frescoes, encourages Spode's idea because it is a rare opportunity for him to invite embittered artists and critics and to see them quarrel. One of Huxley's main objections to intellectualism – its dissociation from profound emotions – is clearly visible in Spode's conversation with Tillotson. Despite the old man's senility and endless complaints about his living conditions, Spode feels inferior. He is first moved by the old-man's recollections of his master Haydon, and then he feels ashamed:

What was the use of his own youth and cleverness? He saw himself suddenly as a boy with a rattle scaring birds rattling his noisy cleverness, waving his arms in ceaseless and futile activity, never resting in his efforts to scare away the birds that were always trying to settle in his mind. And what birds! wide-winged and beautiful, all those serene thoughts and faiths and emotions that only visit minds that have humbled themselves to quiet. Those gracious visitants he was for ever using all his energies to drive away. But this old man, with his hedgehogs and his honest doubts and all the rest of it – his mind was like a field made beautiful by the free coming and going, the unafraid alightings of a multitude of white, bright-winged creatures. (131).

At the *Café Bomba* where the banquet takes place, Spode is back to his old self, arranging dinner for the audience and taking care of subscriptions. But at least he is able to feel something. Other guests – London's art *crème de la crème* with Dickensian names such as Mrs. Nobes, Mrs. Cayman, and Mrs. Mandragore, the artistic and intellectual hodge-podge which will get its full shape in *Point Counter Point* – consider Tillotson an old clown whose performance has enabled them to come together and demonstrate their superiority. Only when Tillotson constructs a few sane words about an artist's difficult life, do the audience regard him as a human being. They almost wish they had donated more money. Nevertheless, when he continues the disjointed story about Benjamin Robert Haydon, they heave a sigh of relief and burst into clapping, praising the old man for not becoming more respectable. The whole scene illustrates what Huxley called "organized lovelessness" (Huxley 2009: 95). In *The Perennial Philosophy*, elaborating on the current treatment of Nature and its relation to the perception of arts, he writes that such "lovelessness [is] so extreme that we have effectively killed all the fundamental or useful arts" and that "lovelessness in regard to art is at the same time a lovelessness in regard to the human beings" (95). The audience at the banquet do not see art as something beautiful and inspiring, something that could enlighten them and bring closer to other human beings, but merely as a vehicle for conveying their own intellectual superiority.

In "Young Archimedes" Huxley describes what a truly great mind should be. The man of genius, in another twist of Huxleyan irony, is none other than an Italian boy Guido. Although a couple of years older than his friend Robin and endowed with considerable intelligence, he is "patient, tolerant, and untyrannical" (Huxley 1992: 233). The narrator often finds the boy meditating with his

chin in hand and elbow on the knee, as if he were an infant version of Rodin's *Thinker*. He understands Euclidean geometry, even though he has never gone to school. What's more, having proven Pythagorean Theorem "in a very untechnical language, but clearly and with a relentless logic," the boy exclaims: "It's so beautiful! It's so easy!" (247). He is also capable of feeling and even interpreting classical music. After listening to Bach's *Concerto in D Minor* for two violins, he hums a long phrase and sees a connection between the two instruments. He doesn't like Strauss' *Till Eulenspiegel* because "the end doesn't seem to come out properly of the beginning." He dislikes Debussy's *Arabesques*, too, and asks: "Why does he say the same thing over and over again?" (242). He is too young to understand what he is listening to, let alone to explain his interpretation in a more sophisticated language, but he possesses a necessary ingredient for any artistic experience: The emotional and intellectual have not been separated in his mind, which is a characteristic that most Huxley's characters lack.

Despite his intelligence and artistic sensibility, he is not condescending to little Robin. And he enjoys playing games with equal passion as when explaining geometric problems. What can such a boy expect in a world where knowledge and creativity limit the experience of life instead of broadening it? Signora Bondi (the irony of her name is self-evident), who has been obsessed with Guido ever since he showed the first signs of his intelligence, takes him to her house in Florence, separating the boy from his family and friends. She forces him to practice the piano more than he wants and forbids him from exploring Euclidean geometry. She considers it a waste of time, evoking the Reverend Roger's remarks on teaching science in British public schools. She does not understand that Guido's potential, in Zygmunt Bauman's words, is "unfulfillable on its own, without assistance of a reason and the reason-bearers" (Bauman 1993: 26). To secure Guido's attachment to her, Signora Bondi tells the boy that his family have abandoned him. She hopes that expensive presents will make up for the change he has never wished for. Not seeing any way out of his captivity, Guido kills himself, jumping off the window. This boy with high intelligence and creativity who never fails to see the importance of ordinary childhood becomes Rampion's "revolt in favor of life and wholeness" (Huxley 2004: 155). He is a powerful contrast to superficial intellectualism which compels minds with great potential to adhere to one aspect of their intellect and neglect their emotional life.

"Chawdron" is a story about the life and death of a wealthy eccentric Benjamin Chawdron. But the real protagonist is Edmund Tilney, a disillusioned literary journalist who has ghostwritten Chawdron's autobiography. He seems to be a strange mixture of Jacobsen, Mark Rampion, and Maurice Spandrell. He shares Jacobsen's emotional void, Rampion's contempt for fake spirituality, and (to a certain degree) Spandrell's attitude to women. Tilney understands the futility of "gruff old scientists, the rough old scholars, the bluff old admirals and bishops, and all the other pillars of Christian society" who strive to become "super-human" (Huxley 1992: 309). He puts businessmen and clergy together with intellectuals and scientists, for he believes, just like Rampion, that all of them have the same goal – to limit holistic experience of life. His disdain for Christianity and organized religion is the most fervent. Referring to Thomas à Kempis'

The Imitation of Christ, Tinley explains that “organized Churches turn out to be nothing but vast and elaborate Academies of Dramatic Art,” where people learn how to master the roles of “Jesus or Podsnap or Alexander the Great, or whoever the local favorite may be” (323). His monologues are full of condescending remarks on pretty much every person he talks about. He mocks Chawdron for “having no taste, and being whole without education” (317). He pities a woman named Sybil whose first husband was Jewish, while the second one was Mexican Indian. As Claudia Rosenhan (2005) claims, his statements, albeit racist at first glance, are meant to indicate the social status of Sybil’s husbands (97). Finally, his descriptions of Maggie Spindell evoke Maurice Spandrell’s misogyny and his “sadistic desire to humiliate women” (Baker 1974: 127). Among Tinley’s numerous descriptions of Chawdron’s “Little Fairy,” the most memorable is the “blood-curdling” way in which she says “be-yütiful,” which is “long-drawn-out with the oo sound thinned and refined into German u-modified” (Huxley 1992: 321).

However, he has a trait that the majority of similar characters in Huxley’s fiction do not possess. He understands his limitations and is not afraid of admitting them. At times, he even enjoys talking about his failures. Unlike Jacobsen, he knows that his literary talents are at best mediocre. He may have written a few decent articles and one good book – Chawdron’s *Autobiography*, which he cannot claim as he has ghostwritten it – but he is well aware that his writing will never secure him a place in the literary pantheon. In one of his monologues brimming with self-pity, Tinley explains that he has always been familiar with the *idea* of life but never felt it in real time:

Thanks to the books and the ideas, I never learnt how to deal with real situations, with solid people and things. Personal relationships – I’ve never been able to manage them effectively. Only ideas. With ideas I’m at home. With the *idea* of personal relationships. For example, people think I’m an excellent psychologist. And I suppose I am. Spectatorially. But I’m a bad experimenter. I’ve lived most of my life posthumously, if you see what I mean; in reflections and conversations after the fact. As though my existence were a novel or a text-book of psychology or a biography, like any of the others on the library shelves. An awful situation. That was why I’ve always liked the bitches so much, always been so grateful to them – because they were the only women I ever contrived to have a non-posthumous, contemporary, concrete relationship with. (310)

Tinley criticizes the dominance of analysis over experience, prevalent in most forms of intellectualism. He describes his life as a chain of “posthumous” reflections. He realizes that he has never experienced the fullness of life, only its filtered version. His words evoke what Huxley described as “consistent intellectualism” which “may be socially valuable” but makes for “individual death” (Huxley 1937: 99). Tinley is another intellectual in Huxley’s short fiction with a potential to uncover deeper layers of reality; yet he never attains that level partly because of his egoism and partly because of his self-loathing joy.

Moira Tarwin, the protagonist of “The Rest Cure”, had similar upbringing as Marjorie Petherton from “Happily Ever After”. She has been raised by her grandfather Sir Watney Croker, “one of the most eminent physicians of his day” (Huxley 1992: 338), whose early work on duodenal ulcers became a classic in its field. Moira spent most of her youth surrounded with intellectuals of all sorts. Her childish remarks on high-brow topics such as the Absolute or Britain’s industrial future were always a source of great amusement. The guests at Sir Watney Croker’s dinner parties, which only the most privileged could attend, enjoyed retelling Moira’s frivolous comments, treating her as “hardly more than their mascot” (361). She married her grandfather’s friend John Tarwin, a research student and literature lover. She admired him in the beginning, but soon realized that he would drag her into the same lifeless pattern from which she desperately wanted to escape.

At first glance, her husband seems to be a different kind of intellectual. Not tied to any particular academic position, he has been “all over the place – tropical Africa, India, North and South America” (339) and he also worked in London, Japan, Germany, and the Rockefeller Institute in New York. Unlike most of Huxley’s reclusive intellectuals and scholars who live alone and are more or less isolated from the world, he likes making love to his wife (far too often, as Moira feels) and at times he talks “in his furriest voice about Love and Beauty and necessity of being like Goethe” (342). As Huxley once wrote about the poetry of Conrad Aiken, “his emotions are apt to degenerate into a kind of intellectual sentimentality, which expresses itself only too easily in his prodigiously fluent, highly colored verse” (Huxley, 1958, 96). Although Tarwin is not a poet, he fits the profile of the intellectual sentimentalist. He is also a “pet-fancier” like her grandfather, treating his wife as a child and even retelling her naïve comments in public. And he is obsessed with himself. That is why Moira detests his soliloquies on beauty and love. As he tells her during one of their bitter fights, he knows what he should feel about women but has never really felt anything other than his own superiority.

Five years later Moira is in Florence, where she has gone to cure her frayed nerves. Her marriage has turned into a disaster. She hates the slightest thought of John Tarwin, let alone the idea of living with him again. As other similar characters in Huxley’s fiction, the unhappy women crippled by conservative intellectualism and unaccustomed to ordinary life (Marjorie Carling from *Point Counter Point* is another illustrative example), Moira Tarwin is an easy prey. She falls in love – or rather becomes obsessed – with Tonino Vasari, the first good-looking man who impresses her with impeccable manners and feigned affection. He meticulously plays the role of a romantic lover before he talks her into giving him the money to help his father. Her tragicomic suicide comes more as a consequence of brutal realization that she will never escape the sterile intellectual pattern which has been forced upon her than because of Tonino’s betrayal.

Conclusion

This analysis shows that the caricature of intellectualism is an important topic in Huxley’s short stories. However, it would be wrong to say that Huxley was against

intellectuals or scientists in general. He came from a “formidably long-standing intellectual aristocracy” (Murray 2003: 18). T. H. Huxley was his grandfather. His mother Julia was Matthew Arnold’s niece and one of the first women to graduate from Oxford University. His brother Julian was a distinguished biologist and the first director of UNESCO. Aldous himself was an erudite and staunch advocate of science, particularly of new theories emerging in the first decades of the XX century. He was among the rare authors to emphasize the importance of modern physics, biology, and chemistry (Deery 1996: 59). He also lambasted the writers who did not bother to learn even the basics of science or who boasted about their ignorance (17).

Still, he usually depicts intellectuals with heavy irony and sarcasm. This seeming paradox is usually explained in the literature as his youthful protest against the intellectual climate in which he grew up. But there are more important reasons for Huxley’s satire. First of all, Huxley mocks intellectuals for suppressing their emotional side. Having committed their whole beings to their limited fields of knowledge, the characters such as Alfred and Roger Petherton, Emberlin, and Sir Watney Croker are devoid of profound emotions, evoking other, more famous characters in Huxley’s novels such as Scogan, Shearwater, and Lord Edward Tantamount. In his essay “To the Puritan All Things Are Impure,” Huxley (1931) states that a “man is an animal that thinks. To be a first-rate human being, a man must be both a first-rate animal and a first-rate thinker” (159). Other intellectuals in Huxley’s short fiction such as Jacobsen, Spode, Tilney, and John Tarwin have occasional emotional outbursts, although they are undermined by intellectual sentimentality or simply not strong enough for a radical change. The egos in all those characters are too inflated to allow any transformation. From time to time, Huxley shows the victims of one-dimensional intellectual upbringing such as Marjorie Petherton, Moira Tarwin, and the young Archimedes Guido, all of whom are forced to grow without emotional support. Therefore, the characters mentioned above contradict Conner’s (1973) opinion that Huxley “sided with intellectuals” in his early works until 1925 (286). Both Huxley’s early short stories and novels indicate that he did not approve of one-sided intellectualism.

Huxley also criticizes the detachment of many intellectuals and educators from their immediate surroundings. In “Happily Ever After,” one of the Reverend Roger’s most brilliant ideas is to tax the poor because, in his opinion, they live better than other citizens. His relation to the soldiers in WWI is equally bizarre, even if they come from his inner circle. Having learnt that Guy, Marjorie’s fiancée, has been killed in a battle, the Reverend is more concerned with writing an appropriate obituary than comforting his bereaved niece. Huxley’s satire is not only reserved for British academics and public school teachers but for expatriates as well. Jacobsen shares the Reverend Roger’s attitude toward the tragedies of WWI. He boils down George’s amputation to a pun between the English word *stump* and its French translation *moignon*. Likewise, upon hearing of Guy’s death, he is unable to deal with the news as a mature man, so when Marjorie comes in the room, he escapes through the window. Many Modernist authors wrote about young men who came back from the war incapable of having a normal life due to a physical disability or mental health issues. In that regard, Huxley may have never created a remarkable character such as Septimus Warren Smith, but

instead—in both his short stories and novels—he mocked privileged intellectuals for their appalling indifference to the social tragedy that continued after WWI. This paper therefore confirms Nicholas Murray's (2003) opinion that Huxley chose "the contribution of the intellectual to society" over "the speculation that risk becoming self-indulgent" (298).

Although Huxley's short stories correspond in many aspects with other Modernist texts, they also criticize the over-intellectualization of art, which Huxley attributed to some Modernist artists. In "Eupompus Gave Splendor to Art by Numbers," Emberlin, a pious follower of Eupompianism, is the caricature not only of Modernist obsession with schools and movements but also of intellectual exclusivism. In "The Tillotson Banquet", Huxley satirizes artistic opportunism and snobbery. Spode believes that the rediscovery of the forgotten painter will raise his status in the art circles. Lord Badgery sees the banquet as an opportunity to bring together art critics and see them quarrel. London's art audience, embodied in characters such as Mrs. Nobes, Mrs. Cayman, and Mrs. Mandragore, come to the banquet to compete with one another and exercise their sarcasm. All of them have one thing in common: They do not use art to reach more profound dimensions of human existence and become connected to other people. For them, art is just another field where they can show their intellectual superiority.

But the most important reason for Huxley's criticism of scholars and intellectuals is that he considered a vast majority of them to limit human experience and prevent a holistic approach to life. For him, knowledge in one field, no matter how thorough, could provide only a fragmentary perception of reality. A scientist, as he explains, "selects from the whole of experience only those elements which can be weighted, measured, numbered, or which lend themselves in any other way to mathematical treatment" (Huxley 1958: 362). Huxley, on the other hand, spent his whole life trying to find a concept which will unify philosophical and scientific knowledge, artistic creativity, and spirituality or mysticism. According to him, this was the only way to understand the *ultimate* or *divine reality* and the position of a human being in it. Thus, tunnel-visioned scientists, indoctrinated teachers, delusional scholars, and snobbish art critics, claiming to know the essence of life, could only deserve his contempt.

References

- Baker, Robert S. (1982) *The Dark Historic Page: Social Satire and Historicism in the Novels of Aldous Huxley, 1921–1939*. Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Baker, Robert S. (1974) Spandrell's "Lydian Heaven". Moral Masochism and the Centrality of Spandrell in Huxley's Point Counter Point. *Criticism* 16 (2), 120–135.
- Bauman, Zygmunt (1993) *Postmodern Ethics*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Bedford, Sybille (1973) *Aldous Huxley: A Biography, Volume One: 1894–1939*. London: Chatto & Windus.
- Bell, Michael (1999) The metaphysics of Modernism. In: Michael Levenson (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 9–32.
- Bradshaw, David (1996) The Best of Companions: J. W. N. Sullivan, Aldous Huxley, and the New Physics. *The Review of English Studies* 47 (186), 188–206.

- Childs, Peter (2000) *Modernism*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Congdon, Brad (2011) "Community, Identity, Stability": The Scientific Society and the Future of Religion in Aldous Huxley's Brave New World. *ESC: English Studies in Canada* 37 (3-4), 83-105.
- Conner, Frederick W. (1973) "Attention"! Aldous Huxley's Epistemological Route to Salvation. *The Sewanee Review*, Vol. 81, No. 2, 282-308
- Deery, June (1996) *Aldous Huxley and the Mysticism of Science*. London: MacMillan Press Ltd.
- Eliot, Thomas Stearns (1957) *On Poetry and Poets*. London: Faber & Faber.
- Fletcher, John & Bradbury, Malcolm (1991) The Introverted Novel. In: Bradbury, Malcolm and McFarlane, James (ed.) *Modernism: 1890-1930*. London: Penguin Books, 393-416.
- Gill, K. S. (1981). *Aldous Huxley: The quest for synthetic sainthood*. *Modern Fiction Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 4, 601-612.
- Huxley Aldous (1958) *Collected Essays*. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers.
- Huxley, Aldous (1992) *Collected Short Stories*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Inc.
- Huxley, Aldous (1937) *Do What You Will*. London: Watts & Co.
- Huxley, Aldous (1931) *Music at Night and other Essays*. New York: Doubleday Doran & Company, Inc.
- Huxley, Aldous (2004) *Point Counter Point*. London: Vintage Books.
- Huxley, Aldous (1957) *Proper Studies*. London: Chatto & Windus.
- Huxley, Aldous (2009) *The Perennial Philosophy*. New York: Harper Publishers.
- Meckier, Jerome (2002) Aldous Huxley's Americanization of the "Brave New World" Type-script. *Twentieth Century Literature* 48 (4), 427-460.
- Meckier, Jerome (1969) *Aldous Huxley: Satire and Structure*. London: Chatto & Windus.
- Murray, Nicholas (2003) *Aldous Huxley: An English Intellectual*. London: Abacus.
- Paulsell, Sally A. (1995) "Color and Light: Huxley's Pathway to Spiritual Reality." *Twentieth Century Literature* 41 (1), 81-107.
- Rosenhan, Claudia (2005) An attribution in Huxley's short story "Chawdron" via Lawrence and Ludovici. *Notes and Queries* 52 (1), 95-97.
- Sheppard, Richard (1997) Modernism, language, and experimental poetry: On leaping over bannisters and learning how to fly. *The Modern Language Review* 92 (1), 98-123.
- Sion, Ronald. T. (2010) *Aldous Huxley and the Search for Meaning*. Jefferson, North Carolina, and London: McFarland.
- Vitoux, Pierre (1974) Aldous Huxley and D. H. Lawrence: An Attempt at Intellectual Sympathy. *The Modern Language Review* 69 (3), 501-522.
- Witemeyer, Hugh (1997) Modernism Resartus. In: Witemeyer, Hugh (ed). *The Future of Modernism*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- Yeats, William Butler (1936) Introduction. *Oxford Book of Modern Verse 1892-1935*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

ANDRIJA MATIĆ (1978) is a novelist and short story writer. He received his Ph.D. in English Literature from the University of Belgrade, Serbia. He is the author of five novels, a collection of short stories, and the first Serbian study on T.S. Eliot's complete works. He also published many articles on Anglo-American Modernism and contemporary fiction. He lives in Istanbul, where he teaches academic writing at Kadir Has University.

Address: Andrija Matić, Kadir Has University, Core Program, Cibali, Kadir Has Street, 34083, Fatih, Istanbul, Turkey. [email: andrijam147@gmail.com]



This work can be used in accordance with the Creative Commons BY-NC-ND 4.0 International license terms and conditions (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/legalcode>). This does not apply to works or elements (such as image or photographs) that are used in the work under a contractual license or exception or limitation to relevant rights.

