From Word to Discourse

Monograph
Edited by

Katarzyna Kozak
Agnieszka Rzepkowska

WYDAWNICTWO
IKR[i]BL
Siedlce 2015
Contents

Literature

Liliya Kornilyeva:
SOUTHEY`S LYRICAL HERO, ROMANTIC HISTORICISM AND
SHAKESPEARE´S INFLUENCE IN SOUTHEY´S VERSE................................. 11

Yulia Klymchuk:
IMAGES OF WOMEN ARTISTS IN WENDY WASSERSTEIN´S
DRAMATURGICAL DISCOURSE...................................................................... 23

Maxim Shadurski:
ALDOUS HUXLEY´S “ROLL OF HONOUR”: (DIS)ENGAGEMENT WITH
ENGLAND........................................................................................................ 35

Culture

Katarzyna Kozak:
“CERTAIN THINGS THAT YOUR HUSBAND WILL REQUIRE FROM YOU”
- SEX EDUCATION AND SEX LIFE IN LORNA SAGE´S BAD BLOOD AND
MARGARET FORSTER´S HIDDEN LIVES.......................................................... 47

Iwona Świątczak-Wasilewska:
AMERICA AS A MACHINE: THE MYTH OF AMERICA´S ECONOMIC
POWER AND THE VALUE DIVIDE IN DEMOCRATIC AND REPUBLICAN
RHETORIC........................................................................................................... 61

Linguistics

Agnieszka Wróbel:
ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA AND FORMULAICITY.
THE QUESTION OF QUALITY......................................................................... 77

Alexander Garbalev:
VAGUENESS AS DISCOURSE STRATEGIES.................................................. 93

Katarzyna Mroczynska:
ON VERB VALENCY AND THE ANTI PASSIVE CONSTRUCTION IN
THE POLISH LANGUAGE.................................................................................. 103

Agnieszka Rzepkowska:
INTERDISCIPLINARY PROFESSIONAL DICTIONARY – DEFINITION,
STRUCTURE, TYPOLOGY AND APPLICABILITY......................................... 119

Magdalena Wieczorek
CREATIVE WAYS TO ACHIEVE HUMOROUS EFFECTS IN A SITCOM
DISCOURSE ..................................................................................................... 133

Bibliography .................................................................................................... 147
ALDOUS HUXLEY’S “ROLL OF HONOUR”:
(DIS)ENGAGEMENT WITH ENGLAND

Introduction

Throughout much of his career, Aldous Huxley (1894-1963) exhibited a disengaged relationship to England. His sense of detachment from the domesticities he inhabited had surfaced as early as “Home-Sickness... From the Town” (1915). The poem’s central metaphor of “life nauseous” ironically subverts the idea of home-sickness: instead of brooding nostalgically, the poet intensely craves for a detachment from home into “[s]weet unrestraint and lust and savagery” (Huxley 1915, 27). In the midst of the Great War, Huxley’s disengagement from the major stresses of English life was suggestively captured in The Times. Reporting on the Battle of the Somme on 3 July 1916, The Times published “Oxford Honours Lists” (Fig. 1), which named A. L. Huxley in “Class I” of English Language and Literature graduates. This filler found itself in the fifth column, preceded by an immense “Roll of Honour” listing the names of about 1500 casualties. The same page also contained other contrasts:

Fig. 1. “Oxford Honours Lists.” The Times 3 July 1916.
advertisements of tobacco, body shields, whose life-saving capacities were endorsed with a testimonial, and motor cars. Whereas the commercials asserted their involvement with the war through pictures of men in military uniform, the “Oxford Honours Lists”, with Huxley’s name mentioned first, presented a non-sequitur, a fragment of life incompatible with the totality of war effort. However, Huxley’s physical detachment from the turmoil of the Great War cannot be taken to imply his voluntary isolation. In his late teens, he had been left visually impaired by a severe attack of keratitis punctata. This impairment detached Huxley from his country’s agonies, much as he had wished otherwise; but it might also have sharpened his insight into the problem of England.¹

Huxley’s treatment of the problem of England was initially accompanied by an ironic disengagement. Thus, in his first novel Crome Yellow (1921), he deployed the allegory of a country house to recount “a placid and uneventful record” of England’s continuous degeneration (Huxley 2001, 94). His later adoption of the pacifist cause led to a wholesale denunciation of national (and nationalist) sentiment. Anthony Beavis, the protagonist of Eyeless in Gaza (1936), had told his diary what Huxley reinstated afterwards in Pacifism and Philosophy (1937) and Ends and Means (1937):

One of the great attractions of patriotism – it fulfils our worst wishes. In the person of our nation we are able, vicariously, to bully and cheat. [...] Sweet and decorous to murder, lie, torture for the sake of the fatherland. [...] In the light of these facts, it’s obvious what interpersonal, inter-class and international policies should be. [...] peace propaganda must be a set of instructions in the art of modifying character. (Huxley 1961, 155-156)

These lines record Huxley’s anti-national outlook, which had been fostered by his regular absences from England, and additionally reinforced by his voyage to the United States, whence he never returned.² As an expatriate, Huxley belongs in the category of contemporaries for whom exile meant

---

¹ In an examination of the said issue of The Times, Randall Stevenson has drawn out ways in which “the print media’s new powers in fragmenting the language” can be seen to galvanize the literary imagination with the striking antinomies of “subject and style, horror and sunshine” (Stevenson 2006, 35-37).

² In many significant ways, Huxley’s pacifist agenda was his life principle. Having lived in the United States for over twenty-six years (1937-1963), he was never sworn in as a US citizen. In his account of Huxley’s life in America, David Dunaway has reproduced a declassified document of the US Immigration Service dating from November 1953. This document sheds light not only on the nature of Huxley’s loyalties, but also on the contemporary American ideology: “Investigations should fully cover Mr Huxley’s writings as well as a neighbourhood; employment and social life of both [Aldous Huxley and his first wife Maria Nys] to determine more fully their qualifications for citizenship outside of their unwillingness to bear arms” (Dunaway 1995, n.p.).
a severance from a national base. Chris Baldick has explained this phenomenon in his comprehensive literary history of the period:

The secure link between writers’ locations and their oeuvres which had been such a prominent feature of nineteenth-century English Literature from William Wordsworth and Jane Austen to George Eliot and Thomas Hardy has by now been broken so often that the author “rooted” in the same place about which she or he writes is the exception and not the rule. (Baldick 2004, 12-13)

Along these lines, Huxley was in most respects uprooted from England, which makes him an unlikely candidate for any, aside from ironic, attention to the national problematic. At the same time, the project of a World State that he furnished in Brave New World (1932) contains certain discernible traces of engagement with England. Indeed, the location of the World State’s metropolis in London rather than New York, which would have been better suited for the role during the 1930s, arguably betrays an underlying anxiety about England’s rivalled primacy in a global capitalist future. Another narrative tension arises from the fact that England becomes completely absorbed into a global capitalism that Huxley so penetratingly satirizes. Because the unholy proliferation of international influence is enacted against the background of Southern England, this localization may be read as Huxley’s ongoing, albeit professedly disengaged, disputation of national symbols and significations. In his 1946 foreword to Brave New World, Huxley famously dubbed himself “the amused, Pyrrhonic aesthete who was the author of the fable” (Huxley 1968, 6). Critics have rightly dismissed this categorization as disingenuous and largely misleading (Ferns 1980, 146; Bradshaw 1994, viii). Through reference to Brave New World, this article will explore Huxley’s (dis)engagement with the problem of England in a wider context of his poetry, at the level of genre and narrative topography.

1. Motion and Fixed Points

Huxley’s attempts to make sense of individual involvement in collective experience traverse his early collections of poetry. In The Burning Wheel (1916), the eponymous poem highlights the tension between “the rim that is dizzy with speed” and its “motionless centre”:

Shall the wheel revolve till its anguish cease
In the iron anguish of fixity;
Till once again
Flame billows out to infinity,
Sinking to a sleep of brightness
In that vast oblivious peace. (Huxley 1971, 15-16)
While the rim “must strain through agony” until it begets “a flaming fire upward leaping”, the centre remains infinitely calm in “that vast oblivious peace” (Huxley 1971, 16). The poet finds the two states, which betray a resemblance to John Donne’s diptych of storm and calm, unbearable. This counterpoint of irreconcilable, yet mutually dependent, states will later become the recurrent technique of Huxley’s fiction. Intellectual and artistic escapism from what life has to offer receives further attention in Huxley’s second collection of poetry *The Defeat of Youth* (1918). In “The Decameron”, the poet stages a sudden invasion of a placid summer afternoon by “hideous broken laughter” which lays “poor plague-stricken carrions” (Huxley 1971, 67). Identifying himself simultaneously with the party of hedonists and the party of invaders, the poet heightens their incongruity and disowns them as equally futile and deadly.

In *Brave New World*, the counterpoint of individual suffering and collective pleasure gains particular prominence in the textual fragmentation of Chapter 3, in which Mustapha Mond, “the Resident Controller for Western Europe”, makes a foray into the pre-history of the World State. Mond’s references to gas attacks, anthrax bombs, an economic collapse and “a choice between World Control and Destruction” (Huxley 1968, 53) echo the First World War and its aftermath. According to Mond, all such history is “bunk” (Huxley 1968, 40). He disputes the isolating aspects of pain and poverty as infringements on social stability. The World State enables pleasure through conditioning and drug use, which become a fixed point around which social stability revolves. This arrangement is designed to oppose the motion of history. In line with Huxley’s counterpoint of individual suffering and collective pleasure, motion and fixity are incompatible; both of them need to be challenged, but can never be fully reconciled.

### 2. Change and Status Quo

As an epigraph to *Brave New World*, Huxley cited the dissident Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev, who had admonished that utopias “seem very much more realizable” (Huxley 1968, 3). Huxley’s choice of epigraph testifies to his critical and even conservative attitude to utopia. This line of argument can be further confirmed by his initial project to furnish a riposte to H. G. Wells’s *Men Like Gods* (1923). In a letter of 18 May 1931, Huxley acknowledged: “I am writing a novel about the future – on the horror of the Wellsian Utopia and a revolt against it. Very difficult. I have hardly enough
imagination to deal with such a subject. But it is none the less interesting work” (Letters 1969, 348). However, as Huxley progressed in his writing, Brave New World acquired a more complex series of satirical targets that came to include not only Wells’s utopia, but also the theories and practices of Henry Ford, Sigmund Freud, Karl Marx, to name a few. Jerome Meckier suggests that, by immortalizing the bearers of these names in the novel, Huxley proscribed them as enemies of humanity and subverters of the future (Meckier 2006, 191). In Huxley’s own words, the novel “started out as a parody of H. G. Wells’s Men Like Gods, but gradually it turned into something quite different from what I’d originally intended” (qtd. in Wickes 1963, 165). The fact that Huxley reacted against a wide range of available socio-economic possibilities as though they were realizable utopias places his text in the category of anti-utopia, which, according to Peter Fitting, is “explicitly or implicitly a defence of the status quo” (Fitting 2010, 141).

At the same time, the kind of status quo Huxley might have witnessed in interwar Britain became rather contentious after the 1931 Parliamentary election. Contrary to conventional British politics, the election had not yielded what Keith Robbins describes as “a government of one colour being confronted by an opposition of another” (Robbins 1998, 204). Instead, the vote legitimized a “National” coalition government. Historians generally agree to link such a political settlement to the economic crisis on which the previous Labour government had been unable to deliver (Glynn and Oxborrow 1976, 184; Robbins 1998, 203; Coupland 2000, 318). In the broader context of 1930s Europe, where France, to say nothing of Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia, saw equally unprecedented institutional and constitutional revisions, Huxley’s concern about the fixity and motion of history begs an additional comment. In his discussion of the origins of dystopia, Gregory Claeys discerns the target of Huxley’s satire not only in materialism and consumerism, or even the eugenic state, but in “the threads which connect America with the Germany of Hitler and the Russia of Stalin, the human willingness to renounce a more diverse life in favour of certainty and stability” (Claeys 2010, 116). In the light of Huxley’s reservations concerning finite stability, Britain’s political situation with a “National” government in power can be seen to represent a tipping point which had compromised liberal democracy to a more satisfactory economic outlook. Unsurprisingly, Mustapha Mond, the mastermind of social stability in the World State, repudiates “something called liberalism” (Huxley 1968, 51). At first glance, this contextualization runs counter to the status quo of national politics and social life in the early 1930s, which
qualifies *Brave New World* as a dystopia asserting “the need for change” (Fitting 2010, 141). On a closer look, however, Mond’s denigration of liberalism appears to resonate with Huxley’s own proposals, made two weeks before the novel was published. In his essay “Science and Civilization” (1932), Huxley had posited elitist dictatorship as the most appropriate form of government in times of crisis, “like the present” (Huxley 1994, 110). Whereas Mond admits that, even though liberalism was dead in England, “all the same you couldn’t do things by force” (Huxley 1968, 54), Huxley contended that “once our rulers have been educated up to the point of realizing the extent of the power which psychological science has placed in their hands, strong government will cease to be necessary” (Huxley 1994, 110). The above homologies reveal ways in which Huxley used dystopian form to express his own desiderata for an England governed by a scientific autocracy.

3. Capitalism and Residual Topographies

That England lies at the heart of Huxley’s imaginative concerns is testified by a highly recognizable and suggestive narrative topography. *Brave New World* opens and is set, for the most part, in Central London. Judy Giles and Tim Middleton have indicated in their anthology: “[T]he Eng-lish town or city has never carried the same positive connotations as the English village or countryside” (*Writing* 1995, 194). In this respect, the narrative distinction between the urban and rural versions of England, made in Huxley’s novel, hinges on the above discourse of Englishness. Outside the radius of Central London, mention is made of Chelsea, Notting Hill and Shepherd’s Bush. Further afield lie Eton, Stoke Poges, Slough, Canterbury, Portsmouth, Exmoor and Torquay. Surrey encapsulates England’s rural landscape, all the other places take on their familiar roles, twisted to meet the needs of the World State. With the exception of the golf courses at St. Andrews (Huxley 1968, 87), the novel does not record other British locations outside England’s borders. Registered in the novel, the islands of St. Helena, Cyprus, Ireland and the Falklands betray immediate associations with English history. In their own peculiar ways, Iceland, used as a decanting sub-centre, and New Mexico, featuring a pueblo reservation, both act as foils to a more technologically advanced and civilized order. Moreover, England itself comes across as a constituent part of the World State, in that it accommodates “the Resident Controller for Western Europe”, and London thinks of itself as its centre. This network of geopolitical arrangements bespeaks Huxley’s ambivalent
stances not only on dystopia, but also on the problem of England.

The fact that Huxley supplies the World State with a distinctively English topography resonates with an earlier construction of England’s “South Country” offered in the poetry of Edward Thomas. Susceptible to the scarring effects of industry, suburbanization, and war on landscape, Thomas constructed England as a perennial, yet elusive, presence that had asserted itself through naming. Thomas’s “Lob” (1915) summons a spirit whose knack for giving names inaugurates him as the author and poet of England’s quaint realities:

He has been in England as long as dove and daw,
Calling the wild cherry tree the merry tree,
The rose campion Bridget-in-her-bravery;
And in a tender mood he, as I guess,
Christened one flower Love-in-idleness,
And while he walked from Exeter to Leeds
One April called all cuckoo-flowers Milkmaids. (Thomas 1981, 54)

The profound emotional attachment to England that manifests itself in “Lob” came in for Huxley’s praise. In the collection of essays On the Margin (1923), Huxley pointed up Thomas’s remarkable ability to capture “his English countryside and the character of its people” with the utmost precision (Huxley 1973, 154). As late as Texts and Pretexts: An Anthology with Commentaries (1932), Huxley, still remaining fascinated with this robust rendering of England, turned to “Lob” afresh, in order to highlight the country’s growing evasiveness (Huxley 1974, 161). In a study of England’s literary landscapes, Roger Ebbatson has observed that “Thomas’s poems characteristically set up the beloved South Country not only as a utopia, but also as [...] an imaginary place” (Ebbatson 2005, 165). The prominence of English topographies in Brave New World may thus be seen to match Thomas’s compensatory construction of England, threatened by the pervasiveness of global capitalism. In Huxley’s dystopia, capitalism takes the shape of a World State which inscribes itself, most unscrupulously, on residual English topographies, both urban and rural.

**Conclusion**

Whether Huxley’s engagement with the problem of England meets the standards set by Edward Thomas will deserve a separate paper. Here, we should probably double back on our opening remarks about Huxley’s intellectual and artistic insularity on “Oxford Honours Lists”, which suggested his disengagement from the “Roll of Honour” – a textual sea of
human loss and turmoil. This article has contended that, despite the previously mentioned medial fragmentation of national life and Huxley’s own detached attitudes, his writing demonstrates an engaged and more than ironic response to the problem of England. *Brave New World* enacts this problem as a failed standoff between an England marked by a quaint vernacular topography, on the one hand, and global capitalism, on the other. A capital-driven World State has incapacitated England’s insularity.

**References**


Aldous Huxley’s “Roll of Honour”...


Abstract

Through reference to *Brave New World* (1932), this article explores Aldous Huxley’s engaged relationship to the problem of England in a wider context of his poetry, at the level of genre and narrative topography. It argues that *Brave New World* enactsthis problem as a failed standoff between global capitalism and insularity, between a World State and a residual England marked by a quaint vernacular topography.

**Keywords:** dystopia, England, *Brave New World*, insularity, capitalism