

I N T R O D U C T I O N

Aldous Huxley (1894-1963) is one of the most prolific and versatile twentieth century writers. He successfully handled almost all literary forms - novels, poetry, drama, short stories, travel-books, essays, biography and so on. His fiction consists of eleven novels and they are : Crome Yellow (1921), Antic Hay (1923), Those Barren Leaves (1925), Point Counter Point (1928), Brave New World (1932), Eyeless in Gaza (1938), After Many a Summer (1939), Time Must Have a Stop (1945), Ape and Essence (1949), The Genius and the Goddess (1955) and Island (1962). The Huxleyan world of fiction has in it an extremely interesting set of women characters who are equal in significance to the central men protagonists. No study of Huxley's world is complete without a special focus on the women characters who not only add dramatic interest to his world, but also perform a significant role in the kind of novels that Huxley writes, that is, the novel of ideas. It is the purpose of this dissertation to study the women characters in their proper novelistic contexts and evaluate their novelistic functions in terms of their relations to theme, plot and texture.

There are, as many critics have already recognized, three distinct phases in Huxley's development as a novelist. But, for the sake of convenience, I have

made five groups of his works, and devoted a chapter each to the study of women characters in the novels of each group. One notices a certain similiarity in the pattern of women characters in the novels of each group and it is possible to divide them in certain recognizably distinct categories. We find that each group has a distinct central concern and the women characters are chiefly related to these concerns or their corollaries. Some times the plots, too, require a certain set of primary and subsidiary women characters for the sake of contrast, balance and such other plot-requirements. In my study I focus my attention on the thematic roles of the women characters in Huxley's fiction and on their formal functions.

The dissertation consists of eight chapters:

Chapter 1 : Perspectives (I) : Huxley's Fictional World

This is an attempt to sketch the map of Huxley's fictional world as it emerges from a cursory reading of his novels, and to discover the 'family' groups to which his women characters belong.

Chapter 2 : Perspectives (II) : Huxley and the Novel of Ideas

Since the most of characterisation is governed by the kind of novel that the writer

is writing, it was necessary to have a clear idea of the Novel of Ideas to which form Huxley's novels generally belong.

Chapter 3 : Women characters in Huxley's early novels, Crome Yellow, Antic Hay, Those Barren Leaves.

Chapter 4 : Women characters in Point Counter Point.

Chapter 5 : Women characters in Eyeless in Gaza, The Genius and the Goddess.

Chapter 6 : Women characters in After Many a Summer, Time Must Have a Stop.

Chapter 7 : Women characters in Brave New World, Ape and Essence, Island.

Chapter 8 : Conclusion.