

# Temporaries and Eternals



Temporaries and Eternals:  
The Music Criticism of Aldous Huxley, 1922-23

By

Michael Allis

**CAMBRIDGE**  
**SCHOLARS**

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P U B L I S H I N G

Temporaries and Eternals:  
The Music Criticism of Aldous Huxley, 1922-23,  
by Michael Allis

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To Philip G. Wilkinson, in memoriam:  
an inspirational teacher and consummate musician



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## A NOTE ON THE TEXT

In preparing this text for publication, Huxley's spellings, punctuation, capitalisation and word divisions in his music column have been retained throughout; however, obvious misprints have been corrected, and accents have been added where pertinent.

## INTRODUCTION

He drew up a chair and began to play over and over a certain series of chords. With his left hand he struck an octave G in the base [sic], while his right dwelt lovingly on F, B, and E. A luscious chord, beloved by Mendelssohn—a chord in which the native richness of the dominant seventh is made more rich, more piercing sweet by the addition of a divine discord. G, F, B, and E—he let the notes hang tremulously on the silence, savoured to the full their angelic overtones; then, when the sound of the chord had almost died away, he let it droop reluctantly through D to the simple, triumphal beauty of C natural—the diapason closing full in what was for Dick a wholly ineffable emotion. He repeated that dying fall again and again, perhaps twenty times.<sup>1</sup>

Although the writer Aldous Huxley (1894-1963) is best known for novels such as *Point Counter Point* (1928) and *Brave New World* (1932), he always retained a keen interest in music. Having taught himself to play the piano via the Braille method in 1911 when his cornea became inflamed (Huxley suffered from poor vision throughout his life),<sup>2</sup> he soon began to tackle works such as Beethoven's Piano Sonata op.26 and selected works of Chopin, identifying the latter's C sharp [minor] prelude as "Extraordinarily much easier than the Beethoven."<sup>3</sup> At Balliol College Oxford, Huxley's early interest in the "novelty of the syncopated music that had recently arrived from America" fuelled performances of popular songs (including "The Wedding Glide" and "He'd have to get under, get out and get under") for his student friends, and he also attended productions by the visiting D'Oyly Carte Company and various Balliol musical events,<sup>4</sup> public and

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<sup>1</sup> Aldous Huxley, "Farcical History of Richard Greenow", *Limbo* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1920), 31-2.

<sup>2</sup> Huxley's eye problems led to his discussion of a range of potential treatments (including the method of William H. Bates) in *The Art of Seeing* (New York & London: Harper & Brookes, 1942).

<sup>3</sup> See Huxley's letters to his father Leonard, 16 and 23 June 1912, and letter to his brother Julian, 18 June 1912, in Grover Smith (ed.), *Letters of Aldous Huxley* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1969), 43, 45-6.

<sup>4</sup> See Gervas Huxley, *Both Hands: An Autobiography* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1970), 68-72, and Julian Huxley (ed.), *Aldous Huxley 1894-1963: A Memorial Volume* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1965), 60-61.

private concerts that he witnessed included chamber music by Brahms and Schumann—Brahms’s F minor Piano Quintet being singled out for praise as “really magnificent”.<sup>5</sup> Huxley’s social circle also offered opportunities to meet a range of composers and performers including the violinist Jelly d’Arányi,<sup>6</sup> Philip Heseltine (Peter Warlock)—who he met at Garsington Manor in 1915<sup>7</sup>—Lord Berners and William Walton,<sup>8</sup> and the violinist Yehudi Menuhin.<sup>9</sup> However it was the composer Igor Stravinsky with whom Huxley developed a particularly close friendship. Huxley first met Stravinsky at the Los Angeles Farm and Country Market in 1946. Not only did the composer’s Harvard lectures on music (published in 1942) chime with some of Huxley’s own ideas,<sup>10</sup> but it was Huxley who proposed W. H. Auden as the librettist for Stravinsky’s opera *The Rake’s Progress* (1947-51), and who spoke at the premiere of Stravinsky’s ballet *Agon* in June 1957—hence the composer’s reference to him as the “Rake’s godfather” and a “guiding spirit”,<sup>11</sup> after Huxley’s death in 1963, Stravinsky composed the commemorative orchestral work *Variations: In Memoriam Aldous Huxley* (1963-4).

Huxley’s correspondence highlights connections with several other composers. He approached Leonard Bernstein, for example, in relation to

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<sup>5</sup> See letters from Huxley to his father, [12 October 1913] and c.21 February 1915, *Letters*, 54, 67.

<sup>6</sup> Huxley’s 1914-15 correspondence with Arányi is included in *Letters*, 63-84.

<sup>7</sup> See Nicholas Murray, *Aldous Huxley: An English Intellectual* (London: Abacus, 2002), 52. The character of Coleman in *Antic Hay* was modelled on Warlock. After Heseltine’s suicide in 1931, Huxley wrote to Robert Nichols, 18 January 1931, *Letters*, 346: “A bad business about Heseltine—tho’ I confess that when I saw him this spring he rather gave me the goose-flesh.”

<sup>8</sup> See Mark Amory, *Lord Berners: The Last Eccentric* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1998), 74, 91.

<sup>9</sup> For Menuhin’s reminiscences of Huxley, see *Aldous Huxley: A Memorial Volume*, 86-8; Menuhin performed J. S. Bach’s Chaconne from the second Partita for solo violin at a memorial gathering for Huxley in the Friends’ House in London on 17 December 1963.

<sup>10</sup> Compare, for example, Stravinsky’s comments on the relationship between composer, performer and audience in *Poetics of Music: in the Form of Six Lessons* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1942, repr. 1982), 129-32, with Huxley’s “The Interpreter and the Creator” and “Music and the Interpretative Medium”, 50-2 and 225 below; or Stravinsky’s criticisms of Wagner, *ibid.*, 60-63, with Huxley’s position, summarised below, 31.

<sup>11</sup> See Huxley’s letters to Stravinsky, 9 April 1947 and [18] July 1951, *Letters*, 570, 636-7, and *Aldous Huxley: A Memorial Volume*, 26. The libretto of *The Rake’s Progress* was ultimately a collaboration between Auden and Chester Kallman.

a projected musical comedy version of *Brave New World*, having considered Stravinsky and Rogers and Hammerstein.<sup>12</sup> Another American composer, Ned Rorem, expressed interest in Huxley's *The Devils of Loudun* (1952), and enquired as to whether Huxley might adapt the text into an opera libretto. Huxley felt that a dramatic version should be completed first, and was initially dubious about reducing the text to "five or six thousand words",<sup>13</sup> although he suggested that the music of Luigi Dallapiccola might reflect the "required intensity", in the event it was the Polish composer Krzysztof Penderecki who took John Whiting's theatrical adaptation of Huxley's work as the basis of his opera *The Devils* (1969). Huxley was also fascinated by scientific developments connected with music, whether the invention of a machine to construct fugues,<sup>14</sup> or "the training of the psycho-physical instrument as the basis...of education";<sup>15</sup> he gave a lecture at Mills College that discussed (amongst other things) Alexander technique and Luigi Bonpensiere's piano method.<sup>16</sup> And one should also mention Huxley's status within popular music—whether his inclusion on the iconic *Sgt. Pepper* album cover in 1967, or the fact that Jim Morrison's American band The Doors took their name from Huxley's essay on mescaline use, *The Doors of Perception* (1954).

Readers of Huxley's novels, essays and travel books will be aware of the plethora of musical references that pepper those pages.<sup>17</sup> As this introduction suggests below, many of these are intimately connected with

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<sup>12</sup> See letters to Robert Craft, 26 March 1957, and to Bernstein, 4 April 1957, in *Letters*, 820-21.

<sup>13</sup> Letter from Huxley to Rorem, 9 August 1953, *Letters*, 682.

<sup>14</sup> See Katherine Bucknell (ed.), *Christopher Isherwood Diaries, Volume One: 1939-1960* (London: Methuen, 1996), 89, an entry of 29 January 1940.

<sup>15</sup> Letter to Humphry Osmond, 25 January 1954, *Letters*, 695.

<sup>16</sup> See *ibid.* Huxley wrote the preface to Bonpensiere's *New Pathways to Piano Technique* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1953).

<sup>17</sup> Of the frequent use of musical imagery in Huxley's poetry—a topic that could be explored on its own—one might highlight "The Walk" ("Faint chords, your sadness, secular, immense...You'd have us bless the Hire-Purchase System,/Which now allows the poorest vampers/To feel, as they abuse their piano's dampers,/That angels have stooped down and kissed 'em") from *The Burning Wheel* (1916), "On the 'Bus'" ("I am a harp of twittering strings,/An elegant instrument, but infinitely second-hand") from *The Defeat of Youth and Other Poems* (1918), "A Melody by Scarlatti" ("How clear under the trees,/How softly the music flows,/Rippling from one still pool to another/Into the lake of silence") from *Leda* (1920), and "Theatre of Varieties" ("Music, the revelation and marvellous lie!") in *The Cicidas and Other Poems* (1931); see Donald Watt (ed.), *The Collected Poetry of Aldous Huxley* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1971).

some of the themes discussed in Huxley's music criticism, but others suggest some of his more general views on music. Huxley was clear as to music's educational value, for example, whether in terms of offering "people of limited ability...the opportunity of actually experiencing the thought- and feeling-processes of a man of outstanding intellectual power and exceptional insight", or, through music-making, "not only to perform complicated actions requiring great muscular skill and the mind's entire attention, but also to feel in harmony, to be united in a shared emotion."<sup>18</sup> He also attempted to describe the significance of music as an experience:

Music is a device for working directly upon the experience of Time. The composer takes a piece of raw, undifferentiated duration and extracts from it...a complex pattern of tones and silences, of harmonic sequences and contrapuntal interweavings. For the number of minutes it takes to play or listen to his composition, duration is transformed into something intrinsically significant, something held together by the internal logics of style and temperament, of personal feelings interacting with an artistic tradition, of creative insights expressing themselves within and beyond some given technical convention.<sup>19</sup>

Of all the arts, Huxley suggested that music had "some kind of cognitive meaning"—the ability to say "something about the nature of the universe"; it could "express the inexpressible", and "evoke experiences as perfect wholes (perfect and whole, that is to say, in respect to each listener's capacity to have any given experience), however partial, however obscurely confused may have been the originals thus recalled."<sup>20</sup> Despite music's privileged position, Huxley's polymathic approach meant that he was critical of any attempts to separate individual arts within "walls of mutual ignorance and understanding", and was always looking for

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<sup>18</sup> Aldous Huxley, *Ends and Means* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1938), 204-5.

<sup>19</sup> Aldous Huxley, "Usually Destroyed", *Adonis and the Alphabet* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1956), 215-16.

<sup>20</sup> Aldous Huxley, ed. Piero Ferruci, "Art", *The Human Situation: Lectures at Santa Barbara, 1959* (New York/Hagerstown/San Francisco/London: Harper & Row, 1977), 196; "The Rest is Silence", *Music at Night and Other Essays* (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1931), 26. See also Spiller's suggestion in the short story "The Monocle", *Collected Short Stories* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1958), 286, that "a truth uttered poetically, in art" is "more valuable than a truth uttered scientifically, in prose", because of the power to organise "mental chaos into a pattern". Or Francis Chelifer in *Those Barren Leaves* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1925), who imagines, 141, "that love ought always to be mixed up with affection and admiration, with worship and an intellectual rapture, as unflagging as that which one experiences during the playing of a symphony."

meaningful connections. Hence he chastises the French philosopher Maine de Biran,<sup>21</sup> a contemporary of Mozart and Beethoven, for his lack of musical awareness, and suggests that a major benefit of recordings of early music is that they allow us to appreciate repertoire that artists such as Botticelli, Van Eyck, Tintoretto, Veronese and Bernini might have heard.<sup>22</sup> Huxley was also aware of the potential for music to aid propaganda, however; in *Brave New World Revisited*, noting how a tune could “haunt the memory during the whole of a lifetime”, he highlighted music’s ability to give even an “uninteresting statement or value judgement” a real power as “the words will tend automatically to repeat themselves every time the melody is heard or spontaneously remembered.”<sup>23</sup>

Parallels between musical and literary structure represent another of Huxley’s interests, as the title of *Point Counter Point* suggests. Here the character Philip Quarles famously expounds on such interdisciplinary potential in his notebook:

The musicalization of fiction...But on a large scale, in the construction. Meditate on Beethoven. The changes of moods, the abrupt transitions... More interesting still the modulations, not merely from one key to another, but from mood to mood. A theme is stated, then developed, pushed out of shape, imperceptibly deformed, until, though still recognizably the same, it has become quite different. In sets of variations the process is carried a step further. Those incredible Diabelli variations, for example. The whole range of thought and feeling, yet all in organic relation to a ridiculous little waltz tune. Get this into a novel. How? The abrupt transitions are easy enough. All you need is a sufficiency of characters and parallel, contrapuntal plots.<sup>24</sup>

Hence the structuring of *Point Counter Point* as “a series of simultaneous plots”; contrapuntal devices are also present in less developed form in the street scene in *Antic Hay*, where the narrative of the poor cartman and his wife is juxtaposed with the musings of the primary characters on politics and love.<sup>25</sup> Quarles’ “variations” idea is also applicable to *Point Counter*

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<sup>21</sup> François-Pierre-Gonthier Maine de Biran (1766-1824).

<sup>22</sup> “Variations on a Philosopher”, *Themes and Variations* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1950), 33-4; “Faith, Taste and History”, *Adonis and the Alphabet*, 232-3.

<sup>23</sup> Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World Revisited* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1959), 80.

<sup>24</sup> Aldous Huxley, *Point Counter Point* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1928), 408.

<sup>25</sup> See Bharathi Krishnan, *Aspects of Structure, Technique and Quest in Aldous Huxley’s Major Novels* (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 1977), 58-74; the scene can be found in *Antic Hay* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1923), 74-81.

*Point* (linked to the concept of “multiplicity” where Huxley applies “his knowledge of several fields in an attempt to understand more aspects of a situation than the obvious ones”)<sup>26</sup> as characters often vary in their responses to love, death, and—pertinent to this volume—music. And there is the striking reference to musical structure in Huxley’s short story “Two or Three Graces”, where the narrator Dick Wilkes provides an overview of the events in Grace Peddley’s life:

John Peddley, the children, the house, the blank existence of one who does not know how to live unassisted. Then another musical critic, a second me—introduction to the second theme. Then the second theme, *scherzando*; another Rodney. Or *molto agitato*, the equivalent of Kingham. And then, inevitably, when the agitation had agitated itself to the climax of silence, *da capo* again to Peddley, the house, the children, the blankness of her unassisted life.<sup>27</sup>

A more general use of musical imagery in the novels helps to distinguish the vocal qualities of Huxley’s characters. In *Antic Hay*, for example, Rosie Shearwater laughs “on a descending chromatic scale” and with a “real *capriccio* flavour”, and at morning prayers, Reverend Pelvey’s “oboe” chanting contrasts with Gumbriel’s “trombone”-like response;<sup>28</sup> Mrs Foxe’s voice is described as “warm and musically vibrant with feeling” in *Eyeless in Gaza*,<sup>29</sup> Jeremy Pordage in *After Many a Summer* is self-conscious about his “small, fluty voice, suggestive of evensong in an English cathedral”,<sup>30</sup> while in *Crome Yellow*, the contrast of Anne Wimbush’s quick laughter with her doll-like face is characterised as “a gay melody dancing over an unchanging fundamental bass”.<sup>31</sup> In contrast, Mrs Aldwinkle is established as unmusical in *Those Barren Leaves* through her initial cries “mounting...from a low to a much higher note, not, however, through any intervals known to music, but in a succession of uncertain and quite unrelated tones”.<sup>32</sup>

Huxley’s frequent descriptions of musical performance in the novels also reveal his technical knowledge and eye for detail. In *Antic Hay*, the

<sup>26</sup> Krishnan, 68. See also “Variations”, 149-50 below.

<sup>27</sup> Aldous Huxley, “Two or Three Graces”, *Two or Three Graces and Other Stories* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1926, repr. 1933), 195.

<sup>28</sup> *Antic Hay*, 133, 138, 8.

<sup>29</sup> Aldous Huxley, *Eyeless in Gaza* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1936), 97.

<sup>30</sup> Aldous Huxley, *After Many a Summer* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1939), 4.

<sup>31</sup> Aldous Huxley, *Crome Yellow* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1921, repr. 1925), 24.

<sup>32</sup> *Those Barren Leaves*, 14.

uplifting school hymn (words by the headmaster, music by Dr. Jolly), with its simple rhythms (“One, two, three, four; one, two THREE-4.”) is almost tangible:

[Gumbril] particularly liked the third verse; it marked, in his opinion, the Headmaster’s highest poetical achievement.

(*f*) For slack hands and (*dim.*) idle minds

(*mf*) Mischief still the Tempter finds.

(*ff*) Keep him captive in his lair.

At this point Dr. Jolly enriched his tune with a thick accompaniment in the lower registers, artfully designed to symbolize the depth, the gloom and general repulsiveness of the Tempter’s home.

(*ff*) Keep him captive in his lair.

(*f*) Work will bind him. (*dim.*) Work is (*pp*) prayer.<sup>33</sup>

However, it is the characters’ musical prowess, affiliations and proclivities in the novels that affect the reader’s sympathies. In *Crome Yellow*, the idealistic, intellectual and continually thwarted Denis Stone gets up “hurriedly and, with some embarrassment” when interrupted in his piano improvisations by Barbecue-Smith,<sup>34</sup> he is deliberately contrasted with the superficial Ivor Lombard, for whom “education seemed supererogatory”, who confidently revels in opportunities to improvise “rapidly and loudly” on the piano.<sup>35</sup>

Ivor brought his hands down with a bang on to the final chord of his rhapsody. There was just a hint in that triumphant harmony that the seventh had been struck along with the octave by the thumb of the left hand; but the general effect of splendid noise emerged clearly enough. Small details matter little so long as the general effect is good. And, besides, that hint of the seventh was decidedly modern.<sup>36</sup>

Some of the references to specific composers and their works, whether Filomena Occum’s poignant deathbed reference to the Baroque composer Alessandro Stradella’s “Amor, amor, non dormir piu” (representative of music-making with her husband—who plays on his “fine Cremona fiddle”–

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<sup>33</sup> *Antic Hay*, 9.

<sup>34</sup> *Crome Yellow*, 51.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

in happier times) in *Crome Yellow*,<sup>37</sup> the *leitmotifs* of the Beethoven and Mozart piano sonatas that punctuate *Antic Hay*, or the central performance of J. S. Bach's B minor Suite in *Point Counter Point*, will be discussed below. What is clear, however, is that within the primarily cynical tone of the early novels in particular, music is often valued as something of a spiritual oasis that might suggest the possibility of a better life. As musical ideas that weave in and out of Huxley's published writings as another form of counterpoint, these and other references can only be fully understood in the context of the music criticism reproduced in this book.

### Huxley's music criticism in context

Apart from a five-week hiatus in the Spring of 1923, Huxley's music column in *The Weekly Westminster Gazette* was a consistent feature from 18 February 1922 until 2 June 1923.<sup>38</sup> This was not Huxley's first journalistic role—he joined the editorial staff of the *Athenaeum* in April 1919 (penning a series of weekly "Marginalia"),<sup>39</sup> became a regular contributor to the *London Mercury* from its inception in November 1919, and had already been appointed as a dramatic critic for *The Westminster Gazette* in April 1920. *The Westminster Gazette* had been launched in London by Edward T. Cook on 30 January 1893, and soon established itself as an influential Liberal newspaper with a select readership, perceived as an "evening equivalent to the morning Times".<sup>40</sup> From 1904, it was complemented by the weekly *Saturday Westminster Gazette*, which continued as *The Weekly Westminster Gazette* from 18 February 1922 (the date of Huxley's first music column) to 27 October 1923, and *The Weekly Westminster* (1923-26); eventually, on 1 February 1928, the *Gazette*

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 143, 132; the story of Sir Hercules and Filomena is narrated in the novel by Henry Wimbush as part of his *History of Crome*.

<sup>38</sup> The reason for this hiatus was a four-week visit to Florence in April 1923. During that period, "J. W. N. S." (J. W. N. Sullivan) and Bonzoline Turner deputised for Huxley, with articles on "Pianists and Beethoven", "Some Notes on Musical Audiences", "Marionettes and Men", and an untitled piece discussing a concert by Albert Coates and the London Symphony Orchestra. After Huxley left the *Gazette* as music critic, his column was continued by E. J. Moeran (16 June to 30 June 1923, and again 6 October 1923) and Philip Heseltine (14 July to 29 September 1923).

<sup>39</sup> Many of these were subsequently published as part of Huxley's *On the Margin: Notes and Essays* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1923).

<sup>40</sup> See Steven Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain* (London: Fontana, 1990), 325-7, 513-14.

merged with its liberal rival, *The Daily News*. Huxley's column, often sandwiched between an assortment of articles (solutions to chess problems, poems, "Art Notes", "Country Diary", "The golf ball of the future") and theatre reviews, usually took as its starting point a concert event, the publication of a book on a musical subject, a phrase in the national press, or even a character in a novel, and proceeded to expound upon a particular issue close to the author's heart. Huxley's text had to appeal to the general public, and he was acutely aware of the qualities that he felt an effective music critic should possess:

The ideal musical critic is a man who is perfectly at home with the technical part of music, but whose interest in it does not blind him to the larger emotional and intellectual aspects of composition. He must understand and he must be able to make other people understand; in a word, he must be able, like all other critics, to write well.<sup>41</sup>

Huxley names and shames in his column those who, in his opinion, do not write well, displaying pretension or a lack of "sensible, straightforward criticism"—Watson Lyle on Saint-Saëns, Alfred J. Swan on Skryabin, and John Porte on MacDowell; however there was praise for Charles Stanford's *Interludes*, and the writings of Hubert Parry ("a most acutely critical analyst of...the body of music") in particular.<sup>42</sup> Huxley was also aware of how limited verbal explanations of musical experiences could be:

Music "says" things about the world, but in specifically musical terms. Any attempt to reproduce these musical statements "in our own words" is necessarily doomed to failure. We cannot isolate the truth contained in a piece of music; for it is a beauty-truth and inseparable from its partnee. The best we can do is to indicate in the most general terms the nature of the musical beauty-truth under consideration and to refer curious truth-seekers to the original.<sup>43</sup>

Just as musicologists such as J. W. N. Sullivan were "led astray" by attempting verbal definitions of musical truth, it was "possible for a man to give a most subtle reading of [Beethoven's Piano Sonata] Op.111 and yet be able to furnish, in his conscious mind, only the most absurd

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<sup>41</sup> "The Criticism of Music", 84 below.

<sup>42</sup> "Books About Music", 212-14 below.

<sup>43</sup> "Music at Night", *Music at Night*, 57. Huxley, *ibid.*, 52-3, is also critical of the "verbiage" and "absurd multiplicity of attributed 'meanings'" found in analytical concert programmes.

explanation of his interpretation.”<sup>44</sup> Musical opinion could also be challenged; in an unpublished article, “Postscript to a Misadventure”, Huxley cited Franz Grillparzer’s dismissal of Weber’s music as “completely lacking in melody” to show that “even the greatest experts are not to be believed unquestioningly.”<sup>45</sup>

The engaging manner of Huxley’s music column is apparent throughout. By the time he penned these texts, Huxley had already published his first novel *Crome Yellow* (1921), and was working on his second, *Antic Hay* (1923), and some of the wit of these works is reflected in his pages for the *Gazette*. The music criticism is an important part of Huxley’s oeuvre for several reasons. As a social document it provides a fascinating snapshot of repertoire performed in London in the 1920s, together with well-known performers of the day. There are references to the British National Opera Company, the Oriana Madrigal Society, the London and Flonzaley string quartets, and conductors Serge Koussevitsky, Eugène Goossens and Albert Coates. Huxley also reminds us of the wonderful string players in this period (violinists Jacques Thibaud, Fritz Kreisler, Albert Sammons, Jelly d’Arányi and Adila Fachiri, and the cellists Guilhermina Suggia and Pablo Casals), together with pianists such as Egon Petri, Alfred Cortot, Harold Bauer and Maria Levinskaya. Vocalists singled out for praise included rising British stars (Dorothy Silk and Robert Radford) alongside some of the great voices of the early twentieth century—the Italian baritones Titta Ruffo and Mattia Battistini (who “knows how to sing, and knows more thoroughly, I suppose, than any man alive”), the German soprano Frieda Hempel, who “can make us listen with pleasure to almost anything”, or the “astonishing voice and the prodigious dramatic talent” of the Russian bass Fyodor Chaliapin;<sup>46</sup> in 1933 Huxley recalled his initial reaction to the distinctive timbre of Chaliapin and his countrymen:

I remember the first time I heard *Boris Godounov* with Chaliapine and a complete Russian company and choruses—the extraordinary impression the quality of the voices made on me. I can’t think what it is due to: for after all Russian vocal cords must be very much the same as other people’s vocal cords. *Mystère*.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Letter to Paul Valéry, 4 January 1930, *Letters*, 323; “Books About Music”, 213 below. J. W. N. Sullivan (1886-1937) published *Beethoven: His Spiritual Development* in 1927.

<sup>45</sup> Franz Grillparzer (1791-1872), Austrian poet and dramatist. See *Letters*, 838.

<sup>46</sup> “Opera, Marionettes, and Battistini”, “Music and the Interpretative Medium” and “The Interpreter and the Creator”, 220, 226 and 50 below.

<sup>47</sup> Letter to Mrs Kethevan Roberts, 22 December 1933, in *Letters*, 375.

The select discography included at the end of this book allows readers to explore a flavour of the soundscape that inspired Huxley's philosophical musings. Huxley was supportive of the contrasting musical experiences available to 1920s London audiences—"after a series of perfectly safe concerts of impeccable old music one yearns for something new, experimental, contemporary"—and was a keen promoter of Music Clubs, but suggested that more small orchestras (on the Bournemouth model) should be created to increase the number of orchestral concerts.<sup>48</sup> Apart from his documenting of reactions to Anton Webern's *Fünf Sätze* op.5 for string quartet in Salzburg,<sup>49</sup> Huxley is relatively silent on the conduct of the audiences themselves; one wonders how far his description of Grace Peddley's "perfect concert-goer's technique" in the short story "Two or Three Graces" reflected his observations as a music critic: she listens "with the same expression of melancholy devotion, as though she were in church, to every item on the programme."<sup>50</sup>

The detail and scope of the column also testifies to Huxley's own musicianship. Huxley described himself as "tolerably musical—that is to say, I enjoy music and, I think, comprehend it";<sup>51</sup> by the late 1940s, according to Robert Craft, Huxley commanded "a huge store of music history and a tune-humming acquaintance with the repertory" almost as wide as Stravinsky's, and his ear was so developed that he could perform the *sprechgesang* in Arnold Schoenberg's *Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte* op.41 for narrator, piano and strings.<sup>52</sup> The music criticism reveals a familiarity with repertoire from Palestrina to Schoenberg (Huxley's other writings expand this range to encompass Dufay and Pierre Boulez),<sup>53</sup> and several writers on music (Charles Burney, Richard Wagner, A. W. Thayer, H. L. Mencken, James Huneker, Edward Dent, Romain Rolland). If Huxley was apparently unacquainted with other significant figures in

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<sup>48</sup> "The Week's New Music", "Music Clubs" and "What Are the Wild Waves Saying?", 61, 184-5 and 215-16 below.

<sup>49</sup> "The Salzburg Festival—I", 121 below.

<sup>50</sup> "Two or Three Graces", 49; see also 48-9: "If the hall were empty—which, to the eternal credit of the music-loving public, it generally was—one could get a seat at the back, far away from the other sparsely sprinkled auditors, and talk very pleasantly through the whole performance."

<sup>51</sup> Aldous Huxley, *Proper Studies* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1957), 61-2.

<sup>52</sup> Robert Craft, *Stravinsky: Chronicle of a Friendship 1948-1971* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), 15, 254.

<sup>53</sup> In *The Human Situation*, 187, Huxley described Boulez's music as "where the tones are almost atomic—below the level of melody and the ordinary forms of construction."

musical criticism—despite a brief reference to Ernest Newman,<sup>54</sup> there is no mention of Eduard Hanslick, E. T. A. Hoffmann, or, closer to home, George Bernard Shaw, Cecil Gray or Herbert Thompson, and he concluded that there was “no well-trodden path” that he could use as a model<sup>55</sup>—this did not affect his confidence in addressing a wide range of issues, many of which continue to perplex critics and audiences today. The relationship between music technology (in Huxley’s case, the gramophone) and live performance, for example, is a recurring theme. Representative of music “shut up” like “one of those bottled djinns in the Arabian Nights, and ready at a touch to break out of its prison”,<sup>56</sup> the gramophone appears throughout Huxley’s writings as an important feature of the modern soundworld, as in “The Rest Cure”, where “The ghost of Caruso was singing from a gramophone, far away on the other side of the water”—in this case the song “La Spagnola” (“Stretti, stretti, nell’estasi d’amor”).<sup>57</sup> Huxley expounds on the gramophone’s educational advantages, but also suggests the possibility that in bypassing live performance by making musical pleasure accessible, there is the danger of promulgating a lack of mental effort, or (in tandem with the pianola) even putting musicians out of work;<sup>58</sup> together with the radio, the gramophone is seen as responsible for “the slump in singing” and for creating “an audience of hearers who consume an amount of hearing-matter that has increased out of all proportion to the increase of population and the consequent natural increase of talented musicians.”<sup>59</sup> Similarly, the blend of instruction with concert-giving that Huxley admires in the recitals of Maria Levinskaya and the Museum concerts has a current resonance in the educational

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<sup>54</sup> “Temporaries and Eternals”, 162 below.

<sup>55</sup> “The Criticism of Music”, 83 below.

<sup>56</sup> “Music at Night”, *Music at Night*, 49.

<sup>57</sup> “The Rest Cure”, *Collected Short Stories*, 352. “La Spagnola” by Vincenzo di Chiara (1820-69), is also sung by Ivor Lombard in *Crome Yellow*, 168, representative of his natural ease, and by Dr. Obispo in *After Many a Summer*, 294.

<sup>58</sup> “Music and Machinery”, 71-3 below; “Faith, Taste and History”, *Adonis and the Alphabet*, 232; “Pleasures”, *On the Margin*, 49. In the short story “Two or Three Graces”, 41, the “active bore” John Peddley begins “a long description of the mechanism of pianolas”.

<sup>59</sup> “Abroad in England”, published in *Nash’s Pall Mall Magazine* 87 (May 1931), reproduced in Robert Baker & James Sexton (eds.), *Aldous Huxley Complete Essays*, Volume III, 1930-1935 (Chicago: Ivan Dee, 2001), 268; *Beyond the Mexican Bay: A Traveller’s Journal* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1934), 275-6.

programmes offered by orchestras and opera companies, or the music series at London's National Portrait Gallery.<sup>60</sup>

In the familiar debate over the relative merits of abstract music and programme music, Huxley asserts the superiority of the former as the “free and unconditioned expression of the spirit”, as opposed to literary music’s “expression of the spirit conditioned by something outside itself”;<sup>61</sup> however, where the setting of text is concerned, a literary stimulus can help a musical setting—particularly where “there is no structural pattern, where the style is polyphonic and the movement of the music is not circular, but straight ahead, irreversible and rectilinear”—as in the “paradoxical, antithetical” texts used by the madrigalists.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, it is the particular beauties of early music that Huxley is often keen to promote. Palestrina, Lassus and Vittoria represent music “at a pitch of excellence that was about as near to perfection as anything which is the work of men’s hands or brains can be”, making Verdi’s *Requiem* crude in comparison, and despite Huxley’s exclamation “If only [Orlando] Gibbons had had at his disposal the artistic materials which Mozart could command!”, modern composers are encouraged to study Gibbons’ “intricacies of polyphonic writing”, as there are “no short cuts to perfection in polyphonic music.”<sup>63</sup> In terms of music history, Huxley questions the applicability of particular terminology such as “baroque” (given its associations with the seventeenth-century artist Bernini), and is critical of generalisations—the tendency to summarise the eighteenth century as an age of amusement, for example, despite the counter argument suggested by the work of “the most durable and influential men” of the century, Bach, Handel and Mozart.<sup>64</sup> He is also broadly an advocate of nature over nurture: “no amount of education...could have prevented

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<sup>60</sup> See “Instruction with Pleasure” and “Music in a Museum”, 56-7 and 106-8 below.

<sup>61</sup> “Literary Music”, 90 below.

<sup>62</sup> “Gesualdo”, *Adonis and the Alphabet*, 273.

<sup>63</sup> “Verdi and Palestrina” and “An Orlando Gibbons Concert”, 164-6 and 156-7 below. See also Huxley’s discussion of Dunstable, Dufay, Ockeghem, Josquin, Lassus, Palestrina and Vittoria in “Faith, Taste and History”, 232-37, and “Gesualdo”, 251-73.

<sup>64</sup> “Faith, Taste and History”, 235-6; “Crébillon the Younger”, *The Olive Tree and Other Essays* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1936), 136-7. See also “Variations on *The Prisons*”, *Themes and Variations*, 198: “And, finally, why should Voltaire and Hume be regarded as more typical of the eighteenth century than Bach and Wesley?”

Mozart from being a musician, or musicianship from being the central fact in Mozart's life."<sup>65</sup>

Then there is Huxley's attitude towards performers. Apart from his clear opinions on conductors (Albert Coates is berated for being "too violently energetic", as opposed to the "fabulous elegance" of Eugène Goossens),<sup>66</sup> Huxley admires the modern exponents of the Italian vocal tradition (Mattia Battistini, Titta Ruffo) and the "unaffected" pianism of Leonard Borwick.<sup>67</sup> However, elsewhere he laments the "concentrated femaleness of most contralto voices", highlighting "emotions of dismay, embarrassment and indignation, which we have all so often felt while listening to a murderous rendering of even Schubert or Wolff" [sic] – a sense of disappointment reflected in Calamy's comments in *Those Barren Leaves*—"You remember what Beethoven said: 'that he seldom found in the playing of the most distinguished virtuosi that excellence which he supposed he had a right to expect.'"<sup>68</sup> The experiences of the music critic Dick Wilkes in "Two or Three Graces" might also reflect Huxley's own; Dick is bored by "second-rate pianists playing the same old morsels of Liszt and Chopin, second-rate contraltos fruitily hooting Schubert and Brahms, second-rate fiddlers scraping away at Tartini and Wieniawski" and a "maudlin incompetent...pounding out Rachmaninoff".<sup>69</sup> Mirroring his distaste for inappropriate historical generalisations, Huxley is also critical of a perceived tendency of performers to "squeeze" composers into a simplistic "dixhuitième mould": "They play Bach mechanically, Handel lightly, Mozart frivolously, without feeling and therefore without sense, and call the process a 'classical' interpretation"—even if Mozart could be considered "about as nearly performer-proof as any music can be."<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> "D. H. Lawrence", *The Olive Tree*, 202. However, elsewhere Huxley suggested that environment might affect musical awareness and education. Discussing a street near St. Katharine Dock in London, he noted, "If I had been born and lived my life in this street of rags behind the Docks, should I be playing Bach, I wondered, should I have heard of Schubert? I felt uncomfortably doubtful." See Huxley, "Greater and Lesser London", in David Bradshaw (ed.), *The Hidden Huxley* (London: Faber & Faber, 1994), 94; this essay was originally published in *Nash's Pall Mall Magazine* in October 1931.

<sup>66</sup> "Variations" and "The Arnold Bax Concert", 151 and 158 below.

<sup>67</sup> "Singing and Things Sung", "Supplementing the Concerts", "Mozart at Salzburg" and "Brahms's Birthday", 76-7, 101, 129 and 217 below.

<sup>68</sup> "Music and Poetry", *Texts and Pretexts* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1932), 254; *Those Barren Leaves*, 10.

<sup>69</sup> "Two or Three Graces", 48-9.

<sup>70</sup> "Crébillon the Younger", *The Olive Tree*, 137; "Round About Don Juan", 167 below.

Several performers are berated for their attitude to programming—Casals for his dilution of a serious programme with French miniatures and his missing the opportunity to include some of Bach’s less familiar cello suites, Suggia for the inclusion of Boëllmann’s Symphonic Variations (“purely and simply cinema music, suitable for performance during the passion scenes of five-reel American drama”), Borwick for his failure to select a “more exhilarating programme” of Brahms pieces, or Chaliapin for his inclusion of “musically worthless items”.<sup>71</sup> However, it is the composer-performer relationship to which Huxley often returns. Critical of the privileging of the performer in the gramophone catalogue, Huxley identifies composers, and not virtuosi, as the “real artists”, and regrets how music is “at the mercy” of “secondary artists who must always come between the composer and his audience.”<sup>72</sup> This gap between composer and performer was an issue that he returned to in *Antic Hay*, where the Sclopsis Quartet performs Mozart’s String Quintet in G minor. “Strange...to think that those ridiculous creatures could have produced what we’ve just been hearing”,<sup>73</sup> muses Gumbriil; the gulf between Mozart’s music and those who perform it is also reflected by Sclopsis’s reaction to the applause in contrast to the intrinsically musical character Emily:

Great Sclopsis himself received his share of the plaudits with a weary condescension; weary are his poached eyes, weary his disillusioned smile. It is only his due, he knows; but he has had so much clapping, so many lovely women...The poached eye of Sclopsis lighted on Emily, flushed and ardently applauding. He gave her, all to herself, a weary smile. He would have a letter, he guessed, to-morrow morning signed “Your little Admirer in the Third Row.” She looked a choice little piece. He smiled again to encourage her. Emily, alas! had not even noticed. She was applauding the music.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> “A Few Complaints”, “Bad Music”, “Brahms’s Birthday” and “The Interpreter and the Creator”, 95-6, 172-4, 217-18 and 50 below.

<sup>72</sup> “The Interpreter and the Creator” and “Music and the Interpretative Medium”, 50-2 and 225 below. In “Uncle Spencer”, *Little Mexican & Other Stories* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1924), 104, an operatic tenor is “only interested in music in so far as it affected the tenor voice”, and so despite being familiar with Leoncavallo, Puccini, Saint-Saëns and Gounod, had “never heard of Bach or Beethoven”.

<sup>73</sup> *Antic Hay*, 193.

<sup>74</sup> *Antic Hay*, 192-3.

Huxley also muses upon the relative merits of opera libretti,<sup>75</sup> bemoans what he sees as a decline in the musical heritage of Italy,<sup>76</sup> and expounds upon the nature of the musical child-prodigy.<sup>77</sup> However, the central theme of Huxley's column, reflected in the title of this book, is the vexed question of how to judge the relative merits and long-term significance of specific composers and their works. At "a given moment in time", Huxley argues, there is the possibility for a musical work to be allotted "an importance entirely disproportionate to its intrinsic value", and future generations may legitimately question the critical judgements of their forebears.<sup>78</sup> "How do we know", asks Huxley, "that Mozart is a greater man than Rossini"? Ultimately Huxley attributes this knowledge to "a kind of inward certainty", suggesting that greatness "is a quality to be apprehended, in the last resort, intuitively."<sup>79</sup> Or more humorously, he offers an acid test: whether he is able to stand throughout a piece of music at a promenade concert without a feeling of physical distress. Whilst he

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<sup>75</sup> "Light Opera and the New Stravinsky" and "New Friends and Old", 64-5 and 146-7 below. In a letter to Ned Rorem of 9 August 1953, Huxley suggested that there were only three "really good librettos": "Da Ponte's for *Don Giovanni*, Boito's for *Falstaff* and Berg's for *Wozzeck*"; see *Letters*, 682.

<sup>76</sup> "Popular Music in Italy", 131-3 below; see also Huxley's "Guide-Books", *Along the Road: Notes & Essays of a Tourist* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1925), 46-8, and "The Portrait", *Collected Short Stories*, 217: "For Lord Hurtmore, Venice meant unlimited music. It meant Galuppi's daily concerts at the orphanage of the Misericordia. It meant Piccini at Santa Maria. It meant new operas at the San Moise; it meant delicious cantatas at a hundred churches. It meant private concerts of amateurs; it meant Porpora and the finest singers in Europe; it meant Tartini and the greatest violinists." In *Those Barren Leaves*, 207, Mr. Cardan suggests: "For by some strange and malignant fate the Italians, once arrived at baroque, seem to have got stuck there. They are still up to the eyes in it. Consider their literature, their modern painting and architecture, their music—it's all baroque. It gesticulates rhetorically, it struts across stages, it sobs and bawls in its efforts to show you how passionate it is."

<sup>77</sup> "The Mysteries of Music", 67-8 below. See also the reference to "infant prodigies" and "Rows of little Mozarts" in *Those Barren Leaves*, 23, representative of Mrs Aldwinkle's vision of how the glories of the Italian house that she has bought might be revived.

<sup>78</sup> "Temporaries and Eternals", 161 below.

<sup>79</sup> "Let Us Now Praise Famous Men", 112 below. However, as Milton Birnbaum notes, *Aldous Huxley's Quest for Values* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1971), 180, this promotion of intuition was not always consistent, as in "Hocus Pocus", *Texts and Pretexes*, 168, Huxley suggested: "*Malgré tout*, I still prefer reason and experiment to plain-pathed experience and its wish-fulfillments, to even the most high-class instinct, the most appealingly feminine intuition."

can “stand in comfort” during Beethoven and Bach, Brahms can only be “stood fairly well”, Huxley finds himself “aware” of his legs “very early” in Wagner, and whilst he has “stood enthusiastically” through Tchaikovsky’s later symphonies in the past, he now has “no particular desire to make the experiment.”<sup>80</sup> Suggestions of criteria that might be employed in judgements of musical value can be found throughout the music criticism in relation to individual composers; the superiority of Mozart’s *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Don Giovanni* to Cimarosa’s *Il matrimonio segreto* and *Astuzie femminili*, for example, is explained not only by Mozart’s genius, but—given their “very similar melodic elements”—by a greater rhythmic awareness.<sup>81</sup>

Underpinning Huxley’s hierarchical system is the great triumvirate that towers above the rest—J. S. Bach, Mozart and Beethoven—although Palestrina is not far behind.<sup>82</sup> The sheer number of references to these composers in Huxley’s music column and other writings testifies to their status. Arguing in *The Art of Seeing* that “every psycho-physical skill...is governed by its own laws”, for example, Huxley suggests that Bach’s lack of thought “about the physiology of muscular activity” does not prevent him “from using his muscles to play the organ with incomparable dexterity”,<sup>83</sup> elsewhere, as the musical equivalent of Milton’s “sober certainty of waking bliss”, Huxley offers the experience of listening to “the slow movement of the Ninth Symphony, to the Mass in D, to Mozart’s Requiem or *Ave Verum Corpus*”—works where “a great man and a consummate musician (and, alas, how few of them there are!) has put the whole of his being.”<sup>84</sup> As men of genius, this triumvirate are set apart. Mozart’s musical imagination differs both “in degree” and “in kind” from those blessed with a moderate musical gift,<sup>85</sup> as for Beethoven:

I am as utterly in the dark about the workings of a mind like Beethoven’s as a dog is in the dark about the workings of my mind. No mental experience of my own avails me to form the slightest idea of what it must be like to have a mind that cogitates in terms of such things as the opening

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<sup>80</sup> “Reflections in the Promenade”, 138-9 below.

<sup>81</sup> “Round About Don Juan”, 167-8 below.

<sup>82</sup> See “Patriotism and Criticism”, “Literary Music” and “Verdi and Palestrina”, 81-2, 90 and 164-6 below.

<sup>83</sup> *The Art of Seeing*, 11-12.

<sup>84</sup> “Music and Poetry”, *Texts and Pretexts*, 252-3. See also a letter to Mrs Kethevan Roberts, 22 December 1933, *Letters*, 375-6, where Beethoven’s Mass in D, Mozart’s *Requiem* and *Ave Verum Corpus* represent “depth and religious passion”, whereas Bach’s passions were said to lack an “agonized, poignant quality.”

<sup>85</sup> “The Mysteries of Music”, 68 below.

of the C-sharp minor quartet and the slow movement of the Ninth Symphony...As a dog is to me, so am I musically to Beethoven and mathematically to Einstein. The only consolation is that Beethoven himself is a mathematical dog in relation to Einstein, while in all cases where visual art is concerned, Einstein on his own confession is a dog in comparison with any good painter or even any appreciator of painting.<sup>86</sup>

However, Huxley does admit an additional hierarchy within the individual output of these composers:

Now, I would say that, other things being equal, a work of art which imposes aesthetic unity upon a large number of formal and psychological elements is a greater and more interesting work than one in which unity is imposed upon only a few elements. Bach's Two-Part Inventions are perfect in their way. But his Chromatic Fantasia is also perfect; and since its perfection involves the imposition of aesthetic unity upon a larger number of elements it is (as we all in fact recognize) a greater work.<sup>87</sup>

There are several striking references to the music of J. S. Bach throughout Huxley's essays, novels and travel writings. Describing a trip through Jerusalem, for example, Huxley notes how "High up, in one of the houses surrounding the court, somebody was playing the opening Fantasia of Bach's Partita in A minor—playing it, what was more, remarkably well", suggestive of how "A tunnel of joy and understanding had been driven through chaos and was demonstrating...that perpetual perishing is also perpetual creation";<sup>88</sup> in "Two or Three Graces", Grace Peddley nominates Bach as "the greatest musician" and highlights the "lovely things" in the *Well-Tempered Clavier*.<sup>89</sup> Bach is also used to describe Huxley's LSD experiences, which he incorporated into his novel, *Island*. In one significant passage, Susila MacPhail (who suggests that Bach is "closest to silence, closest, in spite of its being so highly organized, to pure, one-hundred-degree proof Spirit") plays a recording of Bach's Fourth Brandenburg concerto when Will Farnaby tries the *moksha*-medicine:

It was the same, of course, as the Fourth Brandenburg he had listened to so often in the past—the same and yet completely different...The Allegro was revealing itself as an element in the great present Event, a manifestation at one remove of the luminous bliss. Or perhaps that was putting it too

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<sup>86</sup> *Proper Studies*, 61-2.

<sup>87</sup> "Variations on El Greco", *Themes and Variations*, 185.

<sup>88</sup> "Usually Destroyed", *Adonis and the Alphabet*, 215-16.

<sup>89</sup> "Two or Three Graces", 43.

mildly. In another modality this Allegro was the luminous bliss; it was the knowledgeable understanding of everything apprehended through a particular piece of knowledge; it was undifferentiated awareness broken up into notes and phrases and yet still all-comprehendingly itself...every phrase of this well-worn familiar music was an unprecedented revelation of beauty that went pouring upwards, like a multitudinous fountain, into another revelation as novel and amazing as itself.<sup>90</sup>

Similarly, in describing the difficulties of an intrusively statistical approach to the testing of patients in these altered states, Huxley noted “people under LSD or mescaline are generally in a state of intenser, more significant experience...It is rather like asking somebody who is listening with rapt attention to a Bach Prelude and Fugue, or is in the midst of making love, to answer a questionnaire.”<sup>91</sup>

Bachian associations in the novels contribute to Huxley’s characterisation. In *Eyeless in Gaza*, the communist Mark Staithes sees Bach (and Beethoven) as representative of the hope for humanity, a “consolation” that tempers his increasingly disillusioned politics:

The fact that the Matthew Passion, for example, the Hammerklavier Sonata, had had human authors was a source of hope. It was just conceivable that humanity might some day and somehow be made a little more John-Sebastian-like. If there were no Well-Tempered Clavichord, why should one bother even to wish for revolutionary change?<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Aldous Huxley, *Island* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1962), 265-75; see also Laura Huxley, “Disregarded In the Darkness”, in Huxley (ed. Michael Horowitz & Cynthia Palmer), *Moksha: Writings on Psychedelics and the Visionary Experience 1931-1963* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1980), 76-77. In a letter to Dr. Humphry Osmond, 23 December 1955, *Letters*, 778-80, where Huxley describes the “overpowering” effect of listening to Bach’s B minor suite and the *Musical Offering* under the influence of LSD as “an expression of the essential all-rightness of the universe”, other music (“Palestrina and Byrd”) was “unsatisfactory by comparison”; he warned against subjecting a patient “to sentimental religious music or even good religious music, if it were tragic (e.g. the Mozart or Verdi ‘Requiems’, or Beethoven’s ‘Missa Solemnis’), whereas “John Sebastian is safer because, ultimately, truer to reality.” See also Huxley’s *The Doors of Perception* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1954), 38-40, where he compares his mescaline-fuelled responses to Mozart’s C minor Piano Concerto (which left him “rather cold”), Gesualdo’s madrigals (whose “psychological disintegration” was exaggerated) and Berg’s *Lyric Suite* (identifying “an incongruity...between a psychological disintegration even completer than Gesualdo’s and the prodigious resources, in talent and technique, employed in its expression”).

<sup>91</sup> Letter to J. B. Rhine, 19 September 1957, in *Letters*, 828.

<sup>92</sup> *Eyeless in Gaza*, 311-12.

Staithe's subsequent performance of Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D minor allows him and Anthony Beavis to leave Marxist theory behind and enter "another universe, a world where [Irving] Babbitts and Staithe'ses didn't exist, were inconceivable."<sup>93</sup> It is in *Point Counter Point*, however, where the performance of Bach's B minor Suite allows characters to display different reactions—part of the "variations" idea noted above—helping to define the ideas that they represent. As Peter Bowering suggests, Lord Edward's response excludes "the possibility of human participation, each event being described as if it were the workings of a complex and intricate mechanism":<sup>94</sup>

The shaking air rattled Lord Edward's *membrana tympani*; the interlocked *malleus, incus* and stirrup bones were set in motion so as to agitate the membrane of the oval window and raise an infinitesimal storm in the fluid of the labyrinth...a vast number of obscure miracles were performed in the brain, and Lord Edward ecstatically whispered "Bach!"<sup>95</sup>

Compare this with Fanny Logan's response to the same music:

The music was infinitely sad; and yet it consoled. It admitted everything, so to speak—poor Eric's dying before his time, the pain of his illness, his reluctance to go—it admitted everything. It expressed the whole sadness of the world, and from the depths of that sadness it was able to affirm—deliberately, quietly, without protesting too much—that everything was in some way right, acceptable. It included the sadness within some vaster, more comprehensive happiness.<sup>96</sup>

These contrasts appear in a more compressed form where a description of the flautist Pongileoni's playing juxtaposes the scientific and the spiritual:

In the opening *largo* John Sebastian had, with the help of Pongileoni's snout and the air column, made a statement: There are grand things in the world, noble things; there are...intrinsic lords of the earth. But of an earth that is, oh! complex and multitudinous, he had gone on to reflect in the fugal allegro.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 317.

<sup>94</sup> Peter Bowering, *Aldous Huxley: A Study of the Major Novels* (London: The Athlone Press, 1968), 17.

<sup>95</sup> *Point Counter Point*, 44.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 34. Huxley refers to these contrasting "scientific and aesthetic" responses in "And Wanton Optics Roll the Melting Eye", *Music at Night*, 46-7.

<sup>97</sup> *Point Counter Point*, 31-2.