

Expunging Father Time:
The Search for Temporal Transcendence in the Novels of Aldous Huxley and Tom Robbins

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Introduction:

The nature of time is elusive, always slipping through man's grasp because of its complexity. Time is intangible, yet man attempts to measure it; time seems sometimes to progress in a straight line and at others proceed in cycles; the passing of time also leads to both good and evil. Indeed it appears that, as Jorge Luis Borges notes, "Time is the One Essential Mystery" (qtd. in Halpern xvi). However, numerous persons and societies have sought to solve time's mysteries, forming various theories about the nature of time.

Two of the more recent of these time theorizers are Aldous Huxley and Tom Robbins, and, therefore, this study will focus on the concept of time as played out in their novels, specifically the idea shared by both authors that time is the enemy of mankind, and that as such time must be transcended. It is of great interest that these two authors, who lived in different places at different times and who employ dissimilar styles of novel writing, possess views of time which are surprisingly parallel.

Although his non-journalistic work began with poems and satires, the bulk of Huxley's writings more closely resemble essays—he published a number of essay collections, but even a great number of his novels seem to take on this form. These books are fashioned, at least loosely, around plot and character, but at points the works take a turn toward the didactic exposition of Huxley's philosophy. In fact, one can trace Huxley's philosophical development through a study of this approach in his novels. One particularly interesting theme that recurs in his work is his concept of time. Huxley believed that standardized time or clock time is an enemy of mankind—indeed, it may be the primary enemy of man. In his philosophical treatise *The Perennial Philosophy*, Huxley states that time keeps man from reaching God, that it traps him in the present; however, Huxley argues that it is possible for man to transcend this temporal prison and

enter eternity now through a kind of spiritual awakening or enlightenment. In the latter part of his career, the British Huxley moved to America and began spreading this mysticism. Critics have published some commentary on his mysticism but have not looked extensively at the mysticism of Huxley's novels, so this study will examine this aspect of Huxley's writing more closely.

Robbins, an American author who began his writing career as a journalist in the 1960s, composes his novels in a manner quite different from that of Huxley. He weaves fantastic tales interspersed with various interludes and narrative comments. Like Huxley's, his language is precise and witty, but Robbins' words are also playful and lighthearted. Robbins treats major themes and concepts through quirky narrators and plots. Time emerges as a major player in his writing as well—he plays with the structure of the novel, forcing the reader to reconstruct the timeline of events and has characters discuss the problems of time. Robbins also seems to believe that time is the enemy—the whole of *Jitterbug Perfume* is dedicated to the search for immortality or transcendence of time. Strongly influenced by eastern mysticism and the psychedelic movement of the '60s, Robbins also sees this kind of spirituality as key to overcoming the menace of time. In spite of their differences of style and period of writing, these two authors share a common thread—time as oppressor of mankind.

The first chapter of this project will discuss historical conceptions and measurements of time that form the context for the writings of Huxley and Robbins. Time has not always been conceived or measured in the same way, and understanding the progression of these concepts allows for a more complete discussion of the significance of the time concepts of these two authors. Indeed, time measurement today is even more precise (and arguably more controlling) than it was in Huxley's lifetime or even the earlier writings of Robbins. Therefore, the initial

chapter will seek to give a brief overview of the philosophical, historical, and social context of time as it relates to these two authors.

The next two chapters will provide readings of some works by Huxley and Robbins and establish the connection between them. For both authors, time imprisons man on two fronts, or in two cages, if you will. The smaller of these cages is society's concept of time, clock time, which constrains the activities of man, forcing him to submit to his fate as a mere drone operating on the assembly line of life. In this prison, man cannot take the proper time to commune with nature, to look inward at himself and his life, or to focus on the real meaning and goal of life—escape from the larger cage. This larger cage is time as it relates to the lifespan, to man's mortality. From birth he is sentenced to death—it is only the length of days that varies from person to person. Hence time as the messenger of death becomes the ultimate foe to be overcome. Man can, with perhaps considerable effort, spring himself from the first cell, but freedom from the larger one—achievement of timelessness—becomes the definitive pursuit.

Chapter 1: Time's Misdeeds (or Misuse)

As mentioned previously, before a specific investigation of Huxley and Robbins' concepts of time can properly be made, those of their predecessors¹ must be examined. For these authors are not writing in a vacuum; in fact, they often respond specifically to historical time conceptions through incorporation, revision, or rejection of these ideas in their works. Although there are two general conceptions of time (cyclical, which holds that time continues in a circle, forever repeating itself, and linear, which presents time as a straight line with a beginning and end), in a sense, the whole history of time conception and measurement can be reduced to the progressive movement from natural or God-given time to manmade time.² Both cyclical and linear views of time began with connections to the natural world, one that was created by a god for a purpose, and throughout history these views have been altered to fit the utilitarian aims of society. Huxley and Robbins, then, argue most vehemently against the artificial character that man has given to social time and yet also take issue with nature's time, which inevitably leads to man's death.

Section 1: Historical Overview of the Concept of Time

Cyclical

One of the oldest views of time (and the one that plays the most prominent role in the conceptions of Huxley and Robbins) is that of time as a continuous circle. Many early societies noticed the natural cycles around them, and their myths and practices demonstrate these cycles' connections to time. Man himself exhibits many cyclical elements: the in-and-out breathing patterns, the continuous beating of the heart, the menstrual cycle, and the seeming regeneration of a person in his offspring. Likewise, the world around him seemed to operate in repetitious

¹ Because both Huxley and Robbins are generally regarded as novelists of ideas, the focus of this section will be on religious and philosophical ideas instead of literary manifestations (although some of these are mentioned).

² Or the formation of the smaller cage of time.

patterns: the sun rises and sets at approximately the same time in a twenty-four hour period, the same seasons come and go over a twelve month period, plants grow and die and revive every year, and birds migrate south every winter. Even what they understood of the cosmos seemed to come in circles—the phases of the moon, the rotation of the earth and the planets. Therefore, their concept of time mirrored that which they saw in nature; time is cyclical, always returning to the same point, indefinitely.

However, even from the earliest points in human history, man has sought to reconcile the seemingly infinite and eternal nature of the universe with his own mortality—usually through religion. Paul Halpern explains that “[b]ecause the human experience has been one of looking beyond the apparent fragility of life to seek a transcendental permanent reality, the history of religion can be said to be a document of the struggle to understand and supersede mortality and unite with the everlasting truth of the cosmos” (2-3). Thus, the desire to defeat the power of time has been a long-lasting one, and one of the first places that man looked for the key to his victory was in the world that surrounded him. Halpern mentions that early civilizations noticed that plant life was perennial and thus sought to harness such power of regeneration as their own:

Feeling that plants possessed a kind of immortality, they developed medicinal potions based on fruits and herbs. Their goal was to claim this gift for themselves and thus be able to live again and again in renewed forms of being. Because it was felt that the rhythm of vegetation furnished the key to the mystery of birth, death, and rebirth, fruits and herbs were thought to provide everlasting existence and knowledge of ultimate reality. (3)

Elements of the cosmos such as the sun, moon, and planets also became objects of worship and study because of their connection to cyclical reality. Somehow it seemed that seasonal rebirth

could provide a cure for the decay of human existence, and women had a special connection to that knowledge: “Women’s menstrual cycles were considered to be links between the divine lunar rhythms and the earthly processes associated with fertility. Thus, female fertility was seen as being connected with the mystery of vegetation and the celestial motions which set the pace of cyclical time” (Halpern 3). Moreover, the gods of the harvest were often female, and festivals yearly celebrated their role in the lives of men. Interestingly, but not surprisingly, the early depictions of time were also associated with agriculture, as well as the cosmos (to be discussed more fully in the section on Father Time and Saturn).

In India, people also view time as cyclical, which affects the nature of their traditional religious practices. Although three significant religious groups (Vedic, Hindu, Buddhist) emerged in ancient India, Ruth Reyna points out that at the heart of all of these lies two beliefs—there is one “supra-rational Absolute” (“the Absolute *is* Reality and there is nothing other than It”), and objective time marks the lifespan of each universe before it is destroyed and another created (228-9). The Absolute exists outside of time—it is “Pure Consciousness, standing aloof and unconcerned with the world, having no dependence upon the world for being—timeless, spaceless, ‘not this not that’” (Reyna 230). Reyna goes on to explain that the philosophy of World Cycles underlies the time conception of Indian religion:

[T]he history of the universe in its passage from evolution to dissolution is conceived as a process of gradual and relentless deterioration, disintegration and decay, not unlike the “Time’s Arrow” conceived by Arthur Eddington in his explanation of the process of world entropy. Only after all phenomena has run its [sic] course into total dissolution and has been re-incubated in the boundlessness of the timeless cosmic Unity, does the universe reappear. Whereupon,

immediately, with the first movement of cosmic energy, the first stroke of time, the irreversible process begins anew. Whereas the emanations and dissolutions of the World Cycles revolve with a cold and seemingly ruthless impersonalism that reduces to virtual nonreality the great realm of human existential sorrows, nonetheless strange and magnificent histories take place that are warmly sympathetic to the life-illusion. (229)

Therefore, time is cyclical, but not a cycle of motion that continues at the same speed or quality: it is more like a ball that someone has rolled across a level field, a ball which slows down and will eventually stop moving. Thus, the goal of these religions, accomplished through varying means, is to transcend the myth of objective time and unite with the Absolute, who is outside of Time.

The Vedic (or early Indians) believed that transcendence could be achieved through repetitious sacrifice. Halpern explains that “annual sacrifices and daily fire offerings were integrally linked to the continuation of the world. The Brahmans felt that the immortality of the universe could be maintained only by priestly rituals at the fire altar” (4). Essentially, the participation in these cyclical rituals brought them in sync with the timeless universe and could bring a greater understanding of truth and the possibility of immortality. Mircea Eliade believes that such a concept is one of sacred time:

By its very nature sacred time is reversible in the sense that, properly speaking it is a primordial mythical time made present. Every religious festival, any liturgical time, represents the reactualization of a sacred event that took place in a mythical past, “in the beginning.” Religious festival implies emerging from ordinary temporal duration and reintegration of the mythical time reactualized by the

festival itself. Hence, sacred time is indefinitely repeatable. From one point of view it could be said that it does not “pass,” that it does not constitute an irreversible duration. (69)

Therefore the sacrifices allowed for a kind of time transcendence through connection with the past.

Emerging from these early ideas, Hindu philosophy teaches that man transcends time through rebirth and that the universe itself is always in the midst of the rebirthing process. Halpern notes that the “preoccupation with daily and seasonal rhythms became incorporated into the notion of the wheel of samsara: the periodicity of natural being. In this Indian tradition, everything exhibits birth, life, death, and rebirth. A human lifetime is considered to be an immeasurably small part of an endless chain of reincarnation” (4). Thus man lived his life knowing that he would be reborn and, in this sense, death was only temporary and not something to be feared—reincarnation was not assumed to necessarily take human form, but other forms were not considered inferior because they were vital to the world cycle. According to Reyna, Hinduism holds that the universe itself is destroyed and created every 4,320,000,000 years (235). From the Hindu tradition the idea of a perennial philosophy, “an ageless wisdom revealed and re-revealed through the cycle of ages,” emerged (Reyna 234). The *Vedas*, the Hindu sacred texts, are believed to contain the eternal wisdom of the universe. Reyna explains, “They are said to embody the ideal form of the universe, and since the successive worlds have their constant form, the authoritativeness of the Vedas are constantly maintained in each successive world-epoch. The archetypal forms, however, are not eternal in the sense in which the Ultimate Reality is eternal, and they vanish with all else at the level of Brahman” (234-5). Thus, the Hindu does not

have to seek a way to transcend time for himself because he, in accordance with the nature of the universe, is always in the process of life, death, and rebirth.

The Buddhist tradition (which emerged a few hundred years after Hinduism) while maintaining some of Hinduism's core characteristics, requires an individual effort to unite with the Absolute. Reyna states that "[f]or Buddha life is nothing but a series of manifestations of becomings and extinctions, a stream of becoming in which the world of sense and science is from moment to moment. Whatever is the duration of any state of being, be it brief as a flash or as long as a hundred eons, all is becoming" (231). Therefore, "[a]t every moment everything is changing into something else and identity is only an illusion. Even the self is looked upon as a continuous succession of ideas" (231). Because of the constant change and illusory nature of life on earth, man must endeavor to see through the fog, to recognize his place in Reality, in Nirvana. Halpern explains, "Buddhism is a religion based on the sacredness of contemplation. By meditating, one realizes the ever-changing nature of one's thoughts, which in turn leads one to contemplate the impermanence of all things . . . One can obtain inner peace only by letting go of the illusion of continuity and accepting the ceaseless pace of change" (5). Buddhism seeks a separation of the mind from the body which traps man in time and illusion—Nirvana is a place of spiritual connectedness that has nothing to do with the physical body that man possesses.

The ancient Greek time concept is also cyclical, presenting a world that, although moving, returns always to the same condition. Heraclitus states, "Cold things grow hot, hot things grow cold, the wet dries, the parched is moistened, [but] the way up and the way down are one and the same" (qtd. in Halpern 6). Likewise Plato maintained this cyclical view "link[ing] time to the succession of natural events, and in particular to planetary motion": "The progression of time as expressed by planetary orbit is, in his words, 'the moving image of eternity.' It is for

this reason he believed in a recurrent universe in which the world is periodically renewed” (Halpern 7). Even Aristotle believed in “the continuity and eternity of generation and corruption in an imitation of the continual circular motion of heavenly bodies” (qtd. in Halpern 7). Halpern explains that for Aristotle, “[s]ince every change requires a cause and that causal action requires yet another cause, time has to be without beginning or end [,and] [b]ecause a circle is an object without endpoints...time must be related to circular motion” (7). The concept of time as a cycle certainly has some merit—days and seasons repeat their patterns, humans and animals cyclically birth young and die, the earth rotates around the sun—but this view lacks direction. If time is only a circle, then it leads nowhere, and there is no hope of something better—even in ancient Greece, time conceptions began to exclude the existence of the divine.

The cyclical view of time has persisted due in part to the importance of the Greek civilization to the western world, but also because of the scientific discoveries of Newton and the writings of Nietzsche. Although Isaac Newton separated time from the motions of the heavenly bodies, his absolute time still maintains a cyclical nature. As Halpern notes, “Newton’s laws³ exhibit complete time reversibility,” and he provides an example to demonstrate how such a concept is possible:

To understand why this is true, picture the motion of a ball on a billiard table. If one hits the ball so that it bounces off a cushion, it will move in a certain direction with a certain speed. If one could then reverse the direction of the ball at the same speed, the ball would precisely trace its path backward to its starting position. All forces on the ball would be the same. One could not distinguish the backward

³ 1. Every body continues in its state of rest or of uniform motion in a straight line unless it is compelled by a force to change that state. 2. Change or motion is proportional to the applied force and takes place in the direction of that force. 3. To every action there is an equal and opposite reaction or the mutual actions of two bodies are always equal and oppositely directed.

motion from the original motion, because the ball would look as if it were replaying its original motion backward in time. Its motion is geometric and therefore symmetric in time. (13)

This symmetric nature of motion is directly related to the pendulum and its governing principle—the conservation of energy. If one knows the angle from which the pendulum is released, he can also know the future positions and speeds of that pendulum. Halpern states that the reason for such predictability is that the energy of motion is transformed into the energy of position over and over again, so that energy is neither created nor destroyed:

When the pendulum swings back up to the other side, it slows down. Its energy of motion is now being converted back into energy of position as it rises. Similarly, the hourglass can be turned over, causing the sand in the energy-of-motion half to flow once more into the energy-of-position half. Just as the sand from the hourglass can flow back and forth from one half to the other, so the pendulum can keep on swinging, constantly transforming its energy from one form to another.

Thus, conservation of energy guarantees temporal periodicity. (14)

Therefore, Newton's laws, which are still taught today, suggest that because energy cannot be created or destroyed, time is not created, nor will it be destroyed and, as such, it is cyclical, always returning to the same point. With this new view of time in hand, man began to look for ways to use time for his advantage, to rein it in for gain—working tirelessly to create perpetual motion machines that would eliminate human interaction in many processes.

Nietzsche's writings (and particularly his idea of eternal return) were equally important in the persistence of the view of cyclical time. Heine explains eternal return as a condition of the

universe that repeats and never changes:⁴ thus, things may seem to change, but in fact, are simply recurrences of previous events. Nietzsche also borrowed many ideas from Greek and Indian philosophy, and Halpern suggests that “eternal return resembles the Heraclitean belief in a periodically repeating ending of the world out of the all-consuming world conflagration” (8). Nietzsche believed that history, reminiscent of the Indian belief of World Cycles, is a series of destructions and recreations: “During the constructive periods, the greatest achievements of humanity manifest themselves because those with the greatest “will to power” emerge and build an increasingly complex civilization. After the era of construction reaches a high point, forces of destruction tear down what was created and the cycle begins anew” (Halpern 8). Because man is destined to repeat moments of his life over and over, he achieves a kind of immortality.

Nietzsche did not find this fact comforting, but quite the opposite:

What if some day or night a demon were to steal after you into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: “This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sign and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to return to you, all in the same succession and sequence. . . The eternal hourglass of existence is turned upside down again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!” Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? (273)

⁴ “For time is infinite, but the things in time, the concrete bodies, are finite. They may indeed disperse into the smallest particles; but these particles, the atoms, have their determinate number, and the number of the configurations that, all of themselves, are formed out of them is also determinate. Now, however long a time may pass, according to the eternal laws governing the combinations of the eternal play of repetition, all configurations that have previously existed on earth must yet meet, attract, repulse, kiss, and corrupt each other again” (qtd. in Kaufmann 16).

This eternal repetition instead is damning, or would be if it did not preclude the existence of God. However disturbing such a thought may be, Nietzsche's eternal return made its way into the minds of those of the following century, who believed indeed that "God is dead" (167).

For the most part, Huxley and Robbins both find the cyclical elements of their modern societies frightening. In essence, the industrial world made possible by mass production was a haunting revisit to the prison formed by cyclical time: "[T]he industrial magnate in the pattern of Henry Ford, had set himself to manage an industrial world organized . . . with the efficiency of a machine: 'a great and perfect machine, a system an activity of pure order, pure mechanical repetition, repetition *ad infinitum*, hence eternal and infinite'" (Quinones 55). Eternal repetition, as Borges indicates, eliminates creativity: "Homer composed the *Odyssey*; if we postulate an infinite period of time, with infinite circumstances and changes, the impossible thing is not to compose the *Odyssey* at least once" (191). Obviously for novelists and all great thinkers, this possibility is unacceptable. Huxley's friend D.H. Lawrence sums up the problem in his novel *Women in Love*: "The thought of the mechanical succession of the day following day, *ad infinitum*, was one of the things that made her heart palpitate with a real approach of madness. The terrible bondage of this tick-tack of time, this twitching of the hands of the clock, this eternal repetition of hours and days—oh God it was too awful to contemplate. And there was no escape from it, no escape" (529-30). Taking no satisfaction in the doom that such a notion brings Huxley, and later Robbins, seeks to find an escape.

Transition from Cyclical to Linear

Although the linear view of time (which in contrast to the cyclical view of time, depicts time as an arrow that moves in a straight line with a specific direction and an end goal) eventually eclipsed the cyclical, these changes did not occur immediately—even though living in

an age dominated by linear time, Huxley and Robbins seek to maintain a focus on cyclical time by emphasizing the natural in their works. In spite of the rise of Christianity and its linear view of time, the cyclical view of time still maintained strength during the Middle Ages. Halpern notes that Greek philosophy was still influential and that because of the lack of technological and social advances, linear time conceptions failed to connect with the common man. Most people remained linked to the cycles of the earth because farming was their livelihood (27). During the Renaissance, however, linear time began to supersede cyclical. The Renaissance concept of time presented a contrast to the medieval focus on the afterlife. Jacques LeGoff notes that “[p]erhaps the most important way that the urban bourgeoisie spread its culture was the revolution it effected in the mental categories of medieval men. The most spectacular of these revolutions, without a doubt, was the one that concerned the concept and measurement of time” (qtd. in Quinones 39). As cities began to grow and man became wealthier in both knowledge and possessions, he began to turn his attention toward his time on earth, seeking to maximize his earthly potential. Ricardo J. Quinones notes that the Renaissance “saw the consolidation of the urban mentality, the growth of commerce and capitalism, the development of the mechanical clock, the cultivation of family feeling expressed in art and literature, new ways of memorializing death and of perpetuating of the self after death through fame, and finally the emergence of the first modern classics” (39-40). These emergences brought with them a concept of time that placed a great, and often horrible, responsibility on each man—each day, each moment must be filled with work and contemplation. Time can be destructive, but every man still has the responsibility to respond to this force by making the most of his days. Quinones explains that “[t]he argument of time urges activism and social utility; consequently, the indolent person is more than wasteful—he is, after the parable of the talents, evil, since he scorns the gifts

of God (of which time is among the chief) given to man so that he could add to them” (52).

However, the negative consequences of this new time consciousness were often ignored as man took more control of his life away from nature, believing that these downsides would fade as a new solution came along.

Over the next few centuries, as mankind continued to advance and explore new territories, cyclical time became an idea of the past. Fewer and fewer people relied on the land for survival, and with the demise of the feudal and caste systems, it became possible for man to change his social position. These opportunities for improvement became a goal to work toward: no longer was every day like the day before. Likewise the expansion into newly discovered lands gave man the sense that he could conquer anything. Halpern explains that “[c]hanges in the perception of space can have a strong influence on the time model favored by a society. When space is seen as unchanging, cyclical time is the favored model of the world; when space seems to be growing at an enormous rate and the frontiers of humanity are being pushed out further, the idea of progression is more appealing” (29). Thus, as the world grew, linear time conceptions took hold, and in times of prosperity took on a positive direction.

In linear time conceptions, essentially, there is only one direction that time moves—from the past to the future—but there are two possible ends. One end of time is the destruction of the universe that naturally follows the decay of natural processes, and the other is a kind of paradise that results from the progression of the universe from decay to perfection. The first linear time conceptions saw time as a force that led man to his destruction, but as man began to see himself as taking control of his own destiny through technological and societal advancement, the road to destruction became not only distasteful but unlikely. So man simply changed the end of time—the crumbling path emerged as the yellow-brick road.

The first of these linear views finds its roots in Judaism and most of its strength in Christianity. In the Judeo-Christian view of time, the world is moving toward a particular end. God, a timeless and eternal being, created the universe, and thus created time. Originally time was a positive concept, but after Adam and Eve disobeyed God, death entered the world and time took on its negative characteristics. Thus, the human race, if left to itself, will continue down a path of destruction until the end of time, and life will not ultimately continue to get better and better but worse and worse. At the appointed time, God will destroy the world, in an event called the apocalypse, which will usher in a state of timelessness—God will create a new heaven and a new earth where his faithful will live in a state of timeless bliss. In a sense, then, all of the events in history, in time, are leading up to this particular moment. The Judeo-Christian view of time, then, is intimately connected to time as *kairos*. All events in history are charged with significance because they all play a part in the culmination and ultimate meaning of the universe.

Interestingly, the Judeo-Christian view of time is also inexorably linked to the concept of typology. Typology, as George Landow explains it, is “a form of biblical interpretation that proceeds on the assumption that God placed anticipations of Christ in the laws, events, and people of the Old Testament” (qtd. in Heady 360). For instance, Isaac’s willingness to be sacrificed at the command of God anticipates Christ’s willing death on the cross. Thus, Isaac’s sacrifice, though meaningful in itself, becomes extremely significant because of the event of Christ’s death. Although this form of interpreting history began in the Bible, its application in the more general sense does not stop there. Because typology, as Landow notes, is based in the historical and refers to real people and events in time (Heady 361), the concept applies to all history in the Christian view of time. Therefore, one can take comfort that the events of his life

can prefigure others in the future, which gives his life greater meaning. The Judeo-Christian view of time, then, is essentially positive for the Christian.

Although the Judeo-Christian view of time resolved many of the ills of a purely cyclical understanding of time by providing a direction and giving time meaning, for many people, its emphasis on faith in a distant future did not provide much comfort in the present. Destructive and terrible events still occurred, and no amount of dwelling on eternity could curb the diseases that plagued their world. The power of time still resided outside of man. However, as human technology and society advanced, focus on the apocalypse receded and man became confident in his own ability to achieve a utopian present.

During and following the Renaissance, the destructive attributes of linear time became confined to certain religious beliefs and a positive linear view of time (progress) gained influence in western society, asserting that life was, in fact, moving toward greater order and complexity. Charles A. Beard notes that “[i]t was not until commerce, invention, and natural science emancipated humanity from thralldom to the cycle and to the Christian epic that it became possible to think of an immense future for mortal mankind, of the conquest of the material world in human interest, of providing the conditions for a good life on this planet without reference to the hereafter” (xi). Progress, as J. B. Bury defines it, is a “theory which involves a synthesis of the past and a prophecy of the future” and is “based on an interpretation of history which regard men as slowly advancing . . . in a definite and desirable direction, and infers that this progress will continue indefinitely” (5). Bury goes on to explain that Progressive theory implies that “a condition of general happiness will ultimately be enjoyed, which will justify the whole process of civilization; for otherwise the direction would not be desirable . . . The process must also be the necessary outcome of the psychical and social nature of man; it must not be at the mercy of

any external will,” for otherwise the idea of God or “Providence” must enter the picture (5). In essence, this time concept allows man to see himself as the controller of his fate and believe that improvements in technology and organization can lead to utopia.

This movement of time conceptions away from mythical or natural (cyclical) depictions becomes particularly evident through the evolution of the concept of Father Time, the iconographic representation of time. Modern day conceptions of Father Time stem from the medieval and Renaissance conceptions of Saturn, which related specifically to the opposing ideas of time as *kairos* and *chronos*. *Kairos* is a Greek word for time, which Amilcare A. Iannucci notes means “the brief, decisive moment which marks a turning point in the life of human beings or in the development of the universe...the moment charged with significance when past, present, and future meet” (“Fortune’s Wheel” 4). In a Christian mindset, as Laurie Zwicky points out, *kairos* relates to “God’s plan for the world, [in which] everything will occur at its proper moment, ‘when time shall be’ (271). According to Panofsky, this term was often associated with the “figure of Opportunity,” which began to blend with the idea of Fortune (71). Panofsky notes that when depicted as Fortune, this figure “was shown as a man (originally nude) in fleeting movement, usually young and never very old . . . He was equipped with wings both at the shoulders and at the heels. His attributions were a pair of scales, originally balanced on the edge of a shaving knife, and, in a somewhat later period, one or two wheels” (71-2). *Chronos*, on the other hand, is connected to “chronological” or “sequential” time, and became virtually synonymous with Kronos, the Greek equivalent to Saturn (Iannucci “Fortune’s Wheel” 5). In medieval thinking, Saturn has a dual nature, a good and an evil side. The positive aspects of Saturn show him as the “patron and protector of philosophical and religious contemplation” (Iannucci “Saturn” 54) and as the “protector...of peasants [and] hidden treasures” (59).

However, Saturn is most often associated with his negative side of death and catastrophe: C. S. Lewis explains that “[i]n the earth his influence produces lead; in men melancholy complexion; in history, disastrous events. . . He is connected with sickness and old age. . . [H]is activities. . . promot[e] fatal accidents, pestilence, treacheries, and ill-luck in general” (105). Saturn, once depicted as majestic figure, became rather decrepit by the end of the Middle Ages: “A dignified if somewhat morose figure, he was depicted in classical art with a sickle in his hand and a veil covering his face. . . [but this image shifted to one of] a sick and gloomy old man, often in the garb of a peasant. In place of his original sickle he now carried a spade or mattock” (Iannucci “Fortune’s Wheel” 5-6). Even though the latter presentation was less magnificent, Saturn’s depiction was still quite frightening—he still appeared more and more menacing as his associations with death grew stronger. Most scholars also agree that the iconographic depiction of Father Time stems from this Kronos-Saturn idea (Lewis 105, Iannucci “Fortune’s Wheel” 6; “Saturn” 59, Hollander *Inf.* 289, Panofsky 75). Originally, then, Father Time had both a positive and negative side, encompassing both *chronos* and *kairos*.

However, as the progressive view of time gained prominence, the two-sided depiction of time no longer reflected society’s thoughts about time, and gradually the negative aspects of Father Time were removed and formed into another figure—the Grim Reaper. Both of these depictions still exist in modern society, often used in commercial depictions and advertisements. The Grim Reaper, though, is seen only as the harbinger of death and is not directly connected with time. On the other hand, the modern depiction of Father Time is relatively free of mythical associations—no longer linked to fortune, agriculture, or even a destroyer—but has become a cartoonish old man with a white beard and robe who usually carries a watch or an hour glass. Occasionally he is equipped with a crutch or scythe, but these items lack the menace and link to

the earth that they originally held. As societal time conceptions moved away from the mythical or natural toward the social and commercial (linear), so did the tangible depiction of time—man decided that time brings progress and happiness and has, thus, removed the negative aspects from time's depiction.

One of the earliest and most influential supporters of the progressive view was Sir Francis Bacon. Halpern notes that in his work *Novum Organum* (1620), Bacon argued for the importance of scientific inquiry to benefit humanity, advocating the formation of government supported organizations to accomplish this task. Bacon did not believe in fortune; instead he thought that man made his own destiny and that only ignorance was holding humanity back (58). Essentially he believed that God gave man knowledge and with it great power. Although it seems unlikely that Bacon intended to imply that man could be like God, as Halpern explains, "Bacon's essays had a powerful effect upon the perception of time and nature by society. For the first time, the notion that nature could be tamed by humankind was advanced; it displaced the idea that human destiny must be determined by uncontrollable natural forces" (58). This kind of thinking, which was continued by many more intellectuals in the following century, combined with the increasing industrialization of the Western world made divine intervention seem almost unnecessary as man created his own solutions.

Of course, industrialization brought its own problems and hardships (child labor, unsafe factories, long hours and little pay), but two philosophies developed to explain away these issues in light of Progress. The capitalistic economic theory of Adam Smith was one of these. Halpern states that "Smith argues that unrestricted competition and free trade will lead naturally to the accumulation of wealth[, and] he predicts that the mechanism, if unhindered, will lead to increased production, wealth, and social prosperity without the need for any guiding structure"

(61). For Smith the local problems would eventually resolve themselves and the machine of industry would make the lives of everyone better. Disorder, then, would eventually lead to perfect order. So the course of capitalism will bring happiness and improvement to the world. On the other end of the political spectrum, Karl Marx also developed a progressive notion of time that accounted for the horrors of mechanization. For Marx the ideal state that man was moving toward was communism, and capitalism was just a stage in the progression toward that state. Halpern lists Marx's periods of history as 1. "primitive communism: the state of affairs before the coming of imperial conquest and war" 2. civilizations "in which slave labor was the underlying economic mechanism" 3. the "feudal period," which ended when the "economic basis shifted from agriculture to industry" 4. capitalism, which is the current structure 5. communism, the ideal society which has eliminated class distinctions (65-6). One of Marx's most famous statements is "Democracy is the road to socialism." Thus, Marx believed that the chaos of capitalism would eventually lead to the order of communism—time was leading man through turbulence to perfection. Even though these two men had very different political views and goals, they both believed that time was moving man toward a better state, and because each man was a leader in his political sphere, the progressive model continued to gain strength.

Despite the influence of these three men, undoubtedly the greatest power behind the progressive view of time is Charles Darwin's theory of evolution.⁵ In 1859 when Darwin's *Origin of Species* was published, ideas about evolution were not new, but this work gave completeness to previously undeveloped concepts. Darwin explained how such a process would take place: "The key to the evolution—and preservation—of living organisms was the pressure they constantly experience to be well adapted to their environment; individuals who best meet

⁵ Although the theory of evolution implies that there will be no end to change, that in fact the line will never reach an ending point, the common man extracted the idea of movement to a better state from the more complex implications—for him science had proved that life would get better.

that criterion have a greater chance of survival than those less well adapted” (qtd. in “Darwin on the Struggle for Existence” 139). Thus, small adaptations lead to greater adaptations, mutations lead to new organisms—amoebas become men. Halpern notes, “Darwin’s theory had an enormous influence on both the scientific community and the general public. In some sense it provided a material basis for the progressive model of time. Through evolution, animals, humans, societies, and perhaps even the universe as a whole could transform into higher and higher states of development” (69-70). Evolutionary theory became a prominent model of thought, especially when Herbert Spencer added his term “the survival of the fittest” to Darwin’s theory: as Halpern indicates, “The idea of survival of the fittest was appealing to followers of both Smith and Marx” (71). *Origin of Species* changed the way modern man thought about the universe and added weight to the idea that time is an improving force.

Some even sought to speed up the natural process of order and perfection by creating utopias. Robert Owen, a Welsh industrialist, bought several mills and established his own community near Glasgow in which working conditions were good and hours fewer. He also started a community in America, but his experiment was unsuccessful (Halpern 62). Many others tried to do the same but failed as well. In spite of these social failures, utopian literature became popular with H. G. Wells as a leading figure. Peter Firchow comments that “[f]or a whole generation of readers growing up between 1900 and 1930 this little, fat, and jolly man, half prophet and half huckster, became identified with the shape of things to come... Only Jules Verne rivaled [Wells] as a writer of scientific romances” (260). Two of Wells’ most famous works are *The Time Machine* and *War of the Worlds*, but *Men Like Gods* is the one that Huxley chose to mock specifically in *Brave New World*.⁶ Firchow notes that “Huxley openly avowed his

⁶ In the Wellsian world of *Men Like Gods*, society has achieved a state of near perfection by breeding out the possessors lower and uncreative minds. These men and women reside not in a metropolis but in dwellings scattered

aim to expose the ‘horror of the Wellsian Utopian’” (260-1). Because utopias never worked out in reality and because the harshness of life remained prominent, most people rejected utopian literature and the notion of achieving such a state in society, at least any time in the near future.

Even if one could take comfort in the overall movement of mankind to an improved state, linear progression through evolution presented some disturbing implications for the individual. For one thing, man could no longer hold to the belief that he is truly separate from and superior to nature. Man was not created in the image of God or was any way part of God, but was an animal in the latest stage of evolution. This time concept also eliminated the possibility of reincarnation and the need for participation in rituals to keep things moving, which made the life of each individual fleeting and potentially meaningless—not everyone impacts the course of history. Without a belief in God, only the temporal nature of life is present, and, as Milan Kundera asserts, man’s being is light, his existence matters little and will soon float away and be forgotten. If Nietzsche can be believed and “God is dead,” then linear time inevitably brings demoralization and hopelessness.

However, Rudolf Clausius’ scientific discovery of 1854⁷ disproved the certainty of progress and effectively shattered the utopian dream. Clausius formulated his two laws of thermodynamics, which outlined basic principles of energy and entropy: 1. “The energy of the world is constant.” 2. “The entropy of the world strives to a maximum.” Halpern explains that these laws, coupled with Sadi Carnot’s earlier discovery that building a perfectly efficient

throughout the countryside, and have neither the need for police and or healthcare because threats such as disease and violence have been erased through ecological control and psychological collectivity. The desire to perform their duty to society characterizes their lives, and these utopians work willingly as their passions and desires have been steered away, through childhood education, from recreation and lust and toward scientific discovery and useful production. In Huxley’s dystopia, however, the citizens have been genetically engineered into a pyramid-like caste system, in which the majority of the beings possess little intelligence. These people are also trained from childhood to obey the order of the state, but instead of being told to redirect their desires they are instructed to always strive for their gratification. As such society is stabilized by distracting its citizens through countless forms of entertainment to avoid thought, which could potentially lead to discontentment or insurrection.

⁷ Although Clausius’ discovery came before Darwin, the full significance of his work was not immediately evident.

machine is impossible because a certain amount of energy will always be lost, invalidate Newton's theory of perpetual motion and indicate that the world is heading toward disorder and eventual destruction:

The process of temperature leveling and an associated increase in entropy occurs naturally. The opposite process, namely that of heat travelling from a cold to a hot object, does not occur naturally. Thus, events occur in the direction of increasing entropy. Not every process results in entropy increase, but any local decrease in entropy must be accompanied by a corresponding increase elsewhere. In the scheme of the universe, that means that eventually all temperatures will become equal. At that point, the entropy of the universe would reach a maximum. From that point on, no work could be done in the whole universe. No engines could be created to use any of the energy left in the cosmos. Therefore, no change would be possible anywhere in the universe. The final state is called the heat death of the universe. (37)

Although many scientists and other scholars have sought to deny the likelihood of this scenario, their arguments fail to discount adequately this downward flow of the universe. Jacques Charon notes, "What is particularly distressing for those who seek a 'death-proof' meaning and purpose of life without taking refuge in the 'other' world is that science actually confirms the conclusion of meaninglessness to which the fact of death led man long before science had shaken his belief in immortality and disclosed the insignificant place of his abode in the universe" (qtd. in Halpern 49). With such a fate waiting, life becomes almost meaningless even if this heat death does not occur for thousands or millions of years.

Clausius' discovery had a profound impact on man's thinking about the universe, but the devastating World Wars that occurred in the first half of the twentieth century had an even greater effect on the common man. During the Industrial Revolution, man became increasingly assured that technology presented the solution to any problem—disease, inefficiency, unhappiness, etc. But when technology brought about more widespread death through warfare than had ever been seen before, doubts about this panacea arose, and many sought to return to previous views. Halpern explains that “[n]aturally, there is a great hope that a period of construction will follow a war. Then the notion of circular time is most appealing. The terrible fear is that periods of destruction will continue, things will grow worse and worse, and eventually Armageddon will occur, with the complete destruction of humanity as its outcome” (34). Of course, such an end is terrifying if one does not believe in God or an afterlife, and thus man had three choices about how to live his life: take comfort in a god or afterlife, live in utter despair because life is meaningless, or find another way to define the universe and his existence.

Huxley was born into this climate of conflicting and confusing ideas, a climate which continued and even worsened throughout his writing career. In general there were two conflicting schools of thought: one philosophical and scientific camp believed that technology would continue to improve man's quality of life and that the world was moving toward greater order and prosperity,⁸ and the other rejected the progressive nature of the universe and the promises of religion, so that they were characterized by a sense of skepticism (at best) and/or hopelessness (at worst). Huxley, however, did not strictly adhere to either side and sought to find his own resolution. Huxley generally believed that Christianity was incompatible with the observable world, perhaps because he came from a family of scientists. He also lived and wrote during the modernist period, which gave birth to the world wars, so Huxley was skeptical about

⁸ Necessarily this camp chose to ignore or account for the implications that entropy (and later relativity) posed.

the redemptive qualities of technology—man-made time seemed to bring more harm than good. In response to this damning and synthetic system of time, Huxley initially satirized societal views of progress in his novels and essays, but towards the end of his life, became interested in eastern religions (eventually becoming a mystic) and sought to reconnect with the cyclical and achieve transcendence.

Although Robbins wrote several decades after Huxley, his own social and philosophical climate was also tumultuous: the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Hippie Movement all provided differing views of progress. Robbins, like Huxley, rejected Christianity, believing that it has pulled man away from his natural roots. His involvement in war protests and mystical drug experimentation also aided in his anti-technology sentiments and desire to return to early connections with the cycles of the earth and eastern ideals. Robbins does not adhere to one philosophy of time or transcendence but seeks to combine the best of several in his quest to best time.

Time and Perception

In the midst of the crisis of progress (and Huxley's childhood), a revolutionary study by Albert Einstein revealed information about the nature of the universe that would transform the way that man thought about time. In 1905, Einstein published several scientific papers that introduced new or improved concepts related to the study of physics. One of them suggested that light is composed of both particles and waves, and another proved the existence of atoms. But arguably the one that set forth the idea of special relativity⁹ is the most significant to the study of time, for although the idea is actually very simple, the implications are numerous and complex.

⁹ Although Einstein is more famous for his theory of general relativity, which established gravity as the curvature of spacetime, the implications of this concept (black holes, tunnels, neutron stars, etc.) did not become evident until after the time of Huxley and also do not seem to directly affect the writings of Robbins—he does not include time travel in his works—so this study did not necessitate a detailed explanation of this concept.

Relativity essentially disproved the absolute nature of the universe, which allowed for a shift in time views from laws to individual perceptions.

The Principle of Relativity is that “[t]he laws of physics are the same in all uniformly moving reference frames” (Wolfson 82). This sounds simple enough, but it implies that the laws are not the same if reference frames are not moving uniformly. Einstein’s revelation came when he realized that “our concepts and laws of space and time can only claim validity insofar as they stand in clear relation to our experiences; and that experience could very well lead to the alteration of these concepts and laws” (qtd. in Strathern 54-5). Previous thought, established by Newton, held that the time and space were absolute, but the startling discovery made through Einstein’s theory is that time and space are not, in fact, absolute. For this proposal to be true, both space and time would have to be relative. Einstein explains this phenomenon and its implications as such:

Now we must bear carefully in mind that a mathematical description of this kind has no physical meaning unless we are quite clear as to what we understand by “time.” We have to take into account that all our judgments in which time plays a part are always judgments of simultaneous events. If, for instance, I say, “That the train arrives here at 7 o’clock,” I mean something like this: “The pointing of the small hand of my watch to 7 and the arrival of the train are simultaneous events.” (qtd. in Schleifer 153)

Thus, time is not really absolute: if someone else were standing at the same platform waiting for the same train, but when the train arrived his watch was pointing to 6:59 then he would say that the train did not arrive at 7. Special relativity, then, showed that time depends on frame of reference—two people at different points would perceive time differently.

Another interesting implication of special relativity is that time order may also depend on a reference frame. Richard Wolfston notes that “the relativity of simultaneity precludes...talking about a universal present instant that pervades the whole Universe” (140). Therefore, one must speak not of the present but of the present event, and the present event can only be measured by its relationship to other events. Wolfston explains, “The past of a given event consists of all those events that are capable of influencing the given event. Similarly, the future of the given event consists of all those events that the given event can influence...in a Universe in which simultaneity is relative, there’s simply no such thing as a universal past and a universal future” (140-1). Thus some event (A) may have occurred at a previous point in time but not be part of a certain event’s (B) past because that event (A) did not influence the present event (B). Wolfston gives a detailed example of how the discovery of a life form on Mars by a Rover cannot affect the coffee break of a NASA employee that happened five minutes later on Earth because it takes information 10 minutes to travel the distance between Earth and Mars. However, depending on one’s frame of reference the two events could be conceived to occur in a different order:

[A]n observer moving in the direction from Mars toward Earth will observe Earth time advanced relative to Mars time. That advancement will be 5 minutes—meaning that the two events will be simultaneous—if the observer happens to be moving at half the speed of light. Observers moving faster but in the same direction will judge the coffee break on Earth to occur before Rover’s discovery of Martian life. Observers moving slower but in the same direction will judge the Mars event to occur first, but by less than 5 minutes. (142)

Although most people never move at the speed of light, this theory suggests (at least) that time is not fixed, in order or general perception.

The realization of the relativity of time changed not only the thoughts of scientists but eventually those of the general population altering their perceptions of social reality.¹⁰ Halpern explains, “When Einstein’s theory of special relativity first appeared, it had an enormous, unprecedented effect on the general public. No other modern physical theory had captured the popular imagination in quite the same way” (105). Einstein the man was seen as a kind of celebrity, a genius who could solve the puzzles that held the keys to the universe. His clear style also made his ideas seem accessible and applicable to many facets of life. Halpern states, “In one sense, the statement that clocks would run differently for different observers tapped into a general feeling of openness and ‘social and psychological’ relativity. It was seen as confirming what many ‘knew’ to be the case: that one cannot judge others by one’s own standards.” He goes on to say that “Einstein’s work also lent itself to [the] philosophy of social freedom [rising from a break with Victorianism and the theories of Freud], since many interpreted the theory of relativity to be a document which promoted a principle of social relativism that everybody should be allowed to pursue his or her own goals” (105). In a sense, Einstein’s theory neither proved nor disproved the superiority of linear or cyclical time: time could still move in a line (or an arc) towards a specific point or continue to cycle. However, progress (or cycles) could no longer be held as a complete and absolute picture of time reality. If time is relative, then the measurement of reality is relative and, in a sense, anything is possible—no answer is absolute.

However, Einstein’s time theory did not really explain the disconnect between internal and external time. Even if time is relative to the observer, the difference between the time measurement of two observers is rarely very large, but one’s internal sense of time can significantly differ from another’s. For a student who hates math class that hour period can

¹⁰ Although the theory appeared in 1905, the concept did not achieve significant recognition outside the scientific community until 1919 after the solar eclipse—astrophysicist Arthur Eddington provided proof of the curvature of space-time, which effectively validated Einstein’s theory.

seem to go on for days, but for one that enjoys math, the same hour could feel like mere minutes. So which is reality—the internal feeling or the movement of the clock? Henri Bergson¹¹ seeks to resolve this conflict, presenting internal time and its connection to memory as the ultimate reality.

Bergson refutes the general conception of abstract time, believing that this conception confuses time with space. The “general conception of time is that of a medium in which our feelings, impression, emotions are arranged in the same kind of order that we find in space, that is, one after the other” (Church 6). Such a conception rings false to most people because at any moment a person can experience several impressions and emotions that do not necessarily happen in any order—a person who cries with joy can be said to experience sadness, relief, and joy at once. J. Solomon explains that “to postulate abstract time is to break up the continuous process which is the essence of reality into an infinite number of stationary parts each of which corresponds to or occurs in ‘a moment of time’” (20). Church notes that Bergson’s theory of time takes space out of the equation: “*Durée*, or duration, untouched by the conception of space, is a state in which we do not part the present from the past or from the future; ‘our ego lets itself *live*.’ We do not set up time in any order; rather all states melt into one” (6). Bergson explains that instead of succession, time is a state of “mutual penetration” (*Time* 101). Thus, as Church states, “As in a piece of music each note becomes part of and changes the entire composition, so each moment of time changes the whole” (7). So each moment affects every other moment, and as such all exist in the present—internal time is a kind of snowball effect, in which the present as

¹¹ Church notes that “[i]n general, Bergson’s influence on the contemporary writer has been to indicate for him a sense of time which was humanly meaningful in terms of man’s inmost existence, to free him from the artificial distinction of clock time as well as to show that the inner time of man is not a kind of inferior adjunct to a Christian, Hindu, or Buddhist eternity” (9).

it expands to include other presents becomes a larger and larger ball. Often, though, because of simultaneity of consciousness and event, man equates the two:

For instance, if the hand of the clock points to four and we observe this fact, what we observe is space. Our several states of consciousness at four o'clock are quite different. They penetrate one another. Because the fact of four o'clock and our states of consciousness are simultaneous, we are likely to believe that states of consciousness may be enumerated. Actually, however, in both cases there is interpenetration. By the time what we think 'four o'clock,' the clock no longer says four; furthermore, the flow of consciousness constantly moves, incorporating into it states from all of existence. (Church 7)

Bergson explains that "movements, compounded together, we confess, will never yield anything but movements; our consciousness, though incapable of coming into touch with them, yet by a mysterious process is said to translate them into sensations, which afterwards project themselves into space and come to overlie, we know not how, the movements they translate" (*Matter* 267). In essence, man's consciousness can make sense of successive events, but the process is not reversible—succession cannot make sense of consciousness.

Bergson believes that memory is the key to the mutual penetration of time and space in consciousness. In *Matter and Memory*, Bergson makes the distinction between two kinds of memory. The first kind is that of remembering a lesson learned in the past, which allows for present action. The second involves a kind of imagining of a past event. Within his concept of duration, the first kind of memory is not really memory at all because it involves a voluntary interpretation of actual memory: "On the contrary, a learnt recollection passes out of time in the measure that the lesson is better known; it becomes more and more impersonal, more and more

foreign to our past life. Repetition, therefore, in no sense effects the conversion of the first into the last; its office is merely to utilize more and more movements” (95). Solomon explains that Bergson thinks that “we should by a purely mental act, pure memory, place ourselves in thought in the past; out of this attitude there grow up . . . , nebulous at first but ever more distinct, images becoming constantly more and more like those of perception; but they must be felt to have their roots in the past, and that is why they are felt as past” (25). Such imaginations bring the past subsumed in the present up to the surface and thus testify to the fact that that past is never lost but exists in each moment. For Bergson the existence of man is one of “incessant becoming” (Solomon 15)—man is ever recreating himself in a kind of expansive process in which all consciousness is connected. Thus, time is not bound to a past, present, and future that moves forward linearly, for all of these elements exist at once, allowing for each individual to experience his own time.

For Huxley and Robbins this turn towards relative and inner time held considerable appeal—they saw flaws in each absolute system (cyclical and linear) and sought a means for individual transcendence. In Huxley’s *Time Must Have a Stop*, several of his characters discuss the importance of Einstein, and Robbins includes Einstein as a character in *Jitterbug Perfume*. Neither believed Einstein’s theories to be the complete answer to the oppressive hand of time, but each acknowledged his role in opening the door to new possibilities: Einstein’s discovery suggested the futility of man’s attempt to control time—if the universe is not absolute, then time cannot truly be measured as definitely as had been previously thought. Likewise, neither Huxley nor Robbins adopted all of the tenets of Bergson’s theory of time. Huxley did not ignore the existence of social time or disregard it as false, but believed that memories and dreams could be keys to individual transcendence. Likewise, Robbins advocated the use of drugs and other

substances to achieve dreamlike states that brought one closer to a state of timelessness. Bergson's conception moved away from the artificial time constructs of society and was more individually based, thus providing a starting point for transcendence—perception. In a sense, then, these perceptive views shift the conception of time back in the direction of God-time: they reveal the errors and destructiveness of man-made time and advocate an inward, spiritual search for freedom from time's control.

Section 2: Historical Overview of Time Measurement

Huxley and Robbins also revolt against the artificial nature that time measurement develops as man's philosophy of time develops during the expansion of civilization. For example, in his book *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*, Robbins depicts a time mechanism called the clockworks, which although based upon the movement of the heavens, enslaves the people that built it. The people seek to control time and history by winding the clock, but it ends up controlling them. In a sense, this image reflects the motives and results that drove man towards the construction of artificial time.

The history of time measurement, even more so than that of general time conceptions, presents a clear movement from natural, mythical time to artificial, social time (and man's self-inflicted imprisonment to time). The earliest known tools for time measurement were the natural cycles of the earth and celestial bodies. Man measured a day by the rising and setting of the sun, so depending upon the time of the year some days were longer than others. Longer periods of time could be calculated by the phases of the moon and the changing of seasons. According to Samuel A. Goudsmit and Robert Claiborne, many primitive agricultural peoples believed that the stars held the secrets of time and prosperity and often appointed one member of their society to observe the heavens and discover the ideal times for planting, when festivals should be held, and

gods appeased (56-7). In these civilizations time was important because it corresponded to the weather, and they needed to be prepared for heat or cold in order to survive. The average man did not concern himself (or need to) with the passing of minutes and the exact hour of the day, for his society demanded only that a day's work be accomplished.

As civilizations progressed and city-states emerged, the calendar was developed to answer the need for a more reliable and exact system of time measurement. Building cities and irrigation structures required the coordination of hundreds of men, and thousands now depended upon the food harvested nearby—without precise dates of planting and harvesting, everyone could starve. Market days and governmental functions also needed to be held consistently. Goudsmit and Claiborne note that the Egyptians were the first to assign 365 days to the year, dividing it into twelve months of thirty days each (and an extra five days tacked on to the end to bring the total to 365) (60). They also divided the day into twenty-four hours, but these hours were of unequal length because twilight and dusk were reckoned as hours and their length varied based upon the time of year (77). However, the rotation of the earth and its cycle around the sun do not exactly fit into man's neat measurements of time: by the time of Julius Caesar, the calendar was more than two months different from the seasons, and to rectify the situation Caesar declared 46 A.D. to have 445 days (Goudsmit and Claiborne 61). Only centuries later in 1582 did the calendar really come into working order with the edict of Pope Gregory XIII. By this time, though, the calendar was not so much measuring the year according to the seasons as marking off periods of social action to allow businesses and governments to work more easily.

Although the advent of the calendar did much to improve timekeeping and planning, the length of time measured was still too long to coordinate some activities, and another tool was needed. Even the Egyptian division of the day into 24 hours failed to bring any real solution

because the measurements were based upon the heavens and, therefore, inconsistent. So man began to make clocks that calculated time apart from the sun, moon, and stars. The first of these were water clocks or clepsydras, which measured time by the movement of water from one vessel to another. These water clocks were usually used in coordination with sun dials to mark of the length of the hour with the time of day. Goudsmit and Claiborne note that with the development of these clocks, “[c]lock time—measured time—was becoming part of the lives of ordinary people. Gradually, as the clepsydra became more familiar, so, too, did the notion of time as a thing in itself, as a flowing reality that could be measured independently of the heavens” (78). In the following centuries, as these devices were improved, time became more and more integral to man’s daily activities and yet more and more artificial.

This integration of measured time proved mostly beneficial to society and did not really change the pace of life until the early 1300s when the mechanical clock was invented and urbanization was on the rise. Le Goff explains that before the revolution of the mechanical clock days were still the primary measure of time and the pace of work more relaxed:

The unit of labor time in the medieval West was the day. At first, this meant the rural working day, which one finds reflected also in metrological terminology, for example, the *journal* (a French dialect word for the amount of land that can be plowed in one day...). Analogously, the urban working day was defined with reference to variable natural time, from sunrise until sunset, which was marked off in an approximate way by religious time, the *horae canonicae*, borrowed from Roman antiquity...On the whole, labor time was still the time of an economy dominated by agrarian rhythms, free of haste, careless of exactitude, unconcerned by productivity—and of a society created in the image of that economy, *sober* and

modest, without enormous appetites, undemanding, and incapable of quantitative efforts. (44)

In this environment, a day's work was not in question, and few could claim to have been overworked by their employers. However, the mechanical clock "made it possible for the hour to achieve its mathematical sense [, and] at the dawn of the preindustrial era, it replaced the day as the fundamental unit of labor time" (Le Goff 49). Work days began then to be measured in hours and production per hour, putting more pressure on workers to accomplish more—thus it became easier to view employees as machines rather than human beings. Of course, it would be an exaggeration to say that these changes happened overnight, but the mechanization of time nonetheless began to change the way man thought about life. Time became a thing, something that could be utilized or wasted, and the humanists of the era viewed the wasting of time as a kind of sin. As Le Goff so aptly phrases it, "Henceforth, the clock was to be the measure of all things" (52).

Although the advances of the Renaissance did much to alter man's conception of the nature of time, time measurement still largely reflected solar time for each locality; it was not until the developments of communication and travel of the industrial era that time became a purely social tool. Eviatar Zerubavel notes that "[t]he abolition of local time-reckoning practices and the introduction of supralocal standards of time mark a most significant point in the history of man's relation to time, namely, the transition from a naturally based manner of time reckoning to a socially based one" (19). Around 1780 with the introduction of the British mail coach service, communities could begin to communicate with each other on a much more immediate basis; however, this network required that a more reliable or standard time system be established. (Every city or town had its own time that did not necessarily coincide with neighboring

communities, which made the punctuality of mail delivery rather impossible even with the use of complex charts.) In an attempt to deal with this problem, as Zerubavel mentions, the mail carriers themselves began to carry watches that were set to a standard time: “Since the Royal Observatory in Greenwich was the most reliable observatory in Britain, every mail-coach guard was required to carry a timepiece indicating Greenwich Mean Time (GMT),¹² so that all clocks in various post offices on the coach’s route could be adjusted in accordance with it” (6). Before this development, punctuality was not really a concept and certainly not considered a virtue, and even with this advancement standard clock time did not take hold of the ordinary person: “It was railway transportation that, together with the rise of the factory, was primarily responsible for spreading the significance of punctuality and precise timekeeping among the general population” (Zerubavel 6). When passenger cars were developed around 1825, train schedules were very difficult to coordinate because everyone still operated on his own local time—even the complex timetables that converted local times to GMT failed to keep people from missing their trains and accidents from occurring. Eventually the major railroad companies began to use only GMT timetables, and according to Zerubavel, “many cities soon followed the railroad’s example, and by 1855, 98% of all public clocks in Britain were already set to GMT” (7). The situation in the United States was more difficult to resolve, though, because of the much greater land mass and the lack of a natural center. There clearly could not be one time for the entire country because solar time would be vastly different—the sun would be rising at 6:30 a.m. in New York, while in San Francisco it would remain dark for several more hours. Because of this discrepancy, the railway companies began to hold regular meetings to work out the standardization problem, and

¹² Mean time is the average of solar times for a certain area. For instance, to coordinate time for 5 degrees of longitude all of the times would be averaged together, and that number would become the time for the entire region.

in 1881,¹³ they voted to divide the nation into four standard time zones (approximately covering 15 degrees of longitude with times one hour apart and corresponding to GMT). Soon after the establishment of time zones in America, the International Meridian Conference (1884), which established many of the rules that govern the global division and measurement of time, was held in Washington D.C. Zerubavel notes a few of the major decisions as follows: the Greenwich Observatory was chosen as the prime meridian, the world was divided into 24 one-hour time zones, the day would begin at midnight, and the International Dateline (set at the 180th meridian) would mark the east-west boundary (13-16). He also observes that “practicality and convenience” (15) seemed to be the driving force of the conference: “What seems to have replaced nature as a temporal referencing anchor is the principle of rationality, long viewed as one of the key characteristics of modern civilization” (20). With the establishment of standard time zones, people from all over the world could now communicate and coordinate business much more easily, but time became almost a purely artificial social construct—one could travel a mile to a different town but upon crossing the time-zone line would almost magically gain an hour of time; the day began in the middle of the night; and proper time was even legislated and enforced by the government.

This shift in time measurement represented not just a step towards ease of travel and communication but a shift in power—employers and governments now believed that they had ultimate control, that nature had nothing to do with this new reality. Randall Stevenson explains that “[a] definitive, universal temporality had quickly enabled much more precise controls of time in the workplace, and firmer measures for its conversion into wages: increasingly time could be exactly commodified, and so simply equated with money” (“Greenwich Meanings”). At

¹³ The time zones were not officially legalized until 1918, but they were generally acknowledged and followed soon after the original decision.

this point, time really became money, and, especially in factories, men became commodities as well: as Frederick Winslow Taylor declared, “in the past the man has been first; in the future, the system must be first” (22). A literary example of this shift can be seen in Lawrence’s *Women in Love*—the protagonist embodies Taylor’s principle and Ford’s application of system over man:

He had to fight with Matter with the earth and the coal it enclosed. This was the sole idea, to turn upon the inanimate matter of the underground, and reduce it to his will. And for this fight with matter of the underground, one must have perfect instruments in perfect organisation, a mechanism so subtle and harmonious in its workings that it represents the single mind of man, and by its relentless repetition of given movement will accomplish a purpose irresistibly inhumanly. . . . As soon as Gerald entered the firm, the convulsion of death ran through the old system. . . . Terrible and inhuman were his examinations into every detail; there was no privacy he would spare, no old sentiment but he would turn it over. The old grey managers, the old grey clerks, the doddering old pensioners, he looked at them, and removed them as so much lumber. The whole concern seemed like a hospital of invalid employees. He had no emotional qualms. (259, 261)

The clock became the cruel task master of the factory, and man became his slave—all of his activities were regulated and validated by the clock. Man made this time for his convenience, but the price for the average man was great indeed:

With the modern. . . analysis of the work process (Taylorism),. . . rational mechanisation extends right into the worker’s ‘soul’. . . He is a mechanical part incorporated into a mechanical system. . . Marx puts it thus ‘Through the subordination of man to the machine the situation arises in which. . . time is

everything, man is nothing, he is at most the incarnation of time. . . Time sheds its qualitative, variable, flowing nature; it freezes into an exactly delimited, quantifiable continuum filled with quantifiable things (the reified, mechanically objectified ‘performance’ of the worker, wholly separated from his total human personality). (Lukács 88-90)

But the workers are not the only people robbed of their creativity and humanity—those that purchase the products being made, those that buy into the commodity culture created by those like Henry Ford are becoming subjugated by the things they desire. As A. A. Mendilow puts it, “It is the appetitiveness that makes Time so emphatic for us on the level of everyday life. The more we have or can get the more we want; the quicker we can get what we want, the more we become aware of change and movement (not necessarily synonymous with improvement or progress), that is, of Time” (73). This soul-sucking power of the new clock-time is the terror that Huxley and Robbins, like Lawrence, seek to defy and break free from in their novels—artifice has brought damnation instead of salvation. By subjugating himself to social time, man has caged himself into an even stricter confinement than his own mortality, and formed another barrier that will keep him from experiencing true freedom and a sense of timelessness. Therefore, when confronted with the reality that, as Theodore Roszak declares, “the clock is the archetypal machine in our society [and] to experience time in any other way becomes ‘mystical’ or ‘mad’” (228), Huxley and Robbins embrace the mystical in spite of their critics’ accusations of madness.

Chapter 2: The Cage Must Be Broken: Aldous Huxley's View of Time

But thought's the slave of life, and life's time's fool,

And time, that takes survey of all the world,

Must have a stop.

These lines from Shakespeare's *Henry IV* that Huxley restates in his novel *Time Must Have a Stop* (and which form the basis for the title of the work) summarize poetically both the problem facing modern society and, for Huxley, the solution to it. Thought, or the greater consciousness of man, is enslaved by time, which, although originally dictated by some greater power, has become driven by a manmade machine. Thus, since Huxley believed that "[t]here is no greater obstacle to God than time" (*Perennial* 189), man must break free from time—the clock, the archetypal machine of modern society, must be destroyed. For Huxley, the novel forms the hammer that is to smash this infernal time machine (and the worldview that it represents): in *Brave New World*, he first reveals the imprisoning nature of time and then dismantles it in *Eyeless in Gaza*, *Time Must Have a Stop*, and *The Genius and the Goddess*, which lead to his final timeless vision in *Island*.

The Cage of Time

One of the leading ideologies concerning time and history in modern Europe was that of progress, the belief that society would continue to get better until utopia was achieved. Huxley's own brother Julian, as Chad Walsh notes, advocated for this position (3). Huxley, however, denies the progressive ideology, believing that the means do not justify the end—that, in fact, the means of industrialization has made the end (utopia) impossible because technology dehumanizes man. In fact, in *Brave New World*, Huxley argues that industrialization has mechanized both linear and cyclical time, enslaving mankind.

In *Brave New World*, days and years are measured by the advent of Henry Ford instead of by the coming of Christ, which sets the automotive philosopher and subsequently his mechanical system as the highest power, as God. The year of the action of the novel is A.F. 632 instead of the twenty-sixth century, for “[t]he introduction of Our Ford’s first T-Model” has been “[c]hosen as the opening date of the new era” (52). In this new era, children and adults alike have replaced exclamations such as “Oh God” with “Oh Ford,” and instead of saying “in the year or time of our Lord,” the characters say in “Our Ford’s day” or “before the time of Our Ford.” Instead of making the sign of the cross in fitting with the Catholic tradition, those living in A.F. 632 make the sign of the T (as in Ford’s Model T). Ford’s major literary work, which is “a massive volume bound in limp leather-surrogate” that John Savage finds lying upon a table (218) has become the holy scripture of this civilization: Meckier astutely observes that this “copy of *My Life and Work*. . . is printed to resemble the Bible it supplants” (128). However, the mass production of human beings (up to fifteen thousand people can be produced from a single ovary) presents the most striking usurping of deity in *Brave New World*: as the director of hatcheries declares, “[t]he principle of mass production [is] at last applied to biology” (7). This process has taken the ultimate act of creation and placed it in the hands of man, or more accurately machines operated by man. The world no longer reflects the image of God but those images that man desires: Alpha, Beta, Delta, Gamma, and Epsilon. Originally, natural time or the cycles of the earth controlled biology, but here the cycles have been mechanized. In a sense, then, the setting of this novel represents a change that had already taken place in history—the replacement of natural or God-time, with manmade time.

The replacement of God with Ford also reveals that time in London of A.F. 632 is equated explicitly with mechanization—the normal cycles of life have become part of the

machine. The clock controls the lives of people: “In the four thousand rooms of the Centre the four thousand electric clocks simultaneously struck four. Discarnate voices called from the trumpet mouths. ‘Main Day-shift off duty. Second Day-shift take over. Main Day-shift of...’” (33-4). Men are, like cogs in a machine, sentenced in the name of social stability to endless repetition:

The machine turns, turns and must keep on turning—for ever. It is death if it stands still. A thousand millions scabbled the crust of the earth. The wheels began to turn. In a hundred and fifty years there were two thousand millions. Stop all the wheels. In a hundred and fifty weeks there are once more only a thousand millions; a thousand thousand thousand men and women have starved to death. Wheels must turn steadily, but cannot turn untended. There must be men to tend them, men as steady as the wheels upon their axles, sane men, obedient men, stable in contentment. (42)

Repetition characterizes the lives of Epsilons and Alphas alike, beginning at their earliest stages of feeding (“the blood-surrogate pump unceasingly turns eight hundred revolutions per minute” [44]) and of development through sleep teaching (“one hundred repetitions three nights a week for four years. . . [s]ixty-two thousand repetitions” [47]). Even in adulthood every day resembles the previous one—a person works for the same amount of time and fills the rest with a choice of four or five activities. As Peter Firchow notes, “Their roles in society are predestined, their thoughts are predestined, their leisure time activities are predestined, even the length of time during which their bodies will function is predestined” (108). However, this predestination comes not from God or nature, but from the clock, and the mechanization of time—and therefore reality—in this brave new world produces a civilization composed entirely of Ford’s ideal

person: “The ideal factory worker—Ford’s model for the perfect citizen—learns to perform the same chore again and again. He is a masterpiece of conditioned response” (Meckier 126).

Huxley, however, does not share the optimism of Ford—that regularity and mindless work free a man to enjoy other pursuits and bring him a kind of utopia.

For Huxley the means are the end, and mindless repetition leads to dehumanization and slavery, not the Fordian paradise. Lewis Mumford observes that “[i]ndeed scientific knowledge has not merely heightened the possibilities of life in the modern world, it has lowered its depths. When science is not touched by a sense of values it works—as it fairly consistently has worked during the past century—towards a complete dehumanization of the social order” (166). This shallowness characterizes the people of A.F. 632. People communicate almost entirely through clichés usually composed of rhyming phrases (a form of aural repetition) such as “a gramme is better than a damn” and “ending is better than mending,” and when confronted with the possibility of real communication, they do not know how to respond other than to avoid the situation. When Bernard wants to be alone with Lenina and have a conversation, she responds, “‘Talking? But what about?’ Walking and talking—that seemed a very odd way of spending an afternoon” (89). Citizens are, in fact, trained (through the indoctrination that “everyone belongs to everyone else”) to avoid intimacy because relationships can cause strong feelings of pleasure and pain. Their lives must always remain in constant machine-like motion or complete unconsciousness through *soma* in order to avoid the human activity of thinking:

Work, play—at sixty our powers and tastes are what they were at seventeen. Old men in the bad old days used to renounce, retire, take to religion, spend their time reading, thinking—*thinking!*. . . Now—such is progress—the old men work, the old men copulate, the old men have no time, no leisure from pleasure, not a

moment to sit down and think—or if ever by some unlucky chance such a crevice of time should yawn in the solid substance of their distractions, there is always *soma*. . . for a half-holiday. . . returning whence they find themselves on the other side of the crevice, safe on the solid ground of daily labour and distraction. (55-6)

Even the relative elimination of the ills of old age (“We preserve them from disease. We keep their internal secretions artificially balanced at a youthful equilibrium” [110-1]) does not make this world a paradise, for the mental and spiritual growth of humans is also stunted—“characters remain constant throughout a whole lifetime” (55). Indeed an important part of what separates man from the animals is his ability to not only think and reason, but to feel emotions and build meaningful connections with others. But in this world of machine-regulated reality, man has cut himself off from emotions and reason and has become more and more like a machine.

The mechanized and, subsequently, repetitive nature of time in this brave new world is essentially the end point of progress, for the goal of progress is a utopia in which perfection is achieved. Thus, Huxley collapses cyclical time within linear time, declaring them both to be mechanistic. Perfection implies a lack of change, and therefore, as Barry Leal notes, “time is frozen” (280). Of course, if the unchanging world is a desirable one or if a person is conditioned to be unable to conceive of anything else, then such a world is indeed a paradise. However, if one can imagine something more or feels anything lacking, then the world (one without hope of change) becomes a prison: Firchow explains that “[i]t is this unchanging, eternally stable condition of utopias that makes them at once so attractive and so terrible. Utopia satisfies simultaneously our longing for a perfect place and for stasis, and horrifies us because we realize that the ideal approximation of rest and stability is death” (84). This dilemma is, of course, why

books and history have been destroyed in this society, for pictures of the past would give an alternative to the present and disrupt the stability of the state.

Although most of the citizens of A.F. 632 London are unaware of their imprisonment and live their lives in blissful ignorance, a few characters seek to recapture their humanity and in doing so discover the cage-like nature of their static world. Those like Fanny and Henry Foster can live day after day, having different sexual partners and repeating the same activities with unmitigated happiness because they do not question their world, but Helmholtz Watson and John Savage cannot. When Helmholtz, a writer of propaganda, starts thinking for himself and is “just beginning to have something to write about... [feeling] that extra latent power” (182), the authorities reprimand and threaten him, and in the end he is forced to leave one prison for another. John’s dissatisfaction with society is even greater than Helmholtz’s, for as an outsider, he finds the mechanized civilization more horrifying than his cruel home on the reservation. He recognizes the lack of humanity and slavery that technology renders in this society: “But do you like being slaves? . . . Do you like being babies? . . . Don’t you want to be free and men? Don’t you even understand what manhood and freedom are?” (212-3). In the name of happiness, time and therefore life, has been made artificial, but John rejects this reality and claims the “right to be unhappy”: “I don’t want comfort. I want God, I want poetry, I want real danger, I want freedom, I want goodness. I want sin” (240). However, the Controller does not allow him his freedom, but forces him to stay in this limiting society, one which eventually leads John to choose death over slavery. For John and Helmholtz society has become a cage—manmade time has eliminated creativity, and the controllers of that time will not allow them to act outside of the social order.

In *Brave New World*, Huxley denounces the fulfillment promised by the linear and cyclical views of time, for progress necessitates an artificial rendering of time. For him, such a world does not allow freedom, but instead enforces slavery—man becomes a slave to his creation. Leal notes that “in the frozen stability of the twenty-sixth century, the dominance of the untranscended present is absolute, and many of the logical consequences of twentieth century attitudes are revealed” (280). Thus, Huxley sees the prominent view of time in his society as a cage, a prison that strips man of his humanity and reduces him to a mere animal. However, this imprisoning view of time is not restricted to Huxley’s most popular novel, but appears in *Eyeless in Gaza*, as well as *Time Must Have a Stop* and *The Genius and the Goddess*.

In *Eyeless in Gaza*, Huxley focuses his critique primarily on the linear concept of time and on how it enslaves individuals. The novel’s protagonist, Anthony Beavis, often discusses the ills of progress in daily conversation and through the numerous journal entries on, and explains that progress does nothing for individuals:

Progress may, perhaps, be perceived by historians; it can never be felt by those actually involved in the supposed advance. The young are born into the advancing circumstances, the old take them for granted within a few months or years.

Advances aren’t felt as advances. There is no gratitude—only irritation if, for any reason, the newly invented conveniences break down. Men don’t spend their time thanking God for cars; they only curse when the carburetor is choked. (2)

Anthony also notes that a progressive society urges citizens to sacrifice their rights for their conveniences (161), which affirms man’s natural laziness and desire for freedom from responsibility: “One item is the general belief, encouraged by mechanical and social efficiency, that progress is automatic and can be imposed from the outside. We, as individuals, need do

nothing about it. Liquidate undesirables, distribute enough money and good—all will be well. It is a reversion to magic, a pandering to man’s natural sloth” (386). This statement echoes those of John Savage that challenge the unthinking citizens of A.F. 632 to reclaim their manhood and freedom. Anthony observes the tendency toward mindless lives of convenience that so-called social progress brings: “One goes on believing in automatic progress because one *wants* to cherish this stupidity: it’s so consoling. Consoling because it puts the whole responsibility for everything you do or fail to do on somebody else or something other than yourself” (334). Essentially, for Anthony (and Huxley), progress, as it seeks to enable man to escape from nature, introduces a new kind of slavery: “The primal slavery is the slavery to the empty belly and the unpropitious season. Slavery to nature, in a word. The escape from nature is through social organization and technological invention . . . Abolish slavery to nature. Another form of slavery instantly arises. Slavery to institutions” (110). In this sense, modern man, in seeking to evade nature, natural time, has actually fenced himself into a smaller prison, one made up of social institutions which form the larger social structure. Leal observes that Anthony’s “reluctant conclusion is that man’s situation in time is such that he is bound to one servitude or another, and this is not just on a social level, but also in his personal life” (281). *Eyeless in Gaza*, then, seeks to show not only the overarching imprisoning nature of manmade time through its critique of progress, but also the limiting effects that social time has on individual lives.

In the novel, clock time often dictates the behaviors of certain characters, emphasizing the replacement of nature as the ruler of social interactions—“Time for its own sake. Always imperiously time, categorically time—time to look at one’s watch and see the time. . .” (20). During Anthony’s affair with the socialite Mary Amberley, she cuts off their passion because of the hands of the clock: “A clock struck, and immediately, from an upper floor, came the

approaching sound of shrill childish voices. Mrs. Amberley drew back and, laying a hand over his mouth, pushed him away from her. . . ‘It’s six. I do the fond mother at six’” (264). Likewise, Helen, Mary’s daughter and Anthony’s future lover, feels obligated to be engaged in certain activities at certain times of the day: “A clock struck. Nine, ten, eleven, twelve. Twelve! She felt guilty; then, defiantly decided that she would stay in bed for lunch” (268). However, the most poignant example of slavery to the clock is James Beavis (Anthony’s uncle), whose only concern at his sister-in-law’s funeral seems to be the timing of events and how much time he will lose in the attendance of the ritual. On the train to the funeral, while his brother and nephew seem to be in a state of shock and grief over the death of a loved one, James reads the paper and complains about the time: “His face twitching with exasperation Uncle James put down the *Times* and looked at his watch. ‘Two and a half minutes late,’ he said angrily” (20). Even when confronted with the beauty of the church tower, the site of the funeral, all he notices is that the clock is slow (21). Likewise, instead of focusing on memories or present grief, James, rather inhumanly, continues to check his watch as if it holds the secret of life: “James Beavis looked at his watch. In three minutes the hocus-pocus was timed to begin” (25). Even after the funeral, he seems obsessed with time, how much time will it take him to get where he needs to go: “At Waterloo Anthony and his father took a hansom. Uncle James preferred to walk. ‘I can get to the Club in eleven minutes,’ he told them. His hand went to his waistcoat pocket. He looked at his watch” (37). For Huxley, time had become its own entity, a controlling force that told men what to do and where to go.

However, submission to clock time does not stop the effects of natural time—death and aging are still very real. Beppo and John Beavis become increasingly wearied as they advance in age, James Beavis dies, and Mary Amberley deteriorates grotesquely—she tries to hold onto

youth but fails, making a fool of herself. As much as man tries through social progress and standardization, “death still remains” (280). Anthony’s friend Mark Staites notes that “[d]eath [is] the only thing that we haven’t succeeded in completely vulgarizing. . . Art, religion, heroism, love—we’ve left our visiting-card on all of them. But death—death remains out of reach” (280). Modern society has partially succeeded in distracting man from his impending doom, but death, his mortality still cages him in. In fact, “behind the smoke the enemy is more formidable. Death’s grown. . . [g]rown to be almost as large as it was when people seriously believed in hell. Because, if you’re a busy film-going, newspaper-reading, football-watching, chocolate-eating modern, then death *is* hell. Every time the smoke-screen thins out a bit, people catch a glimpse and are terrified” (281). Nature still wins in the end. Every man dies, but because of the socialization of time, man often dies before his heart stops beating.

Likewise, in *Time Must Have a Stop*, Huxley continues to denounce progress, but his focus in this novel is the lack of attention to the present that a progressive time concept requires. Sebastian’s uncle, Fred Poulshot embodies the mindless drone of progress. He spends his life avoiding thought and action, for “it [is] enough for him to just *be*” (47). Fred exists merely to act as a cog in the societal machine: “One who loved the routine of marriage and domestic life—carving mutton, begetting children—just as he loved the routine of being (what was it?) Secretary and Treasurer of the City and Far Eastern thingummy-bob. And in all that concerned these routines, he was the soul of probity and regularity” (47). Although Fred is imprisoned by routine, many of the characters enslave themselves to future hopes or fears. The protagonist of the novel, Sebastian Barnack (a poet converted to mysticism who is acknowledged to be Huxley’s mouthpiece), records the concept of slavery to the future in his journal:

[T]he only faith of a majority of twentieth-century Europeans and Americans is a faith in the Future—the bigger and better Future, which they *know* that Progress is going to produce for them, like rabbits out of a hat. For the sake of what their faith tells them about a Future time, which their reason assures them to be completely unknowable, they are prepared to sacrifice their only tangible possession, the Present . . . In politics we have so firm a faith in the manifestly unknowable future that we are prepared to sacrifice millions of lives to an opium smoker's dream of Utopia or world domination or perpetual security. (297-8)

Sebastian's father, John Barnack, exemplifies such a sacrifice of the present to the future. He spends his life pursuing and supporting idealistic causes that seek to better the future. In doing so, Barnack ignores all other present concerns like the well-being of his son, Sebastian, who lives with his aunt and uncle so that his father can devote himself entirely to work. His son always comes second to his work: "There was still money enough for political organizations and, he guessed, for exiled professors; but when it came to sending his own son to a decent school, to getting him a few decent suits and a dinner jacket—nothing doing" (38). Although Sebastian's desire for a new dinner jacket is a bit selfish, his father completely dismisses the notion, not because of the lack of money but because he wishes to use the money to further political causes. This denial of the present catches up with John Barnack, for at the end of the novel, he is old, bitter, and disillusioned. Sebastian describes his father, a "staunch idolater of future time," as becoming "the victim of what he worshipped": "The future and its problems had come to haunt him like a guilty conscience or a consuming passion" (305). Leal notes that "idolatries of future time perpetuate and reinforce the subjugation of life to time" (284). In this sense, focusing solely on the future enslaves man to time, keeping him from joy and enlightenment.

Huxley moves beyond these dangers of Progress in *The Genius and the Goddess* to the damning qualities of natural time—the second cage. The story, framed around the meeting and reminiscences of two old men, John Rivers and the first person narrator, begins with Rivers' critique of the nature of life: "Reality never makes sense. . . In the raw, existence is always one damned thing after another, and each of the damned things is simultaneously Thurber and Michelangelo, simultaneously Mickey Spillane and Maxwell and Thomas á Kempis. The criterion of reality is its intrinsic irrelevance" (9). Rivers understands that the contemporary view of time and history juxtaposes "the great" with the ordinary as time marches unceasingly on. Further on in the narrative, Katy Maarstens, watching her husband on his deathbed, explains the horror of time's passage: "It's the cutoffness that's so terrible. . . You sit there helplessly, watching the connections being broken, one after the other. The connection with people, the connection with language, the connection with the physical universe" (113). Rivers also contemplates death and time noting that "[t]hey were all moving toward the same consummation—toward the progressive cutting of the lines of communications, toward the slow, sure attrition of the sustaining threads, toward the final plunge, alone, into the emptiness" (115). At the same moment of these contemplations of death, the clock struck, "add[ing] gratuitously to a cosmic injury—a symbol of time's incessant passage, a reminder of the inevitable end" (115-6). In fact, the end of one person can haunt or even bring an end to another person, for when Katy dies, parts of others do as well. This acute awareness of death almost stops Rivers from continuing his life (he thinks about suicide) and renders Henry a mere "overwound clockwork monkey" incapable of real human interaction (166). These passages show the cage-like nature of time—man can live (roam) for awhile unhindered, but eventually he will hit a wall and be able to go no further.

Methods of Escape

However, Huxley does not set up time as an unbreakable cage (at least where social or manmade time is concerned), but experiments in his novels with different methods or strategies that might free man from time. Some novels are devoted to one strategy, while others employ several. It seems that Huxley does not see such combinations as conflicts of interest because his main goal is to rebel against and break down the Western capitalist industrial view of time that pervades modern society.

Memory

One of these methods that Huxley plays with is Bergson's concept of memory, particularly focusing on the mutual penetration of the past and present. Undoubtedly, Huxley employs Bergson in an attempt to strike at the artificiality of social or standardized time and its control over the individual. Society dictates that time is a continuous force that moves the same way for everyone, but Huxley demonstrates that time for an individual does not necessarily move chronologically. However, Huxley does not seem to believe that Bergson presents the ultimate answer to the problem of time, for although this version of individual time allows for an escape from mechanized slavery to time, it also brings pain.

In *Eyeless in Gaza*, Huxley arranges the structure of the novel according to the Bergsonian principle. The chapters are not organized in chronological order, but instead move sporadically from present to past and back again. The book begins in 1933 and ends in 1935 yet moves back to 1902 and various other times between. It is as if, as Anthony Beavis notes in his musings about memory, "[s]omewhere in the mind a lunatic shuffled a pack of snapshots and dealt them out at random, shuffled once more and dealt them out in a different order, again and again, indefinitely. There was no chronology. The idiot remembered no distinction between

before and after” (15). Church believes this shuffling to be the “time scheme behind the book” but also mentions that Huxley “does not achieve a sense of ubiquity like that in *Ulysses*” (111). The reason for this is that the chapters are dated so that one could theoretically put the chapters back in order. Though Church argues that Huxley “merely plays with the hands of the clock” (111-2), she seems to be missing the richness that is added to the story through the jumbled presentation. The novel begins on a day that proves to be significant in the lives of both Anthony and Helen—August 30, 1933. On this date, Anthony finds the box of pictures that is full of memories from his youth, and Helen breaks up with Anthony. These events connect the others in the novel, for without the pictures Anthony and Helen would not reminisce and Anthony would not become depressed enough to follow Mark to South America, where he meets Miller and finds his salvation. The moments of August 30 are crucial to the destinies of the major characters, and the audience is finding this significance at the same time that Anthony and Helen are. Huxley tells his tale in much the same way as one would remember pieces of his or her life in memories—not simply recollections of now unfamiliar events but “the emotion felt when the unfamiliar was still the familiar, when the absurd, being taken for granted, had nothing absurd about it” (1-2). This method of narration emphasizes that the past is still applicable, that it is actually part of the present.

Another way that the past becomes part of the present is through the sense of smell, which is often connected to memory. Scents particularly affect John Beavis, causing him to think of his late wife. In the cab on the way to her funeral, John associates the smell “of straw and leather” with the “year eighty-eight” and a mischievous handholding incident (21). At other times the smell of his wife’s perfume brings forth painful memories: “Maisie lying there, panting for breath, her face flushed with fever, dark with the horrible approach of asphyxiations, and

across it, like two weals, bluish and livid, the parted lips” (51). After more time has passed, John seeks to recover memory through scent, making the smelling of his wife’s clothes a kind of ritual: “He buried his face in the scented folds of her dresses, he spread out the lace and lawn that she had worn next to her skin” (132). Smells also produce physical responses that cause Helen to lose her nerve in the butcher’s shop and Anthony to go into a kind of panic in church. Interestingly these powerful scents are associated with their earliest memories included in the novel. It seems that Huxley includes these incidents to underscore the power that memory can have over an individual.

However, Huxley does not fully ascribe to Bergson’s notions—although memories keep the past alive and allow for an individual time perception, memories are not always beneficial. One of the first clues that Huxley does not completely support Bergson is that he is the favorite philosopher of Brian, a character whose ideas are often rejected by Anthony. Brian, a member of the Fabian Society, a socialist organization of which H.G. Wells was a short-time member, embodies many weaknesses that Anthony rejects, such as an interest in socialism, faith in Christianity, and irrepressible morals that keep him from intimacy with the woman he loves. Another reason to believe that Huxley, at least partially, rejects Bergson is that most of the inclusions of memories are painful.¹⁴ When the jackdaws cause Sebastian to remember a time when he went skating with his mother, he does not feel joy but sorrow as “tears came into his eyes again” (26). Likewise, when John Beavis seeks to remember his wife, he is met with pain, not happiness. In fact, many of the characters are haunted by their memories. These memories form a kind of personal hell, one that Anthony describes Helen as suffering from: “As though she were in hell. And in fact, he went on to think, she *was* there. The mind is its own place; she

¹⁴ Even though the memories are usually of painful events instead of good times it seems significant that Huxley would choose only to include bad memories—perhaps he is suggesting that the most powerful memories are usually negative.

carried her hell about with her” (2). Memories of her deranged and promiscuous mother and her own failed marriage torture Helen, while thoughts of Brian’s suicide taunt Anthony. In a sense they are living in the past, allowing previous events to ruin their present moments. Although, as mentioned before, Huxley does not advocate excessive focus on the future, he also rejects dwelling on the past even if it is a means of attaining individual time.

Nevertheless, the most convincing evidence that Huxley does not believe memory to be the best means of obtaining individual time is the expunging of memory in *Island*. In the novel, mynahs, tropical birds, constantly repeat the phrases “Attention” and “Here and now, boys” because they have been trained to do so. The function of these sayings is to call the hearer’s attention to the present because “that’s what you always forget” (10). Mary Sarojini also encourages a focus on the moment when she tells Will to repeat his bad experience over and over again. She does this to help Will purge his memory, to make it less controlling and painful and ultimately irrelevant: “Yes, what *was* all the fuss about? The snake hadn’t bitten him; he hadn’t broken his neck. And anyhow it had all happened yesterday. Today there were these butterflies, this bird that called one to attention, this strange child” (13). In this instance too, memories cause pain and distract one from present reality. It is also important to note that most critics generally acknowledge Huxley’s last novel, which depicts a truly utopian civilization, as the author’s final vision of reality: “*Island* represents Huxley’s final and maturest thoughts on the fate of humanity in the modern world, his *Summa Philosophica*, as George Woodcock calls it” (Beauchamp 59). Therefore, his treatment of memory in *Island* seems particularly relevant to his overall concept of time and its relation to memory.

Einstein and Relativity

Huxley also experiments with Einstein's persona and theory of relativity in his novels in another attempt to undermine the fixed social construct of time. It seems likely that Huxley, as a man of curiosity and extensive scientific knowledge, knew of Einstein especially since the scientist's fame had made him a household name, but David Bradshaw notes that J.W.N. Sullivan, a journalist who was among the first to write about general relativity in layman's terms, played an important role in the cultivation of Einstein's theories in the mind of Huxley. In 1924 Sullivan paid the Huxleys an extended visit in Florence, and around that same time wrote in an article that "[t]he universe which was to be explained in terms of little billiard balls and the law of the inverse square is now a universe where even mystics, to say nothing of poets and philosophers, have a right to exist" (353). Bradshaw goes on to state that Sullivan "through his writings and in person, impressed on Huxley the compatibility between the mystical-idealist bent of his own mind and the mind of the new physics" (368). Therefore, Huxley's inclusions of Einstein in his novels appear to be statements about the infinite nature of the universe and the inconsistencies of a finite view of time. Although Huxley critiques his Einsteinian characters for being too forward-looking, he seems to embrace relativity because framing individual time perception allows him at least partial escape from the cage of time.

In *Time Must Have a Stop*, Huxley uses the character Paul De Vries to invoke Einstein. De Vries is a young man who discusses Einstein and other recent scientific discoveries with Mrs. Gamble. He believes that no subject could be more exciting and that anyone can understand relativity: "Everyone ought to know something about Einstein. . . It's only the mathematical techniques that are difficult. The principle is simple—and after all it's the understanding of the principle that affects values and conduct" (86). De Vries goes on to say that the "revolution. . .

[is] [i]ncomparably more important than anything that had happened in Russia or Italy. For this was the revolution that had changed the whole course of scientific thinking, brought back idealism, integrated mind into the fabric of nature, put an end forever to the Victorians' nightmare universe of infinitesimal billiard balls" (87). Because Einstein is mentioned in such detail and, as Bradshaw mentions, Sullivan, "Huxley's first guru[,] re-emerge[s] as Paul De Vries in *Time Must Have a Stop*, a novel which is mainly set in the Florence of 1929" (367), Huxley seems to agree with his notions of relativity. However, whether Huxley takes these ideas seriously comes into question with Eustace Barnack's reaction to De Vries. Eustace mocks the scientific enthusiast and accuses him of putting his focus solely on the future. Although he is clearly not Huxley's ideal character in the novel, Eustace does offer some valuable insights such as the downfalls of Progress (131). Yet, as Hal Bridges rightly observes, Eustace is "an esthetic, cynical sensualist," and after Eustace dies, he "struggl[es] against repentance and union with the Clear Light of the Void" (349) and thus his opinions do not carry much weight. With only De Vries to support him, Einstein's theories do not stand in complete acceptance with Huxley.

In spite of this, the inclusions of séances and Eustace's consciousness after his death (especially in a novel that makes specific references to Einstein) point to an acknowledgement of relativity. In a finite universe, it is assumed that there exists a universal past, present, and future, but in an infinite universe that assumes relativity to an individual it is possible for reality to vary according to individual perception. Reality, then, is based in experience, and if something has been experienced, it can be true, real. Therefore, if Eustace experiences strange (to us) sensations after he is physically dead, then it can be said that there is a reality that exists outside of time. Huxley provides such a reality that does not adhere to limits of time and space:

All sound had died away, and it was quite dark. But in the void and the silence there was still a kind of knowledge, a faint awareness. Awareness not of a name or person, not of things present, not of memories of the past, not even of here or there—for there was no place, only an existence whose single dimension was this knowledge of being ownerless and without possessions and alone. The awareness knew only itself, and itself only as the absence of something else. Knowledge reached out into the absence that was its object. Reached out into the darkness, further and further. Reached out into the silence. Illimitably. There were no bounds. (138)

This boundlessness permits Eustace to have visions of the future (Mrs. Thwale after her marriage and a war that is presumably WWII [180]) and communicate through a medium to those who attended the séance. From the way that Huxley describes that séance, it seems clear that Eustace's new world, although poorly communicated to the living, is real: he gives Eustace's thoughts alongside the words of the living and presents the living as being at least partially aware of Eustace's presence. This world exists outside time and is knowable only through the perceptions of the observer, and thus fits with relativity. Although Einstein's theory does not seem to provide a final answer for the problem of time, it does open up a realm of possibility to an existence outside of time, which at least weakens the strength of an absolute social time.

Einstein's ideas also appear in *The Genius and the Goddess* although in more subtle form. Einstein's name never appears in the novel, but, in a sense, the framing plot relies on a discussion of relativity. The work opens with the first person narrator's visit to John Rivers, an old friend. Soon after his arrival notices a volume on a table titled *The Life of Henry Maartens*, which prompts him to ask a simple question, "And this is the official biography?" (10). Rivers

replies that it is “[t]he official fiction” (10) and that the reality was not “quite so simple” (11). He notes that the book is not necessarily inaccurate but not as complete as his memories: “No, it’s all true—so far as it goes. . . Maybe the total reality is always too undignified to be recorded, too senseless or too horrible to be left unfictionalized” (11). The majority of the book, then, is filled with Rivers’ account of Maartens, his perception of the man’s reality. The idea is not necessarily to prove the absoluteness of one view but to present another alternative to Maartens’ reality.

Furthermore, the character of Henry Maartens resembles the persona of Einstein. Like Einstein he is a renowned physicist, one whose name the narrator notes as being a “household word” (10). In resemblance to Einstein’s first wife who, as Strathern notes, left him because of his obsession with work and lack of concern for her (70-5), Henry’s first wife divorced him because “[s]he simply wasn’t strong enough to play the parts assigned to her—mistress to an indefatigable lover, business manager to an absentee halfwit, secretary to a man of genius, and womb, placenta and circulatory system to the psychological equivalent of a fetus” (54). Henry can also be considered quite absentminded and socially inept, “[a]n idiot where human relations were concerned, a prize ass in all the practical affairs of life” (57). His complete inability to take care of himself when his wife is away also mirrors Einstein’s lack of attention to his health and household in the midst of his work. However, Huxley does not in this comparison exalt Henry and hold him up as the ideal; instead Henry embodies the shortcomings of science—a man without the knowledge of selfless love, who is miserable in his egotism. He makes himself sick in order to bring his wife back from her dying mother’s side and only cares about her in relation to what she can do for him. Essentially, Henry is too much of a relativist—his own perception of reality has blinded him to the needs, if not the very existence, of others. Thus, reliance on relativity to escape from the cage of time proves insufficient.

Eastern and Mystical Practices

Although Huxley acknowledges certain of their ideas and their attempts to break through the confines of time, Bergson and Einstein, being among the foremost minds of the west, cannot offer him a complete answer to the problem of time. In Huxley's mind, the shortcoming of the ideas of these two men is precisely the overemphasis on the ideas themselves, on knowledge. For knowledge presents only part of the escape from the cage of time—experience is the other. Thus, Huxley turns his gaze to the east, for Eastern practices and thought open up a new world of possibilities that allow for an understanding of unity in diversity—man can be an individual and yet realize his place in a larger conception of reality.

From 1937 until his death in 1963, Huxley lived in the United States, writing about and practicing mysticism. Bridges notes that “Huxley approached mysticism mainly by the path of the Vedanta, the Indian religious philosophy that Swami Vivekananda brought to the United States in the 1890's” (341). He goes on to explain that most of the centers started by Vivekananda teach the Vedantic nondualism of Sankara and the Yoga of Patānjali, which combines some of the elements of Hinduism and Buddhism:

It conceives of the world of time and space as *māya*, lacking ultimate reality, and of the one God as being at once transcendent (*Brahman*) and immanent as the divine Self (*Atman*) within every man. It teaches that man's goal in life is to overcome desire, which binds him to a weary round of *karma*-fettered reincarnation, and to realize that his true, indwelling Self is one with God—“That thou art,” in the profoundly simple Vedic phrase (*Tat tvam asi*). The goal, then, is mystical experience; and for the Vedanist an important way of achieving it is yogic meditation, not the strenuous twists and bends of body-oriented hatha yoga,

but silent sitting with erect spine, with the thoughts flowing continuously to God.
(342)

With the Vedanta, an individual can achieve timelessness on earth through contemplation and yoga, and though the outside world of oppressive time constraints is not changed, the individual's outlook on it has, as well as his inner sense of reality. The focus of such practices is experience, as opposed to knowledge, for many know of eternity but have not experienced it and thus are trapped in time. In *Eyeless in Gaza*, *Time Must Have a Stop*, and *Island*, Huxley embraces these basic Vedantic conceptions as a means of individual time transcendence.

In *Eyeless in Gaza*, most of the mystical elements appear in the journal entries of Anthony that are interspersed throughout the novel and focus on experience above knowledge. In fact, the diary itself presents a form of contemplation, a practice to achieve unity with God. Anthony mentions in his first entry a remark of Dr. Miller's that "[r]eally and by nature every man's a unity; but you've artificially transformed the unity into a trinity. One clever man and two idiots—that's what you've made yourself. An admirable manipulator of ideas linked with a person who, so far as self-knowledge and feeling are concerned, is just a moron; and the pair of you associated with a half-witted body" (9). His goal, then, is to change his divided person into a unity that can only at that point be able to achieve unity with God and all things—"Unity of mankind, unity of all life, all being even. . . Unity even in diversity" (417). The change begins with getting to know the self (10), which will in turn lead to knowing the Self, the immanent nature of God in man. To do this, Anthony not only writes in his diary, but meditates. He meditates on the nature of God, focusing primarily on peace, love, and goodness. In one entry, Anthony describes a meditation on the phrase, "Force may subdue, but Love gains; and he who forgives first wins the laurel," in which he visualizes situations of force and love and ponders the

potential for goodness within every man (341-2). However, Anthony notes that meditation without proper attention to the body is not effective; a sense of awareness is needed, alertness to mundane activities like walking and eating (224). To aid with awareness of the body in daily activities, he practices a kind of yoga that Dr. Miller instructs him in, a yoga of life that begins with simple exercises in sitting in a chair and getting out of it to more advanced practices that can allow one to have enough control over the body to avoid psychological disorders. Huxley makes it clear that it is the Vedantic practices that allow one a new kind of freedom not just belief in a certain nature of God—the goal is not Nirvana or a future heaven but a timelessness on earth that affects every aspect of life.

Mystical practices open up for Anthony a new world that is no longer meaningless or enslaving. He knows the premise and goal of mysticism even in his school years, for he discusses union with the truth and the emphasis on being over knowing with Brian (83-5). However, this knowledge does not keep him from betraying his friend, having numerous meaningless affairs, and being rather miserable. It is only after Anthony meets Miller and is introduced to Vedantic practices that his life changes. By realizing that he is a part of the timeless God, Anthony can begin to live in eternity in the present. He becomes less self-centered and is motivated by a desire to love, which allows him to reconcile with Helen and gain the courage to lead others even in the face of death. These meditations and yogas allow Anthony to transcend himself and therefore transcend time as well, to focus on the present and break free from the past.

Likewise, in *Time Must Have a Stop* mysticism allows characters to transcend time and become more enlightened, and better, human beings. Throughout the novel, the protagonist Sebastian Barnack is a selfish, spoiled brat who never takes responsibility for his actions, and yet in the epilogue he emerges a transformed being, one who is mindful of others (particularly Susan

and his father). This conversion comes from his interaction with Bruno Rontini, a secondhand book seller and mystic. Although Bruno never meditates during the action of the novel, he does exhibit some of its desired effects, which suggests that he has transcended himself and found unity. He pays close attention to every activity. When he is pricing books he contemplates the Love and Liberation that the “L” in Lire stands for, and “[i]n spite of the impatient hooting, in spite of the clang and rumble of the traffic, the silence, for Bruno Rontini, was like a living crystal” (103). He blocks out distractions to focus on the meaning of the task at hand. Bruno also exhibits a profound compassion for others, even those who mock his beliefs: when his cynical cousin Eustace comes into his shop, Bruno asks about his health and seeks to help him, and likewise when Sebastian comes for help retrieving the painting, Bruno does so. Even after Sebastian’s betrayal and his time in jail, Bruno is joyful because of his participation in the “timeless and infinite presence” (286). His life has been transformed through a transcendence of the self, and he seeks to impart that wisdom to Sebastian, admonishing the young man to “sacrifice [his] self-will to make room for the knowledge of God” and to “[f]ind out how to become [his] inner not-self in God while remaining [his] outer self in the world” (288). At some point after Bruno’s death, Sebastian realizes these truths for himself and records many of the principles in his journal entries that appear at the end of the novel. For Huxley, the Vedanta offers not a hope in future escape from time in the afterlife, but a timelessness in the present, in one’s life on earth—a timelessness that changes a person by putting him in contact with ultimate reality.

Although the benefits of mysticism are clearly emphasized in these two earlier novels, Huxley’s last novel *Island* gives the most complete picture of the freedom from time that Indian mysticism brings. The setting of the novel is the island of Pala, a kind of isolated utopia based

upon Buddhist principles and practices: the Vedic phrase “*tat tvam asi*, ‘thou art That’ [forms] the heart of all [their] philosophy,” for they are Mahayanists, their “Buddhism is shot through with Tantra” (74). This Tantric Buddhism allows for liberation from time and self through various yogas or practiced attention to the moment: “If you’re a Tantrik, you don’t renounce the world or deny its value; you don’t try to escape into Nirvana apart from life. . . No, you accept the world, and you make use of everything you do, of everything that happens to you, of all the things you see and hear and taste and touch, as so many means to your liberation from the prison of yourself” (74). These practices encompass nearly every aspect of life—there is a yoga of work, which calls one to pay special attention to the sensations and meaning of the task at hand, a yoga of eating that requires one to chew the first mouthful of the meal until nothing is left and to “pay attention to the flavor of the food, to its consistency and temperature, to the pressures on your teeth and the feel of the muscles in your jaw” (202), the “yoga of love,” which involves special techniques that lead to heightened awareness during sex (75), and many others. Palanese children are taught these yogas in school and by their parents at home, so that they know the need for attention to the moment. Teachers and parents alike also educate Palanese children about the connectedness or union of man with nature, that “all living is relationship” (217). In schools biology and ecology are integrated into the curriculum at even the earliest levels, and in the home mothers expose their young children to all sorts of animals, explaining that they are good and should be respected. The Palanese also meditate on a daily basis, either in private or together in meditation rooms. In the rooms, pictures of landscapes form a springboard for thought because “[y]ou’re almost forced to submit to your immediate experience; you’re practically compelled to perform an act of self-knowing” (187), which is the first step towards

union with God and Nature. In a very real sense, then, this special brand of Buddhism forms the basis for an entire society and its every act of life.

Furthermore, these Buddhist practices provide the citizens of Pala with a kind of freedom and happiness that is virtually unknown to the outside world. Because self-actualization and not the accumulation of wealth is the goal of life, people on Pala are not slaves to industry or social time, working toward maximum efficiency, and thus can live more fulfilling lives: “You think first of getting the biggest possible output in the shortest possible time. We think first of human beings and their satisfactions. . . . If it’s a choice between mechanical efficiency and human satisfaction, we choose satisfaction” (151). Will Farnaby, an Englishman who was shipwrecked on the island, frequently notices the effects that transcendence has upon the Palanese: “Everybody looks so healthy. . . . And happy. . . . Even the women look happy” (182). In fact, none of the citizens of Pala seem bitter or discontent—even Mrs. Rao, a woman with “[n]o talents and no cleverness” who acknowledges that by outside standards she “ought to feel horribly inferior and depressed,” does not envy others or despise herself but is happy (189-90). Perhaps surprisingly, time has not disappeared on the island—people still follow the clock as a guide for social interactions and still die of old age—but what is absent is the anxiety that time brings to the Western world. The yogas that are practiced focus on “living and dying, so that you can be aware, even in the final agony, of who in fact, and in spite of everything, you really are” (245); therefore, when a person is dying, his loved ones help to remind him of the art of living and the purpose of life. Of course, sadness from the death of a loved one still exists, but the terror is gone, replaced by acceptance. The Palanese, through meditation and yoga, live in the Eternal Present having transcended the entrapment of the past and worries about the future. Thus, with his island utopia Huxley asserts that mysticism is a viable means of escape from the cage of time.

Hallucinogenic Drugs

Huxley does not stop with pure meditation and yoga in his quest for timelessness but couples them with psychedelic drugs, namely mescaline and LSD.¹⁵ In Huxley's personal life, though he ascribed to the mystical experiences described in *Perennial Philosophy* and several of his novels, he had not had personal experience with them, as Beauchamp notes, until his experiments with mescaline—"With mescaline [sic], he synthesized that experience, gaining for himself 'the immediate knowledge [that] unites the knower with that which is known'" (61). Huxley first took mescaline in 1953 under the guidance of Dr. Humphrey Osmond and continued to experiment until around the time of his death in 1963. In a letter to Osmond, Huxley describes an experience with mescaline as such:

There was little vision with my eyes closed. . . but much transfiguration of the outer world. . . for what came through the closed door was the realization—not the knowledge, for this wasn't verbal or abstract—but the direct, total awareness, from the inside, so to say, of Love as the primary and fundamental cosmic fact. . . (It was the same fact, evidently, as that which the Indians discover in the peyote ceremonies.) I *was* this fact; or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that this fact occupied the place where I had been. The result was that I did not, as in the first experiment, feel cut off from the human world. I was intensely aware of it, but from the standpoint of the living, primordial fact of Love. And the things which had entirely occupied my attention on that first occasion I now perceived to

¹⁵ Both mescaline and LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide) are hallucinogenic drugs that were most commonly used during Huxley's time to achieve a kind of mystical experience. G. Ray Jordan, Jr. explains that mescaline "appears naturally in the peyote plant [which plays an important part in a North American Indian sacrament] but can be synthetically produced. LSD is derived from a fungus which sometimes develops in rye. It is far less expensive to use and far more powerful than mescaline. Four to five thousand times as much mescaline as LSD is required to obtain similar effects in a subject. Generally speaking, the effects are very similar in similar subjects" (114).

be temptations—temptations to escape from the central reality into false, or at least imperfect and partial Nirvanas of beauty and mere knowledge. (*Letters* 679)

For Huxley, taking these drugs did not conflict with his Buddhist principles but enhanced (and sometimes allowed for even greater experience) their practice, for “in one way or another, *all* our experiences are chemically conditioned, and if we imagine that some of them are purely ‘spiritual,’ purely ‘intellectual,’ purely ‘aesthetic,’ it is merely because we have never troubled to investigate the internal chemical environment at the moment of their occurrence” (*Heaven and Hell* 73). Moreover, Huxley argues, “it is a matter of historical record that most contemplatives worked systematically to modify their body chemistry, with a view to creating the internal conditions favorable to spiritual insight” (*Heaven and Hell* 73). Huxley believed that, in fact, not taking advantage of the insights available through these drugs was wasteful, a squandering of resources.

Thus, as one would expect, these chemically enhanced mystical experiences play an important role in Huxley’s final vision—*Island*. On Pala the drug of choice is called *moksha*, which is a chemical taken from fungus or toadstools that are cultivated by the people specifically to aid in mystical experience (138). Beauchamp notes that this imaginary drug is presumably like LSD and that the name “[*m*]oksha is a Sanskrit word meaning liberation” (64). The Palanese call *moksha* “the reality revealer” and “the truth-and-beauty pill” because it allows them to “liberated from his bondage to the ego” (138-9). The use of this drug forms an important part of the culture on Pala: individuals take the *moksha*-medicine a few times a year to aid in their own journey toward self-actualization, and the drug is used to enhance special religious ceremonies. Thus, the Palanese are not addicts for the drug is not used for its own sake but for the end it helps one achieve—*moksha* acts in several ways that allow one to achieve timelessness.

One of the benefits both in general and in *Island* of psychedelics is an increased awareness of the outside world. Jordan describes an experience with LSD as being “more of the same, only more so,” that “there was an entirely new intensity or new dimension to everything.” He goes on to note that the subject experiences intensification of color and shape and profound significance in everything he sees during the trip, and although “[t]he intensity of color and objectivity of movement do not continue” after the drug wears off, “[w]hat does remain, if one chooses to attend to it, is a new sensitivity to all visual relationships” (116-7). This new level of awareness is experienced and explained by the people of Pala. When Dr. Robert McPhail describes his *moksha* experience that he shares with his dying wife, he says that she went through a “mental transformation” (142). He goes on to say that the medicine reveals important truths about “your own nature, about this strange world that you’ve got to live in, learn in, suffer in, and finally die in” (142). In the initiation ceremony, the *moksha* makes the Palanese youth more aware of the statue of Shiva, and in fact, makes them see it move, see the reality of the God in action: “Look at his image. . . Look at it with these new eyes that the *moksha*-medicine has given you. See how it breathes and pulses, how it grows out of brightness into brightness ever more intense. Dancing through time and out of time, dancing everlastingly and in the eternal now” (170). However, Will’s psychedelic experience more fully explores this new awareness. When he listens to Bach’s Fourth Brandenburg Concerto, a piece that he practically knew by heart, Will experiences it as if for the first time, understanding its essence: “Tonight, for the first time, his awareness of a piece of music was completely unobstructed. . . [it] was a pure datum. . . not merely an unowned Thing in Itself; it was also, in some impossible way, a Present Event with infinite duration” (274-5). He also sees or, rather, experiences ordinary objects like walls, tables, and bookcases as if they are “living process[es]” (278). But most significantly he gains new

insights into the essence of another human being, Susila: “Before his eyes the face, the whole body, underwent another change. . . All that power. . . all that admirable power, terrible will! You might have been Lucifer. But fortunately, providentially. . . The blessed gift of sensuality—it’s been your salvation” (289-90). Through this experience Will is able to take great strides in overcoming his cynical self and see the world in a new light—he sees the beauty that he had previously been denying. The *moksha* provides him with heightened awareness of the world which is one of the first steps toward individual time transcendence.

Furthermore, hallucinogenic drugs produce a sense of timelessness in their users. According to Jordan, “Perhaps most commonly, a brief duration of clock time seems to him [the subject] to have been a great duration. It is not that time drags; rather, so much seems to be going on and with such intensity that one thinks it must have taken hours or sometimes years to have happened, when by the clock it was only a few minute” (116). Clearly this manipulation of time plays nicely into Huxley’s overall scheme to break through the confines of clock time. Jordan also notes that “[c]losely associated with this time modification is an oft-present timelessness which is known immediately as reality and not as merely metaphor” (116), which, in fact, expresses Huxley’s belief in the reality of life and achievement of this reality through mystical experience. In the novel, an interesting reversal of this duration takes place during the initiation ceremony. The children who have taken the drug seem to experience everything as if it had only taken a short time; while Murugan (a boy who refuses to take the drug because of his mother’s brainwashing and his foreign education) perceives the ceremony as interminable, the faces of the other children are “mark[ed] [with] a listening serenity, the hardly perceptible, ecstatic smile that welcomes a sudden insight, a revelation of truth or beauty” (173). However, they are still experiencing a sense of timelessness, as Dr. Robert notes: “For a little while, thanks to the

moksha-medicine, you will know what it's like to be who in fact you are, what in fact you always have been. What a timeless bliss!" (173). Likewise, when Will takes the drug at the end of the novel, he experiences a sense of timelessness. For him "time had ceased to exist" as he is "at the heart of a timelessly present Event, of a Now that changed incessantly in dimension, not of seconds and minute, but of beauty, of significance, of intensity, of deepening mystery" (271). The clock continues ticking and the cock crows, but these have no meaning to Will—he is no longer bound by time "while in the depths of the great Event of light and sound timelessly unfolded" (276). His experience takes most of the night but does not seem that long to him. Through these scenes, Huxley attempts to narrate the timelessness that can be achieved through psychedelic drugs—even if it is only temporary, this feeling opens up a new world to individuals, one that can be embraced and change a person.

However, the most permanent and, therefore, significant effect of LSD is its alteration of the self, the opening up the subject to his place in the ultimate reality—"thou art That." Jordan lists four kinds of radical self-modifications that can occur from LSD intake, but the two that apply to Huxley's descriptions are the "realiz[ation] that quite literally everything is Self. . . both what is usually known as self and all that usually is not self (people, objects, sky, earth, etc.)" (117) and "a complete disappearance of self in any and every sense . . . reality (or Reality) simply being as it is," an achievement of a sense of beingness (118). Although these two experiences seem contradictory and mutually exclusive, they are not, and both relate specifically to the transcendent and immanent nature of the Buddhist God. During his *moksha* experience Will undergoes both of these transitions. When he becomes fully aware of the music, objects, and the other person in the room, he is really experiencing his connection with them, that they are all part of the same substance. This understanding is part of the reason that he is moved to

tears after he sees Susila for who she really is. Not surprisingly, though, most of the focus rests on his realization of Suchness, of union with God. Will describes the scene as “this experienced fact of being blissfully one with Oneness. . . *Its* presence was his absence. William Asquith Farnaby—ultimately and essentially there was no such person. Ultimately and essentially there was only luminous bliss, only a knowledgeless understanding, only a union with unity in a limitless, undifferentiated awareness” (271-2). Will’s experience with Reality not only brings him joy during the trip but afterwards as he sees “the Suchness of the world and his own being blazing away in the clear light that was also (how obviously now!) compassion” (294). The self-modification that was induced by the drug continues after its effects wane, for it merely opens one up to reality. Therefore, the drug helps him to live in a timeless present, which is Huxley’s solution to the problem of time.

For Huxley the sense of time that western industrial civilization has created is the enemy of mankind, namely because it subordinates the individual to a larger mechanism. In this progressive view of time, one man is merely a cog in the machine of history. Thus, throughout his later novels, Huxley points out the destruction that manmade time has brought and seeks to offer solutions to allow one to escape from its imprisoning nature. He looks first to some of the brightest minds of the West, for they promise conceptions that return the focus to the individual. However, finding these ideas unfulfilling, Huxley turns eastward, adopting aspects of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Tantra—with these concepts and practices, a man can begin to live with a sense of eternity his present life instead of hoping for peace after death. The reality of this life can only be experientially realized for some, Huxley argues, through the use of psychedelic drugs. Even though these drugs cannot bring one a permanent escape from time, the fact that they can open up the possibility of escape seems important to Huxley. Not surprisingly, this solution, which

defies many of the Western ideals that his audience clung to, was not embraced by any but a small population. Although many people likely still felt (as Robbins' work will testify to) the undesirable pressures of artificial time, its presence is so ingrained in western society, so intricately woven into nationalist ideals, that Eastern ideas (that inevitably challenged the foundations of society) could not be seen as viable solutions.

Chapter 3: The Gatekeeper Remains Intact: Tom Robbins' View of Time

It had long been Dr. Robbins' belief that the central problem facing the human race was time...

Or, more, precisely, civilized man's idea of time.

--Even Cowgirls Get the Blues

As this quotation suggests, time plays a leading role in the writings of Tom Robbins. Like Huxley, Robbins believes that time, particularly artificial time, is the enemy of mankind, for it imprisons him, keeping him from reaching his full potential—a state of self-awareness that leads to fulfillment. As Mark Siegel notes, “Robbins’s novels teach that man must step out of ego-bound time to gain a broader perspective on his relatedness to the universe. . . [, that] man may be able to rediscover some sense of his oneness with the universe—to learn that, in fact, there can be little difference between the universal and the personal in a liberated consciousness” (“Tom Robbins”). Thus, Huxley and Robbins have the same goal, and while Robbins has a more playful style, he is no less serious: in an interview with Russell Reising, Robbins says, “Wit and playfulness aren’t only serious, they’re a form of wisdom and a means of psychic survival” (469). In *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues* and *Jitterbug Perfume*, Robbins presents a view of time that is similar to Huxley’s, elaborating on the cage-like nature of time and presenting characters which use the ideas of memory and relativity, as well as the practices of mysticism and psychedelics as avenues to liberation.

The Cage of Time

Similarly to Huxley, Robbins attacks the progressive view of time that forms the crux of Western civilization. Those with a progressive view advocate unrestricted (or at least minimal restriction on the) building of cities and machines because they believe that manmade technology will bring greater order to the world. Robbins, as Siegel explains, “rejects the conventional

notion of technological progress” (“Tom Robbins”) and does not see civilization and the standardized time measurement that it has fostered as beneficial to the individual—but as imprisoning forces that cage in the human spirit. Thus, in *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*, Robbins sets up his critique of time by attacking the belief that technology leads to utopia; he points out the artificiality of life that cities foster and then connects that concept to time. In fact, in *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*, Robbins sets up civilization as a symbol of the progressive time and tyranny that needs to be dismantled, for “the notion of time is welded inseparably to the notion of progression” (192).

While Robbins does not create a society that is as extreme as *Brave New World* in this novel, he sets up the cities of South Richmond and New York as artificial bastions of progress, depicting them as harsh, disgusting places that promote the standardization of people. South Richmond, the protagonist’s (Sissy) home city, epitomizes the ills of industrialization: “South Richmond was a neighborhood of mouse holes, lace curtains, Sears catalogs, measles epidemics, baloney sandwiches. . . There have been cans of dog food more splendid than South Richmond. Land mines more tender. South Richmond was settled by a race of thin, bony-faced psychopaths” (16). The smell of tobacco taints everything in the city. The city exudes cheapness with its overabundance of mass produced products and lace as a cover up, and fosters meanness while it bravely puts on the face of progress. Even when Sissy returns to the city over a decade after she hitchhiked out of town as a teenager, though “signs of prosperity” such as new offices and shopping centers abound, her old neighborhood and childhood home are in shambles: “The Hankshaw residence had been boarded up clumsily, like a box hastily readied for some funky Houdini’s escape trick . . . Sagging linoleum. Peeling wallpaper. Dust doing its dust dance in the morning light” (278). The old has been pushed aside to make room for the bigger and better; a

front has been propped up to conceal the degeneration—much like the smiling faces that hide the corrupted souls of its citizens, for as the Chink (the novel’s ironically nicknamed, Japanese-American guru) says, “Technology shapes psyches as well as environments” (234).

The citizens of this rather unremarkable town subscribe to the notion and goal of normalcy, which is hardly more than an effort to standardize people. In Richmond, Sissy, a girl who born with abnormally large thumbs, is constantly ridiculed. Children in the neighborhood called her “Thumbelina” (12), her classmates refuse to allow her to participate in their activities like the “unchaperoned” junior high picnic (33), and when she is invited to a costume party, one boy provides entertainment by mocking her—“Betty’s boyfriend and the most popular guy in school, bounded through the door, amid shrieks of laughter, wearing giant papier-mâché thumbs. Ach! Billy had come as Sissy Hankshaw” (32). Adults do not escape this disdain for the extraordinary either. A local woman who takes pity on Sissy takes her to a “‘special dance’ where the girl would ‘feel comfortable’” (40), where “[t]he dance floor glistened with drool as over it limped, staggered, slid and dragged the crab toes and chicken heels of a score or more of splayed, spindly and rickety organisms” (41). The gesture clearly indicates that the woman believes that Sissy is not a real part of society and should be relegated to the outside, a place where she can fit in among other disabled people. Even Sissy’s parents see her as a freak: her earliest memory involves her father and uncle looking at her thumb, discussing her lack of future potential (11). They also take her to a doctor and a palm reader to find out what can be done about her appendages, and when nothing meaningful is discovered, Sissy’s father remarks that her thumbs are “a punishment of some sort. . . a judgment” (21). As Dr. Robbins says, “Normality is the Great Neurosis of civilization. It’s rare to discover someone who hasn’t been infected, to greater or lesser degree, by that neurosis” (242). The citizens of Richmond believe,

consciously or unconsciously, that standardization or this kind of artificial perfection should be applied to everything.

Furthermore, the citizens of Richmond, led by their progressive view, seek to cage Sissy in, to limit the thing that she was made to do. For a girl with thumbs like Sissy, hitchhiking seems like a natural pastime, but “one thing the citizens of South Richmond agreed upon was that it was not fit, proper or safe for a little girl to go around hitchhiking. . . Parents, teachers, neighbors, the family minister, older children, the cop on the beat tried to reason with her” (17). The discouragements fail to stop her; however, when she tries to flag down an ambulance with her enormous digits, the cops arrest her and hold her even though she is “underage” and “her crime difficult to classify” (38). A few weeks after her second arrest (for trying to hitch a fire engine), the county attorney tries to have Sissy sent to a reform school. In this city, this hub of civilization, Sissy feels trapped in the system, so she flees. Interestingly, Richmond is also the place where Sissy comes to have her thumbs operated on when she at last gives into the pressure to be normal, for she knows the citizens of the city would like nothing more than to make her normal. Thus, Robbins argues that civilization is a restricting force that inhibits individual expression and fullness of life.

Similarly, New York, although oft considered the cultural center of America, embodies the dirty cage of progress. Robbins describes the metropolis as a cesspool:

The weather: hot hokey puppy poopie with billows of industrial paranoia at 600 feet. Manhattan smells like the litter box for the Kitty of the World. It has twisted its body into the *dog-shit asna*. Close by but far away, in a world beyond odors, ghosts of the original inhabitants are laughing their feathers off, remembering how they stuck it to the white devils with this doomed piece of real estate for

some very chic beads and a box of Dutch Masters. The Big Apple, polished with Rockefeller spit and wiped on the pants of a multitude of Puerto Ricans, is ready for the chomps and nibbles of Friday-nighters everywhere. Junkies are stirring their warrens, pizzas are primping in their ovens, Wall Street is resting its bloody butthole and the Statue of Liberty wears a frown that won't quit . . . New York City. In progress. (72)

Here again civilization has wrought a place that rebels against nature and only thinly disguises despair. Even one of the blocks that “maintains some class” houses people behind “barred windows and triple-locked doors with chains á la mode” where they “are holding their own against the constant onslaught of soot, cockroaches and burglars” (72). The city itself essentially imprisons people as it progresses, as technology and time march on.

This prison has also created some unsightly characters, which have been stripped of nature and seek to extinguish the natural, the unique in others. One of these is the Countess, a socially deformed kind of she-male, who has money but none of the class and grace that usually comes with financial advantage. Everything about him is artificial: “Ashes from French cigarettes sifted onto the white linen suit that he wore daily without respect to the season; ashes sifted upon the month-old bloom in his lapel. His monocle was fly-specked, his ascot was steak-sauced, his dentures thought that they were castanets and the world was a fandango” (57) He “ha[s] a smile like the first scratch on a new car” (57), and, as Beverly Gross notes, “[t]he Countess is morally, spiritually, and psychologically sick. His attitude is anti-natural” (41). Not only is Countess himself against nature, but he works to remove the natural in others, particularly women. He creates and manufactures sprays and creams to mask the natural odor of women in an effort to remove part of their humanity and make them into sterilized playthings. The

Countess also seeks to normalize Sissy by using her as a model to promote his product, but always hides her hands so as to not distort the otherwise perfect image. The Countess uses Sissy as he pleases until she is no longer valuable (too many questions asked about the hidden hands) and then passes her off to an even more normalizing force—Julian, a friend and employee of the countess, who marries Sissy.

Civilization has robbed Julian of his identity and turned him into a kind of drone who follows the dictates of society. Julian's ancestry is Mohawk Indian, but in an effort to conform, he virtually denies his heritage, accepting the ideals doled out by educational institutions: "What do they do to you boys in those Ivy League schools, anyway? Strap you down and pump the Nature out of you? That's what they do alright. They can even press the last drop of Nature out of a Mohawk buck" (86). Julian, instead of cultivating the physical prowess of his ancestors, goes to school to be indoctrinated with the mind of the West; Gross notes that Julian's wheezing is a result of this denial, "the body's last faltering objection to the transformation of the primordial Indian into the overcivilized cosmopolite" (43). Julian is a socialite who bounces from one cocktail party to the next and makes his living painting natural scenes but never goes out into nature—his only contact with the natural world is through his pets. Like the Countess, Julian tries to confine Sissy and rid her of her natural gift of hitchhiking. After they are married, he tries to turn Sissy into a housewife and frowns upon any mention of hitching. Julian also buys her a miniature village for Christmas that "had been made by a young man who had had both arms amputated after a tricycle accident at age three" in order to encourage her to work to overcome her disability (167). Furthermore, he sends Sissy to a psychiatrist, Dr. Goldman, to have her straightened out. Essentially, Julian has been so infiltrated by the artificial character of

civilized life that he cannot appreciate anything or anyone who breaks out of this mold and as a kind of defense mechanism attempts to turn the other (Sissy) into the norm.

While Sissy is in New York, she feels trapped and depressed. She seems listless away from hitchhiking and away from nature: “Back in Manhattan . . . Sissy gazing over the primordial rim . . . of mixing bowls . . . dishpans . . . brandy snifters. Sissy listening to the lope of Tenth Street traffic. Sissy staring down the poodle” (171). She has also lost the peace that she has, in spite of her troubles, possessed for the majority of her life: “Sissy introspective, Sissy brooding, Sissy calm as ever except that now her lifelong serenity seemed thin and brittle and she gave people the disquieting impression that at any moment she might lunge away in and unexpected direction” (171). Sissy also begins to lose her physical vitality as she is caged in Julian’s apartment, “growing pale. Pale as a phantom tangled in lace curtains. Pale as Easter. Pale as the foam on a maniac’s lips. Even [her] thumbs are losing their cherry sanguine sheen” (261). Her life in New York is artificial—she cannot do what nature has intended for her and in a sense is losing sight of who she is.

Interestingly, Robbins refers to time as being artificial only during scenes set in a city, for artificial time dictates artificial life. Robbins opens his description of the filth of New York this way: “New York City. June 21, 1972. Eighty-thirty in the evening, according to the position of the two mechanical hands on an arbitrary dial” (71). By beginning his lengthy description of the ills of New York with a mention of the artificiality of time, Robbins is suggesting that the character of time played a role in shaping the character of the city. The unnaturalness of clock time is also noted when Sissy meets with Dr. Robbins (Dr. Goldman has passed her along to a fellow shrink): “[Dr. Robbins] thought of the arbitrary dial of a clock and how certain arbitrary numbers on that dial, such as nine and five and noon and midnight have been left dog-eared by

undue emphasis” (210). Dr. Robbins feels the control that social time has put upon him and believes that his life has been cheapened by this artificiality. Robbins argues, then, that life in these cities is artificial because of the artificiality of time that controls societal interactions.

Robbins also argues that clocks only have to do with societal perception of time, not time itself: “A book no more contains reality than a clock contains time. A book may measure so-called reality as a clock measures so-called time; a book may create an illusion of reality as a clock creates an illusion of time” (107). Such an illusion of time can be seen while Sissy and Julian wait at the hospital for the Countess’ surgery to finish: “Sissy and Julian stared at the clock, waiting for its minutes to chase its hours around—but it was a warm day and the minutes were walking. How many hours passed before the surgeon emerged from his operating room? Sissy and Julian didn’t know. The clock could not be believed” (268). This equation of time with societal mandate instead of individual experience again connects time with artificiality.

In *Jitterbug Perfume*, Robbins also rejects the notion of progress by portraying negative effects of civilization, namely its power to disconnect man from nature. The disappearance of Pan represents the most important example of this separation. Robbins’ Pan is meant to be the mythical god of literature and history—as W. R. Irwin notes, Pan is a “nature-god” who presides most often over fields and flocks but also over more other natural terrain, characterized by lust, great power, music, and often a gentility towards humans (161)—and thus retains many of his characteristics. Pan’s body is goat-like from the waist down and human above, and he plays reed pipes, seduces nymphs and maidens, and exudes a potent scent. When Pan discovers Alobar, the protagonist of the novel, sometime in the Middle Ages, he still possesses most of his powers, but his influence and appearance are diminishing: “Despite Pan’s bedraggled curls and matted wool, despite the drool on the goatee and manure in his hooves, he was by far the most impressive

being Alobar had ever met” (52). As Alobar leaves Pan, a nymph explains that “Pan is not well . . . It began with the rise of the cities” (55). As the years go by and civilization expands, Pan begins to weaken even more, and by 1664 he no longer can be seen by men, only vaguely sensed from his stench. This loss harms man, for “the need for Pan is still great in humanity” (166). Pan signifies man’s connection to nature, to cycles and natural time; therefore “[l]acking a direct relationship with Pan, modern Europeans were estranged from their flocks and their crops, from the natural world and, indeed, their own natural impulses” (185). Furthermore, this break from the natural and embrace of the artificial diminished man’s quality of life: “In losing you [Pan], they were losing their body wisdom, their mountain wisdom . . . They weren’t as much fun, anymore, the poor homers; they were straining so desperately for admission to paradise that they had forgotten that paradise had always been their address” (157). The expansion of civilization, and its movement toward artificial time, severs man’s understanding of nature.

Robbins also argues that this movement towards the artificial is detrimental to humanity. One of the characters, Marcel LeFever who is perfumer who lives in the twentieth century, comments about his company’s perfume *New Wave* providing another example of Robbins’ distaste for the artificial. Marcel is the nose, so to speak, behind the LeFever Corporation, which is developing a new fragrance to please the avant-garde consumers who have lost all interest in the natural—“a truly modern scent—sharp, hard-edged, assertive, unisexual, urbane, unromantic, nonmysterious, cool, light, elegant, and wholly synthetic” (76). Marcel, however, is displeased with the perfume because he senses “control, conformity, and domination” in its artificial character (76). He notes that “[t]here is a comfort in conformity, a security in control that is appealing. There is a thrill in domination, and we are all of us secretly attracted to violence” (76). Yet, Marcel loathes this conformity and desire for control, seeing them as confining and

diminishing to humanity. For him, perfume is the essence of life, and life, due to increasing industrialization, is becoming fake, a sham, a trap.

Robbins has argued so far that the natural is far superior to the artificial, that man's humanity somehow rests in his connection to nature. It is curious, then, that Robbins also critiques natural (cyclical) time in *Cowgirls* and even turns most of his attention in *Jitterbug Perfume* towards the dismantling of cyclical time—indeed many of the characters are on a quest for immortality. Perhaps a return to the natural provides the best method of escape from the first cage, but it still leaves one imprisoned in the second, larger cage.

In *Cowgirls*, Robbins uses the Chink and his followers to point out the ills of cyclical or natural time. The Chink, whom Gross considers to be the “author’s ideological mouthpiece” (48), believes that people are “victims of the disease of time” (202). Likewise, Dr. Robbins, disciple of the Chink, notes that man’s fear of death is likely the cause of much of human misery: “Most of the harm inflicted by man upon his environment, his fellows and himself is due to greed. Most of the greed (whether it be for power, property, attention or affection) is due to insecurity. Most of the insecurity is due to fear. And most of the fear is, at bottom, a fear of death. Given time all things are possible. But time may have a stop”¹⁶ (203). He goes on to say that, at the very least, time limits the human experience: “whether it is in danger of stopping and catching us with our pants down, or whether it runs on forever and demands that we busy ourselves preparing for the next station on the long ride, either way, time prevents us from living authentically” (204). In essence, the fear of death (an inevitable result of cyclical time) keeps people from really living how they want to, driving them to either piety or despair.

Robbins also notes that even those enlightened enough to escape from the cage of artificial progress are trapped by the cycles of the earth. The Clock People are the prime example

¹⁶ This wording is reminiscent of Huxley but implies Robbins’ belief in the multiplicity of meanings.

of such entrapment. They are a group of Indians, who having witnessed the Great San Francisco Earthquake and white man's reaction to it, moved to the hills (and lived in a cave system) to get away from the progressive trap. The Clock People practice a kind of "Life Religion" (187) formed around the clockworks, a time maker/measurer that is based upon the stars and the number thirteen—when the Babylonians "invented astrology, they willfully overlooked a major constellation, erroneously assigning the zodiac only twelve houses" (188). The main part of the clockworks consists of a huge hour glass filled with acorns that takes about thirteen hours to funnel, and every day a group of people travels through the tunnels of the cave to wind the clock. The other part of the clockworks is the pool of water which houses the hour glass and is filled with blind fish that can detect earthquakes hundreds of miles away. The Clock People believe that an earthquake will come one day and destroy the clockworks and initiate them into a state of timelessness, the "Eternity of Joy" (191). Although the clockworks is "their last icon of time-bound culture" (193) for they have eliminated all other "rules, schedules, and moral standards" (190), the Clock People are still enslaved by time. They cannot separate themselves from their ritual—they never leave the cave and never forget to check the time. In fact, "all Clock People deaths and births occur in the presence of the clockworks" (189)—they may be living outside of societal time, but time still governs their life cycles. The Chink, who lived with the Clock People for over twenty years, says that although he "loved those loony redskins" and "respected the quality of their dream," they are "[j]ust more suckers betting their share of the present on the future, banking every misery on a happy ending in history" (201). Robbins sees man's fear of death, fostered by cyclical time, as life's killjoy and seeks a time conception that transcends this problem.

Jitterbug Perfume offers an even more pointed attack on natural time by framing the narrative around the search for immortality. Alobar is one of the characters that recognizes time as an imprisoning force and seeks immortality. He rules over a kind of tribe or city-state in what would be considered northern Europe, where the Romans did not reach. In Alobar's kingdom, custom dictates that kings are put "to death at the first sign of old age" (19), but Alobar, who is still in prime physical condition except for a gray hair, does not wish to submit to this tradition, to be one of the "time-trapped kings" as he calls them (24). He rejects the notion of his people that death "is the business of the clan" (23), that his death will continue the life cycle of others, declaring that his "life is not merely a public phenomenon, it is a solitary adventure as well" (25). Alobar resents time and death because they limit his individuality and try to cage him in: "Death is impatient and thoughtless. It barges into your room when you are right in the middle of something, and it doesn't bother to wipe its boots. I have a new passion for being myself, and for being more than previously has been manifested for a single lifetime. I am determined to die at my own convenience" (56). Thus, Alobar, when his people discover his secret, fakes his own death and escapes into the woods to spend the rest of the novel trying to break free, to dodge "the swipe of the Reaper's sickle" (97).

Similarly, Kudra, a Hindu born in India, perceives the cyclical nature of time and her religion as restrictive entities that she must overcome. Even as a child, Kudra suspects that there is something imprisoning about her culture—after witnessing a woman run away from the funeral pyre, Kudra runs away "sobbing hysterically" (84) and for weeks afterwards is "troubled by nightmares" so violent that she keeps her whole house awake (88). The funeral pyre or Suttee is supposed to unite the wife with her dead husband in eternity, but Kudra does not see it that way—she cannot understand why a woman would seek to escape if joy truly awaited in the

afterlife. Years later, when her own husband dies, Kudra escapes her own death on the pyre, running away under the cover of night. When confronted by Alobar about her flight, Kudra initially claims that she was avoiding the corrupt priests who discussed the division of her jewelry and clings to her Hindu beliefs saying, “Death is release” (97), “I am certain to be reincarnated as a spider,” and “Now I shall probably have to endure a hundred more lifetimes before I reach nirvana and gain my final release” (98). However, after some prodding from Alobar, she admits that she does not want to die. Clearly, reincarnation does not hold that much sway for Kudra (or Robbins for that matter), for she continues to flee death by travelling with Alobar. Either consciously or unconsciously Kudra believes that time is a prison and spends her life trying to escape.

Robbins also uses Wiggs Dannyboy (the character, if any, that would be considered the author’s mouthpiece) to point out the ills of cyclical time. Wiggs, an anthropologist from Dublin and prophet of the sixties, believes that time has tainted his life: “he was dissatisfied. Anxious. Unhappy. It wasn’t prison . . . It was something else, something that had haunted him since boyhood, undermining his every triumph, dulling his ecstasies, amplifying his agonies, mocking his optimism, spitting in his ice cream. It was, he came gradually to realize, the specter of death” (281). He goes on to say that death often dictates how people live their lives: “a lot of what we do is done, subconsciously, indirectly, to avoid the thought of death, or to make ourselves so unexpendable through our accomplishments that death will hesitate to take us, or, when, the scimitar finally falls, to insure that we ‘live on’ in the memory of the lucky ones still kicking” (282). Furthermore, Wiggs believes that this imprisoning force of time is cyclical: “We’ve got ourselves stuck in a cyclical system that makes true freedom, true growth impossible . . . Cycles take the meaning out o’ life as they do in art” (321-2). Like Alobar and Kudra, Wiggs resists the

confining nature of time and dedicates his life to “the eradication o’ death” (283) by establishing the Last Laugh Foundation (an immortality clinic).

Methods of Escape

However, Robbins (like Huxley) does not view time as an impenetrable fortress from which man, try though he might, can never break free. In *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues* and *Jitterbug Perfume*, Robbins employs many of the same strategies that Huxley does in his novels, attempting to provide some means of escaping (or even destroying) societal and natural time. Both of these novels mix the methods together to provide options, for unlike Huxley, Robbins believes in multiple solutions—each individual must find his or her own path. Nevertheless, both novelists revolt against the “civilized man’s” view of time—progress.

Memory

Although the philosopher’s ideas are probably not as fresh in his mind as they were in Huxley’s, Robbins also experiments with Bergson’s concept of memory as a means of overcoming standardized societal time. For him, the extremely personal and individual nature of memory is attractive—hardly anything short of brainwashing can standardize this aspect of the individual consciousness. Memory also brings the past into the present; in fact, that memory (previous event or emotion) becomes part of the individual’s present. Time, then, does not necessarily move chronologically or linearly.

In *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*, Robbins takes advantage of memory’s ability to undermine chronology, setting up the narrative as a product of memory. The narrator-author, whose identity is revealed only at the end of the novel, is Dr. Robbins, Sissy’s psychiatrist (and lover?): “And out on the Siwash Trail . . . comes stumbling, crashing, falling, cursing, and sniggering, Dr. Robbins, your author. Having gathered all of the material for this book, Dr.

Robbins waits not even for the light of day, but plunges, mustache first, into dangerous Dakota darkness to reach Siwash Cave” (364). This revelation indicates that, because Dr. Robbins is both a character in and author of the story, he relates the tale guided by his memory. As such, the events of the novel are not all related in chronological order. The first few chapters provide various hints and overviews of events to come later, almost as if they were fleeting memories passing through Dr. Robbins’ consciousness before he begins his tale: “It was thumbs that brought her to the clockworks, took her away, and brought her back. Of course, it may be a disservice to her, as well as the Rubber Rose, to emphasize the clockworks—but the clockworks is fresh in the author’s mind right now” (8). Various “Cowgirl Interludes” also break up the chronology of the story, appearing in Parts I and II, which relate Sissy’s time in Richmond and New York—before she ever went to the Rubber Rose Ranch where the events of the interludes take place. These events described in the interludes, as the author notes, actually occur after Sissy had come and gone from the ranch (107). So, in the narrator’s mind the events at the cowgirl ranch, although occurring at a later time in Sissy’s life, are integrally related to her history—her story does not come in a straight line. To add another layer of ambivalence to time in the novel, Robbins relates Sissy’s first meeting with the Chink through her memory—Part I ends with Sissy headed toward Siwash Cave but Part II starts with Sissy back in New York, where she proceeds to tell Dr. Robbins about the Chink during their sessions together. Moreover, most the chapters of the novel are very short,¹⁷ which gives the book an episodic or snapshot feel, reminiscent of Anthony’s idea of memory in Huxley’s *Eyeless in Gaza*. In an interview with Matteo Vignali, Robbins comments on his use of short chapters in his novels: “I think that’s the way our lives are constructed, so I think it’s more realistic to write that way, in that our everyday

¹⁷ There are 121 chapters in this 365 page book.

lives are a series of episodes rather than a continuous linear progression” (177). By using memory as a tool, Robbins creates a novel that defies many conventional notions of time.

Smell also plays a key role in Robbins conception of memory. When Robbins describes Richmond and New York, he associates them with different smells—tobacco in Richmond and kitty litter in New York. In fact, the smell of tobacco is integrally connected with Sissy’s memory of her hometown: even though there is only one tobacco plant still operating when she returns, “a golden effluvium still toasted the air of South Richmond. At least, it seemed so to Sissy. Maybe it was merely memory speaking into her nostrils” (278). Thus, smell has the power to evoke things of the past and even make them seem like part of the present. This connection with the past seems to be one of the things that the Countess seeks to destroy with his feminine hygiene sprays and lotions. The female scent, in a sense, connects her with her ancestors—ancestors who were strong women, masters of their own destiny, woosers of nature. So, when the cowgirls revolt against the Countess by taking off their pants and marching toward him (160-1), they are using smell to evoke the memory of the past and claim that power in the present. Memory, in part, bridges the gap between past and present and in so doing disrupts societal time.

In *Jitterbug Perfume*, Robbins emphasizes memory’s link to scent even more strongly. In his speech at the perfumers’ convention, Marcel LeFever explains the importance of smell: “of our five senses, the one most directly connected to memory is the sense of smell . . . Memories associated with scent are invariably more immediate and more vivid than those associated solely with visual imagery or sound . . . Fragrance is a conduit for our earliest memories (256-7). He goes on to note that scent may also connect to the future: “it may accompany us as we enter the next life . . . It is our strongest link to the past, our closest fellow traveler to the future. Prehistory, history, and the afterworld, all are its domain. Fragrance may well be the signature of

eternity” (257). This eternal aspect of smell pervades the novel and connects people across the reaches of time and space. When Alobar and Kudra are in Paris and resolve to try to dematerialize and rematerialize into the New World, they believe that scent will unite them: “Suppose, just suppose, that we should become separated in our—our journeys into the Other Side. If we were marked by a unique scent, a fragrance all our own, we could always identify each other” (204). After Kudra dematerializes, Alobar (for he turned back at the last moment) seeks to call to her, to reach her in the beyond with the smell of K23, the perfume that the couple was developing. He believes that, in a sense, perfume may be able to transcend time. This perfume may not have been able to summon back Kudra in the way that Alobar was hoping, but it does bring together characters from different parts of the world (Paris, Seattle, New Orleans, and wherever Alobar is from), which in turn leads Alobar back to the rematerialized Kudra at the end of the novel. However, scent does successfully bring Huxley Anne (Wiggs Dannyboy’s daughter) back from her coma: “Marcel left an open bottle of her favorite scent by her bed. To call her back . . . The physicians had no explanation of their own, however, so Marcel was prepared to attribute the miraculous recovery to fragrance, or, rather, and interaction between the powers of fragrance and the powers of the human spirit” (342-3). In fact, the timeless quality of the perfume seems to be evident from the first few pages—Madame Devalier is in her shop working on distilling the jasmine (a vital component of the perfume) and declares, “I have lost all sense of time,” because of the “boof”¹⁸ (7). Thus, for Robbins, memory’s ability to connect one to something beyond and its power to allow an individual to break from standardized time makes it a viable option, a vehicle perhaps, for one to transcend time.

¹⁸ “Boof” is a name that the character gives to a perfume compound.

Einstein and Relativity

Einstein and his theory of relativity provide Robbins with another way to break free of societal time (and another link to Huxley), for relativity stresses, in part, the role that individual perception plays in time conception. As Robert Nadeau points out, Robbins has a great deal of knowledge about physics, for his “fiction reveals a serious effort to evaluate the impact of ideas from contemporary physics upon the moral and intellectual foundations of western values” (63). Needless to say, many of these ideas of contemporary physics find their roots in Einstein’s theories. Therefore, it is not surprising to that Robbins integrates Einstein and his most famous theory into his novels.

In *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*, Robbins (or Dr. Robbins?) mentions Einstein several times as he narrates his tale. Sometimes Robbins mentions Einstein’s name just in passing or to provide an example for his statement on the limitations of genius: “Einstein never could remember to take the biscuits out of the oven” (123). At other times his name appears in association with a person who is started to think critically about life: “The other was an old friend of Debbie’s . . . who’d started reading the complete works of Albert Einstein and was learning to think (not reason, but think)” (354). However, Robbins also employs several paragraphs about the famed physicist as a transition from a Cowgirl Interlude back to Sissy’s life in New York—perhaps further emphasizing relativity and individual perception because of the proximity to the disrupting influence of memory: “If you could buckle your Bugs Bunny wristwatch to a ray light, your watch would continue ticking but its hands wouldn’t move. That’s because at the speed of light there is no time. Time is relative to velocity. At high speeds, time is literally stretched to its absolute and becomes static. Albert Einstein figured that one out” (90-1). Robbins goes on to say, “Einstein knew a lot about space—he determined, for example, that

beyond the expanding volume of the universal space ceases to exist, and so we have *no space* to contend with as well as *no time*” (91). Although some of these allusions are seemingly offhand, they are still significant, for they are part of the narrator’s musings on time that pervade the novel.

However, Robbins’ most powerful statements about relativity’s role in time transcendence come through Sissy’s hitchhiking. In fact, for Sissy, hitchhiking provides a kind of escape from time because of its relation to motion: “Time in terms of m.p.h. no longer interested me. I began to hitchhike in something akin to geological time: slow, ancient, vast . . . I removed the freeway from its temporal context . . . Without destination, without cessation, my run was often silent and empty; there were no increments, no arbitrary graduations reducing time to functional units. I abstracted and purified” (47). This perpetual motion teaches Sissy that an individual can alter time and reality: “Einstein had observed motion and learned that space and time are relative; Sissy had committed herself to motion and learned that one could alter reality by one’s perception of it—and it was a discovery, perhaps no less a one than Einstein’s” (71). Altering reality can, thus, give one freedom from time—Robbins calls this idea “the Great Secret” (72). Sissy also alludes to Einstein and the relativity of time and direction when she replies to Julian’s critique of her directionless hitching: “What is the ‘direction’ of the Earth in its journey; where are the atoms ‘going’ when they spin?” (80). Robbins is suggesting here that time does not necessarily have a direction. Thus, modern society’s idea that time has a direction is wrong, and an individual who recognizes this can change his or her relation to time.

In *Jitterbug Perfume*, Robbins goes one step further than Huxley, whose novel *The Genius and the Goddess* centers around an Einstein-like character, and inserts Einstein into the novel as a character. Robbins’ Einstein more than just bears the name of the famous scientist—

he works as a professor at Princeton and has an appropriately messy office: “not just a common two-plus-two-equals four mess. Einstein’s office was a genius equation mess . . . In amongst the piles of paper were strewn orange peels, banana skins, Dixie cups, chalk sticks, pencil nubs, sweater lint, violin strings, and drifts of cigar ash” (268). Alobar (who is still alive in the 1950s and working as a janitor at Princeton to monitor and disrupt the longevity research) actually has “some fine discussions” with Einstein about his most famous theories and “many more wonderful things than relativity” (269). In fact, Einstein is one of the few male friends that Alobar has had throughout the many centuries of his life: “They never went bowling together or guzzled beer in a bar, but Einstein had lent him money, as a true friend will do, and they’d had some wonderful talks. If you and another guy know things about each other that nobody else knows, and you keep those things confidential, then you and the guy must be pals” (265). This friendship seems to be significant, for Alobar is the novel’s protagonist and the character with the strongest desire for (and most success in finding) immortality. Thus, Robbins seems to be suggesting that Einstein and the defeat of time, if not integrally connected, are at least compatible.

Eastern and Mystical Practices

Robbins also explores eastern ideas and practices as possible means of escaping from the cage of time. Eastern religions focus on mystical experience, which can often be attained through certain daily practices, and this emphasis on experience over mere knowledge seems attractive to Robbins, as it did to Huxley. Robbins, like Huxley, places great value on the individual, and yet believes that the individual is connected to the rest of the universe. However, Robbins does not reject the Western ideas of Bergson and Einstein in order to embrace those from the East, for he believes in multiple paths to transcendence.

Although there is no mystical conversion experience to speak of, Robbins does openly acknowledge his that Eastern thought has influenced his life and work. Robbins, who, as Munat and Vignali note, has an M.A. in Far Eastern Studies (168), explains that the “underpinnings of [his] literary aesthetic are not anchored in Western tradition” (Reising 468)—instead they are rooted in Asia and include “the universe’s predilection for paradox and novelty,” the concept of “ego dissolution,” the need for “romancing the Tao,” “the flux and elasticity and transmutability of reality,” and “nonspecific ecstasy” (Reising 469). Moreover, Robbins states that he “think[s] that the secret of the universe is that everything is connected” (Munat and Vignali 170). These ideas, as Robbins explains to Vignali, are a mixture of the philosophical systems of Zen, Tantra, Taoism, and Sufi (172). While Robbins himself does not practice meditation or yoga (at least not according to any sources or his own admissions), he acknowledges the benefits of such practices through inclusion of them in his novels.

In *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*, for instance, Debbie, one of the cowgirls, embraces Buddhism as her path to enlightenment. Her reading material consists of “*The Way of Zen*” (60), and she often spouts Zen proverbs like “At the end of the endless game, there is friendship” (106). Debbie practices yoga and teaches a class to ranch visitors (against the wishes of the tyrannical and narrow-minded Miss Adrian) on “kundalini yoga” which involves “trying to mentally force a serpent of fire to crawl up your spinal column” (118-9). The Buddhist cowgirl also eats and prepares meals based upon a diet plan a Himalayan cookbook (119). She believes that these practices aid in the achievement of a state of calm reflection, which is the mark of the wise: “The highest men are calm, silent, and unknown . . . The true masters seldom reveal themselves, except in the vibrations they leave behind, and upon which the lesser gurus build their doctrines” (143). Thus, like any good Buddhist, Debbie does not advocate violence,

refusing to take part in the slaughter of the cattle or pick up a gun to fight against the Countess or the FBI. Debbie, being part of the cowgirl gang, takes a stand against societal conventions and finds peace through these eastern practices.

However, the Eastern concept that receives the most attention in the novel is the Tibetan concept of “crazy wisdom.” According to Robbins, Tibetan Crazy Wisdom is “the wisdom of taking risks and living free, of inspired playfulness, of . . . mocking the stupidities of society” (qtd. in Mudat and Vignali 168). The Chink embodies these qualities. He spends his life pursuing freedom engaging in such practices as “jijitsu, ikebana, Sanskrit mushroom magic and Zen archery” (181) and physically escaping from a Japanese detainment camp. When the religion of the Clock People becomes too restrictive, the Chink leaves them for his own cave. The Chink is also rude and playful—he chases away would-be disciples by “shakin’ his dick” (143) at them, he laughs frequently (“Ha ha ho ho and hee hee”), dances to polka music and even the news (217), and seduces Sissy by caressing her thumbs. In fact, freedom for the Chink means “the freedom to play freely in the universe” (227). He points out the ills of civilization and religion, and declares, “There are no group solutions! Each individual must work it out for himself” (227). This seemingly ridiculous character is the picture of wisdom in the novel, for he knows who he is and his position in the universe. Robbins scatters pieces of the Chink’s beliefs throughout the book, and sets him up as an example to the other characters. Through their exposure to the Chink both Sissy and Dr. Robbins are liberated from the constraints of society—after her exposure to Chink, Sissy realizes that Julian is not right for her, and Dr. Robbins leaves his practice of normalization (psychiatry) to devote himself to finding meaning in his life. Robbins’ depiction of the Chink, then, certainly gives credence to the idea of an Eastern lifestyle as a means of transcendence.

However, in *Jitterbug Perfume*, Eastern practices (a combination of Buddhism, Taoism, and Tantra) actually allow one to defy natural time. A few years after Alobar's escape from death at the hands of his tribe, he travels to a lamasery in the Himalayas, where he lives as a student and laborer. Here he learns meditation techniques and the dogma of Buddhism that help him achieve peace: "The architecture, the painting, the sculpture, the music and liturgy and refined garments, but most of all, I think, the meditation, the hours each day of sitting silent and motionless, these things have smoothed my frayed edges and left me floating through life like a toad bladder in a mountain stream" (104). Alobar also notes that during his time at Samye he lived in a state of "heightened awareness" (108). Although Alobar does not entirely agree with the Buddhist teachings for he seeks a state of timelessness on earth not separate from it, these practices seem to keep him from aging (a first step toward freedom from time): "Samye has agreed with you. You appear healthy and strong. I did not lie when I mentioned down by the river that you have not aged since I saw you last [more than twenty years earlier]" (104). However, like the Palanese of Huxley's *Island*, Alobar and Kudra do not see meditation as the complete picture of time transcendence—yoga also forms a vital part of the lives of characters seeking immortality.

The yoga techniques that the characters use to achieve timelessness in the novel are related to Taoism and Tantra. Eliade notes that "[t]he ultimate goal of the adepts [Taoists] was to obtain physical immortality" (*Religious Ideas* 33). He goes on to explain that one of the techniques involves special dietary practices that "nouris[h] the vital force" (34). Alobar and Kudra practice this kind of yoga of food by "consum[ing] small amounts o' food at a time," "fast[ing] for five days each month," and eating plenty of vegetables, especially beets (294). Thus, Alobar's aging in prison is due in part to the abundance of fatty and starchy foods that he is served. Another of

the Taoist immortality techniques that the couple practice is called “embryonic breathing,” which is “an inner closed circuit breathing similar to that of the fetus in its mother’s womb” (Eliade 35). Wiggs Dannyboy calls this technique “a strange kind of yoga” (289), but Alobar and Kudra call it Bandaloo breath because they perfected this technique while they are in the Bandaloo caves. This special kind of breathing that is “apparently indispensable to extreme longevity” (152), and Wiggs explains it this way: “the inhale and exhale were connected in an uninterrupted rhythm, a continuous, circular, flywheel pattern like a serpent swallowin’ its own tail. Their breathing was deep and smooth and regular. When they brought air into their bodies, they visualized suckin’ in as much energy and vitality as possible; when they expelled air, they visualized blowin’ out all the staleness and flatness inside o’ them” (291). The couple also practices the yoga of love (similar to that which is described in *Island*), which is part of Tantra. Alobar and Kudra make extensive use of the techniques of the *Kama Sutra* that Kudra learned in her time in India to maintain their youth and fight against time—their frequent passion is noted by the citizens of whichever town or village that the couple is residing (153). These sexual techniques bring the couple to a new level of awareness of each other and also their connection to the universe. Moreover, the yoga of love allows the couple to trick time (nature’s agent of death): “The human organism is designed by DNA to maintain an optimum of strength and health to sexual maturity—and just a few years beyond . . . What Alobar and Kudra did was to keep their sexual fires so hotly stoked that DNA was fooled into believin’ that they were just entering into sexual maturity” (295). Thus, these yogic practices form a kind of lifestyle that allows Alobar and Kudra to be in constant communion with nature, with their true selves, and this in turn leads to great longevity, if not immortality, which taunts Old Father Time.

Hallucinogenic Drugs

While Robbins, like Huxley, sees Eastern thought and practices as a way to escape from the confines of time, he also believes that psychedelic drugs open up a similar pathway. Robbins himself has used LSD a number of times and is considered by Reising to be “the premier psychedelic practitioner of the art of fiction” (464). Robbins believes that these kinds of drugs can expand the user’s mind and that they are literally “mind-manifesting” (qtd. in Munat and Vignali 175). In an interview with Reising, Robbins explains what LSD has done to improve his mind:

It certainly made me a lot less rigid intellectually, emotionally, and I guess I could say spiritually. Certain boundaries just seemed to dissolve. The difference between so-called reality and so-called fantasy, between wakefulness and dreaming, between animate and inanimate, between the world of the living and the world of the dead were no longer distinct. I think that acid might have increased the range of my mobility and awakened my appreciation of the tricky balance of opposites. I could move back and forth between conflicting states of mind with greater ease. (467)

In essence then, the drug can allow one to see the confines of time dissolve. Lest he be thought to be an addict, Robbins clarifies that his “life doesn’t revolve, nor has it ever revolved, around psychedelics. They enhanced [his] life—psychedelics can enhance the life of any intelligent, courageous person, and they might even represent our last great hope for planetary survival—but they didn’t *replace* [his] life or become its central focus” (qtd. in Reising 468). Thus, Robbins believes that, if used sparingly, LSD can be a way to achieve greater understanding of the world.

As one would expect, then, psychedelics appear in Robbins' novels as catalysts that help liberate the minds of some of the characters. In *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*, Delores del Ruby, one of the cowgirls, has several peyote-induced¹⁹ visions that bring her new insights about her place in the world. The location of her first vision is a matter of hearsay among the cowgirls, but the event itself is clear—"she ate peyote one night and had a vision. Niwetúkame, the Mother Goddess, came to her on the back of a doe, hummingbirds sipping the tears she was shedding, crying 'Delores you must lead my daughters against their natural enemy'" (151). Although Delores clearly misunderstands the meaning of the message she receives, believing that men are the enemy, it changes her life, leading her to leave her home and sell peyote to hippies. After wandering for a time, Delores has another vision in which she is told to "go to a certain place to prepare for her mission" (151)—Rubber Rose Ranch. At the ranch, Delores continues to eat peyote and waits for her third vision. Robbins clearly does not endorse her overuse and excessive emphasis on drugs for enlightenment because he describes her passing out often and getting in arguments with the other cowgirls about her habits. However, at the end of the novel, another vision does come to Delores: "Long after the vision of St. Anthony and Paul's epileptic flashes on the Damascus road, long after the voices spoke to Joan of Arc and Blake had his eyeballs seared with heavenly wonderments, long after Edgar Cayce's prophetic trances and Ginsberg's glimpse of the hip angel, came the three visions of Delores del Ruby" (342). This vision reveals to Delores a truth that is a central theme in the novel, one that helps to end the cowgirls' standoff with the police: "We all have the same enemy. The enemy is the tyranny of the dull mind" (342). The message indicates that standardization and social constructs (artificial time) ruin lives by deadening the human spirit and compelling the cowgirls to abandon their guns in order to find other means of combating societal restrictions. Thus, peyote opens Delores' mind, allowing her

¹⁹ Peyote is the plant in which mescaline (chemical which produces effects similar to LSD) naturally occurs.

to move a step closer to understanding the world, which will allow her to break free of the cage of time (or artificial reality).

Furthermore, Robbins uses the drugs to break natural time's cycle by showing their effect in nature—with the whooping cranes. The cranes are a symbol of the wildness of nature in the novel (they have not adapted to civilization, deciding that they “would survive on [their] own terms or not at all” [252]), and part of the action of the novel centers around their presence at Siwash lake, which is near the cowgirl ranch. Every summer the whooping cranes nest in northern Canada, and every winter they migrate to Arkansas, taking the same path every year. In a sense, then, the birds are stuck in a rut—they are controlled by cyclical time. However, peyote changes this pattern: when the birds land at Siwash lake near the ranch and the cowgirls mix peyote in with the food they give the birds, the whoopers do not continue on their migratory path (but the rest of their behavior remains mostly unchanged).²⁰ Debbie, the Zen cowgirl, explains the birds' transformation this way: “the peyote mellowed them out. Made them less uptight. They were afraid of bad weather and humans. That's why they migrated and kept to themselves. But the peyote has enlightened them. It's taught them there is nothing to fear but fear itself. Now they're digging life and letting the bad vibes slide on by. Don't worry, be happy. Be here now” (325-6). This response may seem like Robbins is poking fun at those who believe in the enlightening effects of drugs, especially when compounded with Sissy's unfavorable reaction, but the birds' flight at the end of the novel seems to point towards the enhancing effects of the drugs. After the drugs wear off and the standoff is over, the whooping cranes set off for their winter nesting ground, but only as a rest stop on their trip around the world: “Continuing

²⁰ Interestingly, the cowgirls use almost the same defense of “drugging” that Huxley uses in *Heaven and Hell*: “What do you mean ‘drugged’? Every living thing is a chemical composition and anything added to it changes that composition. When you eat a cheeseburger or a Three Musketeers bar, it changes your body chemistry. The kind of food that you eat, the kind of air that you breathe, can change your mental state” (325).

southward, they rested in the Yucatán for a while, then flapped down to Venezuela and lunched on leopard frogs in the swamps of the Orinoco . . . The whoopers ruined a beach in the south of France, upstaged the famous pigeons at St. Mark's in Venice . . . Their whoops, greeted with religious fervor along the Ganges, could barely be heard above . . . Tokyo traffic" (359-60). The birds have broken out of the cage of cyclical time. Moreover, after this description Robbins indicates that the birds' cycle-breaking flight is a kind of example to the world: "Perhaps the whooping cranes carry a message, bearing it far and wide. A message from the wild to the wild-no-more. Is such a thing possible? All's possible" (360). While the enlightenment of a bird seems, perhaps, to be odd proof that psychedelics expand the mind and allow one to break free from time, Robbins believes that playfulness is serious—and drug-enlightened birds are certainly playful.

Psychedelics also play a part in expanding the mind of Wiggs Dannyboy in *Jitterbug Perfume*. Wiggs is the mystic of the novel—he undergoes a kind of transformation, his thoughts appear through various parts of the book and several pages (363-70) are dedicated to "Dannyboy's Theory" (rather like Anthony's journal entries in *Eyeless in Gaza*), and he is, apart from his goofiness, rather like Aldous Huxley. Wiggs, an Irish anthropologist, moves to the United States, where he "experiment[s] with mind altering chemicals" and even "journey[s] to the Amazon to munch vision vine with the Indians" (232). Wiggs also becomes a kind of exponent for psychedelics: the "self-styled psychedelic prophet, or 'electric shaman,' as he called himself, appear[s] on TV talk shows, lectur[es] on campuses everywhere, promoting with considerable flair the notion that certain drugs can raise consciousness and that persons with elevated consciousness are less apt to be violent, greedy, fearful, or repressed" (232). He believes that LSD has not destroyed his mind but has merely removed some cells that were impairing his

intellectual growth: “Sure [the drugs] destroyed some cells, no doubt about that, but ’twas for the good. If you want your tree to produce plenty o’ fruit, you’ve got to cut it back from time to time. Same thing with your neural cells. Some people might call it brain damage. I call it prunin’” (285). Thus, like Huxley, Wiggs believes that LSD does not negatively affect the user. Interestingly, Wiggs is also blind in one eye—reminiscent of Huxley’s childhood period of blindness. However, Wiggs’ greatest connection to the mystic author is that he named his daughter Huxley Anne. Robbins’ choice of name here does not seem to be a mere coincidence, especially when taken into account with the other famous names in the book—Einstein and Pan. The fact that Huxley Anne is the daughter of the mystic Wiggs could be pointing to a kind of reverse progeny—Wiggs, Robbins’ mouthpiece, is a descendent of Huxley’s.

Thus, a clear connection exists between the time concepts of Huxley and Robbins. Like Huxley, Robbins sees time as an imprisoning force—progress and civilization have standardized life, which has caused a disease of conformity in society, and the fear of death and its finality keeps man from a full life. Robbins seeks to combat these ills in many of the same ways as Huxley, bringing time conception away from a standard artificially measured to individual perception. The relativistic nature of the theories of Bergson and Einstein allow for this shift, as do eastern thought and psychedelic drugs. However, Robbins does not really give prominence to any of these practices or conceptions but weaves them together, indicating that, as any good Postmodernist would agree, there are many paths, not just one. Nevertheless, the lack of commitment to any one solution suggests a degree of uncertainty. Robbins seems fairly certain that an individual can break free, and should break free, from the artificial time imposed by society, but unsure about the possibility of freedom from the larger cage. Although he

acknowledges that humanity desires to escape death and even invents supernatural scenarios that allow this feat, Robbins does not seem to hold to this kind of optimism.

Conclusion:

Huxley and Robbins offer brilliant critiques of artificial time in their novels. Huxley forcefully shows how time can debilitate man and even turn him into a kind of machine, and Robbins, playfully yet effectively, depicts civilization's role in stifling individuality. In fact, their evaluations of clock time address the enduring sense of malaise that has plagued the twentieth century—as every aspect of life has become dictated by the clock, the pressure to fill each minute with so-called productivity has left most people either utterly exhausted or overcome with guilt. In a very real sense, then, these authors suggest that artificial time has created artificial life, and they challenge this debilitating kind of life because it diminishes the dignity of humanity. Any aspect of society that limits and undermines the value of the human person needs to be examined and either modified or destroyed. Huxley and Robbins recognize these damning implications of artificial time and seek to bring them to the attention of their readers.

Both authors experiment with similar means to escape from this artificial time. Huxley and Robbins use Bergson's concept of memory as a guide to structure some of their novels and make time a function of individual perception rather than societal conscription. They also evoke Einstein's theory of relativity to undermine the absolutist conception of the universe, thus allowing time to become unfixed. Eastern religions and hallucinogenic drugs offer additional (or for Huxley, the ultimate) ways for an individual to become unstuck in time. However, although these concepts work fairly well in the novels, they do not hold up to scrutiny in the world of artificiality that the authors live in. First of all, these solutions fail to give a viable alternative for society as a whole. If progress and artificiality could be dismantled on a large scale, what would replace them? The anarchy of pluralistic views? Artificiality of life is certainly undesirable, but how would man function within communities without underlying connections? Perhaps creating

a new system is impossible and individual enlightenment is the best alternative. However, each of the individual solutions offered by Huxley and Robbins comes with its own shortcomings. An undue focus on memory can lead one to dwell in the past and even allow past events to ruin the present, while an overly relativistic mindset keeps one from noticing or caring about anything beyond the self. Eastern mysticism seems to be able to bring one a sense of peace on earth and perhaps into a state of timelessness during meditation, but this sense of timelessness is only temporary. Furthermore, the authors' coupling of mysticism with LSD and other hallucinogenic substances suggests that this timeless state is nearly impossible to reach without the help of drugs. The reliance on psychedelics, then, poses other questions—though drugs may offer a temporary solution, allowing man to escape from his problems for a few hours, such a lifestyle inevitably causes more problems than it solves. In fact, many of the proponents of psychedelics died at early ages or were controlled by addictions, which actually made them victims of time—either through death or another kind of enslaving repetition. Although Huxley and Robbins' solutions to the problem of time may not be convincing, the fact that they are so closely connected is significant.

One of the reasons that the connection between the time concepts of Aldous Huxley and Tom Robbins is significant is that it is in some way representative of the shift in thinking from modernism to postmodernism. The modernists saw that the world was full of ills but desperately sought for solutions to these problems, believing that a right way existed. Huxley spent his life vehemently attacking the negative aspects of his society—and their primary cause, artificial time—and working toward a means of transcendence. When Huxley found mysticism, he believed it to be the one answer to man's problem of time. Postmodernists, on the other hand, often encounter inconsistencies similar to those of the modernist period, but address them with a

kind of playful pluralism. Robbins, then, perceives the persistent, harmful effects of artificial time, yet has not really devoted his life to solving the problem. In his novels, Robbins critiques artificiality and offers many possible means of time transcendence. Although the style of his approach and his ultimate answer to the problem of time differ from Huxley, Robbins' acknowledgement of the problem of time reveals the continuity between modernism and postmodernism—Robbins may, like other postmodernists, seek to break from his modernist ancestry, but he still carries their heaviest burden, time.

Another important aspect of this connection is that it gives greater weight to Robbins' work. So far Robbins has not been taken seriously by academics: very few articles and only one book, a critical companion, have been published about the author. Those that have been published only begin to skim the surface of the depths that Robbins' books hold. However, the treatment of time in *Jitterbug Perfume* and *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues* and its close connection to that in Huxley is certainly noteworthy, especially considering Huxley's position as a major literary figure of the twentieth century. If Robbins has developed such an analysis of time in his novels, what other important themes is he addressing? What does his particular use of language suggest or how does it add meaning to the themes? How do Robbins' critiques of American society compare with his contemporaries? These are all questions that are waiting for critical attention. Although Robbins work is often considered light because it is lighthearted, he merits attention, for this kind of play is a characteristic of much postmodern fiction.

This continuity between time conceptions also points out areas for further research. Because there is a span of several decades between the beginning of Huxley's writing career and the beginning of Robbins', it would be interesting and informative to continue the study of time in the novels of other major authors who could perhaps bridge the gap. Some of the authors that

would fall into this category are Virginia Woolf, William Faulkner, Thomas Pynchon, Joseph Heller, and Kurt Vonnegut. In a sense then, it might be possible to track the shift in time perception and depiction between modernism and postmodernism, which would reveal not only authorial views of time but those of mainstream society as well, for the way one thinks about time colors the way one thinks about life. Of course, the study of time in literature, especially as it relates to the historical and social context of the work, need not be limited to the twentieth century.

Analyzing the portrayal of time in literature is an immense and important task. Almost all works of literature convey some sense of time, whether it is through its plot, character, theme, form or its place in its historical context. Thus, capturing the complete depiction of time will require study of the totality of a work and its context. Such an undertaking is important because it reveals societal attitudes about life and death. In a sense, this awareness of death is part of what it means to be human, and what else is the purpose of studying anything if not to learn more about ourselves and our relationship to the universe?

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