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ENGLISH NOVEL OF IDEAS

AN ATTEMPT AT A PRELIMINARY DEFINITION AND DESCRIPTION OF THE GENRE

Regardless of various trends in criticism, literary scholars have always been greatly attracted by complex relationships between literature and the environment in which it is created. One may find a large number of studies examining the philosophical or political contents of some literary works or the reflection of the impact of science and cultural movements¹; it is also significant that such studies are written not only by literary critics and writers, but also by philosophers, sociologists, or politicians, and then the examined works, mostly novels, are often treated as philosophic treatises, social documents or propaganda writings. It is also true that the 20th century novel, after its unprecedented development, contains all these elements of non-fiction in various proportions, which, naturally, only contributes to the number of such studies².

Generally speaking, in spite of the profits that such works bring to a student of comparative literature or of history of ideas, they seem to be of little importance for a student of history and theory of literature, because strict literary analysis is what they most frequently lack. The conclusions drawn from such studies seem to require confirmation by a structural and functional analysis of all these non-fictional elements.

The problem of the relationship between the novel and its milieu could not be ignored by critics and having noticed this increased inter-

¹ From among numerous examples see, for example: E. W. Knight, *Literature Considered as Philosophy. The French Example*, New York 1962; J. Howe, *Politics and the Novel*, New York 1957; P. Braybrook, *Philosophies in Modern Fiction*, London 1929; S. H. Eoff, *The Modern Spanish Novel. Comparative Essays Examining the Impact of Science on Fiction*, New York 1961.

² On non-fictional elements in modern novels see: A. Hutnikiewicz, *Od czystej formy do literatury faktu*, Toruń 1967, p. 45.

relation which seems especially pronounced in our days, they reacted to it by inventing a number of names in order to describe a given novel in the most meaningful way. Let it suffice to mention that one critic in a single study uses no less than over 50 different names of novels and his work is by no means an exception³. A great variety of criteria is used in describing novels; usually the following bases are employed: the content or theme of the work; the epoch and country in which it has been written; purpose of the novel; character of the author and his attitude towards the subject matter; technique(s) employed; personal, subjective evaluation of the work; literary convention to which the work belongs; or, sometimes, two of these combined⁴.

Needless to say, this situation only contributes to the existing chaos in literary terminology, especially in the field of the genology of the novel. Terms invented individually and their free and unlimited application give rise to controversies and misunderstandings. The fact is that the criteria, when used for the motivation of the term, are usually used singly and that lack of integration causes overlapping and discrepancies; only an approach combining several criteria as well as historical, formal, and typological analyses may promise help in proper understanding and application of genological terms concerning the novel⁵.

In comparison with other terms of this kind, the name "novel of ideas" is used relatively frequently by various critics who, with the only exception of Józef Heistein⁶, do not attempt to define the genre, but prove their opinions about particular novels by taking one or two aspects of such works into consideration; some of them, e.g. Bowersox or Żmigrodzka⁷, take the meaning of the term for granted and do not provide

³ J. McCormick, *Catastrophe and Imagination. An Interpretation of Recent English and American Novel*, New York 1957.

⁴ The following examples may be quoted to illustrate the application of particular criteria: idyllic peasant novel, kolkhoz novel, biographical novel; didactic biography, novel with a moral purpose; Anglo-American novel, Contemporary English novel; a highbrow novel, novel of reproach, novel of indignation; novel-as-film-script, experimental novel, scenario-novel; good or bad novel, curious novel; bastard genre, dadaistic novel, fairy-tale historical novel; well-plotted novel, unhistorical historical novel, etc.

⁵ The argument seems to hold true even if some of these terms are understood as describing only a single feature of the whole work and not the type of the novel.

⁶ J. Heistein, *Le roman d'idée et le roman-essai*, „Zagadnienia Rodzajów Literackich”, vol. XI, No. 1 (20).

⁷ H. Bowersox, a review of P. Bowering's book (*Aldous Huxley: A Study of the Major Novels*, New York 1969), „Modern Philology”, vol. 68, No. 1, August 1970. M. Żmigrodzka, *Problem narratora w teorii powieści XIX i XX wieku*, „Pamiętnik Literacki”, 1963, vol. 54, No. 2.

any motivation at all. Similarly to other terms, this term also provokes controversies: O'Connor and Harvey make quite contrary statements concerning the origin of the genre⁸, there is a discrepancy in the opinions of several critics as to the question of the author's commitment⁹, finally, there are also discussions as to the problem of which novels can be regarded as "novels of ideas" and which cannot¹⁰.

As far as the criticism of the English novel is concerned, the best analysis of the term seems to be that by Frederick Hoffman in his essay *Aldous Huxley and the Novel of Ideas*¹¹. The author offers neither typological differentiation nor historical development of the genre but points to Huxley as an obvious example of a typical novelist of ideas. Many other critics also use this term in reference to the novels of Aldous Huxley, or at least to his early novels written in the 20's¹².

A son of Dr Leonard Huxley, teacher, editor and man of letters, and of Julia Arnold, niece of the poet, Matthew Arnold, and sister of the novelist, Mrs Humphry Ward, as well as a grandson of T. H. Huxley, the scientist, and of Dr Thomas Arnold, "a formidable moralist", — Aldous Huxley inherited a great tradition of his distinguished ancestors and seemed predestined to continue that tradition. After his studies at Eton and then at Balliol College, where he took First Class Honours in English Literature, Huxley became "a brilliant novelist, a subtle critic of literature, music, painting, a fascinating essayist ... and in youth a beautiful poet" — as Lord David Cecil writes¹³. "Nothing was beneath his interest"¹⁴ — and indeed in his literary output one may find evidence of Huxley's deep knowledge of such diverse subjects as microbiology and philosophy, medicine and politics, psychology, religion and biology¹⁵.

⁸ W. van O'Connor, *The Novel in Our Time*, [in:] *Forms of Modern Fiction*, Bloomington 1969. See Harvey's statement quoted after B. Bergonzi, *The Situation of the Novel*, London 1970, p. 50.

⁹ Compare the statements made by Moravia, Hoffman, O'Connor with those by Bowering, Harvey, Heistein.

¹⁰ Compare Greenlees's opinion on Gouglas's novels in: *Norman Douglas*, London 1957; and Pritchett's statements on Musil's novel in: *The Working Novelist*, London 1965.

¹¹ F. Hoffman, *Aldous Huxley and the Novel of Ideas*, [in:] *Forms of Modern...*

¹² Cf. R. F. Karl, M. Magalaner, *A Reader's Guide to Great Twentieth Century English Novels*, London 1959; S. O'Faolain, *The Vanishing Hero*, London 1956; E. B. Burgum, *The Novel and the World's Dilemma*, New York 1947; A. Burgess, *The Novel To-day*, London 1963; A. Burgess, *The Novel Now*, London 1971.

¹³ Cf. his contribution to *Aldous Huxley 1894—1963. A Memorial Volume* (ed. by Julian Huxley), London 1966, p. 13.

¹⁴ J. Atkins, *Aldous Huxley. A Literary Study*, London 1956, p. 25.

¹⁵ Cf. *A Memorial Volume...*

"Sceptic, esthete, satirist, stylistic virtuoso, encyclopedia of scientific fact, columnist of the family gossip known as Culture, amateur of the fantastic and expert in human folly — Huxley has been all these things ... He has come close to writing a biography of the ideas of modern man"¹⁶. Huxley began his literary career with poetry and already these four volumes of alternating lyrical and satiric verses — *The Burning Wheel*, *Jonah*, *The Defeat of Youth*, and *Leda* — are said to constitute "a microcosm of Huxley's attitudes and ideas"¹⁷ that will appear later in his novels.

This abundant evidence¹⁸ allows one to assume that Huxley's novels are good examples of the genre called "novel of ideas", yet none of the existing studies (either on Huxley or on other novelists¹⁹) offers a full and conclusive description of the genre. Therefore a complete formal analysis of a few of his works may help to distinguish certain characteristic features which may turn out to be typical of that kind of novel.

Thus the present paper consists of two parts: the first one comprises a formal and comparative analysis of Huxley's first four novels and leads up to a tentative definition of the term; on this basis an attempt is made in the second part to trace the diachronical development of both the term and the genre.

HUXLEY'S NOVELS OF IDEAS

As has already been stated, most critics unanimously agree that at least Huxley's early novels written in the 20's are good examples of the novels of ideas (these early works include: *Crome Yellow*, *Antic Hay*, *Those Barren Leaves*, and *Point Counter Point*). Thus, the following section will contain a detailed analysis of his first novel, *Crome Yellow*, and will be followed by a presentation of his subsequent three novels discussed in relation to the first one (such a procedure will also make it possible to notice Huxley's development as a novelist). The works will be analyzed according to the method suggested by Prof. W. Ostrowski²⁰ and in the order of structural elements distinguished therein.

¹⁶ C. Rolo, Introduction to *The World of Aldous Huxley*, New York [after 1947], p. XXV.

¹⁷ Bowersox, *op. cit.*, p. 242.

¹⁸ One may also add Huxley's own statements about the novel of ideas expressed in *Point Counter Point*.

¹⁹ Cf. the statements by Bergonzi, *op. cit.*, McCormick, *op. cit.*, and E. K. Brown, *The Revival of E. M. Forster*, [in:] *Forms of Modern...*

²⁰ Personal communication — typescript: *Towards a More Systematic and Exact Analysis of the Novel and Related Genres*.

Denis Stone, a young poet and an "intellectual" — by which Huxley means that he is "more capable of theorizing than of experiencing"²¹ — arrives at Crome, the mansion of the Wimbushes in the countryside, and meets a number of characters there. There are typical Huxleyan women characters: Anne, cold and "pagan", Mary Bracegirdle, a "hot lover" and "a moonlike innocence", Priscilla Wimbush, masculine and manly, interested in horoscopes and gambling, and Jenny Mullion, a mysterious deaf artist drawing caricatures of everybody. The men characters include: Henry Wimbush, the owner of the house interested in the past of Crome and in the Primitivists, Mr Scogan, a man of wisdom, who significantly becomes a fortune-teller during the Fair, Gombauld, a "Byronic" painter, Mr Barbecue-Smith, a teacher, writer and prophet, and finally — Ivor, "the virtuoso in love-making" as well as a poet, musician and painter at the same time.

Huxley's methods of characterization seem to be numerous: the appearance of the characters, especially when comic or satirized, is almost always described in a very detailed way (especially when it is important for an expression of his ideas; compare Denis's white trousers and Anne's reaction to them in Chapter 4 with a scene in Chapter 30, when Anne mentions the trousers once again but, this time, to Denis's dissatisfaction); the same may be said about the manner of speaking and pronouncing (e.g. "deep and masculine voice and laughter of Mrs Wimbush" — p. 9; "... Mr Scogan's fluty voice" — p. 28; "Four thousand", he repeated, opening his mouth very wide on the *ou* of thousand ..." — p. 17). Some of the characters bear significant names: e.g. Scogan — "a device for automatically opening valves in a steam engine"; Wimbush — "to separate, to winnow"; Budge — "to move or stir in spite of inertia"²².

Instances of indirect characterization are again numerous; people are characterized by their gestures (cf. pp. 32, 86, 83), attitudes towards the arts, science, culture, religion, etc., expressed either by the narrator or by their participation in numerous conversations — their utterances are sometimes expanded into long monologues resembling essays and may last for several pages (cf. Chapter 16 and 22). Frequent quotations and misquotations from poetry and scientific works also serve as means of characterization (cf. pp. 22, 35, 42). The characters often talk about other characters — in this way Huxley presents both the speakers and the objects of their discussion (cf. Chapter 7 including a conversation between Anne and Mary on the choice of the most proper candidate for a lover).

²¹ A. Huxley, *Crome Yellow*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth 1964. All subsequent references are made to this edition.

²² Definitions taken from *Oxford English Dictionary*.

Finally, they are also characterized by the kind of setting in which they appear: thus, a detailed description of Crome, with its galleries of pictures and its rich library, also speak for the owner; the same may be said about the severity of the room in which Mr Bodiham prepares his lashing sermon; Anne's coldness is emphasized by her bed shaped like a sarcophagus; Mary's sadness after the departure of Ivor is accompanied by a "pleasantly comic version of the Medici Venus", and so on.

But not only in its relation to the characters is the setting important. As often as not it offers a good chance for a long discussion and a clash of ideas represented by particular characters: such is the function of the library, in the description of which Huxley shows his erudition by giving a long list of titles and names, but which, at the same time, gives an opportunity to Scogan to expand on his theories about art and literature in particular; such is also the function of a description of the Home Farm and the large sow which had a litter of fourteen, which is a pretext for a clash of ideas on breeding and birth-control. Sometimes the setting assumes a symbolic function: old Crome is a place where "among the accumulations of ten generations the living had left but few traces" — indicating the theme of futility in the action of the characters (this is further stressed by the symbolical significance of extracts taken from the history of Crome). The setting is also an important factor creating atmosphere — e.g. the "palpitating" atmosphere of the garden where the "comedy of errors" takes place (Chapter 17) and the opposite mood of the church and Mr Bodiham's sermon in the very next chapter.

Contrary to the setting, time does not seem to be an important element governing the development of the action, as it sometimes does in other novels²³. The action covers roughly about two weeks in summer, with several "excursions" into the past, most frequently to the history of Crome; the sequence of days is not marked and Huxley is satisfied with specifying a particular time of the day, e.g. "morning", "dinner", "after-lunch coffee", etc. The only significant feature about time construction is the fact that some events, although presented one after another, seem to cover the same period of time, or, in other words, seem to take place simultaneously; for instance, Chapter 21 describes Anne and Gombauld painting her portrait, while in Chapter 22 Denis Stone hears their laugh which prevents him from writing a poem, by arousing jealousy in him; a similar example may be found in Chapters 11 and

²³ Cf. S. Skwarczyńska, *Wstęp do nauki o literaturze*, Warszawa 1954; A. A. Mendilow, *Time and the Novel*, London 1952; K. Bartoszyński, *Z problematyki czasu w utworach epickich*, [in:] *W kręgu zagadnień teorii powieści*, Wrocław 1967.

12, when one group of characters goes to see Mr Brabecue-Smith off, while, in the next chapter, though "at the same time", Mary pays a visit to Gombauld in his studio. Later on this method is developed into the technique of counterpoint. It is significant, however, that the effect is not achieved here by careful marking of the passage of time, as it is in Huxley's other novels (*Point Counter Point*), but by the setting: Denis is close enough to the duck-yard to hear Anne and Gombauld laugh, while Mary takes the opportunity to carry a letter to Gombauld because there is nobody else in the house. If the first instance seems important, as the method makes it possible to present two situations simultaneously and to present Denis's reaction as well as to stress his next failure, no such significant correlation seems to exist in the second scene.

If one leaves aside the substance of numerous discussions and lengthy monologues, since they do not constitute "events" in the traditional meaning of the term, the action of the novel seems to be so much reduced that it may actually be summed up in a few words: arrivals and departures, meals and walks of which two are connected with love-making, and the most important event — the Fair in which one may eventually look for the climax of the whole novel. The framework of the plot is clear and consists of Denis Stone's stay in Crome: his arrival is described in the first chapter, while his hasty, though unwilling, departure — in the last.

Such an approach, however, would be unfair because if one looks for the "purposefulness" or "causation" which usually regulate the action, one must precisely examine the logical development of ideas expressed by all the characters and the narrator. In other words, it is on the level of conversations or talks that one may find the actual causation which is much more significant than the traditional framework of Denis's stay in Crome. This is further stressed by the division of the work into chapters: one chapter is always devoted to one event (e.g. Chapter 1 — Denis's arrival), or to a discussion of an idea or a clash of ideas (e.g. Chapter 5 — a visit to the Home Farm and a controversy between Anne, who is against excessive breeding, Gombauld and Henry Wimbush, presenting the opposite opinion, and Mary, "a birth-controller"; the controversy finds no solution and the chapter is finished by Mr Scogan's monologue about the future world, when such matters as breeding will depend entirely on man and his will)²⁴.

Very frequently it is not the action, but an idea that links separate chapters together. Thus Chapter 3 ends with a remark by Scogan ironi-

²⁴ It seems significant that, in spite of these controversies, none of the characters ever feels offended.

cally describing Mary as "femme superieure", and Mary takes it in; the next chapter opens with a misunderstanding between Denis and Jenny and the former's remark about "parallel straight lines" — which signify lack of communication, "femme superieure" being mentioned again. A still better example may be found in Chapter 8, when Scogan talks of Church and uniforms, and in the next chapter we have Mr Bodiham's sermon followed by his receiving a catalogue of priest's uniforms; then his talk with his wife about the birth of Sodom and Gomorrah in the village is followed in Chapter 10 by a description of a dancing party in Crome. Ideas are so closely connected with the action that it is frequently they that push the action forward: thus a talk about sex precedes Ivor's arrival; a discussion on the necessity of „mental carminative" precedes Denis's fit of jealousy, and so on.

The almost perfect integration of all these elements has certainly contributed to the good opinion which this novel enjoys even among some modern critics. All the elements are closely interrelated in the novel not only by their unity in expressing the author's ideas, but also by the omnipresent and omniscient narrator with his frequent comments mostly of satirical nature. To the aforementioned variety of the means of characterization one should also add richness of narrative techniques: apart from the omniscient narrator, there are frequent quotations — the sermon, extracts from the history of Crome, songs, and poetry — whose functions are organically connected with the whole novel. Not only do they provide entertainments between the discussions on serious subjects, but they also complement the action by offering contrary points of view or opinions (Mr Bodiham's sermon and the opinion of Henry Wimbush about the disappearance of "country pleasures"), or by thier symbolical significance (the story of Sir Hercules juxtaposed with the situation of the living people and the disappearance of the good old tradition). Finally, one should mention the problem of Huxley's style in this novel. Apart from the essayistic elements which have already been mentioned, Huxley presents highly poetic descriptions of the countryside and the landscapes (see pp. 11, 21, Chapter 17); there are also numerous examples of symbols and metaphors, as well as metaphors becoming symbols through their recurrence (see Ivor's song, pp. 91—94 and 140; Priscilla imagined as Wilkie Bard — a cantatrice, pp. 9 and 13; the fantastic Tales of Knokestopch, expressions like "Black ladders lack bladders", or Mrs Budge described as "a blown black bladder", p. 157). All these devices effectively balance lists of scientific data (pp. 38, 90), names and titles of scientific books (pp. 10, 60, 79, 157), and numerous aphorisms, and literary digressions (Chapter 16, pp. 22, 25, 90, etc.).

That somewhat lengthy presentation of Huxley's first novel seems

to be justified by the fact that the other three novels to be analyzed here bear a very strong resemblance to the first one and that is why it seems possible to limit oneself to the discussion of the similarities and differences instead of presenting their full analyses.

In *Crome Yellow* Mr Scogan tries to imagine which of the first six Caesars the other characters may resemble; he says:

I take each trait of character, each mental and emotional bias, each little addity and magnify them a thousand times [...] I am potentially all of them [...] with the possible exception of Claudius who was much too stupid to be a development of anything in my character [p. 87].

Now, the same procedure seems to be true about Huxley's way of creating characters in his subsequent novels. Obviously it would be useless and unnecessary to compare them all, besides, in his later works the number of characters greatly increases, so let it suffice to mention the most obvious similarities like that between Ivor and Lypiatt (from *Antic Hay*), both interested in music, painting, and poetry at the same time; or the scientists: Henry Wimbush, Shearwater, and Lord Edward; or men of wisdom: Scogan, Gumbriel Senior, Mercaptan, Cardan, or Rampion; or unhappy women characters: Mary Bracegirdle, Marjorie Carling, Miss Thriplow; or sexually hedonistic women: Anne, Mrs Viveash, Lucy Tantamount; finally, the always present group of writers: Denis Stone, Mr Barbecue-Smith, Gumbriel Junior and Lypiatt, Francis Chelifer, Philip Quarles, etc. However, along with the development of Huxley's interests and ideas some new kinds of characters are added, e.g. politically oriented opponents like Illidge and Webley, Marxists like Falx and Bojanus, or a mystic — Calamy, a sadist — Coleman, or a suicidal type — Spandrell²⁵.

The methods of characterization, however, remain essentially the same; the characters still bear significant names, their appearances and manners of speaking are always precisely described, and they are characterized by their gestures, attitudes and ideas presented in long monologues; the only difference is the matter of more technical quality and increasing length of certain means of characterization — both leading to the perfection of such methods. Thus descriptions of characters' pronunciation are becoming longer and more "phonetic" — e.g. Mr Mercaptan "... complained hissing on the c, labiating lingeringly on the v of 'civilized' and giving the wirst two i-s their fullest value", or Mr Quarles Senior who pronounced his a-s "as though a flock of sheep had broken loose in his vocabulary". Huxley even goes as far as to introduce neolo-

²⁵ All these new additions seem to reflect Huxley's widening interests in a variety of modern events.

gisms so that his characters are fluting, braying, oboeing or tromboning. The same is true about the length of the monologues of the characters; their increasing length may be seen in *Antic Hay* in Mr Bojanus's monologue (pp. 25—26), in Boldero's speech (pp. 94—95), or in an essayistic contemplation of the idea of "Complete Man" (Chapter 9); in the next two novels Huxley goes as far as to introduce extracts from the writings of his characters-writers (Francis Chelifer's Autobiography and Philip Quarles's Notebook).

There is a marked development of the kind of setting (though not of its functions): in *Antic Hay* the action takes place in several flats and restaurants and clubs in London; in *Those Barren Leaves* the setting is very much like that in *Crome Yellow*, though it is moved to Italy; in *Point Counter Point* it is again London, though a short part takes place on the way from India to England. Its functions, as has been mentioned, remain the same: getting a group of characters together, so that they may freely discuss a number of various ideas; as in *Crome Yellow* it may also provide objects for a discussion, it may evoke reactions, or create atmosphere.

The element of time also increases in importance in these subsequent novels, especially in *Point Counter Point*; it is changed so as to illustrate ideas in the best possible way; it may be easily understood if one considers the technique of counterpoint which is meant to help in achieving an illusion of the simultaneous presenting of clashes of ideas; this problem, however, has been discussed in detail elsewhere²⁶.

A significant change occurs in the action of Huxley's novels; if in *Crome Yellow* there has been a kind of traditional framework, there is almost none in subsequent novels. The action of *Antic Hay* is reduced to Gumbriel's leaving the school, his return to London, numerous meetings and discussions with his friends, and his adventures as a "Complete Man". Similarly, *Those Barren Leaves* consists of Chelifer's accident which brings him to Mrs Aldwinkle's villa, repeated long walks, meals, and discussions, love-making, and a journey to Rome. The same holds more or less true about *Point Counter Point* which, though perhaps richer in events, still lacks the conventional framework. Just as in the case of *Crome Yellow* Huxley continues to divide his novels into chapters which are frequently linked only by ideas discussed in them, in *Point Counter Point* some chapters are even further divided so as to show the clashes of ideas more effectively.

²⁶ See my paper: *Music in Literature — Presentation of Huxley's Experiment in "Musicalization of Fiction"*, "Zagadnienia Rodzajów Literackich", vol. XIV, No. 2.

Further perfection and development may be noticed in narrative techniques. The technique of counterpoint is limited to such instances where it is possible to accomplish simultaneity of presentation without time shifts, e.g. topics in a discussion, reactions of several people to the same event, or one person's monologue juxtaposed with the thoughts of the other person, etc. This technique becomes the guiding principle in *Point Counter Point* and Huxley makes there experiments with time in order to achieve an illusion of simultaneity. Similarly, the interior duplication technique²⁷, in the first two novels limited to the introduction of a short story (two short stories are included in *Crome Yellow*) or a play (*Antic Hay*), develops into extracts from the writings of fictional novelists ("Fragments from the Autobiography of Francis Chelifer" constitute the second part of *Those Barren Leaves*; fragments "From Philip Quarles's Notebook" in *Point Counter Point* are scattered throughout the novel.) Such a change obviously increases the number of essayistic parts in the novels and at the same time it is the most easily observed change in Huxley's style of writing; another change in the same aspect of his novels is the shift in the tone of the discussions, which become much more violent, full of despair, feeling of hopelessness, etc.

It seems possible to account for these changes by the fact that all the three novels following *Crome Yellow* develop the ideas that so far have only been casually mentioned. Thus *Antic Hay*, with its motto taken from Marlowe, might have developed from the motif of dance described in *Crome Yellow*; such a metaphorical description as "the beast with two backs" occurs in both novels (*Crome Yellow* — p. 52; *Antic Hay* — p. 133)²⁸. The single idea of "parallel straight lines" (*Crome Yellow* — p. 19) develops into a whole part "The Loves of the Parallels" in *Those Barren Leaves*; finally, a single remark of Miss Thriplow — "Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven" (*Those Barren Leaves*, p. 48—49) — becomes the significant conclusion of the whole novel — *Point Counter Point*. It seems probable that Huxley takes his ideas from his earlier works and develops them in a more detailed way in his later novels, where they become, as he puts it, "the general statements" of the whole works. The aimless dance of modern society, lack of communication between individuals, and multiplicity of contrasted characters with different reactions, aims, opinions, are the principal ideas presented in these three novels, though they have already been mentioned in *Crome Yellow*. Denis Stone makes an important statement:

²⁷ The term taken after L. Livingstone, *Interior Duplication in the Modern Spanish Novel*, "PMLA", No. 4, Sept. 1958.

²⁸ The metaphor is taken from Shakespeare's *Othello*, Act I, Scene I, 118.

One entered the world [...] having ready-made ideas about everything. One had a philosophy and tried to make life fit into it [...] Life, facts, things were horribly complicated; ideas, even the most difficult of them, deceptively simple. In the world of ideas everything was clear; in life all was obscure, embroiled. Was it surprising that one was miserable, horribly unhappy? [p. 22]

and his opinion is equally true in relation to Gumbriel and Lypiatt, Chelifer and Calamy, Philip Quarles and Walter Bidlake. They, and actually all other characters, represent ideas in confrontation with real life. The action of the novels serves that purpose; the narrative techniques present clashes of ideas as well as their fates and fortunes in "real life". It is not surprising, then, that in view of such a dominant function of ideas in every element in the structure of these works they have been called "novels of ideas".

Summing up the analysis of formal features of these works, it should be emphasized that these novels not only illustrate ideas, but they use them as a kind of "protagonists". Character, being so far one of the most important elements in the structure of the novel (in the opinion of some critics it still is) loses its importance — it serves openly as "a mouthpiece of ideas"; it should also be mentioned that such characters are fairly numerous in the novels of ideas and in this way the ideas they stand for assume dynamic qualities, or, as Hoffman puts it, "they appropriate the fortunes and careers which ordinarily belong to persons"²⁹. The characters may bear significant names or not (it is mostly the secondary characters that are labelled so); their appearance, manners of speaking, and mostly their attitudes, ideas, and opinions are the main, if not the only, means of characterization.

The chief function of the setting is to account for a group of characters talking and discussing things: sometimes, however, it provides an opportunity for an exchange of ideas by providing an object to be discussed. It is not surprising, either, that the action of such novels takes place in the circles of artists, scientists, and intellectuals, in other words, people who can have ideas to present. Action is fairly reduced in these novels (e.g. it is frequently impossible to indicate the climax); the conventional framework not only loses its importance, but is almost completely discarded. The division into chapters (and sometimes into even smaller parts) seems to be dependant exclusively on their contents of ideas whose logical relationship, being that of contrast or continuation, links the chapters and provides purposefulness or causation for the action. Time in these novels is of little importance, unless it is connected with the narrative techniques, such as, for instance, the contrapuntal

²⁹ Hoffman, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

technique. The omniscient and omnipresent narrator seems to be very convenient — he may present contrasted thoughts, feelings, utterances and actions of the characters; the utterances of particular persons may be very long and may assume an essayistic character³⁰. Apart from the conversations, the narrator uses the "interior duplication" technique and quotations from various notebooks, diaries, correspondence, scientific papers and handbooks, fragments of other novels, plays, short stories, etc. as the means of providing new ideas and variety³¹. Generally speaking, these novels are characterized by richness of narrative techniques and a multitude of styles — from that of a scientific treatise to poetic prose: essayistic fragments, lists of names and titles, aphorisms, symbols and metaphors. Finally, these novels often include elements of fantastic character — like frequent "inventions"³². Great interest in all contemporary events in every realm of life is another feature of that type of novel. One must also add, now, the total lack of commitment of the author; all ideas are treated as equally important for him — as Hoffman writes: the novelist of ideas "must have an eclectic faith in the democracy of ideas".

After such a summary of the formal features of these works one may make an attempt of suggesting a tentative working definition of the novel of ideas: *it is a novel characterized by the structural dominance³³ of ideas³⁴ and by their analytical treatment; evidence of both parts of the definition may be found in the structure of the novel and in its style, respectively.*

ORIGIN OF THE GENRE

"It would be difficult to say what his books are; for they are neither romances, novels, tales, nor treatises, but a mixture of all these combined"³⁵ — these statements would be very true in relation to Huxley's

³⁰ Cf. B. Berger, *Der Essay*, Bern 1964.

³¹ Cf. H. Meyer, *Das Zitat in der Erzählkunst. Zur Geschichte und Poetik des europäischen Romans*, Stuttgart 1961.

³² Pneumatic trousers, the "Complete Man", Shearwater's and Lord Edward's experiments, etc.

³³ The definition of "dominance" as a literary term has been given by J. Tynianow, *Oda jako gatunek oratorski*, [in:] *Sztuka interpretacji*, Wrocław 1971, p. 229.

³⁴ It seems unavoidable to leave aside the philosophical discussion of the term "idea" where its meaning is confused because of its analogy to the question of perception (cf. definitions of the term by Plato, Descartes, Locke, Berkeley, Hume). The term is understood here in its common sense of "thought", "conception" or "concept".

³⁵ A review of *Nightmare Abbey* in the "Literary Gazette"; quoted after C. Dawson, *His Fine Wit. A Study of Thomas Love Peacock*, London 1970, p. 159.

novels or, indeed, almost to any modern novel. Yet, the above quotation aptly describes works of a writer who had written them over half a century before Huxley became a famous and fashionable novelist. The author of *Headlong Hall*, *Nightmare Abbey* or *Gryll Grange* — Thomas Love Peacock — wrote works which are now called “novels of talk” or “conversation novels” and which reveal numerous similarities to the works by Huxley. His characters, although perhaps more schematic than those of Huxley, are also scientists, philosophers, artists, and gentlemen of leisure. They are characterized, first of all, by their names of Greek and Latin origins, the meanings of which are always carefully and fully explained in the footnotes. They discourse on numerous subjects in long monologues abundantly quoting various authorities. The setting is almost always the same as in Huxley’s *Crome Yellow* or *Those Barren Leaves*. Time and action have a constant framework of a love-affair ended with a wedding (and as such they are unimportant). The narrator is always omniscient and omnipresent while the style is changeable: from poetic descriptions of nature and beautiful ballads and poems, to a scientific and learned language of academic scholars.

Even more similarities to Huxley’s novels may be found in N. Douglas’s *South Wind* (1917); it seems enough to compare Huxley’s considerations with the following statement of Douglas:

[...] it would be nearer to truth to say that it is nothing but plot from beginning to end. How to make murder palatable to a bishop: that is the plot. How? You must unconventionalize him and instil into his mind the seeds of doubt and revolt. You must shatter his old notions of what was right. It is the only way to achieve this result, and I would defy the critic to point to a single incident or character or conversation which does not further the object in view. The good Bishop soon finds himself among new influences; his sensations, his intellect, are assailed from within and without. Figures such as those in Chapters 11, 18, and 35, the endless dialogue in the boat, the even more tedious happenings in the local law-court, the very externals — the jovial immoderation of everything and everybody: they foster a sense of violence and insecurity; they all tend to make the soil receptive to new ideas³⁶.

Historical approach of this kind, aiming at a hypothetical origin of the genre, will lead one back to the predecessors of T. L. Peacock. Going backwards, Carl Dawson enumerates the following writers: Robert Bage, Richard Graves, Amory, Athenaeus, Plato, Petronius and Lucian³⁷. The

³⁶ Quoted after Greenlees, *op. cit.*, pp. 22–23.

³⁷ Cf. Dawson, *op. cit.*, pp. 162–166. Some other critics also mention such works as L. Dickinson’s *A Modern Symposium* (1905), and W. H. Mallock’s *The New Republic: Culture, Faith and Philosophy, in an English Country House* (1877).

last two names are usually associated with an ancient genre called the "Menippean satire". Several scholars have noticed the similarities between certain modern works and that ancient genre and they have provided lists of writers who seemed to have followed that tradition. For instance, speaking about the author's treatment of ideas N. Frye writes:

Lucian's attitude to Greek philosophy is repeated in the attitude of Erasmus and Rabelais to the scholastics, of Swift and Samuel Butler I to Descartes and the Royal Society, of Voltaire to the Leibnitzians, of Peacock to the Romantics, of Samuel Butler II to the Darwinians, of Aldous Huxley to the behaviorists³⁸.

According to Frye's broad categories the novel of ideas will belong to the "Anatomy" or to the "Confession ... intellectualized in content". Similar conclusions have also been drawn by C. S. Lewis³⁹ and he also traces the development of the "Menippean satire" towards the modern novel of ideas. However, the best formal evidence has been presented by M. Bakhtin in his famous study in Dostoevsky. Bakhtin enumerates the following features of the "Menippean satire": humour; freedom of philosophical fiction and plot construction; fantasy used as a test for a truth or a word-idea — adventures of an idea in the world: earth, hell, Olympus; gross naturalism; philosophical contemplation; action developed on three planes (also *Schwellendialog*); experimental fantasy; moral or psychological experiments (unusual and strange psychological states of mind); extravagances and scandals; contrasts and oxymorons; elements of utopia (travels); quotations — a mixture of poetry and prose; multitude of styles and moods; and sensitivity to contemporary events. According to Bakhtin, in its later development the "Menippean satire" also included diatribe, soliloquy, and symposium⁴⁰.

As can easily be noticed almost all of these formal features of the "Menippean satire" may be found in the novels of ideas; such generalizations, however, still seem to require further studies to confirm their validity and usefulness for literary research, in spite of their brilliance.

ORIGIN OF THE TERM AND DEVELOPMENT OF ITS MEANING

From the research done so far it appears that the term "novel of ideas" was used for the first time by Honore Balzac in the following paradoxical statement:

There are active souls who like rapidity, conciseness, sudden shocks, action, drama, who avoid discussion, who have little fondness for meditation and take

³⁸ N. Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, Princeton 1957, p. 230.

³⁹ C. S. Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*, Oxford 1962, p. 468.

⁴⁰ M. Bakhtin, *Problemy poetyki Dostojewskiego*, Warszawa 1970, pp. 185—186.

pleasure in results. From such people comes what I should call the Literature of Ideas ⁴¹.

Without pausing over the contradictions and strangeness of this definition let us add that Balzac made that statement in relation to the works of Stendhal whom he regarded as a typical novelist of ideas illustrating Rousseau's theories about what goes on within the mind or about life in general.

It is in this sense that the term seems to preserve a more or less similar meaning when applied to the works of G. Eliot and E. M. Forster, among others. E. K. Brown writes about G. Eliot in the following way:

In her works the way to salvation is always neatly codified. And so it has been with Meredith, with Hardy, with Samuel Butler, with Wells, and with Forster ⁴².

His statement is based on G. Eliot's remark when she spoke about "the severe effort of trying to make certain ideas incarnate, as if they had revealed themselves to [her] first in the flesh" ⁴³. In his opinion, for all these writers "the ideas are more important than the characters, the plots, or the settings" ⁴⁴.

If one considers Huxley's four novels in the literary context, however, one is acutely aware of great differences between them and the works of the novelists enumerated above. Huxley does not limit himself to particular theories, as G. Eliot or E. M. Forster seem to do, but he is more interested in the total body of ideas, more in the manner of Peacock. Unlike Peacock — on the other hand — he does not display ideas, but examines them — just like G. Eliot and E. M. Forster seem to do. Finally, he uses his characters openly as "mouthpieces of ideas", his novels have no conventional framework, and he makes experiments with the narrative techniques.

With such a diachronic approach to the question of literary genres one must always remember about their constant development and evolution on the one hand, and on the other — about the equally constant interrelationship between literature and its milieu.

It has been demonstrated both theoretically and practically by many scholars that every novel is bound to reflect at least a part of the reality in which it has been written. Although such an approach does not seem to be promising in typological studies, still it may be helpful in explaining

⁴¹ Quoted after L. Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination. Essays on Literature and Society*, New York 1957, p. 265.

⁴² Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

some changes that occur in the genre. This approach seems to be accepted by W. van O'Connor when he writes:

The sense certain novelists, among them André Gide and Aldous Huxley, have had of living in a world of conflicting or at least complementary ideas has given rise to the novel of ideas ⁴⁵.

Increasing importance of ideas in modern life and the reflection of that phenomenon in literature have also been noticed and discussed by many other critics and novelists ⁴⁶.

This fact may throw some light on the problem of the differences between Huxley's novels and the earlier novels of ideas. Written is a period of time when ideas are not fixed, calculated, or limited by canons of strict acceptance or rejection, and by a man so fascinated with intellect and knowledge, his novels offer a new combination of traditional novelistic techniques, modern content and treatment of ideas which seems to be peculiar to his age, and as such they seem to be a development of the earlier novels of ideas.

If one goes beyond the scope of the present paper and analyses Huxley's later novels, one easily notices that his fascinations with ideas deepens, that the essayistic fragments become more and more important, that their length increases, so much so, that, as Hoffman states: "his recent novels are lengthy essays, to which are added entertainments" ⁴⁷. That tendency, in turn, brings to mind one of the most recent terms, namely, "the essay-novel" as represented by such novelists as Robert Musil, Franz Kafka, Herman Broch, or Alberto Moravia ⁴⁸. In this situation one may risk a statement that Huxley's novels clearly reflect the evolution of that genre and stand somehow between the traditional and the most recent kind of the novel of ideas.

Obviously the conclusions reached in this part of the paper still have a hypothetical character because the features of the novel of ideas have been established only on the basis of Huxley's fiction. One may venture to hope, however, that further formal and comparative analysis of the novels by the authors mentioned in this paper and other novelists creating related kinds of fiction may lead to justification of the term "novel of ideas" as meaningful in literary genology.

⁴⁵ O'Connor, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

⁴⁶ Cf. R. B. Heilman, *Literature and the Adult Laity*, [in:] *Thought in Prose*, Englewood Cliffs 1962, pp. 586—587; Trilling, *op. cit.*; statements of John Earth and Robbe-Grillet quoted by Bergonzi, *op. cit.*, pp. 45 and 37.

⁴⁷ Hoffman, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

⁴⁸ Heinstein, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

ANGIELSKA POWIEŚĆ IDEI
PRÓBA WSTĘPNEJ DEFINICJI I OPISU GATUNKU

STRESZCZENIE

Dynamiczny rozwój powieści w dwudziestym wieku, jak również coraz silniejsze związki z otaczającą ją rzeczywistością sprawiają, że we współczesnej terminologii krytycznoliterackiej pojawia się coraz więcej nazw różnych typów powieści. Ponieważ często są one tworzone indywidualnie, dla opisanego tylko cech danej powieści, oraz używane są dość dowolnie, bez podawania definicji lub ich stosunku do istniejących już określeń, wpływa to na wyraźne pogłębianie się chaosu panującego w terminologii literackiej.

Jednym z dość często używanych terminów w krytyce angielskiej jest „powieść idei”. Podobnie jak w przypadku innych określeń gatunkowych, nie doczekał się on dokładniejszego opracowania i wzbudza liczne kontrowersje dotyczące zarówno jego znaczenia, jak i zakresu użycia. Praca niniejsza jest próbą wypracowania wstępnej definicji tego gatunku na materiale pierwszych czterech powieści Aldousa Huxleya, co do których badacze są niemal całkowicie zgodni, że stanowią one doskonałe przykłady „powieści idei”. Formalna analiza tych utworów pozwoliła na ustalenie zespołu cech, które wydają się charakterystyczne dla tego gatunku. Z kolei pozwoliło to na wyprowadzenie następującej wstępnej definicji pojęcia: powieść idei charakteryzuje się strukturalną dominacją idei oraz ich analitycznym potraktowaniem; dowody obu części definicji znaleźć można w strukturze danej powieści i w jej stylu.

Druga część pracy przedstawia prawdopodobne pochodzenie gatunku na podstawie sugestii niektórych badaczy oraz analiz utworów poprzedników Huxleya. Wydaje się, że zarówno liczne cechy formalne tych utworów, jak też problem stosunku autora do otaczającej go rzeczywistości wskazują na starożytny gatunek znany pod nazwą „satyry Menippejskiej”. Tego typu stwierdzenia wymagają jednak dłuższych badań dla ich ewentualnego potwierdzenia.

Ostatnia część pracy stanowi próbę określenia pochodzenia samego terminu i rozwoju jego znaczenia, poczynając od pierwszych utworów nazywanych powieściami idei oraz podstaw używania tej nazwy aż do współczesnej powieści idei i jej przypuszczalnego dalszego rozwoju. W tym szerszym kontekście literackim wydaje się, że twórczość Huxleya stanowi, z jednej strony, rozwinięcie tradycyjnej dziewiętnastowiecznej powieści idei, z drugiej zaś — wkracza w zakres jednego z najnowszych typów powieści, a mianowicie „powieści eseistycznej”.

Proponowana tu definicja oraz sugestie dotyczące pochodzenia i rozwoju „powieści idei” mają jeszcze hipotetyczny charakter, można jednak sądzić, że dalsze badania pozwolą zarówno na ich weryfikację, jak też obszerniejsze udokumentowanie.

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