

VINTAGE HUXLEY

**THE
GENIUS
AND THE
GOODNESS**

VINTAGE CLASSICS

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About the Book

It is Christmas Eve, and John Rivers is thinking about the past; about his sheltered upbringing; about an extraordinary time spent as a lab assistant to the great physicist Henry Maartens; about Maarten's beautiful wife, Katy, and about a love affair which shook Rivers to the core and caused him to question everything he once revered.

About the Author

Aldous Huxley was born on 26 July 1894 near Godalming, Surrey. He began writing poetry and short stories in his early twenties, but it was his first novel, *Crome Yellow* (1921), which established his literary reputation. This was swiftly followed by *Antic Hay* (1923), *Those Barren Leaves* (1925) and *Point Counter Point* (1928) – bright, brilliant satires of contemporary society. For most of the 1920s Huxley lived in Italy but in the 1930s he moved to Sanary, near Toulon.

In the years leading up to the Second World War, Huxley's work took on a more sombre tone in response to the confusion of society which he felt to be spinning dangerously out of control. His great novels of ideas, including his most famous work *Brave New World* (published in 1932 this warned against the dehumanising aspects of scientific and material 'progress') and the pacifist novel *Eyeless in Gaza* (1936) were accompanied by a series of wise and brilliant essays, collected in volume form under titles such as *Music at Night* (1931) and *Ends and Means* (1937).

In 1937, at the height of his fame, Huxley left Europe to live in California, working for a time as a screenwriter in Hollywood. As the West braced itself for war, Huxley came increasingly to believe that the key to solving the world's problems lay in changing the individual through mystical enlightenment. The exploration of the inner life through mysticism and hallucinogenic drugs was to dominate his work for the rest of his life. His beliefs found expression in both fiction (*Time Must Have a Stop*, 1944 and *Island*, 1962) and non-fiction (*The Perennial Philosophy*, 1945,

Grey Eminence, 1941 and the famous account of his first mescaline experience, *The Doors of Perception*, 1954.)

Huxley died in California on 22 November 1963.

ALSO BY ALDOUS HUXLEY

Novels

Crome Yellow
Point Counter Point
Antic Hay
Those Barren Leaves
Brave New World
Eyeless in Gaza
Time Must Have a Stop
Ape and Essence
After Many a Summer
Island

Short Stories

Limbo
Mortal Coils
Little Mexican
Two or Three Graces
Brief Candles
The Gioconda Smile
(Collected Short Stories)

Biography

Grey Eminence
The Devils of Loudun

Travel

Along the Road
Jesting Pilate
Beyond the Mexique Bay

Plays

The Burning Wheel
Jonah

The Defeat of Youth
Leda
Verses and a Comedy
The Gioconda Smile

Essays and Belles Lettres

On the Margin
Proper Studies
Do What You Will
Music at Night
Texts and Pretexts
The Olive Tree
Ends and Means
The Art of Seeing
The Perennial Philosophy
Science, Liberty and Peace
Themes and Variations
The Doors of Perception
Adonis and the Alphabet
Heaven and Hell
Brave New World Revisited
Literature and Science
The Human Situation
Moksha

For Children

The Crows of Pearblossom

ALDOUS HUXLEY

The Genius and the Goddess

VINTAGE BOOKS
London

"THE TROUBLE WITH fiction," said John Rivers, "is that it makes too much sense. Reality never makes sense."

"Never?" I questioned.

"Maybe from God's point of view," he conceded. "Never from ours. Fiction has unity, fiction has style. Facts possess neither. 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 Thomas à Kempis. The criterion of reality is its intrinsic irrelevance." And when I asked, "To what?" he waved a square brown hand in the direction of the bookshelves. "To the Best that has been Thought and Said," he declaimed with mock portentousness. And then, "Oddly enough, the closest to reality are always the fictions that are supposed to be the least true." He leaned over and touched the back of a battered copy of *The Brothers Karamazov*. "It makes so little sense that it's almost real. Which is more than can be said for any of the academic kinds of fiction. Physics and chemistry fiction. History fiction. Philosophy fiction...." His accusing finger moved from Dirac to Toynbee, from Sorokin to Carnap. "More than can be said even for Biography fiction. Here's the latest specimen of the genre."

From the table beside him he picked up a volume in a glossy blue dust-jacket and held it up for my inspection.

"*The Life of Henry Maartens*," I read out with no more interest than one accords to a household word. Then I remembered that, to John Rivers, the name had been something more and other than a household word. "You were his pupil, weren't you?"

Rivers nodded without speaking.

"And this is the official biography?"

"The official fiction," he amended. "An unforgettable picture of the Soap Opera scientist—you know the type—the moronic baby with the giant intellect; the sick genius battling indomitably against enormous odds; the lonely thinker who was yet the most affectionate of family men; the absent-minded Professor with his head in the clouds but his heart in the right place. The facts, unfortunately, weren't quite so simple."

"You mean, the book's inaccurate?"

"No, it's all true—so far as it goes. After that, it's all rubbish—or rather it's non-existent. And maybe," he added, "maybe it *has* to be non-existent. Maybe the total reality is always too undignified to be recorded, too senseless or too horrible to be left unfictionalized. All the same it's exasperating, if one happens to know the facts, it's even rather insulting, to be fobbed off with Soap Opera."

"So you're going to set the record straight?" I presumed.

"For the public? Heaven forbid!"

"For me, then. In private."

"In private," he repeated. "After all, why not?" He shrugged his shoulders and smiled. "A little orgy of reminiscence to celebrate one of your rare visits."

"Anyone would think you were talking about a dangerous drug."

"But it *is* a dangerous drug," he answered. "One escapes into reminiscence as one escapes into gin or sodium amytal."

"You forget," I said, "I'm a writer, and the Muses are the daughters of Memory."

"And God," he added quickly, "is *not* their brother. God isn't the son of Memory; He's the son of Immediate Experience. You can't worship a spirit in spirit, unless you do it now. Wallowing in the past may be good literature. As wisdom, it's hopeless. Time Regained is Paradise Lost, and Time Lost is Paradise Regained. Let the dead bury their dead. If you want to live at every moment as it presents