Aldous Huxley’s Dichotomized Beginning towards Spirituality

An Analysis of Religious Aspects in *Crome Yellow*

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Abstract
This essay is an analysis of the religious aspects of *Crome Yellow*. The main focus is to discover what Aldous Huxley’s views on religion were at the time he wrote *Crome Yellow* and to explore how Huxley’s contemporary surroundings influenced his views on religion. Huxley was born into a family and a society where there was a conflict between science and religion and this conflict together with the crises of his early life, came to affect him greatly. This essay conducts an analysis of *Crome Yellow* by utilizing Peter Berger’s theory of social construction, which includes information about Huxley’s contemporary surroundings. Huxley seems to have been ambiguous towards religion. He was concerned about the future of society and opposed to organized religion. He was longing for answers and meaning, and he had begun to form a spiritual belief where colour and light are central. These spiritual aspects can be seen as the beginning of Huxley’s spiritual enlightenment.

Keywords: Aldous Huxley, *Crome Yellow*, Spirituality, religion.
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Introduction

Aldous Huxley was born in the midst of the conflict between science and religion. Not only was Huxley born into a society that was disunited and deeply affected by this conflict, but he was also born into a family where two men of importance to Huxley, in many senses, personalized this conflict. These men were his grandfather Thomas Huxley and his great uncle Matthew Arnold. Thomas Huxley was a man who believed in science and only science, whereas Matthew Arnold believed that science was inefficient in providing all that man and society needed (Sawyer 8-19). Philosophy, religion and science came to play a large role in Huxley’s life and in his literary works. In Brave New World Huxley suggests that science and technology are going to lead to a dark future for society and in later works he writes about mysticism, hypnotism, psychedelic drugs and elements of Buddhism and Hinduism (Sawyer). Crome Yellow is only mentioned briefly in many of the works that deal with Huxley’s spirituality.

It is true that religion is not in focus in Crome Yellow in the same way that it is in his later works, and it is written before Huxley develops his final theory of belief, but this is also why Crome Yellow is worth examining. Crome Yellow can possibly provide clues as to how Huxley perceived religion in his younger years and show how a deeply spiritual man started his journey, as well as show how Huxley’s religious beliefs and opinions were influenced by his surroundings. Huxley was often autobiographical in his novels, and in Crome Yellow, Denis is a portrait of Huxley himself, which gives further opportunity to answer the questions about Huxley’s religious orientation through an analysis of Crome Yellow.

In this essay Crome Yellow will be analyzed in relation to the theoretical approach of religion as a social construction. Peter Berger’s theory of religion as a social construction states that religion is made for man and by man, which means that Huxley is influenced by the contemporary surroundings and its religious thoughts, and he can also be seen as a
representative of his time. This theory provides a possibility to analyze *Crome Yellow* in relation to data about Huxley’s contemporary surroundings which will enable a detailed understanding of the novel and its representations of religion. The objective of this essay is to analyze Aldous Huxley’s views on religion in his novel *Crome Yellow* and to explore how Huxley’s surroundings might have influenced his views on religion. To be clear, the concept of religious views includes, in this case, Huxley’s own beliefs, or possibly non-beliefs, as well as his opinions on religion both on an individual level and in society. The research question is: What are Huxley's views on religion at the time and how can these views be explained in relation to his environment?

The term religion can be used and interpreted in many ways, therefore, this essay uses the definition of religion as an understanding of the universe, a view of how we should live, a notion of a world beyond the natural world and a belief in God or a transcendent order or process (Wibeck 18). The reason why this definition is used in this essay is because it includes different forms of religion, both traditional religions as well as spirituality in all its shapes and forms.

Theorical background

In this essay the theory of social construction will be applied. This theory includes many perspectives, hence, a presentation of the specific perspectives of this theory which this essay is going to use will be displayed here. Peter Berger argues in his book *The Sacred Canope* that the relationship between man and society is a dialectic phenomenon where both are products that are affected, produced, reproduced by one another (Berger 3). Berger states that religion is a social construction that has been created by man, and by society to establish an existential meaningfulness, to create an understanding of cosmos, and to construct order in society.
In the process in which a religion is created, the religion is subject to a process called legitimization. This means that knowledge is created by society to explain and justify social order or institutions. For example, kings or political authorities have been understood as they were sent by God or even as being God. Legitimation, hence, is the answer to how religion has been able to become an instrument for power and order by a number of societies in different historical settings. When the structures of a religion are being questioned or opposed this can either result in that the traditional religious structures become stronger, or that a reformation is put into motion (Berger 3-51). In Berger’s theory, it is also explained that suffering and pain evokes a need for meaningfulness and answers. Religion can therefore be reinforced in a society, by death, evil, suffering and pain (Berger 53-55).

Besides religion and its relation to society, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann state that the individual has a need of social conformation. The individual, as a new born child, has a predetermined need for sociality but is not yet a member of society. The child moves through a process called primary socialization where an understanding of themselves is formed in relation to the world and others, and so, creates an identity that is formed in relation to the specific people and environment that surrounds them. Through primary socialization the individual becomes a member of society.

Secondary socialization means that the individual establishes knowledge from a specific occupation or political standpoint. The individual has therefore formed a role and has obtained role specific knowledge such as vocabulary and norms. The individual also, unconsciously or consciously, adopts opinions, thoughts and ideas that are understood to belong to the specific group that the individual is part of through their role. The identity of this role must then coexist with the identity of the primary socialization. In the secondary socialization the individual is, in addition to their role, able to create views of their own. The
identity from primary socialization is not as free as the one that is created in secondary socialization (Berger & Luckmann 149-157).

Background: Huxley

In accordance to the theoretical perspective that this essay has taken, a picture of Huxley’s surrounding environment regarding this subject must be provided as a tool for the analysis of Crome Yellow. Therefore, the influences and opinions on religion in Huxley’s life will be presented.

Thomas Huxley, also called Darwin’s Bulldog was Aldous Huxley’s grandfather. Thomas Huxley believed in the Darwinian theory, the importance of scientific education, and overall, viewed science as the primary and dominant way in which to comprehend the world. Matthew Arnold was Aldous Huxley’s great uncle. Matthew Arnold did not resent science at all, but he did not value it as highly as Thomas Huxley did. Arnold was critical against science and reflected upon how science affected the world and the human, and thus, he focused on philosophical, religious and ideological matters in relation to science. These two men, as well as the context of society, are said to have affected Huxley’s identity and development both as a writer and in his conception of life. In the beginning of Huxley’s life, he agreed with his grandfather and held a very scientific position, but he soon started doubting. He believed that science had left a vacuum and a meaninglessness. He also started asking questions that were very much like the questions that Matthew Arnold had asked. The relationship between science and religion came to play a major part in Huxley’s life and works (Sawyer 10-20).

These two patriarchs of Huxley’s family were not the only ones who are said to have affected his view of the world. His aunt Mrs. Humphry Ward wrote a novel that dealt with science and the mysticism of Christianity which Huxley wrote highly of later in his life (Sawyer 10-20). Huxley’s mother is described as a deeply religious woman, but not in a
Huxley’s father said that he was in a bad mood when these events took place (Bedford 9). Therefore, it seems like Huxley’s father was not religious and it is also likely that he disliked religion. Huxley’s family was clearly, and in several generations, disunited in the matter of science and religion. Dana Sawyer writes: “The crisis of faith forms the genesis of Aldous’s philosophical and spiritual evolution. He would inherit not only a group of answers and a scientific method that made them possible but also a group of questions” (10).

Huxley’s life is depicted in detail in Sybille Bedford’s biography. Huxley had a safe and happy childhood, but when Huxley was fourteen years old his life suddenly changed as his beloved mother died. In the following years, he also lost most part of his eyesight from an inflammation which lead to him leaving school and his plan to become a scientist was no longer possible. Five years later, Huxley was able to start studying again, but not long after this, his brother committed suicide and the reason is believed to be unhappy love. Huxley is said to have been deeply marked by these events (Bedford 2-49). Sawyer describes the importance of these events in his biography about Huxley “These three life crises are important because they pushed him toward an early pessimism that colored his first mature outlook” (21).

In the year that followed, Huxley was struggling to figure out who he was and what he wanted to be. Sawyer writes that Huxley had been influenced by the many convictions of his family but, Huxley had a need to find his own self aside from these influences (29). Huxley was invited to Garsington where, it turned out, Huxley found help in his self-exploration. At Garsington, intellectuals freely discussed art, literature, politics, ideology, philosophy, sexuality and morality amongst many other subjects (Sawyer 29-38).

Social Darwinism was spreading in society. Social Darwinism was a Eurocentric, racist and nationalistic form of Darwinism which provided an excuse for war which both Huxley
and the others at Garsington were against. Social Darwinism and the war effected Huxley and, both he and others at Garsington developed a deep pessimism and felt anxious about the future of society. They also saw possibilities in this state of society, when there is no need to follow the traditional views there is a certain amount of freedom as to what to follow instead. These were frequently debated subjects at Garsinton (Sawyer 11-38). Based on his stays at Garsington, he wrote *Crome Yellow* and with this novel he made a name for himself (Bedford 121).

When Huxley wrote *Crome Yellow* he was criticized for being too cynical. Sawyer describes that Huxley was colored by his personal loss, which is why he was cynical (28). Additionally, he was influenced by the pessimism that evolved at Garsington. Furthermore, it is also stated that Huxley was, at this time, sure of what he did not like and less sure about what he did like (Sawyer 38-42). Sawyer writes “He understood the illness better than he understood the cure” (Sawyer 42). A major part in this was the role of science due to that he did not believe that science could provide meaning and therefore meant to find it elsewhere (Sawyer 43). In the edition of *Crome Yellow* that this essay has used, there is an introduction by Malcolm Bradbury and he writes “…that the transition from the age of religion to the age of modern science might lead not to utopia but universal anarchy, concerned him greatly” (introduction Bradbury). In addition, Huxley also believed that it was the artist, not the philosophers or scientists, that could lead society forward (Sawyer 47).

In an article written by Harvey Curtis Webster, Aldous Huxley’s view on religion, at the time when he wrote *Crome Yellow*, is described: “He was attracted to religion (or religions) he could not believe in; he hated bogus spirituality, yet trusted, half-concisely, that there is a faith that comprehends and transcends dogma” (Webster 34). Huxley is also said to be against organized religion and he believed that religion often was used to create fear and worry (Sawyer 75).
It is described that Huxley goes from “ironical detachment” in his early works, *Crome Yellow* included, to becoming a “gentle mystic” in his later works (Heitman 19). This is not what Sally L. Paulsell argues, he says that this view of Huxley is common but false. He argues that Huxley’s spiritual journey is visible in the very first of his novels, which is *Crome Yellow*. He states that Huxley’s spiritual pathway is present in *Crome yellow* by the representations of “Mystical colors and light” and he further explains “Despite elements of wishful thinking and open doubt in Huxley’s life and work, his conscious commitment to the struggle to believe in the Divine Light can be traced as early as 1922 in his first novel, *Crome Yellow*” (Paulsell 81-82). One determining reason as to why light and colors became of importance to Huxley’s religious ideas is, according to Paulsell, Huxley’s eye injury (84).

By the time Huxley was sixty years old, he had written several books regarding his spiritual beliefs, which involved mysticism and influences from Asian religions. He was regarded as a philosopher and a prophet, he proposed answers and solutions to many questions and problems regarding technology and science with his spiritual hypothesis as a cornerstone and he believed that he had found a way to reconcile religion and science. (Sawyer 1-3).

**Analysis**

Berger’s theory states that because religion is a social construction, man is influenced by the contemporary views on religion that surrounds them, and religion is influenced by man’s contemporary views. That Huxley should have been greatly influenced by the conflict between science and religion is therefore not only proved by primary and secondary socialization, but also by Berger’s theory that religion is a social construction, and additionally it is also proven by Huxley’s biographers, as is presented in the background. This analysis will firstly display an analysis of the religious representations in *Crome Yellow* to answer what Huxley’s views on religion might be at this time and how these views can be
explained by his surroundings. Therefore, according to the theory, information about Huxley’s life and surroundings, which are presented in the background about Huxley, will be used in the analysis. Hence, what Huxley writes about religion in *Crome Yellow* will be analyzed in relation to Huxley’s background. Secondly, Huxley’s views on religion will be discussed in relation to the theory to provide more information as to how Huxley’s views on religion can be explained by his surroundings.

Depictions of religion, in its many variations, are constantly present throughout the novel. This alone shows that religion is of importance to Huxley. In the following analysis, it has been found that he expresses many ideas, questions, beliefs and fears as well as criticism in relation to religion in *Crome Yellow*. He was afraid that science, technology, and the loss of religion would send the world into chaos. He was critical towards specific forms of religion and he uses aspects of religion to criticize the aristocracy. It has also been found that Huxley is ambiguous in his views and beliefs on religion. Additionally, Huxley’s future spirituality, where colour and light are of importance, is implicitly present in *Crome Yellow*. His spirituality had therefore, arguably started to develop. These findings will be presented in the following close reading of *Crome Yellow* and supported by the theoretic approach which also involves the surrounding environment of Huxley.

In *Crome Yellow*, Mr. Scogan gives his idea of a perfect world where technology and science rule. He explains how “the goddess of Applied science” (23) has provided them with precious gifts such as the cinema and the automatic pistol. This “goddess” has also given them another precious gift, the possibility to love freely without forced attachments. Mr. Scogan goes on and states that he looks forward to a time when “an impersonal generation will take the place of Nature’s hideous system” (23), and people will be made in bottles. Society’s base, the system of family, will be destroyed and new foundations will have to be found and, Mr. Scogan says, extatically, “…Eros, beautifully and irresponsibly free, will flit
like a gay butterfly from flower to flower through a sunlit world” (23). Huxley is illustrating how the world might enter chaos when science continues to evolve, and traditional values and structures fade away. In one way, it gives a positive notion to love, in the sense that it would be free, but on the other hand it also indicates that the world would enter into chaos as the base of society will be destroyed and man would not have to take responsibility. This clearly relates to the discussions and opinions that Huxley and the others at Garsington had regarding their pessimistic anxiety towards the future, but also their idea that freedom will emerge from the loss of traditional values.

This becomes clear in yet another depiction in the novel, where Mr. Scogan talks about how he is not interested in nature but only by the creations of man. He explains that he does not like to take the bus for then he is forced to look at the nature, therefore he prefers the tube where he can see nothing that is not built by man. Mr. Scogan explains his view as follows “All is human and the product of friendly and comprehensible minds. All philosophies and all religions-what are they but spiritual tubes bored through the universe!” (130). He continues to explain “…preserve me from nature, preserve me from all that is inhumanly large and complicated and obscure” (130). Huxley’s thoughts, fears and questions about technology are, arguably, presented here, in the sense that nature, philosophy and religion are placed against man-made technology and science.

Furthermore, Huxley and the people at Garsington were anti-war, and in this quote, Mr. Scogan describes the automatic pistol as a precious gift from the goddess of applied science. Huxley may imply that there is a danger of and a downside to science. Mr. Scogan also uses the words “the goddess of Applied Science” which depicts science replacing religion which Huxley was greatly concerned about, and he feared that this might not lead to utopia, as Mr. Scogan pictures it, but to chaos. According to Berger’s theory of social construction, one of religion’s function is to create order in society. The opposite to order is chaos, and chaos is
what Huxley was afraid would enter society if science removed religion and its values. Huxley therefore, also seems to believe that religion and its values have constructed an order in society, and this order was now challenged by science and technology.

Ergo, Huxley is afraid that the absence of religion and its traditional values and existential meaningfulness will lead to chaos in society, but he is also clearly critical towards religion on several occasions in the novel. These representations of criticism towards religion will now be presented.

In a conversation with Denis at the beginning of the novel, Priscilla Wimbush starts to explain that she is busy with her horoscope and tells him how she is using the stars to win when she gambles, and that she had such a boring life before she found her faith. It is explained that she was interested in “the New Thought and the Occult” (7). Huxley writes ironically about how Mrs. Wimbush spends her days with the “complicated” task of reading the horoscopes and betting on the right horses. The reader is made aware of the fact that Mrs. Wimbush has a gambling problem. The conversation goes on and Mrs. Wimbush says to Denis “‘Such a pity you don’t believe in these things, Denis, such a pity’…” (7). Denis answers “‘I can’t say I feel it so’” (7). Mrs. Wimbush explains to Denis that her life has become very exciting and amusing because of her faith, everything has now got a meaning, and nothing becomes boring because she tells Denis “I have the stars…” and “the infinite to keep in tune with…” (7).

In this event, criticism is displayed, both towards this form of faith and towards the superficial Mrs. Wimbush, who seems to use religion as an excuse and as a tool to gamble, which she has an addiction to. She is a rich person living in a mansion, but Huxley shows in this event that these things do not make a person happy, on the contrary, they are meaningless, and she therefore has to resort to faith and gambling. Her religion is pictured as a product of her meaningless way of living. Her faith is superficial, just as she is. Huxley also writes that
Denis does not believe in this form of faith and this is clearly pictured in the quote. This might therefore be interpreted as Huxley not agreeing with this form of belief.

Mrs. Wimbush, excitingly, starts to read from a book written about spirituality by a man named Mr. Barbecue-Smith. Mr. Barbecue-Smith has also written another book, Denis recalls, “what a young girl ought to know”. Mrs. Wimbush is distracted and suddenly, Mr. Barbecue-Smith’s book is thrown on the floor. The name that Huxley chose for this writer is clearly satirical and that he has also written a book about what young girls ought to know shows that this man is meant to be seen as a hypocrite, or a fake. The way that Mrs. Wimbush suddenly is distracted and throws the book on the floor shows that she too is a hypocrite that easily derails from her views, otherwise, she would have dealt with the book with care and respect.

The criticism and the satire of Mrs. Wimbush and Mr. Barbecue-Smith and their religious beliefs are reoccurring. In one event in the novel, Mrs. Wimbush introduces Denis to Mr. Barbecue-Smith and says to him that Denis is a writer too which Denis has a strong reaction to. “Denis was furious, and, to make it worse, he felt himself blushing hotly. Had Priscilla no sense of proportion? She was putting them in the same category- Barbecue-smith and himself” (25). Huxley once again, establishes the fact that Denis does not believe in this form of religion and he does not want to be associated with it. The strong standpoint that Huxley, arguably, takes against this form of faith, can be reinforced by the fact that Huxley, at this time, is said to “hate bogus spirituality”. Huxley pictures both the religion and the two believers as hypocritical which shows that this is exactly the type of spirituality that he believes to be “bogus”. The event takes places only a few pages into the novel, which might also be a clue as to how Huxley viewed this religion because it is seemingly important to him to establish, from the start, that he does not believe in this “bogus”. To give yet another example, Huxley describes Mrs. Wimbush’s spirituality and her attempts to connect to the
spirits: “Try as she could- and she tried hard- Priscilla had never seen a vision or succeeded in establishing any communication with the Spirit World” (92). Huxley arguably implies that Priscilla may try and try, but she will never succeed, because the “Spirit World” does not exist.

Furthermore, there is Mr. Bodiham who believes that God is not only merciful, but cruel and that he will bring on the apocalypse where only the true believers will survive by being saved by the lord who will return to earth. In the narrative, Mr. Bodiham starts to think about a sermon he held about the coming Armageddon. This sermon is explained by a footnote in *Crome Yellow*, to be a reproduction of an address given by E.H Horne in a meeting of clergy in 1916 and it was later published in a book by Horne (Huxley 45). This character seems to reject everything that is modern and cling on to his ideas about the end of the world. He tries to project his ideas onto the people who come to church by giving this sermon (43). Huxley was against organized religion and believed that people often used religion to create fear, which shows that he uses this narrative to criticize precisely that. The fact that this sermon was a reproduction of a real publication further suggests that this is criticism, in the sense that this way of scaring people, was used in reality. Mr. Bodiham is then made fun of, as he sits thinking about why the Apocalypse has not arrived and he observes that “England was at peace, the sun shone, the people of Crome were as wicked and indifferent as ever…” (43). He becomes angry and has a minor breakdown about the absence of the apocalypse before he calms himself and starts “…to rebuke himself for his rebellious impatience” (44). He reminds himself of all the wars that go on in the world and is comforted with the thought that Armageddon may still be arriving (44). This, once again, gives the idea that Huxley is criticizing the fanatic ways of how religion is used by some organized religions.
The criticism of Mr. Bodiham and his orthodox religion is revisited when there is a discussion about a war-memorial. Mr. Bodiham wants to build a war-memorial in the shape of “a useless work dedicated to God and carved with knops” (95), not a library that others had proposed. The war-memorial was to be dedicated to God, not man, especially since the apocalypse will come soon. In addition, those who had lost relatives in the war were to contribute to the war-memorial with an equal amount that they would have paid for a burial. Huxley is, in many regards, very clear in this section because he does not believe in Mr. Bodiham’s religion, he is opposed to the way fear is imposed on people by religion and he is also anti-war. The loss from the war should not be dedicated to God and the relatives should not pay for a memorial that is dedicated to God and not their lost loved ones. If anything was useless, it was the war (95). More criticism follows via Mr. Wimbush who expresses that Mr. Bodiham and “the pious magistrate had snuffed out for ever a little happy flame that had burned from the beginning of time” (97) which gives further strength to Huxley’s opposition against the fear imposing religion that has taken away happiness for the people.

It seems as though Huxley uses aspects of religion as a complementary tool to criticize the aristocracy on several occasions in the novel. For example, Sir Ferdinando built “privies” in the towers of Crome so that he would be as far away from the sewage and as close to the heavens as possible, for spiritual reasons. The narrative about Sir Ferdinando is followed by critique towards his toilets and his class “Eccentricity…It’s the justification of all aristocracies. It justifies leisured classes and inherited wealth and privilege and endowments and all the other injustices of that sort” (53). This satiric narrative and the criticism that follows is Huxley's way of making fun of this class, providing a picture that they believed themselves to be better, so much better that they wanted to have their toilets close to the sky and that they had the means to act on these eccentric ideas about themselves.
The same kind of satire is pictured in the narrative about George Wimbush. He comes to Crome and meets three sisters. These sisters do not eat because they think that it is unspiritual, and they talk about death as if they long for it and they talk about love as if it is incompatible with life. They set up a facade of being frail, ethereal, deep and spiritual. George Wimbush describes one of the sisters as though “she might lose her precarious hold on this material world and become all spirit” (103). Then one day when he explores the manor, he finds them in a room, indulging in heaps of food and holding chicken bones in their hands (107). The spiritual sisters of Crome where hypocrites, which suggests that Huxley is criticizing the hypocrisy of aristocracy and their idea of being more divine than others.

There are apparently two types of religion that Huxley does not agree with, “bogus spirituality” and religion that are used to evoke fear. He also uses religion to make satire of the aristocracy, but Huxley’s own lostness and long for meaning and answers to his questions are also visible in *Crome Yellow*. In one conversation between Denis and Anne, Denis explains how he was born into the world with a ready-made philosophy that has made him very unhappy. Denis says: “One entered the world with ready-made ideas about everything. One had a philosophy and tried to make life fit into it. One should have lived first and then made one’s philosophy to fit life” (18). This quote is strikingly similar to the way that Huxley’s own life has been described by biographers and other writers cited in the background about Huxley where it is stated that he was born into a family with a lot of ready-made opinions, which had led him to have a lot of questions to which he looked for answers. At the time that he stayed at Garsington he had a need to find his own views of the world. Huxley was critical of his environment and he was, as described in the background, sure of what he did not like but not sure of what he did like, which is also visible in this quote as Denis says that he does not have a philosophy of his own and therefore he has not been able to create his own meaning of life.
Huxley, at the time he spent at Garsington, felt a meaninglessness and a hopelessness, and he had no sense of direction. His worries, and his hopelessness towards the future as well as his thoughts about the universe are explicitly clear as he says that it is not just Anne who has made him miserable, but that he is “wretched about himself, the future, life in general, the universe” (48). Huxley seems fully aware of his lack of meaning as he writes about Denis who exclaims “…the fact that he knew his disease did not help him to cure it” (48).

In the event in which Denis complains to Anne about his lack of an individual philosophy, Denis, in a dramatic state, exclaims “was it surprising that one was miserable, horribly unhappy” (18) and as he asks this question he stands “in an attitude of crucifixion” (18). Huxley describes his character as an ironic martyr that makes himself unhappy, which makes Anne feel sorry for him and she describes him as pathetic. This is what Huxley does in this novel, he exaggerates and makes satire, but in his choice of topic and in relation to his background, one could argue that there is an implicit notion that Huxley’s autobiographic character Denis displays Huxley’s own desire for answers, and as he stands “in an attitude of crucifixion” he desperately asks for answers from a higher power. It can also be argued that Huxley makes fun of religion and his character in the way that Denis acts in this quote, and this might very well be the case because Huxley is, at this time, very uncertain of what he believes, therefore this might represent his own ambivalence as well as his yearning for answers.

This ambivalence becomes clearer as this event proceeds. Anne says that she simply takes things as they come, and she enjoys what is enjoyable and she avoids things that are not. She is stunned that anyone could complicate these things as Denis does. He replies that it is not possible for her to understand, because she was born a “pagan” and Denis explains “I am trying laboriously to make myself one” (19). He goes on, in a sense of despair, and says that he has to make up justifications for everything that is delightful. He invents what he calls
excuses and tells himself that “art is the process by which one reconstructs the divine out of chaos”, “pleasure is one of the mystical roads to union with the infinite…”, and he also describes that he perpetually tells himself that women are “the broad way to divinity” (19).

Huxley seems to suggest, in satire, that Denis’s beliefs prevent him from enjoying life because he is too serious and thinks too much, which makes life hard for him. Then again, Denis does not seem to be able to stop believing. This could be seen as if this character is imprisoned by his faith and as Huxley believed that the lack of religion would create a sense of freedom, this could represent how religion creates a sense of imprisonment. The lack of faith was also believed to create a sense of meaninglessness and this is arguably visible in this quote, by the way that Denis needs to invent a meaning to the things he wishes to enjoy.

Huxley has chosen to describe Denis, as if he is not a “a pagan”, which shows that this character, in some ways, is religious. The word “Pagan” means a person not subscribing to any major or recognized religion or a non-Christian, according to the Oxford English Dictionary. Therefore, Denis does have, to some extent, a Christian belief or he is influenced by Christianity in the way that he perceives the world. Earlier in the novel, Denis said that he did not have faith, hence, he seems to be very uncertain of what he believes. It is also said that Denis tries hard to get rid of this religion, but he cannot because it is as if he needs it too much. Since Huxley has criticized Christianity, this may represent how Huxley tries to separate himself from Christianity but that he still has a need for a religion. It could also be meant as criticism towards Christianity in the way that it seems as though Denis is imprisoned by its ideas, but since the event pictures a need to find explanation and meaning in life, it is more likely to symbolize Huxley’s need for meaning and answers in relation to religion.

Denis’s despair seems to reach its peak in the end of the novel where his confusion about life makes him walk up to Crome’s tower and, as he stands there, he fantasizes about killing himself, talking to himself in a dramatic sense. He explains that he gets a feeling of
solemnity as he stands looking down from the tower. Mary, who sleeps in the tower, sees
Denis and asks him what he is doing. They sit down, talk, and Denis tells her everything,
about his misery and despair. As he pours out everything to Mary, he feels as if “…his soul
was floating in a sad serenity” (164). “No, I can’t go on like this,’ (165) Denis answers Mary,
and together they make plans for Denis to leave Crome. Huxley describes how Denis has
found a sense of calmness in his soul in this event. Denis fantasizes about suicide which gives
the picture that Denis’s despair and lostness has reached its culm but as he disburdens himself
by talking to Mary he seems, for a moment, saved. Denis has, for a moment, found a serenity
in his soul which arguably are words that can be related to spirituality.

The day after when Denis sends a telegram that will trick the others into believing that
he has to go home, he thinks about his decision of going home “…a decisive step taken- and
he so rarely took decisive steps; he felt pleased with himself” (167). After this he expresses a
lightness and sits meditating behind a newspaper as Mr. Scogan talks. Later on, as the
telegram arrives, he suddenly changes his mind and the novel ends in a melancholy manner
and Denis thinks to himself that “it was time for him to lay himself in his coffin” (169). Denis
seems to have achieved a small glimpse of serenity and he is, for a short while, happy and
calm, but it swiftly turns, and Denis is surrounded by darkness again, bitterly thinking that he
is just going to give up and lay himself into a coffin. In this representation, Huxley explains
that Denis finds a serenity in his soul and that he also meditates, which can be seen as aspects
of religious faith, but this is quickly changed, and Denis goes back to his old lost self.

It is not only Denis who seems to doubt his views on religion. Mr. Scogan has expressed
his views on technology and said that he wants a world where humans are made in bottles and
be in a place where he can see nothing that is not built by man. On one occasion in the novel,
Mr. Scogan says that he tried to become religious and that “life would be richer, warmer,
brighter, altogether more amusing” (141) if he could become religious. But Mr. Scogan has
not been able to achieve any religious beliefs. This portrays, again, a need or a longing for religion and a view that it can provide meaning and happiness.

Throughout the whole novel Huxley uses a language that is filled with words that can be related to religion and spirituality, such as spirituality, mystical, universe, magical and cosmos. He often uses colour and light to describe the surroundings as well as the character’s ways of apprehending their surroundings and he prescribes these colors with features of magic. Below follow three examples from *Crome Yellow*, that prove these statements.

The light spurted and then grew steady. Magically, a little universe had been created, a world of colours and forms- Anne’s face, the shimmering orange of her dress, her white bare arms, a patch of green turf- and round about a darkness that had become solid and utterly blind. (88-89)

…an angel’s head, pink cheeks, and hair like a bell of gold. An angel’s face, the feather of an angel’s wing…somehow the whole atmosphere of this sunrise was rather angelic. (110)

‘That’s the test for the literary mind.’ Said Denis. ‘The feeling of magic, the sense that words have power. The technical, verbal part of literature is simply a development of magic. (115-116)

This depicts how Huxley, at the time, already had a system of beliefs and an individual spirituality that becomes visible in the way that he writes and by his choice of words. It has been argued that Huxley was not religious at this time and this might therefore, solely, be an expression of poetic images in the narrative, but it is more likely that he had started his
process toward spirituality, than him being completely non-religious. This claim is strengthened by Paulsell’s findings, which are displayed in the background about Huxley, because he too found that Huxley’s spirituality can be found in *Crome Yellow* through representations of light and colour. Though his spiritual belief is only implicitly exposed in *Crome Yellow* it might be the case that Huxley does not know yet that this will evolve to become a spiritualism which would be of major importance to him. Even if he was unaware of his spiritual ways of viewing the world, it is clear that his future spirituality has begun to form at the time he wrote [*Crome Yellow*].

Despite all of these prospects of religion that this essay has dealt with, there is also another important aspect in connection to them that should be mentioned. Huxley believed that through art, society could be moved forward. Therefore, Huxley places great pressure on literature as an art form, which, arguably, can be seen in the quote where Huxley describes literature and words as something magical. As pictured earlier in the essay, Huxley also writes that art is the process where divinity can be reconstructed out of chaos. Chaos is what Huxley believed would be the result of society if science and technology would take over and religion would disappear. Even though Huxley did not know the cure yet, he seems dedicated to making an impression on society and finding a solution that would bind together science and religion to avoid chaos. Later in Huxley’s life he believed that he had found this solution because he found a religion that could coexist with science.

This essay has found that Huxley is troubled by how science, technology and the lack of religion may come to affect society, that Huxley criticizes “bogus spirituality” which includes new age and the occult. He criticizes the orthodox form of Christianity, and people who use religion to create fear. He is also using aspects of religion to criticize the aristocracy. Huxley seems ambivalent in his own views of religion as he pictures religion in both negative and positive ways and depicts Denis, being his autobiographical self, as being very unsure of
what to believe. It has shown traces of Huxley’s future spirituality, with focus on colour and light which shows that Huxley had begun to develop a spiritual belief. Lastly, Huxley believed that literature could affect society and his struggle towards finding a belief that could include both science and religion started as early as in *Crome Yellow*.

Huxley’s views on religion, as they have been found in the analysis of *Crome Yellow*, can be further examined and explained by using Berger’s socialization process. In Huxley’s primary socialization he is surrounded by views about science and religion and he is constantly exposed to opinions regarding this conflict, from a number of important persons in his early life. In the primary socialization an identity is created in relation to the surroundings, therefore, it was preconditioned that science and religion came to play an important part in Huxley’s identity and life. Since his family disagreed on certain things in the roles of science and religion it is also predestined that Huxley, in his primary socialization, should inhabit a somewhat ambiguous relationship towards science and religion.

When reaching secondary socialization, the person starts to create an individual identity which must coexist with the one from primary socialization and at this stage one is affected by the role that one has taken and by the others that belong to the same role. Huxley’s future plan of becoming a scientist was made impossible by his damaged eyesight and he was instead on his way to becoming an intellectual writer. As said in the background, Huxley was struggling to find his own identity separated from his family’s influences on him. He had started to ask questions and develop ideas about the world, but so far, he had no answers and his ideas were not complete, he was lost. He was drawn between the ongoing formation of his identity in secondary socialization and his already existing identity from the primary socialization.

Huxley’s primary socialization involved being influenced by a lot of criticism towards religion, but it also included questions and worries about how science and technology would
come to affect society, as well as more positive views on religion. In his secondary
socialization he was influenced by the people at Garsington who also had worries about the
future without religion and its traditional values and structures. Huxley was drawn between
science and religion from when he was a child, and this was deeply rooted in his identity. As
he began to form his own identity, he did not know what to believe. This explains why there
are representations of both criticism towards religion and towards science as well as implicit
representations of spirituality in the form of light and colors.

At Garsington he found a role, a role as an intellectual and as a writer, and here he was
influenced by other intellectuals. He developed a pessimism, which others at Garsington did
too and together they were anxious about the future and its state once traditional values would
be lost. As a first step towards becoming a famous writer and in Huxley’s process of
secondary socialization and creating an individual identity, his stays at Garsington were an
important time in Huxley’s life. This is made even more clear by the fact that he wrote Crome
Yellow which was the product of the time that he spent at Garsington.

When a religion is legitimized, it is given the possibility to have power over its
followers, which is why organized religion has been able to be used as a tool to place fear into
people. Huxley was strongly against the way that religion could be used to create fear and he
was against organized religion. When the structures of religion are questioned, it can become
stronger or a reformation can be started. In Huxley’s time, Darwinism was popular, science
and religion stood against one another. The world was changing, and Huxley was trying to
find new meaning and new answers.

Huxley, as already mentioned, was not sure of what he believed in, as he was in the
process of creating a new identity in secondary socialization. Himself and his works from this
time are described as pessimistic. The crises that Huxley suffered in his young years are said
to be an important reason as to why he developed this pessimism. According to Berger’s
theory it is common that man resorts to faith when being exposed to death and pain. Therefore, these three crises can also be a major factor in why Huxley started to develop a spirituality. Berger states that religion creates meaning and give answers to man about the universe, and that it establishes order. Huxley was, when he wrote *Crome Yellow*, longing for meaning and answers and he was afraid what would happen to the order in society without religion. Religion has several important functions for man and society and possibly, this gives further reasons why Huxley starts to develop a spirituality and why religion is so constantly handled in *Crome Yellow*.

Conclusion

*Crome Yellow* does not seem to have been of interest to any of the writers that have focused on the aspects of religion in Huxley’s works. This essay has shown that there are many interesting representations of religion in *Crome Yellow* and it has argued that religion was an important factor for Huxley even in his younger years. Huxley was born into the conflict between science and religion and this came to have major influence on Huxley. Huxley’s grandfather was “Darwin’s Bulldog”, whereas his grand uncle was more spiritual and had worries about the future of society. His aunt wrote a book about Christian mysticism. His mother was religious, and his father was not. Hence, in his primary socialization, Huxley created an identity which included a dichotomized relationship to religion, and he had, like his grand uncle and his aunt, questions and worries about the future with science and without religion.

With the theory of social construction this essay has used data about Huxley’s life to analyze the representations in *Crome Yellow*, to find out about Huxley’s view on religion, at the time he wrote *Crome Yellow*, and how his views on religion can be explained by his contemporary surroundings.
In *Crome Yellow* there are a great number of representations of religion and in analyzing them, in accordance to the theoretic perspective and the background, it has been found that Huxley presents several different meanings in relation to them. He expresses his fears, worries and questions in relation to science and technology. He has an ambiguous relationship towards religion and he has a need for religion, but he does not know what to believe in. He criticizes New age and the occult, and the organized Christian religion and he uses aspects of religion to criticize the aristocracy. A start to Huxley’s spiritual belief, with focus on colour and light, is implicitly found in *Crome Yellow*. Huxley believed that art could lead society forward, that literature possessed a magic power and through art, society can be led from chaos to divinity.

In Huxley’s primary socialization he was influenced by different opinions concerning the conflict between science and religion and his ambiguous relationship to science and religion was therefore predestined to occur in Huxley’s identity. As he starts to evolve during secondary socialization and as he finds his role as an intellectual and a writer, he has many questions and is somewhat lost in how to perceive the world. He is influenced by the people at Garsington and develops a pessimism and a hopelessness, and a meaninglessness towards the future. Huxley is, at this time, unsure of what to believe. He knows what he does not like but he is not sure of what he likes. This state of mind and his time at Garsington is very much visible in *Crome Yellow*.

The pessimism that Huxley developed was partly influenced by the people at Garsington, but the three crises that Huxley had suffered earlier were also a great influence. Suffering is said to evoke a need for meaning and answers, which religion can provide, and it is therefore common that death and suffering leads to a religiosity. This, together with the influences from Huxley’s primary socialization and secondary socialization can give an answer as to why Huxley sought faith and why religion is a major theme in *Crome Yellow*. 
both as a longing for it and as criticism towards it. Huxley’s criticism towards organized religion can be explained by legitimization and the fact that society had begun a process of change regarding religion.

Huxley’s display of religion in *Crome Yellow* is versatile and together with the theoretic approach and his background, it has been possible to create a view of Huxley’s beginning towards his spirituality which came to play a major part in his life and in his works. It has also been able to give a picture of Huxley’s early view on religion and science in society.

Works cited


