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### ALDOUS HUXLEY, VERNON LEE AND THE *GENIUS LOCI*

By RICHARD CARY

ONCE every five years the American Academy of Arts and Letters presents its Award of Merit for the Novel "in recognition of a novelist's entire corpus of work." In 1959 it selected Aldous Huxley for the honor, thus bringing to semi-official culmination an opinion long harbored by the literate reading public. To those who have read the cited succession of novels (*Crome Yellow*, 1921, to *The Genius and the Goddess*, 1955) there remains no doubt that he has "done the best work in our time in . . . the novel of ideas." But this is to isolate a single facet of his irradiant output. For almost forty-five years Huxley has emitted a profuse and provocative flow of poems, essays and fiction of extraordinary subject range. The categories in his recent *Collected Essays* are indicative: nature, travel, love, sex and physical beauty, literature, painting, music, taste and style, history, politics, psychology, sense and psyche, way of life. In short, the whole spectrum of human experience.

Awed by the illimitability of Huxley's scope, V. S. Pritchett was moved to remark, "If the electronic brain could develop the temperament of the artist, it would become Aldous Huxley." He also characterized him as "a mellifluous encyclopaedia," a man who "gave the impression [of knowing] the Britannica by heart." Pritchett was secure in his intuition. From the beginning, Huxley was hard put to resist "the temptation to read promiscuously, omnivorously and without purpose." During earlier years of extensive travel, his inveterate companion was at least one volume of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, from which he gleaned an "almost countless number of curious and improbable facts." His interim biographer John Atkins says without qualification that "Nothing was beneath his interest." The beauty of Huxley's amplitude, however, is its unpedantic quality. In this he resembles Emberlin, his arcane sonneteer in "Eupompus Gave Splendour to Art by Numbers," — a person "immensely erudite, but in a wholly unencyclopaedic way."

Thirty-five years ago, Huxley had not the stature he enjoys today but he was far from unknown. By 1925 he had published

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five volumes of poetry, three novels, three collections each of essays and short stories, and was busily constructing three more books which were to appear in 1926. *Crome Yellow*, *Mortal Coils*, *Antic Hay*, and *Young Archimedes* had established him as a portent in prose fiction, yet the essay — particularly the travel essay — was a matter of capital concern to him at this time. Three of the four sections in *Along the Road* (1925) are titled: "Travel in General," "Places," "By the Way." It is unremarkable, then, that he should pick up and read with absorption Vernon Lee's assembled portraits of places, *The Golden Keys* (1925). On May 26 of that year, from 15 Via S. Margherita a Montici, Firenze, Huxley sent her this coruscant letter (now in the Colby College Library):

Dear Miss Paget.

I have been savouring the *Golden Keys*<sup>1</sup> — if one can be said to savour a key — at leisure & with the keenest enjoyment. I tend to like best the papers about the places I know myself — Bologna & that beautiful Bologna road (where we were once held up for a night, in arctic cold, by the snow) and that exquisite Villa Gori at Siena<sup>2</sup> (which it was only the lack of drains & water that prevented us once from actually living in). They recall old delights and make one observe significant details which I had not noticed or insufficiently appreciated. From the known I proceed with confidence to the unknown, feeling sure

<sup>1</sup> Colby College's *The Golden Keys and Other Essays on the Genius Loci* (John Lane, London: 1925) was Miss Paget's personal copy. Across the front of the olive green dust cover is scrawled *V Paget*, brusquely underlined. On the first endleaf she wrote *Casa*, for *Casa Paget*, the family home. On page 3 she scored *elms* and penciled *planes* in the margin; on page 4 she slashed *n* in *town* and indicated *er*; on page 7 she lined out the second element of *rose-colored* and substituted *geranium*; on page 23 the adjective *frescoed* is shifted to modify *vases* instead of *hedges*. Then, as perhaps fatigue or ennui set in, she did not even trouble to cut open at the fore edge two pairs of pages containing half titles of essays. Not until page 237 does further emendation of text occur; there she added *n* to *Gipsel* in the epigraph to "At the Chalet." In archaeological conspiracy with time and damp, a now absent metal paper clip has spread its immortal brown stain along the top margin of the last half dozen pages.

<sup>2</sup> In *The Golden Keys*, Chapter VI is "The Old Bologna Road," Chapter VII, "Dusky Many-Towered Bologna," and Chapter XXII, "The Woods Around Siena." Miss Paget knew the magic of euphony and made the most of it in describing "the road from Bologna to Florence by Pietramala and Loiano." It was Edith Wharton, "the American novelist who has so great a knowledge of Italian gardens," who introduced her to the Villa Gori outside Porta Ovale. Miss Paget's depiction of the Seven Churches round San Stefano, with "barrocco *Gesu Mortos* shelved where you expect only broken chairs and derelict besoms," and the tunnels of clipped *ilex* at Siena, so remindful of Laocoon's writhing captors, were bound to clutch at Huxley's gothic sensibility.

During 1923-1925 Huxley lived for the most part in Italy. In *Along the Road* (also published in London, 1925), he recorded his own impressions of this region in "The Palio at Siena" and "A Night at Pietramala."

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that, when I come to visit Vézelay & Semur & Wolframsdorf,<sup>3</sup> I shall find that I know them already — know the essential and artistically important things about them — from your book.

How much I like, too, your generalizations about the Genius Loci! One may be born a worshipper of more spectacular deities — from Jehovah to D. H. Lawrence's Dark God,<sup>4</sup> from Dionysus to the object of Boehme's ecstasies — one may be born but it is useless to try to make oneself, consciously, a worshipper at such shrines. For most of us, I fancy, Wordsworth's Natural Pieties<sup>5</sup> are the most decent & satisfactory thing. Of the theory & practice of the Natural Pieties your books are a most delicate and beautiful exposition.

I am looking forward with faith, hope & patience to the end of this abominable weather. When it comes, I shall venture to propose myself again, one afternoon. And if it doesn't come — which seems, after all, likely enough — well, I shall do the same.

Yours very sincerely,  
Aldous Huxley.

To a request for permission to print this letter, Huxley assented graciously on a 3 x 4 engraved informal correspondence card. The meticulous mind picked out a flaw in the typed transcript, recalling precisely what he had written over thirty-four years ago. (One suffers no qualms on this point. His handwriting is  $\frac{1}{2}$  of 1% more legible than Miss Paget's, which is a relentless cacograph.) To inquiries about where and when he first met Miss Paget, and his impression of her as a personality,

<sup>3</sup> Vézelay appealed to Miss Paget on three counts: its air of being "a miniature Siena," the great narthex of the Church of the Magdalen, and its "longings for everything which reality denies." The pellucid blue sky, the black-aproned children, and the ancient billiard table of M. du Châtelet caught her eye in Semur-en-Auxois, but it must have been the anomalous mytho-Christian synthesis that intrigued Huxley: the bunches of freshly harvested grapes adorning statues of the Virgin and the Christ Child. The pseudo-Palladian front and pastiche interior of Schloss Wolframsdorf would have beckoned any real amateur of the road.

<sup>4</sup> Some critics purport to see marked Laurentian influences in Huxley's thinking. Huxley maintained a long and satisfactory friendship with Lawrence, edited a volume of his letters, and is said to have re-created him as Mark Rampion in *Point Counter Point*.

<sup>5</sup> The phrase is transcribed from "My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold." At this point in his career Huxley was quoting Wordsworth with notable frequency. In his review, "A Wordsworth Anthology," he had said: "Brought up as children in the Wordsworthian tradition, we were taught to believe that a Sunday walk among the hills was somehow equivalent to church-going; the First Lesson was to be read among the clouds, the Second in the primroses; the birds and the running waters sang hymns, and the whole blue landscape preached a sermon 'of moral evil and of good'." [See Wordsworth's "The Tables Turned," stanza 6.]

But Huxley was already altering his faith. In *Those Barren Leaves*, a novel published in the same year he wrote this letter, he could let one of his characters disparage "old William's mild pantheism." And not much later, in "Wordsworth in the Tropics," he proclaimed the elder poet's decline from "a natural aesthete . . . into a moralist, a thinker," adding glumly, "The angels triumphed. Alas!"

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he responded expeditiously, this time on an 8½ x 11 sheet from a three-ring loose-leaf notebook:

Dear Professor Cary,

It was, if I remember rightly, during World War I that I first met Miss Paget — at Gorsington, the home of Lady Ottoline Morrell, near Oxford. Later, when my first wife & I were living at Florence, I saw her fairly often and used always to enjoy her conversation. She had read everything in most European languages; but her talk was not merely erudite, it was extremely witty. One of my greatest pleasures was to listen to her talking in Italian, which she spoke with the kind of literary perfection which can only be achieved by a foreigner who has completely mastered the language but still speaks it from the outside, so to say, as an artist consciously manipulating his medium.

Yours sincerely,  
Aldous Huxley.

Huxley had every reason to admire Vernon Lee, mentally and temperamentally. They have much in common in several areas; the art of conversation, for one. Atkins avers that Huxley could “talk fluently about everything under the sun,” and Osbert Sitwell lists as one of his myriad topics “the elaborate love-making of lepidoptera.” A reporter of the London *Times* testified to Lee’s agility with this compliment supreme: “She could hold her own with such a master of good talk as Whistler” — equally in Italian and French as in English.

Comparable, also, are they in the matter of literary fecundity. Against some fifty volumes published over the span of forty-four years by Huxley, Lee can equate forty-three titles (some in two or three volumes) in fifty-two years. Both have formidable checklists of appearances in newspapers and periodicals: many of his earlier pieces originated in his column “Marginalia” in the *Athenaeum*, while she was represented almost every week in the *Westminster Gazette*. As to versatility, Vernon Lee wrote on similar and no fewer categories than those noted above for Huxley. This affinity of interests brought about a diverting concurrence of titles. Thus, Lee’s *Limbo* (1897) is matched by Huxley’s *Limbo* (1920), her *Music and Its Lovers* (1932) by his *Music at Night* (1931), *Genius Loci* (1899) by *The Genius and the Goddess* (1955). There is of course no conscious larceny of methods or approach here. Huxley’s *Limbo*, for instance, is a collection of short fiction; Lee’s a bouquet of essays.

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They shared enthusiasm in psychology, esthetics, pacifism — the parallel could be extended out of hand. But to revert to 1925 and the gist of Huxley's letter to Miss Paget, they were incontestably devotees of travel and accomplished essayists. David Daiches has said that even in his novels Huxley's "real genius is as an essayist," avouching Huxley's own statement that "following Montaigne, I have tried to make the best of all the essay's three worlds." *Along the Road* (1925), subtitled *Notes and Essays of a Tourist*, was his first accumulation in this genre. *Jesting Pilate, the Diary of a Journey*, followed the next year.

By 1925, Vernon Lee had compiled no less than seven books of travel essays: *Limbo and Other Essays* (1897), *Genius Loci, Notes on Places* (1899), *The Enchanted Woods, and Other Essays on the Genius of Places* (1905), *The Spirit of Rome, Leaves From a Diary* (1906), *The Sentimental Traveller, Notes on Places* (1908), *The Tower of the Mirrors, and Other Essays on the Spirit of Places* (1914), *The Golden Keys and Other Essays on the Genius Loci* (1925). It is to be noted that only the first gives no positive sign that she is dealing with the actualities of locale.

The essays in these volumes were largely extracted from her steady contributions to the *Westminster Gazette*. In style, tone and depth they are far superior to what one expects from newspaper illuminati. Here is evidenced a taut but delicate intelligence, raising scores of prose vignettes above platitude with illusive poetic charm. The language is apt, the allusions from art and literature abundant, the philosophy forceful but not disagreeable. Her contemporaries were nothing if not impressed. They ranked her with such princelings as Lamb, Hunt, Hazlitt, Emerson, Sterne, Stevenson, Addison, Steele and Henry James, predicting that her slim but solid essays would "echo like faint spinet-notes down the corridors of time."

Her hypothetical *genius loci* did not spring full-blown from the fore edge of her first book on travel. *Limbo* (1897) reveals only casually the substantial image which evolves Proteus-like in succeeding volumes. "The Lie of the Land" merely suggests qualities which will figure importantly in Lee's later individuation of the idea. Her ecstatic discovery is basically physical to begin with. "It is extraordinary how much of my soul

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seems to cling to certain peculiarities of what I have called *lie of the land*, undulations, bends of rivers, straightenings and snakings of road." This she quickly allies with the subconscious: "How much of one's past life, sensations, hopes, wishes, words, has got entangled in the little familiar sprigs, grasses and moss." Then with the mystic: "The landscape one actually sees with the eyes of the body and the eyes of the spirit — *the landscape you cannot describe*." Finally, she imputes to it an evocative magic: "The power of outdoor things . . . can make one live for a moment in places which have never existed save in the fancy." But she does not, herein, endow this mysterious force with a name of its own.

Two years thence, the inchoate concept had acquired definition and an appellation.<sup>6</sup> In the introduction to *Genius Loci* (1899), Lee summed up her occult formulation with a nonsense air:

Genius Loci. A divinity, certainly great or small as the case may be, and deserving of some silent worship. But, for mercy's sake, not a personification; not a man or woman with mural crown and attributes, and detestable definite history, like the dreadful ladies who sit round the Place de la Concorde. To think of a place or a country in human shape is, for all the practice of the rhetoricians, not to think of it at all. No, no. The Genius Loci, like all worthy divinities, is of the substance of our heart and mind, a spiritual reality. And as for visible embodiment, why that is the place itself, or the country; and the features and speech are the lie of the land, pitch of the streets, sound of bells or of weirs; above all, perhaps, that strangely impressive combination, noted by Virgil, of "rivers washing round old city walls."

. . . Although what I call Genius Loci can never be personified, we may yet feel him nearer and more potent, in some individual monument or feature of the landscape. He is immanent very often, and subduing our hearts most deeply, at a given turn of a road; or a path cut in terraces in a hillside, with view of great distant mountains; or, again, in a church like Classe, near Ravenna; most of all, perhaps, in the meeting-place of streams, or the mouth of a river, both of which draw our feet and thoughts time after time, we know not why or wherefore. The genius of places lurks there; or, more strictly, *he is it*.

<sup>6</sup> Here and hereafter, Lee or her publishers were consistently inconsistent with the rendition of that name — sometimes capitalized, sometimes italicized, sometimes neither, sometimes both, within the same essay. For the *genius loci* Lee created numerous agnomens (the spirit of places), familiar epithets (the benign divinity), corollaries (the sentimental traveller), and archetypes (the enchanted woods) to impart immediacy and a sense of fullness to her duplex universe.

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Intense and abiding friendship can be established with places and, as is befitting deity, may at best develop into outright worship. "I have a feeling as of something like . . . a religious rite accomplished, binding the place and me together." Soberly, she underscores the role of creative imagination in this love of localities. The drama exists only for those who have the capacity to will it, who understand and assent. For it is "like art, religions, philosophic systems, and all the things we make to suit our likings." With unfeigned passion she implores the spirit to promulge itself:

*Saget, Steine, mir an; o sprecht, ihr hohen Paläste;  
Strassen, redet ein Wort! Genius, regst du dich nicht?*  
[Tell me, O stones; speak, you lofty palaces;  
Streets, speak a word; Genius, do you not stir?]

But she is woman enough and romantic enough to skirt the pitfalls of consistency. In despite of her sturdy protests, she sublimely repudiates her foremost dogma — "for mercy's sake, not a personification." Before long (page 38) she tells of meeting a satyric old man "all dyed an exquisite bluish verdigris green," and without a tremor designates him "a bronze *genius loci*." In the rambling course of five future books she was to make sundry other adjustments and refinements.

Direct references to the *genius loci* or its several aliases are most frequent in *The Enchanted Woods* (1905). One is apt to find generalizations about the elusive divinity in the initial and terminal sections, while in between lies an enticement of details. She laments the "stupid wicked carnival sacrilege" which ignores the organic habit and reason of places (climate, soil, vegetation, lie of land, history) and makes them "into living creatures, charming friends, or venerable divinities." She decrees the impersonality of the spirit, yet in the next breath conjures it as "a human voice and human eyes . . . personified in kindly living creatures." She asserts that "whole districts have meant friends," and tarries hopefully "at unknown gates in alien places" for a glimpse of the fugitive. She concedes that it plays questionable tricks of recall and identity on dedicated travelers, but assigns it the very human traits of friendliness and humility. In Gascony she concludes that "The Genius Loci of these parts must be, and is, a human soul."

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In contradistinction, Lee objectifies the presiding spirit of places as an oread in receptive trees or a naiad in pure beryl water, of necessity "like the great divinities of Olympus . . . an intangible idol." To this mythos she prays that it "bestow upon us eyes and hearts such as will recognize thy hidden shrines all over the world." Horror strikes her at the thought of impiety, and she offers "sacrificial and holy tributes." Penitently she accepts the "tiny sample" of reality permitted us — "the *enough* utterly denied" — as "one of the small cruelties with which, like every other divinity, he troubles and chastens and makes ready the souls of his worshippers."

*The Spirit of Rome* (1906) has, conversely, precious little to say about the deity as such. Lee states plainly in the opening pages that she intends to confine herself to the city's physical character. There are a couple of phrasal curtsies to the *genius loci* but no dilate descriptions or discussions. The spirit is implicit here. One derives as one may, with no assist from the author. This is less tasking than it might seem, for these are brief "left-over" notes and no significant unorthodoxies intrude.

Although new attributes and a new dimension accrue to the *genius* in *The Sentimental Traveller* (1908), of commanding value in this book is the account of Vernon Lee's epiphany, her "brief but unforgotten vision of Rome as it existed for other folk." When she was a child, her own household *moved* often ("careful to see nothing on the way") but never *traveled*. It was her good fortune while at Rome in these early years to fall within the ken of "enchancing, indomitable, incomparable" Mrs. Mary Singer Sargent, mother of the famous American artist. Lee's meanderings with this "high priestess of them all, the most favoured and inspired votary of the Spirit of Localities" opened her eager young eyes to "the spirit immanent in those cupolas and towers and hilly pine-groves." The germination of her lifelong ardor took place then and there, grew as she grew, changed as she changed.

In *The Sentimental Traveller* Lee re-emphasizes the god's tendency to caprice: he refuses his presence, sometimes coyly, assuming odd disguises "when indiscreetly invited to prophesy;" and sometimes obstinately, when "scared by elaborate ritual." Not infrequently, as she hinted in *The Enchanted Woods*, ca-

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price can turn to Calvinistic vehemence. The *genius* exhibits elements of Jehovah's jealous wrath in "smiting and humbling," "delighting to flout self-righteous worshippers." Here, Lee also decries the dilettantism of such as Pater, Stevenson and Ruskin, who profane the cult through their eulogies of picturesque squalor and decay. "The Genius of Places," she declares huffily, "is no immoral divinity." Salient, however, is her extension of the *genius*' function to "reveal our real self to ourselves." We carry this ineffable spirit within, "to be brooded over in quiet and void." As in all mystic communion, there occur moments of "aridity," during which we are prone to regard certain well-traveled districts as hackneyed. But this is the fault of "our own eyes and soul, because we see their commonplace side and the rubbish of everyday detail which we bring with us." In compensation, the power which the *genius* grants us — of seeing things in the shape of our hearts' dream — endues drabness with the stuff of Eden, Arden, and the Hesperides.

Six years later, *The Tower of the Mirrors* (1914) repeated the incommunicable, untranslatable message which the god of places poured into Lee's innermost soul, compounded the inconsistency that the *genius* was "after all, largely the spirit of a region's inhabitants," and once more endorsed the spirit's ability to recall similar loved places "like views in opposite mirrors." But no new notions cropped up.

So it is that when Huxley "savoured" *The Golden Keys* (1925) the image of *genius loci* was virtually complete. All but the last of these twenty-five essays were written before the war, struck off in familiar vein as she trod her uncertain cycle around Italy, England, France, Switzerland and Germany. Affirmatively, she states what once she had put negatively: the *genius* is, of all indwelling gods, the youngest, humblest, most decent — "a truly moral godhead." She unfurls another catalogue of its luminous properties: the philosophy, poetry, music of a nation; the shape of its buildings; the kindly, gracious, childish habits of its people; the winter boxes for birds; the wheels for storks; the be-ribboned Christmas trees; the green garlands over church doors; the dionysiac bunches of grapes on sanctified statues. And she rejoices over its evocative propensities.

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The one innovation here is the *genius'* capacity to materialize indoors. Never before had Lee vibrated to the spirit's presence within four walls and a ceiling. At Schloss Wolframsdorf she perceived it within the very chamber she occupied. It emerged without warning from the simulated porphyry, the sconces, the cameo-like reliefs, the fading mignonette. She knew now, once for all, that the *genius* never was nor ever could be a "stage-property" of hers; it could not be induced, only found. To produce it at will was to indulge in "sentimental hanky-panky."

In the last sad chapter, Lee mourns the war's devastation of the *genius* cult. "Sacked, burnt, defiled ten thousand times over by millions of indignant wills and by imaginations thirsty for reprisals," the spiritual as well as material aspects of places are beyond revival. "The plough and the salt of oblivion" have transfigured them irrevocably. But her god died hard. In the unpublished *A Vernon Lee Notebook* one finds an essay entitled "Genius Loci in North Oxford," dated June 29, 1930. The quondam spell of Assisi and Siena is resuscitated, and it becomes clear that the elf in her breast never really expired.

Miss Irene Cooper Willis, associate and executrix of Vernon Lee, captures her aptitude in a single dictum. "She had a Chinese Eye, and a Chinese power of drawing sustenance from what is beautiful." Miss Willis professes that "To go a walk with Vernon Lee, to climb with her the quarry valleys, thick with myrtle scrub, near her Florentine home, to visit some village church or old villa, was to be admitted into her rapt enjoyment and to feel how vital — as vital as air — to her were [these] impressions." Concomitantly, to see her in this mood was to realize that "The places she visited were more to her than were her friends."<sup>7</sup>

Aldous Huxley never ventured so far afield in search of a *genius*. Travel he did, long and often, but out of the landscape leaped no such sprite as Lee envisioned. Partial explanation of this truancy lies in Huxley's fundamental skepticism, part in his concentration on people and their activities, and part may be inferred from his "Wordsworth in the Tropics" theme. He could believe in "the stimulatingly inhuman strangeness of Nature," in its "endless varieties of impersonal mysteriousness," but these

<sup>7</sup> *Vernon Lee's Letters* (Privately printed, London: 1937), xiii-xiv.

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could too easily "lose all their exciting and disturbing quality" and "become as flatly familiar as a page from a textbook of metaphysics or theology." In *Along the Road* (1925) he wryly decides that "People travel for the same reason as they collect works of art: because the best people do it. To have been to certain spots on the earth's surface is socially correct; and having been there, one is superior to those who have not." How distressingly removed from the *amours de voyage* of Lee's sentimental traveler through enchanted woods.

In "One and Many," Huxley's two unequivocal statements — "men make gods in their own likeness" and "truth is internal" — seem to bring him into accord with Lee's major premise. He did, in fact, espy mythology of a sort in travel, but it is not a matter of desire and dryads. The myths he adduces are the false trappings of glamor which envelop places "it is socially smart to have visited." The paltry object of these fables: to bring in "several hundred milliards of good money." A reliant cult operates here too, but it is animated by a solitary code — *snobisme*.

In their disdain of guide books, Huxley and Lee are compatibly acidic. Baron Baedeker receives short shrift from either. But on the subject of motorcars they part ways. Lee lashes at that "improbable mode of locomotion" for its distortion of the sense of topography, the moral pusillanimity and the sacrilege involved in using one for sightseeing. Although Huxley allows that "car-owning may have the worst effect on character," he is so steeped in admiration of a motorcar's maneuverability that he does not mind missing the daemon of the place as he rolls smoothly and comfortably over it.

To keep him company on his travels, Huxley begets several clever accessories, mostly corporeal counterparts to Lee's fancies. He displays the makings of a superb mystique but not the inclination to romanticize. His "born traveller" is so absorbed by real things that "he does not find it necessary to believe in fables." But not unlike Lee's "sentimental traveller," he too "takes pleasure in every manifestation of beauty." Upon the relative meanings of *real* and *beauty* depends the essential similarity or disparity of the two travelers. Both, you see, travel for traveling's sake.

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Vernon Lee might have admitted Huxley's "wander-birds" to her Shangri-La. These sun-browned Tyrolese youths walked with energy and hardiness across the Alps, slept in barns and along roadsides. They struck him as an elite breed, and he gravely doffed his hat to them.

Huxley's "traveller's-eye view" could not have failed to elicit favorable response from his senior. The traveler starts with two advantages: curiosity and ignorance. Observing, he learns; learning, he conceives. Between knowledge and inference, the mystery dissolves, the secret is unshrouded.

Certainly the most (if a pun may be pardoned) spectacular of Huxley's techniques to exorcise the *genius loci* is his employment of green spectacles. Longing for beauty and delight in a dour landscape, Huxley dons a pair of properly tinted glasses. "The effect is magical. Every blade of dusty grass becomes on the instant rich with juicy life. Whatever greenness lurks in the grey of the olive trees shines out, intensified. The dried-up woods reburgeon. . . . From imbecile, the sea turns siren, and the arid hills . . . break into verdure." Thus he could "temper the illumination of the world" to his own whim without investing it with pixies. What Lee accomplishes only through diligent exertion of her mythopoeic faculties, Huxley effects by merely calling on his optometrist.

Huxley has neither the capacity nor the patience for sustained rhapsody. His delineations of landscape approximate the comeliness of Lee's until they run foul of a shock in imagery, a stark metaphor or an incongruous analogue. Huxley does not shy away from the soilure of time or civilization. He is not unhappy in "the pleasing confusion of untempered reality," and his modernity welcomes "the contest between industrialism and the natural beauties of the earth." The baroque interior of a Gonzaga palace awakes in him no glorious phantasm like Lee's *genius* at Schloss Wolframsdorf, only a conventional "ghost of departed plenitude." He saw the Cartesian landscape of North Holland as a matrix of geometric — not geomythic — figures. At Bologna, where Lee was all eyes for the surrounding wonder of sky and mountain, Huxley succumbed to the courtesy, inquisitiveness and cordial mendacity of the natives, perused his beloved *Britannica*, dabbled in anecdote and biography, pon-

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dered the function of the artist, and took photos. Vernon Lee abhorred Kodak.

The measure of variance between Lee and Huxley as hierophants of travel may be gauged in these representative epithets: Lee wrote votively about "the sacred fury of travel," and frowned behind rose-colored glasses; Huxley called his barbless sin "the vice of travel," and winked behind green goggles.



**Vernon Lee Collection:** This veritable mountain of books, letters, manuscripts (published and unpublished), photographs, first appearances in newspapers and periodicals, and miscellaneous memorabilia was allotted to Colby College Library by Miss Willis in two large lots. The November 1952 issue of COLBY LIBRARY QUARTERLY was entirely devoted to descriptions of this accumulation, containing articles on "The Vernon Lee Papers," "Who Was Vernon Lee?" "An Interim Bibliography of Vernon Lee," "A List of Those Who Wrote Letters to Vernon Lee," "Mr. [H. G.] Wells and Vernon Lee," "Letters From Gosse and Benson."

CLQ for February 1953 has "Letters From Edith Wharton to Vernon Lee;" November 1953, "To My Friend, Karl Hillebrand;" February 1954, "A Letter From Mrs. Humphry Ward to Vernon Lee;" May 1954, two articles on *Ariadne in Mantua*;" August 1954, "Letters From Paul Bourget to Vernon Lee."

A limited number of copies of these issues are available on request.

