

MINUTES
of the Meeting of
the Novel Club of Cleveland
November 7, 2017

We are grateful to our generous hosts, Peter Haas and Bob Jackson.

Jill Korbin was presented as Peter Haas' guest for the evening. There being no committee reports, we took a moment to distribute the '17-18 Novel Club Calendar, and then plunged fearlessly into Clyde Henry's biographical essay on Aldous Huxley.

Concise as it was, Henry packed into it a lot of humorous ephemera, while tracing the narrative of Huxley's professional and personal life, his marriages and the wide range of his writings.

We then heard Ted Sande's critical essay on *Brave New World*. Sande's précis of the novel's plot led quietly to a subtle unpacking of its primary ironies. He then sketched in the fascinating-yet-terrifying historical contexts of social engineering ideologies, institutions, and noted experiments following not long after Huxley's novel was written, suggesting that it's mostly dystopian utopia was the result of its author's critical anxieties about human fear and desire as it is filtered through its also too-human science, politics, economics.

The discussion questions provided by Sande continued to pursue the novel's ironies. Several members explored an extended comparison between *The Tempest*, source of the novel's title, and the novel under discussion as a strategy for answering the first two questions, which turned on the bleak debasement of marriage and family in the book. Other members placed the book in literary contexts, particularly the science fiction genre. It was characterized by some that Huxley's "world" was only lightly fleshed out, missing many aspects of the world-building for future societies that contemporary science fiction animated movies so elaborately provide. The question of his having plagiarized his own contemporary sci-fi author-peers was raised, but most felt he was more contributing to the discussion on the idea of the future than trying to rip it off. The Club debated the ultimate status of women in the novel, but a definite statement on the question eluded formulation, despite brave new attempts to connect Huxley's literary influences to his narrative.

The meeting came to a reluctant close minutes before 10, and members helped return the folding chairs to the corners, returned to the dining room for a last bite, and bade one another good night.

Respectfully submitted, JK