

# After Many a Summer Dies the Swan

J. E. Minnis

For a brilliant satire on humanity, I can think of no better author to turn to than Aldous Huxley. His rhetoric is flawless, his characters unbelievably typical, and his satire tinged with just the right amount of reality to render it plausible. Born in England, Mr. Huxley has no more mercy on his own countrymen than he has on those of other nationalities. His satire is universal and completely nonpartisan.

**After Many a Summer Dies the Swan** is the story of a West-coast industrial magnate who fears nothing but death and worships no God save his own desires. Jo Stoyte, born in rags and risen to riches, indulges himself in a cultural atmosphere which he is completely incapable of appreciating. His very lack of feeling toward culture causes him to build an enormous castle on the outskirts of Los Angeles and fill it with objects of art from all over the world. He does this in defiance of those people who are not blessed with riches but whose minds are capable of higher attainment than his own.

Mr. Stoyte employs a middle-aged literary recluse from England, Jeremy Pordage, to catalogue the papers of a now extinct but formerly prominent family of English peers. He sets up a complete laboratory of scientific research for one Dr. Obispo that the doctor may search for some means of prolonging life indefinitely. The doctor finally discovers the elixir but, with the use of it, certain complications arise which cause its practicality to be doubtful. He allows an old school mate to live on a small plot of ground in his domain merely out of sentiment. Mr. Propter is a retired professor and philosopher of sorts who makes it his business to try to better the living conditions of the itinerant workers who harvest Mr. Stoyte's orange crop. Virginia Maunciple, an attractive young girl whom Mr. Stoyte discovered in the chorus line of a night-club, fills the double position of daughter and mistress of the magnate.

Mr. Huxley's familiarity with every phase of the Fine Arts allows him to see life through the eyes of two entirely different patrons of those arts. His understanding of the human elements in contemporary America enables him to put on paper the words and thoughts of the varied characters of whom he writes. Finally, his ability to satirize and philosophize permits him to interpret the actions of these people in an uncanny lifelike, if satirically exaggerated, manner.

**After Many a Summer Dies the Swan** is at once witty and serious. It is Mr. Huxley's good fortune to be capable of being entertaining, amusing, and, at the same time, philosophically instructive.