

***Brave New World* and the Anthropologists: Primitivism in A.F. Jerome Meckier**

Huxley's utopian interest in primitivism, finally turned to advantage in *Island*, dates back to the late twenties when he read Malinowski, Lévy-Brühl and Margaret Mead before composing *Brave New World*. Cultural anthropologists with a philosophical bent receive strong praise in his letter to Mrs. Kethevan Roberts (28 November 1930), recommending Malinowski's *Sexual Life of Savages* and Mead's *Growing up in New Guinea* (L, 343).¹ Huxley's missive should also have lauded Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa*, Malinowski's *Sex and Repression in Savage Societies* and Lévy-Brühl's *The "Soul" of the Primitive*, for these, too, he seems to have been reading attentively.² As a consequence, one of the cleverest thrusts in Huxley's dystopia is the constant counterpoint between the utopian pretensions of futuristic London and the costly ultramodern primitivism the World Controllers have actually established.

To unfrock enemies of individual and societal evolution, the false utopians so abundant in the modern age, Huxley imagines a society constructed according to their combined precepts—which makes *Brave New World* a highly sophisticated novel of ideas. At the same time, drawing on his familiarity with Mead, Lévy-Brühl and Malinowski, he builds into his novel a series of ironic parallels between the scientifically controlled future the false utopians represent and the primitive past that was still observable among Melanesians in the 1920s. As the parallels are exposed or implied, Huxley offers the reader an unnerving satiric proposition: Ford, Freud, Wells, Pavlov, J. B. Watson, and their mechanistic ilk do not herald a brighter, braver future; instead, the society that results from an association of their ideas introduces new forms of compulsory primitivism no better than John Savage's life in Malpais.

From *Coming of Age in Samoa*, which leaves a firm imprint on both *Brave New World* and *Island*, comes Huxley's inspiration to combine *Bildungsroman* with utopia. Mead's studies of primitive youth searching for maturity and frequently finding it more easily than young people do in the West convince him that the perfect society must understand what growing up means and encourage its citizens to do so to the fullest. Huxley contrives a new litmus test for utopia: the harder it is to mature in a given society, the less utopian that society becomes. Fordian London fails this test dramatically. The thinkers abused in *Brave New World* do not know how society can come of age, that is, develop into utopia. Once he has discredited the new primitivism that they signify, Huxley can start to outline the genuine utopian future more convincingly and suggest the demanding spiritual maturity it will entail.

When Mustapha Mond extols the partnership of Our Ford-Our Freud for abolishing the miseries of family life, a voice, perhaps a student in his audience, points out that the savages of Samoa and the Trobriand Islands did so first: "in certain Islands off the coast of New Guinea [...] Home was in any one of twenty palm-thatched houses. In the Trobriands conception was the work of ancestral ghosts; nobody had ever heard of a father" (BNW, 43-44). These observations, derived from a reading of Mead and Malinowski,³ make Huxley's satiric point

¹ On 12 October, Aldous informed Julian that he had "read and enjoyed Malinowski" (L, 318). Huxley's interest in anthropologists was thus considerable, despite disclaimers in *Beyond the Mexique Bay*, 7-8. There he regards them with the same prejudice that Dickens reserved for Mrs. Jellyby's brand of philanthropist: "My objection to anthropologists is the same as my objection to missionaries. Why do these two classes of people waste their time converting heathens and studying the habits of blackamoors, when they can find, in their own streets, men and women whose beliefs and behaviour are at least as strange as those in the M'pongos and, so far as we are concerned, painfully and dangerously more significant? Anthropology, like charity, should begin at home." In *Brave New World*, it does.

² Huxley's list in *Proper Studies* of "sociological writers whom I have read with profit" includes "M. Lévy-Brühl (xix). Additional references to Lévy-Brühl occur on 73 and 77.

³ Mead describes the phenomenon of "consanguineous refuge" in *Coming of Age in Samoa*, 44 (first published in 1928). Trobriand theories of ghostly conception are explored by Bronislaw Malinowski in *Sex and Repression in Savage Society*, 9-13, and in *The Sexual Life of Savages in North-Western Melanesia*, Volume 1, 173 ff. *Sex and Repression* was originally published in 1927, *The Sexual Life of Savages* in 1929.

unmistakable. Using test-tubes, artificial insemination and assembly lines more complex than those in Detroit, Brave New Worlders incur great expense to exterminate the tight family structure Samoans and Trobriand Islanders effortlessly abolish. Mond's Englishmen, it soon appears, are the savages of tomorrow—futuristic primitives who employ modern technology on *their* Island to accomplish what savages in the Pacific can do more naturally.

A writer of Swiftian subtlety, Huxley deploys the concept of primitivism satirically in *Brave New World* to make both utopian and pejorative comparisons. The concept of primitivism proves richly ambivalent, a flexible weapon.⁴ It can express belief in the superiority of primitive societies or condemn a community and its customs for being uncivilized. Consequently, Brave New Worlders can be criticized for being worse than Samoans and for being like them. Apparently dissimilar peoples are shown to be surprisingly alike, or else the ostensibly superior Brave New Worlder is revealed to be inferior. Although laughably ignorant of elementary psychology, for example, Trobriand Islanders circumvent the Oedipus complex more easily than Brave New Worlders. In this instance, primitivism seems utopian; savage superstition outstrips modern science and psychology, both of which needlessly burden man with anxiety and guilt. But Huxley also demonstrates that the sex life of Brave New Worlders, their promiscuity in particular, is really no more sophisticated than a Melanesian's, in which case primitivism becomes a negative standard and sexual liberation a step backward.

A less complicated satiric ambivalence governs the parallels one discerns between the material preoccupations of Mead's sea-dwelling Manus in *Growing Up in New Guinea* (1930) and the consumer-oriented life-style of *Brave New World*. Mead reports a cravenly materialistic society that places no moral value on art, friendship or love-making. Manus devote their energies exclusively to acquiring wealth, owning property and conducting trade. Ardent businessmen, they are natural followers of Our Ford, consumerists *par excellence*.

The Brave New World conditions citizens to fear such nonconsumable items as books and flowers (23). It breeds into its inhabitants "the tendency to consume transport" (24). After hours, its workers travel by copter and rail to play Obstacle Golf and Centrifugal Bumble-puppy. *Hypnopædia* teaches the freshly decanted that ending (i.e., discarding) is preferable to mending. The "conscriptio of consumption" forces "every man, woman and child" to consume a specified amount of goods and services annually (57). But the Brave New Worlders are not more dedicated to material goods than their dour, pleasureless counterparts in the Admiralty Islands, whom Mead repeatedly compares with contemporary Americans (32, 48, 164, 174, 213).

Huxley ridicules the notion that materialism needs to be instilled and then artificially stimulated. The modern idea of expending time and money to make man into what he already deplorably is, strikes Huxley as an amazing aberration. Instead of spurring the individual on to the next stage of personal and societal development, utopian behaviorists have created high-powered consumers for an economy that runs more smoothly than business among the Manus but is not otherwise superior. Economically speaking, Brave New Worlders often seem like caricatures of the Manus and vice versa. However, the Brave New World definitely improves upon the dreary materialism of Manus society. Thanks to Our Ford, Huxley's satiric image for modern life in *Brave New World* is the factory, society as a universal business. But the elaboration of consumerism into a state religion is not shown to be inherently beneficial. Therefore, the improvements His Fordship and the other Controllers have concocted actually make their society worse than the one a Mead critically investigates.

The voice that interrupts Mond's panegyric on the alliance of Ford and Freud also describes the virtues of a "tropical sunshine" that is "like warm honey." The speaker imagines "naked bodies of children tumbling promiscuously among the hibiscus blossoms" of Melanesia (43-44). This passage reveals the firm hold a certain

⁴ Huxley's ambivalence about primitivism resurfaces in *Island* when he reconsiders his satiric use of this idea in *Brave New World*. The Palanese are a sympathetic portrait of Mead's Samoans, but Huxley must endow his primitives with cultural sophistication, technical know-how and spiritual awareness.

kind of primitivism exercised on Huxley's imagination as early as 1932. Idyllic Samoa exposes the mechanical aridity of the Brave New World. At the same time, sunlight and blossoms contrast with the squalor and pervasive stench of Malpais: its "dust and rubbish," "flies" and "famine-stricken dogs" (137). Again, the flexibility of Huxley's satiric primitivism allows him to use one form of it to belittle another. Huxley draws on another "anthropological" source here and suggests that D. H. Lawrence sought his primitives in the wrong place. Instead of sojourning in New or old Mexico and writing *The Plumed Serpent* (1926), he ought to have turned toward Samoa and the Trobriands (as Huxley would do thirty years later when inventing a locale for the ingenious, stress-free Palanese).

Lawrence had promoted his mystical encounter with the American Southwest into "the greatest experience" he ever had in the outside world, an episode more rewarding than his attempts to absorb Buddhism in Ceylon. "It was New Mexico that liberated me from the present era of civilization," Lawrence confessed. One glimpse "and a new part of the soul woke up suddenly, and the old world gave way to a new."⁵ Primitivism for Lawrence had spiritual overtones that Huxley could not accept; aboriginal America gave him "a religious experience of a kind radically different from that of traditional Christianity" (Cavitch, 126). Huxley's dispute with Lawrence involves the question of where to seek new religious orientations. Dissatisfied with traditional Western faiths, Huxley also wished to escape "the present era of civilization" in favor of fresh social conditions conducive to the resurrection of man's soul. *Brave New World* is a clearing away of fraudulent new directions, including Lawrence's brand of primitivism, which had to be disavowed before Huxley could turn with confidence to the Eastern wisdom of Buddhists and Vedantists.

The dances and religious rituals in Chapter Seven of *Brave New World* are modeled on Lawrence's accounts of primitive rites in *Aaron's Rod* and *The Plumed Serpent*. But in Huxley's version the impressiveness of Indian ceremonies is undercut by Lenina's reactions. Only moderately intelligent, Lenina easily perceives the absurdity of the rituals she witnesses. The inescapable stench of unwashed bodies forces her to keep a handkerchief to her nose. She devalues the ceremonies by comparing "the men's savage affirmation of their manhood" (an excellent parody of Lawrence) to "a lower-caste Community Sing." She likes the drums because they remind her "reassuringly of the synthetic noises made at Solidarity Services" (131).

Particularly apt, Lenina's observations work in a fashion a bit different from comparisons made earlier between the abolition of family life in the Brave New World and the enlargement of families on Samoa. Here, Huxley disgraces the primitive life-style that Lawrence admired by making it no more satisfying than a modern Solidarity Service. The savage affirmation of manhood and the lower-caste Community Sing, apparent opposites, become similars that cancel out each other's viability. This mutually destructive parallel damages its originator by uncovering the essentially primitive nature of the religious observances she enjoys in the supposedly modern Brave New World. Huxley constructs a counterpoint between savage and modern that can be dissolved into a compromising comparison. Dances and communal singing become variations on a theme: society's perennial awareness of man's religious nature is regularly accompanied by puerile attempts to meet his needs. With one stroke, Huxley satirizes Lenina, her society, Lawrence and the Southwestern primitivism Lawrence found so appealing. Similarly, John Savage takes offense when the "young Etonians" whose school he is visiting, laugh at a movie in which the Penitentes of Acoma practice their primitive religion (191). A new form of barbarity, the Etonians miss Huxley's parallel, as does the Savage: the Penitentes are no more outlandish, and no less so, than Bernard Marx at a Solidarity Service or Lenina and John at the Feelies. Despite the work of its emotional engineers, it is worth reiterating, religious services in Fordian London do not adequately contain man's spiritual drive; they seem no more innovative than the revisions of family life.

⁵ See Lawrence's essay "New Mexico" in *Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D.H. Lawrence*, 142.

Without assistance from Bronislaw Malinowski, Huxley could not have attacked the sexual permissiveness of the Brave New World so effectively. Morally *avant garde* though it seems, sexual behavior in Huxley's dystopia is really a distasteful adaptation of the Melanesian customs documented by Malinowski. The uninhibited life-styles of Lenina, Polly Trotsky, and Benito Hoover lose their attractiveness when similarities between savage and ultra-civilized society unfold. Stability and docility are traits the Brave New World values excessively. Mond and the other Controllers have discovered that unlimited opportunity for pleasure and the abolition of stress-producing relationships guarantee a stable community. Primitive societies, unchanged over long periods, offer the best proof of this. Huxley develops the paradox that sexual permissiveness brings with it societal stagnation. The liberated sexuality of Brave New Worlders, their compulsory promiscuity, is a logical extension of the sexual freedom practiced by the bright young generation in Huxley's previous novels.⁶ It is also quintessentially primitive. The sex life of the average Brave New Worlder is closely patterned on that of the Trobriand Islander, but the latter's mores evolved spontaneously; they were not artificially and arbitrarily imposed for political reasons that are highly suspect.

Consequently, instances of permanent sexual maladjustment are rare among Malinowski's Trobrianders, whereas Lenina, Fanny, Bernard Marx and Helmholtz Watson are often sexually unhappy despite intensive Pavlovian conditioning. Lenina occasionally longs for monogamy, Fanny for motherhood. Congenitally introverted, Marx finds it difficult to request the sexual favors he wants; and Watson increasingly prefers spiritual advancement to promiscuity. Thoughtless sexual liberation, unthinking freedom, turns out to be non-utopian. The idea of incurring great expense to inculcate the permissiveness the primitive in man tends towards anyway seems as redundant as encouraging citizens to consume. Nevertheless, all four of the characters just mentioned chafe under the provision that they remain sexually "infantile," i.e., primitive and irresponsible, "even against their inclination" to go forward and grow up (114). As is always the case in the Brave New World, the primitive programs instituted by the Controllers reinforce man's easily manageable base inclinations but make no provision for aspiration or evolution.

Starting in childhood, Malinowski argues in *Sex and Repression*, the Melanesian indulges in "copulation amusement" (56). This form of infantile sexuality is provided for youngsters in the Brave New World as obligatory erotic play (34-35). Puberty presents few problems for either the Trobriander or the Brave New Worlder, for each is conditioned to enjoy sexual freedom virtually from birth. Sexually and in many other ways, the Trobriander and the Brave New Worlder are encouraged never to grow up. Freed in this manner from the difficult adolescence Freud considered inevitable, citizens of the Brave New World simply increase their sexual proficiency by refining the rudimentary sexual games they played as children.

Mond boasts that his society has eliminated the period of anxiety that formerly intervened between desire and fulfillment (51-52). He means that Brave New Worlders, like Samoans and Trobrianders, scoff at romantic love and countenance no delays. In all three societies direct solicitation generally leads to immediate sexual gratification. A Samoan or Melanesian invites a young lady to meet him under the palm trees in much the same manner that Benito Hoover might accost Lenina or Bernard Marx propositions Miss Keate, the Head Mistress, when John Savage tours Eton. Hence the excellent comedy when Lenina later attempts to seduce the Savage (227-28). John ought to cooperate willingly, but his primitivism has been impaired by Shakespeare, especially *Romeo and Juliet*. The reader is treated to the contrapuntal spectacle of a highly civilized Lenina behaving like a Trobriand Islander toward a New Mexico Indian as puritanical as Lawrence, who clings fastidiously to Elizabethan notions of romantic love as found in Shakespeare.

When John Savage reads *Romeo and Juliet* to Bernard Marx and Helmholtz Watson, the latter laughs uncontrollably. Conditioned to live in a sexually permissive society, Watson finds comic Romeo's writhings for

⁶ That Huxley thought of his peers in this manner is evident from his contempt for our modern savages` who copulate with the casual promiscuousness of dogs` (*PS*, 259).

Juliet and hers for him. The same thing happened, Mead recalls, when she recounted the story of Shakespeare's star-crossed lovers to the Samoans. Virginity, celibacy and romantic love, Mead notes, were meaningless to them: "Samoans rate romantic fidelity in terms of days or weeks at most and are inclined to scoff at tales of lifelong devotion. (They greeted the story of Romeo and Juliet with incredulous contempt)" (MM, 119). Borrowing this anecdote, Huxley again satirizes all concerned: Watson, who eventually outgrows his society's sexual habits, fails to perceive how primitive they are; at the same time, Huxley sympathizes with Helmholtz and the Samoans, neither of whom develops complexes trying to validate in experience the impossibly romantic ideals found mainly in literature. From Mead, then, may have come the idea of bestowing a knowledge of Shakespeare upon the Savage. Huxley sets out to determine what would happen if, instead of scoffing, a primitive believed literally in Shakespeare as an alternative vision of reality and tried to find the Bard's outmoded conceptions of love, honor and glorious human diversity reflected in the modern world. A frustrated utopian, John Savage finds the Brave New World no closer to Shakespeare's dramatic universe than was Malpais. He discovers the terrible gulf Huxley never tired of stretching between life and art.

Having absorbed Malinowski, Huxley is prepared to argue in *Brave New World* that sexual repression can be more complicated than Freudians and behaviorists realize. Lenina, Bernard and especially Helmholtz are still repressed in a variety of ways, for the complexity of their needs has been reduced to one requirement, frequent copulation. Thanks to anthropology and the mental-spiritual underdevelopment of the Trobrianders, Huxley can support his view that some forms of repression are more detrimental than the sexual. The unpardonable societal sin is not the hindrance of sexual freedom but any unfair suppression of personal growth. Like Trobriand communities, the Brave New World encourages sexual freedom but fails to promote self-realization. Watson is spiritually repressed; his religious drive resembles Mond's description of the sexual energy less liberal societies try to contain: it builds like "water under pressure in a pipe" (46).

In 1929 Huxley informs his brother, Julian, that reading Malinowski inspires him "with a desire to write a companion treatise on *Sexual Life of Gentlemen and Ladies*. There'd be much odder customs to record than among those extraordinarily rational Trobrianders" (13 July; *L*, 314). Six months later, with the book still on his mind, Aldous asks Norman Douglas if he knows Malinowski's study, which is "very depressing inasmuch as it demonstrates the incomparable superiority, intelligence, and decency of the Neolithic inhabitants of the Trobriand Islands to the English" (7 January; *L*, 326). Huxley soon satisfies the impulse to do a pendant volume on the sex lives of ladies and gentlemen by creating a society that mechanically, and therefore perversely, imitates the life-style of the Trobrianders, a style that makes sense when found naturally in Melanesia but seems less rational when adopted by modern Londoners unable to behave otherwise. On second thought, Huxley finds no need to anatomize the "odder customs" of his own generation. The sexual rubric of the Brave New World, an exaggeration of the mores of his generation, seems sufficiently queer when certain parallels with the Trobrianders are exploited satirically.

A glance at the work of Lévy-Brühl reveals that Brave New Worlders are as primitive psychologically and socially as they are sexually. When it comes to individual mentality and social organization, primitives of the future barely surpass Melanesians, Bantus, Thonga, Azandas or the Banaro societies Lévy-Brühl analyzes. In *The "Soul" of the Primitive* (1928), the French sociologist states his purpose: to determine the notions savages possess of soul and personality. A brief "Foreword" divulges that his studies have convinced him that, "Properly speaking," savages have none. The same is unfortunately true of citizens in the Brave New World, except, belatedly, for Helmholtz Watson, who rediscovers himself and his soul under adverse circumstances.

The motto of the World State is "Community, Identity, Stability." Lévy-Brühl's opening chapter, "The Solidarity of the Individual with His Group" in primitive societies, clarifies the perverse and primitive meanings Mond's trio of ideals has been given. By sacrificing identity to community, Mond and the Controllers achieve stability, the "primal and ultimate need" (49). Stalled at an earlier stage of social evolution, primitive societies

unwittingly demand the same sacrifice. According to Lévy-Brühl, the primitive mind confuses the individual and the species (L-B, 60, 67-68). A small portion of the savage's mind may see his own personality as something separate and unique, but his idea of himself is largely "collective [...] the individual hardly grasps himself save as a member of his social group" (67-68). Relationship among primitives is to the group only; groups are interrelated, not individuals. This is alarmingly true of Brave New Worlders, for whom the roles and relationships of mother, father, brother and sister have been scientifically abolished so that only group relationships remain. The Brave New Worlder is loyal to the Bokanovsky Group which gives him his identity.

Among Azandas and Bantus, Lévy-Brühl relates, the individual is so intimately subordinated to his group or clan that the solidarity is virtually organic. In the Brave New World, thanks to the Central London Hatchery, which decants sets of identical twins *ad infinitum* from a single ovary, it has become so literally. The Banaro, for whom family groupings do not exist, arrange youngsters according to age; the group becomes a unit of all those born at the same time, a sort of biologically natural equivalent of a Bokanovsky Group. The precision of modern science simply makes primitive group-identification or group-loyalty easier to maintain. Neo-Pavlovian Conditioning Rooms inculcate in the young mind a primitive confusion between individuality and caste or group. *Hypnopaedia* teaches the sleeping child to think of himself or herself not as Bernard or Lenina, but as Alpha or Beta, whichever the case requires. The Director of Hatcheries and Conditioning boasts that one can staff an entire factory "with the products of a single bokanovskified egg" (6), with, in short, an artificially created primitive community. Undeveloped societies, in which natives dress alike, think alike and pursue the same or a narrow range of occupation, closely resemble assembly line workers in a Detroit factory or a Bokanovsky Group of "standard Gammas, unvarying Deltas, uniform Epsilons" in the Brave New World.

Primitive societies prefer that the collective thought of the group predominate. Individual opinions have no importance, and persons with different ideas are destroyed. The slogan Lenina pronounces discourages personal perception: "When the individual feels the community reels" (109). Trapped in a state preoccupied with reducing the range of human possibilities, malcontents, such as Watson and Marx, are censored, exiled or both.

Primitive rites and education try to discourage discontent by developing in the individual qualities exactly like those of other individuals in the group. Lévy-Brühl's account suggests that the Solidarity Services held at the Fordson Community Singery are not the religion of the future but a pseudo-sophisticated rendition of primitive ritual. Regardless of their alleged happiness and stability, Brave New Worlders appear to need mechanically induced ecstasies. *Primitives and the Supernatural* (1935), published too late to benefit *Brave New World*, describes in more detail the collective hypnotism, the group ecstasy, of primitive rites designed to effect communion with unseen powers (129-33). The service Bernard Marx reluctantly attends in Room 3210 parodies the primitive rituals it attempts to imitate.

Bernard and his companions drink to "annihilation" of the self. They are "ready to be made one, waiting to come together, to be fused, to lose their twelve separate identities in a larger being," a distinctly non-mystical and primitive goal. The service is designed to stifle any traces of individuality and foster group identification: "oh, make us one,/ Like the drops within the Social River" (94). But in *Brave New World*, unseen powers remain invisible. Although the cup is passed, "drums beat," and the "Greater Being" (a parody of the Divine Ground) is exhorted to "Come," only his "feet" (a particularly banal touch) are heard mounting the stairs. For a disappointed Bernard, "nobody" comes. The Service quickly deteriorates into a frenzied, primitive orgy, "a circular procession" of modern savages "stamping to the rhythm of the music with their feet, beating it out with hands on the buttocks in front." At the end of this "Orgy-porgy," a ritual more vulgar than the ceremonies Lenina witnesses at Malpais, an untransfigured Bernard remains sadly convinced "of his own separateness" (100). Unfortunately for him, he laments the only non-primitive aspect of his condition. Unlike Watson, Bernard fails to recognize his capacity for solitude as a passport to growth and salvation.

For Bantus and Thonga, Lévy-Brühl writes in *The "Soul" of the Primitive*, the notion of hierarchy is more rigid and highly developed than in advanced societies (71). One's position in this hierarchy is generally settled at birth. The caste system of *Brave New World* is thus another step backward into the primitive past. By giving the bottle babies their inescapable social destinies, workers in the Social Predestination Room contrive scientifically the rigid caste system primitive societies struggle to define. The Controller's confident Fordian declaration that "History is bunk" amounts to sheer bravado (38). Mond's ideal society remains tied to the past, not to such highpoints of civilization as Athens, Rome, Thebes, Cnossos and Mycenae, but to many of the worst aspects of primitive communities. One of the finer ironies in the opening chapters of *Brave New World* is the picture it offers of modern science, the naively utopian ideal of H. G. Wells, in the service of primitive notions.

Malinowski's *Sex and Repression in Savage Society* prompted Huxley to invent the satiric strategy of testing Western philosophies in primitive environments. Huxley discovered several of his best satiric techniques by observing modern scientists, especially zoologists and anthropologists. Thus the solution to the problems of family life in the *Brave New World* is measured against Samoa's. The satirical novelist of ideas does not simply make his characters mouthpieces for current theories. Every facet of his work is permeated by the ideas of his time which are constantly played off against each other. If the theories of Ford, Freud, Wells and Pavlov are combined, the result would be the *Brave New World*. To reveal that the kind of society such a federation of influential theories might produce is not a significant improvement upon primitivism, Huxley compels Freud's ideas to compete unsuccessfully with Malinowski's.

As is true with *Brave New World*, *Sex and Repression* was written to quarrel with the primacy Freudians assign to the Oedipus complex. Huxley's dystopia relies on Malinowski's findings to repudiate his generation's fascination with Freud. The negative view of man in modern psychology as the flawed consequence of inevitably traumatic childhood experiences is challenged by the opinion of anthropologists that he is simply the product of his culture. If Mead and Malinowski are correct, man remains readily capable, as does society, of significant regeneration. One need not drastically alter human nature, as the *Brave New World* does, for it is cultural conditions that must be improved. Following Freud and Pavlov, the *Brave New World* tries to avoid certain allegedly archetypal complexes, for it conceives of man as fundamentally unwell and theorizes that society originated with a guilt-producing crime against the father. In the process of hearkening to Freud, the *Brave New World* becomes a dystopia. Listening closely to Mead, Malinowski and Gerald Heard, Huxley's *Island, Pala*, becomes, at least temporarily, a genuine utopia. Freud and Dr. Ernest Jones do not hold up well in Melanesia, Malinowski insists. Since family life is not the same in all societies, Malinowski judged Freud unwise to base his psychology on a theory about the influence that one type of family can have upon the mind.

Trobrianders, Malinowski points out, deny the act of birth from the father. Their matrilineal society believes children are inserted into the mother's womb by the spirit of a deceased kinswoman. Husbands have "nothing to do with [...] procreation." The friction generally existing between father and son in the West is missing among Trobrianders (*SR*, 76-77). Dr. Jones is thus mistaken to regard the Oedipus complex as primordial, and Freud's argument that this complex is connected with the origin of civilization cannot stand (*SR*, 158). In fact, as Huxley realizes, the Oedipus complex must be toppled before utopian speculation can continue. The comparative anthropologist who poses the narrowness of concepts based solely on the troubled history of Western man, becomes the would-be utopian's most useful ally. Freud may be able to help individuals who are the luckless products of European and American civilization, but any utopia constructed to avoid the pitfalls modern psychology uncovered will be too defensive, too much a reaction to man's alleged weaknesses rather than an exaltation of his strengths. *Pala*, identally, cures Will Farnaby of his European anxieties rather easily. The voice that interrupts the Controller to praise Trobrianders knows his Malinowski, as do the Palanese. They defuse the Oedipus complex with their marionette show, *Oedipus on Pala*, an excellent parody of the tragic

view of life in Sophocles' play and the complex Freud named after its protagonist (*I*, 243-47).⁷ Transferred to the South Seas, Sophocles and Freud fare no better than Wordsworth in the tropics.

But the argument that Lawrence idolized the wrong primitives continues. Malinowski upends Freud by disproving the idea that the origin of society is tainted and its subsequent course necessarily repressive. He exhibits primitives for whom the Oedipus complex, Freud's equivalent of the Fall, is an impossibility. Huxley demotes Lawrence by denying his primitives this advantage. He purposely supplies the Savage with a strong Oedipus complex. John's problem dates from his indelible recollection of being displaced in Linda's bed by her lover, Popé (145-46). Lawrence's Mexican primitives can again be dismissed with disdain as a wrong choice because their representative, a caricature of Lawrence, has not escaped the problems that the savages studied by Mead and Malinowski know instinctively how to avoid. A mixture of Mexican, Indian, and Christian religions seasoned by a command of Shakespeare, the Savage consists of four cultural factors that are disastrous in combination. John is living proof for Huxley in 1932 that no sensible utopian should attempt a return to primitive culture. The "next condition of man," to use Mead's phrase for utopia, may involve grafting the best aspects of primitive society onto the more defensible cultural and technological achievements of the modern era, as Huxley tries to do in *Island*. But Lawrence's hybrid, according to Huxley, is an attempt to go backwards that makes the worst of both worlds.

A major villain in Huxley's dystopia, "Our Freud," who is our Ford speaking on psychological subjects (43), has exerted a disastrous influence on the behaviorist theory of human behavior adopted by Mond and his fellow Controllers. Convinced by Freud that man is basically sick, that is, at the mercy of deep-seated drives, the Controllers fabricate a world mindlessly dedicated to the Pleasure Principle, a stress-free society that allows man's basest drives freest play. Freud's theory that certain psychological hazards during childhood and adolescence are both formative and unavoidable compels the Brave New World to keep its citizens permanently infantile. Except for Watson, who matures against the wishes of his society, *Brave New World* can be seen as a monstrous anti-*Bildungsroman*, a world-wide suppression of mental, moral and spiritual growth. A true utopia should also be, to Huxley's way of thinking, the *Bildungsroman* of a society's adolescent community. It should demonstrate ability to conduct its citizens to maximum adulthood. But Mond and the other Controllers turn cities like London into extensions of its infant nurseries. They might not do so if they would peruse Mead's studies of growing up in primitive societies as thoroughly as they have read Freud. Furthermore, the fruitless reconstruction of the family situation Freud incorrectly identified as the root of all evils would not have been obligatory if Viennese psychologists understood more anthropology and could apply to their theories what Malinowski calls a sociological corrective. Neuroses and complexes, Huxley decides, may be cultural rather than primordial. If so, anthropology may have more to say than psychology about their elimination.⁸

The nineteen twenties, it would appear, were characterized by jurisdictional disputes between two new disciplines, modern psychology and cultural anthropology. As a satirist, Huxley's opinion of man was generally more pessimistic than Freud's. Yet he was also drawn intellectually toward utopian undertones in the writings of Mead and Malinowski, for Freud's psychoanalytic hypotheses made little provision for the undeniably positive elements in man. Mead and Malinowski catered to Huxley's latent utopian impulse by fostering a romantic willingness to believe human nature imperfect mainly because of imperfections in particular societies, not because society itself fosters anxieties, complexes and psychoses. Had he been less versed in modern anthropology, Huxley might not have been so adamantly anti-Freudian. Anthropologists gave Huxley reasons to

⁷ When the boy and girl from Pala easily persuade Oedipus from blinding himself, one accepts their argument that it is just as silly for Oedipus to punish himself for being the victim of implausible circumstances as the Samoans knew it was for Juliet to crave only Romeo.

⁸ Hence Huxley's lifelong preference for Mead, Malinowski and Gerald Heard over Freud, Adler and perhaps even Jung. In *Proper Studies*, Huxley finds Jung by far the most highly-gifted of contemporary psychologists, not "monomaniacal" like Freud and Adler (xix).

hypothesize that culture, as Mead says, makes all the difference for individual fulfillment or defeat.⁹ Mead takes this position in her "Introduction" to *Coming of Age in Samoa*; and Franz Boas' "Foreword" to the 1928 edition specifically blasts the psychoanalytic approach (10). Freud and modern psychology will lead to dystopia if the future is left to them, but a feasible alternative may lie in the studies Mead and Malinowski have made of apparently healthy societies still partially embedded in the primitive past.

As he discloses the essentially primitive origins of the consumerism initiated by Our Ford and demolishes the psychology of Pavlov and Freud, Huxley begins thinking about a future not controlled by their ideas. His turnabout in the early 1930s, a shift from "Pyrrhonism" to a more positive outlook, is the product of several interrelated developments. Huxley rejects vigorously the findings of Freudians and behaviorists. He places his confidence in cultural anthropology, which is never as mechanistic or as reductive as Pavlov and Freud. Mead and Malinowski supplement Huxley's growing interest in mysticism and the promise of an utopian expansion for the individual mind. From Mead, Huxley acquires a scientific basis for the belief that societies might be altered for the better if the cultures shaping their children, especially the methods of child-rearing, are improved. Pala will be the ultimate product of this kind of speculation. Indeed, utopia begins with Dr. Andrew MacPhail's realization that "people [...] are at once the beneficiaries and the victims of their culture. It brings them to flower; but it also nips them in the bud or plants a canker at the heart of the blossom." When MacPhail and the Raja join to convert Pala into utopia, they try "to avoid the cankers, minimize the nippings" (*I*, 128). Although Pala moves toward utopia in the 1850s, its founders operate from tenets central to the cultural philosophy of Franz Boas and Margaret Mead.

Mead's contention that only culture matters persuades Huxley to give new life to the assumption once held in common by eighteenth-century thinkers as diverse as Helvétius and Rousseau, namely that "men are made or marred by environment or education" (*PS*, 11). *Brave New World* completes the attack on the rationalists that Huxley began in *Proper Studies* (1927), but he simultaneously rethinks the utopian possibilities implicit in a more sensible statement of their case.

Proper Studies shows scant respect for Descartes, Locke and the erroneous definition of human nature their followers made popular. Huxley points to congenital differences among men to disprove the Cartesian axiom that reason is the same in everyone and he rejects the *tabula rasa* theory of the mind conceived by Locke. Unlike the rationalists, whose democratic ideals it perverts at this point, the *Brave New World*, cognizant of Freud, does not consider all men equally reasonable or naturally good; but it believes in it making the members of each caste so by means of controlled environments and rigorous conditioning. In *Brave New World*, Huxley continues the assault on rationalism and its perverse exaggeration in Mond's society by allowing Watson's innate spiritual drive to overcome his environment and undo his conditioning. Watson matures despite his surroundings and contrary to his education. Huxley's novel is even more severe when it exposes several modern thinkers as descendants of the rationalists. From Helvétius, who argued that education is everything, comes the modern fallacy of behaviorism; from Rousseau, the outmoded primitivism of D. H. Lawrence.¹⁰

Between *Proper Studies* and the completion of *Brave New World*, Mead and Malinowski publish their best work. Studies of idyllic primitive societies force Huxley to reevaluate the difference culture obviously can make. Without greatly improving his opinion of man, Huxley must reaffirm the possibility of utopia. Consciously or not, Watson is the first step Huxley takes toward the realization of Pala, for the creation of Helmholtz redefines human nature in a manner contrary to the mechanical idea of it prevailing in Mond's

⁹ Mead restates this view succinctly in the Preface to the 1961 edition of *Coming of Age in Samoa* (12).

¹⁰ If Huxley needed any authority beyond his own common sense to refute Rousseau, he found plenty of ammunition in *Growing Up in New Guinea*. Manus society, Mead points out, renders absurd the idea of a noble savage. Left largely uneducated, children in the Admiralty Islands turn out mentally dull and socially immature, as one might expect. See pp. 7, 10.

society. By the time *Island* appears, Huxley concedes the paramountcy of environment and education in any society where the individuals in charge of them comprehend human diversity (i.e., Jung's psychological types) and possess a Vedantic theory of human destiny, a sense of man's Final End. The same anthropologists whose studies of primitives assist Huxley to undermine the futuristic pretensions of the Our Ford-Our Freud partnership excite in the satirist a desire to conduct utopian speculations along rationalist lines but with a more intelligent conception of human nature. Supporters of Locke and Descartes were right to stress the formative powers of education and environment. Mead attests to this in *Growing Up in New Guinea* when she calls human nature raw material that must be shaped by cultural tradition (*G U*, 212). Unfortunately, the ideas the rationalists entertained about man and the purpose of his existence were much too primitive, a judgment the even narrower application of their doctrines by the Brave New World corroborates.

As long as Huxley remains convinced that the cankers and nippings detrimental to self-realization are imposed mostly from without, his utopian experiments can continue. But his alliance with anthropology (where the conviction Huxley needs seems strongest) is always uneasy. Throughout his career, Huxley questions the primitivism of Lawrence and distrusts all utopian speculations that rely on the definition of man coined by eighteenth-century rationalists. He is more sympathetic toward the proposition that evil is inherent in human nature. His persistent utopianism is curiously tied to Lawrence and anthropology but undercut by a residual allegiance to the view of human perversity shared by Catholics and Manicheans. Divided sympathies become evident in *Island* when the hopes of cultural anthropologists and a modified version of Lawrence's primitivism are rekindled only to be reconsidered, celebrated, and then sadly extinguished because the life process apparently favors the forces of darkness over the children of the Clear Light.

Huxley's satiric proposition, the assertion that many of the modern era's most progressive trends amount to regression, also suggests that spiritually unenlightened societies are always going backward, no matter how futuristic they seem. Parallels between the Brave New World and primitive societies constitute a satiric safeguard that Huxley carefully builds into his novel to insure the unattractiveness of so pleasure-filled a dystopia. The climactic confrontation or debate that ends the novel in calculated stalemate takes on a final irony. One cannot choose Mond's alternative or the Savage's not only because each outlook is incomplete, but also because both are at bottom unpleasingly primitive solutions. Going forward with Ford, Freud, Pavlov and Wells is no better than returning with Lawrence to the dark gods, broken threads and old mysteries. Having exposed the backwardness of the Brave New World, Huxley borrows from Gerald Heard to predict some genuinely promising new directions.

In *The Ascent of Humanity*, a work whose title nominates it as a replacement for Darwin's *The Descent of Man*, Heard outlines man's development from group consciousness to individuality. When, as seems likely, Huxley read Heard's book in 1929,¹¹ it restored his faith in evolution. An anthropologist with a theory of civilization and a taste for Eastern religions, Heard predicted that man's next step would be super-consciousness, a society-wide expansion of the mind similar to what individual mystics have always experienced. Mond and his fellow Controllers remain ignorant of this possibility. Schooled by Freud, Ford and Pavlov, they restrict man to a modern version of primitive group consciousness, the state he was in when men roamed in primitive bands. From these undifferentiated herds, the argument goes, individuals gradually emerged by sloughing off their corporate sense. Reinstating it would be good for business and perfect for national stability. It would limit behavior in a manner acceptable to Pavlov and favorable both to Fordian industrialists and totalitarian advocates of universal statism.

¹¹ Huxley's official biographer, Sybille Bedford, and Grover Smith, editor of the *Letters*, agree that Huxley first met Heard in 1929. From Heard, Huxley derived a positive myth to offer his age. Heard does for Huxley what Christianity did for Dante, Vico for Joyce, or Madame Blavatsky for Yeats. In 1935, Huxley favorably reviewed Heard's *The Source of Civilization*, but *Brave New World* suggests he was familiar with Heard's work before then.

One of the central counterpoints in *Brave New World* opposes the descent of humanity, engineered by the Controllers, against the Healdian pattern of ascent personified by Helmholtz Watson. Huxley permits Watson to shed his group identity, to cease thinking of himself mainly as an Alpha. Drawing on the internal reservoir of unused evolutionary energy that Heald believed remains in everyone, Watson begins to enjoy mystical glimpses of a higher unity, the possibility of participatory knowledge of the Divine Ground. This may be the next stage in man's evolutionary ascent, a third choice instead of Mond or the Savage. If Watson is the forerunner of a new form of consciousness, a broadening of awareness, his exile does not spell permanent defeat. The simple fact of his existence promises that the type he represents will continue making sporadic appearances.

In a society dedicated to scientifically induced immaturity, Watson begins to grow up by going against the grain. As *Brave New World* becomes in part Watson's *Bildungsroman*, Huxley theorizes that man's evolutionary momentum, his desire for a higher state of being, is the truly primordial drive. It becomes operative even under dystopian conditions. If man's religious instincts and his longing for utopia propel him in the same direction, then Helmholtz emerges as the obligatory third choice in *Brave New World* because he is the only character still maturing at the end. Only he has an opportunity to come of age intellectually and spiritually. Mond's road leads to stagnation, the Savage's to frustration and suicide. Whether the terminal point is Alpha Plus or Epsilon Minus, everyone else in the *Brave New World* is a case of scientifically arrested development, on which the artificial stability of society is predicated.

Watson does now what a majority of men, perhaps even society as a whole, may one day accomplish once enough gifted individuals make themselves unifiable parts of the larger consciousness which mystics term the Clear Light or Divine Ground. Where the Pavlovian *Brave New World* distorts the democratic ideals of the rationalists, Huxley prefers an elitist's view of continuing evolution by means of gifted individuals. Pala is a community in which the Watson type and its supporters predominate. If Helmholtz Watson is the wave of the future, the prospective perfect citizen for the perfect society, Huxley need only begin imagining the kind of place that will permit him maximum growth. The unity that may someday exist among the super-men whom Watson foreshadows can be seen as a higher form of the solidarity primitives feel with their group. This higher primitivism combines the untutored social wisdom of Samoan and Trobriand societies with the centuries-old religious teachings of Vedanta. Watson's case, admittedly hypothetical, suggests that man may be destined to move from primitive group awareness through individualization to a form of higher consciousness in which, paradoxically, he transcends his individuality without actually having to forfeit it. This, it appears, would be the truly utopian state of affairs. Watson, then, enables Huxley to play a final variation on the idea of primitivism. As the prototype or earliest stage of Dr. Robert MacPhail and the spiritually mature citizens of Pala, Helmholtz is a positive variation on Mond and the Savage; he is the only entirely commendable primitive in the novel.

NOTES

1. On 12 October 1929. Aldous informed Julian that he had "read and enjoyed Falinowski" (L, 318). Huxley's interest in anthropologists was thus considerable, despite disclaimers in *Beyond the Mexique Bay*, 7-8. There he regards them with the same prejudice Dickens reserved for Mrs. Jellyby's brand of philanthropist: "My ejection to anthropologists is the same as my objection to missionaries. Why do these two classes of people waste their time converting heathens and studying the habits of blackamoors, when they can find, in their own streets, men and women whose beliefs and behaviour are at least as strange as those of the M'pongos and, so far as we are concerned, painfully and dangerously more significant? Anthropology, like charity, should begin at home." In *Brave New World*, it does.
2. Huxley's list in *Proper Studies* of "sociological writers whom I have read with profit" includes "M. Lévy-Brühl" (xix). Additional references to Lévy-Brühl occur on 73 and 77.
3. Mead describes the phenomenon of "consanguineous refuge" in *Coming of Age in Samoa*, 44 (first published in 1928). Trobriand theories of ghostly conception are explored by Bronislaw Malinowski in *Sex and Repression in Savage Society*, 9-13, and in *The Sexual Life of Savages in North-Western Melanesia*, Volume 1, 173 ff. *Sex and Repression* was originally published in 1927, *The Sexual Life of Savages* in 1929.
4. Huxley's ambivalence about primitivism resurfaces in *Island* when he reconsiders his satiric use of this idea in *Brave New World*. The Palanese are a sympathetic portrait of Mead's Samoans, but Huxley must endow his primitives with cultural sophistication, technical know-how and spiritual awareness. See chapter fifteen below.
5. See Lawrence's essay "New Mexico" in *Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D. H. Lawrence*, 142.
6. That Huxley thought of his peers in this manner is evident from his contempt for "our modern savages" who "copulate with the casual promiscuousness of dogs" (*PS*, 259).
7. When the boy and girl from Pala easily dissuade Oedipus from blinding himself, one accepts their argument that it is just as silly for Oedipus to punish himself for being the victim of implausible circumstances as the Samoans knew it was for Juliet to crave only Romeo.
8. Hence Huxley's lifelong preference for Mead, Malinowski and Gerald Heard over Freud, Adler and perhaps even Jung. In *Proper Studies*, Huxley finds Jung "by far the most highly gifted" of contemporary psychologists, not "monomaniacal" like Freud and Adler (xix).
9. Mead restates this view succinctly in the "Preface" to the 1961 edition of *Coming of Age in Samoa* (12); also, see p. 19.
10. If Huxley needed any authority beyond his own common sense to refute Rousseau, he found plenty of ammunition in *Growing Up in New Guinea*. Manus society, Mead points out, renders absurd the idea of a noble savage. Left largely uneducated, children in the Admiralty Islands turn out mentally dull and socially immature, as one might expect. See pp. 7, 10.
11. Huxley's official biographer, Sybille Bedford, and Grover Smith, editor of the *Letters*, agree that Huxley first met Heard in 1929. From Heard, Huxley derived a positive myth to offer his age. Heard does for Huxley what Christianity did for Dante, Vico for Joyce, or Madame Blavatsky for Yeats. In 1935, Huxley favorably reviewed Heard's *The Source of Civilization*, but *Brave New World* suggests he was familiar with Heard's work before then.

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