

**Fearing an Inhuman(e) Future:
The Unliterary or Illiterate Dystopia of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World***

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English Thesis
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April 9, 2009

In the midst of a global economic crisis, two great wars, and new ideologies and technologies, Aldous Huxley, in despair for the world of 1932 and beyond, wrote his famous dystopian, social satire, *Brave New World*.¹ Peter Firchow suggests, *In Modern Utopia Fictions: from H.G. Wells to Irish Murdoch*, that “most of the memorable utopian fictions of our time are largely pessimistic—not of course about the future, but really about the present” (5). The overwhelmingly traumatic time period of the 1930s definitely set the stage for Huxley’s seminal work. Presently, the state of the world provides numerous points of comparison, and the novel certainly possesses a timeless quality. *Brave New World* continues to speak, and to scare, certain readers about such a possible future. Other readers, however, sense only the science fiction aspect of *Brave New World*. The novel has become merely a cliché phrase to describe the potential dangers of scientific advancement.² In his “Foreword” to the novel, Christopher Hitchens suggests that such a misunderstanding of literature often occurs and

literary immorality often depends on such vague but durable misunderstandings, and the three words “Brave New World” (themselves annexed from Miranda’s speech in Shakespeare’s *Tempest*) are as well known as “Catch-22” or “Nineteen Eighty-Four”—virtual hieroglyphics, which almost automatically summon a universe of images and associations (viii).

There exists a much greater complexity and richness to the novel because its main theme relates to an expansive, or comprehensive, view of the development of society. Ultimately, *Brave New World* is a satire that utilizes science fiction and contemporary issues to demonstrate the destruction of humanity. The novel’s dark tone does not fade in the end. Instead, the bleakness of Huxley’s critique overwhelms the work and suggests an inevitable collapse in the future.

¹ “Deliberately conceived dystopias, such as Huxley’s and Orwell’s, however, differ from most utopias that have merely become dystopias over time in that they are usually satirical” (Firchow 5).

² Nicholas Murray writes that while “*Brave New World* is Huxley’s most famous book,” it is, perhaps, unfortunate. The ironic title has become a “journalistic cliché,” but “classics are often doomed to be misunderstood” (256).

Set in the distant yet familiar future of A.F. (The Year of our Ford) 632, *Brave New World* envisions an omnipotent, totalitarian government – the “World State” – controlling, or “stabilizing,” the population. The select “World Controllers,” such as the character of Mustapha Mond, oversee all features of life. The World State utilizes bioengineering to create its citizens and also psychologically and socially “conditions” the people to accept this “utopia.” The novel clearly presents that the World State’s goal is to make the entire population enjoy their “inescapable social destiny” in the name of stability (Huxley 26). Through this system, perhaps an irreversible one, a process of dehumanization occurs. The World State erases any natural feature of life from birth to death. The controllers also secure the “savage,” or American Indian/indigenous peoples, reservations to prevent any issues of the past from arising. Problematically for the World State, there exists a literate or semi-literate savage, John. The failure to secure civilization completely, by eradicating all “savage” or past existence, causes the narrative’s conflict. Society, therefore, becomes hopelessly anti-human over time and loses its meaning and significance.

Many readers narrowly understand the novel in the context of the 1930s’ fears, or more specifically in the advancements of science and/or technology. Christopher Hitchens notes that while George Orwell, in *1984*, “was writing about the forbidding, part-alien experience of Nazism and Stalinism... Huxley was locating disgust and menace in the very things – the new toys of materialism from cars to contraceptives – that were becoming everyday pursuits” (xi). The novel considers the obvious political and social fears of its time; however, the novel also thoroughly confronts a more menacing and pervasive problem, quite real and familiar to today’s reader. Firchow notes that “[t]echnology, or more commonly, the opposition to technology, is undoubtedly an important recurrent theme in much dystopian literature,” and this explains the

novel's clear overlap with science fiction (6). Nevertheless, in his 1946 "Preface," Huxley explains: "The theme of *Brave New World* is not the advancement of science as such; it is the advancement of science as it affects human individuals" (8). The most critical theme of the novel is not one particular aspect, such as science, but the effect of dehumanization on society in every aspect, especially culture. Nicholas Murray, in his biography of Aldous Huxley, explains that *Brave New World* "was much more than a 'nightmare vision' of babies in bottles. It was ... about science and human freedom, culture and democracy, and the manipulation of the citizen by mass media and modern consumer capitalism" (256). *Brave New World*'s theme is that a relativistic current within the flow of modernity, affecting all aspects of life, eliminates the fundamental characteristics of humanity. Relativism means the fading of definitive and enduring concepts for lesser yet newer ones. This concern makes *Brave New World* as haunting today as in 1932.

To understand what creates this pervasive relativism that dehumanizes the world is to understand how the novel relates to the idea of modern, modernism, and modernity. In the "Introduction" to *A Companion to Modernist Literature and Culture*, Kevin Dettmar writes: "For a phenomenon supposed to be safely in the past, modernism has been experiencing a good bit of change, even growth, of late" (1). Modernism immediately connects with a sense of time and change, mainly in the recent past, yet the idea is much broader and still developing. Almost purposefully vague by its nature, modernism remains a complex and debated idea. In *The Cambridge Companion to the Modernist Novel*, Peter Brooker suggests the widest range "of modernism ... run[s] for fifty odd years, from the 1890s to 1945" (32). Peter Firchow, however, would extend this period until 1960 (xv). Establishing a time frame for the "modern era" and "modernism" presents numerous challenges. One can more narrowly define the idea of modernity as the advancements of a society, technologically but also philosophical, etc., toward

a new world or understanding of the world. Brooker proposes that “we should look not for a ‘before’ or even ‘after’ modernism ... [because] ‘modernism’ best refers to works exhibiting a high degree of conspicuous formal experiment, where this can be understood as a response, one way or the other, to the conditions of modernity” (33). *Brave New World* is stylistically unique as simultaneously a science fiction, a social satire, dystopian novel. Hitchens notes how it is “ahead of, and behind, its time ... [because] Huxley was a reactionary modernist” (xv). *Brave New World* reacts and critiques the developments in this modern era, specifically of the 1930s but also beyond. Huxley’s novel is modern and a part of modernism because it is concerned with the times and reacts against the pervasive relativism that modernity ushers into the world. Dehumanization occurs as a product of this de-evolution, which also extends to the present day.

Huxley’s broad concern specifically links this relativism, which the advancements of modernity facilitate, to a problem of historicism.³ Robert Baker, in *The Dark Historic Page: Social Satire and Historicism in the Novels of Aldous Huxley 1921-1939*, notes that “Huxley’s philosophy of history ... is so variously built into the novel that ... it cannot be in fact be fully comprehended if divorced from his theory of modern romanticism” (5). Huxley uses this term, “modern romanticism,” for his grandiose and conflated historical, philosophical, and social explanation for the world’s problem. Modern romanticism attempts to express the current era’s overly naïve and mawkish understanding of the past and actions in the present. Ironically, and paradoxically, *Brave New World* utilizes a very romantic tone to criticize modernity. Only in the very end of the novel is there any sense of the failure of romanticism. Baker explains this issue by writing that “Huxley’s depiction of a society numbed by the trauma of the Great War and given up to unvaryingly hedonistic aims, yet increasingly tempted to wayward forays in the

³ Peter Firchow proposes that history “is always present in utopian literature since the future is always a function of the past as well as of the present” (xi).

direction of apocalyptic faiths and coercive ideologies, is inseparable from his criticism of historicism” (5). *Brave New World* expresses Huxley’s feelings that the world’s problems derive from a lack of historical understanding. Huxley suggests that historicism is a relative or subjective and, therefore, false sense of history that leaves critical problems unresolved or simply avoids major issues. “Historicism,” Baker writes, “... has altered our understanding of the past, inspiring on the one hand the violent ideologies of modern history while on the other hand encouraging a relativist rejection of absolute or trans-historical values” (5). Historicism ignores or re-writes critical moments, ideas, and values that are essential and replaces these things with something much less. *Brave New World*, therefore, proposes that the rising violence of modernity may ultimately create the desire to resign individual will and simply survive. In the novel, Huxley explains that “most historical facts are unpleasant” and, therefore, the future avoids them for happier pastimes (32). *Brave New World* is vast in its conflated critique; nevertheless, it specifically describes the horrors, and seemingly certain reality, of a world without a culture informed by the past.

Perhaps, the most interesting aspect of Huxley’s critique, which is so rarely addressed, focuses on the destruction, or lack, of culture in the utopia of *Brave New World*.⁴ The idea of culture in the novel is manifested most often in literature but also in interpersonal relations.⁵ Literature provides a critical understanding of humanity; it contains the core characteristics of life and provides outstanding examples of how to express thoughts, emotions, and ideas,

⁴ Interestingly, Firchow suggests that the best of utopian and dystopian works stand out for their literary quality because “in doing so, their ‘demonstrations’ have stressed the fictional (or, more broadly speaking, the literary) aspects of utopia in order to make those ‘demonstrations’ more persuasive” (11).

⁵ Jerome Meckier, in his essay “Poetry in the Future, the Future of Poetry: Huxley and Orwell on Zamyatin,” advances more specifically that “poetry, defined as intenser self-awareness or expansion of consciousness, becomes synecdochic for art” and, therefore, “the fate of art is seen to be identical with the density of the independent spirit, soul, or spirituality in general” (20).

especially with other people. Milton Ehre, in “Olesha’s Zavist: Utopia and Dystopia,” explains this vital connection between literature and humanity when he writes:

Utopia and dystopia designate the human dream of happiness and the human nightmare of despair when there are assigned a place (topos) in space or time. Since narrative literature ‘is essentially an imitation not of persons but of action and life, of happiness and misery,’ [quoting Aristotle’s *Poetics*] utopian and dystopian inventions are mere extremes of literature’s ongoing story (2).

Literature, specifically dystopian and utopian, helps readers to define what humanity is. Peter Firchow writes that “the depiction of utopia (and dystopia) in the modern period become increasingly literary, so that what is utopian about these fictions must always be viewed, and interpreted, from the literary perspective” (xiii). The dystopian elements of *Brave New World* involve the absence of literature, which destroys society’s ability to comprehend and express what should make it human. Firchow suggests that anyone who fails to understand this connection “fails to see that Huxley’s satire of the future Fordian utopia is based on a deliberate impoverishment of human nature when contrasted with the wealth of human experience as displayed in the great literature of the past (i.e. John Savage’s Shakespeare)” (15). Through the juxtaposition of the literature of the past and present, the narrative creates a future world devoid of essential elements. There exists even an inability to relate to other people in the intimacy and tenderness of sex. Despite the apparent stability of this utopia, its cultural emptiness leaves the reader, and many of its citizens, wondering: do I want to live in such a place and/or time?

The specific cultural localities of *Brave New World* create a sense of realism that generates a universal fear. The dystopia occurs mainly in the modern and futuristic city of London. The uncivilized “Savage Reservation of Malpais” in New Mexico also plays a crucial role. The savage reservation acts as the homeland of John (the Savage), the central anti-World State figure. By introducing John to “utopian” London, the novel makes his character a link

between the “old” and “new” world. The novel ironically juxtaposes the “new,” yet old and savage, world of America, specifically the frontier of the Southwest, and the “old,” yet futuristic and utopian, world of Europe, specifically England. Jerome Meckier, in “Aldous Huxley’s Americanization of the *Brave New World* Typescript,” mainly asserts that Huxley fears the products of the relativism of modernity specifically arising from America. Meckier focuses on the allusions to Henry Ford and American consumerism. He suggests that Huxley’s Americanization, or the Fordization, of the novel is essential “to universalize his anti-utopia” (footnote 9, 434). The Ford references specify part of Huxley’s contempt for the modern, overly industrial and overly consumer-driven, society. Nevertheless, the “F” of “A.F.” also often represents Freud, specifically in matters of psychology (Huxley 44). This Freudian allusion suggests Huxley’s criticism of the intellectual and cultural downfall of Europe. Both places are equally unlitrary or illiterate and sordid spaces. John’s failed utopian experiment, in the English countryside, acts as the third and final location. The failure of this “return to nature” provides the novel’s most overwhelming sense of despair. Meckier ultimately concedes that there exists no place of hope but only “unacceptable alternatives,” represented in “Fordian London and Lawrencian Malpais” and also John’s final resting place (“Americanization” 437). Firchow explains that, for Huxley, “there is no more good place. There are only different kinds of bad places” (xv). In A.F. 632, there is no higher understanding of life, just as how in 1932 “utopia had in an important sense ceased to be utopian” (Firchow xv). There is only a “new (inhuman) world” because dystopia occurs not only spatially but also temporally.

To understand the novel’s suggestion about the world’s growing problems does not require a complex and/or comprehensive understanding of history. Baker suggests that Huxley’s “central characters become ‘a social symbol, a paradigm of the whole of the community’” (8,

quoting Huxley, *Letters of Aldous*, 384). The novel utilizes “literature” and the literariness of specific characters to address its broader concerns. Firchow explains: “utopia must not simply be defined as the depiction of society outside of history but as the depiction of believable characters confronted with the problem of how to create and live in and often ironically ‘ideal’ society while retaining their humanity” (14). *Brave New World* connects its central characters – John the Savage, Helmholtz Watson, Bernard Marx, Lenina Crowne, and Mustapha Mond – through their personal struggles with literature and each other. The actions and interactions of these characters provide varying perspectives that help to locate the downfall of society. John is the semi-literate “Savage,” who represents a desire for something more in life; he is the most extreme outsider and the true rebel of the group. Helmholtz, a virile and intelligent writer of propaganda for the World State, depicts a poet struggling to express his feelings in a time without poetry. Bernard, a physically deformed yet extraordinarily intelligent psychologist, is an outsider who searches for a higher purpose. Though he longs for something else in life, as an outsider, Bernard is readily willing to conform and “be happy.” The beautiful Lenina is hopelessly socially conditioned; she represents the typical mindless citizen because she is happy with the World State. Mustapha Mond, the most intellectual and certainly the most literate character, provides the ironic “voice of reason” for the World State. Mond provides an offensive rationale for shedding one’s essential being for “survival.” The characters’ inner desire to find meaning, specifically in language and literature, drives the problem of the novel.

Through the utilization of famous literature, namely Shakespeare’s, *Brave New World* presents its nightmarish prophecy. The novel’s title derives from a famous line of Shakespeare’s the *Tempest*. Ira Grushow in his essay, “*Brave New World* and *The Tempest*,” suggests that the *Tempest* is the most sustained literary reference in the novel, even among all the other

Shakespearian references. He argues that *Brave New World* structurally acts as an “ironic repetition and continuation of the play” (45). The novel acts in communion with the higher art and culture of the past. John the Savage utters the line “O brave new world” several times, but he also represents his counterpart Miranda beyond these utterances. John is a Romantic character longing for companionship but cut off from the rest of the civilized world. The emergence of civilized characters into the remote places of both John and Miranda, hopefully to deliver them from their isolation, begins the true conflict of both works. Gurshow’s essay helpfully connects the critical relation between these two works. *Brave New World*, however, goes far beyond this one work and creates a more extensive intertextuality with the great literature of the past.⁶ Huxley utilizes classic examples of English literature to demonstrate how literature acts as the source for understanding the complexities of life, such as the emotions of love and revenge.

The novel suggests a general necessity of language for a culture to communicate ideas, even in the future. The Director of Hatcheries and Conditioning, the supervisor of the factory or laboratory where people are created and trained (rather than born and/or educated), tells his young workers that “wordless conditioning is crude and wholesale; [it] cannot bring home the finer distinctions, [it] cannot inculcate the more complex course of behavior” (Huxley 36). Through reading literature, one learns the true power of language, to think critically, and to respond with their emotions and thoughts in language. Some of the most powerful and beautiful examples of language in literature discuss unstable and controversial ideas and concerns; thought and emotion do not necessarily provide for stability. The World State knows that it must keep certain forms of language to communicate and condition its citizens, yet there must be a limit to

⁶ Gurshow also notes a few of the various other famous literary allusions: “at the beginning of Chapter Five, Huxley translates Gray’s *Elegy into a Country Churchyard* into terms of Fordian Society” (42). *Brave New World*, however, is devoid of the emotion and meaning behind Gray’s *Elegy* and this ironic rewriting of the poem provides simply another horrific picture of this relativistic, unliterary, future society.

expression. The director tells his young workers that ““there must be words, but words without reasoning,”” reflecting on the importance of Hypnopaedia, or sleep conditioning (36). The World State intends to control all thought and emotion to stabilize the world into an empty, and false, happiness.⁷ Without the ability to fully express thought and emotion, there is no possibility for literature. The World State stabilizes society by sequestering the power of language.

There exists a purposeful lack of complexity and emotion in the language of the World State. Keith Booker, in *The Dystopian Impulse in Modern Literature: Fiction as Social Criticism*, suggests “the products of this culture industry are devoid of any real content that might lead to analysis or thought” (58). In this utopia, culture is thought of as a mechanized industry. The World Controllers create base forms of language to control “the mind that judges and desires and decides” (Huxley 36). Language no longer serves a humane purpose in this future; it is merely a sector in the industry of “progress” and “stability” for the purpose of social conditioning and not anything remotely literary. The Director suggests conditioning is a form of “moral education, which ought never, in any circumstances, to be rational” (Huxley 34). Ironically, language prevents rational or critical thought for the good of society in the World State. This use of language, or the advancement of language in Modernity, must be devoid of any overly complex and/or emotional ideas. The World State reasons that: “[those] poor pre-moderns were mad and wicked and miserable. –they were forced to feel strongly (Huxley 47). The World State clearly suggests this application of an advancement of Modernity is good when compared to a past time in society. “The powers that be” utilize language to dictate subservient meanings for everyone’s life. The Director further states: “that is the secret of happiness and virtue—liking what you’ve got to do. All the conditioning aims at that: making people like their

⁷ Violent Passion Surrogate, V.P.S., is given to the members of the World State to control their emotional feelings (Huxley 215). It does not prevent their feelings; rather, it allows the people to have some but in controlled doses.

unescapable social destiny” (Huxley 26). By informing all of its citizens how to think, the World State accomplishes its goal of stability and makes people happy with their trivial existence. Any use of language or form of culture, in this perverse future, merely aims to suppress. The novel continues to express the idea of an illiterate world as inescapably meaninglessness.

There exists a purposeful deficit of meaning even in the World State’s scientific literature. This deficit expresses a dark concern for restoring culture in this unliterary world. Any unorthodox desire for a higher knowledge or purpose to life, even in scientific advancements, is not permissible in the World State. Through Mond’s reading and critique of a paper entitled “A New Theory of Biology,” Huxley further explains the need to conform all thought:

It was a masterly piece of work. But once you began admitting explanations in terms of purpose—well, you didn’t know what the result might be. It was the sort of idea that might easily decondition the more unsettled minds among the higher castes... and take to believing, instead, that the goal was somewhere beyond, somewhere outside the present human sphere, that the purpose of life was not the maintenance of well-being, but some intensification and refining of consciousness, some enlargement of knowledge. Which was, the Controller reflected, quite possibly true (Huxley 162).

Mond’s reflection shows the World’s State extreme need to suppress unorthodox thought, especially if it is well thought, and even if it is probably true. To remain in control, especially over the likes of Bernard and Helmholtz, “the unsettled minds of the higher castes,” Mond must suppress these “new” and “ingenious” ideas that suggest a higher purpose exists. This fear about a pervasive destruction of meaning, or purpose, is rooted deeply in Huxley’s fear for the future.

In the aftermath of the Great War and the build-up to the Second World War, Huxley’s fears a desire for stability could supersede a desire for purpose. The notion that a “Nine Years War,” which occurs in the history of the novel, could lead to the desire for a “World State” appears very logical. As Huxley’s character Mustapha Mond asks: ““What’s the point of truth or beauty or knowledge when the anthrax bombs are popping all around you?”” (250). Mond’s

question demonstrates the potential absence of certain key elements to life, such as truth and beauty. One can find expressions of these elements in other literary work such John Keats' poem "Ode on a Grecian Urn." Keats' poem depicts a "utopian" world on an urn, fixed from history and forever unaltered by time. The urn, and poem, as a work of art preserves a remnant of past culture and existence. Mond creates a similar world in some ways, yet his utopia is fundamentally the opposite of Keats' urn. Like the World State, the urn is frozen from time and history and filled with happiness: "Ah, happy, happy boughs!.../More happy love! More happy, happy love!" (Keats 21-5). Nevertheless, the ideas of happiness and love are quite different in these two worlds. On the urn, the lovers cannot physically join together. Their beauty and grace do not change with age or time, and the lovers never leave one another. In *Brave New World*, people regularly unite in sex. The idea of beauty does not permit them to age, yet "lovers" never engage in the intimacy of true love because they are merely temporary objects of lust. There is a notion of impossibility in the "naturalness" of the urn's utopia; however, the urn contains "truth and beauty," which John the Savage claims as the ultimate ideals. Keats' poem suggests that truth and beauty are "all/Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know" (49-50). Nevertheless, the earth of *Brave New World* is without truth or beauty for the sake of stability. Mond's question, then, clearly includes within it the concern: When people merely want stability, is there a place for literature? The bleakness of the world's state does not present the hope of a better, let alone ideal, future. The novel's dark tone presents a sense of inevitability. The willingness to cede meaning in life, to have "stability" and "happiness," makes the idea of "utopia" monstrous.

Ultimately, this conditioning, or lack of language and literature, depletes the World State's characters' ability to communicate effectively. The inability to express ideas and emotions creates problems in the characters' personal relationships. Many times these moments

allude to another work of literature that contains the noticeably missing idea or emotion. When Bernard goes on a date with Lenina, he tries to share his romantic passion through staring at a storm over the sea. Jerome Meckier, in "Poetry in the Future, the Future of Poetry: Huxley and Orwell on *Zamyatin*," suggests that "Bernard Marx harbours a Romantic poet's fondness for the beautiful and the sublime" (24). Bernard initially desires to simply walk and talk with Lenina in the "Lake District," an allusion to the famous locality within English literature associated with the Romantics (Huxley 88). Lenina, however, insists on a more "social" activity and forces Bernard to share only a helicopter ride alone with her. Huxley writes that, during their return helicopter ride, "a south-westerly wind had sprung up, and the sky was cloudy" (89). The scene is reminiscent in many ways to Percy Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind." Bernard is overwhelmed at the sublime sight of the storm over the ocean with emotions and life; Lenina is simply disgusted and wants to leave. Bernard brings the machine into the tempest and comes alive. Bernard explains to Lenina: "[This] makes me feel as though...' he hesitated, searching for words with which to express himself, 'as though I were more me'" (Huxley 90). This scene provokes a new spark of life and feeling within Bernard. He utilizes the sublimity of the natural scene, the roaring ocean and stormy sky, to express himself in a vague yet similar way to Shelley's poem. Bernard feels a compulsion to something else, something unknown. He cannot define who or what it is, nor can he really identify why he feels this way. He is incapable of fully expressing himself and certainly incapable of composing a poem truly similar in style and force to Shelley's. Bernard is not in touch with his romantic or poetic soul because the social order strips Bernard of the power of language and so also his humanity.

The often tense and highly problematic interactions provide further insight into the characters' understanding and perspective of their life, or their purpose. Bernard says that

moments such as these make him desire “to be free to be happy in some other way [not the World State’s]... not in everybody else’s way” (Huxley 90). Bernard taps into some basic and surviving nature or desire for personal freedom and expression. These very personal ideas and emotions horrify Lenina. Because of her social conditioning, Lenina merely wants a distraction from reality, and so she turns on the radio. Lenina says that she feels “free to have the most wonderful time” and does not mind “being a part of the social body” or “belonging to everyone else” because it creates stability and happiness (Huxley 90). Bernard recognizes and criticizes Lenina’s referral to the catch phrases of social conditioning. He declares that Lenina and himself are “enslaved by [their] conditioning” and, therefore, are unable to be free in their actions, thoughts, and feelings. (Huxley 90). Lenina does not wish to find a reflection of reality or any thing that might provoke a deeper feeling. She merely desires an escape from her life. Social conditioning is intended to eliminate personal conflicts and desires for higher ideals; yet, these feelings linger.

Bernard and Lenina’s interaction provides insight into the novel’s rationale for the discrepancy between characters’ capabilities. Bernard appears more whole as a person when he acts on his feelings. Bernard is created as a member of the “Alpha plus” caste, though. He is given a higher level of intelligence than most and, therefore, he possesses some ability to think and to feel freely. He says that he wants to be “an adult all the time,” however, meaning he that does not wish to act “infantile” or feeble-minded, like Lenina (Huxley 91). Nevertheless, Bernard is also a physical anomaly; he is deformed for his caste, being much shorter and not as physically attractive. These abnormalities provide Bernard with a unique personality and vision of society. This separation affords Bernard a higher capability. On the other hand, Lenina is created with an inferior intellect, or in a lower “caste,” yet she is very sexually attractive and

quite popular. She feels more connected to the social body and, as a result of this, she cannot feel and think like Bernard. She represents the mindless masses of the present and also the future possibility of eugenics. The horror of the external world's reality causes her desire to find only happiness in life, even if it is superficial.

Huxley's own examples of the culture of London in A.F. 632 further demonstrate the unliterary or illiteracy of the Leninas of the world. These cultural "works" decried what could, and perhaps has, happened to humanity. Lenina relates to a savage ceremony that she witnesses with her understanding of it: "'Orgy-porgy,' she whispered to herself. These drums beat out just the same rhythms [as the Solidarity Services, Community Sings, etc]" (Huxley 108). Lenina's encounter with this new and foreign, or exotic, experience immediately conjures her own similar quasi-religious, community experience. She recites lyrics or lines from part of the Community Sings, which the reader experiences through Bernard's encounter with it: "*Orgy-porgy, Ford and fun, /Kiss the girls and make them One. /Boys at one with girls at peace; /Orgy-porgy gives release*" (Huxley 85). Huxley parodies the re-writing of an old nursery rhyme, "Georgy Porgy," which seems more likely to be a veiled satire of sexual deviancy (Roberts 71-5). Huxley's version, though, acts as a social conditioning mantra to promote promiscuity. Lenina processes and understands the savage's religious ceremony events through this allusion. While there is a similar idea of a "religious" nature in both ceremonies, Lenina's "orgy-porgy" does not capture the true spiritual and cultural essence of the mixed indigenous and Christian ceremony. She lacks any real understanding of these ideas. Instead, Lenina solely relates to an instinctual sense of rhythm, which triggers a conditioned response to her necessary sexual promiscuity. This moment displays the inability of illiterate and debased citizens of the World State to process experiences and suggests a collective loss of memory and intimacy.

Though natural birth is prohibited in this future “culture,” it becomes quite obvious that sex, or sexual promiscuity, is programmatically encouraged. Sex does not relate to love, passion, or any sort of personal, intimate (and certainly not a monogamous) relationship. Sex merely provides another leisure entertainment to fill time and prevent thought. Unlike the female leads of Shakespeare’s plays, such as Desdemona, Lenina is not a chaste beauty faithful and true to her one love. The World State’s demand for public stability devastates the beauty and tenderness in this most personal act. To Bernard’s great disdain, Lenina describes herself sexually the same way as other people describe her, as “awfully pneumatic” (Huxley 92). Lenina being pneumatic marks her as both large breasted – physically attractive in a primal sense yet also stereotypically stupid – and machine-like. In terms of the World State, this is an “awfully” wonderful attribute. Bernard, however, thinks of this as just “awful” and disturbing. He wishes that his feelings for Lenina could be more than sexual lust. Lenina does not feel or think beyond the physicality; she merely acts as a sexual object, or a piece of “meat” (Huxley 92). Lenina’s beautiful body is only the shell of a lesser being, and it does not compensate for her illiterateness. Such a person proves incapable of understanding any greater purpose in life than basic or base “happiness.”

With the entrance of John the Savage, an unconditioned outsider, the novel begins to explore more deeply the possibility of reclaiming a lost world. When first finding so unique a specimen as John, Bernard says: “‘So hard for me to realize ... to reconstruct. As though we were living on different planets, in different centuries. A mother, and all this dirt, and gods, and old age, and disease ...’ he shook his head. ‘It’s almost inconceivable. I shall never understand unless you explain” (Huxley 116). John and the savages believe in God, family, purity, and natural living. The savages, as a whole, share more of a genuine culture than the members of the World State and resemble a lost tribe of humanity. Malpais, nevertheless, presents religion and

family life but also filth, decay and violence. Bernard cannot relate to John, but it is not merely because he is a savage. Bernard attempts to understand John, not as a psychologist but more as an anthropologist. John, however, is literate and literary; therefore, he has no equal in either place. John's existence as the last literate human provides a missing link between the two different worlds and times of London and Malpais. John connects to the external world, of the past and present, through his knowledge of literature. He represents the past beauty of humanity and culture but also possesses a serious naiveté for the present reality.

John's reminisces with Bernard about his childhood and, in doing so, provides the psychological background to explain his own conditioning. John is an outsider in the world of Malpais, as Bernard is in London. His mother, Linda, is a woman from London, stranded at the reservation during a visit with Bernard's boss.⁸ John, therefore, appears ethnically or racially very different from the savages. Also, his mother's promiscuity with the men, specifically one called Popé, causes embarrassment and shame. Linda often appears as a bad mother because she is completely unfamiliar with the idea of mothering; however, she possesses enough basic maternal instincts to care for John and provides John's only salvation. One incident of the boys of Malpais teasing John relates to John's ragged clothing. Linda is incapable of repairing clothes because such things are never done in London. She does, however, provide John with the power of language by teaching him to read. John's reflections reveal that as a child he thought: "But I can read,' ... 'and they can't. They don't even know what reading is'" (Huxley 121). Despite his ragged and shabby appearance, John sees himself as equal to, if not greater than, the others because of his literacy. John's ability to read further isolates him; nevertheless, he only more

⁸ This past trip is seemingly a pre-cursor to Bernard and Lenina's trip and is one the many oddities of the novel. The connections between Bernard and John, Linda and Lenina, the appearance of Helmholtz, and Bernard's un-heroic ending are almost inexplicable because of their lack of depth. Perhaps, all of these can be traced to the process of a rewriting that occurred quickly before publishing, as Jermone Meckier suggests ("Americanization").

readily desires to read because he wishes to be more capable than the others. John's gains the basic ability to read with a copy of "*The Chemical and Bacteriological Conditioning of the Embryo. Practical Instructions for Beta Embryo-Store Workers,*" Linda's job manual. This text does not provide a fuller or meaningful understanding of the world because its concepts are too specific and foreign for John. Through Linda's biased, utopian explanations of London, for which John has no basis for comparison, John finds a place to escape. Through Popé, Linda eventually provides John with, perhaps, the last existing copy of *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*. John's ingestion of the plays makes him unique in Malpais, or anywhere else, and an eventual threat to the World State. John gains the ability to connect to human thought and emotion, through the universal expressions of humanity contained within these works. John, however, also struggles to fully comprehend the meaning of Shakespeare's plays.

The account of John's first incident further reveals his inability to live fully in the world because of his dangerous reading. John's first contact with Shakespeare provides a clear connection to his mother's sexual relations with Popé. John recalls reading this first passage from *Hamlet* on the infidelity of Hamlet's mother and uncle:

*Nay, but to live,
In the rank of sweat of an enseamed bed,
Stew'd in corruption, honeying and making love
Over the nasty sty ...*

... better than Mitsima's magic, because it meant more, because it talked to *him*, talked wonderfully and only half understandably, a terrible beautiful magic (Huxley 123).

These new strange words provide John with a way to express what he feels and thinks. John's reading identification with Hamlet's conflict of his mother's inappropriate romance with his uncle perfectly captures John's experience and feelings. His mother's "corrupt love making" to Popé in their "nasty sty" of a home causes John's suffering. Shakespeare becomes John's

definitive explanation of humanity and more. Literature is divine or magical because its words speak to John only half understandably. John first reflects on this reading: “What did the words mean? He only half knew. ... [but] they gave him a reason for hating Popé” (Huxley 123). John has no real education or guidance with this powerful literature. This overly personal and emotional style of reading stifles John’s ability to comprehend meaning. John continues to reflect that “...he had never really hated Popé before... because he had never been able to say how much he hated him, but now he had these words” (Huxley 123). John gains access to his emotions and thoughts through these magical words that allow him to express himself. John also admits that “he couldn’t make head or tail of [*Hamlet*]” (Huxley 123). He lacks the complex understanding to analyze literature and, more importantly, to respond with his own thoughts. His knowledge of literature does not make him completely human; it merely makes him more human-like. Unfortunately, all of John’s words and understanding of the world comes from Shakespeare. Booker suggests: “Huxley’s world is a far different stage than Shakespeare’s, though, and John’s Shakespearean processing of the stimuli he receives is entirely inappropriate” (58). Though not always or completely inappropriate, it is certainly not productive for John only to relate to Shakespeare. Nevertheless, John’s inability to separate fact and fiction leads to a very problematic existence.

Neither the past world of Malpais nor the future land of London creates a true utopia. The Savage Reservation is an unfriendly place from which John wants to escape. In his naiveté, John ironically thinks of London and the idea of a brave new world or utopia as a positive thing. The possibility of traveling to London, with Bernard, leads to John’s first reciting of Miranda’s words: ““O brave new world that has such people in it. Let’s start at once.”” (Huxley 130). John desires to live in the “brave new world,” or utopia, of London that he hears about as a child; he

desires to be among others like himself, yet no such place exists. Bernard tries to warn John before they depart: “...hadn’t you better wait till you actually see the new world?” (Huxley 130). Bernard knows of the disappointment John will meet in London and suggests that this other place and these other people are no more like John than anyone in Malpais is. Huxley foreshadows John’s fate when he writes: “‘To touch the fence is instant death,’ ... ‘There is no escape from a Savage Reservation’” (Huxley 99). This spatial barrier of separation, similar to the temporal barrier of time’s passing, prevents the colliding of, and exchange between, the two separate worlds. Once John leaves this place, this time, there is no return. Huxley does not present either place favorably, yet the World State thrives because of Huxley’s pessimistic fear that “time is intractable” (Baker 8). The fixed, physical reality of time means that forward progress cannot be stopped. As time moves forward, there is the inescapable reality of what is to come. For this reason, John’s departure also means his death and the loss of the last remnants of literature and culture, which he and his copy of Shakespeare represent. *Brave New World* is in a dark age, a time without literacy. Without literature, there can be no real humanity because there exists neither representations of language or the past nor the evolutionary development of humane ideas such as honor, passion, and civility; there is no mode for preserving and communicating such ideas.⁹

Brave New World further demonstrates, with John’s presence, a convincing possibility for a world whose culture, specifically popular culture, is unnatural and without intimacy. Hitchens, in his “Foreword,” informs the reader: “Aldous Huxley absolutely detested mass culture and popular entertainment, and many of his toughest critical essays, as well as several

⁹ The works of literature are beyond the physical texts of books, but, even in our digital age, texts are preserved in some physicality or lost. In the novel’s future age, perhaps today’s age, technology would never be used to preserve literature. Perhaps, this is why Ray Bradbury in *Fahrenheit 451* imagines a world in which works of literature must be memorized or lost forever.

intense passages in his fiction, consist of sneers and jeers at the cheapness of the cinematic ethic and the vulgarity of commercial music” (vii). In the world of A.F. 632, Huxley presents similar alternatives to literature, such as the “feelies” or hyper-virtual-reality movies. After arriving in London, John attends a “feelie” with Lenina and views it with disgust, later finding a remote comparison to *Othello* because of the black male character’s love for the white females character (Huxley 155). The plot appears too “simple” and the film merely an overly sexualized fantasy that John describes as “base and ignoble” (Huxley 155). John resists viewing Lenina’s enjoyment and sexual arousal as a flaw because he views himself as the dark-skinned, Othello figure in the movie and Lenina as the beautiful female lead, his Desdemona.¹⁰ John initially blames “the surrounding circumstances” to avoid corrupting his vision of her (Huxley 155). John sees the people of this society as victims of the World State and the machinery of modernity. The novel, then, suggests that John is “bound by strong vows that had never been pronounced, obedient to laws that had long since ceased to run” (Huxley 156). John is from a very different place and time. The aspects of life that John honors admires exist more concretely in his cultural works. Through the juxtaposition of John’s literature’s profundity and London’s culture’s emptiness the novel poignantly shows the effect of modernity on humanity.

None of the World State’s characters, despite their efforts, can find any higher meaning for life.¹¹ Helmholtz Watson is an extremely intelligent and sexually appealing “Alpha” male;

¹⁰ Huxley quite explicitly explains John’s direct mapping of Shakespeare’s play to his own life: “The Savage was reading *Romeo and Juliet* aloud—reading (for all the time he was seeing himself as Romeo and Lenina as Juliet) with an intense and quivering passion” (167-8). John directly sees himself, and others, in terms of plays, quite problematically. He does this quite explicitly with *Othello* and *Hamlet*, as well.

¹¹ In Meckier’s essay “Poetry in the Future,” Helmholtz and his poetry represent a middle ground between John and Mond. Meckier suggests that this shows how the ideals of humanity exist in the souls of poets, regardless of the absence of literature. These literary souls can overcome the suppression of language and deliver us. Meckier, however, feels a positive note to the novel’s end and reads the bleak ending as more of a critique of Wells and Lawrence. This seems to be a shallow reading that does not fully appreciate the severity of Huxley’s own feelings of despair. While there does exist a lingering humane feeling for poetry, this feeling is more likely because of weaker conditioning.

however, he is also an intellectual and a writer for the World State's Propaganda department. When Helmholtz tries to work with John, to gain a better grasp of literature and expand his writing, Helmholtz runs into a major problem. Helmholtz insists: "It's not enough for the phrases to be good; what you make with them ought to be good" (Huxley 73). The phrases of social conditioning are terse or laconic rather than pithy. Helmholtz recognizes his writing works well for conditioning. He also knows that it never progresses into a more sustained idea for real social good, besides the World State's "social good." Words, he senses, can also elucidate a more fulfilling understanding of life. Despite the World State's attempts to eradicate this inherent desire, the feeling still exists, specifically in the outliers.¹² Helmholtz wants to write and to think for himself but he does not know what to write. The unknown, innate compulsion to literature and meaning escapes from Helmholtz's grasp because he has no training, no education, in literature. He does not possess any powerful, emotional connections or experiences about which to write. Helmholtz cannot take John seriously when he reads *Romeo and Juliet*. Helmholtz tells John: "'No.' He concluded, with a sigh, 'it won't do. We need some other kind of madness and violence. But what? ... 'I don't know,' he said at last, 'I don't know'" (Huxley 169). "It," Helmholtz realizes, lies in some contrary notion to stability—madness or violence. He cannot find "it" in romantic love, however, because "love" means only sex to him. The act is meaningless, so he cannot write about it. He has no example to give a more concrete demonstration of his lack. There is no humanity in a stable yet meaningless world. Ultimately, John's inability to communicate, beyond his knowledge of Shakespeare, also proves problematic.

¹² Bernard similarly tells Lenina: "I want to know what passion is, ...I want to feel something strongly" (Huxley 92). Similarly, in the beginning, a demonstration is made of how children are taught to hate nature, symbolized in flowers, and reading literature. The innocent children have a natural desire to reach out because – "a new and profound significance seemed to suffuse the shining pages of the books" (Huxley 29). Then, the children are shocked and scared away to be conditioned to renounce such ideas.

John's presence eventually causes great frustrations for everyone. Lenina's sexual desire for John grows into an almost romantic love, yet these feelings are too new and overwhelming for Lenina. John can express only through literature his love for Lenina. He recites a poetic line from Shakespeare to her, but Lenina only grows frustrated and confused, saying: "For Ford's sake, John, talk sense. I can't understand a word you say" (Huxley 174). There is a gap in the literacy and understanding of the two characters. When John explicitly informs Lenina of his feelings for her, she finally relays her sexual and more romantic feelings for John. She seductively says, "Hug me till you drug me, honey," reciting popular song lyrics (Huxley 176). The novel comments: "She too had poetry at her command, knew words that sang and were spells and beat drums" (Huxley 176). Lenina knows that she must relate her emotions to John through language; however, she does not possess the ability or correct emotional stimuli for John's liking. She does not know how to express her love except through her body. John grows upset at seeing Lenina's promiscuous behavior, represented in the golden T, a bastardized Cross, around her neck – a gift from another lover. Nevertheless, her "base and ignoble" words are what finally cause John to lose control and become violent. These terrible words are painful to John; this poetry does not represent love, only egregious sexuality like that of his mother. The emptiness in these words causes a great clash between John and Lenina and leads John to further violence. John's rebellious presence contains a hope for a potential renaissance; however, he is merely another flawed character and represents an impossible life style in the World State.

Without a full understanding of literature or humanity, and no understanding of the future world of London, John is not prepared to deal with people in A.F. 632. His knowledge of Shakespeare, in fact, might make him worse off because the magic of literature can be dangerous when not equipped to handle its complexities competently. Booker explains: "Literature for

Huxley can be a powerful humanizing force, but it can be a negative one as well, especially if its readers lose the ability properly to distinguish fiction and reality” (59). John shows an inability to comprehend meaning and to distinguish fiction from reality, or his life from the plays. This creates a dangerous conflation, or rather an implosion. John specifically reads the actions of his life as the same as Hamlet, Othello, and Romeo and also purely relates to the world through Shakespeare. John is not impressed by the astonishing speed of the mass transportation vehicle of “The Bombay Green Rocket,” for example. John explains his lack of astonishment at this modern marvel by saying, ““Ariel could put a girdle round the earth in forty minutes.”” (Huxley 146). John once again utilizes the magic of the *Tempest* to understand this new world. The language of Shakespeare stirs John to such strong feelings that he is often unreasonable or irrational because he thinks of Shakespeare not as fiction but fact.

Literature moves John to do nothing productive or helpful; in the end, he succumbs to violence. In dealing with the death of his mother from her endless soma trip out of time,¹³ John begins to hope for a return to the reality of a humane world:

he would force her to come back from this dream of ignoble pleasures, from these base and hateful memories—back into the present, back into reality: the appalling present, the awful reality—but sublime, but significant, but desperately important precisely because of the imminence of that which made them so fearful (Huxley 185).

John wants to force Linda back into reality because he thinks that she merely escapes from the truth; however, he is also dreaming in some false reality. The present, the inescapable present reality of this dystopian future time, does not allow for any significance, not even in death. John

¹³ Huxley represents this clash of ideologies in the use of drugs, as well. Huxley explains the miracle drug “soma” as a release: “from the miseries of space and time” (163). One doctor explains to John: “But think of the enormous, immeasurable durations it can give you out of time. Every soma-holiday is a bit of what our ancestors used to call eternity” (Huxley 143). This erasing of time and history for happiness is a major part of the World State’s control and it repulses the Savage.

prefers to live in Shakespeare's time, instead. John does not want literature to be an escape, either. He wants it to be real. Nevertheless, he is attempting futilely to re-establish a lost world.

Overwhelmed with this new world, John creates his own tempest in the World State's sea of tranquility, thereby forcing the novel to its climactic conclusion. After erupting at Lenina for her actions and seeing the lack of care his mother's death, John rages against this world's indecency and immorality. John cries out: "O brave new world that has such people in it" (Huxley 190).¹⁴ John feels strongly opposed to this place, now, and uses these words in anger and horror at its citizens. This brings the ironic meaning of the title of the novel full circle. John, nevertheless, thinks that he might be able to create a real utopia: "'O brave new world!' Miranda was proclaiming the possibility of loveliness, the possibility of transforming even the nightmare into something fine and noble. O brave new world! It was a challenge, a command" (Huxley 190). John uses literature and its values to create this alternative world or utopia. John, playing the hero and leader of a rebellion, borrows a line from *Julius Caesar* to reason with the mindless workers: "'Listen, I beg of you,' cried the Savage earnestly. 'Lend me your ears ...' [but John] had never spoken in public before, and found it very difficult to express what he wanted to say." (Huxley 191). John is unable to process effectively his feelings and thoughts without Shakespeare. He needs these words to express himself rationally; however, the impracticality of using such language has already become obvious, for the reader, through Helmholtz and Lenina. These people cannot grasp anything John says. In the end, "[r]age was making him fluent; the words came easily, in a rush" (Huxley 193). Emotions control John as he initiates a violent riot. He throws away the workers' soma rations and forces them to deal with their miserable

¹⁴ This is not the first time John changes his reading, however. John on seeing the identical twins of lower caste worker-citizens, Gammas, Delta-Minuses, and Epsilon Semi-Morons is moved to horror at this modern world and vomits. "By some malice of his memory the Savage found himself repeating Miranda's words. 'O brave new world that has such people in it.'" (Huxley 148).

existence. Helmholtz joins the short-lived riot while Bernard watches frozen in terror, yet The it ends before anything can happen. Nevertheless, John's actions and refusal to live in this utopia force the novel's conclusion.

Brave New World's ultimate culture clash occurs through the debate between the novel's main, opposing characters: John the Savage and Mustapha Mond. Huxley's "point counterpoint" style of debate reveals his own equal yet opposite points of contention. In this debate, the nature of God's existence arises. The reader learns that even the meaning of God, the ultimate being, can change in this new world:

'But God doesn't change.'
 'Men do, though.'
 'What difference does that make?'
 'All the difference in the world,' said Mustapha Mond (Huxley 208).

Mond argues that since human perception changes over the course of time so does meaning. John, however, argues meaning is fixed and permanent. Both characters present extreme or radical and polar opposite views on life, and literature. In Mustapha Mond's explanations, Huxley directly explains his problems with modernity. John asks Mustapha Mond, whom John discovers knows more about literature than even himself:¹⁵ "Why don't you let them see *Othello* instead [of the feelies]?" (Huxley 198). Mond responds: "I've told you; it's old. Besides, they couldn't understand it ... [a]nd if it were new, it couldn't possibly be like *Othello*" (Huxley 198). The idea of stability and "human progress" makes anything such as *Othello* or the old, savage world of Malpais incompatible with the modern world. Time, or modernity, changes the world forever in this process of dehumanizing and mechanizing. Mond further elaborates that

¹⁵ Mond shows John his personal library or collection of banned books, locked away in a safe (Huxley 207). Mond apparently owns some of the last remaining written works, including the Holy Bible, besides John's copy of Shakespeare. With John's demise, the last known public book is removed from circulation.

this “world is not the same as Othello’s [because] the world’s stable now” (Huxley 198-9). This stable world is devoid of human experiences, such as death and love, which create meaning.

In the process of alleviating humanity of its problems, culture and meaning are erased. Mond continues to lecture that “you’ve got to choose between happiness and what people use to call high art;” he explains further: “We’ve sacrificed the high art. We have the feelies and the scent organ instead” (Huxley 199). John, however, howls in protest that “it doesn’t mean anything” (Huxley 199). Huxley finally concludes this debate with John claiming “his right to be unhappy,” which is impossible, yet not before making his darkest statement. John says to Mond as his closing argument: “Don’t you remember what Othello said? If after every tempest came such calms, may the winds blow till they have wakened death” (Huxley 213). By alluding to both the *Tempest* and *Othello*, Huxley suggests it would be better for whatever social instability, perhaps the atomic bomb, that could bring about the World State to simply destroy all life. Though this statement is an extreme and unviable option, John is a sincere and sympathetic character when confronting the futility of life in this place. John further relates a story from Malpais suggesting that pain and suffering, or “flies and mosquitoes,” are worthwhile endeavors. John complains to Mond: “You just abolish the slings and arrows. It’s too easy” (Huxley 214). John decides that the end of all existence is best and the novel ends like John’s rebellion, without a satisfying conclusion.

In the final chapter of *Brave New World*, Huxley leaves the reader with a choice between so-called “happiness” and death. John flees to nature and the past away from the mechanized city and the future. John travels into the semi-remote wilds of the countryside and into the past.¹⁶ Nevertheless, he cannot escape the future. The citizens and media of the World State visit John as if he is an animal in the zoo and John’s thoughts and feelings for Lenina also plague John.

¹⁶ Huxley provides an incredibly detailed and realistic description of where John goes to create his utopia.

John attempts to purify himself by such extreme measures as starvation and flagellation. Huxley clearly is ironic and mocking about John's extreme actions, and these moments demonstrate Huxley's bitter feelings about the apparent absurdity and futility of a romantic escape from the problems of modernity; John is not a hero, just the other "insane choice." John, so overwhelmed, becomes unable to think of anything but the release of sleep or death. Digging in his garden, John thinks in terms of Shakespeare: "'Besides, thy best of rest is sleep and that thou oft provok'st; yet grossly fear'st thy death which is no more. No more than sleep. Sleep. Perchance to dream. ... For in that sleep of death, what dreams?' ...'" (Huxley 226-7). Finally, unable to accept the reality of this world, John completely assumes the role of the character of Hamlet and escapes into this world of Shakespeare.¹⁷ John's final attempt to create his own utopia fails; the inability to live in this fantasy world of literature only encourages violent, suicidal thoughts. Huxley clearly suggests there can be no such thing as utopia, only some horrible faux form of it.

¹⁸ The novel ends, like *Hamlet*, with death, yet there is no outside force to make sense of it all. John's final line is "Kill it, kill it, kill it" as he whips his own flesh (Huxley 230). John is repeating the chants of the foolish crowds, but it is clear that this "it" has several potential meanings. What John is really saying is: "Kill modernity, Kill meaninglessness, Kill myself." John submits to the pressure to be happy or leave this world. The only way to end the problem of modernity and save himself, John realizes, is to remove himself from this time. John leaves this world and with him all hope dies. The final spoken words of the text are "Mr. Savage!" as some unknown couple find John's hanging, lifeless body (Huxley 231). The cry for the last remnant of hope is the novel's final utterance. The very last lines are a recounting of these two, visiting

¹⁷ Jerome Meckier, in his essay "Poetry in the Future" suggests that "poets become victims of their own illusions; they engender impossible expectations" and cites John's reaction to the Bombay Green Rocket (21).

¹⁸ Biographer Nicholas Murray suggests that "Huxley's novel was written deliberately to warn against contemporary trends but also against the whole notion of Utopia itself, the idea that we could design a perfect blueprint and then impose it" (257).

strangers' actions: their slow turn towards his lifeless body, their pause after seeing him, and their turn away, which is all presented by directions. The narrative fades away with an ellipsis. The reader is left to ponder their own direction for dealing with such an inhuman future.

The inconclusive finale to *Brave New World* provides the best depiction of the novel's problematic despair, and it is also its most provocative moment as a satire. Huxley wrote later in his 1946 Preface that the novel's "defects as a work of art are considerable; but in order to correct them I should have to rewrite the book – and in the process of rewriting, as an older, other person, I should probably get rid of not only of some of the faults of the story, but also of such merits as it originally possessed (5). It would be quite ironic for Huxley to rewrite the novel, when the erasing of time, history, and meaning are the work's central ideas. The supposed flaw that "[t]he savage is offered only two alternatives an insane life in Utopia, or the life of a primitive in an Indian village, a life more human in some respects, but in others hardly less queer and abnormal" may actually be the novel's greatest strength (6). Huxley recognizes and admits that he purposely concludes with the notion "that humans are given free will [in this dystopia] ... to choose between insanity... and lunacy" (6). It is this paradoxical ending, this tension or "flaw," which Huxley believes creates the lack of artistic and "philosophical completeness" in *Brave New World*. This "flaw," however, creates the novel's most interesting comment. The reader must actively engage with the text, which paradoxically seems concerned that literature alone may not be able to save humanity. *Brave New World* challenges the reader to find a true meaning to life when it asks the reader to reject modernity and its dehumanizing comforts. The novel asks: How can we know where we are, or more importantly who we are, without knowing where we come from? Without a past, without literature, without some truth or purpose, *Brave New World* argues, we have no real future; however, it also forces the reader to choose a side.

Brave New World envisions the horror of a future world devoid of culture and meaning, yet it is thought of as “utopia” because of the desire for a “great happiness.” Ultimately, *Brave New World*, like most satires, fails to provide an answer; it merely suggests the failure of any hope for the future. *Brave New World*, in fact, refutes the ability to go back into the past or to create a better future. The novel suggests humankind is going out of time and history and into a place of nothingness— utopia. Huxley suggests that utopia is never a possibility for reality. It is only with a later change in Huxley’s life that he wishes to rewrite the novel and to present another plausible, or viable, alternative to this nightmare. In the time of 1932, there is no alternative, however and it is far more interesting to consider the meaning of this work of art, especially today, in its published state. There is no ideal, clear conclusion, nor is there any understanding of what to do. There is only ironically a choice to be made between an inhuman existence, a world without literature, or no existence, intellectual, and perhaps physical, death. The conclusion is not only bleak, it is problematic; however, this is necessary because life is problematic.

Huxley’s lack of choices in the end stems from his critique of modern romanticism. The novel suggests that romanticism ultimately fails to change the world because it does not actually engage the world beyond the confines of literature. Three of the men protagonists possess unique or abnormal qualities that stir their inner human self. These thoughts and emotions lead to their personal rebellion against the World State. Bernard Marx, Helmholtz Watson, and John the Savage all possess characteristics and experience moments that one can label as anti-progress or anti-modernity. John is undoubtedly a romantic character and one might even equate Bernard and Helmholtz as fellow romantics. In his weakness, however, Bernard eventually cedes his humanity for happiness. Helmholtz Watson ultimately resigns to live on an island, an

intellectual's oasis. This place is not utopia and this choice is not honorable. In leaving London, Helmholtz cannot help all those other "conditioned" people. Forever knowing the true horror of the World State, but not do anything to change it, certainly does not seem a much better or noble option. Clearly, John the Savage is the most deviant and strongest individual. John demands a more meaningful existence. Initially, John wishes to live a utopian life, freed from the oppression of his old savage world in Malpais. His desire for an ideal world, however leads him to a far worse place, London. The World State denies John everything that he holds dear: individual freedom, unique expression, romantic love, natural living, sacrifice, pain, the possibility of true pleasure, God or the infinite being, etc. John cannot live in this new world; he makes literature his life, literally. He "reads" and interprets his world through a constant comparison with Shakespeare. This is also not a feasible alternative in *Brave New World*, as John the Savage discovers. After a thoroughly romantic conception of what being human means, the novel suggests it is impossible.

While clearly influenced by the happenings of his own time, especially concerning science, Huxley's work expresses a much greater and broader concern for humanity.¹⁹ *Brave New World* regards neither extreme view of John or Mond as viable or acceptable; yet, Huxley suggests that these two alternatives are the only possible outcomes.²⁰ *Brave New World* exists as an "unavoidable evil" for Huxley. So mired in his space-time, Huxley could foresee many future occurrences, yet he provides no plan for escape from the novel's ending. *Brave New World* is not merely a romantic novel satirizing the modern condition; instead, it is a satire of all extreme

¹⁹ Baker-Smith and Barfoot also notes that the pessimists, dystopians, represented in the likes of Huxley shared with early utopians, like Moore, that humanist quality of recognizing "literature as a moral witness to human nature, one which gives due prominence to the irrational forces in man" (2-3).

²⁰ Huxley concludes his preface to *Brave New World* with a note on the socio-political situation of the world, between the two extremes of socialism and fascism, and informs the reader: "You pays your money and you takes your choice" (13).

views and the inability of humanity to reconcile, or even recognize its problems. This necessitates the eventual choice between the two extremes presented. Some middle ground is needed, however, to preserve humanity in the era of modernity. Somehow, we must reconstruct meaning. If nothing else, *Brave New World* demands that its reader ask: Am I living in Huxley's "World State," a world devoid of human history, literature, culture, and all that is humanity? It is interesting to reflect on our current world's state and wonder Huxley's perennial question: "How then must we live?" (Murray 169). Huxley's *Brave New World* ultimately suggests that if humanity is willing to sacrifice literature, for peace and "stability," for some somatic "great happiness," then it is willing to sacrifice everything that makes society humane.

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