

# Oedipus in Dystopia: Freud and Lawrence in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*

Brad Buchanan  
*Stanford University*

Freud's role in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* has been much discussed, but little consensus has emerged, partly because of Huxley's apparent ambivalence about Freud's ideas and his growing reluctance, after he had written the novel, to admit that he had ever been in agreement with Freud's conception of human nature. In a 1960 interview, Huxley said, "I was never intoxicated by Freud as some people were, and I get less intoxicated as I go on."<sup>1</sup> Although some have taken this statement as an unequivocal denial of any affinity Huxley may have had for Freud,<sup>2</sup> it reads less as a repudiation of Freud than as a confession that Huxley was indeed "intoxicated" by Freud to a certain extent when he was younger, although he certainly never reached the stage of feverish zealotry achieved by some of his contemporaries.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, Huxley's half-hearted protestations against Freud have prompted insinuations about the motives behind them. For instance, Charles Holmes claims: "throughout his life Huxley rejected Freud, though the tone and intensity of his rejection varied. Given Freud's emphasis on sex and Huxley's near-obsession with it, the rejection implies unconscious resistance incompletely understood."<sup>4</sup> Philip Thody has undertaken to explain this "resistance" in biographical terms:

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1. Quoted in Jerome Meckier, "Our Ford, Our Freud and the Behaviorist Conspiracy in Huxley's *Brave New World*," *Thalia*, I (1978), p. 37.

2. Foremost among these scholars is Jerome Meckier, who argues that Huxley's novel is a rejection of Freud's theories. Meckier's article, while intriguing, is unsatisfactory, mainly because it dogmatically asserts that Huxley satirizes Freudianism for being part of what Meckier calls a "behaviorist conspiracy" that dominates Western thought, which Meckier deems mechanistic and materialistic (p. 41). Of course, as Peter Firchow points out, "Huxley knew very well [that] mechanistic psychologists . . . were adamantly opposed to Freud; for them, consciousness was the last refuge of the soul" (p. 47). Furthermore, as we shall see, Huxley was often more of a materialist than Freud ever was, recommending drugs and behavioral modification therapy rather than Freud's "talking cure" in cases of mental illness.

3. According to an oft-repeated anecdote, Huxley mocked these Freud-worshippers at a psychoanalysts' convention by crossing himself whenever their hero's name was mentioned.

4. Charles Holmes, *Aldous Huxley and the Way to Reality* (Indiana University Press, 1970), p. 147.

Huxley's adoration of his mother implied feelings of intense jealousy for his father, and . . . these were translated into the subconscious notion that Leonard Huxley was at least partly guilty for his wife's death. . . . [T]he hostility which Huxley always shows for Freud's ideas . . . [is] an indication of the fear which he had that such a diagnosis might be true, and the fact that almost all the fathers in Huxley's fiction are caricatures would lend weight to this view.<sup>5</sup>

My concern, however, is neither to confirm nor refute such descriptions of and speculations about Huxley's ambivalent attitude to Freud, but to show how this attitude manifests itself in *Brave New World*, in which Freudian ideas are plainly on display. I also suggest that any account of Huxley's reaction to Freud should take into account the probable influence on Huxley of D.H. Lawrence, who attacked Freud's views yet whose life and work present clear examples of many Freudian theories.

The most prominent of Freud's ideas, at least for my purposes, is his notion of the "Oedipus complex," which, according to Freud, describes a male child's feelings of incestuous desire for his mother and parricidal aggression towards his father. Oedipus' story is potentially every boy's, according to Freud, because all boys see their mothers as love-objects and their fathers as rivals.<sup>6</sup> This was perhaps Freud's most controversial and unpopular theory, and one that Huxley might have been particularly eager to debunk. Yet on 24 August 1931, shortly after finishing *Brave New World*, Huxley wrote a letter to his father in which he describes his new book as "a comic, or at least satirical, novel about the Future . . . and adumbrating the effects on thought and feeling of such quite possible biological inventions as the production of children in bottles (with [the] consequent abolition of the family and all the Freudian 'complexes' for which family relationships are responsible)."<sup>7</sup> This letter shows that Huxley was willing to discuss the "Freudian 'complexes' for which family relationships are responsible" very seriously indeed and with his own father, no less. If Huxley had any doubts at all about the truth of the most famous of these complexes, he would certainly have assured his father that he harbored no such "complex," with its attendant murderous and incestuous feelings, or at least would have palliated the unpleasant thought that his own family was to blame for imposing these emotions on him. The fact that he did not, I propose, says a good deal about his opinion of the fundamental truth of Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex.

This opinion is shown even more clearly in *Brave New World*, in which the Oedipus complex is deemed such a dangerous and powerful force that it (along with the family structure that produces it) has been eliminated from civilized life, as far as possible. Children are no longer born to a set of parents but produced in an assembly-line process from fertilized eggs, which are then "decanted" into bottles and subjected to endless chemical alteration and conditioning.<sup>8</sup> By controlling all aspects of a child's birth and upbringing and by keeping adults in a condition of infantile dependency on a larger social body, Huxley's imaginary state has taken over the role of parent and robbed the child of his or her Oedipal potentialities. Indeed, it could be argued that the active suppression of the Oedipus complex is the principal tool of social stability practiced in this future.

5. Philip Thody, *Huxley: A Biographical Introduction* (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), pp. 16–17.

6. For Freud, Oedipus (who kills his father and marries his mother) is "nothing more or less than a wish-fulfillment—the fulfillment of the wish of our childhood" (*The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud* James Strachey, trans. [Random House, 1938], p. 308).

7. Aldous Huxley, *Letters of Aldous Huxley* Grover Smith, ed. (Chatto & Windus, 1969), p. 351.

8. Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (Harper & Row, 1946), p. 91. All subsequent parenthetical references to *Brave New World* are to this edition.

Yet this state of affairs is really just an extension of principles that have helped to form twentieth-century life, according to Freud. After all, in *Totem and Taboo* Freud postulates that the reason Oedipus' parricide and incest shock us so much is that we have constructed civilization precisely to discourage the two crimes of which Oedipus is guilty, the "only two crimes which troubled primitive society."<sup>9</sup> In Huxley's futuristic utopia, the prohibitions against parricide and incest are simply taken to their logical extreme, so that even the unconscious energies produced by repressing such desires are dissipated. The solution to the problem of Oedipal desire is to make everyone so infantile that he still feels as if he were in the womb/decanter. A popular song within the novel expresses this pre-Oedipal state: "Bottle of mine, it's you I've always wanted!/ Bottle of mine, why was I ever decanted?" (*Brave New World*, p. 91).

Freud himself is treated as a prophet in this pseudo-paradise; indeed, he is elevated to near-divinity, along with Henry Ford (the similarity of their names comes in handy): "Our Ford — or Our Freud, as, for some inscrutable reason, he chose to call himself whenever he spoke of psychological matters — Our Freud had been the first to reveal the appalling dangers of family life" (p. 44). These dangers have to do not with incest or parricide but with "the prohibitions they were not conditioned to obey" and which force them to "feel strongly" (p. 47). Strong feelings, of course, are unpleasant enough to the denizens of the "brave new world," but the Director of London's Central "hatchery" supplements this already grim picture with the horrible thought of emotionally suffocating parents who once clung desperately to their children: "The world was full of fathers — was therefore full of misery; full of mothers — therefore of every kind of perversion from sadism to chastity" (p. 44). He sums up the plight of past generations vividly:

home was as squalid psychically as physically. Psychically, it was a rabbit hole, a midden, hot with the frictions of tightly packed life, reeking with emotion. What suffocating intimacies, what dangerous, insane, obscene relationships between the members of the family group! Maniacally, the mother brooded over her children . . . like a cat over its kittens; but cat that could talk, a cat that could say, 'My baby, my baby,' over and over again. "My baby, and oh, oh, at my breast, the little hands, the hunger, and that unspeakable, agonizing pleasure. . . ."

"Yes," said Mustapha Mond, nodding his head, "you may well shudder." (pp. 42–43)

The people of Huxley's future have not read Freud, quite clearly, but they have been indoctrinated with a Freud-influenced awareness of the possibility of illicit relations between mother and child. This awareness, which manifests itself in Lenina Crowne's distaste for the "indecent" spectacle of "two young women giving the breast to their babies," the sight of which makes her "blush and turn away" (p. 130), is exploited to inculcate a less visceral but nonetheless strong suspicion of any private or emotionally intense relationship between two people. Indeed, any individualized, personalized sexual feelings are branded as essentially incestuous, and the language of forbidden passion is essentially a disgusting outgrowth of the obsolete love-talk between mother and child: "My baby, my mother, my only, only love" (p. 49). An "only love" is an incestuous love, in Huxley's futuristic world, because it tends to work against the social solidarity which is the key to peaceful life.

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9. *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud*, p. 917.

Despite all this revulsion towards the very possibility of Oedipal crimes or Oedipal urges, the mythical figure of Oedipus returns to Huxley's novel with a vengeance, in the form of John ("the Savage"), a man who was born (in the traditional "viviparous" way) into an Indian tribe on a reservation in New Mexico. John's father is the Director of the London Hatchery, who leaves John to be raised by his mother, Linda, after he has impregnated her in the once-traditional but now unthinkable way. Like Oedipus, John grows up without knowing who his biological father is, but finally, with the help of his mother, he learns the truth. He also unintentionally ruins his father by embracing him publicly, kneeling before him, and addressing him as "My father" — a scene that no doubt functions as Huxley's satirical rendition of Oedipus' unwitting murder of his own biological father. Yet John is more of a Freudian case study than a reincarnation of Oedipus himself; his sensibilities have been formed by a battered edition of Shakespeare which he finds (rather improbably) in the squalor around him, and he identifies strongly with Hamlet's rage about his mother's marriage to Claudius. He experiences some classically Freudian Oedipal jealousy of the native man who sleeps with his mother, spurring his anger with apt quotations from *Hamlet*: "He hated Popé more and more. A man can smile and smile and be a villain" (p. 156).<sup>10</sup> Finally, as if to complete the Freudian cliché, John tries to kill Popé as he is "drunk asleep" (p. 158); he fails, but Popé is mildly impressed with his attempt and says laughingly but affectionately: "Go, my brave Ahaiyuta" (p. 159).

As if belatedly following this directive, John and his mother eventually leave the reservation with Bernard Marx, an insecure would-be intellectual who seeks to win approval and social status by parading them as curiosities back in London. Yet even after he has encountered the many attractive and available women there, John remains obsessed with his mother. He remembers the intimate moments between him and Linda fondly, recalling "those times when he sat on her knees and she put her arms about him and sang, over and over again, rocking him, rocking him to sleep" (p. 244). Linda's own behavior towards John has contributed heavily to his fixation on her; she has been neglectful, sentimental, abusive, and affectionate by turns towards John. For instance, when John was little, she slapped him for calling her his "mother" and then, in a matter of moments, repented and kissed him "again and again" (p. 150), as if he were a suitable replacement for the lovers whom she has lost temporarily because of other women's jealousy. John never understands the nature of his feelings towards Linda, conflating his incestuous desires and violent impulses towards Popé with the trappings of heroism (after all, both traits are found in Hamlet). The fact that such powerful attachments are not normal any longer in a world of obligatory contraception and institutionalized promiscuity simply reinforces John's sense of tragic self-importance. Direct exposure to Freud's writings might have informed John that his feelings are not symptoms of some extraordinary powers or responsibilities, that they are normal emotions (at least in Freud's mind) to be recognized and overcome. Yet as we can readily see, no one any longer reads Freud, or if

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10. Reading *Hamlet* intensifies and focuses John's anger towards Popé, as Huxley is at pains to indicate: "it was as though he had never really hated Popé before; never really hated him because he had never been able to say how much he hated him. . . . These words . . . gave him a reason for hating Popé; and they made his hatred more real" (p. 157). Here Huxley implies that literary examples of human behavior—for instance, the Shakespearean representation of a son's jealousy about his mother's relations with another man in *Hamlet*—anticipate the Freudian theory of the Oedipus complex. His portrait of John shows how the Oedipus complex is produced partly through natural boyish pride and jealousy and partly through John's aesthetic enjoyment of Shakespeare's language. This is no doubt a sidelong jab at Freud, and certainly adds resonance to Huxley's remark that "All that modern psychologists . . . have done is to systematize and de-beautify the vast treasures of knowledge about the human soul contained in novel, play, poem and essay" (Aldous Huxley, *Music at Night* [Chatto & Windus, 1970], p. 292).

people do, they fail to apply or explain his theory of the Oedipus complex to John, the one human being to whom it is still relevant.

John finds it difficult to renounce his mother or sever their emotional connection (as he shows throughout the novel), and this leads him to be extremely censorious of any lustful impulse in himself, since all of his erotic attachments seem charged with the unsatisfied desires of his childhood love for Linda. When he calls Lenina an “impudent strumpet” (p. 232), he is not only censuring her evidently promiscuous behavior (which she, ironically, seems at times to be willing to change for his sake); he is projecting his revulsion at his own lusts onto her. We get a sense of how deeply John’s libido has been repressed when he attends a “feely” (a futuristic movie which allows spectators to feel as well as see the actions onscreen) which features scenes of lovemaking between “a gigantic negro and a golden-haired young brachycephalic Beta-Plus female” (p. 200). No doubt prompted by memories of Linda and Popé,<sup>11</sup> John is revolted by this interracial love story; he “start[s]” violently as it begins and later terms it “horrible” (p. 202), although he is struck by the similarities between it and Shakespeare’s *Othello*. Long afterwards, John’s desire for Lenina becomes inextricably linked to the mixture of sexual arousal and disgust that he feels while watching the feely: “he felt her [Lenina’s] lips soft against his own. So deliciously soft, so warm and electric that inevitably he found himself thinking of the embraces in *Three Weeks in a Helicopter*. Ooh! ooh! the stereoscopic blonde and aah! the more than real blackamoor. Horror, horror, horror . . . he tried to disengage himself” (p. 229).

John seems to identify with the possessive “negro” (whom he links to Shakespeare’s nobler *Othello*), just as he had once identified with Popé, and yet he reacts with predictable disgust at the depiction of his own incestuous fantasies on the screen (just as he comes to hate Popé for having sexual access to Linda). Like Linda, the heroine of the “feely” is a blonde Beta who makes love to a man from a different, darker-skinned race. Lenina, who accompanies John to the “feely,” is herself associated in John’s mind with the “brachycephalic blonde” and, by extension, with Linda herself;<sup>12</sup> thus, as Freudians might well argue, he cannot imagine having sexual relations with Lenina before he has exorcised the unconscious incestuous demons that plague him and make him mistrust all sexual activity. These demons seem to determine his reactions to many of the everyday features of the world he has entered; for instance, he is outraged by the docile subservience of a group of identical Deltas awaiting their *soma*. He sees such twins as “less than human monsters,” asking them why they do not want to “be free and men” and challenging them to throw off their dependence on drugged bliss: “Do you like being babies? Yes, babies. Mewling and puking” (p. 254). Here Huxley’s keen sense of irony is at its most forceful: the Savage accuses the cloned workers of the same infantilism he has managed to confront only (and that partially) through his violent and unresolved “Oedipus complex.” There may be more than Freudian theory at work here, however; as anthropologists have observed, twins frequently symbolize the results of

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11. John has memories of “white Linda and Popé almost black beside her, with one arm under her shoulders and the other hand dark on her breast, and one of the plaits of his long hair lying across her throat, like a black snake trying to strangle her” (p. 157).

12. The link between Lenina and Linda remains strong in John’s mind, even after Linda dies from an overdose of *soma*: “He tried to think of poor Linda, breathless and dumb, with her clutching hands . . . Poor Linda whom he had sworn to remember. But it was still the presence of Lenina that haunted him. Lenina whom he had promised to forget” (p. 302). John seems to have successfully transferred his love from his mother to Lenina, but instead of congratulating himself on his more adult object-choice (as Freud would likely have told him to do) he feels guilty for forgetting Linda, especially since he still blames himself for her death. It is difficult to avoid the suspicion that reading a bit of Freud might have helped John accept his adult sexuality.

incestuous activity. As René Girard writes in *Violence and the Sacred*, “Incestuous propagation leads to formless duplications, sinister repetitions, a dark mixture of unnamable things. In short, the incestuous creature exposes the community to the same danger as do twins . . . mothers of twins are often suspected of having conceived their children in incestuous fashion.”<sup>13</sup> Thus, it may be that Huxley wants to indicate that John associates these twins with his own unfulfilled urges, which he must then repress all the more violently, or sublimate into radical activity (witness his act of throwing the Deltas’ long-awaited soma out the window). After Linda’s death, the link between her and these twins remains prominent: “he had sworn to himself he would constantly remember . . . Linda, and his own murderous unkindness to her, and those loathsome twins, swarming like lice across the mystery of her death” (pp. 296–97).

Haunted by such memories, John finally commits suicide, having failed to live up to the standards of chastity and morality which he has set for himself, yet he is not the only one who finds himself unable to live within the parameters of Huxley’s imagined society. Bernard Marx and Helmholtz Watson share a sense that “they were individuals” (p. 80) and chafe against the conformity imposed on them, however pleasant its trappings may be. Like John, both of these heroes have a certain amount in common with Oedipus; both end up in exile, Bernard for his obstreperousness and Helmholtz for his refusal to live by the usual rules enforcing indulgence, promiscuity, and sociability.<sup>14</sup> They are friends but are conscious of a major difference between them: “whereas the physically defective Bernard had suffered all his life from the consciousness of being separate, it was only quite recently that, grown aware of his mental excess, Helmholtz Watson had also become aware of his difference from the people who surrounded him” (p. 80). While Bernard’s show of resistance to the permissive status quo disappears once he has gained the self-confidence to get what he wants,<sup>15</sup> Helmholtz’ desire to impose a measure of austerity on himself, especially with respect to his sexual relationships, is genuine.

John’s and Helmholtz’ moral objections to the amorous goings-on around them have long been assumed to be an expression of Huxley’s own disapproval of promiscuity, and understandably so. After all, a few years before writing *Brave New World*, Huxley had claimed that “Nothing is more dreadful than a cold, unimpassioned indulgence. And love infallibly becomes cold and unimpassioned when it is too lightly made.”<sup>16</sup> In a 1931 essay, Huxley argues that “No reasonable hedonist can consent to be a flat racer. Abolishing obstacles, he abolishes half his pleasures. And at the same time he abolishes most of his dignity as a human being. For the dignity of man consists precisely in his ability to restrain himself . . . to raise obstacles in his own path.”<sup>17</sup> This view is remarkably close to that expressed by Freud in *Civilization and its Discontents*,<sup>18</sup> a book

13. René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), p. 75.

14. Oedipus exiled himself after discovering he was guilty of incest and parricide. While Helmholtz’s genius with words and metaphors seems to recall Oedipus’ facility in solving the riddle of the Sphinx which depends upon a metaphorical interpretation of the word “legs,” Bernard’s bodily defects—he is abnormally short—bear a resemblance to Oedipus’ deformed feet. Both Bernard and Oedipus are forced to make their minds their most powerful asset; as Huxley remarks of Bernard, “a physical shortcoming could produce a kind of mental excess” (p. 81).

15. Bernard claims to want to delay his own gratification, telling Lenina that he wishes that their date had not ended “with our going to bed” (p. 109), but (unlike Helmholtz) he lacks the willpower to impose real obstacles on himself.

16. Aldous Huxley, *Do What You Will* (Chatto & Windus, 1956), p. 137.

17. *Music at Night*, p. 167.

18. In *Civilization and its Discontents*, Freud makes it quite clear that in his view all pleasure is only the release of tension, or the overcoming of obstacles and impediments; without the unpleasant uncertainty of anticipation or fear, there is no real enjoyment: “What we call happiness in the strictest sense comes from the (preferably sudden) satisfactions of needs which have been dammed up to a high degree . . . When any situation that is desired by the pleasure principle is prolonged,



translated into English and published in 1930, which Huxley may or may not have managed to read before or during the composition of *Brave New World* (from May of 1931 to August of that year). Nevertheless, Freud is certainly to be numbered among the “reformers” mentioned by Mustapha Mond in *Brave New World* when he addresses his charges: “Has any of you been compelled to live through a long time-interval between the consciousness of a desire and its fulfilment? . . . And you felt a strong emotion in consequence? . . . Our ancestors were so stupid and short-sighted that when the first reformers came along and offered to deliver them from those horrible emotions, they wouldn’t have anything to do with them” (pp. 52–53). Yet passages such as these have caused some of Huxley’s readers to lump Freud in with his supposed followers in the novel. For instance, Philip Thody<sup>19</sup> argues that “In *Brave New World* it is . . . the implied ethical teachings of Freudianism that attract his scorn, the rejection of complex and mature emotions in favour of instant gratification and the pleasure principle. His disapproval is, in fact, almost Victorian in its moral intensity.”<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, critical opinion on this issue has been divided; Peter Firchow points out that “In *Brave New World* excessive restraint, like the Savage’s, still leads to self-destruction.”<sup>21</sup> Firchow not only contests the claim that Freud is a spokesman for libertinism in Huxley’s eyes, he even goes so far as to argue (without much evidence, it must be said) that “Freud . . . is the closest the new world’s science comes to having a conscience.”<sup>22</sup>

Another, more clear-cut area in which Huxley and Freud have been deemed to disagree irreconcilably has to do with artistic creation. We know that, in Huxley’s view, Freud was guilty of implying that art is (as Huxley puts it) a “happy efflorescence of sexual perversity.”<sup>23</sup> In an article called “Formulations Regarding the Two Principles in Mental Functioning,” first published in 1911, Freud did make the somewhat insulting claim that “The artist is originally a man who turns from reality because he cannot come to terms with the demand for the renunciation of instinctual satisfaction as it is first made, and who then in fantasy-life allows full play to his erotic and ambitious wishes.”<sup>24</sup> Yet this position is a long way from the simple choice presented by Mustapha Mond (or “the Controller”), who states the official position: ““You’ve got to choose between happiness and what people used to call high art. We’ve sacrificed the high art”” (p. 264). Some have inferred that this passage means that in Huxley’s mind Freud is the opponent of high art, since his theory of the

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it only produces a feeling of mild contentment” (Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, James Strachey, trans. [W.W. Norton & Company, 1961], p. 23). There is no essential contradiction between Freud’s view and that expressed by Huxley: “Love is the product of two opposed forces—of an instinctive impulsion and a social resistance acting on the individual by means of ethical imperatives justified by philosophical or religious myths. When, with the destruction of the myths, resistance is removed, the impulse wastes itself on emptiness” (*Do What You Will*, p. 137).

19. Thody is eager to make Freud the main villain of the novel, as his analysis makes plain:

. . . in *Brave New World* it is the declared aim of the authorities to translate into the sexual behaviour of adults the total irresponsibility and immaturity which supposedly characterize a child’s attitude to its own body . . .

The Freudian idea that we should avoid repressions and frustrations, that the way to happiness lies in the satisfaction of those primitive, instinctual, sexual drives which previous societies have been compelled to inhibit, is thus criticized first and foremost for the effect that it has on people’s emotional life. (Philip Thody, *Huxley: A Biographical Introduction* [Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1973], pp. 54–55).

20. Huxley: *A Biographical Introduction*, p. 54.

21. Peter Firchow, *The End of Utopia: A Study of Huxley’s Brave New World* (Associated University Presses, 1984), p. 55.

22. *The End of Utopia: A Study of Huxley’s Brave New World*, p. 47.

23. Aldous Huxley, *Proper Studies* (Chatto & Windus, 1933), p. xvi.

24. Sigmund Freud, *A General Selection from the Works of Sigmund Freud*, John Rickman, ed. (Doubleday & Co. 1957), p. 44. Freud goes on to mitigate this slight against artists: “But he [the artist] finds a way of return from this world of fantasy back to reality; with his special gifts he molds his fantasies into a new kind of reality, and men concede them a justification as valuable reflections of actual life. Thus by a certain path he actually becomes the hero, king, creator, favorite he desired to be, without pursuing the circuitous path of creating real alterations in the outer world” (*Freud: A General Selection*, p. 44).

“Oedipus complex” is meant to induce people to accept their lot and to be happy, rather than continue being neurotic and creative. Whatever the merits of this characterization of Freud’s position, its assumption about the straightforwardness of Huxley’s views does them a disservice. Huxley was deeply ambivalent about “high art,” especially tragedy, which he regarded as an outdated genre. In his essay “Tragedy and the Whole Truth,” Huxley argues that there is something inherently false about a tragic narrative: “To make a tragedy the artist must isolate a single element out of the totality of human experience and use that exclusively as his material. Tragedy is something that is separated from the Whole Truth, distilled from it, so to speak.”<sup>25</sup> In this essay, Huxley uses *Othello* as an example of a tragedy which must exclude realistic details which would make it more truthful in order to achieve its dramatic effect. Of course, *Othello* is also mentioned prominently in *Brave New World*, where its interracial sexual themes resurface in the pornographic “feely” attended by John and Lenina. Mindful of John’s habit of viewing everything in Shakespearean terms, Mond admonishes John that “our world is not the same as Othello’s world . . . you can’t make tragedies without social instability” (p. 263). We may infer that in Huxley’s eyes the “Whole Truth” lies somewhere between tragedy and pornography and that John’s tragic vision of reality is an oversimplification of what Huxley recognizes as the complexities of modern life.

Huxley even seems to endorse one element of Freud’s characterization of the artistic impulse, insofar as it is related to the Oedipal energies represented by John. In *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, a monograph published in 1923, Freud creates a scenario to explain the role of creativity, or more specifically, of epic narrative, in primitive society just after the parricidal crisis in which the famous band of brothers has slain the tyrannical father: “some individual . . . may have been moved to free himself from the group and take over the [dead] father’s part. He who did this was the first epic poet; and the advance was achieved in his imagination . . . He invented the heroic myth.”<sup>26</sup> This formula of original creativity is extremely tendentious, to say the least; as Richard Astle puts it in his article “Dracula as Totemic Monster: Lacan, Freud, Oedipus and History,” Freud is “projecting the Oedipus onto an earlier age to explain the origin of myth and, more generally, of narrative.”<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, Huxley seems to endorse something rather like it in his description of Helmholtz Watson’s artistic difficulties. While John has no difficulty expressing his emotions (even if only through Shakespearean tags), Helmholtz, although a would-be artist, seems to be searching for an objective correlative with which to express his sense of difference and his ambitions; he has “a feeling that I’ve got something important to say and the power to say it — only I don’t know what it is . . . If there was some different way of writing . . . Or else something else to write about” (p. 82). He is looking for something “important” to say, something “more intense” and “more violent” (p. 83), but he cannot countenance John’s suggestion that he look to family life for his subject matter. Helmholtz refuses to see family life as a possible source of what he lacks: “You can’t expect me to keep a straight face about fathers and mothers . . . We need some other kind of madness and violence” (p. 221). It seems clear that Helmholtz will never be a real artist, nor will he ever be able to understand his friend John, as long as he cannot accept that there is some validity to the Oedipal narrative.

Another disagreement that has been noted between Huxley and Freud has to do with their attitudes towards religion. Huxley plainly deplored Freud’s implication that religion and other

25. *Music at Night*, pp. 12–13.

26. *A General Selection from the Works of Sigmund Freud*, p. 203.

27. Richard Astle, “Dracula as Totemic Monster: Lacan, Freud, Oedipus and History,” *Sub-Stance*, XXV (1980), p. 99.



mystical experiences were a product of neuroses or sexual repression, yet he seems to acknowledge the reality of what Freud referred to in *Civilization and its Discontents* as “the oceanic feeling.” If Huxley had not read this book, it must stand as an extraordinary coincidence that the religious ceremonies in *Brave New World* employ much of the same vocabulary used by Freud to describe a theory propounded by one of his correspondents (who turned out to be none other than the French writer Romain Rolland):

I had sent him my small book that treats religion as an illusion, and he answered that he entirely agreed with my judgement upon religion, but that he was sorry I had not properly appreciated the true source of religious sentiments. This, he says, consists in a peculiar feeling, which he himself is never without, which he finds confirmed by many others, and which he may suppose is present in millions of people. It is a feeling as of something limitless, unbounded — as it were, “oceanic.” This feeling, he adds, is a purely subjective fact, not an article of faith; it brings with it no assurance of personal immortality, but it is the source of the religious energy which is seized upon by the various Churches and religious systems, directed by them into particular channels, and doubtless also exhausted by them. One may, he thinks, rightly call oneself religious on the ground of this oceanic feeling alone, even if one rejects every belief and every illusion.<sup>28</sup>

The quasi-spiritual rituals of “atonement” (p. 94) in *Brave New World* rely heavily on imagery very close to Freud’s here; one song which features in these moments of group celebration is called a “Solidarity Hymn” and contains the lines: “Ford, we are twelve; oh, make us one, / Like drops within the Social River” (p. 95). Each participant drinks from a “loving cup” of *soma* after reciting a pledge of self-effacement — “I drink to my annihilation” (p. 95) — in a ceremony that seems like a parody of Christian self-abnegation.

This kind of water imagery is very much a part of everyday life in Huxley’s dystopia; a group of ecstatic dancers is described as if “they might have been twin embryos gently rocking together on the waves of a bottled ocean of blood-surrogate” (p. 91). Yet, as if to register his awareness that this kind of mindless bobbing on the ocean’s surface is not quite what Freud meant by the “oceanic feeling,” he shows Bernard contemplating the ocean after participating in one of these liquefying moments. Bernard takes comfort in the ocean’s inhuman wholeness, and he feels that his tenuous individuality has been strengthened somehow: “It makes me feel as though . . . I were more *me*, if you see what I mean. More on my own, not so completely a part of something else. Not just a cell in the social body” (p. 106). While Bernard’s testimony of what this “oceanic feeling” means to him does not quite fit Rolland’s description of a vague spiritual awareness, it does correspond rather well to Freud’s judgment on the sources of such a feeling. Freud writes: “we are perfectly willing to acknowledge that the ‘oceanic’ feeling exists in many people, and we are inclined to trace it back to an early phase of ego-feeling.”<sup>29</sup>

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28. *Civilization and its Discontents*, p. 11.

29. *Civilization and its Discontents*, p. 19. Characteristically, Freud denies that this feeling is truly the source of religious emotions, which he attributes directly to one’s relationship (or lack thereof) with a paternal figure: “I cannot think of any need in childhood as strong as the need for a father’s protection. Thus the part played by the oceanic feeling, which might seek something like the restoration of limitless narcissism, is ousted from a place in the foreground” (*Civilization and its Discontents*, p. 19).

Another accusation made by Huxley against Freud is the not terribly original claim that the latter's emphasis on sexuality was "monomaniacal," as Huxley wrote in *Proper Studies*, published in 1927.<sup>30</sup> Yet Huxley himself reconsidered this verdict very publicly, in a newspaper article published 11 March 1933. In this brief piece, Huxley editorializes about the relative nature of Freud's insights about human nature, claiming that "It is only in the more prosperous sections of civilized urban communities that hunger loses its pre-eminence. Freud, who gives the palm to sex, worked in Vienna. . . . Love, as a wholtime job, has only been practiced by the more prosperous members of civilized societies."<sup>31</sup> Huxley admits that Dr. Audrey Richards is right to point out that sex does not assume the same importance in Bantu society as Freud claims it does in all human civilizations, but he goes on to say something that those who see Huxley as an unflinching anti-Freudian ought to find rather surprising: "That the psycho-analysts should be wrong about savages is not particularly important. The significant fact is that they are probably right about civilized people."<sup>32</sup> Huxley implies that Freud's "Pleasure Principle" is likely to triumph wherever social and technological "efficiency" prevails,<sup>33</sup> and he shows no signs of regarding this likelihood as anything to be lamented. In this respect, we may well wonder whether all the promiscuity which he portrays in *Brave New World* is to be regarded as the inevitable manifestation of otherwise desirable advances in human civilization.

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Huxley was more than capable of making up his own mind about the relative merits of psychoanalysis, but around the time he began to write *Brave New World* he was still very much under the influence of D.H. Lawrence. Huxley first met Lawrence in December 1915 but did not become a close friend of his until 1926, when he and his wife, Maria, saw a good deal of the Lawrences in Italy. In 1920, Huxley had referred to Lawrence as a "slightly insane novelist" who had been "analysed for his complexes, dark and tufty ones, tangled in his mind."<sup>34</sup> As a result, Huxley cattily writes, "The complexes were discovered, and it is said that Lawrence has now lost, along with his slight sexual mania, all his talent as a writer."<sup>35</sup> Huxley soon changed his mind about Lawrence, but his conviction remained that literary talent cannot survive psychoanalytic scrutiny or successful therapy. Lawrence was a very important figure for Huxley during the years just before *Brave New World* was written;<sup>36</sup> Huxley visited Lawrence in Italy during the latter's final illness, and as his letters testify, he was profoundly moved by Lawrence's courage and his uncompromising (albeit frequently irrational) views about sex, social life, and the artistic vocation. Huxley was with Lawrence when he died on 2 March 1930 and witnessed his final struggles with great emotion, calling Lawrence "the most extraordinary and impressive human being I have ever known."<sup>37</sup> In

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30. *Proper Studies*, p. xix.

31. "The Bantus and Dr. Freud," quoted in *Huxley's Hearst Essays*, ed. James Sexton (Garland, 1994), p. 161.

32. *Huxley's Hearst Essays*, p. 161.

33. Huxley concludes his essay with the remark: "Men and women under high biological pressure arrange the pattern of their life in one way; under low pressure, in another way. With every increase in the efficiency of social organizations, more individuals will come to live under low biological pressure" (p. 161).

34. *Letters of Aldous Huxley*, p. 187.

35. *Letters of Aldous Huxley*, p. 187.

36. As Huxley's biographer Sybille Bedford argues, Huxley was very much under Lawrence's influence when he was writing *Do What You Will*, a collection of essays published in October of 1929: "Much of *Do What You Will* was a continuation of ideas turned up in *Point Counter Point*. Mark Rampion is talking on. The impression of the Lawrentian ship was still upon the water" (Sybille Bedford, *Aldous Huxley: A Biography* [Chatto and Windus, 1973], p. 219).

37. *Letters of Aldous Huxley*, p. 332.

memory of his friend, Huxley put together an edition of Lawrence's letters and even contemplated writing a biography of him, although the freshness of the memory and his own contractual obligations prevented him from writing a full-length work devoted to Lawrence.

Between the time Huxley renewed his acquaintance with Lawrence in 1926 and Lawrence's death in 1930, Huxley published *Point Counter Point*, *Proper Studies*, *Do What You Will*, and *Music at Night*, all of which contain references to Freud and/or psychoanalysis. Furthermore, while Huxley was writing *Brave New World* between May and August of 1931, he was still looking at Freud largely through Lawrentian lenses. Lawrence's deep attachment to his sensitive mother and his hostility to his crude father, the Nottinghamshire coal miner, might well have showed Huxley that at least one aspect of Freud's writing (the basic conception of the Oedipus complex) was very likely true, or at least very plausible. In any case, Lawrence's own passionate engagement with Freudianism, as well as his dogged but rather confused attempts to refute Freud's theory of the universality of the Oedipus complex,<sup>38</sup> certainly made an impression on Huxley. In his essay on Lawrence, Huxley addresses the question of Freud's relevance to Lawrence only once, and rather defensively: "Explanations of him [Lawrence] in terms of a Freudian hypothesis of nurture may be interesting, but they do not explain. That Lawrence was profoundly affected by his love for his mother and by her excessive love for him, is obvious to anyone who has read *Sons and Lovers*. None the less it is, to me at any rate, almost equally obvious that even if his mother had died when he was a child, Lawrence would still have been, essentially and fundamentally, Lawrence."<sup>39</sup> Huxley is no doubt reacting against the crudely Freudian analysis of Lawrence's writing contained in John Middleton Murry's book *Son of Woman*, which in the same essay Huxley dismisses as "destructive" and "irrelevant."<sup>40</sup>

Huxley deemed Lawrence "a great man,"<sup>41</sup> and although he found Lawrence "difficult to get on with, passionate, queer, violent,"<sup>42</sup> he was generally very loyal to him, and especially so after Lawrence's death.<sup>43</sup> In September 1931, Huxley was "making notes for a short study of [Lawrence] to serve as introduction to the letters," a study which, as Huxley says, "cannot be specifically a retort to Murry" but will "try to undo some of the mischief that slug has undoubtedly done."<sup>44</sup> The main symptom of Murry's mischievous "cleverness" is his exploitation of "the psycho-analytical rigamarole" where Lawrence was concerned.<sup>45</sup> Addressing this aspect of Murry's book, which Huxley (showing an uncharacteristic taste for oxymorons) terms a "vindictive hagiography," he admits that Murry's insights into Lawrence's psyche are often accurate; Murry's Freudian analysis

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38. Lawrence was convinced that Freud was wrong about incestuous desire, claiming there was in fact a natural antipathy between parents and children where sex was concerned, and that "The incest motive is a logical deduction of the human reason, which has recourse to this last extremity, to save itself" (D.H. Lawrence, *Fantasia of the Unconscious: Psycho-analysis and the Unconscious* [Penguin, 1975], p. 206).

39. Aldous Huxley, *The Olive Tree* (Harper & Brothers, 1937), p. 206.

40. *The Olive Tree*, p. 205.

41. *Letters of Aldous Huxley*, p. 88.

42. *Letters of Aldous Huxley*, p. 288.

43. After Lawrence died, Huxley visited Nottingham to see some of Lawrence's relatives, then in January of 1931 Huxley went to the coal fields in Durham, trying to understand more about Lawrence's background as the son of a miner, and researching the problem of unemployment. By 18 May 1931, he had begun writing *Brave New World*, which he at first described in a letter as a "revolt" against "the Wellsian Utopia" (*Letters of Aldous Huxley*, p. 348). The initial anti-Wellsian flavor of the book soon receded in importance and by the time he was finished the book he was more concerned about its "Freudian" and "Pavlovian" themes, as we can see from the letter he wrote to his father on 24 August 1931.

44. *Letters of Aldous Huxley*, p. 355.

45. *Letters of Aldous Huxley*, p. 355.

of Lawrence as a man in love with his mother and in violent rebellion against his father “is able and in parts very true.”<sup>46</sup> *Son of Woman* was published in April 1931, and as a friend of Lawrence’s as well as a man of letters, Huxley might well have read it in time for it to affect his portrayal of Freudianism in *Brave New World*. Whether this was in fact the case, we may draw several analogies between John “the Savage” and Lawrence himself, with whom Huxley was undoubtedly still preoccupied regardless of his reaction to Murry’s book. As a visionary (at least in Huxley’s mind) who remained true to his beliefs to the bitter end, Lawrence would have provided an excellent model for John the Savage, whose ultimately self-destructive moral absolutism is as unusual in the London which he visits as Lawrence’s was in his own bohemian circle (which included the notorious womanizer Bertrand Russell, his wife, Dora, Lady Ottoline Morrell, and Gerald Heard). While John’s apparent prudery seems to be fundamentally opposed to Lawrence’s worship of the phallic principle and emphasis on the regenerative aspects of sexual activity, these two figures share an important common trait in Huxley’s eyes: they cannot countenance sex as a meaningless form of recreation. Both are convinced that sex bears a tremendous significance and that the purely recreational, hedonistic promiscuity of people such as Lenina and Bernard is deeply obscene.

The Oedipal themes in Lawrence’s own life resonate deeply with John’s struggles in *Brave New World*; Huxley’s decision to have John direct his parricidal aggression towards Popé, a Native American, may have been inspired by Lawrence, who (having spent many years living among the native people of America) muses in a later essay about the notion of having a “dusky-lipped tribe-father” who, “like many an old father with a changeling son . . . would like to deny me.”<sup>47</sup> Moreover, Linda’s capricious yet ardent affection for John is entirely in keeping with Lawrence’s pronouncements about the culpability of the mother in the development of incestuous desires in their sons. The over-affectionate mother, in Lawrence’s eyes, “has not the courage to give up her hopeless insistence on love and her endless demand for love,”<sup>48</sup> and therefore “she provokes what she wants. Here, in her own son, who belongs to her, she seems to find the last perfect response for which she is craving. He is a medium to her, she provokes from him her own answer. So she throws herself into a last great love for her son.”<sup>49</sup> Other familial situations found in Lawrence’s work crop up in *Brave New World*; for instance, in Lawrence’s *Sons and Lovers*, Paul Morel’s aborted parricidal impulse seems to have been diverted and to have attached to Mrs. Morel. As her cancer worsens, Paul wishes that she would die and even goes so far as to administer a large dose of morphine to speed up the process. Huxley’s John does not actually administer the gradual overdoses of *soma* that kill Linda, but, pressured by doctors, he agrees to allow her to take as much as she wants, and this leads to her demise (and to his crippling feelings of guilt).

Before he wrote *Brave New World*, Huxley denied having portrayed Lawrence in his own fiction, claiming that Mark Rampion, the Lawrence-like character in *Point Counter Point* is “just some of Lawrence’s notions on legs.”<sup>50</sup> Huxley felt that Lawrence was “incomparably queerer and more complex” than the dogmatic Rampion, whom Lawrence himself referred to as a “gas-bag.”<sup>51</sup>

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46. *Letters of Aldous Huxley*, p. 353.

47. D.H. Lawrence, *Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D. H. Lawrence* volumes I and II (Viking, 1964), vol. I p. 99. Lawrence continues: “I know my derivation. I was born of no virgin, of no Holy Ghost . . . I have a dark-faced, bronze-voiced father far back in the resinous ages. My mother was no virgin” (*Phoenix* I, p. 99).

48. *Fantasia of the Unconscious: Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious*, p. 126.

49. *Fantasia of the Unconscious: Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious*, p. 122.

50. *Letters of Aldous Huxley*, p. 340.

51. *Letters of Aldous Huxley*, p. 339.

Despite Huxley's diffidence about his fictional renditions of Lawrence, we cannot avoid suspecting that his portrayal of John in *Brave New World* is heavily indebted to his friend. Thus, Huxley repeatedly describes Lawrence's sense of humor as "savage," his "high spirits" are "almost terrifyingly savage," and his "mockery" is "frighteningly savage."<sup>52</sup> In both cases, Huxley remarks upon Lawrence's satirical intelligence (one of Lawrence's less well-known traits) and testifies to its power; it is therefore not surprising that he chooses a Lawrence-like hero such as John to be the explicitly "savage" vehicle of his own most biting satire. Although John does not display himself a terribly sophisticated sense of humor, his naïveté, intense earnestness, and plain-spokenness make for some mordant scenes in *Brave New World*. For instance, when John falls to his knees in front of the DHC and hails the horrified bureaucrat as "My father!" (p. 180), a word which is so "comically smutty" to the onlookers that they break into "hysterical" laughter (p. 181), Huxley is making the sardonic point that traditional family-based values have been completely turned on their head in his utopia.

Furthermore, like John opposing Mond, Lawrence stands in Huxley's mind for the integrity of the artistic impulse, as for the belief that it must be permitted to express itself even if the result is disastrous; as Huxley claims, "Lawrence was always and unescapably [sic] an artist."<sup>53</sup> In describing the difficulties of being an artist, Huxley quotes Lawrence's complaint that "At times one is forced to be essentially a hermit. I don't want to be. But everything else is either a personal tussle, or a money tussle; sickening. . . . One has no real human relations — that is so devastating."<sup>54</sup> Huxley echoes this lament after quoting it: "One has no real human relations: it is the complaint of every artist. The artist's first duty is to his genius, his *daimon*; he cannot serve two masters."<sup>55</sup> Huxley's remarks here imply that there is a split between the artist's task and his or her "human" relationships and that the true genius must finally lose faith in the "human" social setting that others depend on. We recall that, after making the rounds in London (visiting the self-declared intellectuals, much as Lawrence once did, to his own great disgust), the Savage tries to live as a hermit in the woods, and Helmholtz Watson decides that exile will serve his own artistic ambitions better than continuing to live in London.

Another odd detail that links Lawrence to *Brave New World* surfaces in a letter sent by Huxley to Lawrence in December 1928. Huxley describes a visit to a "night-bar . . . devoted to Lesbians" in which he witnessed "a wrestling match between two gigantic female athletes."<sup>56</sup> In *Brave New World*, we are told that Bernard and Lenina fly to Amsterdam to witness "the Women's Heavyweight Wrestling Championship" (p. 104). In 1928, the Huxleys contemplated spending six months on Lawrence's ranch in New Mexico, the Western state which would later become the location of the "Savage Reservation" on which John is born and raised in *Brave New World*. To this circumstantial evidence we may also add the fact that Lawrence's relationship with his wife, Frieda, struck Huxley as being highly unusual, not to say disturbing. Frieda Lawrence was older

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52. *The Olive Tree*, pp. 238–39.

53. *The Olive Tree*, p. 203. Huxley is clearly directing this remark at Murry, who deemed Lawrence a kind of prophetic, almost messianic figure, but refused to call him an "artist" because of the intensely personal and occasionally didactic nature of Lawrence's work.

54. Quoted in *The Olive Tree*, p. 226.

55. *The Olive Tree*, p. 226.

56. *Letters of Aldous Huxley*, p. 305. Huxley says that this contest was "ghoulishly funny," and, evidently adverting to earlier discussions with Lawrence, adds that "It was just the place for the Brewsters" (*Letters of Aldous Huxley*, p. 305), the Brewsters being Earl and Achsah Brewster, two oft-mocked admirers of Lawrence's work.

than her husband and behaved in a very maternal way towards Lawrence, at least in Huxley's eyes: "Lawrence was . . . in some strange way dependent on her presence, physically dependent."<sup>57</sup> Frieda's promiscuity came uncomfortably close to matching Linda's in *Brave New World*, just as Lawrence's possessiveness matched John's, as Huxley was well aware. He writes:

Frieda and Lawrence had, undoubtedly, a profound and passionate love-life. But this did not prevent Frieda from having, every now and then, affairs with Prussian cavalry officers and Italian peasants . . . Lawrence, for his part, was aware of these erotic excursions, got angry about them sometimes, but never made the least effort to break away from her; for he realized his own organic dependence on her.<sup>58</sup>

Frieda exasperated Huxley by her unreliability, indolence, and stubbornness and may have provided a model for Linda. Huxley confesses, "I like Frieda in many ways but she is incurably and incredibly stupid — the most maddening woman I think I ever came across."<sup>59</sup> Of course, Huxley realized that Lawrence too had his shortcomings; as he says, "I never understood his anti-intellectualism. . . . His dislike of science was passionate and expressed itself in the most fantastically unreasonable terms."<sup>60</sup> In this respect, once again, Lawrence is very like John, who dismisses the scientific and technological advances of supposedly civilized London with quotations from Shakespeare or some other irrelevancy.

Despite his sympathy for Lawrence, Huxley felt that his friend's illnesses, both physical and psychological, were "unnecessary, the result simply of the man's strange obstinacy against professional medicine."<sup>61</sup> Clearly, Huxley was deeply ambivalent about both Lawrence and Freud; while he felt a great loyalty towards and admiration for Lawrence, he could not suppress his feeling that Murry was in fact right about the "complex" that afflicted Lawrence and that the latter could have been happier and healthier, although not necessarily a better writer, if he had accepted Freud's insights to a greater extent. This feeling is perhaps reflected in *Brave New World*; indeed, it could well be argued that John desperately needs Freud to explain his own urges and hostilities before they destroy him. However, while Lawrence knew of Freud and disagreed strenuously (perhaps mistakenly, in Huxley's eyes) with Freud's assessment of the incestuous subtext of human sexuality, the real problem in Huxley's *Brave New World* as far as John is concerned is perhaps not that Freudianism has taken over the social structure, but that no one is any longer able properly to explain, remember, or apply Freud's theories, since the family structure that they assumed has been abolished in "civilized" circles.

Clearly, Huxley's distrust of Freud was by no means the typical antagonism felt by an artist towards a scientist who is treading on his or her toes; Huxley's own ancestry (his grandfather was T.H. Huxley, the father of so-called "Social Darwinism") made him rather more receptive to scientific principles than most novelists would be. Indeed, Huxley was often dismayed at what he took to be Freud's lack of real scientific rigor; as he once exclaimed, "How incredibly unscientific the old man [Freud] could be!"<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, although *Brave New World* seems to imply that

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57. *Letters of Aldous Huxley*, p. 364.

58. *Letters of Aldous Huxley*, p. 831.

59. Quoted in Sybille Bedford, *Aldous Huxley: A Biography*, p. 228.

60. Quoted in *Aldous Huxley: A Biography*, p. 192.

61. Quoted in *Aldous Huxley: A Biography*, p. 215.

62. *Letters of Aldous Huxley*, p. 837.



the conflicts within human nature are worth preserving, since they make us interesting, heroic, and tragic, Huxley himself was committed to treating mental and emotional illness by any means necessary. He was a firm supporter of the use of drugs in psychotherapy, and despite the fact that he derided Freud's insistence on the value of his famous "talking cure,"<sup>63</sup> he shared Freud's urge to help individual people survive their psychological disturbances. What *Brave New World* shows us, however, is that Huxley was willing to mock his own (and Freud's) drive to limit or eliminate suffering from human existence. *Brave New World* may still be read as a parable about the difficulty of preserving anything we can recognize as "human" if and when Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex is taken seriously and acted upon by an authoritarian political system. Nevertheless, given Huxley's own documented assent to many of Freud's views on the subject of infantile desire and repression, it is difficult to disagree with Robert Baker's claim that "The Freudian family romance, despite Huxley's repeatedly expressed misgivings concerning Freud's emphasis on erotic behavior, is one of the principal satirical conventions of his social satire. *Brave New World* is no exception to this practice."<sup>64</sup> In other words, Huxley seems to have been using the "Oedipus complex" not as a target for mockery in *Brave New World*, but as a weapon in his satirical attack on the mores of modern life and on its utopian fantasies.

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63. Huxley enunciates his dissent from Freud on this point in no uncertain terms: "Freud—although he did himself say that finally all nervous disorders would turn out to be organic—he did say that in the meanwhile . . . we could treat them successfully by purely psychological means—I think this is absolutely *untrue*" (Bedford, p. 641). Thus in *Brave New World* Freud's verbal therapeutic technique has been replaced entirely with drugs and Pavlovian systems of punishment and reward. Interestingly enough, in 1949 Huxley wrote a letter to George Orwell, congratulating him on the publication of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, but explaining why he felt that his own vision of dystopia was more likely to prevail than Orwell's. He writes: "Freud's inability to hypnotize successfully . . . delayed the general application of hypnotism to psychiatry for at least forty years. But now psycho-analysis is being combined with hypnosis. . . . Within the next generation I believe that the world's rulers will discover that infant conditioning and narco-hypnosis are more efficient, as instruments of government, than clubs and prisons" (*Letters*, p. 605).

64. Robert S. Baker, *The Dark Historic Page: Social Satire and Historicism in the Novels of Aldous Huxley 1921–1939* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), pp. 141–42.



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