“O brave new world that has such people in it. Let’s start at once”
Multicultural Criticism of a “Brave New World”

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Preface
For this project I chose to read Aldous Huxley’s, “Brave New World.” I had read the short essay, “Propaganda Under a Dictatorship” by Huxley, and I remembered finding it very interesting and I wanted to read more of his work. I also decided on this book because it seemed so different than my usual choice of literature. I found the book to be very interesting, but at the same time very haunting. There were many things throughout the course of the novel that were unsettling to me, the major one being the idea of casual sex.

Many times in the novel there are two characters discussing sex as if it was the same as buying a new pair of shoes. For instance in chapter three, Fanny scolds Lenina for seeing, and sleeping with the same man, Henry Foster. Fanny says this, “I really do think you ought to be more careful...No it really won’t do...Four months of Henry Foster, without having another man” (Huxley, 40).

Again, in chapter four, Lenina is discussing with Bernard their plans to travel to New Mexico. She announces rather publicly, “That is, if you still want to have me” (Huxley, 58). This statement actually makes Bernard uncomfortable and when he asks if they could go somewhere else to discuss the matter Lenina is in a state of confusion.

Another occurrence is in chapter 11. Bernard, after gaining his new found fame has the ability to be with any woman he wants. He boasts to Helmholtz Watson about how many women he’s had in the last week and if he had more time he could have more.

The idea of casual sex, something that is supposed to be sacred, helps in showing the degeneration of human kind within the dystopian society of, “Brave New World.”
Writers Chronology

1894 - Born on the 26th of July in Laleham Surrey to Leonard Huxley and Julia Frances Arnold.

1902 - Julia opened Prior Field, and all girls school, “would dominate the rest of her brief life and to remain as her monument (Woodcock, 29). Julia was well loved by her pupils, and by her family.

1908- On November 29th his mother, Julia passed away from cancer. “The little Eton boy very sensitive and brooding and white, and feels it deeply—and dumbly” (Bedford, 25). He had been very close to his mom.

1911- Diagnoses with keratitis punctata, “an inflammation of the cornea, in a particularly violent form and hope for recovery...[was] slight.” However, “He faced it with fantastic courage; and a complete absence of self-pity” (Bedford, 32-33).

1912- His vision begins to recover enough so that he can read, however it was still not easy (Bedford, 43).

1915- While at Oxford, began writing verse, “I had obviously some kind of natural gift for writing” (Bedford, 55).

1919- Aldous married Maria Nys, who he loves greatly.

1926- Voyaged to the United States for the first time, “California fascinated him there and then, though he found Hollywood ‘altogether too Antipodean to be lived in’” (Bedford, 175).

1931- Writes *Brave New World* in four months.

1955- Maria becomes ill, “s’il faut croire aux médecins, sans espoir” (Bedford, 578) and passes away from cancer.

Critical Summary Essay
Joanne Woiak of *The Public Historian* makes a valid argument in her essay, “Designing a Brave New World: Eugenics, Politics, and Fiction.” She argues that Aldous Huxley’s “Brave New World” is not only a novel depicting the anxiety surrounding the degenerated quality of the population but rather it is concurrently a satire of today’s society, a scary prediction of biological advances, and on the social roles of science, as well as a strategy to restore society. She backs up this thesis with many examples from the book, and Huxley’s life.

1. Written in 1931, it anticipated the future use of genetics, endocrinology, behaviorism, and the use of pharmacology.
2. In his novel, Huxley was not demonizing dictatorships or the oppressive utility of science, however he was criticizing the public.
3. Most readers assume that Huxley was demeaning eugenics (the study of improving society) because of his over exaggerated presentation of it in the novel, but he was in fact a supporter.

I agree with Joanne Woiak’s deeper analysis of “Brave New World.” On the subject of science she says this, “*Brave New World* is remarkable for its accurate prediction about science and technology, economics and politics and arts and leisure.... The extreme scenario depicted in the book...has most commonly been read as a cautionary tale about the dehumanizing effects of technology” (107). This seems only truer when looking at technology around us today. It consumes are lives to a point where it is unhealthy.

She also gives evidence to Huxley’s support of the eugenics movement. Four years before the publication of “Brave New World” Huxley wrote, “Outlook for American Culture.” In the essay, he reasoned that it was the mechanization of working and relaxation that had caused “imbecility” in America. “This discussion lead him the claim further that some percentage of the masses already had a hereditary constitution at ‘lower, animal levels’” (118)
Discussion of Literary Elements

It is the year A.F. 632. A.F. meaning after Henry Ford’s invention of the Model T Ford. In this futuristic vision, society has fallen to a dystopia. However, it is believed in the novel that a perfect society has finally been created. People are “hatched,” and conditioned for their roll in society, and are also bread to be consumers. The majority of the novel takes place in London, however two characters travel to a savage colony in New Mexico where we meet another main character.

For about half of the novel, Bernard Marx is the central character. He appears in the third chapter after Henry Foster snubs him. Bernard is he first character whose inner thoughts the reader knows. He is frustrated in the society that they live in and is thought of as a little strange by others because he doesn’t fit into his social status as an Alpha Plus. His behavior is also different than most people. However, after his trip to New Mexico he gains popularity with his discovery of the Director’s secret.

Lenina Crowne is Bernard’s love interest. She as well acts a little different from the other people in the novel by only seeing Henry Foster for four months. However, she is also attracted to Bernard even though other people find him abnormal. Lenina also develops an attraction for John, the savage brought back from New Mexico but in the end, she is consumed by the World State’s ideas.

John takes over the role of the central character after Bernard brings him back from the savage reservation. His mother had been from the World State, and when visiting the reservation had gotten lost. She was also pregnant, and out of shame did not want to return back home. John’s values stand with those he gained on the reservation, and notably from reading the works of William Shakespeare. When he is brought to London, he does not fit in.
The story begins with Director of Hatcheries giving a tour to a group of boys through the Central London Hatching and Condition Center. It is during the tour that we learn a lot about the society in which the novel is set. Families no longer exist (mentioning the word “mother” makes people cringe), and no more natural birth. Every embryo is conditioned to their social role and occupation. We meet Bernard, who is seen as an outcast and he feels like one himself. He has invited Lenina to join him on a trip to New Mexico to visit the savage reservation. She accepts his offer.

Once there, Bernard calls his friend Helmholtz and learns that the Director of Hatcheries is planning to exile him to Iceland. However, things turn in his favor when they meet Linda, a woman beaten down by age, and horrific to Lenina. Linda once lived in the World State. We also meet her son John, who does not fully fit into the reservation society because of his mother. Bernard remembers a conversation he had with the Director and puts it together that John is his son. He convinces John to come back to London with them, and Linda comes as well.

With the information about the Director out, Bernard is shot into popularity, and the novel shifts to John being the central character. John does not handle London society well. He eventually causes a scene and gets both Bernard and Helmholtz into trouble. He leaves to live in a lighthouse out in the countryside but cannot find peace there either. He is eventually overwhelmed with life in the World State and hangs himself.
T-Analysis

**Question**—In Aldous Huxley’s, “Brave New World,” What is the Majority and Minority culture, how do the characters deal with the two and what is the liminal space in between?

“Home, home—a few small rooms, stiflingly over-inhabitated by a man, by a periodically teeming woman, by a rabble of boys and girls of all ages. No air, no space; an under sterilized prison; darkness, disease, and smells” (37).

“‘Yes, every one belongs to every one else,’ Lenina repeated...then, taking Fanny’s hand, gave it a little squeeze. ‘You’re quite right, Fanny. As usual. I’ll make the effort’”(43).

“‘Talking about her as though she were a bit of meat.’ Bernard ground his teeth. ‘Have her here, have her there. Like mutton’” (46).

“‘they’re perfectly tame; savages won’t do you any harm. They’ve got enough experience of gas bombs to know that they mustn’t play any tricks’” (106).

“Lenina was still sobbing. ‘Too awful,’ she kept repeating, and all Bernard’s consolations were in vain. ‘Too awful! That blood!’ She shuttered” (116).

“If you knew how glad—after all these years! A civilized face. Yes, and civilized clothes” (119).

“The boys still sang their horrible songs about Linda. Sometimes, too, they laughed at him for being so ragged. When he tore his closes, Linda did not know how to mend them. In the other place...people threw away clothes with holes.... ‘Rags, rags!’ the boys used to shout” (130).

“‘But instead of also saying “Darling!” and holding out his arms, the Savage retreated in terror, flapping his hands at her as though

Mustapha Mond has been explaining to a young group of boys what it would be like to have a family. They are horrified by the thought, this kind of life is seen as archaic to their society.

Lenina being reprimanded by her friend Franny for not following societies standards. She agrees with Fanny, and realizes that she has been silly—following what society wants of her.

Bernard is seen as an outcast. His inner thoughts show that he does not fit in. He does not like the way Lenina is talked about.

The fact that they call the other people “savages” show that they are the lower class, they are also the minority culture. Seen as strange to those from the World State.

Lenina does not react well to the ceremonies performed by the savages.

Linda, who has struggled many years on the savage reservation is happy to finally see “civilized people” from the Majority Culture.

John was seen as an outsider on the reservation because his mother did not conform to their rules and she could not mend his clothes like the other mothers. Therefore, the other children made fun of him.

Once in the World State, John does not adapt well to the life style. While Lenina is advancing on him he freaks out.
he were trying the scare away some intruding and dangerous animal” (193).

**Observation**— In the novel, the Majority society is the in London, where technological advances have made the family obsolete. Lenina conforms to the society, while Bernard struggles with it. The savages are aptly names because they are the Minority Culture. Linda, formerly from the World state does not fit into the culture. Lenina is disturbed by it and John doesn’t seem to be able to find his place at all.
Analysis Essay

In Aldous Huxley’s “Brave New World” there is a struggle between the Majority Culture of the World State, and the Minority Culture of the reservation savages. However, none of the characters can overcome the differences and live in a society different from their own.

In the novel, the majority culture is the World State. Here, families, mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters are non-existent. To be this way it would seem is if there is, “no air, no space; an understerilized prison; darkness, disease, and smells” (37). This kind of life is seen as archaic and beastly to the majority culture. In the new society, “Every one belongs to every one else” (43) and you must follow society or be an outcast.

Other people however, think of Bernard Marx as weird. He does not fit into this culture; he is disgruntled when he overhears Henry Foster speaking about Lenina remarking that he is, “Degrading her to so much mutton” (46). It is because of this that Bernard wishes to visit the savage reservation in New Mexico. Lenina accompanies him on this trip.

Here, we meet the minority culture, the savages. During this, Bernard and Lenina are lightly walking in the liminal space between the two cultures. Lenina is immediately uncomfortable with the sights around her. After watching a human sacrifice occur she exclaims, “Too awful! That blood!” as she sobs (116). Lenina cannot conform to the minority society. However, Bernard seems to be fascinated by it, at the same time realizing that he does belong back in the World State.

While in the reservation, they meet John and Linda. Linda, who is from the World State got lost while visiting the reservation many years ago, and mothered John after being deserted. Coming from the majority culture, she does not fit into the minority culture. The women scorn
her because she sleeps with all the men and John is looked down upon because of this as well. When Linda meets Lenina, she is overcome with joy to finally see a “civilized face” (119).

John also does not fit into the minority culture mostly because of his mother. He has adopted their ideals that are different from the world state. He wishes his mother could be like the other mothers, who fix clothes and do not sleep around. But still, he wishes to go to the World State. He quotes Miranda from Shakespeare’s “The Tempest” saying, “O brave new world, O brave new world that has such people in it. Let’s start at once” (139).

He is excited to begin a new life where he might be able to fit in. But that does not happen. Once in the World State, John is overcome with the cultural differences, especially the ideas of sex. He regards it as something more sacred, while it is just a casual occurrence to everyone else. Lenina, who is attracted to John, advances him and he reacts by, “retreating in terror, flapping his hand at her as though he were trying to scare away some intruding and dangerous animal” (193). He retreats to a lighthouse in the country to find solitude, but the majority culture won’t leave him alone. He eventually hangs himself because he cannot conform to the majority cultures ideas.

Unfortunately, in this novel the two cultures do not understand each other. John ends up taking his own life because of the extreme differences and guilt he feels over living in what he thinks is such a filthy society.
More Critical Applications

1. What events in Aldous Huxley’s life lead him to write, “Brave New World?” What was society like?

2. How does the diction of the novel persuade you to think of the World State and of the savages?

3. Does the World State represent the Superego or the id in this novel? Explain.

4. How does the title “Brave New World” trap the reader?

5. How is John seen as a hero in the novel? Does he fulfill his journey?

6. How is Bernard exerting power in the novel both before visiting the reservation and after?

7. How is John the victim of the novel, does he have an agent?
Work Cited


