

THE TROBRIANDIZATION OF THE WESTERN WORLD: BRONISLAW MALINOWSKI AND THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION

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ABSTRACT

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This essay explores the wider cultural impact of Malinowski's reports on Trobriand sexual life and society in Britain and Denmark. Through his writings and lectures the Trobrianders became a 'byword among novelists and social reformers (...) the Twentieth-Century Noble Savage' (Meyer Fortes). Malinowski's voice was a part of the discourse of 'the New Generation' of sexual libertarians in Britain and America. This was the First 'Sexual Revolution' of the 1920s and 30s. In the second part of the essay I follow a link to Denmark where the Trobriand model case was introduced into a milieu of 'culture liberals' by the psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich in the mid-thirties. In the Second Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and 70s culture liberals and their ideas became dominant and victorious in Danish educational and sexual reforms. In an epilogue I follow this legacy of free love back to the Trobriand Islands with a Danish filmmaker, Jørgen Leth, in the 1980s.

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I was sitting in 'my village' of Pum on Rossel Island talking with my friend and key informant James Dal:a. It was the evening following a stormy meeting in the village. The young boys had been berated for fooling around and not listening to what their elders wanted them to do. I should first say that traditionally the Rossels have had a rather Victorian moral with strict adult control of the young: there were arranged marriages and even the double standards of prostitution. James had sailed as a deckhand and been to the Trobriand Islands and was well aware of the loose morals there. He commented that on the other islands in the Milne Bay Province people took more and more after the Trobrianders. Then he said 'Now everybody join[s] to Trobrianders. Even Europeans join to Trobrianders. But we Rossels (...) [We don't want that]'. I thought that he was perfectly right about the Europeans, but when I returned to Rossel ten years later the young people had 'disco parties' in the village and young unmarried mothers were nursing their babies in every hamlet. So even on Rossel a global Trobriandization seemed to have taken root.

To some degree I am myself an example of Trobriandization. As a young man in the late 1950s I was somewhat sexually undernourished. At that time I and a couple of similarly afflicted friends were seeking a departure from the restrictive bourgeois morals we had been brought up in. One of these friends had discovered Freud, some of whose

works were at that time being translated into Danish. Freud became our prophet. We now understood how our sexual desires had been repressed and driven into the subconscious. We were all much concerned with needs that were in fact 'natural' but had been prohibited by civilisation. We were convinced that out in the world there were 'primitive peoples' who followed a natural and free way of sexual life. We read popular travel books about exotic peoples, Bengt Danielson's *Love in the South Seas* and Ford and Beach's *Patterns of Sexual Behaviour*. One day my friend had found a slim volume in a bookstore with the enticing title *Sex and Repression in Savage Society*. This was my first encounter with Bronislaw Malinowski and it would lead me to enter the study of anthropology a few years later.

The problem I want to approach is this: have Europeans indeed 'joined' the Trobrianders? And if that is the case, how did it come about? Malinowski's publications about the sexual life of the Trobriand Islanders did play a part in it. But I am not concerned with conventional history of anthropology. Usually, this is an endogamous discourse within the discipline itself. What I am interested in here is how anthropological reports and theories are directed out from the discipline into other forums and to other audiences. I want to look at how the diffusion of anthropological facts and ideas are in resonance with fields of opinion and social movements in wider society. At best I should want to know how these ideas have been appropriated and made use of by common people in society. I have not been able to do this with regard to Britain, where the context of sources was unfamiliar to me, but in the Danish case I have been more successful.

The paper is in two parts. First, I shall describe how Malinowski first framed his discussion of Trobriand sex data in an encounter with psychoanalysis. In a second phase, he presented his material in full monograph form in *The Sexual Life of Savages* (1929). Meanwhile, he was active in bringing his findings to bear on problems of social reform in Britain. In the second part of the paper I shall relate how the radical psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich interpreted Malinowski's description of Trobriand sex life in a Marxist framework. Reich introduced the Trobriand case into Denmark where it became a model of sexual freedom for a group of young, radical Danish revolutionaries.

PART ONE. Malinowski and sexual reform in Britain during the 1920s

Malinowski's interest in sex

In his youth Malinowski was part of a hectic, romantic and decadent avant-garde milieu of students, writers and artists in Cracow and its holiday resort Zakopane. His closest friend was Stas Witkiewicz, a poet and painter. The two discussed philosophy and art, and engaged in erotic experiments and love affairs with various women. They both searched to establish a stable core in their fragmented personalities. Malinowski was torn between base sexual drives, ideals of pure and lasting love, and a monkish urge to keep to the discipline of scholarly work. He was a provocative, but also vulnerable and self-introspective man. No question that he would later be prone to study sexuality, but also the taboos and institutions that framed it in the Trobriands. A further stimulus came from his armchair study of the Australian Aborigines (1913). Here, he had debunked the

evolutionary theories of group marriage and sexual promiscuity. He had also established, as he believed, the Australian natives' ignorance of biological paternity. Within days in Omarakana, 'he was recording salacious details' of sexual behaviour (Young 2004: 403).

Malinowski's involvement with psychoanalysis

On his return from the Antipodes Malinowski first wrote his epic on the kula exchange *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922), a monograph that established his renown as an outstanding ethnographic fieldworker. He now proceeded to build a career.¹ This was in a period of break-up of values after the Great War. There was disillusion among the young with the moral authority of the former generation who had caused the slaughter of millions in the trench warfare of the Great War. The young were in search of a new liberty from former moral principles. It was the time of the 'flapper', the independent young girl who on her own sought sexual encounters in the jazz clubs of London (Malinowski 1962: 103–105). In the early 1920s psychoanalysis had become an intellectual fad in England (Stocking 1986: 29; cf. Malinowski 1960 [1927]: 5). Malinowski soon grasped the opportunity to employ his Trobriand discoveries in a dialogue with the new science of the unconscious.

In the field he had not been too familiar with Freud's theories. He and Stas had both had a fling with psychoanalysis in Zakopane in 1912, having their dreams analysed by two different analysts (Young 2004: 194, 206). During his second expedition to the Trobriands in 1918 Seligman who, through Rivers, had become interested in psychoanalysis, sent Malinowski 'a short account of dreams'; probably Rivers' *'Dreams and Primitive Culture'* (1917). Malinowski answered that he already had a 'fair idea' of Freud's theory, having read part of *Traumdeutung* and some ethnological articles in *Imago* (the official journal of the Psychoanalytic Movement) (Stocking 1986: 31).² When *Argonauts* came out in 1922 he had already been studying Freud more seriously and was developing ideas about how to apply psychoanalysis to his Trobriand data. Just after the appearance of the book his publisher expressed his satisfaction that Malinowski would now turn to 'Studies in Erotics and Psychoanalysis among Savages' (ibid.). From 1923 to 1925 he published a number of articles on this theme—one of them also in *Imago*, but all of them in the periodical *Psyche* edited by C.K. Odgen who became a friend.³ *Psyche* was a psychological Cambridge journal of broad scope where philosophers and scientists could discuss new points of view.

Malinowski began by laying out the principles, as he understood them, of Trobriand mother-right. Totemic descent is through the mother; the children of the family are of her flesh and her clan only. The family is, however, still a well-established sociological unit. The wife moves to her husband's village at marriage and the father is the 'master' of the household, but he has no rights over the children. They are only related to the mother. The father is an 'outsider' in the family. Malinowski asserted that the natives deny any physical role of the father in conception.⁴ Nevertheless, he is a loving father who cares for the children of his household. When the male child grows up he will learn that he is of his mother's clan and different from his father's. He also learns that his mother's brother is the one who has real authority over him. His real place where he has rights of inheritance

is in the mother's brother's village.⁵ The sociological duality and source of conflict in the Trobriands is thus between father-love and mother-right.

The Oedipus complex as conceived by Freud is well-known. The boy-child loves his mother and wants to stay in her bed. He hates the stern and demanding father who ousts him from the mother's bed and possesses her. Hence the complex: the boy wants to kill his father and make love to his mother, but must repress these wishes to the unconscious where they become a source of neurotic troubles. Malinowski argued that in a matrilineal society where the father has no authority over the boy and, on the contrary, is a loving friend, there can be no Oedipus complex. Instead there is a matrilineal complex where the boy hates his authoritarian mother's brother and wants to make love to his own sister. This is the source of repression in the Trobriands. Malinowski accepted the existence of the Oedipus complex in the Central European patriarchal family of his youth but he argued that the complex would take a different shape according to the cultural variations of different societies.

Malinowski's argument was issued also in *Imago* (1924), but it did not please the Father of psychoanalysis.⁶ His 'Lord Lieutenant', as Stocking calls him (1986: 37), the English psychoanalyst Ernest Jones, took it upon himself to reject Malinowski's revision. Malinowski's Trobriand case only confirmed Freud's theory, Jones argued (1925). The Oedipus complex was still there, hidden in the unconscious. Mother-right, the professed ignorance of paternity and Malinowski's avuncular complex were just modes of deflection of the primordial Oedipus complex. The universal validity of Freud's theory could not be questioned. Having chewed on this rebuttal for some time, Malinowski's attraction towards psychoanalysis faded considerably. When he collected his *Psyche* articles with some additional chapters in his book *Sex and Repression in Savage Society* (1927) his approach was much more critical and the book would constitute the end of his dialogue with psychoanalysis. He now continued work on his second major Trobriand monograph, the book he and his wife Elsie called the 'big sex' (Wayne 1995: 93).⁷

Nevertheless, Malinowski had made his name known to the public through his engagement with psychoanalysis. He had published his articles in the noted cross-disciplinary journal *Psyche*. He had talked before a 'crowded' audience at *The Heretics Society* in Cambridge in 1926 (Wayne 1995: 86–87).⁸ He became a friend of the biologist Julian Huxley and of Bertrand and Dora Russell. The latter were notorious sexual reformers who founded the progressive Beacon Hill School in 1927.⁹ Another reformer was the famous philosopher and psychologist Havelock Ellis. He was the author of seven volumes of *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, first published from the 1890s to the 1920s (Lyons & Lyons 2004: 101). Ellis also became a friend of Malinowski and he wrote the preface to *The Sexual Life of Savages*. Malinowski had invited Ellis to comment on a draft chapter of *Sexual Life* and in the book he discussed several topics that Ellis had dealt with in his *Studies in The Psychology of Sex* (Lyons & Lyons 2004: 165, 170). Further, Malinowski was a strong supporter of the *British Social Hygiene Council* contributing to the Council's conferences (Firth 1981: 114; Wayne 1995: 142; Lyons & Lyons 2004: 174). Malinowski gave an address on 'Anthropology and Social Hygiene' at one of the Council's conferences (Malinowski 1926). Here he argued against continence before marriage, held that divorce should be made easier and saw no objection to the use of contraceptives (Firth 1981: 115). He also suggested that 'companionate' or 'trial' marriage on the model of Trobriand

adolescents would be a healthy phase leading to stable marriage. Homosexuals should be tolerated as long as they did not ‘infect’ others. He was always, however, a staunch supporter of marriage and the nuclear family, which he took to be universal institutions. Malinowski also knew the birth control advocate Marie Stopes. In the late 1910s she had published several books on marriage and love, arguing that husband and wife should be equal in marriage and both should have satisfactory sexual fulfilment. She had earlier said that the sex life of primitives had no relevance for civilised societies.¹⁰ Nevertheless, Malinowski became a vice-president of her *Society for Birth Control and Racial Progress* in the 1930s (Lyons & Lyons 2004: 161). The Social Hygiene Council and Stopes’s Society were concerned with the sexual ignorance of the lower classes and their uncontrolled rate of reproduction. Sexual education and access to contraceptives were means to improve the life of mothers and reduce the poverty of working class families. Eugenic measures to ‘improve the purity of the race’ were also much debated in the 1920s.

In 1926 Malinowski attended the *1. Internationalen Kongresses für Sexualforschung* in Berlin where he gave a paper on the anthropological study of sex. He met Richard Thurnwald who had done fieldwork in the Solomons and German New Guinea and also Dora Russell. On a visit to ‘the homosexual den’ of Magnus Hirschfeld’s *Institut für Sexualforschung* he experienced ‘a real shock’ when he witnessed ‘demonstrations of homosex’ (Wayne 1995: 83). This was after all the nineteen twenties when sexual liberation was flourishing in Berlin during the Weimar government.

The Sexual Life of Savages

The Sexual Life of Savages came out in Britain and America in 1929. A German translation appeared the following year (Malinowski 1930). *Sexual Life* was the first monograph-length anthropological treatment of sexuality based on long-term fieldwork. Here sex was placed in its institutional framework of marriage, the family and social structure. The book was a demonstration of the functional theory of culture Malinowski was developing in the late 1920s. With some regret Malinowski had been forced by the publishers to abridge ‘very much’ the section on the act of sex ‘with the detailed description of copulation’ (Wayne 1995: 121). Nevertheless, he had cause to be ‘hopeful’ of the book’s financial success when he was told that it was sold on the boulevards in Paris alongside *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* and Frank Harris’s *My Life and Loves* (ibid. 143–44).

The Sexual Life of Savages boosted Malinowski’s renown in England and America. Bertrand Russell discussed the Trobrianders at length in his *Marriage and Morals* (1929: 14–24), and was especially impressed by Malinowski’s analysis of the father’s role (the lack of authority in the family, the ignorance of biological paternity) in a matrilineal society. Russell was also aware of Margaret Mead’s research in Samoa (Mead 1928; Russell 1929: 107, 219–20). Havelock Ellis also referred approvingly to Malinowski’s findings on several occasions (Ellis 1929: 18–20, 1930: 542–43, 1931: 40). Malinowski was invited to contribute to a reformist American anthology *The New Generation* edited by V.F. Calverton and S.D. Schmalhausen (1930) where he wrote his most elaborate attempt to form a theory of kinship, ‘Parenthood—the basis of social structure’. In the book his essay appeared side by side with a chapter by Margaret Mead on ‘Adolescence’.

Malinowski had made the Trobrianders known to the intellectual public to the extent that Meyer Fortes many years later could write: 'Did not the Trobrianders become a byword among novelists and sex reformers, as well as the model primitive society (I am tempted to say, the Twentieth-Century Noble Savage) for textbook reference among the most diverse scholars and scientists?' (1957: 168).¹¹ But it was into an upper-level sphere of discourse that Malinowski largely directed his writings on the sex life of the Trobrianders. I have found only one publication where he got through to an audience where his views could be applied in school education. This is a brief popular article 'The family: past and present' in *The New Era in Home and School*, the monthly magazine of *The New Education Fellowship* (1934).¹² Here he pointed out that there were primitive puritans as well as primitive liberals and reiterated his view that one could not discuss adolescent free-love-making without reference to the institution of marriage: the one should lead to the other.¹³ This magazine appears to be directed towards progressive school education and here it seems that Malinowski came closest to reaching an audience of people who could apply his knowledge directly in their professional discussions.

From 1930 Malinowski wanted to move on to other projects. He did not like to be known as a sexologist only. In the special foreword to the third edition of *The Sexual Life of Savages* (1932) he complained that the book had been misunderstood: the public had embraced only 'sensational details'. The real scope of the book as an achievement in fieldwork and a synthesis of facts (the functional method) had been overlooked (1932: xix–xxi). He was tired of being misunderstood as a prophet of sexual liberation. But here the magician had chanted a spell with a force beyond his control. In a wider world his Trobrianders would still by some be celebrated as models of sexual freedom, as we shall see. And it is to some degree his responsibility that tourists visiting Papua New Guinea will know the Trobrianders as 'the islands of love'. During the 1930s Malinowski proceeded to elaborate his concept of culture. He completed his third great monograph on the Trobrianders *Coral Gardens and their Magic* (1935). Among his many initiatives during the 1920s had been an approach to the Rockefeller Foundation that developed into securing considerable grants to the African Institute and the L.S.E. for functional anthropological field research into the early 1930s. Malinowski sent a number of students to do fieldwork in Africa and directed his interests towards problems of culture contact and change. In the late 1930s he was increasingly concerned with the rise of authoritarian politics in Europe as a threat to civilisation.

While Malinowski had finished his engagement with psychoanalysis in writing in the 1920s he continued to keep contacts with a few psychoanalysts such as J.C. Flugel, a British practitioner who became a friend (Firth 1981: 116; Wayne 1995: 158). In 1932, during his stay in southern France, he met Princess Marie Bonaparte, married to Prince George of Greece and Denmark (Wayne 1995: 162, 219). Marie Bonaparte had been analysed by Freud and was herself a psychoanalyst of importance in the French psychoanalytic milieu¹⁴ who courageously brought Sigmund and Anna Freud out of Vienna after the *Anschluss* in 1938. When Freud had arrived in London Malinowski wrote a letter to him offering any assistance he was able to give. Freud, however, had not forgotten Malinowski's heretical revision of the master's Oedipus complex. He answered sourly that he was surprised to learn that Malinowski was now 'an adherent of psychoanalysis' having been more aware of his 'opposition and contradictions to our views' (Stocking 1986: 13).

PART TWO. Malinowski, Reich and Danish sexual liberals

In August 1938 Malinowski attended the International Congress of the Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences in Copenhagen.¹⁵ During his visit he was accosted by a group of young enthusiastic Danes who wanted an interview. They regarded him as a prophet of sexual liberation with his portrayal of free adolescent sexual life in the Trobriand Islands. This group of admirers represented the journal *Sex og Samfund* (Sex and Society) published by *Foreningen for Sexual Sundhed* (*The Association for Sexual Health*). Malinowski, however, had to disappoint them. 'I am rather conservative (...) in any case not a revolutionary', he said. He went on to point out that the sexual lives of savage societies must be seen in their functional connections with other institutions. We could not take one aspect of their life and apply it to our own society: 'we must solve our own problems ourselves' he declared, adding that personally he was now more concerned with the rise of fascism and communism than with sex (Elbrønd-Bek and Ravn 1975: 69–71).

Wilhelm Reich

Malinowski and the Trobrianders had been introduced to Denmark by Wilhelm Reich. Reich was born in 1897 of wealthy Jewish parents, landowners in Galicia, the same province of Austrian-ruled Poland where Malinowski grew up. The two had some points of common interest, but politically they were Poles apart, one could say. While Malinowski was a conservative liberal, Reich for a time became a revolutionary communist.¹⁶

After having fought for Austria in the war Reich studied medicine in Vienna. In 1919 he became interested in psychoanalysis and became a member of the *Vienna Psychoanalytic Society* in 1922. He made an impression on Freud and soon took part in his 'inner circle'. He worked in the Vienna psychoanalytic clinic for outpatients from 1922 to the end of the decade. Here he was confronted with problems of working class patients that differed from those of the usual middle class clientele of psychoanalysts. It was here he became involved in socialist politics. Having been first a member of the Social Democratic Party he increasingly took part in the actions of the small Austrian Communist Party. In the late 1920s he studied Marx and Engels seriously and began to fuse psychoanalysis and Marxism. He also founded sexual hygiene clinics for workers in Vienna which offered counsel about abortion, contraception and adolescent sexuality. For Reich there could be no socialist revolution without an inner revolution liberating the repressed libido and 'orgastic potency'. Such views were met with increasing hostility in the Vienna psychoanalytic milieu. Reich's revolutionary politics also led to his expulsion from the Social Democratic Party. In 1930 he chose to move to Berlin where he joined the large German Communist Party. Reich was removed from the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society but in Berlin, being an extremely charismatic personality, he collected a new group of supporters and again opened sex-counselling clinics. He even persuaded the Communist Party to set up a German Association for Proletarian Sex-politics (Sex-pol). After the catastrophic German election in July 1932 where the Nazis became the largest party in the Reichstag, the communist party leadership became nervous about Reich's sex politics and he was expelled from the party. After the Nazi take-over in early 1933

and the *Reichstag* fire in February Reich fled to Denmark arriving in May 1933. Again he became surrounded by a group of supporters and established a seminar, but he did not get a work permit and his six month's visa was not renewed. After having left Denmark in December 1933 Reich visited London where he saw a lukewarm Ernest Jones, but was well received by Malinowski whom he met for the first time and with whom he had a friendly discussion (Sharaf 1983: 197). Reich then moved to Sweden and then to Norway where he stayed for five years. Here he began his bio-electric experiments which at the end were to lead him into madness. He followed Freud's misleading hydraulic model of the personality where the libido was compared to a kind of energy flowing through the person. For Reich, what he called orgastic energy (orgone) was an entity that could be discovered and isolated. Prominent Norwegian scientists dismissed his experiments and a strong press campaign was run against him. Reich left for the United States in August 1939 just before the outbreak of the Second World War. In America he built a new group of supporters and continued his experiments with the result that he was finally jailed for illegal practice and died in jail in 1957.

Einbruch der Sexualmoral

Reich was a prolific writer and published a number of books through the 1920s and the early 1930s.¹⁷ The one relevant in this context is *Der Einbruch der Sexualmoral* (The Invasion of Sexual Morals) from 1932. By 1924 Reich had probably already read Malinowski's article 'Mutterrechtliche Familie und Ödipus-Komplex' in *Imago* (1924b). In 1930 he read *Sexual Life of Savages* in the German translation (1930). Trobriand society interested Reich exceedingly and Malinowski became one of the few authors he quoted frequently (Sharaf 1983: 138).

In *Einbruch* Reich combined Malinowski's anthropological exploration of Trobriand sexual life with his own Marxism; the discussion of Trobriand society takes up 40 pages of a book of less than a hundred pages. Reich began by summarising Malinowski's description of the Trobrianders' lenient attitude towards infantile sexuality. He went on to portray the free sex-life of adolescents and their 'trial-marriages' in the bachelors' houses. The result was sexually well-adapted adults: '*Keine Neurosen—keine Pervasionen*' he wrote (1932: 23), and here he only concluded what Malinowski had said. This was for Reich an ideal case of the psychological benefits of sexual freedom. He then placed Trobriand society in a Marxist framework following the evolutionary stages of Morgan and Engels. The matriarchy of the Trobrianders was an example of *Urkommunismus*. There was common ownership of land, reciprocal exchange of products and an absence of money and social classes. But Trobriand society also evinced a transition to patriarchy, private property and economic inequality. This began with the exchanges at the contracting of marriage, in itself an institution of sexual restriction. It went on with the heavy obligation of a man's harvest tribute to his wife's brother. The chief's privilege of polygamy enabled him to amass wealth from his many brothers-in-law. Reich had a keen eye for chiefly marriage strategy: through the patrilineal marriage of his sister's daughter to his son a chief would ensure that the harvest tribute from his nephew would return to his own 'family' and keep

his son with him. In this way a paternal line of descent would be facilitated. Reich was also quick to spot that in such arranged marriages the partners were engaged while they were small children and the future bride in particular was supposed to remain celibate until the marriage took place.¹⁸ To Reich this was a clear case of the influence of sexual morals in the evolution of society.

The Trobrianders in Denmark

During Reich's sojourn in Copenhagen in 1933 he ran a seminar followed by left-wing students with an interest in psychoanalysis and also some students of child pedagogy. During the fall of that year the group read and discussed Malinowski's *Mutterrechtliche Familie und Ödipus-Komplex* (the *Imago* article of 1924) and his *Geschlechtsleben der Wilden* (the German edition of *Sexual Life of Savages*) (Siersted 1972: 34). This was the first introduction to Malinowski's work about Trobriand child training and sexuality in Denmark.¹⁹ When he moved to Sweden in early 1934 his Danish students and analysts visited weekly by the ferry to Malmö (1972: 35). Again when he moved to Norway there were frequent visits between the Danish sexpols and a new group which had built up around Reich in Oslo (1972: 40, 52): the two groups virtually fused into one. In Copenhagen Reich's successor was physician and psychoanalyst Tage Philipson who with other sexpol members had moved into a new working class housing estate called Ryparken in 1933. A progressive child pedagogue who had been studying under the Italian reform pedagogue Maria Montessori in London opened a kindergarten in Ryparken where the sexpol parents sent their children. They wanted to give them a 'self regulating' free upbringing but did not know how to do it (Korsgaard 2014: 211). Therefore, they established a monthly pedagogic seminar led by Philipson with other parents from Ryparken where children from the kindergarten could be used as cases for discussion. A large number of child pedagogy students were attracted by this seminar, most of them recruited from a recently established reform seminary in Copenhagen led by a (Freudian) psychoanalyst and a female psychologist (2014: 210–13). A whole generation of progressive kindergarten teachers were educated here (Thing 1993: 327).²⁰ After the war these reformist pedagogues would become leaders in the growing number of kindergartens in the country.

I do not know if any Malinowski texts were read at the Ryparken seminar, but the core group of sexpol members among the participants had all followed Reich's original seminar in 1933 and were well versed in Malinowski's Trobriand sexual ethnology. I suggest that this knowledge was passed on in the seminar. Small children's knowledge of the sexual intercourse of adults and the tolerance of their erotic play in the Trobriands could thus become an inspiration for how to bring up Danish children. The Trobriand case was taken by the sexpols as a prime counter example of a free and natural sex life as opposed to our own authoritarian, capitalist and repressive sexuality. This appears clearly in a large handbook about love edited by Philipson and brought out as late as 1952 (Philipson 1952). Here the sexual life of the Trobrianders is discussed over 20 pages (1952: 211–52), still as the only example of 'normal' sexual life as opposed to our own. During Malinowski's

visit to Copenhagen in August 1938 Reich and his Norwegian group came down from Oslo. They were all invited to a gathering of the Danish sexpols with Malinowski and spent an instructive afternoon and evening with him (Siersted 1972: 67).

Wilhelm Reich's followers may only have been a small sectarian group of some 20 people but their influence extended far beyond their number (Thing 1993: 325). They were part of a broader milieu of young liberal social reformers and left-wing intellectuals in Denmark.²¹ These intellectuals fought for a more free education of children, sexual liberation, equality between the sexes and a reform of abortion laws. They were also much concerned with the rise of fascism and the threat of war in Europe, an interconnected field of associations, parties and movements that has later been called the 'Culture liberals'.²² The reform movement grew in the 1930s, later than in Britain. As in England jazz was a liberating cultural force in the life of these youths. In the shadow of neighbouring Nazi Germany the Culture liberals increasingly fought against growing nationalist and reactionary currents in the Danish public and repression from the authorities. After the occupation of Denmark by the Nazis in 1940 all their liberal efforts came to a standstill. If there was a 'First Sexual Revolution' in Denmark or Britain it seems to have been limited largely to middle class metropolitan young. The next sexual revolution would turn out to be a real cultural revolution.

The Second Sexual Revolution

The war years and the first fifteen years of the cold war was a dark and depressive time where tenacious institutional authority and a conservative social ideology reigned in Denmark. Poverty was still widespread and petit bourgeois moderation, repression of desire and patriarchal dominance prevailed. This was soon to be overturned. From the late fifties began a period of economic growth, and middle-class prosperity was on the rise. The consumer society was developing and the market offered a plethora of new material pleasures in which temperance was outdated and new desires were released. Material with sexual content was increasingly published and in newspapers and books sexologists would guide people to more advanced sexual fulfilment. Simultaneously food connoisseurs appeared in the press to entice readers to new culinary experiences. In this climate the ideas of culture liberals became more widely accepted. From the mid 1950s jazz was revived as an entertainment for middle class youth and in the 1960s Copenhagen became a European centre for modern jazz. But a style of music that found a much wider engagement with the young population was beat and rock music. The importance of music as a life style and space for identity-building and liberal mobilization can hardly be overestimated.

The class division changed with the decline of the farmer class and the stagnation of the working class. But the middle class grew and grew and sent a flood of its young into higher education. Public grants for education enabled young students to live away from their parents which weakened the latter's authority. The universities, however, were soon unable to absorb the influx of students and this led to the student uprising in 1968. During the 1960s a large number of the younger part of the population had swung to the left and supported diverse radical left-socialist parties and movements. Meanwhile, the

Social Democrats were engaged in building the welfare state, which consisted of expanded educational and health systems staffed by the growing middle-class. The Social Democrats were now prepared for social reforms. Old and new 'Culture Liberals' took advantage of this development and in co-existence with the Social Democrats they were to occupy the dominating social discourse. They would enter the fast growing public institutions where they introduced their pre-war programmes of the 'new pedagogy', sexual education and the ideology of women's liberation. In this multi-determined conjuncture a great cultural revolution took place and within a couple of decades the sexual pattern of behaviour changed dramatically, with the new effective contraception playing a decisive role: in the fall of 1966 the Pill was approved by the health authorities. The summer of 1967 became the summer of love in Copenhagen (as well as in San Francisco and elsewhere). The same year written pornography was legalised, followed in 1969 by pictorial pornography. Sexual education became obligatory in Danish schools in 1970 and in 1973 free abortion was introduced. 'Companionate marriage' between young couples became a common thing; many would live together and beget children without being formally married. Adolescent sex became widely tolerated. Almost overnight parents would learn to greet the sweethearts appearing from teenagers' rooms on a Sunday morning and make their breakfasts. The Danes had really joined the Trobrianders, it would seem. But Malinowski would hardly have approved the results of this transformation of sexuality. One thing was adolescent sexual liberation. But here it did not lead to stable marriages. According to Statistics Denmark almost half of marriages in the country now end in divorce.²³ Neither would Malinowski have liked the way commercial forces exploited the sexual liberation.

When all this took place very few Danes in fact knew about the Trobrianders, let alone about Malinowski. After the war American cultural influence increased in Denmark and it was Margaret Mead who became known in progressive circles. While Malinowski published almost only scientific texts Mead was keen to spread her ideas through what the Lyons call 'popular advice genres' (2004: 208) and she became widely known in America and internationally. One of her books was translated into Danish by a well known pair of popular sexologists (Kvinde og mand i tre primitive samfund (Sex and temperament in three primitive societies), translated by Inge and Steen Hegler).²⁴ But the work that had most penetration was perhaps Benedict's *Patterns of Culture* which introduced cultural relativism to Danish readers (1948). The book was for some time on the reading list at the Danish Kindergarten Teachers College (Henningsen 1973). Ultimately, however, anthropology was not a prime mover in the processes culminating in the Second Sexual Revolution. A minor part of the individual participants may have been inspired by reading about free sex or the Trobrianders but there were much stronger economic and cultural forces behind the Western sexual reformation as I have suggested above.²⁵ From the late 1960s the main centres of diffusion of Malinowski's theories and reports on the Trobrianders would have been the two university departments of anthropology in Aarhus and Copenhagen.

Epilogue: back to the Trobriands

I have one last example to report. Here I played a minor role myself. In the late 1960s I taught a course on economic anthropology at my institute at the University of Copenhagen as a student instructor. Among my students was, for a short time, a man about my own age. His name was Jørgen Leth, at that time already a journalist and a poet. In a seminar about the kula exchange I introduced Malinowski and also discussed his sexual studies in the Trobriands and his engagement with psychoanalysis. Leth showed a keen interest in Malinowski but he soon dropped out of anthropology. During the following years I heard about him from time to time as he became noted as an avant-garde poet and filmmaker. Having written poetry and made films about sport he later worked annually for a major Danish TV channel as a cultural sports reporter on the *Tour de France*—a kind of pneumatic kula ring, one could say. He also got the reputation of being a hedonist and aesthete. Twenty years after I first met him, Jørgen Leth suddenly entered my office at the institute. He wanted to make a film in the Trobriands and asked for guidance on how to obtain a visa for Papua New Guinea. He did indeed go to the Trobriands, but he seemed to have arrived there in a season of little feasting and ritual life.²⁶ At the end he only used a small part of his material that came out of his project in the film. It was called *Notes on Love* and released in 1989. To me the film was very high-brow and rather boring. It mixed scenes of courting European couples with scenes of Trobriand village life, girls being painted for dancing and portraits of Trobrianders in front of a white screen like the photographs of racial types made by old time anthropologists. There was one scene, however, that made an impression on me. After a drive to a Trobriand village Leth had included a couple of the now famous stills of Malinowski importuning the natives. The background music was the adagio of Schubert's quintet in C major. In the voice-over one heard the poets chanting recitation: 'I travel out to the islands. To begin somewhere (...) to begin somewhere. It is 70 years since Malinowski was here. He slept in his tent. He woke up in the morning. He talked with the natives. He collected his material. He would describe love. That was his project. Malinowski is my hero'. Here was indeed a poet of the sexual revolution who, at least for a brief time, 'joined' Bronislaw Malinowski and the Trobrianders.

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This article is an expanded version of a paper given in a workshop in honour of Gunter Senft on his 60th birthday in the Institute of Psycholinguistics at the University of Nijmegen in August 2012. The essay could as well be called 'Waiting for Michael Young' whose second volume of his great Malinowski biography will hopefully explore the theme of the first part of this paper much more thoroughly. The paper could not have been written without the thorough research of Andrew and Harriet Lyons in their excellent book *Irregular Connections: A History of Anthropology and Sexuality*, 2004. I have also had much help from a book by Lea Korsgaard, *Orgasmeland*, which appeared this year, just as I had thought I had finished the article.

NOTES

¹ In 1924 he first obtained a secure position as Reader at the London School of Economics (L.S.E.). He was elected Professor in Social Anthropology at the L.S.E. in 1927.

² *Imago* was a psychoanalytic journal dedicated to cultural and literary studies edited by Otto Rank.

³ Odgen was also the editor of the celebrated anthology *The Meaning of Meaning* to which Malinowski was a contributor.

⁴ Malinowski's assertion of Trobriand ignorance of biological paternity has been received with enthusiasm by liberal and feminist social reformers but much debated among anthropologists. Leach argued that the Trobriand case does not evince a native ignorance of the facts of life but represents a matrilineal dogma about descent (1966). Weiner notes that a Trobriand child's substance is derived from the blood of the mother, but the growth and form of the child depends on the father's sexual intercourse with his wife during pregnancy (1976: 122–3). Powell was told that the man's semen coagulates with the woman's blood in a 'clot' which a spirit child enters. This was 'women's and children's talk' while the denial of men's part in conception was men's talk, valid in formal situations such as land ownership (Powell 1956: 277–78, quoted in Leach 1966: 48). Senft reported that women on Kayleula Island close to the main Trobriand Island talked about contraceptive plant remedies they used in connection with sexual intercourse (1999: 15–17).

⁵ Powell (1969: 192) and Weiner (1976: 42) note that many or most young men in fact stay in the hamlet of their father. Weiner argues that only those few men who are heirs to the status of lineage headman reside avunculocally. Powell argues that authority over young children resides in the father and not the mother's brother, who according to the brother-sister tabu against cross siblings meddling in each other's sexual behaviour is barred from taking any interest in his sister's domestic affairs (1969: 184).

⁶ This article was also issued separately the same year under its own cover by Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, Leipzig, Wien and Zurich.

⁷ Malinowski actually once used the phrase 'big sex' in a letter to his wife. Otherwise, they referred to the book as 'the Sex Book', and even 'S.O.S.' (Michael Young, personal communication to the editor).

⁸ The society was a well-known forum of non-conformist debate with a number of prominent speakers over the years.

⁹ Malinowski and Elsie had considered the school for their oldest child, but Elsie wrote 'For any sake, don't let Jósefa in for the School for Illegitimate Parenthood!' (Wayne 1995: 126).

¹⁰ I regret that I failed to note the reference for this piece of information.

¹¹ I believe that Fortes put his statement about 'novelists' rather strongly. I have found only one such: a mention of Trobriand conception (and of 'the savages of Samoa') in *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley (1932: 44). Aldous Huxley, a brother of Julian Huxley, was an acquaintance of Malinowski when the latter stayed with his family in southern France during a sabbatical in 1931–32 (Wayne 1995: 161). Fortes's rather ironic formulation shows that in 1957 when it was published, the theme of sex was no longer *comme il faut* among British social anthropologists.

¹² The article was reprinted in the posthumous anthology of Malinowski essays, *Sex, Culture and Myth*, 1962.

¹³ This article was incorporated as a chapter under the title 'The family past and present' in the posthumous collection *Sex, Culture, and Myth* (1962: 36–41).

¹⁴ Marie Bonaparte financed the field research before the war of the Hungarian anthropologist Géza Roheim in central Australia and on Fergusson Island in the Massim in Papua (Kristensen 2006: 237). Roheim was a more orthodox Freudian and did not support Malinowski's theory of a matrilineal complex. Marie Bonaparte's son was Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark who became a student of Malinowski. He did field research in India and Tibet before the Second World War and wrote his Ph.D. at the L.S.E. on polyandry after the war (Peter 1963).

¹⁵ Apart from his encounter with Reich's disciples Malinowski of course also took part in the conference's functions. Raymond Firth told my professor, Johannes Nicolaisen, that after the conference dinner

in the Tivoli Gardens Malinowski had with enthusiasm smashed crockery at the Merry Kitchen booth in the gardens.

¹⁶ The following sketch of Reich's life is based on Sharaf 1983.

¹⁷ Among the most notable of Reich's books were *Die Funktion des Orgasmus* (1927), *Character Analysis* (1933) and *Die Massenpsychologie des Faschismus* (1933).

¹⁸ Thus there is in the Trobriands a rather unheeded echo of the 'sacred maid' complex of western Polynesia (see Ortner 1981: 371–73).

¹⁹ During an illegal sojourn of some months in a summer resort north of Copenhagen in 1934 Reich again led some seminars.

²⁰ The number of participants in the Ryparken seminar has been estimated as up to 50.

²¹ There was even an opposed group of adherents of orthodox Freudianism in competition for control of the journal *Sex og Samfund*. (Elbrønd-Bek and Ravn 1975: 15–17).

²² In Danish this intellectual movement is called *kulturradikalismen* and its adherents *kulturradikale*. But the English word 'radical' lies more to the left, closer to 'extremist', on a continuum from the political right to the political left, than it does in Danish. I have therefore chosen to call the broader Danish movement 'culture liberals' while the sexpol group may rightly be called 'radicals'.

²³ http://www.dst.dk/pukora/epub/Nyt/2013/NR139_1.pdf

²⁴ Her book on adolescent sexual life in Samoa (Mead 1928) was, however, never translated into Danish.

²⁵ This section has benefited from reading the chapter 'Culture liberalism and the welfare society' by Peter Madsen (2001).

²⁶ I made the same mistake in 1980 when I visited the Trobriands after the annual feasting period of the *milamala* in October 1980.

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