

Views from the Rock



**CANNON SHOTS**  
R.J. MARX

# HAPPY 2019 ... and a Brave New World

Aldous Huxley's 1932 novel "Brave New World" is back and more relevant than ever. The title alone is a meme for our genetically engineered, social media besotted society, where individuals speak as "avatars" and conversations between family members take place on a touch-screen keypad.

Ursula K. Le Guin, who knew her way around dystopia, writes in the essay "Huxley's Bad Trip," "Huxley was brilliant in his paradoxical depiction of a perfect heaven which is a perfect hell."

Like another futuristic fable of the time — Herman Hesse's "Steppenwolf," in which citizens strive to stop the inexorable flow of technology by aiming pistols at drivers of automobiles — Huxley brings a mix of highbrow humor, stunning wordplay and science-fiction narrative decades before the term science-fiction was even coined.

The term "Brave New World" is probably as abused as any cliché in modern language. Take a look at today's headlines — not just news, but sports and entertainment.

These are actual headlines from news sites around the world:

Forbes: "A brave new world of brand alignment."

USA Today: "Welcome to the brave new world of spirit-free drinks."

And my favorite, from the Herald in Everett, Washington:

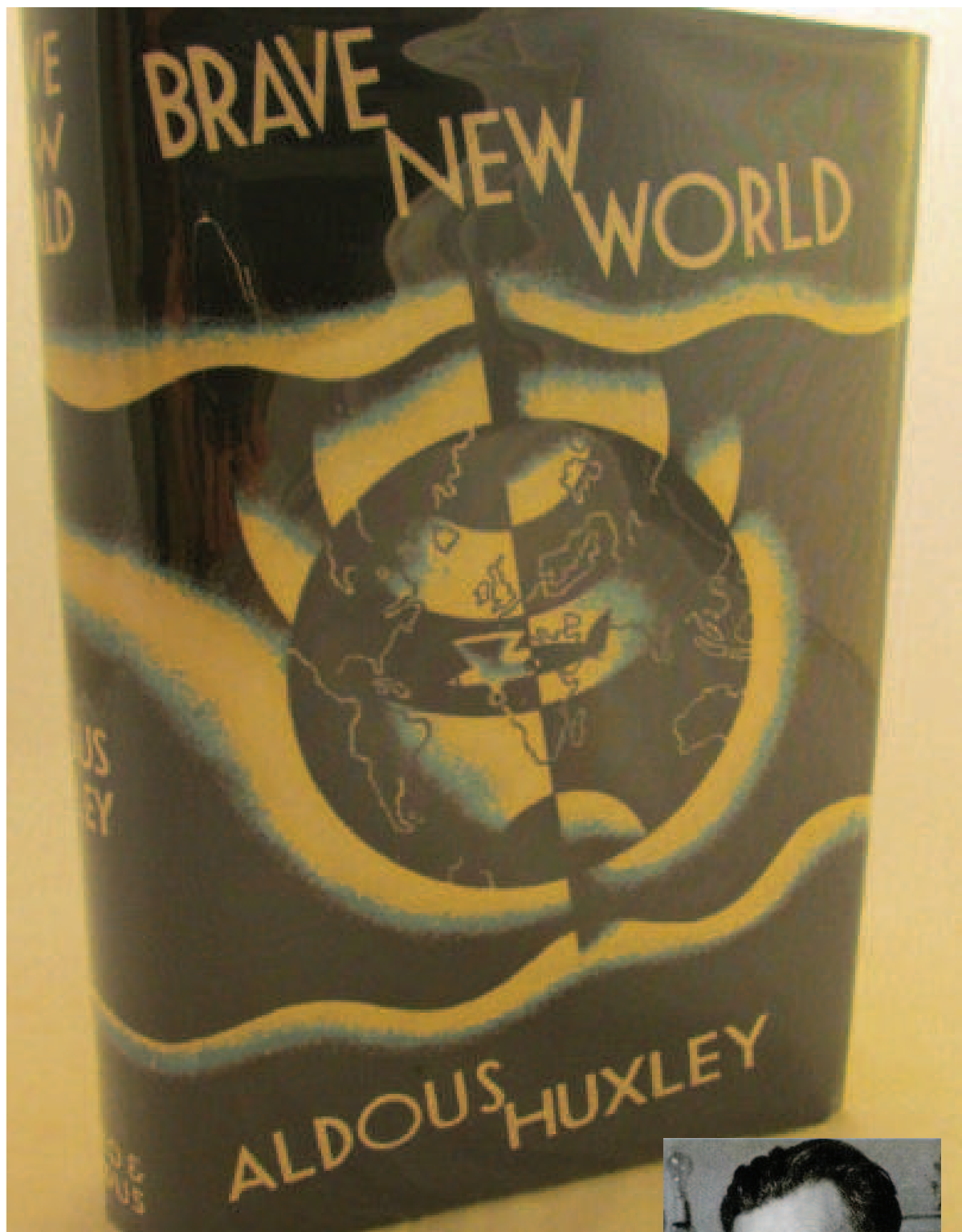
"It's a brave new world for the Seahawks minus Earl Thomas."

There are pages and pages more.

To be sure, many do take over from Huxley's theme of genetics ("China's Brave New World of Editing Human DNA," as headlined in the Washington Post) and gene editing ("Brave New World of Editing Human DNA Starts in China," Bloomberg News). All is geared for what Le Guin described as the planned and organized delivery of programmed, uniformed children living in a materialistic paradise, where nothing is lacking except "imagination, spontaneity and freedom."

In Huxley's brave new world, pregnancy and birth are mechanized and women are designed to provide the eggs for the next generation. Babies are "decanted" through the "Bokanovsky process" in bottling-rooms, assigned to ranks from the elite Alpha-Plus to the nearly subhuman Gamma-Minus.

Time is measured from the introduction of Henry Ford's first Model-T, inspiring the supreme being known as "Ford." Tech-



"Brave New World," in its original British edition, 1931.

niques to ensure uniformity of caste are gruesome precursors of the most selective genetic engineering. Unorthodoxy "strikes at Society itself." (capitalization is Huxley's).

Techniques like infant conditioning and narco-hypnosis are used, Huxley writes, as "instruments of government." Control is maintained by "suggesting" peo-

ple into loving their servitude, a technique as effective as "flogging them and kicking them into obedience."

As an Alpha-plus, Huxley's protagonist Bernard Marx (the name threw me for a loop) is predestined to a life of pleasure and privilege.

But he yearns to experience a world outside of the strictures of his world, "where every man,

woman and child" is compelled to consume so much a year in the interests of industry.

"One of these days," he is warned, "you'll get into trouble."

To overcome his angst, friends urge him to take a "gramme of soma," a sedative that quickly submerges those who take it into a pleasant "holiday from reality, and come back without so much as a headache or a mythology."

But the character's stubborn quest — or is it simple curiosity? — takes him to the "reservation" in New Mexico where he encounters a "savage" named John living a pre-civilization lifestyle, isolated in the desert outside the purview of the new world and its cookie-cutter genetics. John is recruited for a debut in the Brave New World, cast as a sideshow freak.

In that realm the savage is something of a media idol — shades of Andy Warhol's "15 minutes" — sought after by the new world's elite as a relic of a time gone. Once inside the civilized world, there is no retreat — culminating in a violent orgy of frenzied crowd-lust as insidiously violent as the simmering mob in Shirley Jackson's short story, "The Lottery."

Le Guin, the Cannon Beach resident who died in 2017 and left a legacy of work thematically linked to the concept of freedom versus societal groupthink, wrote that Huxley was speaking of his novel not only as a cautionary tale, "but as describing nascent reality."

Huxley's vision predates brainwashing, operant conditioning, subliminal seduction, verbal cues and repetitions by decades — now all part of our daily world as we turn on the television or radio, along with the use of psychotropic drugs and narcotics from Prozac to Zoloft. "A masterpiece in the age of anxiety," Le Guin concludes.

Writing his retrospective "Brave New World Revisited," an extended essay published in 1958, Huxley gives this reflection: "At this point we find ourselves confronted by a very disquieting question. Do we really wish to act upon our knowledge? Does a majority of the population think it worthwhile to take a great deal of trouble, in order to halt, and if possible, reverse the current drift toward totalitarian control?"

The Columbia Journalism Review recently warned of a "brave new world" of the rich and powerful who can afford to "bank-roll their own personal Pravdas."

Sober thoughts for a new year as we stand at a national launchpad of uncertainty.

Huxley's own prescriptive offers promise. "We can be educated for freedom. Much better than we are educated at present."



Wikimedia Commons  
In "Brave New World," Aldous Huxley offered a parable for not only his generation but for those to follow.

## Writers read work at Cannon Beach Library

Cannon Beach Gazette

The Cannon Beach Library is offering an opportunity for residents and visitors to write about life on the North Coast. Selected submissions will be read at a "Writers Read" gathering in the library on March 1. Writers welcome from all locales.

The deadline to submit a piece for consideration is Jan. 18. Submissions can be sent to info@cannonbeachlibrary.org or mailed to the Cannon Beach Library, PO Box 486, Cannon Beach, OR 97110.

What is your connection to the North Coast? What draws you to stay here? Is there a place, an experience, an emotion or an everyday occurrence that illustrates your feelings about the North Coast?

Anyone can participate in the Writers Read project. A group that includes library volunteers, a bookstore owner and local writer will

read the submissions and select six to 10 to be read by their authors at the gathering at 7 p.m. Friday, March 1.

Writers must follow these guidelines:

- Limit submissions to 600 words.

- Please write to the theme, "Life on the North Coast."

- Do not put your name or contact information on the story. The group will read the pieces without knowing who wrote them. However, please include the writer's name, email address and phone number in a cover letter.

- Any format, including personal essay, poetry, or story will be considered.

- The deadline for submissions is Jan. 18. Writers whose works are chosen to be read will be notified after the committee considers them. Writers should be available to attend the March 1 gathering.

For more information, contact the Cannon Beach Library, 503-436-1391.

## New Year's resolutions for the irresolute



Eve Marx/For Cannon Beach Gazette  
Fill in the blanks?

*"THIS WOULD BE A GOOD TIME FOR ME TO SAY THAT WHEN IT COMES TO RESOLUTIONS, I'M PRETTY MUCH A FAILURE."*

As 2018 draws to a close and 2019 begins, I feel an urge, usually alcohol induced, to make resolutions for the coming year. This would be a good time for me to say that when it comes to resolutions, I'm pretty much a failure.

The great majority of my best intentions for the new year get tossed to the wayside by April, sometimes March.

This is not to say that the entirety of my resolutions all go up in smoke. In years past, and trust me there have been decades of resolutions, a few have worked out.

One year I resolved to give up diet soda and because I actually do not like diet soda, that stuck. A resolution that same year to give up Half 'n' Half didn't even make it to February 1. Several years ago I resolved to shrink my rather ridiculous herd of pets (at the time there was a pony, two cats and three dogs) through attrition, which actually worked, but then we got Lucy the min-pin. So much for my stated goal of having just one dog.

When I was much younger, in my teens and twenties, I didn't see the point of New Year's resolutions, which at the time seemed all about curbing some behavior, like alcohol or reckless sex. Since I was healthy

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and hadn't suffered any serious consequences from my dating life, I felt there wasn't much to curb.

These days I have many vices, starting with gluten and candy. In a perfect world for 2019 I'd give up both, at least through February. A friend in California told me her resolution this year is to eat nothing that has a face, but since I can't give up bacon, I can't make the same commitment.

My New Year's resolution this year is to spend more time fussing with my teeth. That means I fully intend to brush them longer, use floss daily, and poke around between them with those special brushy picks. I'm also going to renew last year's resolution to drink more water and cut back on dairy. I swear as soon as I run out of Half 'n' Half, I'm going to try Califa Farms Dairy Free Better Half Coconut Cream and Almond Milk. I'll look for it in the Fresh Foods in Cannon Beach refrigerated nondairy case.

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**CANNON BEACH GAZETTE**  
The Cannon Beach Gazette is published every other week by EO Media Group.  
1555 N. Roosevelt, Seaside, Oregon 97138  
503-738-5561 • Fax 503-738-9285

CannonBeachGazette.com • email: editor@cannonbeachgazette.com  
**SUBSCRIPTION RATES:**  
Annually: \$40.50 in county, \$58.00 in and out of county.  
Postage Paid at: Cannon Beach, OR 97110

**POSTMASTER:**  
Send address changes to Cannon Beach Gazette, P.O. Box 210, Astoria, OR 97103  
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