

Synopsis of the Story So Far... On completing his Trobriands fieldwork in September 1918, Bronislaw ('Bronio') Malinowski returns to Australia as the war ends. He ceases to be an 'enemy alien' and in 1919 marries his fiancée Elsie Masson in Melbourne. They survive Spanish influenza; Malinowski writes on Kiriwina grammar while recuperating.

1920 The couple sail for England in February. They stay with the Seligmans in Oxford and with Elsie's relatives in Edinburgh, where their first daughter is born; they suffer periods of illness. Malinowski begins to write on the Kula and gives a lecture course on primitive economics at the LSE; he renews his acquaintance with Frazer, Westermarck, Rivers, Haddon, Marett and Alan Gardiner.

1921 Escaping 'the whirl of London' and its dismal weather, the Malinowskis spend seven healthy months in sunny Tenerife where the Kula book is completed by late April. Published as *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* in 1922, it confirms Malinowski's reputation as (in Frazer's words) 'the rising son of Anthropology'.

1922 The Malinowskis spend six months in Cassis, near Marseilles, where their second daughter is born. They visit Bronio's relatives in Poland, where he rejects the offer of a professorship at his alma mater, the Jagiellonian University, preferring Seligman's promise of an LSE lectureship. He studies social psychology, writes several reviews and an influential essay on linguistics for Ogden & Richards' *The Meaning of Meaning*.

1923 The couple buy a villa in Oberbozen (Italian Soprabolzano) in the South Tyrol, where they spend most of the year. Supposedly suffering from tuberculosis, Malinowski is granted extended sick leave by the LSE. He reads Freud, discovers Havelock Ellis, and begins to write 'the sex book' that will later become two: *Sex and Repression in Savage Society* (1927) and *The Sexual Life of Savages* (1929). Thanks to a generous infusion of Rockefeller funding, Malinowski (at LSE) and William Perry (at UCL) are simultaneously awarded Readerships. The rivalry between their respective schools of anthropology intensifies.

1924 Malinowski continues work on 'the Sex Book' in Oberbozen. Elsie's parents, Sir David and Lady Masson, visit them in June during a post-retirement trip to the UK.

Now read on.....

Chapter

TEACHING AT THE LSE: MICHAELMAS 1924

‘ROCKEFELLER’S BABY’: AN EXPANDING SCHOOL

Leaving the children in Oberbozen under the care of Frauline Gertie, Bronio and Elsie made their way to London for the beginning of the academic year. It was Elsie’s last opportunity to see her parents before they embarked for Australia. The Malinowskis were granted a visa by the British consul in Paris on 2 October 1924 and they entered Britain via Dover three days later.¹ This was cutting it fine, as Malinowski was scheduled to begin teaching on 9 October. He had asked School Secretary Jessie Mair for a week’s grace so that he could ‘look things up’ before beginning to lecture in the second week of term.² He now had only a few days in which to move into the second-floor office he would share with Seligman and to finalize his teaching arrangements.

The most urgent task, however, was to find lodgings for Elsie and himself. Some of the streets leading off Gray’s Inn Road were popular with itinerant members of the School of Economics, and Malinowski found lodgings at 20 Guilford Street, opposite the Foundling Hospital in Coram Fields. Kingsley Martin and Evans-Pritchard would soon live on the same street, while more permanent School staff, such as R.H. Tawney and Eileen Power, lived around the corner in Mecklenburgh Square – as too did Malinowski’s friend Ursula Grant Duff. The direct route to the School was a brisk ten-minute walk down Lamb’s Conduit and Red Lion Street, across High Holborn into Lincoln’s Inn Fields, and thence to the LSE in Clare Market.

In 1924 the London School of Economics and Political Science, ‘an institution on which the concrete never sets,’ was undergoing a corporeal transformation. A new wing, begun in 1920, was almost finished; the refurbished library in Clare Market was completed during 1924-25, and work had begun on an extension to the main building in Houghton Street. Regular student numbers now approached one thousand, and there were twice as many occasional students. About a hundred students were studying for higher degrees. Inter-collegiate students, who attended the School for special courses, numbered almost 300, about the same number of regular LSE students who attended other London colleges. It was this

kind of inter-collegial cross-fertilization that Anthropology was being encouraged to pursue with University College.³

After five years at the helm, Sir William Beveridge was well on the way to making the LSE the most important centre for the social sciences in Britain. In 1923 he laid the financial groundwork for academic expansion by securing from the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Fund a capital grant of almost £6000 for building and £25,500 for ‘a fluid research fund for four-and-a-half years’.⁴ Beveridge was far from satisfied, however, claiming that the School was still ‘under-housed, under-staffed, and under-equipped with books, instruments and the material means of artistic and social activities’.⁵ A second application to Rockefeller in 1925 yielded a healthy £200,000 for building and £8000 for the library, and on a personal visit to New York the following year Beveridge persuaded the Rockefeller trustees to part with a further £35,000 for building and £145,000 for the development of international studies and the social sciences.⁶ The LSE had become ‘Rockefeller’s baby’ and Malinowski would be a beneficiary of this generous infusion of American money. With its recognition as one of London’s ‘Big Three’ colleges by the University Grants Committee (the others were University College and King’s College), the LSE passed ‘from childhood to manhood’.⁷

Under the eighteen years of Beveridge’s directorship (1919-1937) the School’s premises tripled in size, its annual budget grew sevenfold, and there was a corresponding growth of staff numbers. Another acquisition was a Beaver as ‘mascot and perpetual student’. Although it was something to which Malinowski would have been utterly indifferent, the School now boasted a high sporting profile in athletics, rowing, cricket and golf. The LSE became the first London college to set a minimum annual salary of £1000 for professors, and the first to set up special education and child endowment schemes to assist staff with dependent children.⁸ Malinowski would benefit from these schemes and from a generous superannuation contribution of \$60 from the School added to his own contribution of \$30 per annum.

Happily, Malinowski’s particular theoretical orientation chimed with Beveridge’s (whose hero was T.H. Huxley), and there was a meeting of minds over the biological basis of the social sciences. It suited Malinowski very well that Beveridge wanted an ambitious research programme to investigate the borderland between natural and social science, that the Professorial Council approved, and that the Rockefeller Trustees were sympathetic – just as they had been to Elliot Smith’s ambitions for ‘Social Biology’ at University College. Economics and political science were well advanced, Beveridge argued, and ‘to complete the

circle of the social sciences,' he proposed a third group of disciplines – including Anthropology, Geography, Physiology, and Social Biology – that would 'form a bridge between the natural and social sciences'. Social Biology would include genetics, demography and eugenics.⁹ Malinowski strongly supported the scheme, as did a majority of staff. (Only Leonard Hobhouse complained that he was not consulted, protesting that he had been blending biology and psychology into his sociology for the past twenty years.)

The Rockefeller officer who recommended the LSE to the Trustees to make its 1923 grant had praised it as one of the 'very, very few places' in Britain 'where the academic and the actual come together.... The School is therefore serving an admirable purpose for the study of current, economic and political problems with a sufficient speculative and philosophical background'. Naming Beveridge, Graham Wallas and R.H. Tawney, he referred also to the 'fundamentally conservative character of English radicalism'.¹⁰ He could well have included two other committed socialists of different stripes: Hobhouse and Harold Laski. Malinowski would join them, though his political convictions were never as conspicuous as theirs.

Certainly, the LSE enjoyed a political vitality lacking in the older Universities. It would have been a cheering discovery to Elsie that the staff she met during their lunches at the School were keenly interested in current affairs and that most of them held 'progressive' liberal views on such matters as the French occupation of the Ruhr and German war indemnities. There would have been plenty to talk about over tea in the Senior Common Room that autumn. A plan to outlaw war was presented to the League of Nations Assembly; Mussolini had declared that the Italian Fascist Party was 'above Parliament'; millions were starving in the USSR following a harvest failure; the Turks had begun the expulsion of Greeks from Istanbul. In Britain, a censure vote on 9 October toppled Ramsey MacDonald's Labour Government after it had been accused of sedition over plans for a loan to Russia. On 31 October, the Tories romped home in the general election and Stanley Baldwin was back in power.

TEACHING BEGINS: 'YOU ARE DOING PLENTY'

In the re-organization of the School following the war, Ethnology had separated from Sociology to form its own tiny department under Charles ('Sligs') Seligman. Social anthropology was now free to develop as an independent discipline, though Malinowski (as he had promised Beveridge) would form 'a sort of liaison service between Sociology, Political Science and Ethnology'.¹¹ In practice, this meant conducting seminars with Edward

Westermarck and Morris Ginsberg, and remaining on good terms with Hobhouse, Laski and the latest appointment in Political Science, Kingsley Martin (later to become *The New Statesman*'s influential editor).

Malinowski had signed himself up for a demanding teaching load. According to the *Calendar* for 1924-25, he was scheduled to give 44 lectures linked to 44 hours of classes, plus a weekly two-hour seminar in the Michaelmas and Lent terms. His total for the year amounted to 120 hours, three times more than Seligman. 'If however you think this is not enough,' he had written to Mrs Mair, 'I shall be glad to announce two extra courses of five lectures & five classes': one on 'Early Beliefs & Social Differentiation' (based on his 1915 Polish 'Habilitation' thesis), the second on 'Methods and Aims of Anthropological Field Work'. In Malinowski's copy of the letter this paragraph had been struck through by Seligman with the comment: 'You are [already] doing plenty'.¹² Jessy Mair had otherwise adopted all his suggestions and accommodated all his requests, such as reducing the number of weeks of lecturing in the Michaelmas and Lent Terms to eight instead of nine 'thus allowing for the inevitable grippe which usually greets me after my arrival in London'. He had also asked for his teaching days to be consecutive in order to have other days free for research and writing. This request too was granted, and his teaching took place on Thursdays and Fridays during the first two terms, and on Tuesdays and Wednesdays during the Summer Term.

Seligman offered two courses of lectures in the Michaelmas Term on 'Prehistoric and Early Man' and on 'Ethnology' – for which Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* was the only monograph on his list of recommended books. In the Lent Term Seligman offered a course on 'The Nile Valley and Its Peoples' and he was also scheduled to give five lectures in the Lent Term in what was essentially Malinowski's course of 20 weekly lectures on 'The Psychology of Primitive Peoples'. This solid course was spread over the three terms, and the lectures were supplemented by a weekly seminar – to which admission was 'strictly by permission of Dr Malinowski only'.¹³ Malinowski was also slated to give a course in the Michaelmas Term on 'Systems of Kinship in Primitive Societies' (the last person to teach kinship at the LSE had been Rivers in 1913).¹⁴ In the Lent Term, Malinowski was advertised to give a course on 'Primitive Culture and Mythology,' and in the Summer Term a course on 'The Social Organization of Australian Aborigines'. Finally, the *Calendar* advertised a short course on linguistics ('at times to be arranged') entitled 'Comparative Study of Language', although it is uncertain whether Malinowski taught it in his first year. In addition to these nine courses by Seligman and Malinowski, the department offered its long-standing course

on primitive technology, 'The Useful Arts of Primitive Peoples', by T.A. Joyce of the British Museum.

So it was on Thursday 9 October 1924 at 2.30 in the afternoon that Malinowski began his tenured teaching career at the London School of Economics, a career that would continue for fourteen years. His status was Reader, his age forty, and he was nervous – or so it can be inferred from a note Seligman sent him concerning a migraine attack: 'it looks to me as if this is the form that stage funk takes in you,' he commiserated, 'with me it is mostly bowels.'¹⁵ From the same letter it might also be inferred that Malinowski had made a disparaging comment about some of the undergraduates who attended his first lectures. 'Personally,' responded Seligman ambiguously, 'I have always held that there was nothing in undergraduate teaching of anthropology at London, but having put anthropology into the Calendar as a B.Sc. Pass subject I think it would be extremely bad policy to remove it. So far it's never given us any trouble.'¹⁶ All the lecture courses mentioned above were indicated in the *Calendar* as suitable for a Final Pass or a Final Honours Examination for the B.Sc. (Econ.) degree and the B.A. Honours in Sociology and Anthropology. How many of these students attended Malinowski's lecture courses is not on record, but it is unlikely to have been more a handful. Anecdotal evidence suggests that by the end of the year he had converted his lectures into interactive classes. (Or rather, the lectures merged imperceptibly into the classes that were scheduled to follow them.) The more interactive the 'lectures', of course, the more intellectually challenging unprepared students would find them. Indolent undergraduates soon learned to avoid his lectures, which surely suited Malinowski who wanted only the dedicated few, the *crème de la crème*.

Yet he appears to have taken great pains over the Social Psychology lectures he delivered that autumn. Some of these he had drafted as early as 1921 in Tenerife. The first few lectures had been re-worked so many times that they are palimpsests. The 'Remains of Lecture I' contains fifty pages of screech, mostly in another's hand with a few pages in Polish in Malinowski's hand. Another bundle in the archive contains 'What remains of Lecture II', entirely in his own hand. 'Start with study of the nature of emotions,' it is headlined in red pencil. 'Ask for patience; far from our theme; [but] very important.' The first part of this lecture reveals his method of combating 'stage funk' by underlining certain words as a reminder to stress them when reading aloud in English. Here he is talking about fear, 'instinctual fear in the darkness': 'And where there is fear there is also physiological reaction and the actual perception of the objects of fear.' The sentence that follows is unexpectedly

revealing (did he really confess this to a roomful of strangers?): ‘I have had many personal experiences where I had such reflexes of belief in supernatural terrors, sudden and transient as flashes of lightning but none the less real and impressive.’ In subsequent lectures he made similar, self-referential admissions as if to point the lesson that (in his own words in the third lecture): ‘Scientists tend to project their own frame of mind onto the object of their study.’ Throughout the course during this first term, he returned to the influence of emotions on thinking and the connection between ‘the psychology of emotions and social facts’.¹⁷

The fourth lecture was devoted to a discussion of William McDougall, the fifth to Gabriel Tarde. His list of recommended books for this course on ‘primitive psychology’ gives some idea of its scope: Preuss, *Die geistige Kultur der Naturvolker* (1914); Wundt, *Elements of Folk Psychology* (1916); Marett, *Psychology and Folklore* (1920); Carveth Read, *The Origin of Man and his Superstitions* (1920); McDougall, *An Introduction to Social Psychology* (1922 edition); Levy-Bruhl, *La Mentalité Primitive* (1922); and F.C. Bartlett, *Psychology and Primitive Culture* (1923). Although none of Freud’s works appear in the reading list, the syllabus refers to ‘Savage mentality in the light of psycho-analytic theory,’ and it is clear from references to Freud in his lecture notes that Malinowski made full use of his recent reading in psychoanalysis.

For his course on ‘Systems of Kinship’ he recommended works by Rivers, Westermarck, Alfred Kroeber, Robert Lowie, and – in a reciprocal gesture – Seligman’s *Melanesians of British New Guinea*. This course surveyed the ‘history of the problem’ of kinship and social organization, beginning with Lewis Henry Morgan. It went on to discuss the ‘biological roots of kinship’ and considered in detail ‘a typical system of classificatory kinship in Melanesia’ (that of the Trobriands of course) before comparing it with other systems. Malinowski ended the course by expounding a ‘theory of primitive kinship in its psychological, linguistic and social aspects’.

Psychoanalysis also reared its head in the course on ‘Primitive Culture and Mythology’ which appears to have been heavily based on his articles for Ogden’s journal *Psyche* (the second one is cited as recommended reading). The syllabus refers to ‘the Psycho-analytic theory and the results of social anthropology’ including ‘the variation of “complex” according to the constitution of the primitive family’ and ‘the expression of the complex in mythology’ (Trobriands again). The course concluded with a discussion of ‘the sociological function of myth’ and an anthropological perspective on ‘the science of mythology’. It is clear that Malinowski was basing these lectures on chapters of *Sex and Repression in Savage Society* which he had been working on earlier that year in Oberbozen. Recommended books

for this course were Wundt's three volumes of *Mythus und Religion* (1905-08), Frazer's three volumes on *Folklore in the Old Testament* (1919), P. Ehrenreich's *Die allgemeine Mythologie* (1910), Karl Abraham's *Dreams and Myths* (1913), Otto Rank's *Myth of the Birth of the Hero* (1914) and *Psychoanalytische Beiträge zur Mythenforschung* (1922). Malinowski expected his students to read German.

The fourth and final lecture course he gave (Summer Term of 1925) was based upon his pre-war reading on Aboriginal Australia. The usual suspects are present among the recommended books: Fison and Howitt, Spencer and Gillen, W.E. Roth, Strehlow, N.W. Thomas and G.C. Wheeler. His own book, *The Family among the Australian Aborigines* (1913), concludes the list, and he seems to have re-hashed many of the issues he had dealt with there, such as totemism and the fallacy of 'group marriage'.

The advent of Bronislaw Malinowski made an immediate and perceptible difference to the fledging department of Ethnology. The courses he offered represented a quantum leap in the diversification of teaching. Consider the thinness of the courses of previous years, when Seligman single-handedly *was* Ethnology. In 1920-21, the first year that the Department of Ethnology stood on its own feet, Seligman had offered four lecture courses: his standard Ethnology course, another on 'The Arabs', a third on 'The Art of Savage and Barbaric Peoples' (for which Malinowski had provided some material), and a fourth on 'Some Migrations and Culture Contacts' – a total of 30 hours' teaching spread over two terms. The 1921-22 year would have appeared even more threadbare had it not been for Malinowski's 18 lectures on 'Some Island Communities' that he gave as an occasional lecturer. Seligman taught his Ethnology course and another on Africa; Joyce contributed his 'Useful arts' – in all amounting to 42 hours' teaching in the Department that year. In 1922-23, when Malinowski had been too unwell to take up his appointment and Seligman spent several months in bed, the Department practically ceased to function. Four courses by Seligman were announced, amounting to 28 hours, but most of them were cancelled, as were the three courses Malinowski was scheduled to give. 1923-24 saw an improvement, though Seligman was again 'seedy' for some of the time. He was supposed to give three of his stock-in-trade courses on ethnology, early man, and the races of Europe. Barbara Freire-Marreco (by now Mrs Barbara Aitken) had been recruited to lecture on the Pueblo Indians, and Joyce repeated his demonstrations in 'Useful Arts' – altogether just five courses, totalling 34 hours for the whole year.

With Malinowski's arrival in 1924-25 there was a veritable blossoming of fresh courses. Single-handedly he doubled the number from five to ten and dramatically increased the hours of scheduled teaching from under forty to over 160. Quantification alone, however, does not give a valid picture of the changes that Malinowski brought to the Department, and it is time to introduce his first graduate students and allow them to comment on the *quality* of his teaching.

THE FIRST PUPILS

Ashley Montagu claimed to have been the first of Malinowski's students. He was born Israel Ehrenberg of Russian Jewish immigrants in 1905 in London's East End. His father was a tailor, 'a cold fish' whose domestic violence induced his son to disown him. A fiercely intelligent autodidact, Ehrenberg was fifteen when he took a human skull that had been found in the Thames to Sir Arthur Keith, the foremost palaeontologist in Britain. Keith saw the boy's promise and befriended him. Determined to escape the social stigma of his East End Jewish background, Israel Ehrenberg acquired a middle-class English accent and changed his name to Montagu Francis Ashley-Montague. As he delighted in confiding, Ashley was the name of a young woman, socially far beyond his reach, whom he fancied; Montague was simply a suitably aristocratic name.¹⁸ Fastidiously, he later dropped the first two names, the hyphen, and the final 'e' and Ashley Montagu was born. He was eighteen when he enrolled at UCL to study psychology under Charles Spearman and Jack Flügel, and physical anthropology under Grafton Elliot Smith. As he put it, he 'enjoyed the doubtful distinction of being the first of W.J. Perry's two students,' and it was 'as a gestating Child of the Sun' that he was advised by Perry to take advantage of Dr Malinowski's courses at the LSE. He was told that Malinowski was 'suffering from phthisis' and not expected to live long.¹⁹ (To paraphrase Mark Twain, rumours of his imminent death were exaggerated; indeed, Malinowski's health at that time was as good as it would ever be.)

Montagu remembered being interviewed by an 'utterly charming' Malinowski, who asked what he had been reading. Montagu mentioned Freud's *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*. 'Splendid,' said Malinowski, 'here is Levi-Bruhl's *Primitive Mentality*. Perhaps you'll be willing to present a report on it at my second seminar.' Montagu could hardly refuse, although he 'hadn't the faintest idea who Levi-Bruhl might be'.²⁰ In another memoir written for Helena Wayne, Montagu recalled how, after giving his paper to the seminar, Malinowski complimented him, 'saying that he couldn't have done better himself'.

I need not say that my performance was that of an immature tyro, but it was typical of Malinowski to be both kind and generous to his students. It made a deep impression

on me. Malinowski's seminars were a great contrast to the mumbling unsure style of lecturing of Perry.... Malinowski would enter the room with a sheaf of MSS and begin reading, and suddenly he would pause and shoot a question: "Well, what do you think of that?" at some student, usually Evans-Pritchard, Raymond Firth or myself.

His lectures were attended by several other members of the faculty, colonial officers, and others, and there were generally not more than 20 persons present. Malinowski was almost always present at the seminars given by Westermarck, and these made a wonderful complement to Malinowski's. I was also taking courses with Ginsberg and Seligman, and these rounded things out beautifully. Of all the many lecturers it has been my good fortune to have as teachers no one quite equalled for me the stimulating quality of Malinowski.²¹

At the first seminar Montagu attended 'there were not more than a handful of people,' including Ginsberg, Westermarck, and 'a Russian lecturer' at the School (Baron Meyendorff, Reader in Russian Institutions and Economics). Malinowski enlivened Westermarck's seminars with his application of anthropological findings to problems of contemporary society. By 1929, when Montagu left London for the United States, Malinowski's two-hour, Friday afternoon seminar had swelled to about thirty members. Montagu remembered how the high windows of the room faced onto Charles Dickens's original 'Old Curiosity Shop'. In this room 'the rubicund and influential sociologist L.T. Hobhouse used to hang his coat and hat, which he would retrieve while the seminar was in session. He never stayed to participate in any way.'²²

Edward Evan Evans-Pritchard (known to his friends and colleagues as E-P) was twenty-two years old when he enrolled at the LSE in October 1924. His father was a Welsh-speaking Anglican curate from Caernarfon in North Wales, his mother of Anglo-Irish descent. E-P had schooled at Winchester before entering Exeter College Oxford, in 1921. The novelist Anthony Powell, a fellow-member of Oxford's Hypocrites' Club, referred to Evans-Pritchard as 'grave, withdrawn, somewhat exotic of dress'.²³ Later he would cultivate the reputation of an *enfant terrible*, a convivial raconteur with a mischievous sense of humour. Ernest Gellner remembered him as 'an intellectually restless, ever-questioning, sceptical Hamlet,' but John Barnes added that 'he had none of Hamlet's gloom'.²⁴

Evans-Pritchard graduated in 1924 with second class honours in Modern History. He was introduced to anthropology by Marett and read Frazer, Tylor and Lowie. 'I became an anthropologist in embryo,' he recalled. 'I did not want to become...just an intellectual. I wanted a life of adventure too, and fieldwork seemed to be the solution to combine both.'²⁵ He fancied cutting a romantic figure and seemed perfectly fitted for anthropology: 'well-endowed with physical stamina, self-reliance, sociability and a subtle understanding of

human relationships.²⁶ As a Celt he was understandably attracted to peoples who cleaved to their own customs in the teeth of imperial oppression.

Marett provided no training in fieldwork, so Evans-Pritchard went to London to learn from Seligman – a career move incomprehensible to his Oxford tutors. Malinowski happened to arrive at the same time, and although Evans-Pritchard subsequently claimed to be Seligman's pupil, he admitted to having learnt more from Malinowski than from anyone else.²⁷ He would also complain that neither teacher offered much in the way of fieldwork training: 'Seligman told me to take ten grains of quinine every night and keep off women'. When he asked Malinowski for advice on how to do fieldwork he was told briskly 'not to be a bloody fool'.²⁸ Inadequately trained or not, Evans-Pritchard proved to be an exceptional linguist, a consummate ethnographer and fine stylist. Trained as an historian, Evans-Pritchard conceived a 'passion for texts' which was 'inflamed' by Malinowski, whom he would acknowledge as 'the first to impress on me the importance of recording texts in the vernacular among primitive and illiterate peoples'.²⁹ He also learned from Malinowski that 'facts are in themselves meaningless.... It is useless going into the field blind. One must know what one wants to know and that can only be acquired by a systematic training in academic social anthropology'.³⁰

Long before he made these comments, however, Evans-Pritchard had developed an intense dislike for Malinowski, a dislike that was cordially reciprocated. The genesis of this mutual antipathy – if indeed it escalated from an initial disagreement – is unknown; but the pride and prejudices of both men (combined with paranoid tendencies) ensured there could be no rapprochement. Malinowski, as we know, was hypersensitive and capable of harbouring grudges against perceived enemies. Evans-Pritchard, according to his friend and colleague Raymond Firth, was 'an expert in the glancing blow' and 'not noted for his charity'.³¹ But this is to anticipate the unfolding story of their quarrel; for the moment, from late 1924 until early 1928, relations between teacher and pupil were amicable as long as each acknowledged the brilliance of the other.

Raymond William Firth, an 'unbelieving Methodist' with ancestral connections to John Wesley, was affable, calm, sensible and somewhat austere in his artistic tastes (early music and Romanesque architecture). Born into a rural community in New Zealand, Firth walked barefooted to school until his father bought him a horse. Malinowski noted his puritan strain and often teased him about it. Firth's first glass of wine was poured by Evans-Pritchard in a Soho restaurant. At the age of twenty-three, having prepared himself for the British

metropolis by taking elocution lessons, Firth came to London on a scholarship to study economics at the LSE. As a Master's student at Auckland University College, he had conducted original field research into the kauri gum industry and immersed himself in Maori studies. By chance he came across *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* and was greatly inspired by it. 'Interested in the possibility of providing an economic dimension to anthropological data, I found in this book a superb example, based on intimate field experience, of what I had only vaguely dreamed of doing.'³² From the Foreword of *Argonauts* he deduced that Malinowski lived in Tenerife, so it was a pleasant surprise to find him recently installed at the LSE. Firth had 'hoped to sit in on some anthropology' while reading for his economics Ph.D. and he consulted Jessie Mair. She sent him to see Seligman who introduced him to Malinowski, both of whom were 'very courteous'. The cautious Kiwi sat on the fence for six months, doing courses in both economics and anthropology before throwing in his lot with the latter.

Of that first year Firth remembered in particular the anthropology seminars, held in a small room with windows tight shut in winter and a fire blazing in the grate. Malinowski sat in a large basket chair, made wider by the capacious form of Westermarck. The seminar discussed kinship and the family, magic and *mana*, the Trobrianders Islands, and the works of Frazer, Rivers, Codrington, Tylor and Preuss. There was little good ethnography in print at the time, and little good anthropological theory either, so they read Continental sociologists: Durkheim, Hubert and Mauss, Steinmetz and Tönnies. They read Ratzel's social geography and the social psychology of Wundt, McDougall and Shand. There were few translations available and Malinowski read only the originals, while 'the rest of us made do'.³³ Seligman felt obliged drop his junior colleague a convoluted hint on this matter: 'Unless you v. strongly approve of Wundt do persuade the unhappy E-P not to – let me, in order to spare your possible susceptibilities, say "spend" – too much time trying to read it in the original lingo.'³⁴

Scarcely into their twenties, these male students formed a remarkable trio of talent. Malinowski would have assessed and approved their differences: a tall, upwardly mobile East End Jew; a stocky, feisty Welshman; and a lean, sprightly colonial boy. Ashley Montagu, who attributed his longevity to a love of dancing and the ability to play, would outlive Malinowski by 57 years ('the idea is to die young as late as possible'). After emigrating to America Montagu became an eminent evolutionary anthropologist, a foremost international expert on race, and a polished public intellectual in demand as a television pundit. He wrote a shelf-full of books, both popular and academic, on topics that bridged physical and cultural anthropology. Evans-Pritchard survived Malinowski by 31 years, having created a dynamic

and influential graduate school of social anthropology at Oxford, restored history to the discipline, and co-founded its first professional body, the Association of Social Anthropologists. Raymond Firth ultimately succeeded his mentor at the LSE and outlived him by 60 years. His awesome longevity (which he attributed to his genes) did much to validate his stature as one of the most eminent anthropologists of the twentieth century and he came to embody the golden era of British social anthropology inaugurated by Malinowski. In short, Evans-Pritchard and Firth became respected figureheads of the profession, the first anthropologists to be honoured with knighthoods since Sir James Frazer.

To the degree that he developed a dislike for Evans-Pritchard, Malinowski acquired a great affection for Firth. Never an academic prima donna, Firth remained trustworthy, modest, reasonable and even-tempered throughout his subsequent career as an ethnographer, writer, teacher and administrator. In a low period of personal unhappiness during the early 1930s when his wife's illness had crippled her, Malinowski wrote to Firth: 'You have become for me the symbol of that last burst of hope & optimism & new life which came to me in 1924 when I started my work at the School. Didn't we really start it in a way together? – When my health definitely improved & I began to feel once more that life was worth living.'³⁵

An American graduate student of economics and sociology called Talcott Parsons came to the LSE in the Michaelmas Term for a year of what he later called 'a very mixed bag of exposure'. He would eventually become a renowned, system-building sociologist at Harvard University, but he confessed that in 1924 he was 'an extremely callow young man'. He attended lectures by Hobhouse, Ginsberg, Tawney and Laski, but it was Malinowski who most influenced him. 'I'd never heard of Malinowski when I went there and it was Ginsberg who guided me to him,' and to his course on 'The Psychology of Primitive Peoples'.

His lecturing method was a little unusual. He read from a manuscript of his own and then would stop after two or three paragraphs and comment on what he had just been over. The manuscript was 'Magic, Science, and Religion', and I became very much interested right away. And I had the temerity to enrol in Malinowski's seminar the next term.

Two of the dozen people in the seminar 'really seemed to know something about anthropology'; they were Firth and Evans-Pritchard. Thinking back, Parsons found it curious that he never heard the name Max Weber mentioned during the entire year that he was in London. Weber had died in 1920, Tawney was working on *Religion and the rise of Capitalism* but didn't mention Weber in his lectures, and Parsons doubted if Ginsberg had

even heard of him. He did, however, learn a lot about Durkheim ('mostly wrong') from Ginsberg and Malinowski.³⁶ Still, 'it was a very fruitful year,' and much later Parsons contributed a fine critical essay on 'Malinowski and the Theory of Social Systems' to Firth's memorial volume in 1957.³⁷

There were at least two women in this first seminar of Malinowski's, both of whom he already knew. Barbara Freire-Marreco was five years his senior. Dark and diminutive with a helmet of black hair, she had been a student of Balfour and Marett at Oxford and in 1908 was the first woman to be awarded a Diploma in Anthropology. She was also the first of Marett's female pupils to do fieldwork, which she conducted between 1910-13 among the Tewa Pueblo Indians of Arizona and New Mexico. Malinowski had met her on his first visit to Cambridge about the time that she was collaborating with Haddon, Myres, Rivers and others on the 12th Edition of *Notes and Queries on Anthropology* – the vade-mecum that Malinowski found so useful during his fieldwork among the Mailu of Papua. Having married businessman Robert Aitken in 1923, Barbara was now settled in Hampstead.

Ursula Grant Duff was 39 in 1924, a widow with a keen interest in anthropology. She appears to have attended many of Malinowski's lectures, classes and seminars as an occasional student during the years that followed. Her impeccable aristocratic credentials would have appealed to the snob in Malinowski, while her own persistence in following his courses suggests that she had been captivated by his charm. She was born the Honourable Ursula Lubbock, daughter of the first Baron Avebury. Her unfortunate husband, Adrian Grant Duff, a Lt-Colonel of the Black Watch Regiment, had been killed in action during the first months of the war. The mother of a son and three daughters, Ursula became a close friend of the Malinowski family, and remained so long after the death of both parents.

WHIRLING WITH ELSIE

Sir David and Lady Masson had spent August and September in Scotland before returning to London for a brief reunion with Elsie. It was a final one, too, for after sailing for Australia they never saw their daughter again. While keenly missing her own baby daughters, Elsie was happy to share the 'whirl' of London with Bronio that autumn and to meet new people. Soon after their arrival they lunched with Melville Herskovits, a visiting American anthropologist and, on 14 October, with Marcel Mauss from Paris.³⁸

Elsie and Bronio's friends from Tenerife, 'Bill' Powys Mathers and his wife Roskie, were back in their bohemian flat in Lincoln's Inn Fields. They grew very close – so close,

indeed, that a few years later Bill Mathers would sub-edit *The Sexual Life of Savages* and Malinowski would have an affair with his wife. Pearl Binder described Bill as an ‘enormously fat, brilliant man who looked like G.K. Chesterton’. The Mathers lived in ‘some dotty little flat’ where ‘Bronio was absolutely at home’; they used to play charades and ‘have great cook-ups of food in their tiny garden’. Pearl recalled them attending the first night of Bill’s detective-mystery play, *Cold Blood*, at the Duke of York’s Theatre in 1933: ‘And I remember Bronio leaning forward and clapping hard although he knew it was a rotten play. I thought he was a sweet man to do that: bending down over the circle, clapping hard.’³⁹ Mathers was a rather tragic figure whose beaming benevolence masked a melancholy temperament. At Oxford he proved to be a brilliant decoder of cyphers, prefiguring his later career as ‘Torquemada,’ the first crossword puzzler of *The Observer*. He was also a published poet who specialized in erotic love poems. It must have occurred to Malinowski that Mathers shared with his old friend Staś Witkiewicz – besides a love of wine, women and song – a penchant for cunning disguises and aliases. Mathers’s diffidence as a poet hid behind oriental pseudonyms, and many of the forgotten poets he freely ‘translated’ are suspected to have been his own creations.⁴⁰

Malinowski dined in London clubs whenever he was invited, though he often regarded it a waste of time and never became a clubman himself. Charles Ogden, who belonged to several, put him up for membership of the Royal Societies Club in St James, urging him to ‘do something about it’ by filling out some forms.⁴¹ Malinowski appears to have declined. On the only occasion he joined Ogden at one of his clubs, he reported to Elsie that he had been ‘bored into sleep’; Ogden had said he would introduce him ‘to some important people, and they of course were not there’.⁴²

A more memorable dinner that autumn was with Ernest Jones and his wife at their home in Regent’s Park. Freud’s leading British disciple had just delivered a paper on Mother-Right which he had prepared in response to Malinowski’s article in the October issue of Ogden’s journal, *Psyche*.⁴³ Seligman was also present at the dinner, as was James Strachey, brother of Lytton and a translator of Freud. Concerning this evening, Wednesday 19 November, Strachey sent his wife a scathing account in the savagely witty Bloomsbury manner:

Ernest was in fine fettle (fetal?) [sic] last night over the matriarchy. A full dress parade, with two guests of honour: Dr Seligmann [sic] and Dr. Malinowsky [sic]. Jones was extremely clear, though as usual he seemed rather to peter out in the end. Dr S. is a rather unpleasant imbecile; and Dr M. a rather unpleasant intelligent. The

latter is marvellously Polish and polished: with an immense narcissism and (so far as I could judge) a quite invincible lack of appreciation of the real point of psycho-analysis. However, on the surface all was serene. He gave Ernest a practically unlimited blessing. And Dr S. groaned an Amen. Altogether, we felt, quite a historic occasion. – The main point was: Are the blacks really ignorant of the *Rolle des Vaters* or have they only repressed knowledge of it? – Rather futile, in fact. If these owls are really interested in psychology, why don't they go & get analysed?⁴⁴

More clearly than anything Jones himself would write, this shows that there could be no amicable rapprochement between Malinowski and dyed-in-the-wool Freudians.

There was wit of a gentler kind in a letter of late November from the ever-amicable Sir James Frazer. The Frazers were now in Edinburgh, where Sir James was delivering the Gifford Lectures on 'The Worship of Nature,' mostly about sky-gods of 'the Dark Continent'. Frazer and religion had been on Malinowski's mind for the past few months as he struggled to finish his chapter for Joseph Needham's collection on *Science, Religion and Reality*. Taking up the topic where he had left it the previous year in his review of *The Golden Bough* for the journal *Nature*, Malinowski apprised the triad of Frazer's grand narrative from his own perspective of the psycho-biological functions that science, religion and magic served. Seventy pages in length, 'Magic, Science and Religion' is a brilliantly lucid disquisition that sparkles with axiom and anecdote. The topic is immense, the writing exalted and epigrammatic. The essay makes sweeping statements and bold generalizations, and it endures as a classic, early-modern statement of the anthropological understanding of 'primitive' magic and religion.⁴⁵

In his letter, Frazer repeated his hope that Malinowski might be tempted to apply for a position at Cambridge and he enclosed the notice of a research studentship at Trinity College. 'I would do all in my power to forward your candidature if you stood for it,' Frazer told him. 'It would be an immense advantage for the Cambridge Anthropological School, which, I take it, is not very flourishing, to have you among us.'⁴⁶ But Malinowski had an uneasy feeling that he would not be welcome in Cambridge; besides, there could be no question now of compromising his established position in London.

That he was not yet *fully* established, however, was brought home to him again when – the Michaelmas term's teaching at an end – he and Elsie prepared to leave for Oberbozen to spend Christmas with the children. Jessy Mair had applied to the Home Office to ensure that Malinowski would be granted a visa and a permit to land when he returned to England in January. As usual, papers would need to be checked and forms completed. Mrs Mair reported that he would be eligible to apply for naturalization after having worked for a full year in the

UK, but there was a snag: 'As long as your wife and children are domiciled abroad you too will be deemed to be.' She suggested that he apply in October 1925, provided his wife was with him for the whole session, an arrangement which would 'surely be worthwhile for the sake of getting naturalization'.⁴⁷ But this, too, would be out of the question, for Elsie was pregnant again, and she flatly refused to live in a cold, damp climate.

Endnotes

- ¹ Passport folder. Malinowski Papers Yale (MPY IV/4).
- ² Malinowski to J. Mair, 24 May 1924. Copy in Elsie's hand. MPLSE.
- ³ 'Director's report on the work of the School,' *LSE Calendar* 1925-26, pp.8-9.
- ⁴ Ralf Dahrendorf, *LSE: A History 1885-1995*. Oxford University Press, 1995. p.162.
- ⁵ Cited by J. Harris, *William Beveridge: A Biography*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1977, p.273.
- ⁶ Harris, op.cit. p.272.
- ⁷ Dahrendorf, op. cit. p.158.
- ⁸ Harris, op.cit. p.272.
- ⁹ Harris, op.cit. pp.286-7.
- ¹⁰ Cited by Dahrendorf, op. cit., p.162.
- ¹¹ R. Firth, 'Department of Anthropology.' LSE introductory booklet, n.d. [c.1980].
- ¹² Malinowski to J. Mair, 24 May 1924. Copy in Elsie's hand. MPLSE.
- ¹³ *LSE Calendar* 1924-25, p.92. All the courses under 'Ethnology' are given at pp. 89-92.
- ¹⁴ See M.W. Young, *Malinowski: Odyssey of an Anthropologist, 1884-1920*. Yale University Press, p.233.
- ¹⁵ Seligman to Malinowski, 11 October 1924. MPLSE.
- ¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁷ MPLSE, old folder 312.
- ¹⁸ MWY interview with Ashley Montagu, Princeton, 28 October 1995.
- ¹⁹ Ashley Montagu, 'Memories of Bronislaw Malinowski,' TS written for Helena Wayne, 1 August 1973.
- ²⁰ Ashley Montagu, 'Edward Westermarck: Recollections of an Old Student in Young Age,' in Timothy Stroup (ed) *Edward Westermarck: Essays on his Life and Works*, Helsinki 1982, pp.63-70.
- ²¹ 'Memories of Bronislaw Malinowski,' op. cit. 1 August 1973. Montagu re-told this story of his first meeting with Malinowski in 'An Interview with Ashley Montagu,' by Leonard Lieberman, Andrew and Harriet Lyons, *Current Anthropology*, vol.36 (5), 1995, pp.835-44.
- ²² 'Edward Westermarck: Recollections....' op. cit., p.68.
- ²³ G. Lienhardt, 'Edwin Evan Evans-Pritchard'. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. 2003.
- ²⁴ E. Gellner, 'Introduction' in Evans-Pritchard, *A History of Anthropological Thought*, Andre Singer (ed.), London: Faber & Faber, 1981. p.xv. J.A. Barnes, 'Edward Evan Evans-Pritchard, 1902-1973' *Proceedings of the British Academy*, LXXIII, 1987, pp.447-490.
- ²⁵ Evans-Pritchard, 'Genesis of a Social Anthropologist: An Autobiographical Note,' *New Diffusionist*, vol.3, 1973, p.18. Cited by J.A. Barnes, 'Edward Evan Evans-Pritchard...' op. cit.
- ²⁶ Lienhardt, 'Edwin Evan Evans-Pritchard'. op. cit.
- ²⁷ Evans-Pritchard, 'Genesis of a Social Anthropologist...' op. cit.
- ²⁸ Evans-Pritchard, 'Some Reminiscences and Reflections on Fieldwork.' *JASO* vol.4, p.1.
- ²⁹ Ibid; Evans-Pritchard (ed), *Man and Woman among the Azande*. London: Faber & Faber. 1973, p.11.
- ³⁰ Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1937, p.1.
- ³¹ Firth, 'Bronislaw Malinowski' in Sydel Silverman (ed), *Totems and Teachers*, op cit. p.121.
- ³² Raymond Firth, 'Bronislaw Malinowski' in Sydel Silverman (ed), *Totems and Teachers*, op cit. p.106.
- ³³ MWY interview with Raymond Firth, London, 23 June 1993.
- ³⁴ Seligman to Malinowski, 4 September 1925. MPLSE.
- ³⁵ Malinowski to Firth, n.d. FPLSE.
- ³⁶ Talcott Parsons, 'My Life and Work.' A seminar at Brown University, 10 March 1973. *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, vol. 65, January 2006.
- ³⁷ R.Firth (ed), *Man and Culture*, op. cit. pp. 53-70.
- ³⁸ Herskovits to R. Firth, 11 September 1962. FPLSE; Seligman to Malinowski, 11 October 1924. MPLSE.
- ³⁹ Pearl Binder (later Polly Elwyn Jones). Interview with Helena Wayne, 7 October 1970.
- ⁴⁰ Tony Harrison, 'Introduction' to E. Powys Mathers, *Black Marigolds & Coloured Stars*. London: Anvil Press Poetry, 2004. (Reprints of 1919 editions.)
- ⁴¹ Ogden to Malinowski, n.d. 1924. MPLSE.
- ⁴² Malinowski to Elsie, 26 February 1925. MPLSE.
- ⁴³ Jones to Malinowski, 15 November 1924. MPLSE.
- ⁴⁴ James Strachey to Alix Strachey, 20 November 1924, in P. Meisal & W. Kendrick (eds). *Bloomsbury/Freud: The Letters of James and Alix Strachey, 1924-25*. New York: Basic Books Inc. 1985. pp. 121-2.
- ⁴⁵ Malinowski, 'Magic, Science and Religion,' in J. Needham (ed), *Science Religion and Reality*, London: Sheldon Press. 1926. (2nd Impression). The essay was reprinted in Redfield (ed.) *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays*. Boston: Beacon Press. 1948. pp. 1-71.
- ⁴⁶ Frazer to Malinowski, 21 November 1924. MPLSE.
- ⁴⁷ Jessy Mair to Malinowski, 1 December 1924. MPLSE.