

Aldous huxley's shakespearian dystopia

[Literature](#), [William Shakespeare](#)



Shakespeare's works revel as masterpieces centuries after their debut, influencing generations of writers including 20th century author Aldous Huxley. Huxley's 1932 novel, *Brave New World*, stands as a distinct reincarnation of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, fusing a disturbing reality of a dystopian future with the key aspects of a classical Shakespearean piece. Ira Grushow highlights the similarities of these two pieces to determine Huxley's question between innovation and emotion. Grushow reveals astounding evidence that links Huxley's *Brave New World* to Shakespeare's *The Tempest* by acknowledging the characteristics of Shakespeare's piece and how they overlay Huxley's critique on society and human values.

Huxley's novel, at its core, comes across as a reincarnation of *The Tempest*. Grushow exposes this by drawing comparisons between characters in both pieces. The article specifies how Bernard compares to Caliban as a "deformed monster and unwilling slave of Prospero," (Grushow 43). Huxley intentionally made Bernard "eight centimetres short of the standard Alpha height," and points it out continuously as a deformity (Huxley 64).

Additionally, Huxley displays Mustapha Mond as "a father...to... all under his care" (Grushow 44). A direct connection to Prospero, the father and controller in Shakespeare's piece, Huxley demonstrates deeper insight into the traits of Shakespeare's Prospero through Mond. Mond meets a different end than Prospero which allows Huxley to explore a new perspective while still keeping constant the main character traits. Even the character's actions mirror the play as near the end Bernard "jumped up, ran across the room, and stood gesticulating in front of the Controller," (Huxley 226). In surrender toward Mond, as a slave would to a master, Bernard proves to be a

recreation of Caliban. The comparison of the two works enlighten new perspectives on old characters.

Grushow's article outlines Huxley's critique on society through Huxley's use of Shakespeare. Shakespeare's work symbolizes classical literature and art in our society, it remains relevant because it resonates with reader. In Huxley's world, connection and art mean nothing, everything Shakespeare's work epitomizes results in misery in the World State. Huxley writes, " Making ninety-six human beings grow where only one grew before. Progress," (Huxley 6). Blunt and effective, he glorifies progress and happiness whereas Shakespeare idealized passion. This shows the " full measure of the difference between Shakespeare's vision of an ideal world and Huxley's" (Grushow 43). The " ideal world" that Huxley portrays is convincing, nevertheless. Innovation and progress bring the promise of happiness in contrast to the tragedies many of Shakespeare's heroes met. Huxley is arguing that society may be better off abandoning the arts, that " community, identity, stability," and progress champion as the key aspects to an ideal world (Huxley 3). Even with the underlying darkness and horror that Brave New World displays, Huxley's rhetoric succeeds in portraying a perfect world and vilifying the values Shakespeare represented. Huxley's intentional comparisons to *The Tempest* help readers understand the disparity between passion and happiness and how both cannot coexist.

By the end of the novel Huxley leaves his readers a dilemma with the things we value including art, emotion, and purpose. He argues that our morals and ideals counteract our nature as human beings. As Grushow states, " is his

[John's] code of morality any less obsolete... in our new world than it is in the Brave New World?" John, who roughly represented modern society in contrast to the advanced World State, was the reader's connection into Huxley's world. Disgusted and horrified from the first page, reader sympathized easily with John and thought him honorable because he portrayed values we glorify including chastity, sacrifice to higher beings, and self-denial. However, by the end, readers recoiled from John whipping himself and denying himself even small pleasures like making a bow. Huxley describes "he shouted at every blow as though it were Lenina" (Huxley 252). John thinks of punishing Lenina, and, in the frenzy, sees her, becomes delusional from soma, and sleeps with her. It becomes apparent that passions and values that the reader supports cannot exist in the happy civilized world Huxley created. John, succumbing to sleeping with Lenina and killing himself in shame exemplifies the death of our ideals. Along with Shakespeare and our advancement in science, Huxley binds together the past and present to create an ideal future that disposes of the values of society.

Huxley reincarnates Shakespeare's characters from *The Tempest* and steers them into a new world, an ideal world that mirrors our own, as proven by Grushow. By constantly alluding to Shakespeare, Huxley connects a past filled with morality and values to his future of apathy and progress. Huxley presents to us a warning, that if our society progresses toward a brave new world as Huxley sees it, it will sacrifice our beliefs for the promise of happiness. This caution of the future lets readers stop and question as they successfully feel the effect of Huxley's message.

Works cited

Grushow, Ira. " Brave New World and The Tempest." College English, vol. 24, no. 1, 1962, pp. 42-45. www.jstor.org/stable/373846.

Huxley, Aldous. Brave New World. New York: Harper & Bros., 1946. Print.