

Huxley had one foot in the nineteenth century

Literature



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Britain in the 1920s and 30s was a very politically and economically unstable place, and many people had concerns about the international tension and aftermath of the war, especially in Germany, and how it might affect Britain in the future. We see Huxley's concerns about the rise of fascism and the Nazis in Germany mirrored in the system of the World State.

The separation of the classes, a well known policy of right wing extremists, we see in the caste system, and also labeling according to 'type' - 'Alpha children wear grey... psilons wear black', etc. , reflects the way that anti-Semitism led the Nazis to label the Jews with the star that symbolizes their religion, in order that society would treat them differently and so that they knew their 'place'. The fear of a communist uprising in Germany, which would abolish the separation of the classes, is similar to the citizens of the world state's fear of the lower castes craving more power and wanting equality.

Another aspect of the World State which imitates aspects of right wing Germany is the way the children are conditioned to believe what society wants them to believe - 'everybody's happy now', etc, represents, albeit an exaggeration, the 'Hitler Youth', groups of Aryan children in Germany that were brought up with Nazi customs, and molded to society's perfect citizen in both appearance and demeanor. People feared that the longer this went on, the longer the reign of the Nazis would last, as generations would adopt the customs in turn.

Also, the idea of revered 'World Controllers' in Brave New World are the image of what Hitler wanted to become - already virtually a dictator in

Germany at the time, many British people feared his ambitions to become the leader of the world. It is debatable as to whether some of the more disturbing and repulsive aspects of the World State, namely torturing infants, casually and for the sake of the economy 'the children started, screamed; their faces were distorted with terror', are meant to show people what would happen if such a situation were to become reality.

The somewhat comic worship of Henry Ford in the book represents a fear of industrialism and conformity in Britain. Henry Ford was a famous car manufacturer in America in the 1920s, and his 'T model' car became the most popular car of the time. Ford created the famous production lines, which 'brought the work to the worker'. In *Brave New World*, Huxley takes the idea of the production lines and applies it to the production of humans, using the 'Bokanovsky process'. 'Standard Gammas, unvarying Deltas. Millions of identical twins.

The principal of mass production at last applied to biology. ' The production of identical twins is the same principal as the production of thousands of identical T model cars. The people of the World State also hold the sign of the 'T' in reverence. The production lines which led to the workers sitting down and doing the same thing over and over again to each car is also reflected in the mindless and unchallenging work undertaken by the lower caste factory workers. One of the most memorable and shocking aspects of *Brave New World* is the depiction of women and sexuality.

In the book, women are hypnopaedically encouraged to be promiscuous and to have no traditional values of love, romance or celibacy before marriage -

'Everyone belongs to everyone else'. In the 1920s the image of women was changing with the help of women getting the vote, the rise of female Hollywood icons and cinema (Huxley makes the 'talkies' the 'feelies'), and flappers - fashionable young women who shocked society with their short skirts and open sexuality. Films encouraged people to think of women as stronger, more independent and to abandon the previous traditional image of women as made for housework and childbearing.

The rise in popularity of jazz music also contributed to revealing fashions, as women wore unrestrictive costumes for dances such as the Charleston and the Shimmy. Huxley also has women working in factories as equals with men, a controversial idea at the time. One of the most notable things about the female fashion in *Brave New World* is how easy it is to take off thanks to the zips, which were a cause for concern for those with more traditional views in the 1920s, as it encouraged indecency.

In the book most items of clothing involve zips and can be taken off very quickly - 'Zip! The rounded pinkness fell apart like a neatly divided apple. A wriggle of the arms, a lifting first of the right foot, then the left: the zippicamiknicks were lying lifeless and as though deflated on the floor.' The horrors of the First World War showed young men, as soldiers, and young women, as nurses and relatives and friends, how expendable life could be, and all thought they deserved to have a good time after the trials they had suffered.

This led to an increase in alcohol consumption and a boost to the illegal drug trade. Huxley expresses the concern about these problems through soma,

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the free and legal drug taken recreationally in Brave New World. However, this drug is poisonous and contributes to the taker's early death, which they don't fear as they fear old age. Industrialism was also an issue in the 20s, and mass marketing helped to provide ordinary families with luxury goods like radios and refrigerators.

Huxley emphasizes this to include every part of a citizen's life being for the purpose of fuelling the economy - for example, conditioning children cruelly by administering electric shocks. "' We condition the masses to hate the country,' concluded the Director, " But simultaneously we condition them to love all country sports. At the same time, we see to it that all country sports shall entail the use of elaborate apparatus. So that they consume manufactured articles as well as transport.

Hence those electric shocks. ' Leisurely activities such as golf and tennis and squash have been changed, as the previous versions did nothing to help the economy - golf has become 'obstacle golf', tennis 'Riemann surface tennis', and squash 'escalator squash'. To express contemporary fears of the 1920s and 30s, Huxley has taken many of them and made them reality, most notably the dictatorship of the World State. He emphasized them, sometimes to a comic level, sometimes to a disturbing one, to symbolize some of the dangers and uncertainties Britain faced at the time.