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# How Satire is Used in Both Brave New World by Aldous Huxley and The Tempest by William Shakespeare

## Comparison Essay Between Brave New World and “The Tempest”

In the novel, *Brave New World*, by Aldous Huxley, and the play, “*The Tempest*” by William Shakespeare, the concepts of civilization, government, and the individual and his/her role in society are satirized. Huxley’s utopia is embodied by the World State, a scientifically and technologically advanced dictatorship that utilizes drugs, sex and misinformation to keep their citizens blissfully ignorant and content with their lives; Shakespeare’s society occurs on a reclusive island, where justice is more of an illusion than an actual rule-of-law, and that vengeance is the reason behind the inextricable encounters between the wronged inhabiting the island, and the wrongdoers who are stranded there later on. In both works, the concepts aforementioned are manipulated in such a way to illustrate the idea that people’s actions are motivated by self-interest and, as such, are driven to exploit the system in place for their personal benefit.

Civilization in both *Brave New World* and *The Tempest* is interpreted and depicted similarly throughout each work, and each have their own disillusioned character that experiences both their world and the foreign one (John the Savage in *BNW*, Miranda in “*The Tempest*”), where there is a distinct separation of these worlds: “They took their seats in the plane and set off. Ten minutes later they were crossing the frontier that separated civilization from savagery” (p. 115). The differences between these worlds is what causes cultural clashes between them. The portrayal of civilization as being “people-oriented” without being controlled by the people, is demonstrated through the extraordinary amounts of propaganda, sloganizing, and control through sleep hypnosis and other mechanisms of manipulation. The concept of civilization, though played out differently in both works, is nonetheless similar in that both incorporate the basic principles of stability, power hierarchies, and the stressing of community and belonging to it.

The role of government in both these works is immense, as it’s depicted as this omnipotent, otherworldly entity in *Brave New World*, embodied by the World State and its Controllers, whom, aside from Mustapha Mond, are barely shown in the novel and this lack of depiction can be purposeful, to illustrate the idea of a system of power whose shadowy inner workings are meant to be just that, hidden from public view: “She [Linda] knew him for John, her son, but fancied him an intruder into that paradisaic Malpais where she had been spending her soma-holiday with Popé” (p. 209). Here, Linda chooses to spend her last remaining moment under the influence of the drug soma, illustrating the susceptibility of the individual to the overt influence of an all-powerful government. Then there’s government in *The Tempest*, where Prospero, self-proclaimed, –de-facto king of the island he was exiled to and the running of his small community under the institution of his word being the equivalent of law, and that his primary motivation is his self-benefiting version of justice, where everyone is a pawn in his scheme to return to the mainland as Duke of Milan once more.

Individuals are what comprise the communities that have sprung up in both *Brave New World* and *The Tempest*, and because the rulers of these societies need their support, or at the very

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least a lack of opposition, they appeal to their peoples' desires in order to garner their favor, and then exploit that for their advantage. In *Brave New World*, the World State, though not a particular proponent of science, uses it in order to keep their populace in a constant state of anaesthetization and, because of these blissful comas, they are unaware of what's transpiring around them. Individualism itself is taboo in their society, and is expressed in the following motto: "When the individual feels the community reels" (p. 103), which presents the idea that the community is valued more than the individual, and if said individual starts feeling emotions, it holds the community back. In *The Tempest*, Prospero is depicted as a duplicitous individual who manipulates others to his advantage: "... Welcome! My friends all: --" Prospero says in a polite manner, referring to the castaways, as opposed to his mistreatment and abuse of Caliban: "Thou most lying slave, whom stripes may move, not kindness! I have us'd thee, filth as thou art, with human care; and lodg'd thee in my own cell, till thou didst seek to violate the honor of my child" (I, ii, 344-348).

As both these works come to a close, they reveal that these supposed "utopias" are not as perfect in practical application, as they are in theory, and that the function of these societies are more so geared towards giving the rulers power to govern over the people, rather than have the people govern themselves and make their own decisions. Ultimately, the word "utopia" used to describe these societies is just a nicety for what they really are: dictatorships, ones that appear friendly and egalitarian, but in reality it's all a façade to keep the people content.