

*Title: A comparison of the theme of love in **Nineteen Eighty-Four** by George Orwell and love in **Brave New World** by Aldous Huxley*

*Research Question: How does the theme of love in Aldous Huxley's **Brave New World** differ from that in George Orwell's **Nineteen Eighty-Four**?*

ABSTRACT

How does the role of love in Aldous Huxley's Brave New World differ from that in George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four?

The aim of this essay is to examine the theme of love in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by George Orwell and in *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley in order to compare the role it plays in the dystopias presented in both works.

The essay does so first by analysing the theme of love in *Brave New World* where love is prohibited because it causes disharmony in a society where contentment is encouraged. The sexual act is here separated from love, since sexual intercourse in the World State is emotionless. What is also shown is that the protagonists in the book represent the standpoints of the different citizens, the orthodox, the unorthodox and the outcast.

Secondly, the essay analyses the theme of love in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Here love is banned because it creates disloyalty to the party and Big Brother. Sex is also banned since sexual desperation encourages engagement in the party.

The protagonists in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* try to oppose the system by loving each other, although their interpretation of love is not similar because of gender and generation differences.

Finally, a comparison between the theme of love in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Brave New World* shows that Huxley expresses the idea that love would upset the society, which in *Brave New World* is not desirable, whereas Orwell claims that love is an expression of individuality, which the party in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* considers to be subversive.

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INTRODUCTION

Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* are two of the great novels of our time. They were both set in a futuristic environment and the societies they described were dystopian. However, both works refers to the situation at the time of writing, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, published in 1949, criticised the totalitarian regimes of the Soviet and Nazi Germany, and *Brave new World* was written in 1932 as a satirical comment of the society in the thirties.

Huxley and Orwell's interpretations of love as they are expressed in their works, *Brave New World* and *Nineteen-Eighty-Four* are very interesting since the societies in each novel have prohibited and suppressed it. Yet some inhabitants express love in the novel.

It is equally important to understand the role love plays in both novels as it supplies the reader with a deeper understanding of each work

This Extended Essay therefore intends to investigate this relationship in order to give an account for the similarities and differences of love in the two works. It will do so firstly by writing an analysis of the theme of love in each novel, and secondly by making a comparative analysis, based on these observations, in order to be able to give an answer to the research question.

THE THEME OF LOVE IN BRAVE NEW WORLD

Brave New World is the story of a supposedly perfect world. The World State's inhabitants are happy and the key to their happiness is stability, community and identity (the World State's motto). Birth is no longer natural, there are hatchery and conditioning centres that produce humans, who are being programmed with different intelligence and characteristics appropriate for certain work. The most intelligent citizens, the alphas, are given the most demanding jobs, whilst citizens who have been programmed to have less intelligence are given easier work. This system extends to the Epsilon-minus Semi-Morons, who are content to perform menial tasks.

However, the inhabitants of the World State are very uninhibited. People have sex with others from the same caste, but only for sexual gratification. Relationships are seen as peculiar, and parenthood is taboo. Real love seems to have no place in this world - it is even forbidden in the World State, but this isn't apparent to the reader until the end of the story, when Mustafa Mond, one of the world controllers and thus one of the most powerful men in the World State hierarchy-, has a discussion with John, a Savage, who has lived the majority of his life in a reservation outside the World State culture and society. In fact, a prohibition of love is unnecessary as it is considered as obscene, or even more extreme; people in the World State do not know what love is. They have been conditioned only to feel physical attraction in order to please themselves, not anyone else.

The reason why love is banned is the attainment of total happiness. Strong feelings like love have to be suppressed to ensure stability¹. Therefore, the perfect outcome of the World State society is someone like Lenina Crowne. She has been conditioned perfectly, all her ideas and opinions are thoroughly orthodox. she is good-looking and very popular. She has slept with the majority of the men at the place where she works: The Central London Hatching and Conditioning Centre, and loves to do social activities like playing obstacle golf.

John the Savage is not a product of the World state. Until his meeting with Lenina and Bernard, he has lived his life in a reservation, a place where people still live traditionally, with religion, love and suffering. Thus, John is not conditioned - he has a mother a

¹ Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*, p.216.

woman from the World State who was abandoned in the reservation, his opinions are based on a mixture of aspects: his mother's longing for the World State, the Indian culture that surrounds him, and traces from an older society as he is reading Shakespeare and using his work as a source for inspiration. All of these aspects give John a very unique perception of love. His interpretation of love is very romantic through Shakespeare's dramas, but also natural. Unlike the inhabitants of the World State he has a mother for whom he feels genuine affection. According to John, love is something pure and holy. To love someone you should make the utmost sacrifices and act unselfishly towards the one you love. John looks at Lenina in this way, in his eyes she is divine, and he refuses to change his judgement of her until he eventually is forced to. He believes that making love means expressing your feelings, showing the affection you have for the person you love. He is indignant about Lenina's promiscuousity, her egoistic way of having sex for the simple pleasure of it. He refuses to yield to her offers -or anything the Brave new world offer him- not to ruin this view of her. In fact, his view of love makes him feel unworthy her love if he hasn't suffered for it, or proven him noble enough to deserve her affection. Therefore, when he is tempted by physical lusts his Christian purity restrains him from "sinning" and he feels forced to penance.

Eventually, he tries to abandon his feelings for her when he understands that, according to his norms, she is promiscuous and dissolute and that she is unable to share his understanding of love. He realises that she is too much a child of the Brave New World: something that he initially did not find as something bad. He then develops a frenzied hatred of her², she is sinful, impure and a slut, and he punishes himself for his affection to her.

But oh, oh, her arms round his neck, the lifting of her breasts, her mouth! Eternity was in our lips and eyes. Lenina...No, no, no, no! He sprang to his feet and, half naked as he was, ran out of the house. At the edge of the heath stood a clump of hoary juniper bushes. He flung himself against them, he embraced, not the smooth body of his desires, but an armful of green spikes. Sharp, with a thousand points, they pricked him.³

Lenina on the other hand does not understand John's deeper affection for her. She is unable (as most citizens in the world state) to feel love; instead she is only able to feel sexual attraction, as the society is designed in that way. When she meets John, she

² Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*, p.176.

³ *Ibid*, p.229-230.

cannot interpret his love for her further than his plain interest and to his great horror she continuously tries to seduce him. However, Lenina does develop deeper feelings for John, even though she is not aware of it herself. In the end she expresses sadness (she has even tears in her eyes and actually returns to the Savage after he has assaulted her ⁴).

As in most systems, there are exceptions in the World State of people who are dissatisfied and who question the system. Huxley illustrates the unorthodox citizen with one of the protagonists; Bernard Marx. Bernard is at the top of the hierarchy in the World State. He is an intelligent alpha-plus and therefore, he is supposed to have a very pleasing appearance. However, due to an accident when he was a foetus, he has instead an unappealing appearance that makes him unpopular as people from his caste are conditioned not to accept him as an equal. Consequently, he begins to question the society in which he lives. He finds society promiscuous and the impersonality in the sexual relationships disgusting. He feels indignant when he overhears a discussion about Lenina Crowne between two of his colleagues

"Lenina Crowne?" said Henry Foster, echoing the Assistant Predestinator's question as he zipped up his trousers. "Oh, she's a splendid girl. Wonderfully pneumatic. I'm surprised you haven't had her."

"I can't think how it is I haven't," said the Assistant Predestinator. "I certainly will. At the first opportunity."

(...)

"Talking about her as though she were a bit of meat." Bernard ground his teeth. "Have her here, have her there." Like mutton. Degrading her to so much mutton... ⁵

However, although Bernard resents the Brave New World society, his main struggle is not to remain an outcast, but to be accepted into it. His criticism of the World State is simply a means of justifying his exclusion from it. When he invites the Savage, John, to the World State and uses him to gain popularity, he is pleased.

⁴ Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*, p.235.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.39-40.

Bernard's good friend, Helmholtz Watson, another alpha-plus -like Bernard- is also unorthodox. He, however, questions the society for other reasons. Unlike Bernard, Helmholtz is fully accepted by the society. He is not an outcast, but he strives to be one, since he finds beauty preferable rather than the kind of happiness that is achievable in the World State.

What Bernard is not fully aware of is that he is looking for someone he can trust, and be understood by. Originally, he seeks this contact in Lenina Crowne. She questions Bernard's longing for personality and privacy with some disgust, and finds his feelings peculiar. What Bernard doesn't realise, however, is that the person he has been longing for is his friend, Helmholtz Watson. This level of their relationship is something that doesn't become apparent to him before the end, after Helmholtz has given him consolation -the moment when Bernard realises that he actually is looking for love and not only acceptance by the society:

*"'Helmholtz was wonderful to me,' Bernard resumed after a little pause. 'If it hadn't been for him, I should...'
'Now, now,' Helmholtz protested.
There was a silence. In spite of their sadness –because of it, even; for their sadness was the symptom of their love for one another – the three young men were happy."*⁶

At this moment, Bernard realises what Helmholtz already is aware of; that he prefers love and all the pain it might entail, rather than the happiness of the Brave New World. This alternative is possible since he chooses to be exiled to an island where outcasts are isolated from the rest of the society.

THE THEME OF LOVE IN NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR

The state of Oceania is ruled by a political party (*Ingsoc*) and Big Brother is its absolute leader. The state has inner party members at the top, and its "inhabitants" are simple party members, comrades, who execute orders from above. The lowest caste is the large group of people, the proletariat, who don't fill any function in the Oceanian society.

The system is built upon complete suppression, hatred and fear is the energy that fuels the party. Love is banned as it gives stability to the society. People are not conditioned not to love, but are unable to do so due to fear. The only love that should exist, is love for the

⁶ Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*, p. 221.

party and Big Brother. Something that O'Brien, an inner party member clarifies for Winston when they are in the Ministry of Love

*"There will be no love, except the love of Big Brother."*⁷

Between individuals love has to be avoided for the party to be able to continue. The party still needs marriages to breed children. Nevertheless, marriage is not accepted if two persons feel psychological or physical attraction. This is the kind of relationship Winston has with his wife, Katherine. Their impersonal relationship makes him hate her so much that he even considers killing her.

What is also interesting to note is that the party is two-faced. Even though they would like to appear as loving - the name of Oceania's torture centre is 'The Ministry of Love' - the system is incomplete without hatred, fear and suspicion. This is the product of *Doublethink*, a way of thinking taught by the party which make you ignore certain aspects of a matter to be able to believe in what the party wants you to believe in (for example $2+2=5$ ⁸).

There are two generations of rebels. Winston's generation; those who were born before the takeover by *Ingsoc*, and Julia's generation, which hasn't experienced anything else but the life with the *Ingsoc* regime. Both Julia and Winston are determined to rebel against the party, but they do it for different reasons. Winston is eager to join a resistance group. He wants society to change and *Ingsoc* to dissolve, even though it might take a long time for this to happen. The relationship with Julia is only a first transgression for him, so that he can join a larger organisation through her later. Julia on the other hand is only interested in a short-term rebellion. Her vision of a rebellion is not seen in perspective, she wants to do something to show that she dislikes the party, but as she never has lived in another society, there is nothing she can compare her situation with. Her love is an insurgence in itself, as long as she is pleased, she has her vengeance against the party.

For both of them however, love is rebellion as it is against everything that the party symbolises.

⁷ George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p.280.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.303.

*Their embrace had been a battle, the climax was victory. It was a blow struck against the Party. It was a political act.*⁹

Love for Winston has its origin in the past. He longs for contact and someone he can share his thoughts with, as he is from the old generation, the one that the reader is acquainted with, his love is more understandable (and more serious) than Julia's. In fact, her feelings for Winston appear rather strange to the reader; she calls him love, darling, dearest, but still there are no real feelings behind her words. At the beginning she only seems to choose him because she assumes he is unorthodox:

*'It was something in your face. I thought I'd take a chance. I'm good at spotting people who don't belong. As soon as I saw you I knew you were against them.'*¹⁰

She has not talked with him before, he (like everyone else) has an unsympathetic appearance so she couldn't have felt neither physical nor spiritual attraction to him before.

In addition, Julia is much more a product of the party than she wants to believe. For example, when Winston gets a copy of the Brotherhood's book, and tries to read it to her, she is uninterested and even falls asleep of boredom, another thought-technique taught by the party.

*"Crimestop means the faculty of stopping short, as though by instinct, at the threshold of any dangerous thought. It includes the power of not grasping analogies, of failing to perceive logical errors, of misunderstanding the simplest arguments if they are inimical to Ingsoc, and of being bored or repelled by any train of thought which is capable of leading in a heretical direction. Crimestop, in short, means protective stupidity."*¹¹

However, although Winston and Julia's love appears to be superficial, they do develop deeper feelings and they promise not to betray each other if they get caught, something that they almost manage to keep. Their definition of betrayal is very interesting, but for them very realistic; a betrayal would be for the state to stop them loving each other, not the simple confession.

*"Confession is not betrayal. What you say or do doesn't matter: only feelings matter. If they could make me stop loving you –that would be the real betrayal"*¹²

At the end of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Winston's hatred for Big Brother turns into love.

The book ends with the phrases:

*He had won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother.*¹³

⁹ George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p.133.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.128.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.220-221.

¹² *Ibid.*, p.173.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.311.

This refers to Winston's internal conflicts and what he originally is to what Big Brother makes him during his time in the Ministry of Love. These two sides of Winston, the hatred versus the love for big brother both exist until Winston overhears a report about an important battle, won by Oceania. His last ounce of doubts for Big Brother disappears and he feels complete trust for the party and their ideology. Here he describes Big Brother as a colossus, stable and eternal.

*He looked up again at the portrait of Big Brother. The colossus that bestrode the world! The rock against which the hordes of Asia dashed themselves in vain!*¹⁴

Thus, his love for big brother consists of total subjection, he feels that he is completely in the hands of a safe authority since he no longer is anybody; he has become a part of Big Brother.

How hatred can turn to love can appear to be contradictory: the party has tortured Winston and emotionally separated him from Julia and yet he loves big brother.

However, love and hatred are closely related, and when Julia, the only one Winston can trust, is gone, he is completely alone. He then turns to Big Brother for trust, consolation and as someone who he can confide in since he is no longer himself; he has surrendered everything of himself away to the party.

However, already in the beginning Winston finds it impossible not to cherish warm feelings for the party. During the two minutes hate, he has the same feelings for Big Brother as are described in the end

*At those moments his secret loathing of Big Brother seemed to tower up, an invincible, fearless protector, standing like a rock against the hordes of Asia...*¹⁵

The first acquaintance Winston makes with the party like a parent is O'Brien. He is also the person that consoles Winston and initiates him to the love he later feels for the party. O'Brien is the party embodied during Winston's stay in the Ministry of Love. However, he is eventually replaced by Big Brother, but not until Winston acknowledges the party as the ultimate being.

¹⁴ George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p.310.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.17.

A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE THEME OF LOVE IN BRAVE NEW WORLD AND NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR

At first glance, Huxley's world state appears to be the most propitious –it contains happy habitants, there are no apparent prohibitions, the workers are content and everyone is given drugs (Soma) with no side-effects, which are consumed by everyone and make them happy. This seems to be the perfect world compared with Oceania in Nineteen-eighty-four, where people are subdued, conditions are bad – rates of food and commodities are constantly reduced, party members are spied on through espionage systems and if a party member shows a sign of being unorthodox, although only in his mind, he is brainwashed and tortured.

However, a closer look at the two societies gives a deeper insight into the matter. The reader will soon find the World State in *Brave New World* deceptive, and it will even be repulsive as its inhabitants aren't able to feel any strong emotions, and find emotional behaviour peculiar.

In *Nineteen-Eighty-Four*, love is something the party struggles against, people in Oceania are still able to develop feelings for each other, this is the reason why precautions are taken before marriages to avoid emotional relationships. An example of this is Winston and his wife Katherine.

*As soon as he touched her she seemed to wince and stiffen. To embrace her was like embracing a jointed wooden image.*¹⁶

*She had two names for it. One was 'making a baby', and the other was 'our duty to the party'...*¹⁷

Love in the shape of desire is the greatest enemy to Ingsoc, something that Julia and Winston realise.

*Not merely the love of one person, but the animal instinct, the simple undifferentiated desire: that was the force that would tear the party to pieces.*¹⁸

However, Love is also the party's t dearest friend – love, in shape of total subjection to the party and Big Brother is required for *Ingsoc* to function at all.

*There will be no love except for the love of Big Brother*¹⁹

In the World State however, love is unnecessary, and even though love in itself is forbidden, the system is taking into account those who question it, by isolating them in certain colonies.

¹⁶ George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p.70.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.70.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.132.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.280.

The protagonists in each book, Bernard Marx and Winston Smith, are both exceptions from their systems as they are able to love, entirely against their societies' norms. However, Bernard and Winston do have different opinions about what love is. Winston is inclined to believe that love is the power that will tear the party to pieces, but what he defines as love is sexual intercourse, with someone he is attracted to. In fact, Winston's and Julia's relationship has two levels, the rebellious, sexual, and another which Winston isn't completely aware of. This part of their relationship is not rebellious, but rather an anxious attempt to get spiritual contact with someone, something that Bernard Marx in *Brave New World* is longing for. Unlike Winston, Bernard never questions the system in itself, he only resents it because he doesn't fit in. Due to his loneliness, he welcomes the thought of someone to feel akin with. John the savage is an exception. He doesn't break against the system, as he isn't a part of the World State. For him, love is natural.

The main difference between *Nineteen-Eighty-Four* and *Brave New World* is Huxley's and Orwell's essential interpretation of love. Their fictional societies are based on different ideas: The world state functions because of stability and structure whereas Oceania's and the Party's success is due to oppression. In *Brave New World*, the world controller Mustapha Mond says that strong feelings, like love, are abandoned, because total happiness, the concept of the World State would collapse under the pressure of surging emotions.

*But chastity means passion, chastity means neurasthenia. And passion and neurasthenia mean instability. And instability means the end of civilization.*²⁰

However, most inhabitants of the World State can't feel any love, because they are conditioned not to. They don't have a natural need for love as they are hatched and conditioned by means of science. Parenthood does not exist.

O'Brien, the equivalence of Mond in *Nineteen-Eighty-Four*, on the contrary claims that the more chaotic and unhappy the society is, the better it is for the party.

*Progress in our world will be progress towards more pain. The old civilisations claimed that they were founded on love or justice. Ours is founded upon hatred. In our world there will be no emotions except fear, rage, triumph and self-abasement.*²¹

Love is the expression of a degree of individualism which has no place in Oceania. If people were allowed to love they would not care about the party to the extent that *Ingsoc*

²⁰ Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*, p.216.

²¹ George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.280.

finds desirable. When the inhabitants are restrained from love, they have a surplus of energy, which the party makes them spend on the party and party activities. Sexual privation nourishes hysteria and chaos.

*What was more important was that sexual privation induced hysteria, which was desirable because it could be transformed into a war-fever and leader-worship.*²²

*That was very true, he thought. There was a direct, intimate connection between chastity and political orthodoxy. For how could the fear, the hatred and the lunatic credulity which the party needed in its members be kept at the right pitch, except by bottling down some powerful instinct and using it as a driving force?*²³

What is crucial to note is that Huxley separates sex from love. In *Brave New World*, the sexual intercourse is not love, whereas in *Nineteen-Eighty-Four*, sex is the essential part of love. The reason for this might be that sex is still natural in *Nineteen-Eighty-Four*, and a part of the superficial society in *Brave New World*.

To conclude, the role of love differs essentially between *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Huxley's dystopia believes that love endangers rather than engenders harmony. Orwell's Oceania on the other hand, is not concerned to achieve harmony and because the state prohibits love between individuals, people become hysterical yet attentive to Oceanian authorities.

²² George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p.139.

²³ *Ibid.*, p.139-140.

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