

# “BRAVE NEW WORLD AND 1984: A COMPARATIVE STUDY”

por María V. Vega de Febles

Aldous Huxley, the famous British intellectual finished *Brave New World* in 1932. George Orwell published his last novel *Nineteen Eighty Four* in 1949.

Both books are examples of anti-utopian fiction. They are not portraits of an ideal; they present nightmares, not dreams. Their prophecies that forty and thirty years back looked impossible have a terrifying actuality.

In *The Tempest* Shakespeare was influenced by the tales of adventurers who returned to England from the New World (Bermuda). In Act V scene i, Miranda exclaims, “O wonder! How many goodly creatures are there here. How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world, that hath such people in it”. Her innocence is contrasted by the author with the usurper and his followers who represent ambition, hate and violence. This subtle irony is used by Huxley as the starting point of his famous novel.

Other elements in *The Tempest* that might have influenced Huxley are: Ariel and the books. Ariel, a creature that is like harmony, light and the wind has been compared to a living laboratory, a symbol of science and technology. He is controlled by Prospero's magic. Prospero's powers came from his books; in Act. III, scene ii Caliban says to Stephano, “Remember first to possess his books; for without them He's but a sot, as I am...”

Orwell's works after 1936 has been directed against totalitarianism. He wanted to fuse in his last novel political purpose and artistic purpose into one whole. His descriptions of torture in Oceania's Ministry of Love are really an antecedent of similar descriptions in the novels against Stalinism, the greatest one, *Gulag Archipelago* by Solzhenitsyn (himself a victim in Gulag) was published in 1973.

## I- Technique of presentation and theme

### BRAVE NEW WORLD

The theme of the novel is how the advancement of science affects individuals. The aim of political authorities is social stability and to obtain it a highly centralized totalitarian government controls population of slaves who love servitude.

There is a caste system: Alpha plus on top and down to epsilon minus. With the aid of science men are created in test tubes and are determined since birth to be tall and intelligent or small and stupid.

<b>Government:</b>	10 controllers		
<b>Caste</b>			
<b>System:</b>	(Tallest and most intelligent)	alpha plus	upper
	_____	alpha minus	classes
	_____	beta plus	
	_____	beta minus	
	_____	gamma plus	
	_____	gamma minus	
	_____	delta plus	
	_____	delta minus	
	_____	epsilon plus	
	(smallest and half moron)	epsilon minus	

The first chapters introduce the reader to a terrifying world of cold experimentation and mass production of human beings who are then conditioned since birth to act for the success of society.

The passive masses in this new world (six hundred years in the future) spend their free time watching sport competitions, having free sexual relations or going to imaginary worlds of pleasure with the aid of drugs (soma).

In chapter 3 the author uses counterpoint very effectively. Different dialogues and scenes are presented with a movie film technique. Mustapha Mond, the controller, is indoctrinating the children, explaining the stupidity of the old days in which people had families and love existed; Lenina and Fanny are talking about sex and birth control; Henry Foster is talking with the Assistant Predestinator about sex and Lenina; and Bernard is overhearing the two men and thinking about the degradation of the relationship between men and women in their world.

The ideological part reaches its climax when John, the Savage, is introduced to us in the Indian Reservation. Through his life and spiritual struggle the author tells us how humanity can be saved.

The confrontation between the Savage and the Controller is very important to understand the purpose of the novel and Huxley's ideas (we'll discuss this scene in part II). John's suicide is a terrible blow, redemption is impossible, individuality is lost forever and with it: love, art and literature.

Another techniques used by the author are descriptions and contrast. Descriptions are very elaborate in the first chapters, and though it is boring in a way, it takes us to a nightmarish world in which the main character is science. Contrast is used to point out different attitudes and ideals. Life in the New World is contrasted with life in the Indian Reservation; Linda is contrasted with women in the new world; John is contrasted with Bernard, Helmholtz and Mustapha.

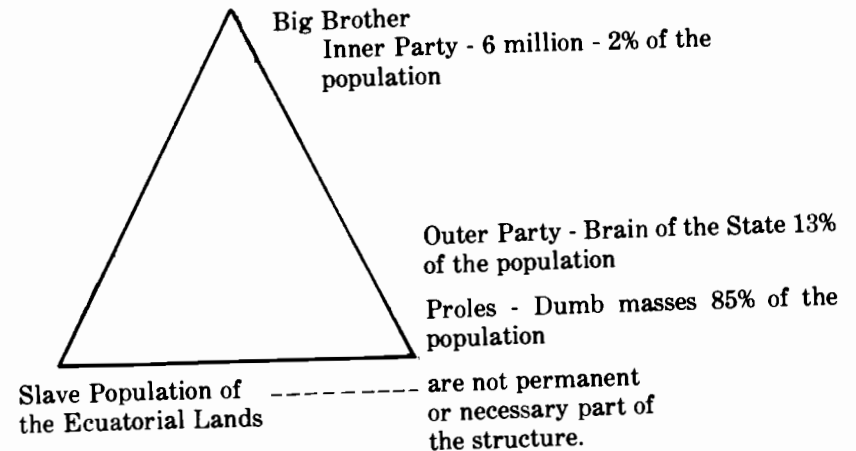
1984

In this novel Orwell describes a totalitarian regime similar to the Stalin's era in Soviet Russia. The places where the action occurs are described like the England of the post World War II period; the author shows the ruined buildings, the crowded pubs, the intellectuals engaged in bureaucratic work and the proletarians interested only in games.

Orwell goes 35 years to the future and presents the world divided in three super powers with different political systems.

World Power	System
Oceania	Ingsoc
Eurasia	Neo Bolshevism
Eastasia	Death worship

In Oceania the social structure was:



- There were four ministries:
- Peace (concerns itself with war)
  - Truth (concerns itself with lies)
  - Love (concerns itself with torture)
  - Plenty (concerns itself with starvation)

The only secure basis for oligarchy is collectivism. The Party owns everything in Oceania because it controls everything and disposes of the products as it thinks fit. Admission to either branch of the Party is by examinations, taken at the age of 16 (there is a similarity with Plato's Republic). English is the chief lingua franca in Oceania and Newspeak its official language.

The oppressive regime is represented by different closed spaces in the novel, (cell structure). Winston's shallow alcove used to write his diary; his cubicle at the Ministry of Truth; the room in the Prole District where he met Julia, the prison cell, room 101 and finally the cage fill with rats. The streets are also oppressive, they are crowded at all times, controlled by telescreens and used to parade the prisoners, to expose them to public hatred and abuse. Even the symbolic paper weight with the coral that represents far away places, the ocean, freedom, is enclosed in the glass case as in a tomb. "We are the dead", Winston repeats over and over during the novel. the only open spaces presented are: the lyrical scene in the woods, when the bird sings during Julia and Winston's first meeting, and in Winston's dreams.

To explain his ideas the author uses the chapters of the prohibited book, read by Winston in the rented room. The world of dreams and the flash backs are tools to reconstruct Winston's life. Newspaper articles and broadcasted news are also a way to develop the plot.

Descriptions are presented with a lot of sensorial effects (visual images, odors, sounds) specially in the third part when the methods of brain-washing and brutal torture that take place in the Ministry of Love are described.

Contrast is used to emphasize the difference in living conditions between the prole and the party members and between the outer party and inner party members.

Irony is constantly present specially in unfolding the ideological background of Oceania.

## II- Main characters

### BRAVE NEW WORLD

Persons in this world are determined by a modern fertilizing process and are created either intelligent or half moron. Their function in society depends on their physical and mental characteristics and they are exposed since birth to constant conditioning. In chapter 2, we are spectators of a Neo Pavlovian conditioning experiment that takes place in the Infant Nursery. Through the use of electric shocks infants are conditioned to hate books and flowers.

It is difficult to study characterization in this novel because characters are like robots.

### BERNARD

He is different, since chapter 3 we know that he is not a conformist. Talking about Bernard, Fanny says to Lenina, "They say he doesn't like Obstacle Golf... And then he spends most of his time by himself, alone".<sup>1</sup>

When he was with this friend Helmholtz, the narrator says, "what the two men shared was the knowledge that they were individuals".<sup>2</sup>

There is something wrong in Bernard. Being an alpha plus, he is not tall enough. Fanny tells why, "they say somebody made a mistake when he was still in the bottle-thought he was a gamma and put alcohol into his blood surrogate".<sup>3</sup>

His importance in the novel is that he is the one who brings the Savage to the Brave New World. Fearing punishment for his unorthodoxy, Bernard plans a way out. By ridiculing the director (John's father) and exposing his old affair with Linda, he thinks he is going to be saved.

### LENINA

Women in this novel are not important. Lenina is a product of the new world. She prefers, though, men that are different; in that way she is individualistic also. She likes Bernard and afterwards desires John. Her relationship with men is only sexual, Bernard compares her with something inanimated that can fulfill a material desire, "she is like meat".<sup>4</sup>

John who knows what love is, can't accept Lenina's way. The love scene in chapter 13, ends up with John rejecting Lenina's sexual advances. Afterwards while she is dressing up, he receives a call and knows that his mother is dead. Life ended in that chapter. The loss of lover and mother prepare the way to the final episodes.

### THE SAVAGE

Huxley presents a sharp contrast between the civilized people in London and the Indians in Malpais. John was not artificially created; Linda, his mother, was part of the new world and used to tell her son about it. He was born and raised in Malpais so by habits and inclinations he was part of the Indian culture. Through the reading of Shakespeare's works, he believes in love, art and spiritual love.

Classical books are not available in the Brave New World. A few are kept in Mustapha Mond's safe.

The idea that literature can save man by keeping alive the ideals of free will, love, heroism and many values, is conveyed specially in the dialogue between John and Mustapha in chapter 17.

The highest authority of this world ironically is the only person who can understand the Savage. He knows the past ideals, but he prefers to sacrifice them in order to obtain social stability.

John arguing with him said,  
----- "But I don't want comfort  
I want God. I want poetry, I want real danger.  
I want freedom, I want goodness. I want sin"

"In fact" said mustapha Mond,  
"You're claiming the right to be unhappy".

“All right then”, said the savage, defiantly,  
“I’m claiming the right to be unhappy”.<sup>5</sup>

Mustapha wins, because the Savage in what reminds us of a ritualistic sacrifice, kills himself.

John is like a lovely stranger in front of an unsympathetic audience. Since his arrival he has been the object of curiosity, like the big ape one goes to watch in the zoo. Huxley in the prologue to the 1946 edition says that if he would rewrite the book he would consider another alternating concerning John’s destiny.

“If I were now to rewrite the book, I would offer the Savage a third alternative. Between the utopian and the primitive horns of his dilemma would lie the possibility of sanity - a possibility already actualized, to some extent, in a community of exiles and refugees from the Brave New World, living within the borders of the Reservation”.

1984

## WINSTON

Winston Smith is a party member, but he is a man who wants to maintain certain beliefs. In a system that forbids the smallest deviation of opinion in its members, he is doomed. His defiance toward the system materializes first in the diary, later in his love affair with Julia and afterwards in joining the Brotherhood.

Because he works in the Records Departments, he knows how history has been altered. How was life before? This quest takes him to the prole section to Julia and fatally to O’Brien. He is not an intellectual like John, the Savage, but he deals with the written word. He wants to reconstruct the past. He never obtained answers because his deviations were erased through physical and mental tortures.

Jenni Calder says about Orwell’s purpose,

“He has to show us that the will, the mind and the body can all be destroyed without destroying life itself, and he has to show us also that the victim co-operates with his persecutors, that the degradation is in a sense, voluntary”.<sup>7</sup>

I don’t agree with Ms. Calder’s point of view; man under brain washing torture is unable to act freely. Winston’s degradation is not voluntary, it is forced upon him and he fights till the very end. That is why the last scene of the book is such a blow.

Winston hates Big Brother and the Party so much, that in order to destroy them he is ready to do horrible things; in this way I see human nature degraded,

“to fight evil, one must be evil” makes resistance as terrible and unjust as the establishment. For instance, when he has the secret interview with O’Brien he answers “yes” to questions like,

“You are prepared to commit murder?”... “To commit acts of sabotage which may cause the death of hundreds of innocent people?... If, for example, it would somehow serve our interest to throw sulphuric acid in a child’s face are you prepared to do that?”<sup>8</sup>

## JULIA

Julia, as Lenina, is necessary in the novel to point out the importance of the relationship between the sexes. This character is not developed, we know very little about her, and after her arrest practically disappears. Our last glimpse of her reinforces that vagueness, she is lost in the crowd.

She works on the novel writing machines and once worked in Pornosec. She hates women and thinks that children are swine. Although physically she is attractive, her lack of tenderness makes her repulsive.

Her rebellion is not ideological, she doesn’t pay attention to Winston when he is reading aloud the secret book, but she enjoys the dangerous game of having affairs with the men she likes. As Winston affirms “You’re only a rebel from the waist downwards”.<sup>9</sup>

## O’BRIEN

O’Brien is a member of the inner party. His relationship toward Winston is similar to a cat chasing a mouse. He enjoyed every minute of the long drama of “rehabilitation”. He knew everything, even the most secret thoughts of the rebel mind.

Sure of himself, as the spider lures the fly to its web, he catches Winston and erases the slightest sign of rebellion from that tortured mind. When the rebel claimed his superiority, O’Brien showed his image in the mirror. Afterwards the brutal man said,

You are rotting away, you are falling to pieces. What are you? A bag of filth. Now turn around and look into that mirror again. Do you see that thing facing you? That is the last man. If you are human, that is humanity. Now put your clothes on again.<sup>10</sup>

## BIG BROTHER

Is the guise in which the Party chooses to exhibit itself to the world. His function is to act as a focusing point for love, fear and reverence, emotions which

are more easily felt toward an individual than toward an organization. Nobody has ever seen B.B. He is a voice on the telescreen. We may be reasonably sure that he will never die.

He is the essence of tryanny.

### CONCLUSION

Some of the scientific advances that Huxley presented are true in our days, for example: new birth control methods (the pill), test-tube babies, genetic experimentation to extend youth, monuclear reproduction (cloning), etc.

Some of Orwell's predictions are a reality. The world tends to divide itself in three main powers, famine and war are ghosts that torment man newspeak is becoming more and more in use, mental torture has become a tool to control men's will.

We can sum up the causes of men's unhappiness that appear in both novels and are present in our days:

- Technology
- Drugs
- Indoctrination
- Loss of individuality
- Lack of family life
- Lack of love
- Lack of religion
- Control of literature
- Tyrannical governments

Many movie pictures are projecting us into the future, in all the films we can hear echoes of Huxley and Orwell. Similar to the ancient oracles what they predicted long ago it's happening.

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p. 30.  
<sup>2</sup>*Ibid*, p. 45.  
<sup>3</sup>*Ibid*, p. 31.  
<sup>4</sup>*Ibid*, p. 62.  
<sup>5</sup>*Ibid*, p. 163.  
<sup>6</sup>*Ibid*, p. VIII.  
<sup>7</sup>Jenni Calder, *Huxley and Orwell*. Studies in English Literature, (London: E. Arnold, 1976), p. 24.

<sup>8</sup>George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1949), p. 173.  
<sup>9</sup>*Ibid*, p. 157.  
<sup>10</sup>*Ibid*, p. 275.

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