

Brave new world and 1984 by george orwell: an analysis of the inferiority of wome...

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Expendable or Indispensable?

“ You’re nothing more than a dishwasher, a cook, and caretaker.” Subjected to conventional domestic duties, women before the 1920s were not granted freedom in exercising rights given to their male counterparts.. Thought of only as mothers, it was not until they were granted suffrage that women were able to display their significance and influence to their societies. Similarly, the dystopian novels that are meant to predict our irreversible future reflect the moral conduct of the past. In Brave New World by Aldous Huxley, women are not equal to men due to their diminishing importance in society. Similarly, 1984 by George Orwell presents women as inferior individuals, generally stymied by the stereotypes which make them essential members of society. In both dystopian novels, gender inequality exists due to the sexual objectification and cliched roles of women in each society, compared to the esteemed, authoritative figures of men.

The women in the novels are presented as subordinate to men and are given little regard in societal matters. The women are the providers, while the men consume what the females have to offer. According to M. Keith Booker of DePauw University,

Concerned with the clash between individual desire and societal demand, dystopian fiction often focuses on sexuality and relations between the genders as elements of this conflict...Brave New World, and 1984 all focus on sexuality as a crucial matter for their efforts at social control. And it is also clear that this focus comes about largely because of a perception on the part

of these governments that sexuality is a potential locus of powerful subversive energies. (Booker)

Sex is either advocated or deprived from the citizens at the cost of women; to control the society and prevent emotional connection between human beings. In Brave New World, women are held to a promiscuous standard and are used by men to maintain superficial happiness, ridding of the traditional binding love in a relationship. When Lenina explains that she has been with Henry for four months, her friend Fanny scorns, " It's such horribly bad form to go on and on like this with one man" (Huxley 41). The values of society are injected into women, who are chastised for staying with one partner, while males are free to socialize with whomever they please. The male-dominated government is able to control the women's views on sexuality, therefore commanding utter control in the World State, just as Booker explains in her article that sexuality is a controlling factor. Similarly, in 1984, loveless marriages are forced upon society and are the sole technique to produce more loyal, brainwashed party members. When Winston is dreaming about the past, he remembers, " The only recognized purpose of marriage was to beget children for the service of the Party" (Orwell 65). When that duty becomes an impossible endeavor, Winston's relation to Katharine is otherwise pointless, as they share no friendship or love, so they separate. Both novels imply that if each society did manipulate sexuality to control their population, women would hold insignificant roles and not benefit society in any way, and men would be able to run their world independently. However, while Brave New World outlines their decreasing importance to

society in comparison to the rising male authority, 1984 uses women to show how strong the male leadership of the government is.

Where the word “mother” sparks reactions shock and controversy, the word “father” elicits no response in Brave New World. The elimination of biological mothers produces a world which only looks at women for expendable pleasures. For instance, when the Director of Hatcheries and Conditioning is distinguishing between how male and female reproductive cells are maintained in the incubator, to an all-male tour group, he points out, “ ‘The week’s supply of ova [is] kept’...’ at blood heat; whereas the male gametes,’ and here he opened another door, ‘they have to be kept at thirty-five instead of thirty-seven. Full blood heat sterilizes.’ (Huxley 5).

Whereas men are given freedom to keep their genes, and therefore biological and future identity, women’s ova are purposefully sterilized to prevent their passage to further generations, perhaps through accidental pregnancies. The women’s power to produce life, the most organic and natural instinct for a women, is completely eliminated, making their ancient societal role abate and their current importance dwindle. Furthermore, their objectification is further amplified when, in reference to Lenina’s body, Bernard notes, “I should say she was pretty...pneumatic too!” (Huxley 60).

This blunt characteristic that Bernard attributes to Lenina mirrors some consistencies of the current society of America, where looks can often be more important than personality for some individuals. Rather than learn more about Lenina and form a connection, which is shown to make the society “unstable,” Bernard uses a superficial, sexualized term to describe

her features. Also, the citizens have soma to keep them happy, and do not need rebellious pleasures like in 1984, so women are therefore even more “disposable”. By teaching future generations that women are physically and emotionally inferior to men, individuals in the society such as the D. H. C. and Bernard, make the two genders unequal.

In 1984, women are dominated by the stereotypes placed upon them. Although the term “mother” applies very loosely to some of the females in society, women are expected to follow their husbands or the higher power that is held by men, making them appear dependent and vulnerable. For instance, Winston’s ex-wife Katharine claimed that they had sex as “their duty to the Party”. In Oceania, sex is ostracized as a pleasure and functions only as a way to further the success of the Party and the rule of Big Brother. Katharine’s only way to contribute to the party was to create a child, and when she was unable to do that with Winston, she left. Whereas in Brave New World, the citizens of World State are able to use soma to escape sadness and other negative feelings, in Oceania, the members are not given such an option. Instead, they find such escape in women like Julia, who are a rare type, and dare to rebel against the government with its own Party members. Whereas in the World State, to rebel is to have one partner and abstain from sex, in Oceania, it is quite the opposite. The essential role of women to continue the legacy of Big Brother contrasts with the World State’s eradication of mothers and natural births. Without the mothers and rebels, Oceania would have no new party members to brain wash or any way for frustration and anger to be released, benefitting the males of society. The

stereotypical role of the women allow the men to rise to a higher position in the Inner Party and gain even more control.

Gender inequality is heavily present in modern day America, and even more so in fictional dystopian novels. Characters such as Julia and Lenina are used by their government and by other citizens at the cost of their dignity and morality. However, by showing females as the inferiors in Brave New World and 1984, authors such as Huxley and Orwell inevitably predict the role of women in our future. The growing sexualization and stereotyping that was present in America's past is very likely to cycle into the future if our society develops towards a dystopian model, made evident by Booker's claim that "sexuality is a potential locus of powerful subversive energies" for those types of government (Booker). A society which manipulates the birth-given characteristics and advocates the constant subversion of one gender will inevitably create a society built upon gender inequality.