
Romance as a Survival technique in dystopian literature

To a certain extent, Orwell harnesses Winston and Julia's romantic relationship as the antidote to their oppression. Not only is it the ultimate transgression due to the fact they care about one another more than the state and for a brief time develop a life outside of the party, but it also allows Winston to retrieve his humanity. Additionally, the very fact the Party places so much emphasis on abolishing human affection, sexual drive and natural love indicates that love is a threat and a potential solution to fighting the oppression of totalitarian regimes. However, the authenticity of Julia's love for Winston is made ambiguous by Orwell and this, coupled with the fact their relationship ultimately acts as a step towards their individual torture, therefore introduces doubt as to whether romantic love really is the weapon that can fight the authoritarian subjugation that Winston and Julia endure.

Winston's transformation and character development over the course of the novel provides evidence for this interpretation of love as an antidote. For instance, prior to meeting Julia, at the end of the first chapter, 'his face, from long habit, was probably expressionless'. Orwell, through the use of the adjective 'expressionless' and the further addition of 'long habit' which indicates the permanence of his vacant manner, encourages us to view Winston as entirely drained of all natural emotion. We can infer that Winston has perhaps lost the ability to feel distinct positive or negative emotions because everyday is the same and he has no close relationships to inflict disappointment or contentment. He has essentially forgotten what it is like to genuinely 'feel'. However, following his initial confrontation with Julia where she passes him a love note, Winston 'felt as though a fire was burning in his belly'.

Not only does 'fire' hold positive connotations of light and therefore optimism, but Orwell's placement of the feeling in the 'belly' makes this a common sensation that many of his readers would be familiar with, thus making Winston relatable and even more human. Additionally, later on in the novel he describes how the 'coral was Julia's life and his own fixed in a sort of eternity in the heart of the crystal'. Here we see Winston recognize the importance of his own fulfillment and happiness (evidence of him rediscovering his humanity) and also directly reject the Party's attempts to deprive him of love towards other human beings. For instance, due to this description, the coral becomes a projection of their desired utopia and we recognise Winston's consequent comfort and security in his relationship. Comparing this to Orwell's portrayal of Winston before Julia, we understand that this is a feeling that the Party cannot provide and can therefore appreciate the extent to which love induces humanity and emotional connection, which, regardless of the circumstances, will always be progressive tools to fight against oppression. Just as critic Herbert Read stated, 'in the love of an individual of the opposite sex the most oppressed slave can escape to a free world'

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In line with practices used in Nazi Germany where the main aim was to increase the population of the country, the Party prohibits pleasure driven sex and argues that it is instead one's 'duty to the Party' in order to ensure a steady population of supporters. For instance, the existence of the 'Junior Anti-Sex League' suggests that the Party places a significant portion of attention on reducing the possibility of affectionate, loving relationships emerging between two people. As Julia outlines, there are 'sex talks once a month for the over-sixteens', implying there is an organised, regular reminder to all citizens that intimacy is prohibited. To reinforce this, she states how 'they rub it into you for years', with the verb 'rub' suggesting that their methods are forceful and intrusive and 'for years' indicating that the process is effective. Furthermore, the Party limit romantic, intimate relationships and instead manufacture cold, unfeeling relationships to take their place. For instance, Winston describes his and Katherine's sex as a 'frigid little ceremony'.

The use of the noun 'ceremony' suggests there is something to be celebrated about it, contributing to the fact it is a 'duty' and can consequently strengthen both the Party itself and their sense of their own orthodoxy. Additionally, 'ceremony' also has ritualistic connotations which removes all intimacy from the act and makes it a part of the Party's protocol. Through this Orwell essentially communicates that the Party blocks all natural drive and instead builds up a store of violent emotion that can be utilized in different ways to benefit the Party. We can therefore understand that this emphasis placed on the prohibition of affection is evidence for the power and ability of romance and love to surpass totalitarian regimes because otherwise, the Party wouldn't try so hard to restrict it.

However, it is possible that, due to the fact that their relationship ends in betrayal, the Party orchestrated the entire love relationship between Winston and Julia and allowed their love to develop only so it could be crushed. The fact that their relationship seamlessly progresses from a strong hatred, to a fulfilling romance and then to indifference ('you do not feel the same') represents how romance in a dystopia is unrealistic and will simply result in heightened suffering. For instance, if we compare Winston's state just after his first confrontation with Julia where he felt as though a 'fire was burning in his belly' to the fact 'his flesh froze with horror' at the thought of having sex with Julia at the end of the novel, Winston's regression is clear.

The juxtaposition between imagery that evokes warmth and imagery that evokes coldness illustrates not only Winston's return to his former, vacant self, but also an extended 'frozen' state where his entire existence is controlled by the Party. Furthermore, the fact that the Party intervene when their relationship is at its peak, with both Winston and Julia clearly comfortable, despite knowing about it from their visit to O'Brien's house, suggests that they could have just intervened at any point and perhaps let it happen only so they could harness their love for each other into eventual love for Big Brother ('he loved Big Brother'). Consequently, according to this interpretation, love is only a temporary antidote to the oppression of totalitarian

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governments, it is not a remedy. We could assume Orwell's idea of harnessing love stems from Stalin's use of love and admiration as a political tool. For instance, Stalin built up his love with the cult of personality, glorified with giant statues and monuments.

Furthermore, as critic John Strachey proposes, 'Julia just wants some hearty sex' and does not have a genuine loving bond with Winston. After all, 1984 is from Winston's point of view and we're consequently unaware of what love means to her and whether she's even capable of it. We could therefore assume that Winston and Julia were merely excited by the thrill they got from working against the party together and declaring that they were in love was just another way to foster that rebellion. For instance, when Winston asks Julia what attracted her to him, she states 'as soon as I saw you I knew you were against them'.

This illustrates how her initial appeal to him stemmed from his rebellious air, rather than a more meaningful, emotive quality. In addition, Julia repeatedly uses 'dear' when speaking to Winston. Although affectionate, it's excessive use removes this intimacy and instead implies that it's perhaps something she's heard and is using to put on a front of fondness. However, regardless of these examples, Julia states at the end of the novel : 'you don't feel the same towards the other person any longer' which signals at a former genuine affection for Winston. Equally, under a totalitarian regime it is likely that any signs of hope or rebellion will be attractive, hence Julia's initial interest in Winston. Furthermore, Julia has had 'many sexual partners', but the Party only fights against her relationship with Winston. This could be because this is the only one she becomes emotionally invested, and so the party takes notice since it is from love they take most offence.

In conclusion, for a stable totalitarian society, love between two individuals is eliminated because only a love for the Party's leader can exist. For that reason, the Party places emphasis on restricting romantic relationships and characterize sexual intimacy solely as a 'duty', making it devoid of any nurturing function. However, in 1984, Winston and Julia's relationship does bypass these restrictions and even though short-lived, it does provide both of them with a supportive outlet where they can speak openly about their feelings. This security and comfort that they both acquire within their relationship even translates to their physical health with Winston even 'growing fatter' as a result. This emotional and physical relief both characters experience coupled with their eventual betrayal of one another therefore leads us to understand romantic love as a temporary antidote to the oppression of a totalitarian regime.

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