



Inter-Sectional Treatment of Gender and Sexuality in Dystopian Fiction

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Abstract

The term 'Dystopia' is an outcome of writers' imaginative formation, envisioning a society where humans live contentedly with upright ethics and values. Dystopian fiction often explores social concerns like class, prejudice, poverty, violence, gender discrimination, rising criminality etc. D.H. Lawrence, James Joyce, Virginal Woolf along with Aldous Huxley can be identified as the chief exponents of the genre in real terms in the vicinity of English literature. D.H. Lawrence, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and Aldous Huxley are prominent authors who explored these themes in their works. Lawrence's novels, like Sons and Lovers and Women in Love, critique the dehumanizing effects of industrialization and mechanization. Joyce's Dubliners and Ulysses portray the struggles of women and the constraints of societal expectations.

Gender and Sexuality in Dystopian Fiction

Dystopia is the opposite of utopia: a state in which the conditions of human life are extremely bad as from deprivation or oppression or terror (or all three). A dystopian society is characterized by human misery in the form of squalor, oppression, disease, overcrowding, environmental destruction, or war. Dystopian fiction worlds tend to contain many of the same narrative features. Common elements of dystopian fiction include societies engaged in forever wars, and characterized by extreme social and economic class divides, mass poverty, environmental devastation, anarchy, and loss of individuality.

Herbert George Wells, an English man is famous today for his science fiction. In his popular fiction *The Time Traveller* his main character steps into the future, perceiving things moving in swiftly all over the place around him. He also conjectures that intelligence helixes from necessity; with no contests facing the Eloi, they delegated into feeble and guileless mortals with little idea of the world in their vicinity. Coming back to the place from where he had started the Traveller finds his machine missing. He is self-assured that it at least has not travelled through time, as he had detached its levers. Afterwards, he bumps into the Morlocks, ape-like troglodytes who exist in darkness underground and come out only at night. Inferring that they have taken his time machine, he reconnoitres one of the many "wells" that take him to the Morlocks' settlements. He learns that they are managing the machinery that has the capacity to make the above-ground paradise of the Eloi. He learns that the Morlocks control and feed upon the Eloi. The Traveller conjectures that the human race has swerved into two species. They are the favoured aristocracy who have become the Eloi, and their mechanical servants are the Morlocks.



David Lawrence's work often surveys topics that reverberate with dystopian literature—particularly the dehumanizing effects of industrialization, along with the mechanization of humanity, and the suppression of natural instinct. His emphasis on social alienation and "savage pilgrimage" away from modern civilization underlines hopelessness of the early 20th-century society. His writings elucidate modernity, social alienation and industrialisation, while championing sexuality, vitality and instinct. Four of his most famous novels – *Sons and Lovers* (1913), *The Rainbow* (1915), *Women in Love* (1920), and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) – faced censorship checks for their pervasive portrayals of romance, sexuality and use of explicit language. Lawrence had been to Fiascherino, on the Gulf of Spezia on vacation. After his return to Italy, staying in a cottage in Fiascherino, Lawrence attempted the first draft of what would later be transformed into two of his best-known novels, *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*. In these literary works, unconventional female characters take centre stage. Both novels were accused of being highly vulgar. For this they were banned on publication in the UK. However, *Women in Love* was banned only temporarily.

A Woman in Love probes into the complex relationships between four major characters, including Ursula of *The Rainbow* and her sister Gudrun. Both novels deal with the imposing subjects and views that confront orthodox matters on the arts, politics, economic growth, gender, sexual experience, friendship, and marriage. Lawrence's opinions as broached in the fictions are now thought to be way ahead of his time. The candid and relatively forthright manner in which he concluded that sexual attraction was apparently why the books were banned, in particular the mention of same-sex attraction; Ursula has an affair with a woman in *The Rainbow*, and there is an undercurrent of attraction between the two principal male characters in *Women in Love*. While working on *Women in Love* in Cornwall during 1916–17, Lawrence developed a strong relationship with a Cornish farmer named William Henry Hocking, which some scholars believe was possibly romantic, especially considering Lawrence's fascination with the theme of homosexuality in *Women in Love*. Although Lawrence never made it clear whether their relationship was sexual, Frieda believed it was. In a 1913 letter, he writes, "I should like to know why nearly every man that approaches greatness tends to homosexuality, whether he admits it or not...." He is also quoted as saying, "I believe the nearest I've come to perfect love was with a young coal-miner when I was about 16". However, given his enduring and robust relationship with Frieda, it is likely that he was primarily what might be termed today bi-curious, and whether he actually ever had homosexual relations remains an open question.

James Joyce in his book '*Dubliners*' describes how life is. In '*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*' he started a new style, called *stream of consciousness*, which is writing all the thoughts that a character has. His work portray sexuality, fidelity, discrimination, extra-marital love affair, farming babies...etc. *Dubliners* (1914), *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), *Ulysses* (1922), *Finnegans Wake* (1939)...are remarkable works present gallery of picturisation of womanhood degradation. See the follow lines-



“I was a Flower of the mountain yes when I put the rose in my hair like the Andalusian girls used or shall I wear a red yes and how he kissed me under the Moorish wall and I thought well as well him as another and then I asked him with my eyes to ask again yes and then he asked me would I yes to say yes my mountain flower and first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes.”
— James Joyce, Ulysses

Virginia Woolf in his most famous characters *Clarissa Dalloway* goes around London in the morning, getting ready to host a party that evening. The nice day reminds her of her youth spent in the countryside in Burton and makes her wonder about her choice of husband; she had married the reliable, successful, Richard Dalloway instead of the enigmatic and demanding Peter Walsh. She "had not the option" to be with a female romantic interest, Sally Seton. Peter reintroduces these conflicts by paying a visit that morning. Peter's visit made it clear that he was still in love with Clarissa (despite mention of his new love interest, Daisy), and Clarissa expressed her desire for Peter to take her away. Clarissa additionally invites Peter to her party that evening.

Huxley wrote novels like *Brave New World*, *Point Counterpoint*, *Antic Hay*, *Chrome Yellow*, *Island*, *After Many Summer Dies the Swan*, *Brave New World Revisited*, *Those Barren Leaves*, *Mortal Coils*, *Eyeless in Gaza* and *Texts and Pretexts*. The themes of his novels suggest that Huxley was deeply concerned about occurring changes in the western civilization that made him write about the serious threats of technological progress. Huxley's description of a society in the novel *Brave New World* is based on the process of mass production, exploitation of sexual affection, and the consumption of drugs which produce emotionless lives. All through the novel, mass production comes simultaneously with mass manipulation. These events of manipulating masses turn people into apathetic animals who eventually lose their sense of individuality. The World State, as presented in the novel and its citizens appear bizarre, scandalous and cruel. The Director explains the process of artificial fertilization and incubation of human babies. "Bokanovskification" procedure is adopted for the making of vast number of identical twins while rapid maturation of human ovaries is achieved by "Podsnap's Technique". The Director also explains the aims and principles of the society which leads to scientific progress.

It is observed that Huxley, in his writings hardly finds sex and love mysterious or worth worship. Right from his first novel *Chrome Yellow* to the last, *Island*, sexual relationships and behaviour never carry and value. In all of his novels there is not a single depiction of a love affair being consummated satisfyingly. The Presentations of marital and extra-marital relations lead to agony and frustration. Only a few exceptions to this observation are some tailor-made happy marriages in *Island*. In *Point Counter Point*, Walter Bidlake is tortured and humiliated by Lucy Tantamount, his mistress by writing to him about her other love affairs on the tour to Paris. Reacting to writing, Walter buries his head in frustration. This is another example of love affair causing affliction to the male characters.



It is also significantly noted in Huxley's novels that women have a greater share in the degeneration of society. Female characters such as Mary in *Chrome Yellow*, Lucy Tantamount in *Point Courter point*. Lenina Crowne in *Brave New World* and Virginia in *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan* exemplify the female characters lacking in morality and ethics. They are depicted as the characters insensitive to emotional aspect of love failing to recognize and understand genuine cravings of their lovers for emotional satisfaction. Lenina in *Brave New World* is an example of this preoccupation with physical lust as she cannot realize the state of minds of the savage and Bernard Marx as she finds them hesitant in making love caring for their unethical behaviour, quite unlikely of the other men in the world state. As regards relation between men and women in Huxley's world state in terms of normal interactions, when the students are assigned to undertake Hatchery tour by their director, it is immediately understood that all the students are boys which indicate the inferior status of women in the society. The second instance, when foetuses of women are sterilized to retain the state's control over reproduction, none of the male futures are tempered with giving clear evidence of male dominance in the world state. The system of the Malthusian belt containing regulation contraceptives is another example of burden placed on women to prevent Pregnancies. In sexual relations, however, both male and female are equally promiscuous and free to hold physical contacts. Margaret Atwood is well known for her dystopian novel *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), set in New England in the near future and positing a Christian fundamentalist theocratic rule in the former United States that developed in reaction to a fertility crisis.

Conclusion

Dystopian fiction serves as a warning, highlighting the dangers of societal control & exploitation. The portrayal of gender & sexuality in these works critiques sexual relationships, and reproductive rights are rigidly controlled, highlighting underlying political and societal concerns. This study uses a feminist interpretation to demonstrate that the control of gender and sexuality is a crucial tool of power in narratives. As *The Handmaid's Tale* criticizes women's captivity under religious and patriarchal regimes, *Brave New World* depicts a future in which the state utilizes sexual freedom as a means of societal control. Herbert Wells well known for his science fiction *The Time Traveller* goes into the future, somehow dystopian succeeded to portray a futuristic society that has an alarming effect of dehumanization. This occurs through the absence of spirituality, obsession with physical pleasure and the misuse of technology.

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