

Class 11 VCE comparing texts: Nineteen Eighty-Four – the film (1984). Dir: Michael Radford

PART 2 of 3: Notes, Quotes and Questions

Firstly, some alterations to last week's notes:

- I think the woman being eaten by the rats in the memory was actually Winston's mother (on closer look it wasn't the prostitute... at least I don't think so!).
- When Winston is at his job 're-writing history' – what is important about this, is that the pictures Winston had of the people he was 'editing' – showed them to be war heroes; he had actual **physical proof** that what he (on behalf of the party) was doing, was 'wrong' – physical proof is so important, because it is very hard to be certain of anything in this world, as 'truth' is constantly being redefined.

Otherwise someone in Winston's position would not 'know' this stuff – he would just follow orders and re-write documents (kind of like the citizens in BNW – not knowing what the Controllers know).

So for Winston this is very important – as it actual physical proof that he is not going mad: (e.g. that chocolate rations do not somehow 'go up' every week, and many other examples that will occur).

This makes him **different** to those around him: he is 'aware' of the lies that the State are making up, whereas everyone else is so afraid that they have brainwashed themselves into 'believing the hype' (it's both similar and different to BNW – for me, there is more fragility in the system of 1984 – because the fear that people feel causes them to repress knowledge they have, but it is not going away – it is still there lurking, waiting for the right spark. This is what Huxley also believed.)

SCENE 14/15: Julia 'bangs' into Winston / "I love you"

Note that "love" is here introduced as a theme, for the first time.

Note the power of the three words "I love you" and their effect on Winston; where before he was suspicious of Julia, now he trusts her to an extent that puts his life immediately into jeopardy.

Also note: That Winston believes Julia apparently works in the "porno" section of the Ministry for Truth, writing trashy literature for the proles (lower classes). **Comparison** The word "porno" is probably ironic (like BNW and "mother") and that pornography probably consists of writing cheap novels/stories that are just propaganda dressed up as 'real' stories (and without any sex in them at all, one would presume, but their version of 'romance').

Symbol & Comparison: the two hands holding hands (shaking) on the INGSOC sign are one white and one black suggesting that this is a racially inclusive society (because *everyone* is afraid of *everyone*!) – this is a similarity between 1984 and BNW – which also has eliminated racism (although not xenophobia!). That being said, I see no black characters in the film...

SCENE 16: The 'Announcement'

In Parson's apartment while Winston fixes the sink: the 'news' claims that they have just won the war against "Eurasia" (Western Europe and Asia, we guess?) – *remember this!*

Director's View: Note the way the children are kept inside "haven't been out much" and instead are entertained by a massive telescreen blasting propaganda.

This could be the director's own view on the dangers of television, and how they are used often as surrogate parents for children, which does untold damage (conditions them).

Interestingly, television as we know it had only been introduced the year before (1947-7 the first mass-produced tv's were made available for public consumption), so Orwell (with the help of Radcliffe) seems to have prophesied (made a prophecy) about the future influence of television.

SCENE 17: Parading the war-criminals

First, watch the following video (it's only short, and well worth it):

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2228597377233304>

Or if you don't have facebook, you can watch a different one on YouTube that's pretty funny/scary (although this one's been artificially made), but which makes the same point:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INwSDY6jYI>

Now...

Some notes:

- Big Brother – like most good dictators, is aware of the power of *directed* hate; channel the unrest and anger the people feel, and redirect it against an enemy. This is why they parade the enemies and shoot them in front of the people. It is an ugly side of humanity, but one that has existed, in certain cultures and epochs, throughout history. We can see this in the way the people are cheering and 'baying for blood' – and it is the same reason public executions have attracted large crowds throughout history (though much smaller now, thankfully! We're on the right path!).

This is why Big Brother organises the "Two Minutes of Hate" each day and why they are preparing for the upcoming "Hate Week" (a week dedicated to hating their enemies, with lots of them executed no doubt...?).

It is also why Big Brother invents Emmanuel Goldstein – *there is no revolution* (at least of which we are aware) – to attract other likeminded insurrectionists (potential revolutionaries), but also to create a figure to channel people's hatred towards.

If they are to succeed in banning the orgasm and sex unless strictly for procreation, then they will need to have a lot more Hate Weeks and a lot more public killings to channel people's sexual energies into a different outlet. How long would this last?

- **Important:** Radcliffe makes sure to show viewers the faces of the criminals (who look remarkably like the faces in the crowd!), in order to **humanise** them, and so influence viewers to feel disgusted by the event (therefore, this is a concern/belief of the director).

Key consideration: also: while the crowd are cheering and chanting, not *all* of the faces in the crowd seem to be 'enjoying' the spectacle. This is important, and **is an affirming view of humanity** to balance the vast negativity. It shows that the system of Big Brother **has not fully conditioned its people** (yet) – although we do wonder that, given more time, and if Newspeak is successful and the English language is reduced to a few hundred words by 2050 – then how successful, ultimately, will it become?

Julia finds Winston in the crowd and slips him another note, organising their secret rendezvous in the country.

Thinking question: what would you do? Follow on the promise of three words, or protect yourself?

SCENE 18: waiting for the train

A very short scene.

18.1 Why does the stranger ask him "on your own brother?" Describe *how* he asks him, and what might be behind the question.

Extension 18.1: what does Winston's response reveal?

SCENE 19: on the train

19.1 Comment on the juxtaposition/contrast of the two types of passengers on the train.

What might the elderly be thinking?

Why has the director created this clear contrast?

Extension 19.1: what is the impact of the children singing such propagandist rubbish? How might it intend to make viewers feel?

SCENE 20: getting busy in the woods

20.1 When Julia tells Winston (without any shame or regret) that she has "done this before... hundreds of times" does it change your view of Julia? Does it undermine the importance of the three words she wrote to Winston?

Note: the highly stylised start to the love-scene, with Julia suddenly back on the meadow, undressing herself as she walks into the woods... It breaks the 'realism' of the scene – perhaps to show the artificiality of what they're doing – that it's a pale imitation of true love.

20.2 *hard question – just do your best.*

After coitus, as Winston lies naked staring at Julia, he is visited by another childhood memory, of walking through the rubble, and then being guided by O'Brien out a hallway and into the meadow "we shall meet in the place where there is no darkness" – his past, and his future, seem to merge into one.

considering my notes from earlier questions: What is all this about? Your interpretation, please.

SCENE 21: back to banning the orgasm

21. 1 Compare how Big Brother conditions its people to accept why abolishing the orgasm is a good thing – by telling them directly, and using logic and reason to argue that this is an “orthodox” way of behaving, with how the World Controllers of BNW also condition their people not by lying, but by making them see the logic in following ‘orthodox’ or, rather, *not following unorthodox, behaviour*.

22.2 **Compare the similarity:** how and why (the theme of) family is shown to be dangerous to Big Brother, as it is to BNW.

Note: “Artsem” is Newspeak for Artificial Insemination – in other words, Big Brother is trying to move towards artificial insemination as a means of reproduction, rather than sex = **SIMILARITY** – it seems like this is (at least) one step that Big Brother has taken to creating a society more like the one described in BNW (makes you wonder if the world of BNW might have started in a similar way – with force and control, before modifying their approach...?)

Scene 22: with Charrington

Note that as Charrington sets Winston up – no doubt aware it will lead to his arrest and likely death, there seems to be a small look of... *something* on his face. It must be hard to be in a system like this – to feel like you have to sell-out others just so you can survive.

SCENE 23: in the bedroom

23.1 From where do you think Julia might have acquired such luxuries to eat? How might this position us to feel/think – either about Julia, or about the system itself?

Quote: Julia: “There nothing those bastards don’t have” – those bastards, we assume, are the members of the Inner Party.

23.2 After watching this scene – write a comparison between Winston and Julia – how similar are they? How different are they?

Consider Julia: “They captured India or something” (how political is she? Why is she a dissident/different? *How* is she a dissident/different?)

Versus Winston: whose issues with the system are more about truth, and are more politically motivated.

Important Symbol: the old-woman putting her clothes on the line, singing beautifully “**how could she make something written by a machine so beautiful**” this is a clue as to the values of the film: beauty through human creativity and human nature. (Also an interesting little connection to BNW.)

It is important to look for these little moments of beauty or hope in the film – as they are there – and otherwise, it becomes a very dark and troubling film altogether. **AND – they are good things to mention in an essay! Because they are little ‘however’s’ e.g. ‘the film portrays a dark and seemingly hopeless world, however...’**

SCENE 24: Winston writes in his diary

24.1 Record as a quote what Winston writes in his diary (= important quote)

This is important to Winston and makes a little **axiom** (something established to be truth) that becomes like a mantra to him. He is able to use this mantra to help himself cling to 'what is real' and hence remain sane, right up until near the end, where O'Brien is able to break him

SCENE 25: Winston back at work

25.1 PAUSE on 48:22 – on the newspaper – interesting:

- We learn that Syme is a world Chess champion who has just beaten an opponent (not sure who) – *do we believe this? Or is it more likely that Syme, who works as a writer on the newspeak dictionary and seems to be a well-connected party member, made this up? If so, why?*
- Have a look at the article written in Newspeak – how much of it can you understand??

I'm not entirely sure of everything in this scene. One thing I remembered is the importance of the little slip that Winston has kept – a record of an "UNPERSON"* - the one with Rutherford and others, and it shows how conscious and therefore concerned he is becoming by his realisation of the lies that surround him.

*basically, Winston's job is to 'unpeople' people from history, to go through all historical files and edit out any reference to a person. In this way, people's legacy cannot remain an influence to others – they are effectively re-writing history to suit their purposes; namely, so that people cannot learn the lessons from history that are so important in maintaining our own freedom!

This is both similar and slightly different to how BNW deals with history.

SCENE 26: Drinking gin in his pad

Note: the little figure he scratches off the label of his bottle of gin is one of the figures (Rutherford, maybe?) that he has had to help 'unperson' – the fact that he is such a famous person from the revolution (inner party member) that he is on their bottles, and yet he is still able to be re-written out of history and human consciousness, shows the audacity of Big Brother – but also the unnerving power and control they must have over their people in order to even consider being able to do this (make people forget such a famous person).

YET – this is what Stalin did (or attempted to do)! Stalin assassinated or accused most of his original inner party members, betraying them all, and then having mock trials in which they were forced to either admit to everything, or else were killed without confessing, and fake confessions were made-up. Stalin's power was absolute – and he ruled over Russia for 30+ years!

If this interests you, I HIGHLY recommend the novel 'Darkness at Noon' – which tells the (semi)fictional story of an inner-party member being betrayed by a Stalinist character known as "Number One" and faced with the option: to not submit and stay true to his ideals (and be tortured before being killed), or to 'confess' to all trumped-up charges, and so allow the 'revolution' (everything he believes in) to continue...

SCENE 27: Taking a stroll with O'Brien

27.1 In what ways is O'Brien different to the other characters we have met so far?

Extension 27.1 – in what ways is O'Brien similar to Mustapha Mond?

27.2 Despite looking different and obviously being wealthier, e.g. "my servant will show you in" – why do you think Winston is so easily persuaded by O'Brien?

Does it have anything to do with his newfound relationship with Julia... ??

SCENE 28: Winston writes in his diary again

Note: as Winston writes, and Ogilvy comes on the screen (one of the historical figures Winston was involved with editing), the background diegetic announces references the recent victory, but calls it a "glorious victory over the forces of East Asia"... rather than "Eurasia"... *the language is starting to be modified, incrementally...*

SCENE 29: Winston 'cuts' some soon to be (not) history

Editing: (linking from Scene 28) the very next shot shows Winston 'cutting' a newspaper article claiming "BB ANNOUNCES IMMINENT EURASIAN ATTACK NORTH AFRICAN FRONT"

Big Brother is carefully starting to erase any idea that Oceania was ever at war with Eurasia!

Why do they want the peace to forget they were ever at war with Eurasia...?

And is it even possible that after so many Hate Sessions that have been directed against this bitterest of enemies, that the people could forget such a thing? And so quickly??

What does this say about (the) people?

What does this say about how powerful is the control of Big Brother, that this may even be imaginably possible??

SCENE 30: Back in the bedroom

30.1 Why do you think the camera stays focussed on Julia's naked body (and not Winston's)?

Is it voyeuristic? Or objectifying? Or something else? Is it tasteful, or tasteless?

Why might the director have made this (very conscious) decision?

30.2 **Important symbol:** what is it about the paperweight that appeals to Winston? *Think what its symbolic value might be to Winston* (he kind of explains it)... he does, after all, spend \$4 on it – when it costs \$4 to rent a room for a week. Can you find any connections here to BNW?

Hint: the paperweight has a piece of coral contained within (a symbol of the natural world); it is one of the few things of beauty that exists in this world...

Extension 30.1: research (or remember) the poem/nursery rhyme "Oranges and Lemons" and see if you can work out what its connection might be to the film; to why both Julia and Winston remember it (without knowing what it is), and how this might function as a **symbol of hope** in an otherwise hopeless world.

In the play-version of 1984, Oranges and Lemons was a central motif; many of the characters went around whistling or humming it, in a very haunting way.

Note: how the director builds the tension and eventual tragedy of the narrative here, with Winston realising that “You know the only thing to do is to walk out of here before it’s too late. Never see one another again.” Julia “Yes.” Winston “Our luck can’t last”... and then (soon)... BANG – their luck runs out (oh cruel twist of fate).

Foreshadowing: Julia tells Winston “I’m good at staying alive” – suggesting that she does what she needs to survive, which foreshadows the fact that she ‘gives up’ Winston’ and her love for him (or before Winston does) under torture.

30.3 Do you think Julia really loves Winston? Why/why not? (*and do we REALLY believe that she has had sexual encounters “hundreds of times” in such an environment as this? Or did she perhaps tell Winston that for another reason...*)

Theme truth & reality: Winston asks Julia “Do you think the Resistance is real” (a plot to overthrow BB), to which she replies “No. None of it’s real.”

Is Julia much wiser than she lets on? Or is she making a grander claim about the nature of reality? Hmmmm.

SCENE 31: Bombs falling from the sky. Or are they?

Thinking question: What do you think: are the bomb attacks on London real? Are their enemy bombing them? Or is Big Brother letting off random terrorist attacks (or dropping their own bombs) relatively harmlessly on London, to keep the people in a constant state of fear, and with a consequent need to look to their leaders (BB) for safety and protection?

Considering they made up Emanuel Goldstein and the Resistance, would you put it past them?

Did you know that it is very rare that a political party is voted out during wartime? Makes you wonder why certain countries seem to be perpetually involved in one war or another...

SCENE 32: Back in the office

Note: how efficiently everyone is working now that there has been an attack... *makes you wonder...*

Important note: Winston, now clearly nerve-wrought and tired, talks into the microphone “Oceania is at war with East Asia”

What happened to Eurasia? Are they the same thing? Or has the “European” part of Eurasia suddenly switched allegiances?

And Winston again: “Oceania has always been at war with East Asia”... “Eurasia is our ally”

Is it possible that the ‘attack’ – which has so clearly made people overwrought and fearfully following their esteemed leader – is it possible that this was all a deliberate attack in order to make it easier for them to make people forget and believe that they have *always been at war*

with East Asia (and never Eurasia)! – it certainly seemed to work on Winston...

The plot thickens...

(Did someone mention 9-11 ?)

SCENE 33: Winston writes in diary

Quote: “Everything fades into mist. The past is erased. The erasure forgotten, the lie becomes truth and then becomes a lie again.”

SCENE 34: Surreal abstraction: “ROOM 101”

Winston seems to again ‘hallucinate’ or remember something from the future: the door to room 101 that opens up to a meadow (the meadow from his memory) and then merges to another childhood memory with his mother (note the contrast in colours!), and then we are back in the bedroom with Winston telling Julia...

SCENE 35: “I dreamt about my mother”

All very Freudian!

35.1 We now are told an important dream/memory from Winston’s childhood: Describe the dream/memory and give your best interpretation of it, and how it deepens into Winston’s character.

Note: this dream is very important, and gives a key memory from Winston’s childhood.

Consider: the guilt/shame associated with this memory (indeed, it seems to have been buried very deeply, and only his relationship with Julia has allowed him to access this deep and dark place within himself, hidden deep in his unconscious under layers of guilt and shame).

35.2 What is the significance of the rats (symbolic or otherwise)?

Key quote: (Winston to Julia)

“It’s not so much staying alive, it’s staying human that’s important... That’s why we mustn’t betray one another”.

35.3 Why is it so important to Winston that they don’t betray one another? (key idea).
(hint: if you keep listening, he elaborates...)

Key Idea: Winston’s experiences since starting his diary, including his relationship with Julia, have awakened his sense of humanity, and of being ‘alive’, in a more human capacity. In this way, symbolically, both the act of creative expression (writing) and of love, **are shown to be destabilising factors to totalitarian control**; or, another way to phrase it: love and creativity are shown to be uniquely human characteristics that cannot be controlled / resist control. (Or, try to phrase it your own way!)

35.4: Julia “They can’t do that” (change one’s feelings) “It’s the one thing they can’t do.

“They can torture you. They can make you say anything. But they can’t make you believe it.”

“They can’t get inside you. They can’t get to your heart.”

Is Julia right?

SCENE 36: Winston pays a visit to O’Brien... ..

36.1 What is the effect of constantly having voices reading statistics & news at your everywhere you are. What intended outcomes might this have for The Party (Big Brother)?

Note: that as Winston sits, the audio speaker finishes “that’s the list of known associates of Goldstein”. The timing of this announcement is perfect (deliberate) – right as Winston sits down next to the man who has written the fabrications that the speaker has just finished announcing.

36.2 Look at O’Brien, his office and his perks: how does life appear to be different for an Inner Party member?

Note: on one level, what O’Brien says it absolutely true – there does exist a Resistance – every person who harbours a thought or does an action that is ‘unorthodox’ to the Party’s rules, then they are resisting the system. However, the Resistance is not organised, no one knows anyone else, therefore, it is next to impossible for them to ever *organise* an uprising...

Extension 36: Finish O’Brien’s thought “Until in a thousand years...” *what was he going to say?? Why did he stop?*

36.3 Why do you think O’Brien gives Winston the book?

SCENE 37: A propaganda film, and then some more bedroom antics

Irony/humour: “This isn’t war. This is cold-blooded murder.” ... Note the way the speaker here tries to paint the war they have been engaged in as ‘honourable’ (when they have been executing soldiers in cold blood); it makes us wonder – **what has really happened/changed** that BB is now ramping things up so dramatically. Is it really that the war has changed in any way, or for another reason?

Important note: Goldstein’s manifesto (which O’Brien has ‘cleverly’ hidden for Winston to find) reads a lot like Karl Marx’s manifesto (the founder of Communism). This is more twisted humour from Orwell, as it was Marx’s manifesto that started the whole revolution that eventually led to Stalinism. The joke here is that the supposed heretical writings of Goldstein, are the very same writings and ideals upon which the revolution (and hence the whole system of Big Brother/Stalinism) was based upon! The irony is delicious.

The message is: revolutions have a way of eating themselves; of turning in upon themselves so that the very ideals that inspired them come to be the opposite of what they preach (because it might lead to another revolution!). There is a cyclical nature to revolutions, it is suggested (the word “revolution” literally means ‘to turn’ – to ‘revolve’.)

Note: the following propaganda film (and a lot of the other symbols used throughout the film) is very closely modelled on real Soviet and Nazi propaganda films.

(Look up Leni Riefenstahl on YouTube if you want an example of some Nazi propaganda films – she was the maestro. On a side note, the final scene of Star Wars: A New Hope (when Han and Chewy get medals) – is very closely modelled on one of her Nazi films – interesting, considering it was a scene of the Rebels, not the Empire! Hmmm, makes you think...) (Sorry about that.)

37.1 What is/are Winston's realisations about war/the war (from reading Goldstein)?

Extension 37: Try to explain the relevance of Doublethink here.

Note: Julia seems to sleep, while Winston reads "the truth" of their existence! It would seem that Julia and Winston's "rebellions" are motivated in different ways...

Is this a sexist representation of men vs women? Or is it just one male character versus one female character, and we need not read into it any further?

Quote: Winston: "to be in a minority of one doesn't make you mad" – even though this is often used as a definition of madness! But here Winston shows how effectively BB has managed to limit any unorthodox feelings and sentiments to the mind's only of people (they are too afraid to share their thoughts or beliefs with others), meaning the only step needed to totally eradicate any chance of rebellion or uprising (instability), is to make people afraid of their thoughts (Thoughtcrime) so that they will eventually not even have any subversive thoughts (aided nicely with the assistance of Newspeak) – it's quite a neat system really!

Winston: I understand *how*, I just don't understand *why* ...

Key theme questions: Power: Do you think the rulers of Oceania (Big Brother) remember *why* they do everything they do (what started this whole system to begin with)? Or do they only act to protect the power that they have?

What is the point of power? To make life better for others, or for oneself?

What motivates the rulers of Oceania?

37.2 Try to express in a sentence, a view/belief/concern that Radcliffe (Orwell) is making about the theme of power.

37.3 **Key Shot:** *From 1:11:03:* write an analysis of the next series of shots, of Winston and Julia standing naked at the window looking down at the lady singing in the courtyard.

Look at cinematography, mise-en-scene and sound.

Consider:

- the fact that they are naked (vulnerable, perhaps childlike, free, whatever else might be suggested here)

- What themes are being explored, what ideas are being presented, what do you think the director is trying to convey?

Extension 37: why does Winston think “the future is hers” ?

Stop now before you get to the depressing part!