

From: Intelligence Squared

To: j <jeevacation@gmail.com>

Subject: Adam Gopnik and Will Self in Brave New World vs Nineteen Eighty-Four

Date: Tue, 03 Oct 2017 15:55:32 +0000



[Brave New World vs Nineteen Eighty-Four](#)

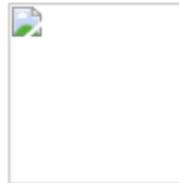
Tues 28th Nov, 7pm, Emmanuel Centre

Dystopian books and films are in the zeitgeist. Reflecting the often dark mood of our times, Intelligence Squared are staging a contest between two of the greatest dystopian novels, *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Each book captured the nightmares of the 1930s and 40s. But which vision looks more prescient to us now in the 21st century? Are we living in George Orwell's sinister surveillance state? Or in Aldous Huxley's vapid consumerist culture? To battle it out, we are bringing two celebrated writers, **Adam Gopnik** and **Will Self**, to our stage.

After Donald Trump was elected, it seemed as if *Nineteen Eighty-Four* had clinched it. The book shot to the top of the bestseller charts. It felt so ominously familiar. In Orwell's dystopia, the corporate state controls the news, insisting that 'whatever the Party holds to be truth is truth'. That sounds very like Trump's 'alternative facts', and the war he is waging on the 'fake news' media. Orwell imagined two-way telescreens spying on every citizen's home. Today we have Amazon's 'always listening' Alexa device, while Google, Facebook and the security agencies Hoover up our personal data for their own ends. Orwell also described an Inner Party – two percent of the population – enjoying all the privileges and political control. Isn't that scarily close to the 'one percent', reviled for their wealth and influence by anti-capitalists today? No wonder everyone rushed out to buy the book.

But Orwell's critics say *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a dated dystopia, a vision that died along with communism. The novel that better foresaw our present, they say, is *Brave New World*. Here Aldous Huxley imagined a plastic techno-society where sex is casual, entertainment light and consumerism rampant. There are pills to make people happy, virtual reality shows to distract the masses from actual reality, and hook-ups to take the place of love and commitment. Isn't that all a bit close to home? Huxley even imagined a caste system created by genetic engineering, from alpha and beta types right down to a slave underclass. We may not have gone down that road, but gene-editing might soon

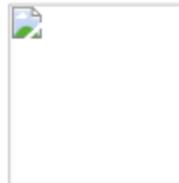
Advocate for Nineteen Eighty-Four



Adam Gopnik

Award-winning author, essayist, lecturer and broadcaster, who has been a staff writer on the *New Yorker* since 1986. His work encompasses the arts, travel, food, sport and children's fiction, as well as lyrics and librettos for musicals. After Trump's first week in office, he wrote in the *New Yorker* about 'how primitive, atavistic, and uncomplicatedly brutal Trump's brand of authoritarianism is turning out to be. We have to go back to "1984" because, in effect, we have to go back to 1948 to get the flavor.'

Advocate for Brave New World



Will Self

Widely acclaimed novelist, broadcaster, political commentator and literary critic, known for his acerbic wit. He has been described in the *Guardian* as the most daring and delightful novelist of his generation. His most recent novels are *Umbrella*, *Shark* and *Phone*, a trilogy which the *New Statesman* predicted will become 'one of the most significant literary works of our century, books that reflect and refract the hideousness of our times.'

Chair and Actors

To be announced.



enable Silicon Valley's super-rich to extend their lifespans and enhance the looks and intelligence of their offspring. Will we soon witness the birth of a new genetic super-class? Both these novels imagined extraordinary futures, but which better captures our present and offers the keener warning about where we may be heading?

Join us on [November 28th](#) as our advocates go head to head, with a cast of top actors who will illustrate their arguments with readings from the novels.



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