

# Review of: "The Unavoidable Order of Things': Fabricated Resistance in George Orwell's 1984"

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With a dense bibliography and a good mix of literary and cultural studies, this paper provides an insightful look into Orwell's classic, as well as a rewarding reading. Considering the number of works cited, from the Orwell Archive in London to D.J. Taylor's biographies, from Irving Howe to Ezio Di Nucci and Stefan Storrie's *1984 and Philosophy: Is Resistance Futile?*, I can only guess there's a wider research going on, of which the present text is just a bit.

The author's main argument is that the apparent act of dissent conducted by the protagonist Winston Smith is actually "a bizarre drama entirely scripted by Big Brother", which presumes a conspiracy narrative carefully hidden in Orwell's text. As I see it, the question should not be whether this approach is "true" or fully "explains" the novel. All we should expect from an interpretation is credibility or, so to say, "to hold water": after all, a modernist (some claim: postmodernist) piece of fiction is designed to stand open and plural before its readership.

However well informed, Jan-Boje Frauen's approach goes beyond Orwell and even literary studies, to tackle the strategies of Power to manufacture mock "enemies" in order to ward off or dishearten real ones. This covert scheme of a totalitarian state to dismantle opposition is what we should ultimately "learn" from Orwell's novel, designed to stir self-critical reflection in the Western societies.

At this point stems my only reservation about the author's line of argument. In his concluding remarks, he claims a parallel between *1984*'s Ingsocs (i.e., English Socialists) and "us", "Ingcaps" (i.e., English capitalists, as the author memorably calls them): while Orwell's citizens were surveilled 24/7 by the telescreens etc., "we" are *sousveilled* by the Internet and social media. First, I suppose the first person plural designs neither only the English, nor the whole world, but what is generally called the "Western"/ "liberal"/ "free" world (though it's not only Western, and not entirely liberal and free).

My position here is that we should read not only the similarities, but also the dissimilarities between the Orwellian dictatorship and globalized capitalism, before comparing the Ingsocs with the Ingcaps. There are so many differences, that Frauen fugitively looks at, but doesn't dwell on. Beside the breaches of basic human rights and democratic principles, characteristic only of dictatorships, there's also a gap between (Orwellian) Newspeak vs (neoliberal) freedom of speech (giving space to real and hardboiled discourses of dissent). Having language on our side (in politics, poetry, philosophy, journalism, in our private lives), I suppose "we" are still far from losing ourselves as autonomous individuals, as the author contends in the last paragraph. I feel that pointing only at the resemblances between dictatorial and neoliberal regimes runs the risk of whataboutism: of levelling out dramatically different political realities.

But I definitely went too far from the text, it's just a thought – stimulated by this daring piece of work.