

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

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No Way Out of the Matrix: A Review of "The Unavoidable Order of Things': Fabricated Resistance in George Orwell's 1984" by Jan-Boje Frauen

Published first in 1949, George Orwell's timeless masterpiece *1984* continues to amaze readers with the accuracy of its predictions. Orwell foresaw that in the dystopian future, the individual would be controlled by the state and could have no secrets from the state. Now with the common use of identity numbers and various other tools of advanced surveillance, the 'Big Brother' is watching us all the time. However, in our era of surveillance capitalism as described by Shoshana Zuboff, increased data collection by powerful corporations has raised additional concerns about control as well as the erosion of privacy and authentic selfhood. To quote Frauen's concluding remarks: "The new sousveillance, other than Orwell's surveillance, is dynamic-decentralized and far more advanced than Orwell could have imagined in 1948".

In his essay titled "The Unavoidable Order of Things': Fabricated Resistance in George Orwell's 1984," Jan-Boje Frauen argues that George Orwell's seminal dystopia *1984* (1949) is a treatise of social criticism that presents a future superorganism that has completely obliterated human agency. Challenging recent interpretations of the novel that situate it in the 'fairy tale' (Bowen) mode of the Gothic fantastic, the essay suggests that even the trio of 'thought-criminals' - Winston Smith, Julia and O'Brien - who seem to have articulated for themselves an agentic status are in fact merely acting their part designed for them by this omnipresent and omniscient superstructure. Thus, ironically and rather tragically, their so-called 'resistance' is itself produced by the 'Big Brother' to provide an illusory opposition to its absolute hegemony. As Frauen points out, all three 'thought-criminals' "own dissociative identities split between 'crimethink' and 'Thought Police' and betray their rebellion".

Drawing attention to details in the story of Winston's life, the essay convincingly argues that Winston's history is scripted by the Party and thus also questions the authenticity of his 'person' and, by extension, his rebellion. In doing so, the essay also examines the theme of betrayal and how it "bears on Winston's identity as a convergence point for manufactured and implanted fears". Throughout the essay, Frauen presents and develops the apparently counterintuitive, yet plausible, idea that Winston is actually "an active participant in the structure of 'doublethink' he is usually said to resist."

I believe that Winston was always aware of what he was doing while mechanically performing the tasks Insoq required of him. While working for the Ministry of Truth, he knew that the party was manipulating events and historical facts to fit the changing party policy. I think he recognized long before he had seen the three Incsog founding members (Aaron, Rutherford and James in the Chestnut Tree Cafe) that there was an objective truth and what he recorded was far away

from it. The party first urged him to rebel and then to accept the rules and truly love the Big Brother. Thus Winston's story also begs the question: Are we, in the 21st century era of Post-Truth, autonomous individuals or are we, similar to Winston, conditioned to act, speak, behave in a certain way? Perhaps our 'freedom' is just an illusion.

As stated by Frauen, Orwell makes the readers question the reliability of Winston's memory. In fact, as shown by the findings of modern neuroscience, memory is indeed fallible. When the individual relates an event from memory, it is very difficult to be accurate. Some parts of it may be fabricated. Ingsoc uses this principle to make the individual doubt his memory of past events and hence accept more readily the version of reality offered by Ingsoc. I agree with the view stated in the essay that we all perform "doublethink" when we recount a past event. We don't usually remember all past events clearly: we fabricate a new version, sometimes erasing the facts we don't want to remember.

Although, as Frauen says, Winston "matured into a temporal person through thoughtcrime," the final phase of Winston's integration is of course his acceptance and love of the system. Despite the fact that he knows he will be evaporated like the three founding members of the party, he still accepts the system. As Frauen aptly remarks: "Orwell saw the dawn of a new species, beings with minds that are constantly constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed." So the novel is very prescient in suggesting that the age of the autonomous individual is over. In this sense, *1984* is more relevant than ever in that it also hints that, in the words of Frauen, "'Reality control' is a post-human way of being in the world". Frauen's reference to the *The Matrix* series is spot on since this modern classic also shows how the so-called rebels who fight against the System are also not their own persons "but mirages of rebellion and choice made by a meta-consciousness that encompasses all of their thoughts and deeds." As scary as the thought may be, perhaps there really is no way out of Plato's cave.