

Psycho-social oppression in george orwell's 1984



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Psycho-social Oppression in George Orwell's 1984 He was standing in front of a wall of darkness, and on the side of it was something unendurable, something too dreadful to be faced. (Orwell 144)

George Orwell's 1984 is a tale of absolute subjugation and enslavement of human beings by the totalitarian state. It involves ruthless political, social and psychological oppression, as well as devious subversion of all possibilities of independent thinking in individual human beings, which is carried out by the all-powerful state in order to serve its own ends. However, oppression cannot be called oppression when it goes beyond certain limit. As the state systematically renders its citizens into mechanical zombies, by employing all the means and technology at its disposal, it is actually accomplishing nothing less than killing the souls of human beings en masse. 1984 has perhaps more resonances with an epic vampire tale than with one of merely political and social oppression; it evokes a scenario where the last man standing - Winston, the humble protagonist of this novel - gets converted in the end, and darkness triumphs. With his 'fall' goes out the last little light and hope for a great part of mankind. Now there is simply no escaping the ominous fact that the omniscient "BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU." (Orwell 2).

At the beginning of the tale, the protagonist, Winston Smith, is a man with some human spirit left in him. However, by the ending, his will and individual identity get totally crushed through unrelenting torture and brainwashing, and Winston becomes a regular zombie among other fellow zombies. Love is one of the most powerful emotions we human beings can experience. Love is delight, love is a basic expression of freedom, but it is a very fragile thing also. By annihilating all tendencies of love for Julia inside Winston, through <https://assignbuster.com/psycho-social-oppression-in-george-orwells-1984/>

subjecting him to intense pain and torture, O'Brien and the Thought Police get rid of all vestiges of humanity in him. Because humanity means rebellion, humanity means free will. To use the language of T. S. Eliot, Winston too is eventually rendered a hollow man, and stuffed man. Winston's dehumanization becomes final and irrevocable. To quote Eliot again, "This is the way the world ends, Not with a bang but a whimper." In 1984, the superstate Oceania is not yet the whole world, but we can imagine it would soon be. In which case, man's journey from the Bible's Garden of Eden to 1984's Oceania would have been a short one.

1984 is a fatalistic tale, as there is not a glimmer of a chance from the very beginning for Winston Smith to have his way for too long. After all, he is no Odysseus that could cunningly save himself from falling into the clutches of the witch Circe, who turned men into pigs, and instead ends up procuring much help from her. Nor is he the modern-day Captain Jean Luc Picard of Star Trek - The First Contact who boldly resists assimilation by the Borgs. Winston is nothing but an accidental anomaly in the system, who had simply no right to be in the first place. Heroic tales like the Odyssey and the Star Trek provide us with inspiration. Dark parodies such as 1984 and Brave New World leave us with profuse perspiration. Still they both have a similar message and purpose. Even as his humanity crumbles down to dust, just as it was bound to, Winston stands as a warning to us all: If we do not cherish our freedom, engage in constant debate and struggle to safeguard the higher values of love and truth, these very same words shall become a mere mockery of their original meaning, as it happens so prominently in 1984.

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