

1984 vs one flew over the cuckoo's nest essay



In a totalitarian country, any ordinary citizen's powers are limited, if at all possible. Although any individual is treated like a part of the society, he has no chances to play a vital role in it. A person is to follow officially dispersed propaganda and obey the rules, which intend to control everything. The totalitarian system uses any means including manipulation, intimidation and even the worst forms of repression just to achieve the main goal - staying in power.

George Orwell's 1984 and Ken Kesey's One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest are very similar novels which describe two different societies being mainly focused on individuals opposing the existing systems. In Orwell's novel, the State of Oceania is ruled by the totalitarian government, with Big Brother as the leader with absolute power. Similarly, in Kesey's work, the mental hospital is portrayed as a kind of totalitarian society, which is controlled by a " watchful robot" (Kesey 42), Nurse Ratched. The systems represented by Big Brother and Nurse Ratched do not recognize needs of individuals.

Those who have power demand total obedience without paying attention to anyone and gradually lead to downfall of those who are under control. In both novels, the efforts of those in charge, ultimately result in suffering and oppression of many individuals, where the effect of leaders, setting and rebellion of individuals directs to a negative impact of one's psyche. However, at the end, Oceania's government still stays in power and continues to have control over the citizens, the Mental Institution begins to slowly lose its power.

Big Brother and Nurse Ratched are leaders whose main aims are to hold as much power as possible and to be in control of everything. In Party's propaganda, Big Brother is presented as a real person and a founder of the totalitarian society. Winston Smith, the protagonist of Orwell's novel, states that "in the Party histories, of course, Big Brother figures as the leader and guardian of the Revolution since its very earliest days" (Orwell 38). Big Brother is in complete control of political ideology in the totalitarian government.

Nurse Ratched, the main antagonist of Ken Kesey's novel is the head of the hospital ward. Despite the fact that she is a woman, the men on the ward see her as a dominating dictator. They say that "she walks around with that same doll smile crimped between her chin and her nose and that same calm whir coming from her eyes, but down inside of her she's tense as steel. [They] know, [they] can feel it" (Kesey 25). These traits show that she is a tough, cold and oppressive leader which brings some fear into patients.

The other factor of abusing the people's psyche, is the manipulation of Big Brother and Nurse Ratched with the human being's feeling and fears. Hence, Nurse Ratched possesses total control over her patients and "tends to get real put out if something keeps her from running like a smooth, accurate, precision-made machine" (Kesey 25). She is a person who is like a robot without any human emotions. Ratched shows only responsibilities without any obligations before the poor souls of her patients.

For the sake of fulfilling her duty as a nurse, she forces the poor patient Billy to betray McMurphy for organizing the party, provoking him to commit

suicide. " Billy, I have to tell her...Mrs. Bibbit's always been so proud of your discretion. I know she has. This is going to disturb her terribly. You know how she is when she gets disturbed; you know how ill the poor women can become" (Kesey 315). This action is an additional proof of her being a heartless, selfish and ambitious person, whose powerful negative influence has forced Billy to commit suicide.

The Party, that Big Brother is in control of, has a very interesting way of dealing with people who do not follow their rules. They simply make people disappear. One name is removed and forgotten. "[One] is abolished, annihilated: vaporized [is] the usual word" (Orwell 21). Those unpredictable actions make people fear to disobey any rules. Nurse Ratched and Big Brother have many similarities in their deeds - they are able to constantly monitor others and execute their powers. The actions of the nurse towards her patients are crude and inhumane.

The big difference, however, between these two leaders lie in the achieving of their goals. While Big Brother manages to get his aims realized, Nurse Ratched is deprived of it, by the brave actions of the patients. The patients try to deprive her of feeling of being a dominant dictator. Both, Big Brother and Nurse Ratched seem to be powerful leaders, and integral part of a system, their unconditional control causes a negative impact on a person's mind. The setting of Orwell's novel, 1984, is placed back to the times in the State of Oceania.

The social structure is strictly divided into three groups: The Inner Party Members, Outer Party Members, and the meaningless Proles. The Inner Party

Members live fancy lives, they have access to wine, as well as real coffee, tea and cigarettes with good tobacco (Orwell 178), they keep all member of Outer Party under close supervision, while Proles “ must be kept in subjection, like animals”(Orwell 74). It is extremely important for the rest of the population to think that they live in good conditions and that everyone is equal. As a result, no Outer Party member or Prole may venture into the Inner Party.

The patients of the Mental Institution that is set in Oregona, are also divided into groups: the Acutes, and the Chronics. “ The Acutes are inmates who are believed that can be cured (Kesey 13). On the other hand, the Chronics are not considered to become healthy members of society, mainly due to the fact that many of them are in vegetable state” (Kesey 14). They are held in separate sections of the hospital in order to intimidate the Acutes, and to remind them that they could be placed in the Chronic's place if they do not comply with the Nurse's orders.

While Party wants everyone to think that they are equal, the Nurse Ratched makes sure that her patients understand that some of them are in luck to be the Acute. To make sure that Members of the Outer Party are following the rules, telescreens and microphones surround them everywhere. Each member clearly knows that “ it is terribly dangerous to let your thoughts wander when you are in any public place or within range of a telescreen. The smallest thing can give you away” (Orwell 65). Having your actions being monitored, sayings heard and minds read makes people feel constant psychological manipulation.

Even though, the mental institution does not have telescreens and microphones, the Nurse Ratched has an absolute control over her ward by watching her patients through the glass window. As Bromdem states, " So after the nurse gets her staff, efficiency locks the ward like a watchman's clock. Everything the guys think and say and do is all worked out months in advance, based on the little notes the nurse makes during the day. This is typed and fed into the machine I hear humming behind the steel door in the rear of the Nurses' Station" (Kesey 24).

The daily routines are the best way of maintaining order in the ward. The institution is not monitored that well, and this is also shown when Randal McMurphy manages to invite prostitutes and bribe one of the guards. Despite the technology that Party uses in order to find out about their traitors, it also " turns kids against their parents and teaches them to spy on them and report their deviation" (Orwell 140). It is clear that all actions are taken just to make sure that everything goes the way Party wants it.

In the novel *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, patients are also being asked to write down the information they overhear, into the big log book by the Nurse's office (Orwell 14). Patients are assured that they are not " squealing, [they] are helping [their] fellows (Orwell 44). Because Nurse cannot know every possible thing that is going on in her hospital, through her power over patients she can easily get needed information from them. Oceania and the mental institution are closely monitored by their leaders. Anyone who does not follow the strict regulations will have to face strong punishment.

In this case, one's mind is also being affected by regulations in each society, since one cannot rebel unless they are brave enough to face the consequences. In both novels, struggles and rebellious actions of the main characters are described. In 1984, Winston and Julia want to become free from the Party. Both of them are committing thoughtcrime and understand that they will be facing some problems later on. Although Smith is a very intelligent man, he manages to safely hide from the telescreen at his home and write about the Party in his diary. He notes that, " If there is hope, it lies in the Proles" (Orwell 72).

His main goal is to overcome the party and he believes that only Proles are able to do so. After Smith is captured, he undergoes many tortures in order to become a " proper" citizen of Oceania. The Thought Police brainwashes Winston's mind and they also make him stop loving Julia. It is impossible to trick the Party who has that much physical and psychological control over its citizens. McMurphy from the novel One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest represents freedom. Not only he unites his friends, he puts himself at a great risk in order to help everyone else.

He tries to help other patients with mental illnesses by breaking all the rules in the hospital. He wants to change the routine and make the Head Nurse change the daily plans. While sharing his plan with all the patients, McMurphy tells them to " bug her till she comes apart at those neat little seams, and shows, just one time, she ain't so unbeatable as you think (Kesey 72). Through rebellion against the governing ward, patients realize that they were " dead" for the whole time while being at the hospital. Rebellion

becomes a struggle between life and death, but it creates a hope for the escape.

Randal has many chances to escape, by fooling the staff and attacking Nurse Ratched, however, he pays for his actions by going through a lobotomy. The Chief finishes what Randal starts; an escape by breaking the glass window and running away. Although characters from both novels manage to defend themselves by hiding their plans from tyrants, they still end up experiencing a downfall. Winston does not get a chance to share his thoughts about Party with citizens because Party “ transforms” him into a loyal Party member who now “ loves Big Brother”(Orwell 311).

Party fully destroys his psychology and ability to think straight. Same scenario happens to McMurphy who rebels against Nurse Ratched's system and is later on lobotomized. However, Nurse Ratched does not regain her former power over the ward. Also, several of the Acutes even transfer to other wards, and some check themselves out of the hospital. George Orwell's 1984 and Ken Kesey's One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest are very similar books about two different groups of people.

Life in such totalitarian societies is bound for miserable outcome in the end, where the influences of the leaders, settings, and rebellion of individuals cause a negative impact on one's psychology. Big Brother and Nurse Ratched are shown as tyrants, whose only goal is to seize as much power as possible by regulating every aspect of one's private life. The societies are divided in separate groups, where the ruling classes do not recognize the needs of individuals. Winston Smith, Julia and Randal McMurphy prove to be

quite intelligent people who want the best for themselves and others by rebelling against their leaders.

Although it seems like there is hope by revolting against the systems, Winston experiences downfall and does not achieve his goal of overcoming the Party, In fact he becomes one of them. One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest is a sign of hope, where some individuals could become free from a controlled environment. With help of McMurphy patients eyes are open to cruel reality. However, no one is really free and happy enough if the society imposes the only ideology that regulates everyday life. In such environment people and their minds always suffer a lot.