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# **Animal Farm-A Conceptual Metaphor on the Destructive Power of Totalitarianism and the Ultimate Corruption of This Power**

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this paper is to examine the way conceptual metaphors in George Orwell's *Animal Farm* contribute to the elaboration of the main theme of the novel: the destructive power of totalitarianism and the ultimate corruption of this power. This novel is prevailed by many strong metaphors which at the same time give an artistic value to this novel and represent the main elements of totalitarianism in the most realistic way, which was very interesting for me as a reader. Decoding the meaning of those metaphors means decoding the message of the novel in overall. Such study of metaphors seemed to me important especially after reading the author's continuous references to them in his essays. In his essay [11] Orwell stated that he considers metaphors as potential contributors to the aesthetic value of a text and that *Animal Farm* is the first book in which he tried "with full consciousness of what he was doing to fuse political and artistic purpose into one whole". The whole paper is specifically based on this statement of him: in analyzing the way he managed to fuse these two elements by giving a clear image and criticism for the Soviet Union through using animals as images and conceptual metaphors of the most significant figures of that system. *Animal Farm* is itself a metaphor of the totalitarian system or the Soviet Union respectively, the pigs represent a metaphor for the authorities of the society and each of the other characters in the work implicitly serve as metaphors for other instances as well. Even the events and their actions have relevance in historical context. Thus, analyzing these aspects is the main purpose of this study.

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## **1. Introduction**

*“Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, against totalitarianism and for democratic socialism, as I understand it” [10]*

Animal Farm is a dystopian novel of George Orwell known as one of the most popular

political novels which depicts the dangers of a totalitarian government. The author was inspired by the Russian Revolution (1917) to write this novel. In his essay [11] Orwell states the fact that it was not his intention to produce works of art by the books that he wrote. Indeed, the main aim of his works was to draw the attention of the readers to some historical facts that he considered necessary to expose them to. Throughout the work, he indirectly criticizes Stalin’s way of governing by analogizing it with the animals’ government in a farm. All the structural organization of this book together with the characters, their actions and events serve as metaphors for the Soviet Union leading and leaders. These metaphors play a double role: giving the novel the political nature and artistic value that the author intended to achieve. The author tells that he considers metaphors as potential contributors to the aesthetic value of a text. It was said that he used some metaphors in this novel to add some art to it: “Above the level of a railway guide, no book is quite free from aesthetic considerations” [11] This novel is prevailed by many strong metaphors which at the same time give an artistic value to this novel and represent the main elements of totalitarianism in the most realistic way, which was very interesting for me as a reader. Decoding the meaning of those metaphors means decoding the message of the novel in overall. In the representation of modern cognitive linguistics, metaphor is one of the basic mental operations, the process of knowledge, structuring and explaining the world around us. Everyday life, communication, the process of thinking and doing- all this has a metaphorical nature. Since metaphors are always associated with the human experience, they always borrow lexical means and meanings from different fields [2] this paper I will try to highlight those elements from which the theme of totalitarianism is built, such as: Psychological manipulation, physical control, control of history and information, language as mind control and so on and explain their association in our everyday reality. According to Funnel (2014), this book is that relevant to the readers that they can get the parallels very clearly in nowadays life. In Animal Farm, the whole story is a metaphor for the political situation during the Russian civil war 1917-1922 [5]. The structure of this paper will include a background on the author and his works, his style of writing in general, the definition and the role of conceptual metaphors in general in literary works and in this novel particularly, a summary of the book and a background in historical events regarding the Soviet Union and the Russian Revolution. Moving on, this study will investigate deeply in the metaphors used in this novel focusing in the donor sphere and the target sphere of them. Thus, getting to understand the meaning of these metaphors is the main aim of this research which will support the hypothesis that the work represents a conceptual metaphoric model of totalitarian system in many meaningful ways.

## **2. Methodology**

Taking into consideration the nature of my topic, in this paper I used a content analysis as a method of data analysis. Reference [8] defined content analysis as a "research technique for making replicable and valid

inferences from data to their context", whereas [1] defined it as "a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication". This data analysis went mainly through three main stages: preparation, organizing and reporting [4] In the center of my study I had the printed book of *Animal Farm* which consists of ten chapters. Initially, I read it carefully to comprehend the content. Next, all the units in the book were analyzed. Further on, I re-read the text to find the subject matter as the aim of study. To strengthen the data found in the book, I also tried to gather the data from other books, journals and articles about literature, specifically in metaphors, Russian government and political system, and Russian history. The next step was to classify the data in the most important metaphors in *Animal Farm*. The data are the dialogues and other information in the novel concerning the metaphors of characters between the Soviet Union leaders of the 20th century and those in *Animal Farm*. Apart from the hardcopy of the book which I will use to decipher my own analysis in the topic that I have chosen, I also used other critical books and online resources which helped me support my analysis.

### **3. Conceptual Metaphors in *Animal Farm*/Discussion**

The various animal images are used by the author of *Animal Farm* to give vivid descriptions of the diversified people, based on the similarities between humans and animals. From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, metaphor is regarded as a 'cross-domain mapping' [9] with some aspects of the similarities between the 'source domain' and the 'target domain' highlighted. As mentioned earlier when talking about metaphors, the metaphorical process requires the donor sphere and the targeted sphere. The donor sphere of the conceptual metaphor in this novel are the animals whereas the target sphere is the Soviet state with the dictatorship of the leader. The animals, the events as well as the plots have symbolic meanings, which enriches the novel with specific aesthetic effects [3]. The most significant metaphor that has been identified in this novel around which revolve all the events in the novel is: Animals are humans. The characters represented in this book share so many traits with human beings. Thus, through the descriptions and actions of the animals in the novel we can see the traits that characterize people so that all the characters are animals in appearance but humans in nature.

#### **3.1. *Jones to Nicholas II***

Jones, the owner of Manor Farm, is represented in the book by Orwell as an unkind master, who applied the autocracy system over his animals. Animals were pushed all the time to do hard work in the field but in return, all they got was life in the poor stalls and very little of what they produced. In the other hand we can see Jones living in a nice and comfortable farmhouse enjoying the products of animals. Jones treated animals like slaves. Among other things, in [12] criticizes men by saying that they are the only creature that do not produce anything and still they only consume, different from animals, and yet they are the lord of them all [12]. From this passage of the book we can see a clear description of Jones and we can understand why the animals are so dissatisfied. Jones is also represented as a drunk [13] tormenting person(p.9.) and foolish (p. 11). On the other hand, Nicholas II, shares the same traits with Mr. Jones. The most similarities of them lay in the fact that they were both bad rulers and destroyed the place that they were leading so eventually were kicked out.

#### **3.2. *Old Major-Karl Marx***

Old Major shares many characteristics with Karl Marx regarding their contribution in inspiring others for great changes and for a better future. While Old Major sees how animals suffer and the unfairness that is done to them and wants to lead them to stand for their right, creates the idea of animalism in the song “Beasts of England” but cannot wait for the revolution because it is too old for it. In the other hand, Marx is the creator of “communism”, it is the one who wants to gather to working class for overthrowing the government but cannot manage to do it because dies before the Russian revolution.

Old Major is highly regarded in the farm and this we can understand from the following lines:

*“...everyone was ready to lose one hour of sleep in order to hear what he had to say” (p.4)*

His inspirational song “Beasts of England” serves as a metaphor for the Communist Manifesto of Marx especially of the first section of it which talks about Bourgeois and Proletarians.

### **3.3. Napoleon-Stalin**

The other parallels can be drawn between Napoleon and Stalin. Both of them are aggressive and brutal, capable of doing whatever it takes to those who stand on their way. Napoleon prefers to stay more behind the scene and to strengthen his power from there. He is specifically a metaphor for the government since he does everything that it takes, even in the disfavor of other animals to strengthen his status and to win authority. He punishes other animals violently and announces Snowball as an enemy, manipulating with the other animals that he is the one who is ruining their products, when in fact is him who does that for his own profit.

*“Napoleon was a large, rather fierce-looking Berkshire boar, the only Berkshire on the farm, not much of a talker, but with a reputation for getting his own way”, (p.16)*

After the seizure of power Napoleon's personality is being exalted, that reminds of the cult of Stalin's personality. Moreover, according to [14], the names of Napoleon and Snowball totally reflect their characteristics. Napoleon is named after Napoleon I, one of the greatest military leaders of history and emperor of France. He was well known for his aggressive and inspirational figure who fought in the French Revolution but then consolidated the power for himself and left the French empire in a state that in many ways looked like the monarchy that they have overthrown.

### **3.4. Snowball-Leon Trotsky**

Further on, Snowball is taken as a metaphor for Leon Trotsky, a pure communist leader influenced a lot by Karl Marx the same as Snowball which stood behind the lessons of Old Major. Both of them experience the same fate, of being driven away by the secret police of Stalin and Napoleon. In the description of Snowball, Leon Trotsky is recognizable: the liveliness of nature, rapid speech, creativity, but at the same time he is less serious than Napoleon.

*“Snowball was a more vivacious pig than Napoleon, quicker in speech and more inventive, but was not*

*considered to have the same depth of character” (p.16).*

Snowball is the author of the idea of building a windmill on the farm, which will facilitate the hard work of animals. Napoleon chases Snowball from the farm; that resembles the situation when in 1929 Stalin expelled Trotsky from the Soviet Union and usurped power. Snowball does not have the name of any historical figure but has a metaphorical meaning. It suggests a process that starts from an initial state of small significance and builds upon itself becoming larger and larger. However, it brings us a feeling of softness and fragility. Snowball, becoming larger and stronger gradually, was easily to be destroyed. Consequently, he is beaten by Napoleon's power at the end [14].

### **3.5. *Squealer- Vyacheslav Molotov***

Squealer, a fat pig, with round cheeks, twinkling eyes and quick movements and high-pitched voice, very persuasive and a brilliant orator - is a metaphor of the V.M. Molotov. Orwell describes him as a fat pig, but a brilliant talker, convincing and very self-confident. He always managed to brainwash the other animals with his persuasive attitude (p.16). Squealer is responsible for propaganda and agitation on the farm. He constantly praises of Napoleon and his wise actions. Similarly, Molotov was the right hand of Stalin, completely fulfilled all their lives to do his will. “Bravery is not enough”, said Squealer. As is indicated in squealer the word, Squealer the pig is a big-mouthed talker. He is always eloquent and plausible that all the animals are talked to peace by him, so he becomes Napoleon's mouthpiece. It may represent the propaganda department that works to support Stalin's image [14].

### **3.6. *Boxer - the working class***

Boxer is a hardworking horse which stands as a metaphor for the working class, the proletariat in a totalitarian system like the one that is implied in the novel. It is characterized by the most unlimited devotion to the authorities. He was admired by everyone and he was surprising everybody with his energy to work as much as three horses together. His answer to every problem was “*I will work harder*” and “*I will work even more*”. His naivety and his lack of education prevented him from realizing that he was unjustly taken advantage of. He is a victim of all the abuses that the leaders made with this naivety of him and as such represents best the victims in a similar dictator society where this class of people does not matter. There is no necessity to mention the implied meaning of the name Boxer which refers to a person who appears to be strong in body but hollow in mind. The name suggests a strong but simple minded person. This fits Boxer the strong but illiterate.

### **3.7. *Clover - loyal to the Soviet government***

The horse Clover is a metaphor of the part of the workers, which has slower than the other animals on the farm forgotten the true goals of the revolution and was more attentive to the current events, for example, always checked the Seven Commandments, written on the wall, with what was happening at the moment. George Orwell shows that these hard workers do not revolt, in spite of the difficult conditions and severe work, willing to remain loyal to the government and carry out the orders of Napoleon. She is represented in this work as a faithful, hardworking, and obedient, no what would happen. According to her, it is enough that things are way

better than in the days of Jones. This is the reason why she accepts the leadership of Napoleon.

### **3.8. Molly - the bourgeoisie**

Just like in every society where there are all the types of characters and classes of people, Orwell depicts also the image of the bourgeoisie in the face of idle white horse, Molly. She is interested in whether the sugar and ribbons will be after the uprising

*“The very first question she asked Snowball was: Will there still be sugar after the Rebellion?, and shall I still be allowed to wear ribbons in my mane? asked Mollie”.*

Of course, the bourgeoisie were concerned with personal wellbeing, as it was the ruling class of capitalist society before the revolution, which had the property and existed due to the income from this property. The bourgeoisie is portrayed quite stupid, selfish and cowardly.

During the fight with people Molly is found hiding in her stall with her head buried among the hay in the manger. Soon after the rebellion Molly runs away to a neighboring farm, which is an obvious allegory of the bourgeois class emigration of people from the Soviet Union.

### **3.9. The dogs of Napoleon - Soviet power structures**

Taking into consideration that Napoleon himself took the dogs since they were puppies, isolated them and trained them just for himself, we can assume that they represent the power structure of any dictatorship, in this case of Soviet Union as well.

When they were given birth, they were taken by Napoleon and for a long time there was nothing heard about them, the others even forgot that they exist. But they enter the scene in the most critical point of the story, when Napoleon gives them signal to throw Snowball out of the farm. From that point on, Napoleon did not make even one single step without them, the dogs were his personal protectors.

### **3.9. Moses**

Moses represents a metaphor for the clergy [7]. Raven Moses all the time preaches about Sugarcandy Mountain - a kind of Paradise, where animals go after the death. According to different sources, the raven is a metaphorical image of religion, the Russian Orthodox Church. Pigs are protesting against religious beliefs, and Moses leaves the farm. With this character the reader meets twice before the uprising of the animals (the time of the Russian Empire and the flourishing of Orthodoxy), and after the Battle of the Windmill, when Moses returns to Animal Farm (partial resurgence of Orthodoxy after the Great Patriotic War).

The raven Moses is named after Moses the man, a religious leader who delivers the people from a terrible situation and leads a great big horde of people out of oppression and into freedom. The ironical effect is Moses the raven does not do anything like Moses the man [14]. *One Sunday morning when the animals assembled to*

*receive their orders Napoleon announced that he had decided upon a new policy. From now onwards Animal Farm would engage in trade with the neighboring farms: not, of course, for any commercial purpose but simply in order to obtain certain materials which were urgently necessary (Animal Farm: 42)* According to Segritti as cited by [6] there is another metaphor identified in the passage above- Orwell's intention here was to show the Nazi-Soviet pact.

#### **4. Conclusion**

In a nutshell, it should be stressed the fact that the use of conceptual metaphor has allowed the author to compress and concentrate the information in such a way that the main events of nearly 20 years period are included in a few pages.

The conceptual metaphorical model of this dystopia implicitly specified in the title demonstrates to the reader George Orwell's point of view on the Stalinist version of socialism in Russia, his extremely negative attitude to totalitarianism.

This novel represents the best example of how the Orwell's writing style works: Conveying a strong message to the readers through the strongest tool- pen in the most powerful way- artistically. And, for real, George Orwell's Animal Farm is a timeless work that reminds us all the time that totalitarianism could be harmful to one society [5].

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