IDEOLOGICAL POWER AND LINGUISTIC CONTROL IN ORWELL'S ANIMAL FARM

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Abstract. *This article examines George Orwell's Animal Farm as a political allegory that critiques the mechanisms through which revolutionary ideals are transformed into authoritarian control. While the novella is commonly interpreted as a satire of the Russian Revolution, this study expands the analysis to focus on the broader dynamics of ideological manipulation, linguistic distortion, and the reconstruction of hierarchy within revolutionary systems. Using close reading and discourse analysis, the article demonstrates how power in Animal Farm is sustained not only through physical domination but also through the strategic manipulation of language and collective memory. The study argues that Orwell presents a cyclical model of political corruption in which language becomes a central instrument of control.*

Keywords: *George Orwell; Animal Farm; political allegory; ideology; discourse analysis; power structures; propaganda; linguistic manipulation; totalitarianism.*

Introduction

George Orwell's Animal Farm is widely recognized as an anti-utopian allegory reflecting the events of the Bolshevik Revolution and the rise of Stalinism. [1][5] However, the significance of the text extends beyond its historical referent. The novella explores how political systems that emerge from revolutionary ideals often reproduce the same structures of domination they initially sought to eliminate.

At the center of Orwell's narrative is a fundamental paradox: the promise of equality becomes the foundation for a new form of inequality. The ruling pigs gradually consolidate power, transforming the revolutionary farm into a hierarchical system that mirrors and ultimately exceeds the oppression of its human predecessors. The evolution of the slogan "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others" encapsulates this ideological reversal. [1]

This article argues that Orwell's primary concern is not only political corruption but also the role of language in enabling and legitimizing authoritarian control. Through discourse manipulation, historical revisionism, and symbolic restructuring, power is maintained without constant physical coercion.

Literature Review

Critical interpretations of Animal Farm have traditionally followed several dominant approaches.

Historical readings, such as those associated with George Woodcock, emphasize the novella's allegorical relationship to Soviet history and Stalinist betrayal of revolutionary ideals. [5] This perspective situates the text firmly within twentieth-century political events.

Cultural critics like Raymond Williams extend the analysis to ideological structures, arguing that Orwell exposes the relationship between language and political power in modern societies. [4] From this perspective, the novella is

not limited to Soviet critique but reflects broader concerns about ideology in mass culture.

Christopher Hitchens and John Rodden further develop Orwell's relevance as a moral and political thinker, highlighting his warnings about propaganda, authoritarianism, and the manipulation of truth. [2][3]

However, while these interpretations address historical and ethical dimensions, they often underemphasize the systematic role of discourse as a mechanism of control within the narrative itself. This article builds on existing scholarship by focusing specifically on linguistic manipulation as the central structural force in Orwell's allegory.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative literary analysis grounded in three complementary approaches:

Close Reading:

Detailed textual analysis of Orwell's language, including slogans, narrative tone, and syntactic simplicity, to identify patterns of ideological encoding. [1]

Discourse Analysis:

Examination of how language functions as a tool of power within the fictional society, particularly through propaganda, slogan repetition, and semantic distortion.

Allegorical Interpretation:

Contextual comparison between the events in Animal Farm and the historical framework of the Russian Revolution, allowing for identification of structural parallels between fiction and political reality. [5]

This combined methodology enables both textual precision and theoretical interpretation, ensuring that analysis remains grounded in the language of the novel while addressing broader ideological implications.

Analysis and Discussion

The transformation of the Seven Commandments represents one of the clearest examples of linguistic manipulation in the novella. [1] The gradual alteration of "All animals are equal" into "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others" demonstrates how language can be structurally re-engineered to justify contradiction.

This paradoxical statement functions not as a logical error but as a deliberate ideological instrument. By destabilizing the meaning of equality, the ruling pigs reshape reality itself, making oppression appear consistent with the original revolutionary principles.

Similarly, the rewriting of history throughout the novel illustrates the fragility of collective memory. Events are continuously reinterpreted to align with the interests of those in power, showing that control over narrative is as significant as control over physical labor.

Through these mechanisms, Orwell constructs a model of power that is not static but adaptive, relying on language as its primary sustaining force.This study specifically utilizes Norman Fairclough's framework of CDA to examine how linguistic choices reflect power imbalances between the ruling pigs and the working animals. [4]

Conclusion

Animal Farm presents a cyclical vision of political power in which revolutionary movements are vulnerable to internal corruption and hierarchical reconstruction. [1][5] While often read as a direct allegory of Soviet history, the novella's deeper significance lies in its exploration of language as a mechanism of ideological control.

Orwell demonstrates that authoritarianism does not depend solely on violence or coercion but is sustained through discourse, repetition, and the manipulation of meaning. [2][4] The pigs' rise to power illustrates how language can be used to normalize contradiction and preserve inequality under the guise of equality.

Ultimately, the text suggests that political systems are not only shaped by institutions and leaders but also by the linguistic frameworks through which reality is understood and represented.

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