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The Unraveling of Orwell's Puzzle

A Literary Analysis of the Characters in George
Orwell's *Animal Farm*

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Abstract

Title: *The Unraveling of Orwell's Puzzle: A Literary Analysis of the Characters in George Orwell's Animal Farm*

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George Orwell's *Animal Farm* is one of the most intricate pieces of fiction ever written and because of the allegorical complexity and depth of Orwell's fable this literary essay is composed to unravel the fundamental parallels between *Animal Farm* and the world of the first half of the twentieth century. The essay also establishes how George Orwell used his fable as a propagandist weapon to dispel the Soviet myth of being a true democratic socialist state by making his characters caricatures of the people and events of the failed Russian Revolution. With the aid of biographical and historical research about the author and the era he depicts, the essay presents evidence of how Orwell successfully dispelled the Soviet myth through *Animal Farm*, while simultaneously managing to introduce the fundamental parallels between Orwell's reality and the imaginary world of the fable.

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1. Introduction

The parallels between George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945) and the world of the first half of the twentieth century are numerous and extensive. Therefore, this essay strives to unravel some of the fundamental parallels hidden within *Animal Farm* with the primary purpose of establishing how the characters of *Animal Farm* are used by Orwell to dismantle the Soviet myth of being a true democratic socialist state without social hierarchies. Therefore, the characters are analyzed in terms of what and whom they symbolize in the debunking of said myth by focusing on how the characters personify the novella's dominating themes and concepts: equality, power, corruption and betrayal. As support for any claims, biographical and historical research about the author and the time period he depicts will be used. The essay is not to be regarded as a biographical research paper on George Orwell, but since the author himself believed all art to be propaganda, some biographical research is necessary to achieve a satisfying result as well as a basic understanding of *Animal Farm*.

To begin with, George Orwell believed in a classless society without "privileges and boot-licking" (*Homage to Catalonia* 112) and thus never considered the Soviet Union to be a true socialist state. Therefore, the author was dismayed by part of the Western world's embrace of the Soviet myth of being such a state. Orwell's strong contempt for Stalin's regime is explicitly portrayed in *Animal Farm* by the inclusion of reality-based characters that symbolize the abuse of power and equality and tyranny that is now synonymous with Stalin's rule.

Orwell's own journey to become the author of *Animal Farm* and *1984* was long and edifying. He served as an imperial policeman in Burma, studied the conditions of the lower social classes in London and Paris and took part in the Spanish Civil War before crafting *Animal Farm* (Wykes 26-29). It was during the Spanish Civil War that the devoted socialist Orwell experienced what he believed to be evidence that socialism could work as the author discovered a microcosmic society who shared Orwell's vision of socialism and what it was meant to accomplish: "socialism means a classless society, or it means nothing at all" (*HTC* 112). Consequently, many of the beliefs and ideas that inspired *Animal Farm* were developed in Spain.

Because of its highly political content and satirical portrayal of the Russian leaders, *Animal Farm* was not published until after the Second World War despite being finished in 1944. Orwell never denied that his primary intention was to refute the Soviet myth and wrote in the preface to the Ukrainian edition: "For the past ten years I have been convinced that the destruction of the Soviet myth was essential if we wanted a revival of the Socialist movement" (Orwell, "Preface to Ukrainian translation of *Animal Farm*"). Despite the controversy surrounding *Animal Farm*, the novel established Orwell as a notable author.

2. Previous Research

Because of the impact of *Animal Farm*, the novella has been the object of many research papers. One example is David Dwan's "Orwell's Paradox: Equality in *Animal Farm*", in which the author focuses on how Orwell deals with the theoretical concept of equality. Dwan argues that the satirical portrayal of Stalin and his regime is not the main provocation within the fable, but rather the way Orwell questions "the coherence and viability of equality as a theoretical principle" (655). Therefore, Dwan believes that *Animal Farm* can be interpreted as criticism of all political ideologies since equality is fundamental for all forms of government (656).

Dwan also attempts to define Orwell's view on equality by analyzing the author's experiences in Spain and by how Orwell had his characters abuse the concept of equality in his novella. Dwan concludes the article by stating that *Animal Farm* reflects that equality is not the solution to everything since the concept itself is so complex, but like Orwell acknowledged: the world would be worse off without the concept (679).

A less extensive study was carried out by Robert Pearce in his brief paper "Orwell, Tolstoy and *Animal Farm*" where the author proclaims that George Orwell may not have despised Leo Tolstoy as much as it is commonly believed, despite Orwell calling Tolstoy "an imperious and egotistical bully" (64). Instead, Pearce believes that Tolstoy may have inspired Orwell's manipulation of the seven commandments of Animalism in *Animal Farm*. The author argues that the rewriting of the commandments lacks a historical parallel, unlike the closely mirrored corruption of Marx's ideology (Pearce 66). Considering that Tolstoy discovered something reminiscent of the modification of the commandments, and that Orwell supposedly learned about it whilst writing *Animal Farm*, Pearce hypothesizes that Tolstoy may very well be the source of inspiration (67).

A final example of a study regarding *Animal Farm* is Paul Kirschner's article "The Dual Purpose of *Animal Farm*" in which Kirschner strives to explore both the political and artistic purpose of Orwell's masterpiece. The article covers many topics, ranging from the establishing of Orwell's views regarding capitalism, fascism and socialism, to how the choice of genre affected the impact of the novella. Kirschner also analyzes certain aspects and events within *Animal Farm* and connects them to the real world. His most intriguing claim is that the resistant and skeptical donkey, Benjamin, is supposedly a characterization of Orwell himself. Kirschner predicates this on the fact that it is Benjamin who reveals the true fate of the horse Boxer to the other animals: "By usurping authorial function, Benjamin suddenly becomes the author not by prudently keeping silent, but by placing sympathy before safety. He becomes 'Orwell' when, through him, the 'author' suddenly seems to drop his mask and show where his heart lies" (765).

As the included studies of Dwan, Pearce and Kirschner reflect, the analytical scope regarding Orwell's satirical retelling of the corruption of an ideal is unlimited. However, excluding the brief instances of character analysis within Kirschner's research, most writers tend to shy away from analyzing the characters of *Animal Farm* and instead focus on broader topics. The aforementioned lack of extensive character analyses about *Animal Farm* proves that there is a legitimate need of such research, and it leads us into the analysis section of my essay.

3. Analysis

It is important to understand that George Orwell wrote *Animal Farm* as an allegorical fable and therefore, Orwell's characters are specifically constructed to symbolize a concept or a value and consequently lack complexity in their personalities, which matches *Encyclopaedia Britannica*'s definition of a flat literary character being "two-dimensional" and that they "do not change throughout the course of a work" ("flat and round characters"). Consequently, this analysis is conducted in terms of how the characters represent the controlling concepts of equality, power, corruption and betrayal within *Animal Farm* and does not cover any psychological aspects of the characters, nor does it try to identify any developments or changes within the characters since it does not occur. Furthermore, the analysis explores how Orwell used his characters to debunk the Soviet myth.

The analysis includes all of the major characters of *Animal Farm* as well as the most significant minor characters. The section starts off with Old Major since he functions as a natural gateway to the two central characters Napoleon and Snowball. The majority of the analysis section will revolve around the two leading pigs since I compare and contrast the two in addition to analyzing how they aid the literary scholar's deconstruction of the Soviet myth. Other vital characters, such as: Boxer, Squealer and the humans of *Animal Farm*, will be analyzed in slightly less detail.

As stated, the first parallel between *Animal Farm* and the real world is discovered in the character of Old Major. The aged boar is only part of the fable for its first chapter but Orwell is still keen to signal the significance of Old Major and establishes the pig's authority by describing him as majestic-looking, wise and benevolent (*Animal Farm* 1). Orwell further signals the boar's significance by stressing that all animals respect Old Major to such an extent that they willingly surrender a few hours of sleep in order to listen to him speak (*Animal Farm* 2).

Old Major dreams of a life where animals reap the rewards of their own labor, and his single purpose within the story is to plant the seed of revolution amongst his fellow animals. This illustrates that Old Major functions as the catalyst of the plot as well as the revolution,

and the boar fulfills his purpose by declaring all human beings to be freeloaders and tyrants. Old Major's speech echoes Karl Marx's beliefs of class struggle between the bourgeois and the proletariat as he calls for the working-class (the animals) to rise against the oppressors, which in *Animal Farm* is initially portrayed by Mr. Jones (Marx & Engels 3, 42).

However, Old Major is somewhat repetitive. The pig has but one solution to solve all the problems of the farm and that is to forcefully remove their tyrant owner. Once that is achieved, the animals would then instantly become "rich and free" (Orwell, *AF* 5). Old Major's view of revolution as the ideal solution to tyranny and inequality is often interpreted as Orwell criticizing Karl Marx and his ideology, which Orwell felt was "too simplistic and naïve" (Wykes 77). Old Major's division between friends and foes based on the number of their limbs further ridicules the single-mindedness of Old Major's philosophy, and strengthens the argument of it being both idealistic and simplistic.

For these reasons, and the fact that Old Major dies just three days after his speech, most interpret Old Major as a caricature of Karl Marx. Because of their untimely demises neither was given the chance to stop the systematic corruption of their ideologies, nor the opportunity to develop them further. The shared fate and the idealism of their ideologies is the least disguised parallel between Old Major and Karl Marx.

On the other hand, some readers believe that the boar is a characterization of Vladimir Lenin rather than Karl Marx. Mostly, these readers base their claim on Napoleon's decision to put the bones of Old Major on display at the farm, which is quite reminiscent of Lenin's public mausoleum. Another argument is that it would be chronologically correct for Old Major to be based on Lenin rather than Marx, since Stalin and Trotsky succeeded Lenin and not Marx. However, in the preface to the Ukrainian edition of *Animal Farm*, Orwell admits to having altered the chronological order of events in order to maintain the symmetry of the story (Orwell, "Preface to Ukrainian translation of *Animal Farm*").

Furthermore, Orwell biographer David Wykes argues that Lenin had to be omitted from the story due to his complexity as a character, a feature which is uncommon within the fable genre as it mainly makes use of flat characters: "Since Orwell wished to emphasize idealism's collapse into tyranny, a figure combining both elements, rather than embodying one or the other, would demand the novel's resources of complexity and not the fable's simplifications" (129).

Consequently, one can conclude that an inclusion of a Lenin character would severely undermine Orwell's cause as well as purpose, and it confirms Old Major as the embodiment of idealism. The omission of a Lenin character is of utmost importance since it shows that Orwell used the genre to suit his purposes, and it establishes *Animal Farm* as a fierce satire designed to strike against the Soviet myth.

Finally, Orwell does not criticize Old Major to the same extent as he does the other leading characters of the fable, as the pig was not at fault for his ideals being corrupted. Orwell was never a Marxist, but he was far more supportive of Marxism than he was of Stalin's distorted version of socialism, and thus Orwell does not necessarily use Old Major to dispel the Soviet myth since the boar does not quite represent it. His ideals may have fostered the revolution, but it was not Old Major's ideology that ruled in its aftermath.

To fully understand where Old Major's ideas of revolution originated from, one must take a look at the farmer the animals revolted against, Mr. Jones. The farmer was always a strict master, but he was not always negligent and cruel. It was not until Mr. Jones experienced economical misfortune that he began mistreating his animals (Orwell, *AF* 11). It is hardly implausible to view this particular aspect of Mr. Jones as Orwell subtly criticizing capitalism, but that is a matter of less importance. Instead, one must determine why Orwell decided to keep human beings within the fable at all.

Arguably, human beings are included to represent the inherited system of elitism and hierarchy that most modern societies rely upon. By keeping the farmers human, Orwell allows the animals a common denominator for everything that is unfair with the separation between a tyrant farmer and his or hers animals. This claim is based on the fact that when Old Major rallies the animals, he is less worried about Mr. Jones and his shortcomings, and instead focuses on the wrongdoing of the human race as a whole (Orwell, *AF* 4), and since all humans within the fable are in a natural position of power, it is not unreasonable to conclude that Mr. Jones serves as a representative of an entire social class as well as the concept of tyranny.

Therefore, the main purpose of the inclusion of Mr. Jones is to present the animals with a reason for revolting as there would be no need for rebellion if the farm lacked a tyrant to revolt against. Thus, the expulsion of Mr. Jones is a great victory for the animals and it is important to remember that Orwell never states that the animals were better off before the revolution. It is the subsequent betrayal of the revolutionary ideals that forces the animals back into tyranny, not the revolution itself.

Historically, one can assume that Mr. Jones represents Czar Nicholas II and his failed rule since Nicholas was the last emperor of Russia and Mr. Jones the last human ruler of the Animal Farm (Hingley 150). Further connections includes Mr. Jones's heavy drinking, which supposedly symbolizes the social decline of Russia after World War I, and as both Mr. Jones and Czar Nicholas II are victims of a revolution, the parallel between the two is quite abundant (Wykes 129).

When the revolution takes place it happens as an impulsive reaction to Mr. Jones repeated neglect. Spearheaded by the pigs Napoleon (Joseph Stalin) and Snowball (Leon Trotsky) the animals successfully chase Mr. Jones and his men off the farm and install their own

government. Old Major's two successors, Napoleon and Snowball, may have lead the revolution and developed Animalism together but are political adversaries from the very start and remain in a state of conflict throughout the fable.

The power struggle between Napoleon and Snowball is evident once the farm is free of Mr. Jones, and the differences between the two pigs are immediately established. Snowball intensifies the development of the farm by organizing different committees for the animals to take part in, as well as introducing writing and reading classes for the senior animals of the farm, while Napoleon remains idly discontent and dismisses all of Snowball's ideas. Due to Napoleon's inability to offer any solutions or innovations of his own, Snowball is propelled into the leadership position at the farm.

Snowball's position is strengthened during the Battle of the Cowshed where he organizes, commands and leads the animals to victory when Jones returns to reclaim the farm. However, the pig also shows a remarkably callous side of himself when he dismisses the workhorse Boxer's remorse over supposedly having killed a human being: "No sentimentality, comrade! War is war. The only good human being is a dead one." (Orwell, *AF* 28), which mirrors the message of Old Major's speech whilst simultaneously reminding the reader that Snowball is very much a dangerous pig as well.

The aftermath of the battle depicts Snowball at the heights of his power and consequently, the conflict between Napoleon and Snowball escalates. Riding the wave of his efforts in battle, and by being the more eloquent and convincing speaker, Snowball wins most debates while Napoleon is described as the better politician and manages to gather his own support in between debates (Orwell, *AF* 31). Napoleon continuously opposes all of Snowball's ideas, and it is transparent that the two want to lead the farm in two very different directions.

Once more, Snowball is the one pushing for continued change and improvement with the proposal of building a windmill for the farm. According to Jeffrey Meyers, an Orwell biographer, the windmill is a symbol meant to represent Leon Trotsky's wishes of industrializing and modernizing communist Soviet (136). In *Animal Farm*, the windmill is similarly introduced by Snowball as a way of forwarding the farm's development.

The windmill controversy is the epitome of the character of Snowball, since it symbolizes what truly distinguishes him from Napoleon, which is his innovative and forward-thinking ways. Snowball is determined to build the windmill since it will ease the animals' workload, modernize the farm and improve the living conditions for the animals. Napoleon, on the other hand, dismisses the notion as unnecessary and instead pushes toward an increase in food production. The power struggle between the two pigs escalates further as Napoleon disrespectfully dismisses Snowball's plans for the windmill by urinating on them (Orwell, *AF* 33) and the farm is divided into two opposing camps.

The battle for supremacy between Snowball and Napoleon will be analyzed in detail later on in this essay, but first we must discuss the main differences between Snowball and Napoleon further.

In contrast to Napoleon, Snowball seems to be motivated by a desire to actually improve the animals' quality of life while simultaneously honoring Old Major's message of equality to some extent. However, in his urgency to do so, he fails to recognize the severity of the threat that is Napoleon. A mistake that abruptly leads to the expulsion of Snowball from the farm, and to the complete submission to Napoleon's distorted and corrupted view of Animalism. After Snowball is expelled from the farm, he functions as a scapegoat and scare tactic to force the remaining animals into submission.

For these reasons, many readers and critics believe that Orwell wrote *Animal Farm* from a Trotskyite point of view (Crick 315), meaning that Snowball was a victim of Napoleon's regime just as much as the other animals were. However, Orwell was not as supportive of the Snowball character as one might think. Meyers presents an excerpt from a conversation where Orwell supposedly said that: "Trotsky-Snowball was potentially as big a villain as Stalin-Napoleon ... The first note of corruption was struck when the pigs secretly had the cows' milk added to their own mash and Snowball consented to this first act of inequity" (139). Orwell is presumably making the case that we cannot know whether the animals would have suffered less under Snowball than Napoleon, since both consent to the unfair rationing of the milk, and had their roles been reversed we might have seen the same display of dictatorship and tyranny from Snowball.

Considering that Orwell is the author of *Animal Farm*, it might seem foolish to oppose his statement, but Orwell appears to have forgotten just how different Snowball's version of Animalism is compared to Napoleon's. Certainly, the Trotsky-based character is at fault when he agrees to set aside the milk for the pigs, and he does have a ruthless and callous attitude toward human beings. However, one would be negligent to diminish the more admirable attributes of Snowball, as they are quite significant. Snowball is the one who tries to retain some sense of a democratic rule by involving the animals in committees and the weekly barn meetings, and it is Snowball that offers all the animals equal opportunity to become literate rather than just the piglets, an effort that is at least reminiscent of Old Major's philosophy of equality between animals.

Furthermore, Snowball's ideas and innovations are at least superficially for the greater good of the farm, and if one considers all the attributes of Snowball, it is not unreasonable to view Snowball as a favorable alternative to Napoleon. Especially considering that Snowball's version of Animalism is corrupted and distorted in a similar manner to how Old Major's original ideas were falsified once Snowball is forced into exile by Napoleon.

Finally, one must remember that none of the characters in *Animal Farm* are supposed to be a protagonist or a representative of genuine socialism. All of Orwell's characters have flaws and Snowball is certainly no exception. However, most readers would still consider Snowball as the lesser of two evils, a claim that is perhaps best explained by Orwell himself after all: "Snowball had once taught the animals to dream, the stalls with electric light and hot and cold water, and the three-day week, were no longer talked about. Napoleon had denounced such ideas as contrary to the spirit of Animalism. The truest happiness, he said, lay in working hard and living frugally" (*AF* 86). Here, the author undeniably presents Snowball in a better light than Napoleon while simultaneously summarizing the main differences between the two.

In other words, if Snowball is partially guilty of having betrayed the ideals of the revolution by consenting to the unjust rationing of the milk and apples, thus eliminating the fictitious classless and equal life on the farm (the Soviet myth), Napoleon is to blame for the following onslaught of both Old Major's ideals and Animalism. Napoleon's ideology is the direct opposite of Old Major's, and he is also quite different from his nemesis Snowball. Napoleon is described as a pig of few words that is notoriously known for getting his own way and he is also presented as the "only Berkshire boar on the farm" as a way of further distinguishing him from the rest of the pigs as well as the other animals (Orwell, *AF* 9). Politically, Napoleon is more conservative and cunning than the innovative and verbally talented Snowball.

The aforementioned power struggle between Napoleon and Snowball consists of countless disagreements, but revolves around two defining issues: whether to strive for permanent revolution or not, and whether or not the farm should build the windmill. Napoleon is against both the building of the windmill and the idea of spreading the revolution to the neighboring farms, which describes his conservative views and how far he has strayed from Old Major's initial philosophy. When Snowball has been expelled from the farm, Napoleon has a change of heart and decides to build the windmill after all. However, his motivation for the project differs greatly from Snowball's, which is best explained by the following citation from an essay written by Paul Eissen:

The windmill soon becomes the means by which Napoleon exerts control. He uses it to direct the animals' attention away from the growing shortages and inadequacies on the farm, and the animals ignorantly concentrate all their efforts on building the windmill. The symbolic nature of the windmill is itself important - it suggests an empty concentration, a meaningless, unheroic effort, for the idea is literally misguided. (Eissen)

The two central conflicts show that Napoleon has no interest in the surrounding world or his peers since his sole motivation is to obtain power. All his actions are without exception part of his grand scheme to become the one and only leader of the farm. Alongside his trusted companion and unofficial minister of propaganda, Squealer, Napoleon extorts and manipulates his fellow animals until the point of full resignation. The windmill scheme is perhaps Napoleon's greatest stroke of manipulation, but it is hardly the only one.

Moreover, if there is one character within *Animal Farm* that is solely designed by Orwell to wreck the Soviet myth, that character is irrevocably Napoleon. As the story develops, and Napoleon's acts of cruelty and oppression grow greater in number, few would claim that his actions are in line with his official ideology. As with the Soviet myth of Stalin's Russia being a genuine socialist state, Napoleon's Animalism is a myth, as it in every possible way is a full-fledged dictatorship. The systematic alteration of the seven commandments of Animalism is the ultimate evidence, and the change from "all animals are equal" to "all animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others" (*AF* 15, 90) is a telling testament of the deteriorating conditions on the farm under Napoleon.

It is a combination of the naivety shown by the other animals and the cruelty and cunning of Napoleon and Squealer that enables Napoleon to become everything Mr. Jones was and to reinstall hierarchy and tyranny. The Berkshire boar scares his peers into submission by killing the few animals that dare criticize him and by repeatedly working his subjects to the brink of starvation. Threatening and starving his supposed peers while he and his fellow pigs sit with fattened bellies shows that Napoleon no longer has any scruples when it comes to increasing the social gap between the pigs and the other animals. Napoleon's reign of terror reaches its climax with the reestablishment of the Manor Farm, and by the raising of a cup; all that the animals fought for in the revolution is eradicated as Orwell's story comes full circle.

As a contrast to the manipulative and abusive dictator Napoleon, Orwell introduces the workhorse Boxer, one of the few sympathetic characters in *Animal Farm* as well as a character at the receiving end of Napoleon's injustices. Boxer is generally perceived as the representative of the proletariat of Stalin's Russia, which is strengthened when Orwell makes a point of describing the physical might of Boxer. The great horse is presented to the reader as "an enormous beast, nearly eighteen hands high, and as strong as any two ordinary horses put together", which is a metaphor for the massive quantity and might of the Russian proletariat. However, Orwell also describes Boxer as not being of a "first-rate intelligence" (*AF* 2).

The mixture of physical might and stupidity serves as Boxer's trademark and as touched upon earlier, the Orwellian characters do not change. Boxer is instrumental in the aftermath of the revolution as he is the farm's most fervent worker and finest soldier, as well as Snowball and Napoleon's most loyal follower. Boxer rarely questions what he is told and he adopts

maxims such as “I will work harder!” and later: “Napoleon is always right” (Orwell, *AF* 18, 41) as guidance in life since he does not like to think for himself. One could say that the character of Boxer instills the sense of a sleeping giant, who is unaware of the power he possesses and the influence he wields, which is highly metaphorical for the power balance between those who rule and their subjects even to this day. It is the people who permit the ruler to rule, but the true power always lie with the masses as we shall soon discover.

The impact Boxer has on the narrative is not to be underestimated. The great workhorse is the one pulling the farm forward with his tireless work ethic and he becomes a source of inspiration for the other animals. Due to the admiration from his fellow animals, Boxer becomes an influential character on the farm that holds more power in his hoofs than he himself realizes: “Squealer made excellent speeches on the joy of service and the dignity of labour, but the other animals found more inspiration in Boxer’s strength and his never-failing cry of ‘I will work harder!’” (Orwell, *AF* 49).

This indicates that Boxer had become more influential than Squealer, Napoleon’s most trusted minister, and it is therefore not too far-fetched to consider the accidental attack on Boxer during Napoleon’s great purge as a planned attack on the character that Napoleon viewed as the greatest threat on the farm (Orwell, *AF* 56). Arguably, this episode is included by Orwell to cement the fact that the people hold the real power and that their leaders always fear that they will one day choose to act on that principle. However, staying true to the tragic undertone of *Animal Farm*, the horse never acts on the injustices he and his fellow animals suffer at the hoofs of Napoleon. Boxer is simply not clever enough to see through the façade of Napoleon.

It is important to keep in mind that, without Boxer, the revolution would not have been accomplished and the windmill would never have seen the light of day (Orwell, *AF* 41). It is therefore fair to say that, through the character of Boxer, Orwell pays homage to the massive contribution and suffering of the proletarians during Stalin’s era. However, Boxer’s less admirable attributes are blatantly used to critique the very same working-class. The horse’s inability to think for himself and question the lies he is told is not only a sign of lower intelligence, but also an attack on the blind loyalty and naivety shown by the proletarians. Their failure to react ultimately enabled Stalin (Napoleon) to betray the revolution and restore hierarchy and tyranny, something that Orwell does not fail to include in *Animal Farm*.

The demise of Boxer is the single most important scene used to dispel whatever faith remains in the Soviet myth this far into the narrative. Even if one disregards the facts that Boxer works longer hours than any other animal and that he never takes a day off as signs of inequality, the scene where the great workhorse is taken to the knacker’s is among the most open attacks on the Soviet myth within *Animal Farm*. Having finally labored himself beyond

the seemingly endless limits of his strength, Boxer is deceived and taken away to be butchered, which eradicates whatever doubt there is about Napoleon betraying the cause and the very same subjects that freed the farm and enabled him to seize power.

By denying the admired and respected workhorse his dream of a peaceful retirement, Napoleon also fulfills Old Major's prophecy regarding Boxer's fate in the opening pages of the fable: "Boxer, the very day that those great muscles of yours lose their power, Jones will sell you to the knacker, who will cut your throat and boil you down for the foxhounds" (Orwell, *AF* 5). If the betrayal of the individual was not enough to convince the readers that the Soviet myth of being a true classless and socialistic society is a lie, the fulfilling of the prophecy proves that Napoleon now embodies exactly what they strived to replace, a realization which serves as the final nail in the coffin of the Soviet myth.

A noteworthy side note regarding Boxer is that Paul Kirschner, who wrote a study on *Animal Farm*, remarks on the death scene of Boxer, stating that the donkey, Benjamin, is in fact the characterization of Orwell himself. Kirschner bases his theory on Benjamin usurping authorial functions in Boxer's final scene where the normally unfazed donkey "drops his mask and shows where his heart lies" (765). Kirschner hypothesizes that since the donkey is the one telling the other animals what is actually happening, and thus briefly stepping into the role of the narrator, he exposes himself as Orwell by projecting the author's inner emotions (765). On the other hand, I argue that if Orwell included parts of himself in Benjamin it is the close-knit relationship between Boxer and Benjamin that gives the author away rather than the single example of Benjamin reacting to injustice. Considering that Orwell spent the majority of his life trying to "reclassify" himself as part of the lower classes, this seemingly makes sense (Wykes 68).

However, the repeated instances of Boxer's stupidity blinding him to the infractions of Napoleon and the pigs make it hard to believe that Orwell did not at least partially blame the betrayed revolution on the acquiescence of the Russian proletarians, and thus it would be very odd of the author to include himself as one of them ("Boxer (a horse) in *Animal Farm*"). Especially as Benjamin only once protest about what is going on at the farm, something that hardly can be said about Orwell, who published both *Animal Farm* and *1984* to criticize totalitarianism.

Another very symbolic character in *Animal Farm* is Napoleon's right hand pig and spokesperson, Squealer, the brilliant speaker known for his ability to turn "black into white" (Orwell, *AF* 9). Squealer is often associated with loyal Stalin supporter, Vyacheslav Molotov ("Squealer (a pig) in *Animal Farm*"), or the well-known newspaper *Pravda*, which mainly functioned as a pro-communist tool of propaganda during Stalin's reign (Meyers 135). However, the different theories of Squealer and what he represents are also proof of how

Squealer differs from the other leading characters of *Animal Farm*, since he does not solely represent events or concepts specifically tied to the Russian revolution or Stalin's rule (Wykes 130).

Simply put, Squealer is more than just an extension of Napoleon's power, designed to manipulate the animals and alter the commandments. Squealer is also a symbol for propaganda as a whole, and a representative for how it is used to control the masses through the press and politics. It is Squealer that justifies whatever inequity Napoleon imposes on the animals, and it is Squealer that trivializes any shortage of food or other necessities. This goes to show that Squealer is very much a lackey of Napoleon, but also that he embodies the concept of propaganda and his functions can thus be applied to any form of government and polity.

Squealer and Napoleon may have mastered the tool of propaganda but it would be negligent to say that they are the only ones who make use of it. For example, the neighboring farmers slander the farm in order to prevent their own animals from revolting (Orwell, *AF* 25) and even Snowball makes use of propaganda when he sends pigeons around to spread the word of the successful revolution at the Manor Farm (Orwell, *AF* 34). The fact that rivaling farms use the same methods as Squealer further strengthens the argument of the pig having a larger purpose in the story. It is evident that Squealer is used by Orwell to critique the totalitarian rule of the pigs, but also to remind the readers of the devastating power of the press and politics when they are used for propagandist reasons.

As we know by now, Orwell's main objective was always to separate what he perceived as genuine socialism from what was taking place in Russia, hence the coinage of the term the "Soviet myth" (Wykes 130). However, the author did not shy away from criticizing the other contemporary world leaders who accepted the Soviet myth. Therefore, it is only logical that Orwell included characters that satirize the Western leaders as well.

Most readers of *Animal Farm* have little trouble with identifying Mr. Frederick as a characterization of Adolph Hitler. The association to the Nazi ruler is established by the mirroring on-and-off relationships between Stalin and Hitler and Napoleon and Mr. Frederick. A relationship that inevitably ends in warfare when Mr. Frederick breaks their previous agreement, which reflects the events of World War II and Stalin and Hitler's non-aggression pact of 23 August 1939. That Orwell does not alter the scene where Mr. Frederick unprovokedly attacks the farm is a testament to Orwell's fairness, as the author refuses to compromise his integrity by altering the truth to further slander Napoleon, but it can also be seen as a sign of Orwell's disapproval of the other world leaders as well as a reminder that Stalin was not all that was wrong with the world.

Other associations between Hitler and Mr. Frederick include Orwell's description of the

relationship between the neighboring farmers Mr. Frederick and Mr. Pilkington: “these two disliked each other so much that it was difficult for them to come to any agreement, even in defense of their own interests” (Orwell, *AF* 24). The description of the relationship between Pilkington and Frederick is reminiscent of the Western allies’ views of Hitler, and Orwell further describes Mr. Frederick as a “tough, shrewd man, perpetually involved in lawsuits and with a name for driving hard bargains” (*AF* 24) to imitate the fierce and warmongering characteristics of Hitler.

As a result of the inclusion of Mr. Frederick, Orwell is handed an opportunity to criticize the democratic Western leaders as well by the necessary introduction of Frederick’s nemesis, Mr. Pilkington. The inclusion of Mr. Frederick was to be expected due to the fascist ways of Hitler, which was yet another hierarchical ideology that we can safely assume that Orwell despised, while many question the inclusion of a Churchill persona in *Animal Farm* since the novella is a very pessimistic satire that criticizes all of its characters. This persona is however discovered in Mr. Pilkington, the characterization of Winston Churchill and, to a lesser extent, his American counterpart Franklin D Roosevelt.

Orwell could never accept the hypocrisy shown by the western leaders during World War II as they willingly supported Stalin in order to defeat Hitler, and wrote in one of his war-time journals that: “One could not have a better example of the moral and emotional shallowness of our time, than the fact that we are now all more or less pro-Stalin. This disgusting murderer is temporarily on our side, and so the purges etc. are suddenly forgotten” (*A Patriot After All* 522). Orwell proceeds by imitating the hypocritical relationship between Stalin and Churchill in *Animal Farm* as Mr. Pilkington gladly forgives Napoleon for their broken agreement once the pigs have defeated Mr. Frederick in the Battle of the Windmill.

When Mr. Pilkington arrives at the Animal Farm for a celebratory dinner, a scene that mirrors the Tehran Conference of 1943, Orwell further questions the Western leaders by having Mr. Pilkington expressing his desire to implement the strict rations and demanding workloads of the Animal Farm at his own farm (*AF* 92). As a final criticism of the Western leaders, Orwell introduces his pessimistic view about the strength and longevity of the alliance (Crick 309). Orwell was certain that the uneasy alliance would never last and therefore has Napoleon and Mr. Pilkington try to cheat each other in a game of cards, mere minutes after their alliance is declared. Once again, the author shares his displeasure with the West and reminds the reader that although *Animal Farm*’s main purpose was always to criticize the distorted and corrupted socialism in Russia, the leaders of the West were far from perfect, and the way Orwell stresses the fact that it is virtually impossible to separate the pigs from the humans in the final scene of *Animal Farm*, is as vicious an attack on all the world leaders as could possibly be (*AF* 95).

4. Concluding remarks

As Meyers states, *Animal Farm* is an extremely subtle and sophisticated satirical allegory in which almost every detail has some political significance (133). The fact that every character in *Animal Farm* is designed to symbolize an idea or a value imposes limitations on the analysis of the characters, as it is impossible to account for it all in a shorter paper like this one. However, the essay has covered the major characters of the novella as well as those that represent something more and wider than the dispelling of the Soviet myth.

Large parts of the analysis section examine each character's individual role in the disassembling of said myth. Since Orwell's main intention was to expose and debunk the Soviet myth, an analysis that focuses on how the author achieved his intentions through his characters must spend hours connecting the dots and then admit to the results being mildly subjective at best. However, I do believe there are some general truths that can be agreed upon after reading this essay.

Undoubtedly, Napoleon is the character that inflicts the most damage on the Soviet myth. This claim is based on the fact that Napoleon becomes exactly what the animals initially fought to replace. Also, Napoleon is the one who initiates the institutionalization of inequality by allowing the alteration of the seven commandments and by granting the pigs their elevated status. In short, Napoleon is the embodiment of tyranny, which is exactly what Orwell considered Stalin's "true socialist state" to be.

In comparison to Napoleon, the second most important character Snowball appears as a much more favorable option for the leadership position despite consenting to the first act of inequity. However, the fact that Snowball at least superficially tried to improve the living conditions on the farm outweighs his one act of elitist behavior. Furthermore, the fact that Snowball allowed the barn meetings to continue and involved the other animals in committees to provide them with an opportunity to voice their concerns peacefully further strengthens the image of Snowball as a favorable option to Napoleon.

In spite of this, it is equally obvious that the pigs are the villains of *Animal Farm* as they symbolize corruption, abuse of power and the restoration of tyranny. Finally, the betrayal of the revolution also falls on the conscience of the pigs. As a contrast, the sympathetic workhorse Boxer represents the endurance and contribution of the proletarians, while Old Major serves as the representative of idealism and as a direct opposite to Napoleon.

However, it is clear that Orwell never intended to glorify any character within the fable as he criticizes both Boxer for failing to react to the pigs' totalitarian rule, as well as Old Major for being unable to construct a functioning ideology that would eliminate the opportunity for Snowball and Napoleon to create a corrupted version of their own. Even if Old Major does not necessarily represent the Soviet myth, since his ideology was presented before the

corruption and served merely as inspiration for the rebellion, Orwell does not hesitate to criticize both Old Major and his philosophy. This illustrates that Orwell very carefully constructed his characters around the central concepts and that the author was very methodical in the deconstruction of the Soviet myth, attacking it point by point and even including its predecessor in the process.

Despite the well-documented thoroughness of Orwell, the way in which the author managed to extend his criticism beyond the myth created by Stalin and his regime was intricate yet brilliantly simple. By the introduction of the human characters, Mr. Jones, Mr. Frederick and Mr. Pilkington, Orwell enabled himself to criticize other world leaders and ideologies as well. Concrete examples include how Orwell makes it a point to never state that the animals were better off under Mr. Jones's capitalistic rule than Napoleon's totalitarian, and by the hypocrisy shown by Mr. Pilkington in his dealings with Napoleon. Also, Orwell's comment on the remarkable similarity between Mr. Pilkington and Napoleon in the closing scene is a metaphorical, but vicious, slap on the wrist of the leaders of the West.

To further discuss how Orwell extended his criticism, the character of Squealer serves as a forceful reminder of the power propaganda possesses, and the grave consequences that occur when the press loses its integrity and allows itself to be used for propagandist purposes. It was also established that Squealer was different from the other characters since he had a broader function, as he represented the totalitarian views of the pigs but also served as a caricature of the concept of propaganda.

To sum up, this essay has strived to unravel the fundamental parallels between *Animal Farm* and the world of the first half of the 1900's by analyzing the characters of the fable in terms of how they dispelled the Soviet myth in relation to the novella's central concepts of equality, power, corruption and betrayal.

In short, I argue that Orwell's *Animal Farm* completely debunks the pretense of the Soviet myth by portraying Napoleon's rule as a poorly disguised dictatorship. During Napoleon's rise, the readers are introduced to the systematic and total corruption of all that the initial revolution stood for, and once the dust settles, there is little doubt that Orwell has succeeded in his mission of exposing the Soviet myth.

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