

# ENG439- Endsem Submission

---

*Abhimanyu Sethia, 190023, [sethia@iitk.ac.in](mailto:sethia@iitk.ac.in)*

---

## **I. Answer the following questions in 50-100 words each: 2x5 = 10 marks**

### **1. How does propaganda win over facts in *Animal Farm*?**

Much like the Stalinist Soviet Union, propaganda ruled over facts in the *Animal Farm*. Whatever Napoleon said was considered as the absolute truth and anybody questioning that was labelled as treacherous and deported or killed. As a result, Napoleon went on to distort history and blame everything that went wrong on Snowball. For example, when the windmill is destroyed by a storm, he calls it a sabotage by Snowball and the gullible animals accept it without questioning. Squealer assists in spreading the state propaganda, by making persuasive speeches and using language and philosophical distractions to distort facts. For example, when Napoleon violated the prohibition against trade, Squealer asks "Is it written down anywhere?" This makes the animals believe that they are mistaken.

### **2. What does Marguerite symbolize?**

Initially, like the all-glass façade of the French building that reflected the cathedral, the Writers' Union was seen as a reflection of Margeurite's house – a satirical imagery on how the writers had prostituted their intellect. However, as the story evolves, Margeurite becomes the symbol of rebellion and resistance, which hides away from the Secret Police. The author dreamt about Margeurite's garters substituting the waving flag over President's house – a symbol of the resistance winning over the communist state. In the end, the suicide committed by Marguerite and her mother symbolizes the reluctance to live with oppression and courage to dissent against that – which the author calls the writers to reflect on.

## **II. Choose ONE of the following and answer in 150-200 words: 10 marks**

### **2. Basing yourself on *Animal Farm*, "The Albanian Writer's Union as Mirrored by a Woman" and *Rhinoceros*, discuss the role of the writer / dissident in a country that is moving towards totalitarian control.**

A country moving towards totalitarian control is characterized by a predominant belief or an 'orthodoxy' (a body of ideas which it is assumed that all right-thinking people will accept without question, as said by George Orwell). Like in *Animal Farm*, the animals gullibly accept that Napoleon is always right or in *Rhinoceros*, on seeing the mob convert to rhinoceros, other characters willing metamorphize.

Therefore, the role of a writer in such a regime is to expose the mob to dissenting ideas and question the orthodoxy. The dissident writer is supposed to be question the right from wrong and provide the intellectual basis for a rebellion.

Each of the three texts (*Animal Farm*, *The Albanian Writer's Union as Mirrored by a Woman* and *Rhinoceros*) depict a dystopian reality where the writers and the intellectuals do not stand up to their role. In *Animal Farm*, Benjamin who represents the intellectuals does not oppose Napoleon's

rise to power despite himself not believing in the rebellion. When the animals ask him to help them by reading the Commandments, he refuses “to meddle in such matters.” Similarly, in *The Albanian Writer’s Union* story, the writers prostitute their intellect by sucking up to the State apparatus (as seen at the Writers’ Union assembly). In *Rhinoceros*, Berenger despite all his attempts fails to convince any of the other characters to remain humans.

Almost by definition, a totalitarian state would oppress or censor a dissenting text from getting published. Hence, the dissident writer also bears the responsibility of finding subvert ways like using imagery and metaphors in fables or folklores to communicate their ideas while circumventing the censors and state apparatus.

Each of the three texts lead by example in their individual contexts! *Animal Farm* published as an animal fable, is a strong satire on communist Russia. *The Albanian Writer’s Union as Mirrored by a Woman*, uses the imagery of a prostitute to communicate ideas of rebellion in the fascist regime in Albania. Meanwhile, *Rhinoceros* uses absurdism to depict the human barbarity of World War II and Nazism.

**III. Given below are two observations about censorship, made by creative writers. Select ONE and state reasons for agreeing / disagreeing with it. Use two or more texts we have done in this course as examples to justify your answer (in 150-200 words).**

**2. “The self-appointed censor is the alter ego of the writer, an alter ego who leans over his shoulder and sticks his nose into the text ... It is impossible to win against this censor, for he is like God—he knows and sees all, he came out of your own mind, your own fears, your own nightmares ... This alter ego... succeeds in undermining and tainting even the most moral individuals whom outside censorship has not managed to break.” – Danilo Kis**

It is indeed true that the self-censor is like an alter ego of a writer.

A case in point is the novel *One Part Woman* by the author Perumal Murugan. When the novel was faced by strong protests, Murugan declared the author in himself dead. Some years later, the court not only denounced the ban on Murugan’s book but also went on to say that ‘Murugan should not be under fear’ and ‘let the author be resurrected.’ Despite that, Murugan in an [interview](#) said, “the censor’s voice still sits inside my head.”

This sentiment is echoed by Ismat Chughtai. After she was tried for obscenity for her story *Lihaaf*, she [said](#) “The story brought me so much notoriety that I got sick of life. It became the proverbial stick to beat me with and whatever I wrote afterwards got crushed under its weight.” This tells us that it indeed is impossible to win against the self-censor.

Even the most moral individuals like the author Ismail Kadare, who are undeterred by the state apparatus for censorship, was ‘horrified’ when he found that two of the projects mentioned at the Writers’ Union Assembly resembled his own. This hints towards a subconscious self-censor that had affected even the most courageous writers like Ismail.

Apart from the fear of falling into a controversy, the fear of being judged for something one writes also leads to self-censorship. For example, in *The Story of Poem*, Sushama tore the poem she wrote because as a ‘good’ wife and mother, she could not afford to be seen as a poet who writes romantic poetry. Readers often assume that the characters in a story have autobiographical elements, as we see in the conversation Reghuraman overheard in the bus. This might be one of the causes of self-censorship among writers.

Especially so, for women writers. The essay *The Censor Within* expands on the sexist connotations of self-censorship. It says that the women writers are inhibited by 'the good girl syndrome' and do not wish to publish their works due to cultural, familial or internal constraints.

Hence, self-censor is indeed the strongest form of censorship.