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Subverting Equality in Animal Farm

Animal Farm by George Orwell. Tells a story of a group of farm animals who rebel against their human farmer, hoping to create a society where every animal can be equal, free, and happy. However, the pigs, who lead the revolution, become corrupt with power, and the farm descends into tyranny, which mirrors the events of the Russian Revolution and the later Stalinist era. Through its different characters and events, Orwell critiques real-world events around this time such as totalitarianism, political corruption, and the use of propaganda for control. In “Animal Farm” the Utopian idea initially presented is equality among all animals. This concept is encapsulated in the pigs’ slogan “All animals are equal”(Orwell, 10). Within this story Orwell uses anthropomorphism, attributing human characteristics to animals, alongside paradox, and historical allegory.

A central paradox in “Animal Farm” is encapsulated by the statement, “All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others.”(Orwell, 103) This statement is blatantly contradictory because equality implies that everyone has the same rights and status, yet the addition of “some animals are more equal than others” undermines this idea. In addition, On one hand, the pigs appealed for universal equality, while on the other hand, after gaining the upper hand, they created for themselves a privileged class through a clear distinction between them and the others. The paradox shows the hypocrisy and corruption of the pigs’ rule, as they claim

to have created an equal society in which all animals live in peace and harmony. Still, they simultaneously establish themselves as a privileged ruling class.

Anthropomorphism is a literary device where non-human entities, such as animals or objects, are given human-like qualities, characteristics, or behaviors. George Orwell anthropomorphizes the animals, especially the pigs, who come off as cunning and manipulative, with human-like intelligence, emotions, and ambitions. For example during a meeting, when there was a sense of muttering, Napoleon has them "let out deep, menacing growls, and the pigs fell silent and sat down again. Then the sheep broke out into a tremendous bleating of 'Four legs good, two legs bad!' which went on for nearly a quarter of an hour" (Orwell 45). This scene, in fact, undermines the professed equality, as it vividly shows the way pigs make use of dogs for the execution of their power. Here, it would seem evident that some form of hierarchical, powerful relationship is acting against the democratic ideals presented during the rebellion.

In "Animal Farm" anthropomorphism is prevalent as the animals are portrayed with human-like intelligence, emotions, and abilities. For example, the pigs, exhibit traits of leadership, manipulation, and ambition typically associated with human beings. "Napoleon was now never spoken of simply as "Napoleon." He was always referred to in formal style as "our Leader, Comrade Napoleon," and these pigs liked to invent for him such titles as Father of All Animals, Terror of Mankind, Protector of the Sheep-fold, Ducklings' Friend." (Orwell,73) This quote shows how Napoleon is not only given human attributes but also put in a place of reverence and authority within the animal community. The pigs, most especially Squealer, are active in the propaganda of Napoleon as a respected leader through manipulation, further supporting his anthropomorphic depiction as a political leader with qualities parallel to those of human leaders. This subverts the initial principle of equality since it illustrates how a pursuit of

power can erode utopian ideals, leading to a new hierarchy where certain individuals are deemed more privileged or favored than others.

Another literary device within *Animal Farm* is the use of historical allegory. The evolution of the accumulation of power into the hands of Napoleon is functional to some of the control mechanisms of Stalinist Russia. Alan Whiting gives a brief description of how the Soviet system functioned under Stalin, "The 1936 version at least mentioned the Communist Party pointed out in Article 1266 that the Communist Party represented the vanguard of the workers. But this Article only hinted at the source of real power, namely the Party. All candidates for government office were to be approved by the Party before the electorate had a chance to vote.The People's Commissars were selected by the Politburo or Stalin himself." (Whiting, 31) The quote seems to evoke a political structure as its shown in *Animal Farm*. Just like the Soviet electorate, who had no alternative other than to support pre-approved candidates, the animals are duped into what looks like a pretense of what Old Major preached at the beginning of the story. This paragraph subverts the utopian idea of equality by showing how Napoleon's rule in "*Animal Farm*," just like Stalin's control in Soviet Russia, betrayed the revolutionary ideals of democratically equal participation.

In conclusion, in George Orwell's "*Animal Farm*," he employs a bountiful amount of literary devices to craft a compelling critique of totalitarianism, political corruption, and abuse of power through the use of paradox, anthropomorphism, and historical allegory. The paradox of "All animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others" encapsulates the book's central theme of inequality and serves the corrupt nature of absolute authority. Additionally, Orwell's use of anthropomorphism allows readers to empathize with the characters, while showing the qualities of human behavior. Lastly, a historical allegory that makes a direct comparison between Napoleon and Stalin, who both changed legislation for their benefit. Even

though all these topics subvert the utopian idea of equality, “it is not always clear that Orwell knew what equality meant...Animal Farm often seems to commit itself to this bad certainty: its satire about the subversion of equality and justice can only function by assuming in advance what these concepts mean and entail.”(Dwan, 656). This means that the effectiveness of Orwell’s satire depends truly on how the audience accepts his definition of equality, this book could be read and comprehended in numerous ways.

Works Cited

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